WISDOM: LIVING SUCCESSFULLY IN A TREACHEROUS WORLD

Preserving Purity, Pt 1
The Importance of Sexual Purity

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”
—1 Corinthians 6:18

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.”
—1 Thessalonians 4:3

“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”
—Hebrews 13:4

2018:

• Every second, 28,258 users are watching pornography.
• $3,075.64 is spent on porn every second on the internet.
• 40 million Americans regularly visit porn sites.

2020:

• ~30% increase in use since March (in the U.S.)
“There is no topic in Proverbs to which more emphasis is given than that of sexual purity.”

—Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs*, 71

**Eight Principles from Proverbs to Help You Fight for Purity (Part 1)**
1. We fight for purity by keeping our ears attentive to instruction.

   • Sexual sin takes root and flourishes when a man listens to and believes lies:
     - “This is just normal human behavior.”
     - “This isn’t that bad.”
     - “I need sensual pleasure and entertainment to get my mind off my problems.”
     - “I can’t stop it even if I tried.”

Key Texts on Purity:

- 2:16-22
- 5:1-23
- 6:20-35
- 7:1-27
- 9:13-18
- 23:26-28
- 29:3
- 30:20
• Instead, we must listen to and believe truth.

• It is not coincidental that Solomon’s instructions on sexual purity almost always begin with a solemn call to incline one’s ear to instruction.

  ▪ Proverbs 2:1, 5, 10-11, 16 – “My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you . . . then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God . . . for wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul, discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you . . . to deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words.”

  ▪ Proverbs 5:1-3 – “My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; that you may observe discretion and your lips may reserve knowledge. For the lips of an adulteress . . .”

  ▪ 5:7-8 – “Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her . . .”
• **6:20-24** – “My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.”

• **7:1-5** – “My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. . . . That they may keep you from an adulteress, from the foreigner who flatters with her words.”

• **7:24-25** – “Now therefore, *my* sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths.”

• **23:26-27** – “Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit and an adulterous woman is a narrow well.”
• Men often ask the question: “Why can’t I obtain victory over lust?”

• Solomon gives an answer: “Wisdom can and will deliver you from this sin, but wisdom never comes passively.”

• The daily fight against temptation in any form—and sexual temptation in particular—will not be advanced in ignorance of or isolation from your intake of God’s Word.

• Psalm 119:9 – “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.”

“If I have given my heart to God and begun to run well, let me beware of the first symptoms of backsliding. Great heights or depths are reached in the spiritual life (as in engineering) by almost imperceptible inclines. Secret indulgence of forbidden desires, repeated neglects of duty,—these prepare the way for a rapid declension or a great fall. There is no such thing as the sudden collapse of a sound heart. When a collapse takes place, and the world is wondering, be sure that heart has been secretly eaten into by hidden sins long before its true state became known, like well-looking fruit preyed upon on the side of the next wall.”

— Pearson, *Counsels of the Wise King*, 1.118
• Victory in the battle against temptation is not won if vigilance is exercised only *at the moment* of temptation itself.

• Victory is won by a myriad of choices made *before* temptation ever arises.

• Holiness is the harvest of a life of small decisions.

• Make the right, small choices early to immerse yourself in God’s word.

• Determine to start, continue, and end your day with a consistent diet of doctrinal nourishment (reading, listening to sermons, memorizing Scripture, etc.).

2. We fight for purity by acknowledging the power of temptation.

The Christian should be able to state:

“This is our enemy; this is his way and progress, these are his advantages, thus has he prevailed, and thus he will do, if not prevented.”

—Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, 76
• Solomon does not shrink from warning his son about the alluring nature of sexual temptation. He speaks frankly about how it works.

- **2:16; 7:5** – “the adulteress who flatters with her words.”
- **5:3** – “the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and smoother than oil is her speech.”
- **6:24** – “the smooth tongue of the adulteress.”
- **6:25** – the seductress can “capture you with her eyelids.”
- **7:10** – the seductress meets the naïve man “dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.”

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**THE DEVICES OF SEXUAL TEMPTATION**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Charming Speech (Sound)</strong></th>
<th><strong>2:16; 5:3; 6:24; 7:5, 14-21</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Flaunted Beauty (Sight)</strong></td>
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“This famous town of Mansoul had five gates, in at which to come, out at which to go, and these were made likewise answerable to the walls, to wit, impregnable, and such as could never be opened nor forced but by the will and leave of those within. The names of the gates were these, Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feel-gate.”

—Bunyan, *Holy War*, 9

“If you want to overthrow a fortress, start by knocking out the watchman—if he can’t warn the others, you will easily breach the wall and carry the day. The flesh plies deceit to knock out the watchman of your soul: your mind.”

—Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within*, 55
• Do not be naïve. Understand how temptation affects you. In particular, understand how sexual temptation makes its appeal.

• While some temptations take aim more directly on your thinking (worry/anxiety), sexual temptation takes aim at your senses.

• Allow the senses to overrule the mind, and you will fall.

• Ultimately, recognize the strength of your enemy and the weakness of your defenses. Pretending that such temptation is powerless over you sets you up for failure.

“Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.”

—1 Corinthians 10:8-12
3. We fight for purity by contemplating the hideousness of sin.

“This is the art of deception: to make someone believe that things are other than they are, so that he will do something he would never otherwise do. This is the way your flesh makes you into the willing servant of sin.”

—Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within*, 54-55

- Solomon uses vivid, direct language to describe the temptress.
- **Proverbs 2:16-17** – “To deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words; that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.”

  1. She is the “*strange woman*” (a spiritual foreigner; alien to God’s ways).
  2. She “*leaves* the companion of her youth” (abandons the vow; covenant unfaithfulness).
  3. She “*forgets* the covenant of her God” (either the marriage covenant of Gen 2:24, or the Mosaic Covenant).
• **Proverbs 7:11-12** – “She is boisterous and rebellious, her feet do not remain at home; *she is* now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner.”

  (1) She is “boisterous” (crude, shameless, unruly).

  (2) She is “rebellious” (flagrant defiance).

  (3) She does not “remain at home” (rejects her God-given stewardship).

  (4) She “lurks by every corner” (devoid of inhibitions).

• **Proverbs 22:14** – “The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is cursed of the LORD will fall into it.”

• **23:27-28** – “For a harlot is a deep pit and an adulterous woman is a narrow well. Surely she lurks as a robber, and increases the faithless among men.”

• **30:20** – “This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’”

• **7:22-23** – “Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it *will cost him* his life.”
“If the mind fails to identify a sin as evil, wicked, vile, and bitter, the affections will not be safe from clinging to it, nor the will from giving consent. This is one side of the castle wall, the first line of defense: to keep in mind that every sin is a forsaking of God (Jeremiah 2:19), to never forget the polluting, corrupting, defiling power of sin—to be shaken to the core by how much God loathes sin.”

—Lundgaard, The Enemy Within, 63

“Wouldn’t it be nice if a man could put on a pair of glasses that would make immoral and immodest women look hideously ugly? Proverbs offers you such spiritual spectacles. Wisdom enables you to look beyond the Strange Woman’s outward beauty and seductiveness to see the ugliness of her character.”

—Newheiser, Opening up Proverbs
• In some cases, sin promotes itself as *attractive*, and men are lured to it by its *deceitful, superficial beauty*.

• In other cases, sin promotes itself as a *minor indiscretion*—an insignificant misstep that is just a normal part of being human (“to err is to be human”), one that will not bring adverse consequences.

• But sin deceives and devours. Once it has conquered it removes the mask to reveal its ugliness and scoff in the face of the sinner as he begins to taste the bitter cup of sin’s consequences.

• Crucial in the battle is to see through the mask early, to be repulsed by its hideousness, and to look into the future to recognize its potential harm.

“There really is no small sin. Sin is not small in God’s eyes, and it is a lie of Satan that a little sin doesn’t matter. Any sin that is tolerated is a serious matter to God because it always leads to more sin. Lust follows a progression of entanglement. It does not become a life-dominating sin overnight, but it will happen, and in a much shorter time than your flesh wants you to believe.”

~ Stuart Scott, *Exemplary Husband*, 287
“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

—Matthew 5:27-28 (citing Exod 20:14)

“Innumerable ways there are whereby sin diverts the mind from a right and due apprehension of its guilt.”

—Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, 97
4. We fight for purity by remembering the consequences of failure.

- The danger of sexual sin is its power to *dull the mind* to its consequences.

- Once again, Solomon points to the law of *cause-and-effect*.

- **Proverbs 2:18-19** – “For her house sinks down to death and her tracks *lead* to the dead; none who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life.”

- **5:3-6** – “For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech. But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know *it*.”
  - “Wormwood” – poisonous if ingested
  - “Two-edged sword” – cuts on both sides, deadly
  - “Her feet . . . to death/Sheol” – mutually assured destruction
• **5:20-23** – “For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths. His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.”

  - Two attributes of God should be the death knell for sexual sin:
    1. God is *omnipresent*: “the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths” (v. 21; cf. 15:3).
    2. God is *holy*: “he will be held with the cords of his sin” (vv. 22).

• **6:26-29** – “For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.”

• **6:32-35** – “The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out. For jealousy enrages a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not accept any ransom, nor will he be satisfied though you give many gifts.”
• **7:22-23, 26-27** – “Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life. . . . For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.”

• **9:18** – Of the bedroom of the temptress: “But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.”

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“One of the most destructive sins for the husband and the family is that of sexual lust. This sin opens the door to all kinds of degradation. . . . This sin can and will destroy a man’s life and his marriage relationship as no other.”

—Scott, Exemplary Husband, 283

- We cannot afford to postpone the contemplation of the consequences of sexual sin until after the sin.

- And when we stumble in the early stages, we must not move too quickly from confession of these early sins to rejoicing in forgiveness. The pangs of the guilty conscience must not be muted too quickly, lest we fail to learn the pain of being burned by sin.

“We are to find as much bitterness in weeping for sin as we ever found sweetness in committing it.”

—Thomas Watson, Doctrine of Repentance
Eight Principles from Proverbs to Help You Fight for Purity (Part 1)

PART ONE:

1. Keep your ears attentive to instruction.
2. Acknowledge the power of temptation.
3. Contemplate the hideousness of sin.
4. Remember the consequences of failure.

Recommended Resources: On Sin and Temptation


Recommended Resources: On Lust and Pornography
