

# Personal Purity

#18

Most believers know that God is in every room we walk into. But we forget, and then we act as if He's not.

## Begin today by reading 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

Paul gets to the core of the issue: God's will for our sanctification in the area of sexuality. People often want to know, "What is God's will for my life?" This is one of the places in Scripture where God's will is clearly laid out for us.

What is sanctification? \_\_\_\_\_

What is sexual immorality? \_\_\_\_\_

The Greek word for immorality – "porneia" is the same word from which we get the word "pornography."

What does it mean to learn to control your body? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of behavior is holy and honorable? \_\_\_\_\_

What is passionate lust? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to "wrong" or "take advantage" of someone in this area? \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 6 states that God will punish those committing such sins. This is a serious matter to God. But the motive in purity is not fear. Look back at 1 Thessalonians 4:1 – the motive is to please God.

Finally, in verses 7-8, we find God calling us to a holy life. He also gave us the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, to empower us to live this life.

On the surface, the Bible can appear to be full of negative commandments that seem imposing and dreary. However, we need to remember that God has only one motivation: LOVE. When we understand that He always seeks what's best for us, these commands become positive.

### You might find the following chart helpful when thinking about purity:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| PROTECT your mind from the images of past relationships.                      | PROVIDE freedom to enjoy your future spouse without detracting mental images.          |
| PROTECT you from mistrust and suspicion in relationships.                     | PROVIDE a foundation of trust for your current and future relationships.               |
| PROTECT you from confusing the intensity of sex with the intimacy of love.    | PROVIDE you with intimacy: true knowledge of the other person outside of the physical. |
| PROTECT you from the fear and consequences of STDs and unplanned pregnancies. | PROVIDE you peace of mind as you enter a marriage commitment.                          |
| PROTECT your Christian testimony.   | PROVIDE integrity in your Christian witness which ministers to others.                 |
| PROTECT your fellowship with God.   | PROVIDE the abundant life.   |

## Look at Romans 8:38-39 to understand why God wants to provide for and protect us.

God created sex to deepen the level of trust and acceptance in a marriage relationship. This can provide lasting enjoyment and total fulfillment if it is used in the right context. That's why the abuse of sex produces such enormous disappointments. God protects us by giving us boundaries and limitations to our activities. They are an expression of His love and wisdom, to keep us from doing ourselves harm.

## Temptation

### Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

What temptation have you experienced that is unique to you? \_\_\_\_\_

Is it fair to say that we gave into a temptation because it was too strong to resist? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

What are some "ways out" of temptation that God provides? \_\_\_\_\_

You're not sinning when you're tempted, so don't give in. When tempted, we may give in because we think we've already lost the battle. Stand firm and fight—but not on your own. Fight with friends beside you and Christ's truth wrapped around your heart.

## Faithfulness in Marriage

Matthew 5:27-28 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Unfaithfulness doesn't just happen. It is the result of thought patterns and many decisions over time, and much temptation from the enemy of one's soul.

Because of the reality of sin, every marriage has difficult moments. We're marrying people that the Bible promises will stumble in many ways. How can that possibly be easy? Once you accept that marriage is inherently difficult, you will no longer resent it when your marriage is difficult. No one says that their marriage has been "easy." Rewarding? Yes. Soul-forming? Absolutely. But easy? Never. This understanding should give you great appreciation for your spouse, who is willing to engage in this difficult task with you.

## Pornography and the Internet

Psalm 101:3a *"I will set no worthless thing before my eyes."*

Pornography isn't always an issue of sex. Power, dominance, curiosity, and the excitement of not getting caught... these all come into play too.

So, why is it so bad? Your mind is the most powerful organ when it comes to sex. Pornography imprints the mind with images that flashback at will. Married couples in counseling tell of how these images defile marital sex and cheat them of intimacy. Often the images are degrading to both men and women.

The internet can make voyeuristic journeys easy. Internet accountability is becoming a bigger issue, and there are several ways to go about it. Discussing sites visited, or having a report of your sites sent to a trusted friend through an organization like Covenant Eyes ([www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)) may be useful.

People often hide sins of self-gratification and pornography because of the associated shame and embarrassment. Bringing light into this dark and hidden world can be very difficult, yet freeing. If you are struggling with this area of your faith journey, would you seek out a trusted friend or a pastor to let God help you bring this area out of the darkness?

## **Personal Accountability**

It means that you answer for your actions and take responsibility for what you do. Through accountability, we learn self-control and self-discipline – fruits of the Spirit. God already knows when we've blown it, but confession is a huge part of forgiveness because that's where we acknowledge our responsibility to uphold God's command for holiness and purity.

What is an accountability partner? \_\_\_\_\_

Find someone in your life who will listen without judgment, but also won't be afraid to hold you accountable. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says when we confess our sins to a Christian brother or sister, we experience God's forgiveness in an audible voice. That's why accountability can be so powerful: it can protect from temptations and the pitfalls of sin by making us face our failures and admit our weaknesses. Sometimes just the verbal admission of failure is enough to break the hold of sin. But often a series of hard questions asked repeatedly over time is the healing option.

## **Fresh Start Forgiveness**

One of the greatest mistakes people can make is to assume that since they failed to keep God's command regarding purity, God wants nothing to do with them. That is simply not true. God is well aware of our sinful tendencies: that's why Jesus Christ came. For King David, what began with a stare led not only to adultery and an unwanted pregnancy, but also to murder. David really blew it. Read Psalm 51:1-17. Notice how David admitted his sin and asked God for forgiveness. Like David, we can receive God's complete forgiveness and make a clean start.

- A.** Confess the sin. Specifically name your sin before God and ask His forgiveness. (1 John 1:9)
- B.** Forgive Yourself. If you are not willing to forgive yourself, you are saying two things to God: (1) Christ's death was not enough for your sins; and (2) you are a higher judge of what can be forgiven than God is. God's grace is extended to you out of His heart of love. When you do not forgive yourself, you throw God's grace right back into His face. If God's grace can't cover your sin, it can't cover ANY sin. (Romans 8:1)
- C.** Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Allow God's Spirit to fill you with His power to say no to future temptation. (Ephesians 5:18)
- D.** Show Fruits of Repentance. Repentance means turning around, changing one's mind. Matthew 3:8 says, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance." This might mean breaking off a relationship, or perhaps making a decision not to be alone together. It might be something else. Whatever it is, your actions should show that you have changed. The individual who professes to be a Christian, but who continues to practice sin, should realize that he might not be a Christian at all. (John 14:21, 1 John 2:3)

God's complete love and forgiveness enables us to make a clean start and live a life pleasing to Him.

**Memorize: 1 Thessalonians 4:7**