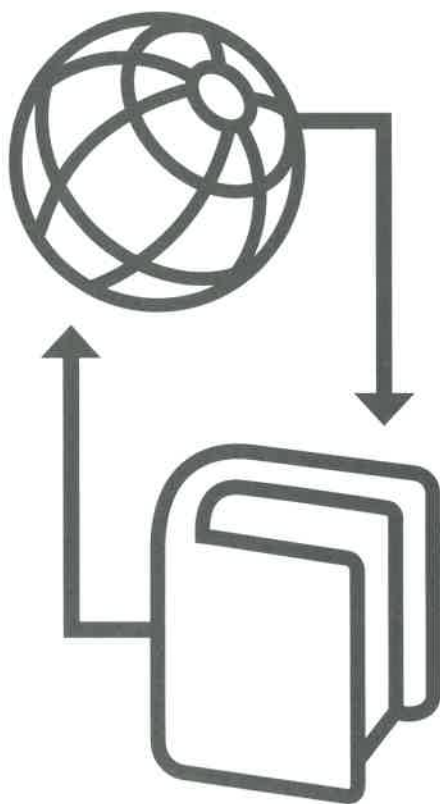




PURITY MATTERS

“Our bodies have been created not just by God. Our bodies have been created for God.” This culture “screams at every turn, ‘Please your body.’ The Bible shouts at every turn, ‘Please God.’”¹

If what the world offers is so appealing, why does purity matter? The fact is, the modern sexual revolution is making promises it can’t keep. Satan’s great lie has always been, “You can have all this—everything

you desire—and you will not surely die,” but this is a lie that leads to destruction (Prov. 14:12).

As parents, we want to be the ones who shape and influence the way that our children think about sex. The culture will constantly tell our kids that sex is everything. We need to be prepared to guide them toward the truth—not in a single conversation, but with ongoing conversations—about sex and sexuality and how God intends for both to fit into our lives.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Humans are embodied beings. We were created by God and we bear His image in the world. He also created both sex and sexuality. Sometimes we are tempted to think that these things are inherently bad, but that isn’t true. Even before the fall of man, we see a picture of Adam and Eve joined together as one flesh. From that scene in the garden, we see both sexes (Adam and Eve as male and female) and their sexuality (Adam and Eve united in sexual union) were all without sin. In fact, the author of Genesis comments positively, “Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame” (Gen. 2:25).

But because of the fall, sin affects every aspect of our existence—even our sexual desires. And because our sexual desires are often misdirected, we live in a world full of sexual sin. The culture lives by the premise that we can do “whatever, whenever” with the bodies the Lord gave us and that denying our desires is harmful and repressive. But Scripture plainly tells us “the body is not for sexual immorality but

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for the Lord” (1 Cor. 6:13). Because of sin, we often have desires that simply should not be obeyed (Rom. 7). We know that our desires are fleeting, so we need something better than desire to determine how we use our bodies. We need the Word of God.

The Bible’s teachings on sexual immorality are crystal clear:

Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

We will not live by a biblical sexual ethic unless we believe that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit because of the redemptive work of Christ.

As Christians, we want to take a redemptive view of sex. Through the gospel, God not only redeems our brokenness, but He also enables us to experience the intended goodness of our sexuality. We have to guard against two opposite errors: We must not be pulled in by the culture’s distorted view of sex, but we must also refuse to talk about sex as if it’s anything less than a God-given gift.

The apostle Paul said in Colossians,

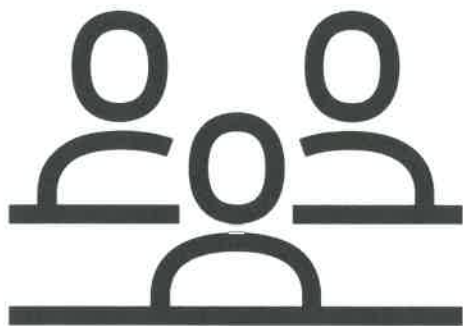
Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God’s wrath is coming upon the disobedient.

COLOSSIANS 3:5-6

Flee. Put to death. Paul was adamant that we must get as far away from these sins as possible because they are utterly destructive. Sexual immorality isn’t only physically and emotionally damaging; it is a desecration of God’s holy dwelling place—our body.

At the same time, the Bible nowhere indicates that sex or sexuality are in any way negative. We want our children to know that sex is a gift from God (that is harmful apart from His design). We want them to desire to experience the pleasures of sex as God intended, within the covenant of marriage. And we want to teach them to honor God with their bodies. How might a biblically faithful vision of sex help your children determine what they will do with their bodies?

This will obviously require additional conversation if one of your children does not know the Lord. This doesn’t mean we avoid talking about sexual morality with a child who has not yet placed their faith in Christ, but we cannot expect him or her to fully embrace a Christian sexual ethic without the direction of the Holy Spirit. If



your child is not a Christian, pray for your child's salvation and keep the gospel central in your conversations.

MORE THAN ABSTINENCE

When we talk about purity, our conversation usually defaults to what you should not do. Kids want to know, "How far is too far?" Asking this question is missing the point. It's flirting with sin, seeing how close we can get to the line without putting a toe over it. Paul said, "Flee." This is about honoring God with our bodies, not getting by on a technicality.

What we mean is that purity actually matters. A message that merely begs our kids to hang in there until the wedding day is horribly inadequate. In between your son or daughter's first inkling of sexual temptation and the enjoyment of holy, married sex, sin will constantly seek to create temptations that can severely damage the heart and soul of your child. The goal for our children is not just avoiding sexual activity; the goal is holiness.

We need to help our kids think through how sexual purity relates to other parts of their spiritual life. We also need to prepare

them for the severity of the sexual temptations they are likely to face. These are difficult challenges. Our sexual desires are good. They are given to us by God. But sin preys on these desires and uses them to draw us into sexual immorality. Parents, you can do so much to help your child fight against sexual temptation simply by being there for them and being willing to talk to them about these issues. Reject the temptation to be evasive with your child when talking about sexual temptation.

When kids fall into sexual sin, it produces shame which often leads to more sin. Open the conversation. Help them think about what they should—and should not—be doing in regard to sexual purity, while helping them pursue holiness in all areas of life.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Sexual sin is going to be a temptation for your child at some point. Experiencing this temptation is normal:

No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide a way out so that you may be able to bear it.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

But how do they handle temptation when it comes? Are they putting themselves in compromising situations? What boundaries should you put in place for your kids? Dean Inserra writes:

There is one purpose and one purpose only for what is known as "foreplay." ... The purpose

is that it prepares you for and leads you to sex. It was not designed to stop before a climax. It is absolutely what the Scriptures would designate as “sexual immorality.” . . . We’ve got to get serious about sexual sin. Sex, foreplay, nakedness, etc., are not for dating people, in love people, or mature people, but for married people. . . . God is not trying to keep you from something; He’s saving you from something. Let’s believe that He does truly know best.²

Adolescents need guidance. Physically, they may feel as if they are ready for sex, but cognitively they are not able to process all the possible consequences of their actions. Our rational ability to make moral decisions are not fully developed until early adulthood. Setting boundaries helps protect our kids from situations they are not emotionally or mentally ready for. As parents, it is our job to take the lead with our kids in setting these boundaries and determining what is appropriate.

LOVE AND GRACE

Educate your children in age-appropriate ways about sexuality. Begin early by giving young children a clear framework that our bodies belong to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:19). (Note: This is important in setting the stage to talk about sexual abuse later on.)

When you approach this subject in conversation, don’t feel like you have to make it an event. Talking with your kids about sex is awkward enough already. Make sure your kids know you are available to answer questions when they have them. They will have questions. You want to be the one they go to first.

Let your son or daughter know you’ve walked in their shoes. You don’t have to go into too many details. But let them know you understand and that they won’t be shamed for struggling with sin. Your kids will mess up. Be ready to offer abundant supplies of grace.

Establish an atmosphere of love in your home so your kids don’t ever feel like they need to search for it somewhere else. The world will tell them that sex is love. Show them Christ is the Source of true satisfaction. Help your kids feel love and acceptance through both your words and your actions.

At the end of the day, we must not only hand down a list of rules—we must help our children understand why purity matters. Purity matters because we belong to the Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Up to this point, how effective have you been at helping your child understand and live by a biblical view of sex?
2. How is purity more than just abstinence?
3. What kind of boundaries for sexual purity have you set for your child and how are you doing at helping them stay within those boundaries?
4. What one thing stood out to you from this article?