

“Blessed: Pure in Heart”

Matthew 5:1-8 (NIV)

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When our first son Ben was a baby, he had a pacifier. There are lots of other names: paci, binky, and I continue to hear of new ones. If Ben dropped his pacifier on the ground, we would run to the sink, wash it, sanitize it, clean it, and dry it before we put it back in his mouth.

Along came our second child Jenny. Now she is 3 years younger than her older brother. When she dropped the binky, we would quickly pick it up and, wipe it off and stick it in her mouth.

Then our youngest Andy was born 5 years after Jenny. Now when Andy dropped the pacifier, we would look and say, “Oh, he dropped the pacifier.” We would finish what we were doing, then go get the pacifier, take a look to see if it had any major grime on it, we might blow on it to get any major dirt off and then we would pop it in Andy’s mouth.

Oh, the progression of how things change with each child. Obviously the cleanest and most sanity, PURE way was what we did with our oldest. Now I don’t know if we got lazy, or just too busy, but indeed we changed.

When we first became a Christian, and we dropped our guard and sinned, did we not immediately ask God to forgive us and get us back on track? “We hurried to confess to God our sin and ask for forgiveness.” Then the longer we are in our Christian walk do we sometimes get slow to respond when we drop our “pacifier.” “Well, God, you know everybody does it, so I’ll eventually work on doing what You want me to do. Like the pacifier we just kind of blow it off and continue in our life. Have we become numb, even hardened to what God is actually calling us to?

Are you with me? XXXXX

If I were to make brownies. Now you may hear Sarah laughing at this. If I were to make brownies one of 2 things would have happened. #1 A miracle has happened. #2 Someone else has taken over my body. Anyway, let’s say brownies are to be made of the ingredients of sugar, flour, cocoa, butter and eggs. Is that pretty close????

However, if I decide to be mean and put a tablespoon of dirt in the cocoa would those brownies be fully brownies?? Actually, they would be brownies with dirt in them.

Let me transition: **⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**

Once that pacifier dropped and if I didn’t wash it and clean it, it was not pure. If I mixed in dirt with those brownies certainly, they would not be good. They were not free from contamination. They were impure.

How pure do we need to be to see God? What does Jesus mean when He says we are to be pure in heart?

In 1878, after years of experimentation with various formulations, James N. Gamble triumphantly reported that he and his associates had developed the formula for a white soap that was satisfactory in every respect. Appropriately enough, the product would be called P&G White Soap. But Harley Procter insisted the new white soap deserved a more distinctive name—one that people would remember when they went to the store.

Finally, after weeks of consideration and rejection of a variety of names, Mr. Procter had a sudden flash of inspiration while attending Sunday church service. The search for a name ended when the minister read from Psalms 45:8: "All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad." In October 1879, the first bar of Ivory was sold. **(image of Ivory soap)** (Proctor and Gamble site)

It is said that Ivory Soap is 99 and 44/100's pure, it says that on the packaging and on that image. That has been the tagline since 1882. Have you ever wondered if Ivory Soap is 99 and 44/100 pure, what is the other 56/100's?"

Ah, good question. What about us? How pure are we? Blessed are the pure in heart. I like the phrase on Ivory soap, "trusted for generations." Like our God, pure, holy, and trusted from generation to generation.

Can we even say we are as pure as Ivory? Also, one of the known things about Ivory is it floats. I guess that would mean it's heavenly. Pure/heavenly...that makes sense.

Oh, to be pure in heart. Blessed are the pure in heart. The Greek word for pure is "katharos" which is defined as a state of being and as an ongoing process of purification. (Shane Stanford, *The Eight Blessings*, Abingdon 2007). We are made clean and pure through Jesus and His love, forgiveness, and mercy. But you see that is ongoing process. Aren't you glad it is an ongoing process? Can I get a big amen to that?

The Greek word for heart is "Kardeeah" which of course is where we get the word cardio. We have to remember that in Jesus' day when heart is mentioned it is not talking about the muscle that pumps the blood. In that time period heart referred to not only what gives life and keeps life going, but also heart refers to the mind, will, emotions and inner self.

Here now is where we get to dig deeper. How do we go about having a pure, uncontaminated heart and make sure our purity of heart is demonstrated in our world? Honest reflection. When we talk about purity in the world, and living with a pure heart it is just about laughable. How do we do that? Can it be done?

I think there is a cry for purity in our world. I'm going to ask you to do something, I'm not sure I've ever asked before. I'm going to give you 6 scriptures. One for Monday through Saturday. I'm going to ask you to write down the scripture reference. I'm going to ask us to make a commitment each day to read the verse for that day. Verses about purity and a heart that is fully God's. Certainly, I can't force you to do it. But I encourage you to get pen/pencil and on the front of your bulletin under sermon notes to write these 6 scriptures.

We will go through them one at a time. Showing mercy begins here. This week may we reflect on these words. Perhaps even sharing with one another what that verse each day means. Have discussion among yourselves.

Monday:

Psalm 51:10 New International Version (NIV) ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

(Certainly, you can use any version; I have used several in this list.)

Context is important. Psalm 51 was written by David in the Old Testament. Create in me a pure heart. We would think---of course this would be something King David would have said. But let's look at Psalm 51. Psalm 51 was a personal prayer of David. It is known as one of the "Penitential Psalms." It is critical to note that the prophet Nathan had confronted David and David was convicted of his sins. The sin of committing adultery with Bathsheba and arranging for the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah. Obviously, those sins were not things of purity. David's heart must be made clean, made pure.

Tuesday:

Psalm 119:9-10 Common English Bible (CEB) ⁹ How can young people keep their paths pure? By guarding them according to what you've said. ¹⁰ I have sought you with all my heart. Don't let me stray from any of your commandments!

Our Student Ministries Department deals with purity and age appropriate topics in their settings. So, I'm not going to be detailed here except to say decisions that are made regarding intimacy and appropriate relations changes everything.

One of Craig Groeschell's quotes is: "You don't build a life of righteousness on a foundation of sin." Keep your foundation, your path pure.

And let me say that we could probably replace the words "young people" and put in our age bracket. Regardless of age purity is expected. It is expected because you seek God with all of your heart. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Don't stray from Jesus' commandments of Loving Him with All, and loving your neighbor as yourself.

Wednesday:

Ezekiel 36:26 Contemporary English Version (CEV) ²⁶ I will take away your stubborn heart and give you a new heart and a desire to be faithful. You will have only pure thoughts,

Anybody here stubborn? Don't answer that! We like to have things our way. We like to do things the way we want to do things. Our way or God's way? But God will give you a new heart!!!! Let us not become lukewarm---renew that desire to be faithful. And oh, to have pure thoughts. You see God knows your thoughts. Blessed are the pure in heart. Jesus said "out of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)

Thursday:

Proverbs 4:23 New International Version (NIV) ²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

We guard so many things in life. We have a passcode for our phone. We want to guard and protect it. We have security cameras to guard our possessions. We have doorbell cameras to see who is coming. We have apps where we can access that information on your phone. Are we guarding our heart as much as we are guarding ‘things?’

You can open some phones by using your finger print. One of the things I like about the phone I have is that it has face ID. I pick up the phone it recognizes my face. What if I picked it up and it said, “This is not who you say you are? Access denied. Your heart represents someone different than you portray.”

Jesus says this: Matthew 15:19 New International Version (NIV) ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

Even later on in this Beatitude chapter, Matthew chapter 5 Jesus says you have heard it said “don’t murder”, but I say whoever is angry in their heart is just as guilty. (Mt. 5:21-22).

A few verses later Jesus is talking about intimacy and unfaithfulness and He says, even if you and have impure thoughts it has the same effect on your heart as the act itself. (Mt. 5:27)

Beloved, it begins in the heart. Guard your heart.

Friday:

Ephesians 4:18 New Living Translation (NLT) ¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

Let’s not have hearts of darkness. Jesus is the light of the world. He came that you might have life and have it more abundantly. Let’s not wander far from the life God wants for us. Let us not harden our hearts. Blessed are the pure in heart.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship wrote this: “Who is pure in heart? Only those who have surrendered their hearts completely to Jesus that he may reign in them alone. Only those whose hearts are undefiled by their own evil--and by their own virtues too. The pure in heart have a child-like simplicity like Adam before the fall, innocent alike of good and evil: their hearts are not ruled by their conscience, but by the will of Jesus.”

The will of Jesus is to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

Saturday:

James 4:8 New Living Translation (NLT) ⁸ Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.

Oh, wash your hands with Ivory soap!!!! Purify your hearts. God wants you to love Him with all your heart...a divided heart is not what He wants. Your loyalty cannot be divided between God and the world.

Soren Kierkegaard lived in Denmark from 1813-1855. He wrote *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing* in order to prepare readers for confession of sin.

We will the Good and only the Good. We do not resist it, we do not will it for ulterior reasons, and we do not possess other motives which obscure it. "We center down upon one thing" (47).

Willing what is good, willing what God wills, willing to be gracious and kind, accepting God's forgiveness for guilt, willing to be obedient to God.

That is loyalty to God!!!

May our one thing be to please God. Oh, may we have a purity in heart that we may see God. That we will see God at work in our world. That we will see God and what He wants us to do in this world. That others will see God in us. And one day as we see God face to face, He will be able to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Is your heart clean? Is your heart pure? Is it centered in Christ? Do we see things the way Jesus does? Do we act as Jesus would? If we have a pure heart won't we want to be the representative of Christ in the world---so others also may see Jesus. Our we willing what God wills.

The following Benediction was given by Bishop Woodie White at the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1996 at Denver, Colorado.

"And now, may the Lord torment you. May the Lord keep before you the faces of the hungry, the lonely, the rejected and the despised.

May the Lord afflict you with pain for the hurt, the wounded, the oppressed, the abused, the victims of violence.

May God grace you with agony, a burning thirst for justice and righteousness.

May the Lord give you courage and strength and compassion to make ours a better world, to make your community a better community, to make your church a better church.

And may you do your best to make it so, and after you have done your best, may the Lord grant you peace."