

***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8)***

***“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.” (Proverbs 16:2)***

What is purity?

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What are the blessings that result from purity, and the consequences that result from impurity? (Mt 5:8; Ps 24:3-5; James 4:4-8; Ps 73; 2 Tim 2:21; Eph 5:5-6)

Blessings of purity	Consequences of impurity

How do we pursue purity of the heart? (Ps 73:28; Ps 119:9-11; 2 Tim 2:22; Eph 5:3-4, 6-10)

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What gives us the ability to pursue purity? (Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:3-4)

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Why do we often choose to pursue impurity instead? (James 1:14-15; Heb 11:25)

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This Hebrews passage describes the pleasures of sin as “fleeting” or temporary, which is one reason why people keep going back to sin. But here is the reality: “...the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” (1 Jn 2:17). As difficult as it may be to live as a Christian, the end reward is worth it, so let us *“lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Heb 12:1,2)

**Reflection:**

Take what we’ve discussed today about what it means to be pure, and consider what that should look like in your day to day life. How should it inform what you choose to do, or not do? How should it inform your decisions about who to have as friends, and how to interact with them? How should it affect how you treat your parents/husband/children? How should it inform what you choose to watch on TV/at the movies, or what you choose to read, or how you choose to dress? How should it affect your language? How should it affect your priorities? What in your life is pulling you away from Jesus? What is really going on in your heart?

These are hard questions, but important ones if we are truly interested in loving God with our whole being. Our answers may require us to take radical action and make difficult changes in our lives, but God is faithful, and He will honour those who honour Him. Purity comes to those who genuinely want it. Is that what your heart desires?

***“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”***  
***(James 4:4b-8)***

**Helpful Quotations**

“The heart is what you are, in the secrecy of your thought and feeling, when nobody knows but God. And what you are at the invisible root matters as much to God as what you are at the visible branch.”

“Jesus did not come into the world simply because we have some bad habits that need to be broken. He came into the world because we have such dirty hearts that need to be purified.”

“Purity of heart...is to will one thing, namely, full and total allegiance to God.”

(Above quotations taken from ***Blessed Are the Pure in Heart***, a sermon by John Piper)

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“We don’t hear the word purity much today except in descriptions of cleaning agents and snow-covered landscapes. We do hear the word spoken more frequently in the Christian community, but usually only as it applies to sexual purity. We have lost sight of all it means to be pure as God intended. So what does it mean? Purity is much more than moral behavior. Purity is first and foremost a matter of the heart. To be pure is to be single-minded. It is to have a single goal, a single focus, and a single purpose for ourselves and our lives. That is biblical purity, and from it springs moral behavior – the good we do with our bodies. At its core, purity is having a heart for the Lord that isn’t watered down or polluted by lesser things.” (pg 9)

“We women struggle, often with little success, to master particular sins – outward displays of impurity. Perhaps that’s because we have been trying to clean up our act while failing to see the impurity of our own heart. What are we to do? We can’t clean our own heart. Besides, the extent of its dirt and sin is beyond our comprehension. A heart is made pure as Christ washes and cleans it...becoming pure comes as we lean on the purity of Christ, on his perfect work for us. It comes as we lean on grace. It comes as we acknowledge our utter inability to become pure women and our need for Christ to make us clean and to purify us through and through. Putting Christ first takes care of everything else.” (pg 10)

“If we are pure in heart, we will be pure in body too.” (pg 11)

“Our hearts are divided. We want God, but we also want the comforts and pleasures that the world offers. The things of this life will ultimately never satisfy us because we were designed to find real fulfillment in God alone.” (pg 12)

“...most of us don’t turn our backs on Jesus and refuse to walk with him any longer; what we do instead is try to have it both ways. We get up in the morning and read our Bible and practice outward obedience, but we are pouring as much if not more of our time and energy into comfort, pleasure, success, and being loved by people. When it comes right down to it, we want God, but we want what everyone else has too.” (Pg 15)

"We get pure hearts by looking away from the world and up to God, and we see him in Scripture." (pg 15)

"If we believe there is something – anything – essential for our well-being besides God, we are double-minded." (pg 17)

"It is true that we cannot actually change ourselves; God changes us. He does so as we set our minds on him and his ways. But we don't set ourselves in this direction unless we believe that what we give up in this process is worth the cost. We can't have it both ways, but we are always going to try unless we are convinced that living for Christ is well worth whatever lesser things we lose along the way." (pg 19)

"...the reason we are so often defeated in our battle for purity is that we are torn in two directions. We love God and his ways, but we love other things equally, if not more, and because of that we seek God for what he will give us rather than just for himself." (pg 23)

"...growth in purity can begin only when we recognize that we can't become pure by ourselves." (pg 25)

"Refraining from physical intimacy until marriage, avoiding drunkenness, and paying our bills on time are certainly obedience to God, but those things can all be done with no love in our heart for him. Love for God is the essence of purity. We cannot be pure without love, but we can perform 'clean' actions without love. It is easy to blur the distinction and not even know it." (pg 28)

"What makes biblical living so hard is not only the fact that we have to contend with our sin nature, but also that the world around us tries to make impurity seem good and desirable." (pg 39)

"The biblical female role model is modest, godly, feminine, gently, kind, nurturing, and known for good works. So we have a choice to make: will we mold ourselves by society's standard or by the one set out in God's Word?

"We all face this choice, and we must select one path or the other, but all too often we try to walk both paths. We fear that not adopting just a bit of the world's way will make us odd, and we'll wind up at a disadvantage. The truth is that it *will* make us odd, which is why Jesus called it the 'narrow way'. But we have nothing to fear from it, because that narrow way leads to life. It's the broad way – the world's way – that we should fear, because it leads us away from all that is good. We don't have to conform – inwardly or outwardly – to the cultural standard, because in Christ we are given everything we need for real life.

"We are all tempted to compromise, to mix in a bit of worldliness alongside our pursuit of holiness. We do want to be godly, but we also want some of the benefits that come to those who live by the world's ideals. Is it really so bad? On the surface, adapting just a teeny bit of worldliness to our otherwise biblical framework seems relatively harmless because much of what's out there isn't actually sinful per se. But it is far from harmless. Not only is compromising with worldliness dishonoring to God, it is also destructive to us. The world's promises are lies." (pg39-40)

"We are called to wage our war for purity in a culture where biblical femininity is no longer valued. By today's standards, an ideal woman is independent, financially successful, sexually alluring and open-minded, and heavily invested in her outward appearance. This ideal is foisted upon us in school, in the workplace, and in grocery store checkout lines, and it has crept into the church and into our homes.

"By and large, we aren't encouraged to be biblically feminine. But since biblical femininity lies at the core of a woman's purity, we must fight for it. That is, for Christian women, an integral part of how we apply Paul's directive to 'put on the new self'. As we do, we have the privilege of demonstrating to a scornful world how women are made uniquely in God's image, and we will know what it means to be truly free." (pg49)

(Above quotations taken from ***Purity: A Godly Woman's Adornment***, by Lydia Brownback)

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"How many of us Christians hope God will guard us from calamity and misery, while every day we make small, seemingly inconsequential immoral choices that inch us toward bigger immoralities?" (pg 10)

"I've done it. So have you. To one degree or another, every sinner trades what they have – or could have had – for a lie. Sometimes the lies get bigger and the stakes get higher. We keep inching our lives toward destruction." (pg12)

"Purity is safe. Impurity is risky. Purity always helps us. Impurity always hurts us." (pg17)

"We will not consistently choose God's way until we come to understand that His way is *always* best for us." (pg 18)

"Obedience to His will and His way forms the underlying lattice for that rarest and most wonderful human condition – joy." (pg 19)

"When God calls on you to pursue purity, you are not being asked to do what will deprive you of joy. In fact, you are being called on to do what will bring you the greatest joy! To choose purity is to put yourself under God's blessing. To choose impurity is to put yourself under God's curse." (pg23)

"A smart traveler doesn't curse guardrails. He doesn't whine, 'That guardrail dented my fender!' He looks over the cliff, sees demolished autos, and thanks God for guardrails. God's guardrails are His moral laws. They stand between us and destruction. They are there not to punish or deprive us, but to protect us." (pg 28)

(Above quotations taken from ***The Purity Principle: God's Safeguards for Life's Dangerous Trails***, by Randy Alcorn)