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Your Journey With Christ · Discipleship · Lesson 17 of 27

Living a Life of Purity

Relate Church • Foundations for a Growing Faith

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

MATTHEW 5:8

Introduction

Living out the moral absolutes of God's Word is not easy or popular. In this world, many people seek freedom from all moral responsibility. Followers of Jesus have the privilege and obligation to live by biblical values. As we do, our confidence in God's goodness grows. We can experience more and more how God's will is "good, pleasing, and perfect."

> [1] *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.* [2] *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.*
>
> **Romans 12:1-2 NIV**

God's Standard of Purity

What is purity? The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition* defines purity as:

1. Having a homogeneous or uniform composition; not mixed.
2. Free of dirt, pollutants, infectious agents, or other unwanted elements.
3. Containing nothing inappropriate or extraneous.

In Matthew 5:8, the word *pure* in the original Greek means clean, pure, clear, in a natural sense, unsoiled, unalloyed. It also means to be clean or pure in a spiritual sense from the pollution of guilt and sin; sincere, upright, void of evil.

God has made promises to those who are pure in heart.

> [3] *Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?*
> *Who may stand in his holy place?*
> [4] *The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,*
> *who has not appealed to what is false,*
> *and who has not sworn deceitfully.*
> [5] *He will receive blessing from the LORD,*
> *and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*
>
> **Psalm 24:3-5 CSB**

> [8] *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."*
>
> **Matthew 5:8 CSB**

Some common impure behaviors to guard against are found in Ephesians 5.

> [3] *But immorality (sexual vice) and all impurity [of lustful, rich, wasteful living] or greediness must not even be named among you, as is fitting and proper among saints (God's consecrated people).* [4] *Let there be no filthiness (obscenity, indecency) nor foolish and sinful (silly and corrupt) talk, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting or becoming; but instead voice your thankfulness [to God].* [5] *For be sure of this: that no person practicing sexual vice or impurity in thought or in life, or one who is covetous [who has lustful desire for the property of others and is greedy for gain]—for he [in effect] is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*
>
> **Ephesians 5:3-5 AMP**

The world's standards differ greatly from God's standards. The world's standards and God's standards are always in direct and complete opposition. Through God's command given to us in 1 John 2:15-16, we know what the world's standards are.

> [15] *Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him.* [16] *For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself].*
>
> **1 John 2:15-16 AMP**

The world's standards include:

- Loving or cherishing the world
- Loving or cherishing the things that are in the world
- Not having the love of God in them
- The lust of the flesh (the craving for sensual gratification)
- The lust of the eyes (the greedy longings of the mind)
- The pride of life (the assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things

Notice how the world's standards are always self-centered and do not consider others.

God's standards include being in right relationship with others. He has defined how we are to treat people. For example:

> [1] *Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers,* [2] *older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:1-2 NIV**

Are you basing your relationships with the opposite sex according to scriptural standards? Is there any relationship you have that needs to be brought into conformity with God's standards and attitudes? If so, what should you do about it?

Personal Purity is Important

Although there are many arenas of personal purity, the area of sexual purity and building godly relationships between men and women is extremely vital.

Personal purity starts with what is going on in your heart.

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

> [1] *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 7:1 LSB**

> [3] *For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, [4] that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, [5] not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. [6] This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. [7] For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness. [8] Consequently, anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 CSB**

Are you aware of anything that may be contaminating your body or spirit?

Ephesians 4 describes what is going on in the lives of those who practice impurity.

> [17] *So this I say and solemnly testify in [the name of] the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the heathen (the Gentiles) do in their perverseness [in the folly, vanity, and emptiness of their souls and the futility] of their minds.*
> [18] *Their moral understanding is darkened and their reasoning is beclouded. [They are] alienated (estranged, self-banished) from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the ignorance (the want of knowledge and perception, the willful blindness) that is deep-seated in them, due to their hardness of heart [to the insensitiveness of their moral nature].*

[19] *In their spiritual apathy they have become callous and past feeling and reckless and have abandoned themselves [a prey] to unbridled sensuality, eager and greedy to indulge in every form of impurity [that their depraved desires may suggest and demand].*

Ephesians 4:17-19 AMP

Some of the primary reasons to avoid immorality are in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 below.

[13] *Food [is intended] for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will finally end [the functions of] both and bring them to nothing. The body is not intended for sexual immorality, but [is intended] for the Lord, and the Lord [is intended] for the body [to save, sanctify, and raise it again].* [14] *And God both raised the Lord to life and will also raise us up by His power.* [15] *Do you not see and know that your bodies are members (bodily parts) of Christ (the Messiah)? Am I therefore to take the parts of Christ and make [them] parts of a prostitute? Never! Never!* [16] *Or do you not know and realize that when a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? The two, it is written, shall become one flesh.* [17] *But the person who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.* [18] *Shun immorality and all sexual looseness [flee from impurity in thought, word, or deed]. Any other sin which a man commits is one outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.* [19] *Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God? You are not your own,* [20] *You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own]. So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body.*

1 Corinthians 6:13-20 AMP

After God created the world and made male and female, He saw that it was good. The primary reason God created our sexuality is for reproduction.

[31] *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.*

Genesis 1:31 CSB

[27] *So God created man in his own image;*
he created him in the image of God;
he created them male and female.
[28] *God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."*

Genesis 1:27-28 CSB

How can sexual immorality mess up God's good intentions?

Let's take a look at some of the things Scripture says about the following excuses for immoral behavior.

"Since everyone does it, it must be all right."

> [12] *There is a way that seems right to a person,*
> *but its end is the way to death.*
>
> **Proverbs 14:12 CSB**

"I just need to discover if this is right for me."

> [9] *Rejoice, young person, while you are young,*
> *and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.*
> *And walk in the ways of your heart*
> *and in the desire of your eyes;*
> *but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment.*
>
> **Ecclesiastes 11:9 CSB**

"As long as I don't hurt anybody, it's okay."

> [17] *"If someone sins and without knowing it violates any of the LORD's commands concerning anything prohibited, he is guilty, and he will bear his iniquity."*
>
> **Leviticus 5:17 CSB**

"Nobody will ever find out that I did it. Nobody will see."

> [13] *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
>
> **Hebrews 4:13 NIV84**

"I'll stop after this one time."

> [7] *Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap.*

> [8] *For he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and destruction, but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*
>
> **Galatians 6:7-8 AMP**

"I didn't really do anything; all I did was think about it."

> [28] *But I say to you that everyone who so much as looks at a woman with evil desire for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
>
> **Matthew 5:28 AMP**

"If it feels pleasurable, it must be good."

> [25] *Because he preferred to share the oppression [suffer the hardships] and bear the shame of the people of God rather than to have the fleeting enjoyment of a sinful life.*
>
> **Hebrews 11:25 AMP**

The Pathway to Purity

Let's not kid ourselves. Remaining sexually pure in both thought and action is difficult.

It is not impossible!

James 1 clearly defines the steps from temptation to sin.

> [14] *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.* [15] *Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*
>
> **James 1:13-15 NKJV**

We can learn more about the process that happens by looking at Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and the sin of Achan in Joshua 7. Notice the similarities.

The reasons behind Adam and Eve's sin.

> [6] *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*
>
> **Genesis 3:6 NKJV**

> [8] *And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*
>
> **Genesis 3:8 NKJV**

The reasons behind Achan's sin.

> [21] *When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."*
>
> **Joshua 7:21 NKJV**

What physical sense was stimulated?
What feeling resulted?
What act resulted?
What was done with the evidence?
Do you think every act of sin follows this pattern? Why or why not?

The world in which we live is filled with sexual images and opportunities. What do you think is the message sent out by the world about sex?

> *The struggle is always going to be there. Since the Garden of Eden, humanity has been infused with the temptation to sin. What complicates the issue is the devious nature of porn. Porn is secret and seductive. It feeds off the lust nature of wanting more because "the eyes will never be satisfied." When we are struggling with a moral challenge, and especially if we have failed the test, our nature is to run and hide. Adam and Eve did the same thing—they tried to hide from God…. They tried to hide their sin the same way porn is hidden, creating the dirty little secret. —Craig Gross and Mike Foster, Questions You Can't Ask Your Mama About Sex*

In light of God's desire for our purity, how does loving people and respecting their dignity apply to viewing pornography?

All of us have had different exposure and experience sexually, whether in real life or via pornography and the like. The Bible clearly assures us that there is no sin—even sexual sin—that God will not forgive. Based on the following Scripture, finish the statement, "No matter what I've done in the past, if I confess my sin and repent, God will forgive me because…"

> [14] *… how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God?*

Hebrews 9:14 CSB

[19] *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus —* [20] *he has inaugurated for us a new and living way through the curtain (that is, through his flesh) —* [21] *and since we have a great high priest over the house of God,* [22] *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water.* [23] *Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful.*

Hebrews 10:19-23 CSB

Try to forget the word cat. Can you do it? This is how some people try to avoid immorality. They think they can just make themselves not think about it. But it is impossible to eliminate a wrong thought from your mind unless you trust God to help you substitute the wrong thought with something good in its place.

God has given us a great and precious promise when facing temptation.

[13] *For no temptation (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 AMP

Paul said that we are to *put off* the old nature and *put on* the new nature (Ephesians 4:22-24). This passage illustrates the essential principle of substitution. What is one practical way you can apply the substitution principle in your struggle for purity?

What we can do to live a clean life that is pleasing to the Lord.

Pray to the Lord and ask Him for His help.

[10] *Create in me a clean heart, O God,*
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Do not choose the wrong path.

> [14] *Do not enter the path of the wicked,*
> *And do not walk in the way of evil.*
> [15] *Avoid it, do not travel on it;*
> *Turn away from it and pass on.*
>
> **Proverbs 4:14-15 NKJV**

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make no provision for the flesh.

> [14] *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*
>
> **Romans 13:14 NKJV**

Purify your soul by obeying the truth through the Spirit. Love one another fervently.

> [22] *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, …*
>
> **1 Peter 1:22 NKJV**

Let's take a look at Joseph and David to learn something about how each one dealt with the opportunity presented to them.

> [6] *So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,* [7] *and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"* [8] *But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care.* [9] *No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"* [10] *And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.* [11] *One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside.* [12] *She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.*
>
> **Genesis 39:6-12 NIV**

> [1] *In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.* [2] *One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,* [3] *and David sent someone to find out*

about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."
[4] Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

2 Samuel 11:1-4 NIV

What were the surrounding circumstances?
What were their respective attitudes?
What were their resulting actions?
Why do you think these two men responded in different ways to a similar situation?

A Biblical Perspective on Marriage

[18] Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." [19] Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. [21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. [22] The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. [23] The man said,
"This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."
[24] For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. [25] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:18-25 NASB95

- God originated marriage.
- The primary purpose for marriage is to leave, cleave, and become one flesh.

This is a manifestation in the natural of the spiritual relationship we have with Christ.

[14] Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? [15] Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NASB95

The principle God established is that believers only marry believers. The problems that happen when a believer marries an unbeliever are countless.

If you are already in this kind of marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 gives sound wisdom.

> [12] *But I (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.* [13] *Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce her husband.* [14] *For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.* [15] *But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace.* [16] *Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 7:12-16 CSB**

There are also reasons to consider when deciding to marry or not.

> [27] *Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.* [28] *However, if you do get married, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But such people will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 7:27-28 CSB**

> [32] *I want you to be without concerns. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord — how he may please the Lord.* [33] *But the married man is concerned about the things of the world — how he may please his wife —* [34] *and his interests are divided. The unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world — how she may please her husband.* [35] *I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is proper and so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 7:32-35 CSB**

Ephesians 5 is one of the ultimate passages on the marriage relationship in the Bible.

> [21] *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.* [22] *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.* [23] *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.* [24] *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.* [25] *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* [26] *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,* [27] *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and*

blameless. [28] In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— [30] for we are members of his body. [31] "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." [32] This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. [33] However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:21-33 NIV

What does God's desire for husbands illustrate?
What does God's desire for wives illustrate?

God's desire for His children as they live in the midst of a corrupt and depraved generation is found Philippians 2:14-16.

[14] Do all things without grumbling and faultfinding and complaining [against God] and questioning and doubting [among yourselves], [15] That you may show yourselves to be blameless and guileless, innocent and uncontaminated, children of God without blemish (faultless, unrebukable) in the midst of a crooked and wicked generation [spiritually perverted and perverse], among whom you are seen as bright lights (stars or beacons shining out clearly) in the [dark] world, [16] Holding out [to it] and offering [to all men] the Word of Life, so that in the day of Christ I may have something of which exultantly to rejoice and glory in that I did not run my race in vain or spend my labor to no purpose.

Philippians 2:14-16 AMP

Memory Verse

[1] DO NOT sharply censure or rebuke an older man, but entreat and plead with him as [you would with] a father. Treat younger men like brothers; 2 [Treat] older women like mothers [and] younger women like sisters, in all purity.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 AMP

In what areas of your life do you struggle with purity? Where do you think God is in your struggle with purity? Where would you like Him to be?

Points to Remember

- God has definite standards for purity of thoughts, speech, and conduct.
- The Scriptures give clear reasons for maintaining personal purity.
- God has provided principles and resources to help us in our struggle for purity.

- The Scriptures reveal God's perspective on purity in marriage.

Things to Ponder

In many cultures today, pornography and the media are attacking our purity. While the delivery systems are new, the struggle with sexual purity is an age-old struggle. The book of Proverbs (especially chapters 5-7) is packed with wisdom, warning, and advice about protecting our sexual purity. It warns us about the consequences and dangers of sexual sin. Soberly consider these consequences of sexual sin based on Proverbs 5-7 in *The Message*.

Consequences of Sexual Sins

Proverbs 5	Proverbs 6:20-35	Proverbs 7
like gravel in your mouth	will eat you alive	has you eating out of someone else's hand
a pain in your gut	like fire in your lap	will bewitch you
a wound in your heart	you'll pay for it	you are like a calf being led to a butcher shop
headed straight for hell	soul-destroying	you are like a stag lured into ambush
no clue about real life	self-destructive	you are like a bird flying into a net
squanders your life	ruins your reputation	makes you a victim
exploited by those who care nothing for you	detonates rage and revenge	like a halfway house to hell
ends in a life full of regrets	nothing you say will make it all right	
traps you in a dead end		
rewards you with death		

From that chapter, what are some of the ways you can avoid being trapped by sexual sin? How can a close friend help? See Ecclesiastes 4:9-11.