



As most of you know, the concept of “purity” has become a very “hot topic” in today’s world. It has become the focus of many groups that reach out to the young people in our culture. The concept of “purity” has also become a popular “catchword” lately for reaching out to the young people within the Body of Christ. However, purity is not just for the youth. It is a concept that spans and affects the entire spectrum of society.

In the Body of Christ, the trend has been to present to the youth within the Body the idea of wearing a “purity ring” which has typically been accompanied by a vow to practice sexual abstinence until marriage. This has become a large movement with concerts and events held by well known Christian music artists and leaders.

In the secular realm, they call them “chastity rings.” They have become a part of the abstinence-only sex education movement in our public school systems. These “purity rings” and “chastity rings” are intended to help the wearer (the youth) to recognize their self-worth and remind them that there is more to a relationship than sex.

The above are wonderful ideas and should continue and be encouraged. However, as we are all very well aware of, they are not the answer to the very serious and critical situation that continues to rise, spread and affect not only our nation and society but also every person upon the earth.

The problem, as mentioned previously, is that the “concept” of purity and the lack of it is not just a youth or young adult problem. It is a concept that is vital for all age groups to grasp and adhere to. Most importantly, it must be addressed within the Body of Christ. However, unfortunately, as we just mentioned, even within the Body of Christ the conversation concerning purity has been relegated to just the youth. This is a mistake and a well thought out strategy of the enemy that has infiltrated the Body.

I believe another mistake that has been tendered in the Body of Christ is that when we approach the topic of “purity” we tend to think of it only in terms of sexual implications. In doing so we have missed the full understanding of what the scriptures desire for the believer and true disciple of Jesus to grasp and live out in and through their life when it comes to living a lifestyle of purity.

As we continue, let us review some definitions of the term “purity.” Secular dictionaries define the term “purity” as – “freedom from adulteration or contamination; freedom from immorality especially of a sexual nature; the condition or quality of being pure; freedom from anything that debases, contaminates or pollutes; freedom from any modifying addition that changes the original condition; freedom from foreign or inappropriate elements; freedom from guilt or evil; chastity; virginity.” As you can see, even in the secular understanding it is quite an extensive definition.

The term “purity” in the King James Version is only used twice, both by the apostle Paul and both in his first letter to Timothy – 1Timothy 4:12 and 5:2. It comes from the Greek word “*hagneia*” which literally means – “sinlessness of life.” The Greek etymology and root word meaning refers to being sacred as in the terms of a “saint.” This is also where we get our English word, “hygiene” which means a purity of health and freedom from sickness, and the contamination of sickness that will affect the human body negatively.

In the scriptures the word “pure” is translated from the Hebrew word, “*tsaraph*.” It means to be refined; to smelt (burning off the imperfections or dross); to test and prove. The Greek word used in the New Testament translated to “pure” is “*katharos*” which means to be free from corrupt desires, sin and guilt; to be sincere and genuine; to be refined by fire.

An interesting side thought is that as we just read, the word “sincere” is found within the definition of “pure.” The English word “sincere” comes from the Latin “*sincerus*” which means to be clean and pure. It also includes and alludes to, the Latin term “*sin cerae*” which means “without wax.” So what does this have to do with our discussion on purity? Let’s see.

In ancient times, as well as in today’s world, there were unscrupulous merchants. In the pottery business, many times these unscrupulous merchants would rub wax into the cracks of marred and cracked pottery so that it would look as if the cracked pottery was good to use. They would put a sign over this merchandise that read, “*sin cerae*” (without wax.) These merchants would then place all of their pottery under tents out of the sun. The smart buyer would take the pottery they wanted to purchase and first take it out into the sun where, if there was any wax, it would begin to melt revealing the cracks.

This same concept has carried over into our modern day letter writing as we, before affixing our name or signature, would write “sincerely” stating that what we just wrote in the letter or document was the truth and written without any lies, deceptions or discrepancies.

Do you see how the term “sincere” relates to our discussion concerning purity? Many times we try to “cover our cracks with wax.” We try to hide the imperfections and cracks in our character. However, the truth is that once the “heat is on” and we are tested and tried and the “fire” comes, it immediately melts away the false façade and reveals our “cracks.” Even though we try to hide those flaws, sooner or later they will be exposed. As the scripture tells us, “...*be sure your sin will find you out.*” (Number 32:23) Hmmm...

Returning to our discussion on “purity,” as a believer and as a disciple of Jesus, we must always refer to whatever Jesus taught concerning a subject or topic. Jesus was very emphatic concerning this topic of “purity.” We He would come upon someone in their sin, He healed them and brought His forgiveness to them, however, He also exhorted them to, “Go and sin no more.”

We also hear His heart on this topic of “purity” in what has been referred to as “The Sermon on the Mount” found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. In His first major teaching to those whom He had called, as well as others who were following, He expressed where the entire character aspect of purity truly originates. In Matthew 5:8 He states, “*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*”

The whole purpose of the first 12 verses of this “Sermon on the Mount” was to express what the characteristics of the true disciple of Jesus were to be. They were the same characteristics that Jesus lived out and role modeled throughout His life. As these characteristics are lived out by the disciple of Jesus he or she would experience the blessings of God being poured out within their lives. All of these “characteristics” express a changed heart that can only come through a relationship with Jesus and the recognition and acknowledgement of the individual’s need for God. (Matthew 5:3 – “...*poor in spirit*...)

In Matthew 5:8 we see that Jesus expresses the characteristic of being “*pure in heart.*” He is expressing that purity begins within a person’s heart. It is an “attitude of the heart.” Therefore, it can only be expressed through a heart that has been changed by and washed in the Blood of the Lamb. It is a heart that has been changed through a life changing encounter with Jesus who brings the individual into a relationship of “oneness” with Him and the Father. As we read Matthew 5:8, we see that there is a wonderful promise to those who truly desire to walk in a “pure heart.” They “...*shall see God.*”

Wow!!! What a promise!!! The words “*shall see*” in Matthew 5:8 come from the Greek word, “*optanomai*,” which literally means to see and behold; to become acquainted with through experiencing. Those who desire to walk in a pure heart will actually be able to behold the Lord and continually experience Him in His fullness. Why? Because they desire to walk in the same heart as Jesus walked in.

We know that Jesus delighted the Father's heart. Therefore those who walk in and seek after the same heart as Jesus will ultimately delight the heart of their Father. As any Father who delights in their children, He will pour out His favor and blessings upon them.

Isn't that what it is all about? Seeing and experiencing God in all His fullness. We will have the "spiritual eyes" to behold the beauty and splendor of the Lord. We will have the "spiritual eyes" to have His purposes and plans revealed to us. The "eyes of our heart" will be open to truly see and experience His heart.

This is the attitude of heart that we all should have as the children of God. It does not mean that we are at a place of perfection but it is an attitude of heart that desires to simply bless the heart of their King. It is a heart that desires God's holiness, His moral excellence, to be expressed in and through their lives.

Using our definitions for what "purity" should look like within a true disciple of Jesus, we get a good look at what kind of heart Jesus walked in. Obviously, Jesus was absolutely, positively sinless. (2Corinthians 5:21) He was the spotless Lamb of God. Now, as His disciples we are to walk in that same lifestyle. However, it goes even further than that. We are not just disciples of Jesus but we are also sons and daughters of the Most High God. We are new creations. The old is passed away and behold we have been made new. (2Corinthians 5:17)

So what does this mean for us now as sons and daughters of the God? It means that we are to live and walk in a lifestyle of purity, or we can say, holiness. Yes, I believe purity and holiness are "two sides of the same coin." The scriptures are clear – "*Be ye holy as I am holy.*" (1Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:45) It doesn't say "try to be holy." No. It is written as a command, "**BE** ye holy..." As we read Leviticus, it is actually a command by God given to His people. Peter in his letter reiterates this command to the born again child of God.

As sons and daughters of God, our Father now chooses to see us as being "holy." We are His "Holy priesthood." However, that fact does not negate the believer's desire to bless the heart of the Father by living out a lifestyle of holiness as His child – just as Jesus delighted the Father's heart through His lifestyle of holiness.

This means that it becomes the responsibility of the individual who refers to themselves as a child of God. It is a lifestyle that must be lived out. Of course we cannot do this in our own strength and ability. That is why we have been given the Holy Spirit. It is He who enables us to live this lifestyle. It is to be a lifestyle of obedience to the commands of the Father which directs us to live a life of purity and sinlessness.

We also, as brothers and sisters, are to encourage each other in this and not bring any condemnation. We all have "cracks" that have come from various root issues. There is no shame in seeking out the help of others in the Body of Christ who we trust and who will pray and exhort us to overcome and bring healing to these "cracks."

We, as believers, are not to be contaminated by the things of this world any longer. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul implores us to live this lifestyle, as we read, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

A part of our definition of "purity" states that it means to be free from "adultery." This doesn't just mean in the natural sense concerning the unfaithfulness between husbands and wives but rather it really means and refers to having no other god(s) before but Yahweh, God and Him alone. We are to flee from anything that would bring a "contamination" of sin and its ways from trying to infiltrate our lives. We are to flee and be free from all immorality and evil desires. These things are actually acts of "adultery" and "idolatry" against God which are direct act of disobedience against the first of the commandments. (Exodus 20:3)

Colossians 3:5 expresses this in the Amplified Version, *“So put to death and deprive of power the evil longings of your earthly body [with its sensual, self-centered instincts] immorality, impurity, sinful passion, evil desire, and greed, **which is [a kind of] idolatry [because it replaces your devotion to God].**”* The “other idol” that replaces God in your life is actually - you!!! Hmmm...

We are also to flee from any “modifying addition” or “foreign and inappropriate elements” that will try to pollute the “purity” of the Word of God and try to change it from its original intent and commands claiming that in doing so it would make it more “relevant” for today’s world. We are to live a life of purity, holiness, integrity and moral excellence as taught and declared in the entirety of scripture. (1Peter 2:2)

As you can see, the concept of purity surpasses the surface level that it has been given when used within just sexual implications. Also, it should not be a concept or teaching that is just for the youth in the Body of Christ. It is an application that must be presented to and applied by every age group, male and female, husband and wife, son and daughter, etc. within the Body of Christ. We are called to be that “city on a hill” that shines for all to see. We are called to be a “light” in this world that is full of darkness. We are called to be the “salt” that makes things different. We are to be “difference makers” as well as live a lifestyle that is different from the “norm.”

As we look within the Body of Christ, we cannot help but admit that we have been failing in this aspect. I am not condemning or passing judgment. What I am saying is that we, as the Body of Christ, need to stop pointing fingers but rather, as Paul commands, *“Let a man examine himself.”* (1Corinthians 11:28) Each one of us must look inwardly and be honest with ourselves concerning those “cracks” we all have.

It is time for the Body of Christ to be that light, that salt, that city on a hill. It is time for us to refrain from assimilating into the way of the world which is controlled by the enemy. Rather, it is time for us to stand out and be different, not just with words, but with our lifestyle. The unsaved see nothing different about us. That is why we hear that word - “hypocrite” - used so much around the Body of Christ. In many ways they are correct.

There are truck loads of statistics and surveys not just for society in general but also concerning the Body of Christ that deal with the concept of purity, or the lack thereof. Without going into detail and sharing these endless surveys concerning this topic, needless to say, we all know that the results are not very encouraging. Something is missing. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly as seen in many of those surveys and statistics, leadership within the Body has just as much difficulty in this area of purity as anyone else.

I believe what is missing is the fact that the terms holiness, repentance, obedience, surrender, etc have slowly but surely been removed from the teaching and preaching within the Body of Christ. It is not just the “feel good” message that is being preached that neglects the above topics. It is also the “it’s all about me” teaching and preaching that tells us that we no longer need to repent, obey and surrender. “Hey,” we are told, “God looks at us holy so what is the need to live the lifestyle of holiness.” I am sorry but the truth encompassed within the entirety of the scriptures is that it is all about God and His purposes and plans – not us. Yes, He loves us but it is all still to be all about Him!!! It is all about blessing the heart of our God!!!

We hear a lot of what I call “Christian psychology” being presented instead of the pure unadulterated truth of God’s Word. Yes, He delights in His people. But He delights and is blessed when His people walk in a lifestyle of purity, holiness, integrity and most of all – obedience and surrender to His Word. Jesus tells us that if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments. (John 14:15)

As we conclude I would like for us to take a look at Haggai 2:12-13 as presented in the Amplified Version. *"If one carries in the skirt of his garment flesh that is holy [because it has been offered in sacrifice to God], and with his skirt {or} the flaps of his garment he touches bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does what he touches become holy [dedicated to God's service exclusively]? And the priests answered, No!" [Holiness is not infectious.] "Then said Haggai, If one who is [ceremonially] unclean because he has come in contact with a dead body should touch any of these articles of food, shall it be [ceremonially] unclean? And the priests answered, It shall be unclean." [Unholiness is infectious.]*

Did you "hear" what you just read? The Amplified Version makes a clear and profound statement that we all need to grasp and understand. What we just read is so very important for each of us as children of God to understand as we live our everyday lives. These scriptures are inferring to us that, "**holiness is not infectious**" but yet "**unholiness is infectious.**"

To give an example of this in the natural to make it a little clearer – a sick person cannot "catch" health from contact with a healthy person; but the healthy person can become sick when they come in contact with a person who has a sickness. Sickness is contagious – good health is not contagious.

Simply put, holiness and purity are not "contagious," but impurity is. You can't "catch" purity and holiness from someone else who is walking the walk. However, an individual can "catch" impurity and "unholiness" when they hang around those that are not walking the walk. Purity and holiness are both attitudes of the heart. This, I believe is a vital concept that is worthy for all of us to ponder upon. Let's take a "Selah moment" here and "pause and think on this."

Please, understand, I am not saying that we can make ourselves holy. No, it is only through the blood of Jesus that the Father now chooses to see as holy unto Him. Through the blood of Jesus we are made holy in His sight. However, the above scriptures and many more like it place the responsibility of living a life of purity and holiness squarely upon each and every believer – alone. Yes, we are to encourage and be there for each other. The scriptures are clear in this. However, decisions and choices are still made by the individual. We may openly seem to be doing what is right but what are we doing during those "secret times" when no one is around? Are we living a double life? Do we have "secret lives?"

Purity and holiness, as previously discussed are "two sides of the same coin." They go hand in hand. Purity is not only referring to sexual matters but it refers to every aspect of our lifestyle. It is an attitude of the heart. We discussed the word "sincere." Are we trying to cover the cracks we have in our character with "wax?" If so, as soon as the "fire and heat" (trials and temptations) are turned up in our lives, that façade will melt and the "cracks" will be exposed. It is time for us as members of the Body of Christ to stop trying to cover the "cracks" of a lifestyle that lacks purity. Rather it is time to be renewed through the blood of the Lamb and the power of the Holy Spirit and be rid of and totally healed and set free from those "cracks."

*"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." - Matthew 5:8*

*"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." - Ephesians 5:27*