

# **Sexual Purity: Fighting Against the Devastating Desire of Lust**

*This document contains notes for a Bible study led by Pastor Steve Sherman with the men of Christian Fellowship Church. The thoughts presented here are not fully developed in written form. God-willing, this document will be revised in the future in order to develop the thoughts more fully.*

## **The Title**

**“Sexual Purity”** – Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt 5:8)

**“the Devastating Desire of Lust”** – If allowed to take its course, lust will devastate & destroy your heart & life. Lust corrodes from the inside out. So at first, the destruction goes unnoticed. Yet as it destroys, one compromise at a time, it gathers power and momentum. It causes your heart to grow numb toward God. Then it impairs your relationships with people. By the time it shows its ugly head, it often has become a life-sucking, life-dominating monster inside you.

**“Fighting Against”** – Lust is so aggressive that we must fight against it as soldiers of Christ. To not fight is to accept defeat. This battle has cosmic proportions, for it is part of a war against Satan, who is viciously fighting to divert our affections away from our glorious God and Savior.

## **The Appropriateness of Discussing Sexuality**

Al Mohler wrote in an address titled, “The Seduction of Pornography and the Integrity of Christian Marriage”:

Christians have no right to be embarrassed when it comes to talking about sex and sexuality. An unhealthy reticence or embarrassment in dealing with these issues is a form of disrespect to God’s creation. Whatever God made is good, and every good thing God made has an intended purpose that ultimately reveals His own glory. When conservative Christians respond to sex with ambivalence or embarrassment, we slander the goodness of God and hide God’s glory which is intended to be revealed in the right use of creation’s gifts.

## **The Reason for This Topic**

Many Christian men struggle intensely against lust. Some live much of their Christian lives dominated by lust. This Bible study has been prepared so that, by God’s grace, Christian men may find consistent victory in their fight against lust and thereby be conformed further into the image of Christ, to the end that God would be glorified.

## Outline

- I. The Inescapable Nature of this Fight
- II. The Hope for this Fight
- III. Effects of 21<sup>st</sup> century American Society upon our Fight
- IV. Definitions of Sexual Purity & Impurity
- V. God's View of Sexual Impurity
- VI. Fighting by Means of Radical Amputation
- VII. Fighting by Means of Mind Renewal
- VIII. Fighting by Means of Replacement
- IX. Practical Tips for Today's Fight
- X. Scriptures for Further Study
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### I. The Inescapable Nature of this Fight

It has been said that 99% of Christian men acknowledge struggling with lust, and the other 1% are lying. You are not unusual for struggling with this.

### II. The Hope for this Fight

Though we will not achieve perfection this side of heaven, the theme of every Christian man's struggle with lust should and can be victory.

**1 Thess 4:7** "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." (NIV)

**1 Thess 5:24** "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."

It is alarming that the percentage of Christian men that look at internet pornography is quite high. This high percentage is not inevitable and ought not to be!

### III. Effects of 21<sup>st</sup> century American Society upon our Fight

#### The culture promotes sexual impurity

A radical change has happened in America in the last several decades. Our culture has become obsessed with sex and sex appeal. We constantly come across images that beckon our lusts—in shop windows in the mall, in the grocery store checkout line, in how many women dress, in TV commercials, in movies, and on the internet. For the most part, men are enslaved to lust (Tit 3:3). Marketing professionals understand this, and capitalize upon it. Many women understand this, and seek to be the object of men's lust. So we are bombarded with images designed to draw out our lust.

Yet sexual impurity is still not promoted here as much as it was when the Bible was written. When the Old Testament was written, Israel's neighbors were so obsessed with sexual immorality that it was commonly used in the worship of their false gods. For the most part, these wicked cultures rubbed off onto the unbelieving Israelites. When the New Testament was written, Corinth and other cities that received the Epistles were more entangled in sexual immorality than our culture. The infinite power of God was sufficient to deliver believers when the Bible was written, and today as well!

### The technology provides for sexual impurity

With the internet, men & boys have access to a huge array of images that can provide for their lusts, both images that our culture considers pornography, and other images that can be just as deadly. These images can be accessed instantaneously, mostly for free, and without anyone else knowing. This presents a huge challenge to Christian men that previous generations did not face.

### The church has weakened its defenses against sexual impurity

The early church functioned, thought, and lived as a body, as seen in Acts and prescribed in the epistles. But the body life of the church has been greatly weakened as the church has adopted the individualistic mindset of America and the West. By living the Christian life individually, we deprive ourselves of the help provided by Christ's hands, ears, and eyes (1 Cor 12:12-27).

## **IV. Definitions of Sexual Purity & Impurity**

If we are going to fight for sexual purity, against sexual impurity, we must know what to fight for and what to fight against.

### Sexual purity

God created man and woman as sexual beings with the capacity for sexual pleasure and with unique sex drives. Man's sex drive is greatly stimulated by sight. Samson's life demonstrates this:

**Judg 14:1-3** Then Samson went down to Timnah and **saw** a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup> So he came back and told his father and mother, "I **saw** a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." <sup>3</sup> Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she **looks good to me.**"

**Judg 16:1** Now Samson went to Gaza and **saw** a harlot there, and went in to her.

God's design is that man and woman would exercise their sexuality and experience sexual pleasure in one and only context—the marriage relationship (Gen 2:24; Prov 5:15-20; 1 Cor 7:3-5).

**Definition:** To be sexually pure is to receive sexual pleasure & satisfaction only from your spouse, and to give sexual pleasure & satisfaction only to your spouse. For singles this means abstaining entirely from sexual pleasure & satisfaction as long as God keeps you single, and pursuing the greatest kind of pleasure & satisfaction—that of knowing God.

This definition comes partly out of Proverbs 5:15-20. Verse 19 instructs, "Let **her** [your wife's] breasts satisfy you at **all** times; be exhilarated **always** with **her** love." Notice the exclusivity of the wording. Notice also what is to be exclusive—not simply intercourse, but the satisfaction and exhilaration (pleasure).

### Sexual impurity

**Definition:** To be sexually impure is to receive sexual pleasure or satisfaction from any source other than your spouse, or to give sexual pleasure or satisfaction to anyone other than your spouse.

Proverbs 5:20 asks a rhetorical question, “Why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner [NIV: of another man’s wife]?” The context indicates the answer: “There is absolutely no reason! You definitely should not!”

**Prov 6:25** Do not desire her beauty [the beauty of anyone other than your spouse] in your heart...

**Matt 5:27-28** “You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';<sup>28</sup> 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.”

- Because of this link between adultery and lust, generally what Scripture says of adultery is also true of lust.

**Rom 13:13-14** “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.<sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.”

- Note the words, “no provision.” Any lust is impure, no matter how small or short-lived. Even any step toward lust is impure.

**Eph 5:3** “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;”

- **NIV** “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.”

## Is masturbation impure?

Masturbation is impure for five reasons:

1. Masturbation is impure according to the definition given above of sexual impurity, based on Proverbs 5:15-20
2. Masturbation is a type of sensuality, which is clearly prohibited in the Bible<sup>1</sup>
3. Masturbation is having sex with yourself, and thus is sex outside of marriage

An essential part of sex, as God designed it, is seeking to give pleasure to your spouse. Sex is a loving act of giving (and receiving), not taking (1 Cor 7:3-5). Masturbation is an attempt to have the pleasure without the giving. It is a selfish act rather than a loving act. It is gratifying the flesh (Rom 14:14). It is a perversion of something good.

4. Masturbation is closely linked with lust

Lust and masturbation encourage one another.

5. Masturbation is something that masters

**1 Cor 6:12** “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

## Summary

Sexual impurity includes sexual intercourse outside of marriage, sensuality, masturbation, lust, and anything else along these lines.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 7:22 lists sensuality as an evil thing that proceeds from within and defiles the man. Fornications and adulteries are also included in the list. Romans 13:13-14 forbids sensuality and links it with both “sexual promiscuity” and lusts of the flesh. 2 Corinthians 12:21 lists sensuality as a sin that needs to be repented of. The other sins in the list are “impurity” and “immorality.” Galatians 5:19 lists sensuality as a deed of the flesh. It is the third item in the list, following “immorality” and “impurity.” Ephesians 4:19 says the Gentiles who do not know God “have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.” 1 Peter 4:3 teaches believers that they are no longer to pursue “a course of sensuality, lusts,” and other things. 2 Peter 2:7 says Lot was “oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men,” the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Greek word for sensuality also occurs in 2 Pet 2:2, 18; Jude 4.

Other translations frequently use the words “debauchery” (NIV), “lewdness” (NKJV), and “lasciviousness/wantonness” (KJV) instead of “sensuality,” as the NASB does.

The Greek word for sensuality is defined in a standard Greek lexicon as, “licentiousness, debauchery, sensuality.” Webster’s English dictionary defines “licentious” as “morally unrestrained, esp. in sexual activity.” It defines “debauchery” as “extreme indulgence of one’s appetites, esp. for sensual pleasure.” It defines “sensuality” as “fondness for or indulgence in bodily or sexual pleasures.”

## V. God's View of Sexual Impurity

If we are going to fight against sexual impurity, we must view it as God views it.

1 Corinthians 6:13-20

- Sexual impurity misuses the body (13)
- Sexual impurity brings Christ into our sin (15-17)
- Sexual impurity is sin against a temple of the Holy Spirit (18-19a)
- Sexual impurity misuses something that belongs God (19b-20)

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

- “His own vessel” (4) refers to one’s own body.
- Sexual immorality and lust defraud other people, referred to as our “brother” (6):
  - Anyone we lust after, even if we lust after their picture
  - Anyone with whom we perform sexual acts outside marriage, and their spouse as well
  - Our spouse (discussed later on in this study)
- Sexual impurity rebels against God’s purpose in calling us (7)
- Sexual impurity without repentance rejects God (8)

This passage in Thessalonians, and most other passages in the Bible on sexual purity, strongly warn of God’s judgment and punishment of those who live impure lives:

- **1 Thess 4:6** ...because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*.
- **Prov 5:20-23** Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? <sup>21</sup> For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. <sup>22</sup> The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. <sup>23</sup> He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. (NIV)
- **Matt 5:29-30** "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell."
- **Eph 5:3-5** But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you....For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
- Hebrews 13:4

These warnings are explicitly addressed to New Covenant believers (Thessalonians, Ephesians, Hebrews), and the Matthew passage is addressed to Jesus’ disciples. Yet the warnings are quite severe, including exclusion from the kingdom of God (Ephesians) and being thrown into hell (Matthew). Though the Bible teaches the eternal security of the believer, these passages are not concerned about comforting the impure believer with the doctrine of eternal security. The passages are strong and forceful, intended to instill in believers a sense of the seriousness of impurity and a fear of the Lord that will keep them from impurity. A professing believer who continues in impurity without genuine repentance, can have no assurance of salvation, and should expect the discipline of the Lord (Heb 12:4-11). If he is truly saved, he will heed the warnings and any discipline, and will repent, giving evidence of his salvation.

Hebrews 13:4

Any sexual impurity dishonor's our marriage and defiles our marriage bed. It is taking the affection that we vowed to our wife alone, and giving it to another. It is a horrible offense against our wife. It has destructive effects upon all aspects of our marriage, including our sexual relationship with our wife.

Therefore, any habit of sexual impurity must be confessed to our wife as sin against her, as well as any instance of sexual impurity she learns of. When we do so, we must realize it will not be easy for her to forgive.

John MacArthur, in a message titled, "Lessons from a Modern-Day Moral Shipwreck," addressed young men with these words:

When you get married...the greatest gift you can give [your bride] is your spiritual integrity, because your relationship to her is going to be built upon two things. She has to trust you. And only when she trusts you will she respect you. And only when she trusts you and respects you will she really love you. And only when she loves you will she truly honor you. And it all starts with trust. And if you appear to be something that you are not and she finds out, once trust is shattered even at that level, it is very, very difficult to get it back ever. Be trustworthy in the smallest things, the littlest things, the tiniest details. Because...if you ever plant in the mind of your partner that you may not be trustworthy, then suspicion dominates the relationship. Suspicion destroys respect and kills love and eliminates honor. So we have every reason in spiritual leadership to live open lives.

*Practical advice:* Ask your wife to explain to you the emotions she goes through when she learns that you have lusted after other women. Ask her what emotions a woman would go through if her beloved husband committed adultery. If you love her, knowing what your impurity would do to her will greatly strengthen your resistance to temptation.

## VI. Fighting by Means of Radical Amputation

Scripture indicates that we must take immediate, painful, drastic action against temptation to sexual impurity.

**1 Cor 6:18** "Flee immorality..."

**1 Thess 4:3** "...abstain from sexual immorality"

- The Greek word translated "abstain" literally means, "distance yourself"

1 Peter 4:1-3

- Compare **Heb 12:1-4** "...let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us..."<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. <sup>4</sup> You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;"

**Matt 5:28-30** "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. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell."

- The "right eye" and the "right hand" are the best eye and the best hand.

**The Principle:** If you have a habit of sexual impurity, you must, for the time being, rid your life of any unnecessary thing that encourages or feeds your impurity.

**Examples:** You may need to amputate one or more of the following, depending on your situation: internet access, TV, movies, being alone in your house, walking by the magazine rack in a store, staying up late at night, etc.

To figure out what needs to be amputated, ask yourself questions like the following:

1. When do I most often fall into temptation? At what time of day? In what location?
2. Where do the tempting thoughts most often come from? From entertainment? From things I see in my daily routine?

## VII. Fighting by Means of Mind Renewal

**Rom 12:2** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

This is how Jesus fought temptation

- **Luke 4:7-8** "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

**The Principle:** The root of sexual impurity is unbiblical thinking. To stop giving into temptation, you must replace this unbiblical thinking with truth, primarily from the Word of God, and secondarily from experience.

<b>Unbiblical Thinking</b>	<b>The Word of God</b>	<b>Experience</b>
It will feel good	“For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.” (Prov 5:3-4 NIV)	It will produce shame and guilt
It will make me feel better	“At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, ‘How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. I have come to brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly.’” (Prov 5:11-14 NIV)	It will produce regret
No one will know	“For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.” (Prov 5:21 NIV)	I will need to confess it to my wife
It will not hurt anyone	<p>“Keep to a path far from her [the adulteress], do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel.” (Prov 5:8-9 NIV)</p> <p>“The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast.” (Prov 5:22 NIV)</p> <p>“With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.” (Prov 7:21-23 NIV)</p> <p>It will give God’s glory to another (Isa 42:8).</p>	It will waste my time and energy. It will hurt my wife.
She looks so good	“Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.” (Prov 7:26-27 NIV)	She is death in disguise
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.

Memorize and meditate upon verses that counteract your unbiblical thinking, so that you have a full belt of ammunition ready for the fight against temptation.

## VIII. Fighting by Means of Replacement

### Married Men

**Prov 5:19** “...Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.”

- **ESV** “...Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.”

**The Principle:** Focus your energies upon romancing, wooing, and loving your wife. Rather than motivating sexual impurity, the sex drive God has given you should motivate you to (1) make yourself sexually desirable to your wife, and (2) give your wife pleasure in sex (1 Cor 7:3-5).

God has created women with a sex drive that is stimulated by loving, supportive relationship. So put your energy to work at such things as complementing your wife, listening well to her, studying what makes her tick, praying with her, studying the Bible with her, dating her, meeting her needs & desires, and helping her to grow in Christ.

In addition, ask for your wife’s help in fighting against temptation to sexual impurity. Work together as a team in fighting against anything that would hurt your marriage. Your wife should be your greatest accountability partner in all areas, including sexual purity.

### Singles

Each Christian is part of the church, which is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27; Rev 19:7)

**1 Cor 7:32-34** “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; <sup>33</sup> but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, <sup>34</sup> and *his interests* are divided...”

**1 Cor 6:16-17** Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." <sup>17</sup> But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

**Psa 37:4** “Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.”

**Psa 16:11** “You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

**Isa 55:1-2** “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup> Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance [NIV: and your soul will delight in the richest of fare].”

**The Principle:** Rather than turning to sexual impurity for pleasure, turn to Christ for superior pleasure—the pleasure of knowing Him and growing in relationship with Him.

**Examples:** Pursue Christ in prayer, meditation upon His Word, obedience, singing, listening to Christian music, reading good Christian books, and fellowship with His children.

Of course, this is good for married men as well!

All

**The Principle:** When you are tempted to lust after a woman you see, you need to start looking at something other than her body, and need to start thinking about something other than her body.

**Examples:** If you must look at her, look at her eyes. Otherwise, find something else to look at. Pray a brief prayer for her, either for her salvation or her spiritual growth. Start praying for your wife or other people. Keep praying until the woman has left your mind.

**IX. Practical Tips for Today's Fight**Internet

1. Some web pages randomly display a different advertisement each time you visit the page. If such an advertisement is inappropriate to look at, clicking your browser's Refresh button usually will change the advertisement.
2. To avoid receiving inappropriate emails, (1) Be careful in giving out your email address to businesses. Some will sell your email address to marketers. (2) Avoid having your email address posted on the internet, because businesses can then collect your email address.
3. Placing your computer(s) in a well-trafficked area of your house will discourage you and family members from using it inappropriately.
4. Various services are available that filter out some of the inappropriate web pages and email information to accountability partners regarding your internet activity. Some good ones are [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com) and [www.safeeyes.com](http://www.safeeyes.com).

TV

1. If you have cable, there is no reason to allow inappropriate channels into your house. Ask your cable company to block such channels. When you stay in a hotel, you can ask the hotel to block inappropriate channels from your room.
2. Placing your TV(s) in a well-trafficked area of your house will discourage you and family members from using it inappropriately.

Movies

1. Rather than guessing that a movie you will watch does not contain inappropriate material, get the facts before you decide to watch it. Various web sites give you detailed information about the inappropriate material contained in movies, including [www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com) (Focus on the Family) and [www.screenit.com](http://www.screenit.com).

**XI. Scriptures for Further Study**

Job 31:1  
Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 7:1-27

1 Corinthians 7:1-5  
Titus 3:3-8

**XII. Recommended Resources**

Harris, Joshua. *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World*. Multnomah Publishers, 2005.

Lundgaard, Kris. *The Enemy Within: Straight Talk About the Power and Defeat of Sin*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1998.

- Based on John Owen's books *Indwelling Sin* and *The Mortification of Sin*

Mahaney, C. J. and Robin Boisvert. *How Can I Change?: Victory in the Struggle Against Sin*. Sovereign Grace Ministries ([www.sovereigngraceministries.org](http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org)), 1993.

Mohler, Al. "The Seduction of Pornography and the Integrity of Christian Marriage."

- Document: <http://www.sbts.edu/docs/Mohler/EyeCovenant.doc>
- Audio with 30-minute Q&A: [http://www.albertmohler.com/audio\\_list.php](http://www.albertmohler.com/audio_list.php)

Piper, John. "Sex and the Single Person."

[http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1981/280\\_Sex\\_and\\_the\\_Single\\_Person/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1981/280_Sex_and_the_Single_Person/)

- Available in both print and audio

Setting Captives Free

- <http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com>
- Online Bible studies on purity
- Accountability