

Sexual Purity

Reading & Sharing

What does the Bible say about sexual purity in general, and sex within the realm of marriage?

The Bible shows us that we must raise the bar of sexual purity beyond what the world thinks.

1. It is far higher than the world thinks it is - not even our thoughts can be impure.
2. There is grace to help us reach for it.
3. Our families, wives and children need us to excel in this area
4. The world needs us to shine in this area.

God's Ideal

What does God want in this area?

EPHESIANS 5:1-4 *New International Version (NIV)*

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Note that sexual immorality is as bad as impurity, greed, obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking. It is not murder or idolatry, but neither is it of no consequence.

We sometimes place enormous shame on men who sin sexually, but it is not alone in things we are to avoid. A coarse joke or foolish talk is also to be avoided.

The word translated as sexual immorality is *porneia*, it is the root word behind pornography and has various meanings, including:

- Adultery
- Prostitution
- Homosexuality
- Sexual relations of single unmarried people
- Sexual intercourse with close relatives
- Sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman

In the New Testament God makes it clear that our motivations and heart attitudes are as much being judged as our actions.

MATTHEW 5:27-30 *New International Version (NIV)*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Lustfully

The word “lustfully” is translated as “covet” or “desire” elsewhere.

Being attracted to a beautiful woman is not sinful. But feeding your sexual appetite by looking and thinking about one is sexually immoral.

Just like junk food is bad for you physically, so this sort of junk sex is bad for you spiritually.

Junk Sex

What do we mean by “junk sex”?

Most men are sexually simple.

Basic visual cues are all most guys need to feel sexual arousal. This may be why research finds men tend to objectify women and be attracted to their individual parts.

Most men casually assess the women around them, and in the privacy of their mind introduce sexual fantasies and judgements, mentally undressing them. This is what we mean by “junk sex”.

This sort of snacking means we can have dozens of immoral sexual thoughts between breakfast and dinner – without appearing to have done anything wrong. Research shows real, and serious, consequences for our relationships, including:

- Less satisfied with the attractiveness of our spouse.
- Lack of empathy towards women in general.
- Persistent sexual thoughts even when not wanted.

Women are usually more complicated.

Women tend to respond to a much more diverse range of cues, including social status, personality, commitment, authenticity, confidence, smell, height, etc. Increasingly we see it becoming an issue with them as well, especially as pornography starts to target women more.

How much of a challenge do you find it to resist junk sex?

Is there anything that has helped you avoid junk sex?

Sexual immorality can also go far beyond junk sex:

- Watching sexy movies.
- Flirting at work.
- Porn addiction.
- Masturbation addiction.
- Adulterous affairs.
- Visiting prostitutes.

These all go well beyond the bounds that Christ has called us to. God's desire is for us to live in victory over these issues – no man is alone and there are many ways you can get help.

Real Men Healthy Sexuality is a course that is all about helping men live in victory over junk sex, pornography, masturbation and other sexual sins. If you want help in this area discuss it with your connect group leader or a member of your local Real Men team.

Sex Matters

An obvious question given men's biological weakness to visual cues and the Bible's high standard is to ask why God gave men and women sex in the first place?

Sex has several very positive characteristics and is in fact celebrated in the Bible when it comes within the bounds of marriage. It is intended to:

1. Bring joy to each other
2. Heal us, physically and emotionally
3. Comfort us
4. Bond spouses to one another
5. Promote intimacy; physical, emotional and spiritual
6. Create Godly children
7. Show us God's goodness
8. Help us understand God as our Father
9. Demonstrate Biblical concepts to us
10. Be a way God can disciple us

What do you think about the reasons mentioned above?

In summary sex is good, in fact Paul points out that married couples owe it to each other to avoid sexual immorality.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-7 *New Testament for Everyone (NTE)*

Let me now turn to the matters you wrote about. 'It is good for a man to have no sexual contact with a woman.' Well, yes; but the temptation to immorality means that every man should maintain sexual relations with his own wife, and every woman with her own husband. The man should give his wife her marital rights, and the woman should do the same for her husband. The woman isn't in charge of her own body; her husband is. In the same way, the man isn't in charge of his own body; his wife is. Don't deny one another, except perhaps by agreement for a period of time, so that you may have more space for prayer. But then come together again, in case the satan might tempt you because of your weakness of will.

I'm not saying this as a command, but as a concession. I would be happy to see everyone be in the same situation as myself. But each person has his or her own gift from God, one this way, another that way.

This passage must be read in context with Paul's other advice, that we should treat our wives as Christ treated the church and that we do all this out of love. It can create great tension when one partner's sex drive is vastly different to the other. However, it can be helpful to start with an agreement that if scripture tells us to not deny each other then we should try to avoid doing that.

Gracious Love

It is worth revisiting the great love passage from 1 Corinthians.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 *New International Version (NIV)*

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

God always intended sex to be in the context of a loving marriage relationship, it must be done with love.

Bring those great attitudes of love to bear to your sex life too!

Being Pure

Sexual purity is keeping your heart, mind and body from sexual sin.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 *New International Version (NIV)*

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

The only righteous expression of sexuality is within the covenant relationship of marriage. That public profession of commitment and love protects and guards your hearts, and lets sex enhance your marriage relationship.

If you are single, purity means disciplining yourself and not giving into temptation – the less you give in, the easier it is to resist!

Bringing a pure sexuality into marriage is the best present you can give your bride.

Discussion Starters

If you are married, what attitudes did you have towards sex before you got married?
What about afterward?

If you are single, has any of this challenged your thinking about sex?

At Home Work

There is some work for you to do before the next meeting:

- Read and meditate on the scriptures we have covered in this topic.
- If you are married, read and discuss with your spouse the reasons why God has given us sex.
- If you have an issue with junk sex, then try bouncing your eyes away and thinking of a verse of scripture or a good thing.

Prayer

At the end of each topic we leave a space for prayer. It is important to remember that we are asking God to show us what we should do with this truth.

Discover More

There are some great books on Christian sexuality to help you understand and discipline this area of your life.

Every Man's Battle, Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker

Valiant Man, Allan Meyer

Dating Delilah, Judah Smith

Scripture References

Some scriptures to dig deeper into this area.

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But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Jesus makes it clear that our motivations and heart attitudes are as much being judged as our actions. Note this next passage is using hyperbole to indicate we should try as hard as we can to avoid sexual temptation – it is not an instruction to harm ourselves!

MATTHEW 5:27-30 *New International Version (NIV)*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

In Corinthians Paul is even more explicit about what this means, addressing prostitution because it was such a part of Corinthian life because of the temple of Aphrodite there.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20 *New International Version (NIV)*

“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

In marriage we are also to make sex available for our spouse. Although this is not a right to be abused – it is to come out of love and respect for each other.

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I’m not saying this as a command, but as a concession. I would be happy to see everyone be in the same situation as myself. But each person has his or her own gift from God, one this way, another that way.

An entire book of the Bible is devoted to erotic love, the Song of Solomon. The love it describes is very much sexual and passionate, so we know God thinks sex is good (he invented it!).

SONG OF SOLOMON 7:8-9 *New International Version - UK (NIVUK)*

I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit.’

May your breasts be like clusters of grapes on the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine.

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May the wine go straight to my beloved, flowing gently over lips and teeth.

Unconditional love is also important for a healthy sexual relationship.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 *New International Version (NIV)*

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Purity is all about how we act, and how we think. Even to the attitudes of our heart.

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Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.
