

7 Sins & 7 Virtues Class #4 Lust vs. Purity

Everyone has an opinion...

“Purity is not imposed upon us as though it were a kind of punishment, it is one of those mysterious but obvious conditions of that supernatural knowledge of ourselves in the Divine, which we speak of as faith. Impurity does not destroy this knowledge, it slays our need for it.”

Georges Bernanos (1888–1948), French novelist, political writer

“We are not naïve enough to ask for pure men; we ask merely for men whose impurity does not conflict with the obligations of their job.”

Jean Rostand (1894–1977), French biologist, writer.

“I always thought of losing my virginity as a career move.”

Madonna (b. 1959), U.S. singer, actor.

“Society drives people crazy with lust and calls it advertising.”

John Lahr (b. 1941), U.S. literary and drama critic.

Prayer –

“¹⁰Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. ¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. ... ¹⁵O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51

Texts –

“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a **pure** heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” I Timothy 1:5

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a **pure** heart.” II Timothy 2:22

Definitions and Perspectives –

Purity – What it is: [as used in the Bible] the condition of being free from any physical, moral, or ritual contamination. There is a sense of wholeness – no missing or broken pieces, no flawed or corrupted motives, character traits, or behaviors. There is also the sense of *single heartedness/ single mindedness*, that is, no divided loyalties.

Lust - What it is: an inordinate or overwhelming craving for the pleasures of the body, obsessive desire to have, to control, or to experience.

Why you do it: Oh, please....

A Classic Example of Lust & Purity in Scripture: Genesis 39 The story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife.

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Lust is a mysterious wound in the side of humanity; or rather, at the very source of its life! To confound this lust in man with that desire which unites the sexes is like confusing a tumor with the very organ which it devours, a tumor whose very deformity horribly reproduces the shape.

Georges Bernanos (1888–1948), French novelist, political writer.

"Abbot Hypericus said: 'A monk who cannot hold his tongue when he is angry will not be able to control the passion of lust either'".
Thomas Merton, Theologian

"Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc."

G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936), British author.

"Life does not need to mutilate itself in order to be pure."

Simone Weil (1909–43), French philosopher, mystic.

Issues:

- Sexual lust is a major personal problem for a huge amount of people – Christian people. It is consequently a very large societal problem, and it is a very large Christian community problem.
- DESIRE is NOT the problem. That is to say, the ability to desire is a good – God given thing. It is true our desires can turn to harmful goals or objects, but the human capacity to desire is absolutely necessary to life. The idea, namely of some eastern religions today, and of some Christian sects past and present, of killing desire all together is not scriptural.
- Seeking “purity of heart” is not a top agenda item on most people’s agenda. It seems so, well, *puritanical*, or prudish. Or, it simply seems unachievable. The sincerest of attempts at maintaining “*pure*” thoughts on a habitual basis are met with flaming defeats on a regular basis. So what is one to do?

The Right Path

- **Confession**
Our whole Christian life begins with confession, and it is confession that keeps us connected to the Vine (Christ). I John 1:9 and Psalm 51 Deeply felt and authentic acknowledgement of struggles or failures with lust (and all vices) are critical to real progress. It is part of the ‘cleansing process’ of the Holy Spirit.
- **Commitment**
Unless we truly *intend* to pursue the ways of God, nothing of any significant or lasting substance will happen in our lives and character. We must make concrete plans to order our priorities and schedules around those things that will bring us into alignment and activity with the teachings of scripture. I Cor 10:1-13, 23 Rom 15:4 Also Matthew 6:33 “**Set your hearts** on his kingdom first, and on God’s saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well.” The least we can do is aim rightly.
- **Pursuit of spiritual purity**
- Disciplines (Practices) of the Faith I Timothy 4:7
”Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness.”
- **Not Fearing Failure – Holding on to Grace, Mercy & Truth**
Many give up before they even start, anticipating failure. This is most often due to a focus on what is being given up and not on what is to be gained. Proverbs 24:16; Rom 6:22 DON’T GIVE UP!
- **Repeat the above**