

Your Life - Your Values #8
Maintaining Moral Purity
1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

As Americans, we care a lot about purity in some areas and in others we could not care less. For instance, we want pure air to breathe, pure water to drink and we want pure food to eat. **But we are not really that concerned about moral purity.**

As a result of our complacency, we have more abortions today than ever before, we have more illegitimate births than ever before, we have more people with sexually transmitted diseases than ever before. Nine million Americans carry a venereal disease. **That is more people with a sexually transmitted disease than people with alcoholism.** **We have people involved in all kinds of different things - living together and different moral standards.**

The Bible says something very different. In 1 Thessalonians 4 this is what God says about you, "God wants you to be pure and to keep clear of all sexual sin. For God has not called us to be dirty-minded and full of lust but to be holy and clean."

As I read that verse, I ask, Is that possible in today's world? Is it even possible to live in a world where I am bombarded constantly by billboards and media in this sex saturated society to maintain a pure mind?

I think it is. Let me give you the reason why. **If you have ever gone ocean fishing and catch an ocean fish and prepare it, the fish has lived its entire life in salt water.** **It grows up in a culture where ever moment of its life, it is surrounded by brine, water that is so salty you can not drink it yourself or you will get sick.** Yet when you catch a bass or fish that has lived its entire life in the ocean and you bring it home and prepare it for a meal, before you eat it, you have to put salt on it.

The same God that can take a fish and keep it in an environment of salt its entire life and yet not be affected by it, can keep you in a polluted world and keep your mind pure. **The answer is not imitation which says, "Let's go out and be like the world and adapt to every perversion that's out there."** **On the other hand, the answer is not the other extreme that says, "Isolation. Let's completely stay away from the world. Let's all dress up like Pilgrims or become nuns or monks and join a convent or monastery and we will isolate ourselves."**

No, the answer to living in this world is not imitation - be like everybody else. And the answer is not isolation - don't be like anybody and do not have any association with the world. **The answer is not isolation or imitation. It is**

insulation. Just like God can insulate that fish and keep it in a briny environment and yet not let it get salty, God can keep you in a polluted world and keep your life, your mind, your heart pure.

How does that happen?

Tonight we are going to look at what the Bible says. God gives us five steps in remaining pure in a polluted world. God never tells you to do something without telling you how to do it.

1. I must make a commitment to God's standard. Psalm 119:9 says, "How can anyone keep his way pure? By living according to your Word." You have to make this an issue and resolve this issue in your mind before anything else can happen in your life. **What is going to be my standard of authority?** On what am I going to base my life? Am I going to make a commitment to God's Word as my standard for living? Or am I just going to make up my own standard?

The issue is: Am I more committed to what I believe God says will meet my needs or am I more committed to what I think will meet my own needs? Does God know more about my life or do I know more about my life? That is the issue.

God has set a set of rules for living. If you play by the rules you win. If you do not play by the rules, you lose.

For example - sex is a gift. It is a gift from God but when sex is abused it becomes sin. **Water is a gift from God.** Ninety percent of your body is water. You cannot live without water. But you get too much of it and you will drown. **Fire is a gift from God.** Fire can warm. But if you get too much fire, you will get burned.

I suggest that the starting point to remaining pure in a polluted world is you make a commitment to God's standard. Once you have done that, regardless of mistakes you have made in the past, then you are ready to move to step two.

2. I must manage my mind. Every temptation starts in the mind. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Be careful how you think, your life is shaped by your thoughts." Proverbs 23:19 says, "Keep your mind on what is right." **The battle is won or lost here.** When you have an open mind it tends to get filled with garbage. What you need to do is watch what you think about.

Anytime you see somebody really messing up their life, it did not start with the actions, it started with thoughts. They were thinking dumb thoughts

before they started making dumb decisions. The Bible says very clearly, and science backs this up, the way you think determines how you feel. **Thoughts determine feelings.** You feel a certain way because you are thinking a certain way. Feelings are what motivate you to action.

It happens like this:

First, it starts with accepting sinful thoughts in my mind. I do not care what it is, if you want to break a bad habit or change a life-style, the key is not *resisting*. The key is *replacing* and *refocusing*.

What does that mean Lets just suppose I have been trying to loose some weight: On the table in front of me is a giant, sky scraper ice cream Sundae with cherries and whipped cream and everything. Do I look at it and say, "I don't want that. I have no desire for that at all! I don't want it!.... Just one bite." **Whatever gets your attention, gets you.** The key to breaking any temptation is to make the choice to just turn away from it. I must get my mind on something else. **If my mind is not on it, I can not be tempted by it.** Change the situation. Turn your back.

3. I must minimize the opportunity for temptation. That means do not place myself in a situation where I know I am going to be tempted. I must minimize the opportunity for temptation. **If you do not want to get stung, you stay away from the bees.** If I do not want to get burned, I stay away from the fire.

There are two ways you can minimize temptation in your life.

1) Recognize what tempts me. Recognize the situations that turn me on, stimulate me, that get me thinking in other directions. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Be careful. If you're thinking, 'Oh, I'd never behave like that' let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin." **He is saying be alert, be wise, be aware.** You need to know the early warning signs of temptation so you can bail out early.

2) Choose my friends carefully. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Bad companions ruin good character." If I ask one of these people in the front row here to give me their hand, is it easier for me to pull people up or is it easier for them to pull me down? It is always easier to be pulled down. That means you need to choose your friends wisely.

4. I must maintain my marriage. That means that a growing relationship with my spouse will reduce the pull and attraction of adultery or any other kind of relationship. Ecclesiastes 9:9 says, "Enjoy life with your wife whom you

love." Notice the word "enjoy." **Do you enjoy your spouse?** Are you fun to live with? **Do you do things together?**

The Bible is very clear about maintaining your marriage. It is very practical too. **1 Corinthians 7** says, "A husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy which is her right as a married woman. Nor should the wife deprive her husband. Do not cheat each other of normal sexual relations or you will expose yourself to the obvious temptation of Satan." **If the excitement is found at home, you are not going to be looking elsewhere.**

The experts have discovered a very scientific study that shows that husbands like to make love on days that start with "T" - Tuesday, Thursday, Today, Tomorrow, Taterday and Tunday. Very scientific study!

5. I must magnify the consequences of sin. Having been a pastor for many years and having counseled thousands of people, I have heard the heartache of the unfaithfulness, the illicit relationships, the sexual escapades outside of marriage or whatever. **I have seen the broken hearts. I have seen the rejection.** I have dealt with the split up families. **I have dealt with devastated children.** I have seen the damage it does in hearts and souls and minds.

What , then, is the answer to a failed life? What is the path way back to purity?

1. Repent. Repent means "to change your mind." That is all repent means. It means I change my mind and say, "You were right God. It was wrong. It is sin." **Do not try to rationalize it. Do not put it off.**

2. Receive forgiveness. God says, "I am waiting. I am waiting to forgive and to cleanse and to restore. I want to release you from the shame and the regrets and the hidden hurts and the pain and all that stuff you are going to carry into your marriage or you have carried into your marriage and it is affecting your marriage today because of things you have never dealt with in the past." **God wants to forgive you and wipe the slate clean.** The good news is once He has forgiven you, you can forgive yourself which you're having a hard time doing.

3. Refocus and replace. You make a commitment to live morally pure by God's standard from this day forward for the rest of your life.

4. Request help daily. Commit my life to Christ and I ask Him to help me manage your life for His glory.

The Bible says this in 1 Corinthians 10, "Remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. (In other words,

we are all in the same boat. We all have the same temptations.) And God is faithful. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so you will not give in to it." **There is no irresistible temptation.** God says, "I will show you a way out."

The choice to live our life for God's glory can't be made by anyone else but you and I. Lets start today!