

## Undefiled

*“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled;”*

**Hebrews 13:4**

**Undefiled**—This Greek word is the negative of *miaino*. *Miaino* is a word picture that describes staining something with color, like stained glass or tile. The moral concept of “stain” always means *pollution* by sin. So, here the word carries the idea that the marriage is to be pure and unstained by sin. Actually, the word is even more specific because it is associated with the sexual relationship in marriage. The author of Hebrews continues this thought by saying that God will judge those who defile this sacred union.

This is about as clear as it gets. Sex in marriage is absolutely exclusive. Christians have always known this. But the implication is far greater than a prohibition against adultery.

What does it mean to “defile” something? How much color do we need to add to make glass less than perfectly clear? If we think of it in terms of the picture of staining, we can see that even the slightest color added to clear glass would alter its transparency.

What does it take in a marriage to pollute the intended sacred sexuality? How about a shared “dirty” joke? Or a calendar girl on the shop wall? How about a soap opera that promotes promiscuity or unfaithfulness? What about that secret fantasy? What about the “imagined” partner? Or the sitcom that endorses serial monogamy?

There is a reason that Paul pleads with us to renew our minds. “Undefiled” is a description of God’s holiness. Marriage has always been used as a religious symbol of God’s covenant relationship to His people. Just as God tolerates no pollution of that relationship, neither should we tolerate anything that stains our sexuality in marriage. It is designed to be a permanent “one-flesh” arrangement.

Many of us have failed to remain “undefiled” in the past. God waits with a covenant promise that He will renew us. We can become reflections of Him in our most intimate commitment.

“Father, forgive me. Wash my marriage vows and make them pure as snow.”