

# Purity – A Family Commitment

Introduction: (Scripture Reading: Proverbs 4:23-27)

1. As we discussed last year, Christians are not tourists enjoying a fun vacation but soldiers enlisted and engaged in a very real war. Are we battle ready? This war is fought on the battleground of our hearts and minds. Our purity is one of the areas the enemy loves to destroy. This doesn't just happen through direct attacks, but by keeping us surrounded by images and sounds of impurity and immorality. It seems you cannot even go to the store without being hit by it. It takes a real devotion to becoming and staying pure on our part. This must be a commitment we are serious about in our families
2. Solomon wisely wrote, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Are we doing this in our physical homes and our church homes?

## A. Pursuing Pure Hearts

1. Pure families are not coincidental. They exist because the people in the homes have a real commitment to personal purity. See how Moses emphasizes the way faithfulness in homes begins with individual faithfulness (Deuteronomy 6:1-7a)
  - a. Moses gets to the point of emphasizing how vital it is for **parents to teach** their children to love God and know God's laws. Not only that, but to create a legacy of spirituality that extends to three generations. But he didn't begin there. Moses began by emphasizing how each person must be devoted himself first.
  - b. We have a tendency to focus on others... To compare ourselves to others, point the finger at others, think of how others should do better, hold to a higher standard. Did you notice the pronoun Moses uses repeatedly here? **YOU! It's personal.**
  - c. Serving God, which includes purity, starts at the most intimate home of all... your own life. **If our own hearts & minds aren't pure, our families won't be pure either.** If we aren't committed to it ourselves, how can we expect others to be?
  - d. Moses emphasizes how this personal devotion flows from an awareness of who God is, reverence toward Him, and love for Him. It is demonstrated in how much care we put into doing everything God commands. Total obedience!
2. Solomon identifies our heart as our most important treasure that must be guarded with purposeful dedication (Proverbs 4:23-27)
  - a. Solomon identifies the heart as the **control center** of our beings. Everything about who we are comes from our heart. Someone once said, "Sow a thought, reap a deed. Sow a deed, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny." That's why our heart has to be protected. When we allow impure things inside, we are **letting the robber steal** what matters most!
  - b. See how Solomon gives us four steps to guarding our hearts. How do we stay pure?
    - 1) **Eradicate bad speech** → Jesus said evil speech comes from an evil heart. If we stop bad speech that doesn't immediately create purity, but it trains the heart that such ungodliness doesn't belong. Its molding the heart!

- 2) **Focus straight ahead** → We have a past behind us and voices beside us that would distract us from our goal of a pure heart. We almost have to go through this world like a horse with blinders on. Anything that would hinder our purity has no place in our line of sight!
- 3) **Consider your direction** → In our purity we ask self-examining questions. Where is my heart headed? What will these decisions do to my heart? How will these people or activities impact my heart? We need honesty!
- 4) **Stay the course** → Here is our commitment. Anything steps that aren't on the path of purity have to be avoided. Sometimes we think a step or two isn't too far off course and we are still generally going in the right direction... but a step or two is all we need to totally miss our target!
- c. A pure heart does not exist by coincidence or chance, it is created. Solomon wants his son to understand he has to work at purity. It doesn't just happen because we say we want it to happen or even because we read the Bible and attend church. Be purposeful... Identifying threats, building walls, pursue what is pure.
3. To pursue purity, Jesus says we must be willing to take extreme measures (**Matthew 5:27-30**)
- a. When Jesus began the SOTM, He declared that the pure in heart would be blessed because they would see God. Jesus emphasizes that purity in our lives would begin with a commitment to purity in our hearts. **The Jewish leaders got this backwards and as a result, they didn't even get the outside right!**
- b. Jesus speaks of one of the biggest purity struggles we have... LUST. You see, people thought that as long as they didn't act on their lust, committing physical adultery, they were okay. Jesus says that's not the line. The line is the heart. We cannot feel justified thinking, "As long as I don't act on it!" – This is true whether it is lust, murder (Jesus had already spoke on this), hatred, etc.
- c. The words of Jesus here sound extreme, they shock us. We wonder, "Can Jesus be serious? Jesus is teaching us that sin is just that **serious**... that the **eternal stakes** are just that important... that the **battle** will be that hard. His point for us to be willing to **do whatever it takes** to deal keep yourself pure! Get **radical** about it!
- d. What kind of person would do this? The person who is **sick and tired** of sin... who realizes the **terrible destruction** sin brings... who realizes the **high cost Jesus paid**... who realizes he is sick and tired of sinning... the person who feels the **grip** sin has on his heart... the person who **wants purity about all else!**
4. Pursuing personal purity of heart is about developing real holiness (**Romans 12:1-2**)
- a. This is about our devotion to God & the sanctification of our hearts & lives. In OT times, sacrifices had to be the first and the best. They were to be pure. We read about lambs without blemish. You are the sacrifice today! Be pure!
- b. But Paul says there's a struggle. We are surrounded by a world that is unholy. So every day we make choices. Will we be influenced by the world or will we transcend it? Blend in or stand out? Become like the world or like the Lord?
- c. So we have to constantly check ourselves and our lives. How much has the world infiltrated our thinking, our priorities, our values? Is our righteousness fading?
5. So how do we practically go about developing personal purity in our own heart?

- a. Remember the old adage... Garbage in, garbage out? That's true of our hearts. If we are feeding trash into our hearts, that is what we will become. What books do you enjoy reading? What social media are you drawn to? What motives? What sitcoms? Sin is not entertaining or funny... at least to those seeking purity
- b. Be willing to take extreme measures to be pure – What is purity worth to you?
- c. Limit your access – TV, internet, cell phones. Watch the alone time.
- d. Be purposeful about purity – You've got to remember that purity doesn't just happen, especially in our world. Take steps. Get involved in doing and taking in things that are pure. Stay focused. NOTHING comes in your life that destroys it!

## B. Pursuing Pure Children

1. To create spiritual success for years to come, Moses wanted the Israelite parents to understand how vital teaching and training their children was (**Deuteronomy 6:7-9, 20-25**)
  - a. Remember where he started... If parents are to raise children who are faithful to God, they must be faithful to God themselves first. So many times, children do not rise about the level of knowledge, spirituality, and faithfulness of their parents. What if your children are just as active and faithful? What if they are little less? It doesn't work to tell our kids to be Christians if we are only halfway living it!
  - b. Moses doesn't say, "Just make sure they make it to worship." They were to teach their children EVERY day. They were to teach their children EVERY place. They had to keep their eyes open for chances to show them God & apply His laws
  - c. Notice how they weren't just to teach them laws but instill in them an appreciation of God and what God had done for them. This was about helping their children trust God and fall in love with God. There'd be no faithfulness without this!
  - d. We are to be our children's teachers. This whole world is to be our classroom. The Bible is our textbook. The outcome is eternal! People say, "If you don't teach your children someone else will." – No! If you don't teach your children someone else already is. Too many times we wait too long, presuming upon innocence, all the while the world is filling their minds with sexual immorality!
2. Our job is more than giving information, it is about training our children (**Prov. 22:6; Eph 6:4**)
  - a. We are wrong when we just give them the "do's & don'ts" without practically helping them apply this knowledge in the real world. They lack the experience we have
  - b. The book of Proverbs illustrates this... It is not just about saying what's right and wrong, but making it practical. Solomon dealt common things like money, jobs, friends, hospitality, anger, lust, & more. He took God's law to every day life!
  - c. Our children are naïve. That's okay because they are young. But this also means their hearts and their decisions are very vulnerable. They don't understand sexual temptation like we do. They don't get the issues surrounding their dress, their dating habits, their social interactions, romantic dancing, and the like.
  - d. Parents... This means we must have uncomfortable conversations with our children. They won't want to listen. But they are facing more battles than we did!
  - e. It also means we will have to help make decisions for them when they don't really understand the magnitude of their actions. Some parents say, "We have to let

- them experience on their own, learn from their own mistakes.” Garbage! You wouldn’t let a child chase a ball across a highway. Maybe they won’t get hit!
3. One part of raising children to be pure is having real Biblical conversations about sexual morality and purity. Too many of our young people grow up with the impression that this is a topic that is taboo to talk about. It is seen as shameful and embarrassing. Some have even grown up understanding it is something dirty you get to do once you get married. Their understanding will be shaped by the world & not the Lord! **(Prv 6:20-24)**
  4. Parents must recognize tendencies in their children. When our children are little, all we see is that sweet and innocent baby... pure to the core. But over time, that little child grows up, matures, and becomes aware. If a child is 1 running around in a diaper is cute, if they are 16 it is not. Be aware, they are growing up. They need teaching, guidance, and yes even boundaries. And we can’t treat them all the same. **(Song of Solomon 8:8-9)**
  5. Let’s consider some practical things to help our children in their fight for purity **(Ecc. 11:9-10)**
    - a. Don’t accept immorality as part of growing up. Yes, we children will struggle to find their way. But don’t dismiss sinfulness as no big deal. Parents will say, “Kids will be kids, they have to sow their wild oats” – Sends message... sin is no big deal!
    - b. Don’t allow social activities to contaminate purity → It is never right to do wrong!
      - 1) Caught up in wanting them to be popular that we sacrifice their purity. It can be our own popularity we are pursuing vicariously through our children.
      - 2) It is easy to cave, especially in the area of modesty, in sporting events (cheerleading, track, soccer and volleyball)... or when we go to the beach or are in weddings. As if the activity makes immodesty okay.
      - 3) Going to school dances and proms become a problem. We send our young men into a dark room with an often very underdressed young woman, both looking and smelling their best, with music playing, bodies swaying and rubbing, and hands all over each other.
    - c. Don’t confuse trust with letting your guard down. We want to give children room to make their own choices. We want them to know we trust them, especially if this means openness with us. But are we opening the door for sexual immorality?
    - d. Be proactive when it comes their access to impurity. Cell phones today often provide unfiltered access to impurity. It’s not just straight up porn either. Even if you think you have it filtered, kids figure out a way around it. There are apps that circumvent filters. There are apps that sound harmless but are filled with filth. Kids know all about them too! You’ve got to talk often and openly about what is going on, let them know they are monitored, and make sure they know they can talk to you about it. It’s not just about what they do but what others send them → Not to mention movies, books, tv shows, etc.
    - e. We need to teach our kids WHY and not just WHAT. They need to see that God is holy and they are also holy. They need to see that their body is special and should be honored. They need to understand why God’s way of purity matter works. They need to hear that sex is wholesome and good, a gift of God when carried out God’s way... but outside of that is terribly damaging.

### C. Pursuing Pure Marriages

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1. Marriage is an incredible gift we have from God. While marriage is not always easy, it has many blessings. One of those blessings is the way it helps us fight for purity (**2 Cor. 7:1-5**)
  - a. Reading, "It is good not to touch a woman..." is confusing. There are at least two things happening. First, Paul does promote the value of staying single in this chapter because you have less burdens and can be free to serve the kingdom more. Also, there is a present distress... Great persecution met with natural disasters made life hard. Single life was simpler. But marriage was still good.
  - b. Paul says marriage helps us battle sexual temptation. A healthy physical relationship between a husband & wife strengthens self-control and lessens the temptation. If we don't get this part of the relationship right, we are setting ourselves or our spouse up for failure. Many affairs happen because needs aren't being met!
  - c. So because of this, a husband and a wife are not to deprive one another. In other words, they are to meet one another's sexual needs.
    - 1) They cannot use this part of their marriage as a threat or a weapon. Any withholding is by consent, for a set time, for renewed spiritual focus
    - 2) This part of the marriage must be purposefully maintained and well fed. Life will present many challenges. Without attention the flame fizzles out!
    - 3) Notice the husband is supposed to focus on the needs of his wife. The wife is to focus on the needs of her husband. When this happens, everyone's needs are met and the fire burns bright. So, study & learn each other!
  - d. I want to say something about separation here: Some read these words and think Paul is giving authority for a husband and a wife to get a separation as long as they don't remarry. This separation he speaks of is not the same thing. This was for a set time, it was temporary, & the couple was to give themselves to prayer and fasting during it. It doesn't even say they live apart, its just a fast from the sexual side of the relationship. Today's separations are wrong.
2. Rejoice with your spouse and be enraptured always in their love (**Proverbs 5:15-23**)
  - a. Solomon often warns his son about the dangers of adultery. His words focus on the powerful allure of a sinful woman. Solomon is real. The enticement is strong. She is good at sucking him in. He will be tempted to let her! It will be exciting, fun, & pleasurable... But it has a terrible consequence. It'll cost him everything!
  - b. How can he resist and stay pure? By rejoicing in the wife of his youth. He was to go to her to meet his physical needs, to let his desires be fulfilled by her.
  - c. Throughout the Bible it is easy to focus on the "Thou Shalt Nots..." – Here God is saying, "Thou Shalt!" and there's no restrictions or limitations here! But this isn't just permission, this is a command. This part of marriage matters!
  - d. The answer to avoiding the sinful woman was to be caught up in loving his wife.
3. In Solomon's love song there is an interesting phrase. The Shulamite woman is in love with a man. There were big threats to their devotion and love. Another man was trying to win her over... and he was rich and powerful. She had friends and people around her who tried to push her toward the other lover. So she says, "Catch the little foxes for us!" This sounds weird... but its not. Foxes are little creatures, but they can do great harm to a vineyard. The point is to identify ANY threat to their devotion, love, and intimacy and

get rid of it before it does great harm! If we are going to maintain purity in our marriage, and if the bedroom is to be what it should, we have to be fox trappers! (SoS 2:14-17)

4. Pursue spiritual intimacy in your marriage (I Peter 3:1-7)
  - a. Sometimes our intimacy in marriage is not what it ought to be because our number one intimacy isn't where it ought to be. God is our first priority, our first love.
  - b. **The marriage triangle:** The problem is the further we are from God, the further we become from one another. Draw closer to God, you'll draw closer to each other. So, our physical & emotional intimacy often suffers and we can't figure out why!
  - c. The physical side of our marriage relationship is vital in our battle for purity because it helps shield us from the temptation to immorality. It not only satisfies a sexual drive, it fulfills a longing soul. But for the Christian, this sexual intimacy isn't just about a physical desire, it the culmination and celebration of relationship that is first in the Lord. It flows from our spiritual intimacy we share together in God.
  - d. A married couple MUST devote time to be spiritually intimate with one another. If we don't, life will leave us spiritually exhausted and drained and we will have nothing left to give each other! We will grow distant. The spiritual fire in our intimacy will draw us closer and will fuel the physical intimacy!
5. Some practical things a husband & wife can do to help each other stay pure... (Hebrews 13:4)
  - a. First... they can love God more. This answer isn't a copout. The person your spouse needs to love the most is God. When that happens with both, you will draw closer to each other which will increase intimacy. Do you do spiritual things together outside of church? Husbands, do you pray with your wife?
  - b. Never stop chasing your spouse! When dating, we do all we can to make them happy & win their affection. At times in marriage we grow comfortable & complacent. Remember the excitement and passion? Chasing our spouse can rekindle this which will help each other's commitment and purity.
  - c. Pay attention to the bedroom. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7, the husband belongs to the wife and the wife belongs to the husband. Each owes it to the other to be meeting their needs. This means we have to actually know their needs and be selfless about meeting them. Keep the fires lit. We don't talk about this in church much, but the Bible is blunt and open about the bedroom. It matters!
  - d. Be open and honest with each other. Communication is vital. So many times when there's a breakdown in purity, there was a breakdown in communication first. Couples stop talking unless its about the kids and bills.
  - e. Guard your relationships with the opposite sex. There is a level of conversation and attention that we should only give and receive with our spouse. Most of the time, long before an affair happens, two people are giving and receiving something they have no business sharing. It may be sharing of intimate secrets, flirting, complaining about their spouse, and more... Give you spouse that care!
  - f. Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that will destroy your vineyard. These foxes may be sinful, but they may also not be inherently right or wrong.
    - 1) The foxes may be people who need to go... people who might encourage us to be unfaithful, or people who might open the door for infidelity

- 2) They may be some shows, movies, or books that attack our purity or commitment to marriage. Fill our minds with filth or weakens our concept of marriage commitment
- 3) Distractions – These are the things that take up too much of our time so we have too little time for each other... The same holds true for our energy and emotions. Too often we give our spouses what is left over... what they get is a spouse who is exhausted & whose mind is somewhere else. We have to be purposeful about making sure we have real valuable time with & for each other... Conversations, bedroom, dating, recreation, etc

#### D. Pursuing Pure Relationships

1. We need to begin this section with a renewed Biblical perspective. We have a responsibility to help keep each other pure (**Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25**)
  - a. When it comes to issues of purity, it's not uncommon to hear people say, "Why should I have change what I do, because you can't control your lust?" Some feel it's their right to do whatever they want. They don't want to be inconvenienced. This line of thinking is incredibly selfish and unloving!
  - b. We have a big responsibility to each other. Your purity is my business. My purity is your business. We can't demand to be left alone or leave each other alone
  - c. No man is an island. Life consists of relationships. Each day is a series of interactions with many people. Our physical family isn't our only family, we also have the church family. So, our commitment to purity must involve our relationships
  - d. This also means we not only are obligated to help each other maintain a pure heart but we must be receptive when other people seek to help us guard our heart.
2. When we play a role in another person sinning, we are guilty too (**Matthew 13:41-42; 18:7**).
  - a. Sure, someone may have a problem with impurity no matter what we do, but if we do things that bring the temptation in, we are not innocent.
  - b. When Jesus speaks of causes of sin, He is talking about people. This means we can be the reason why someone else sins. See the extreme language Jesus uses here... He is talking about Hell! Causing other people to sin can cost us our own soul!
  - c. People are going to be tempted. That is a fact of living in a world where sin is so prevalent. My determination must be if someone is tempted to sin, it won't be because of anything I have done!
  - d. Paul wrote to the churches at Rome and Corinth about not putting a stumbling block in front of each other. In this case, it was eating meat that some associated with idolatry, causing them to stumble in idolatry. Listen to what Paul says to these Christians about their personal responsibility (**Romans 14:13, 15, 21**) → If a person must refrain from eating certain meats if it caused a fellow Christian to violate their conscience, how much more must we refrain from things that cause them to struggle with impurity in heart! Don't destroy the work of Jesus!
3. It is our job to help each other be pure because we are supposed to bear one another's burdens (**Galatians 6:1-2**). The battle for purity is a battle against sin. We cannot afford to wait until a person is consumed to help. We need the encouragement, the warning, the support at all times. This is a relentless and unceasing battle we all are fighting!

4. Consider some practical ways in which we need to be careful about how we impact others:
  - a. Our speech – The bible condemns coarse jesting. It may not just be “locker room speech” or “guy talk” – It may be impurity. Your words may cause people to think impurely, even if it’s not already in their hearts. “Do not awaken love...”
  - b. Our dress – Clothing or the lack thereof, is not just your business. If we dress in ways that are sensual, sexual, provocative, revealing... we are not innocent. You can draw attention to your body. Lust is hard enough as it is... Don’t make it worse!
  - c. Our social media presence – What do you like? What do you share? What are you commenting on and encouraging? We can’t be promoting impure things!
  - d. Our proactive intervention – It’s not just about avoiding the bad... One of the best ways to combat impurity in hearts is to fill hearts with things that are good. We can speak good things, we can spend time doing good things. For everything good you fill someone’s heart with, that’s that much less space for sin to dwell!
  - e. Our judgements and opinions – Sometimes we actually discourage purity in others by putting down their personal convictions. We treat them as odd, different, because they draw a line where we don’t. When we do, we may be chipping away at their purity. Instead... honor them! (dresses, beach, movies)