

OpenTheo

Purity (Part 1)



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In this discussion on culture and purity, Steve Gregg addresses the issue of sensuality in dominant culture and the importance of pursuing holiness. He emphasizes the need to focus on purity of heart and conduct, rather than mere external religiosity. Gregg also encourages an elevated view of marriage and sex, as instituted by God, and calls for modesty in dress and behavior for Christian women. He concludes that a native sense of modesty, guided by God, should trump overwhelming cultural pressures towards immodesty.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to talk about the culture of purity, which confronts the dominant culture of sensuality. Our series, of course, *Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture*, presupposes that in everything that we're considering, Christianity has something unique to offer, something that is in contrast with the dominant culture. We wouldn't bother with a series called *Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture* unless, of course, Christianity offered something that is culturally different and culturally superior to that culture of the land in which we live, or for that matter, the culture of any land.

The kingdom of God has its own unique values, has its own unique truth and light that Christ has given us, and the absence of that in secular cultures is that which prevents them from knowing what we need to know to produce a culture that fits our lives into the plans of God, and makes us fruitful for God, and makes our own lives prosper as well. Now, in this series we've been giving labels, I've been giving labels to different aspects of the dominant culture in which we live, and to the contrasting aspects of the Christian's culture, if there were such a thing. Sadly, there is not, as far as I know, in this country, a radically Christian counterculture in the terms that we're discussing tonight, and that is a culture of purity confronting the dominant culture of sensuality.

I wasn't quite sure which word to use to describe the dominant culture. Sensuality works, there were so many other words that came to mind. Self-indulgence, lust, and a whole bunch of other things.

Lewdness. Of course, I'm talking about the impurity of our dominant culture in contrast to the purity of that which is what Christ wants us to be living as a group of people and exhibiting to the world as an alternative society, not only speaking the gospel, but living the gospel. Not only presenting an explanation of the ways of God, but a demonstration of the ways of God in all of our behavior.

That isn't happening with us, and I don't mean that to implicate anyone here more than myself. We simply do not find that the Christian community in any place I've ever lived has adopted everything that Jesus said to do. I'm not such an idealist as to think that by teaching a few lectures to a small group like this, we're going to transform the world, but it's got to start somewhere.

Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a leaven that's put into a lump of dough. A very small quantity of leaven is put into a lump of dough. It causes the whole lump to rise.

So, it's got to start with a little leaven at least. There is a verse at the beginning of the last chapter of Revelation. Revelation 22, verse 1 says, And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This image of a river of water flowing from the throne of God, from the city of God, from the temple of God, this is simply the last occurrence of that image in the Bible, because it's the last chapter of the Bible where we find it. It is a river of pure water. It is water of life, and it flows from the house of God.

Many people have their own opinions as to what this is referring to. And, of course, there's no reason not to take it entirely literally. I frankly see no difficulty understanding it literally.

But even if it is literal, that does not mean that God hasn't so constructed the new Jerusalem in such a way as to teach lessons to those of us who anticipate it. And in the Old Testament, there are a number of references to this river that flows from the house of God. One of those is found in Ezekiel 47, and it says in verse 1, Then He brought me back to the door of the temple, and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east.

For the front of the temple faced east. The water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. So here we have from under the threshold of the door of the temple, again, water flowing, just as there is in Revelation 22.

If you look at a couple of other little places in the Minor Prophets, I'd like to point out what we learn about this water in those places. One of those would be in the book of Joel, which is not the easiest thing to find. It's just before Amos, Joel chapter 3. And it says in verse 18, in the closing paragraph, or next to the closing paragraph of the book of Joel, it says, And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new

wine, the hills shall flow with milk.

Now, by the way, this imagery sounds somewhat symbolic. I mean, hills dripping with milk and things like that. Milk usually comes from the udder of dairy animals.

It means, well, it's just like when God told Moses the land of his land of promise was land flowing with milk and honey. No doubt it meant there was much fruit trees for the bees to make a lot of honey from and a lot of grazing land for the cows, so you could produce a lot of milk, but it wasn't oozing from the ground, for example. And here we have similar imagery.

The mountains will drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water. Then it says, A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord, and water the valley of the Acacias. Now, it's rather interesting that it says a river will flow from the house of the Lord and water the valley of the Acacias, since the house of the Lord presumably is pictured as being in Jerusalem.

And the valley of the Acacias was actually across the Jordan River in the land of Moab, according to the book of Joshua. And yet, we have a river flowing across another river, the Jordan River. Now, rivers don't really cross each other like highways do.

You can have an intersection of roads, but you can't have that kind of an intersection of rivers where they actually both keep flowing the same direction as they cross each other. It's not physically possible, unless God works some kind of a new miracle in the future that we've never seen, which is, of course, He could do. But this raises questions as to whether this river in question is really considered to be a literal one.

If you look at Zechariah, nearly at the end of the Old Testament, just before the last book, and in the closing chapter of Zechariah, Zechariah 14, it's interesting how in all these cases, the four books that mention this river mention them at the end, at the end of the book. And here we have, in Zechariah 14, verse 8, And in that day it shall be that living waters will flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea. In both summer and winter it shall occur.

Now here, we have the same idea, a river flowing from Jerusalem, but this is the only place in the Old Testament that calls it living waters. That's the term we find in Revelation also. It says, He showed me a pure river of water of life, which is a synonym for living water.

But I want to show you one other verse, and then we're going to get, I'll tie this into our topic. In John chapter 7, verses 37 through 39, On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

But this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in him would receive, for this Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Now what's interesting about this statement of Jesus, and Bible scholars have really puzzled over it a great deal, is that Jesus said, He who believes in me, as the scripture has said. Now scripture certainly must mean Old Testament scripture, since at the time that Jesus said this, no New Testament books had been written yet.

And he's talking about scriptures that have already said what he's saying, so it must be the Old Testament scriptures to which he refers here. He said, As the scripture has said, out of his, that is the believer's heart, will flow rivers of living water. Now what puzzles scholars is the issue of what scripture is Jesus referring back to? What Old Testament scripture says that out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water? You'll actually never find a scripture in the Old Testament that ever speaks about living waters flowing out of somebody's heart or innermost being.

And the closest verbal parallel to what Jesus is saying is the verse we last saw in Zechariah 14.8, which says, Out of Jerusalem shall flow rivers of living water. There will be rivers of living water flowing from Jerusalem. Which, if Jesus is referring back to that scripture, and it's the only one that has anything like a verbal parallel to what he's saying, then that would suggest that Jesus is equating Jerusalem in Zechariah with believers in him here.

He says, He that believes in me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of water, as the scripture has said. And this he was speaking of the Holy Spirit. Now, regardless what Old Testament passage he was referring to, it is interesting that rivers of living water in John 7.38 and a river of water of life in Revelation 22.1 are almost certainly the same thing.

Both, by the way, recorded by John, the same author. And no other author in the New Testament ever mentions water of life or living water. It's only in John's writings.

And it makes me wonder whether, in addition to whatever may be literally true about the New Jerusalem in this description, whether there is some spiritual lesson here intended as well. And that is that from the believer, from the spiritual Jerusalem, from the habitation of God, the city of God, the church, the true saints, is to be flowing to the world this river, which John says is a reference to the Holy Spirit. But in the Revelation, he says it is a pure river.

And what does the river do? It goes out and waters the realm outside of its own precincts. Jerusalem, or if we would say the people of God, the city of God. In Hebrews chapter 12, the general assembly in church of the firstborn is referred to as the city of God in the heavenly Jerusalem.

And that's what we are. We're the general assembly in church of the firstborn who are

written in heaven. From us there is to be flowing to the world this life, this torrent of the life of the Holy Spirit, which is described as a pure river.

And therefore, what is to be coming forth from the church to water the world is characterized by purity. Now, God knows, and so do we, how much the world lacks in purity. Our own culture has become considerably less pure in our lifetimes.

And I suppose it never was. I don't suppose there ever was a culture on the planet earth that was entirely pure. Perhaps the community of the disciples in Jerusalem in the book of Acts in the early days may have approximated it closer than most.

But that was a counterculture. That was not the culture of the city of Jerusalem. That was the culture of a remnant within Jerusalem.

And wherever there are Christians, there should be a standard raised to the surrounding culture of purity. It is to be a refreshing thing. When you meet a group of people who are pure, and you don't find among them the gross godliness and sensuality and showiness and boastfulness and so forth that you'd normally find in the culture and in the church, it's a refreshing thing.

It's something for which, although they may not know it, I think the Bible implies the world is thirsting for. And the church is supposed to be the container from which it is poured. But the church has been compromised like the rest of the world and has become sensual, has become impure.

I'd like to read something from a man who's been my favorite author for the past 25 years, A.W. Tozer. In fact, I don't read from him every time. In fact, I seldom do.

But I might even read from two different things he's written in this book. This is a compilation of some of the best of his works. This editorial that Tozer wrote is called *The Erotic Versus the Spiritual*.

And he assesses, some of you have read it, I'm sure, he assesses the fascination with sexual impurity that's in our culture. And he points out what I would point out here, too, and that is that it has invaded the church. And the church is also fascinated with impurity and illicit sex.

I'd just like to read a few of the paragraphs here, if I might, if you'll indulge me. Dr. Tozer writes, the period in which we now live may well go down in history as the erotic age. Sex love has been elevated into a cult.

Eros, which is, of course, lust, has more worshippers among civilized men today than any other god. For millions, the erotic has completely displaced the spiritual. How the world got into this state is not difficult to trace.

Contributing factors are the phonograph and radio. He didn't know about computer games and videos yet. Which can spread a love song from coast to coast within a matter of days.

The motion picture and television, which enable the whole population to feast their eyes on sensuous women and amorous young men locked in passionate embrace. And this in the living rooms of Christian homes and before the eyes of innocent children. Shorter working hours and a multiplicity of mechanical gadgets with resultant increased leisure for everyone.

Add to these the scores of shrewdly contrived advertising campaigns with which makes sex the not too slyly concealed bait to attract buyers to almost every imaginable product. The degraded columnists who have consecrated their lives to the task of publicizing of soft, slinky nobodies with the faces of angels and the morals of alley cats. Consciousness novelists who win a doubtful fame and grow rich at the inglorious chore of dredging up literary putridities from the sewers of their souls to provide entertainment for the masses.

These tell us something about how Eros has achieved his triumph over the civilized world. Now, if this God would let us Christians alone, I, for one, would let his cult alone. The whole spongy, fetid mess will someday sink under its own weight and become excellent fuel for the fires of hell, a just recompense which is meat.

And it becomes us to feel compassion for those who have been caught up in its tragic collapse. Tears and silence might be better than words if things were slightly otherwise than they are. But the cult of Eros is seriously affecting the church.

The pure religion of Christ that flows like a crystal river from the heart of God is being polluted by the unclean waters that trickle from behind the altars of abomination that appear on every high hill and under every green tree from New York to Los Angeles. The influence of the erotic spirit is felt almost everywhere in evangelical circles. Much of the singing in certain types of meetings has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Ghost.

Both the words and the music are designed to rouse the libidinous. Christ is courted with a familiarity that reveals a total ignorance of who he is. It is not the reverent intimacy of the adoring saint, but the impudent familiarity of the carnal lover.

Religious fiction also makes use of sex to interest the reading public. The paper-thin excuse being that if romance and religion were woven into a story, the average person who would not read a purely religious book will read the story and thus be exposed to the gospel. Leaving aside the fact that most modern religious novelists are home-talent amateurs, scarcely one of whom is capable of writing a single line of even fair literature, the whole concept behind this religio-romantic novel is unsound.

The libidinous impulses and the sweet, deep movings of the Holy Spirit are diametrically opposed to each other. The notion that Eros can be made to serve as an assistant to the Lord of Glory is outrageous. The Christian quote-unquote film that seeks to draw customers by picturing amorous love scenes in the advertising is completely false to the religion of Christ.

Only the spiritually blind will be taken in by it. There's a couple more paragraphs I don't need to read, but I just thought I'd read somebody who could put it more mildly than I probably would. I think that everyone listening to that would say, well, he must have been writing about the evangelical church in the 1990s or the early 21st century.

But of course, A. W. Tozer died in 1963, and so he must have been writing in the 50s. So you can see how long ago this tendency to embrace Eros, really, or sexual lust as a means even of drawing people to church and to Christian movies and books and so forth has been around. I was raised during the years he's speaking of, and I was not even aware of such novels and such in those days, but they certainly are abundant today.

And so what Tozer said then, about 50 years ago, is certainly true today as well. I want to start tonight, before I start haranguing on the culture too much, I want to talk about what God's standard is, what God's ideal is for us with reference to purity. And I'm going to principally be talking about the subject of sexual purity because that is the area which is, I guess, most obvious.

If someone says, I was having impure thoughts today, you immediately suppose they were thinking of sexual thoughts, although certainly sexuality is not the only thing that can be made impure, and sexuality itself is not impure. But generally speaking, it is the impurity in the realm of thoughts of sex that have really destroyed the sanctity and the purity of much of Christian lives. And it's for the Christian, not just to, as an individual, live a pure life, but for the Christian community as a whole to uphold a different set of standards in this than the world around.

For this, we can expect not a great deal of appreciation from the world, and if appreciation from the world is really something we're addicted to, then we might as well change religions because Christ was not appreciated by the world, and his apostles were not, and he didn't call us to seek a way that is popular with the world either. He calls us to be different, he calls us to be radically different, and to set a standard that is high, something that the world that needs this pure river of life, this water, this refreshment, can actually recognize as something different than the polluted waters of our normal culture, our dominant culture. I want to say first of all that in teaching about purity and the biblical standard and ideal of purity, I am not going, I don't want anyone to give the impression that I'm saying that I have always lived according to all the biblical ideals of this, that is far from it.

I have been a Christian since I was young, but I was not in a church that embraced

biblical ideals in this area. My parents were sincere Christians, but they had not been disciplined either, and they did not have sensitivities about many things, about the TV that was on in our house, the magazines, the people I hung out with, the movies I went to. My dad did have a conscience about some of those things, he did draw the line at certain places, and there weren't even movie ratings in those days, but if he knew a movie was very lewd, of course he wouldn't let me see it even if all my friends were.

There were some standards in our home, but they were not uncompromised biblical standards, and I don't want to blame my parents or anybody else but myself for anything in which I have fallen short in these areas. I have, when I was younger especially, before I knew these things. I could have read the Bible for myself, and I did, but I didn't see them clearly, so I just don't want anyone to get the impression that I'm coming from a self-righteous place, saying, well, everybody should live their life just like I did, because they shouldn't.

People should not live their life the way I did. They should live their lives better than I did, even better than I do now, but at least we have to see what the Bible teaches so we'll know what to aspire for, and hopefully our children, if they are raised by parents and grandparents who are enlightened by these truths, may avoid some of the traps that some of us were not able to avoid being raised in a time when the Church was very compromised in these areas. The Church today is very compromised, but there are many who are searching to find out what the Scriptures say about some issues and who are a counter-culture, even outside the established Church in many cases.

Now, the first place to start in considering the biblical teaching on purity is with God. That's the first place to start with any biblical subject, is God Himself. All biblical subjects are God-centered.

God is like the hub from which all other biblical subjects radiate like spokes in a wheel, and the subject of purity has its focus in the purity of God, and it is because God is pure that we must be pure, because we cannot fellowship with a God with whom we do not have important things in common. To be near God requires that we be more like Him than the average person, and to be more near to Him than we are now means that we need to be more like Him than we are now. Now, when I say more like Him, I don't mean more omniscient or omnipotent or those characteristics of God.

We're talking about His character. We're talking about His holiness and so forth. In 1 Peter 1, verse 15, it says, But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

He who called you is God, and He is holy, and as He is holy, you be holy too. And this is really just an echo of an Old Testament Scripture in Leviticus that Peter is alluding to. In fact, he actually quotes it in verse 16.

It says, Because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy. God says, Because I am holy, you be holy. Over in 1 John, chapter 3, a very, I think, I would expect, familiar passage, where John says, Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be.

But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall seem as He is. And he says this in verse 3, And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure, just as Christ is pure. Those who have the hope of being like Him, when He appears, we shall be like Him.

Well, if we have the hope of being like Him, and we know He is pure, then we will purify ourselves. Now, we won't wait for it to happen. I know when I was growing up, my impression was that it really doesn't matter how good you are, how righteous you are, how holy you are in this life.

All that matters is that you get saved, because then at the rapture, or whenever you get, whenever you die, or whenever you make the transition from here to heaven, you will suddenly be perfect. And because you'll be suddenly perfect, it doesn't matter whether you got to, you know, 20% perfection, or 30%, or 40% perfection before that. You're going to be at 100% perfection when you get to heaven.

Well, I don't know if that's true or not. The Bible doesn't necessarily say we're all going to be just alike in heaven. And there are things like crowns and rewards and so forth that are alluded to.

I don't know what these are, but certainly the indication is that we're not all going to be just exactly alike, 100% flawless beings at exactly the same level when we get there. And the Scripture teaches very plainly here, for example, that those who have the hope of being like Jesus when He comes, have from that hope the motivation of purifying themselves now as He is pure. Maybe that is because if we say, Well, I just can't wait to see Jesus because I'm going to be like Him.

Well, that means that I value being like Him, right? I mean, why else would I look forward to being like Him if I don't value that? Well, if I value that, why don't I try to be like Him now? If I say I really love His appearing, and I really look forward to being like Him, but I make no moves in the direction of becoming more like Him now, it kind of gives the light of my testimony that I really look forward to being like Him because I don't seem to have that much interest in it now. It's evident by the pursuits of my life. Those who really have that hope in them purify themselves now because He is pure.

It is His purity, it is His holiness that motivates the believer and the hoper, the one who has this hope in him, to become pure. In the book of Habakkuk, in Habakkuk chapter 1 and verse 13, the prophet says to God, You are of purer eyes than to behold evil. You cannot look on wickedness.

Now, this doesn't mean that God can't see wickedness and that God pays no attention to it. It means, of course, that God is of purer eyes than to allow Him to countenance. He can't countenance or look favorably upon evil or wickedness.

Why? Because His eyes are too pure. He is pure. And therefore, the Christian is called to a purity that corresponds or agrees with the purity that is in God Himself.

Knowing how pure God's eyes are and that God cannot favorably and comfortably look upon impurity. It is His purity that gives us the motivation to pursue purity ourselves and to measure ours by. Of course, we'll never measure favorably against the standard of God's purity, but it is His purity that we must continually be looking at.

As we behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed from glory to glory into that same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, Paul said. And if we stop looking at that standard, if we stop reaching toward that goal, then we don't go any further in that direction. We are changed from glory to glory into that image as we are beholding the glory of the Lord.

And so, we recognize this aspect of God's glory, that He is pure. He is holy. And our behavior, our conduct, Peter said, be holy in all manner of conduct, is to reflect that purity as well.

Now, to be pure is part of being involved in true religion and true wisdom. A lot of religious people do not maintain a purity of their lives, such as we're going to see the Bible enjoins. And yet, James says in James chapter 1 in verse 27, Pure, an undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Pure, untainted from the world. Now, that is pure religion. That is pure and undefiled religion.

A little earlier, just the verse before, James warns us that some people have a religion, but it's empty. He says in verse 26, If anyone among you thinks he's religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless, is vain, the King James says, is empty, it's useless. Imagine going to the trouble of having religion and it being useless.

The Pharisees had religion, it was useless. But it wasn't entirely useless, they had their reward, Jesus said. They had the reward they wanted, which was the favor of man.

But if you're going to not settle for the favor of man and if you're looking to please God and to be like Him, then you're going to have to have a religion that isn't useless and that is pure religion. It requires being unspotted, untainted, unpolluted from the world. Likewise, in James chapter 3, when James is contrasting the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God, certainly categories that have to do with the difference between a

worldly culture and the Christian counterculture.

The wisdom that informs the worldly culture is a certain way. The wisdom that informs the godly counterculture is another way. And that wisdom is, it says in James 3, 17, the wisdom that is from above is first pure.

Now, it's other things too, but it's first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. Now, that's the wisdom that informs a godly culture, a godly society, a godly community of believers. It is first of all, whatever else may be said about it, is first and foremost pure, James said.

That means it is unpolluted. And if we are to be a Christian community that is normative and radically biblical and Christian, we must seek this purity that makes up true religion and true wisdom. This comes not from mere external religiosity.

The Pharisees sought to be pure. In fact, they had their rituals which were called purification rituals. Purification.

To the Pharisee, purification meant you don't touch unclean things. An unclean thing might be a certain species of animal that was an unclean animal. It might be one's wife when she's having her menstrual period.

It might mean his own father if his father died and he went to the funeral and came in contact with the dead body. There were certain things, contact with which a leper or something would make you unclean. And the Pharisees were cautious about contracting that kind of defilement.

They wanted to be pure. And if a person was made unclean, they had to end that period of uncleanness by purification rituals. And so, the Pharisees interpreted purity as something that was external, as something that was ritualistic.

And Jesus, by contrast, when He gave the Beatitudes, said in Matthew 5, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. To be pure in heart enables you to have a vision of God. Someday, you certainly will not see Him without purity of heart, the Bible says.

The pure in heart will see God. Jesus' statement was taken from the Old Testament, not verbatim, but very close, from Psalm 24, verse 4, where David asked the question, Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord, and who may stand in His holy place? Certainly, that is something every true Christian would crave to know. Who has a backstage pass into heaven, where we can stand in God's holy place and talk with Him personally? Who qualifies for that? That's what David was wondering.

He says, Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord, and who may stand in His holy place? And he says in verse 4, He who has clean hands and a pure heart. He who has clean hands is behavior. A pure heart is something deeper than behavior.

The Pharisees kept their hands clean, and just in case they got them dirty or defiled without knowing it, they'd always wash their hands richly, frequently, when they came in from outdoors, because they didn't want to have defiled hands. They didn't quite get what it meant to have clean hands before God, because God said in Isaiah chapter 1 that His complaint against Israel, though they offered many sacrifices and kept their holy days, was, He said, your hands are polluted with blood. Now, they didn't have real blood on their hands.

It was because they were murderers, He said. And as far as God was concerned, their hands were not clean. Paul said, I would that men pray everywhere lifting holy hands.

That's not necessarily a command to lift your hands when you pray, although there's nothing, of course, wrong with it. Paul said he will, that men would pray everywhere lifting holy hands. But it's not so much a command to lift your hands.

It's a command that if your hands are lifted, they ought to be holy hands, that if you're lifting your hands to God, they should be hands that are holy, not hands that have, you know, been kept from touching a bed sheet that a menstruous woman may have slept on the night before. That would have been something that defiled the hands to the Pharisee. That's not what bothers God.

God is looking for purity of behavior, and that comes from a pure heart. Clean hands and a pure heart. Jesus said, Blessed are the pure in heart.

Paul said the end of our instruction is love out of a pure heart. In, I believe it's 1 Timothy chapter 1. A pure heart, that's the goal. Now, if we have a pure heart, then purity will flow from our behavior.

If we don't have a pure heart, we can fake that purity. We can fake that we're sexually pure in our minds and in our behavior, but if there's not purity of heart, there will be compromise. It may be kept secret, but it will be compromised nonetheless, because it is not in man to be pure.

Man is corrupt. Man is fallen. Man has something within him that is stronger than he is.

It's called sin. He's born with it, and he just can't beat it. Unless his heart is purified by God, unless he's been enabled by the pure Holy Spirit to walk differently, but if he is faking purity, he will not have the power to resist the impurities of the world and to remain on the spot of the world.

You have to have purity begin at the heart, and if it's not there, it is not impressive to God. Now, there are several things about Christianity that certainly contribute to maintaining outward purity. If your heart is pure, that doesn't mean that you don't have temptations elsewhere.

You may love God with all your heart, but you also have urges. You also have hormones. You also have temptations.

Jesus was pure in heart, but he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. But there are ways in which a person who is pure in heart and who seeks to purify himself even as he is pure, behaves differently and has these things as foundations to maintain a purer walk than people outside of Christ. One of those things is that the Christian is to have a more biblical view about sex, and this comes from a more elevated view of marriage and sex than the world has.

The word sex... I mean, some people even cringe when they hear the word spoken in church, sex, as if there is something innately dirty about it. And we forget that God is the one who invented sex, and he did so before the fall, and he commanded people to use it before the fall. When God designed the first man, he made him naked, and he built everything about man purposefully.

When he made the woman to correspond to the man, he made her purposefully too, and that included the parts of them that were made for reproduction, the parts of them that made them sexual beings. He could have made them as amoebas that don't need a partner, and they could just split apart by mitosis, but that's not the way God chose to do it. God chose to make man and woman sexual.

When he had done it, he said, that's good, that's very good, and he told them, use it, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth. Sex is not a dirty thing to God. Abuse of sex is, but abuse of anything holy is.

If you take a pig into the temple of God, and offer it on the temple of God, well, I mean, the temple is a nice place, but you've just defiled it. You've cheapened it. You've done something very offensive to God, and to all godly minded people.

And sex is something that God made for a very sacred purpose. The sacred purpose of working together with God in the procreation of more eternal beings. And God made a marriage institution to be the place for that.

And God holds marriage in very high esteem. It's a very sacred thing. It says in Hebrews 13, verse 4, Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is undefiled.

That means sex within marriage is not a defiling thing. It's pure. It's not defiled.

It's pure in marriage. But it goes on to say in the same verse, But fornicators and whoremongers God will judge. So, sex is a very pure thing in the context that God has ordained it.

Outside of that, it's something that God must judge. But Christians should have an elevated view of sex, and that is what makes us disgusted whenever it is cheapened. At

least that should make us disgusted.

Some of us, if we're honest, we have to say that we're not entirely disgusted by it. In fact, we might even in some cases be attracted to the tawdry, cheapened versions of sex. Maybe not the most gross kinds, but just advertisements or magazine covers or whatever that maybe they don't have actual nude bodies on them, but still they exploit the sexual attraction in order to sell something.

And, you know, if we're honest, a lot of us would have to say, Well, there is a part of us that isn't disgusted by that. Although I think we should seek to be, and we should seek to change our tastes if they are not. Paul told Timothy that the attitude of the Christian toward the opposite sex, that is, those members of the opposite sex to whom you are not married, should be a pure one.

In 1 Timothy 5, 2, Paul says, Treat older women as mothers and younger women as sisters with all purity. Paul was writing to a young man. He said, Listen, you are overseeing a religious community.

There are old men and old women, young men and young women. And actually in verses 1 and 2, he addresses how Timothy should treat each of these different groups. And the last group he mentions is young women.

Treat them the way you treat a sister with all purity. Now, if every Christian young man would treat every Christian young woman the way he treats his sister, it wouldn't always be good, but it would at least be sexually pure. And it is that aspect, the sexual purity of it, that Paul is advocating here.

And of course, likewise, if every young woman would treat every young man the way she would treat a brother, a biological brother, likewise, that is a very high degree of sexual purity in most cases. Now, if you find a brother and sister who aren't sexually pure toward each other, then you've got something that is really twisted and perverted. Paul assumed at least this much, even in a corrupt world full of sexual perversion, he assumed at least he could say, treat them like your sister, and that would mean pure.

He did not assume there would be incest and so forth. But what we see here is Christians are commanded to maintain a really high standard of sexual purity and a very elevated view of marriage. And because we have an elevated view of marriage, we are capable of not falling into the traps that the culture has that doesn't know what marriage is.

I just heard today on the radio there's some man in Maine who's gone to court trying to get the court to acknowledge his marriage to his dog. Now, it had to happen. I mean, they're trying to legalize homosexual marriage.

I mean, the culture doesn't know what marriage is. They don't know what sex is for. They don't know what marriage is.

And so, the most perverse and twisted and crazy things our culture is actually suggesting. The court didn't allow it because they didn't let animals in the courtroom except seeing eye dogs. But the fact is, I mean, it sounds funny to us, but it's really not funny at all.

I mean, that a man would seriously suggest this shows how little our culture knows about marriage and sex. Yet, Christians are alone the ones who know what God made marriage for and what sex is for. And we are the ones who should have a very pure and wholesome and upfront ability to discuss those matters with our culture, to confront the culture about this, to show the culture that they, you know, everybody knows that sex is a drive that people have and a very strong drive for many people.

But most people don't know why they have it, what it's for. And Christianity is the only hope for our society in terms of being able to dialogue with those who are in the complete darkness on this subject and to present a pure and a high and a correct standard for this. If that doesn't end up happening, this culture is going to go the ways of all pagan cultures and our society will not survive.

Another thing that is an aspect of the Christian revelation and of Christian character that leads to a higher degree of purity in sexual interaction or interaction between the sexes, I should say, among Christians is a high sense, a strong sense of modesty. Now Christians don't have this in our culture, generally speaking. And the ones who do often do strange things with it.

A lot of times, Christians have become aware that immodesty is a problem not only in the dominant culture but even in the church. And so they pendulum swing to seemingly ridiculous alternatives. I knew of a group, it was a holiness church in Santa Cruz where I lived there many years ago.

They used to be a little, they weren't the Salvation Army but they used to stand out on the street like the Salvation Army sometimes did with a bass drum and a trumpet and play these old hymns and stuff, very poorly by the way, and basically kept people from that corner of the street. I'm sure the shopkeepers appreciated that. But these people dressed in clothing styles that had been the dominant styles probably in the 40s.

And to them, the idea of modesty meant you wear clothing that was in the dominant culture 30 years earlier than the time you're actually living. But that is not a radically Christian alternative. That is a religious, sometimes pharisaical, approach to things.

There are people, all of us know some people I suppose, who are Christians who have taken an approach to modesty that suggests that women ought to always have very long dresses, ought to have their heads always covered, ought to always wear long sleeves, ought to wear very plain colors. And men obviously also wear, I don't know if the men have so much of a costume as the women in some of these movements, but there is this

tendency to try to overcompensate for the lack of modesty generally in our Christian culture, that is the culture of the Christian churches. And the problem of course here is Christianity has not seen itself as having anything distinct to offer to the culture.

And this has been one of the things I've been complaining through this entire series is that the reason we don't see a dominant, we don't see a Christian culture in contrast to a dominant culture is because the church has very rarely had the opinion that it was supposed to confront the culture. The church has often thought, well, we need to accommodate the culture, we need to be culturally sensitive, we need to be seeker sensitive, we need to make sure we don't alienate people by seeming culturally irrelevant and so forth. And so we don't really take a stand ourselves for what's right in the area of something like dress.

The way people dress is a typical cultural thing. You go to some Polynesian cultures or some tribal jungle cultures and maybe the people wear nothing at all or the men might wear a loin cloth merely and the women wear nothing at all or maybe both sexes wear a loin cloth merely. That's part of their culture.

It's not something that's amoral. If Christianity comes there, that's part of their culture that needs to be addressed by Christian principles and one of the things that needs to be changed. But it's interesting how Christians have gotten gun-shy of suggesting that they have a better idea of modesty than the world.

And I think one of the reasons is that, oh, what was it, 20, 30 years ago, maybe longer, Christian missionaries got a lot of criticism because they'd go to these Polynesian cultures where the people were running around naked and they'd make converts and within a few years, they'd have these people wearing Western clothes. The guys, they're out sweating in Western suits and ties and things like that as they're climbing the coconut trees to get their food and the women are wearing Western clothing styles and so forth, which I'm not saying that they shouldn't or that that wasn't okay, but that seemed awfully weird to the world looking on saying these Christians, they're just way out of touch and they're trying to colonialize these people, actually, with American styles and so forth. So under that kind of criticism, missionaries kind of withdrew from that a great deal and now it seems to me that a lot of the missionaries I know don't want to criticize the immodesty of certain cultures that they go to.

And that also is seen in the lack of the church's desire to criticize the immodesty of our own culture. I mean, it's very clear. You can go to any church, shouldn't say any church, there are exceptions, but most churches, certainly any large church, and you will see at least probably a third of the women, if not more, dressed in clothing that Christian women, I think, should be ashamed to be seen in.

Now that doesn't mean they have to dress frumpy, it just means that Christian women need to get a clue. The worldly women want to seduce men, apparently. I'm not saying

every worldly woman wants to seduce men, but it obviously is something that many worldly women want to do in the clothing styles that are marketed for women, they have that in mind.

A great number of men like to have certain parts of the woman's body accentuated and exposed by her clothing. And so, worldly women who are not very smart, it seems to me, they get the clothes that will turn men on. Well, then the Christians who are even less smart, because they're not supposed to want to seduce each other, Christian women go out and they buy the same clothes and wear them to church or wherever.

I'm not complaining merely about the clothes women wear to church. I don't think Christianity just happens in church. I'm thinking, you know, that a lot of Christian women, and I'm going to say men now, in our society, have wardrobes that simply, or in their wardrobe, they have things that shouldn't be there for Christians.

It's very common now, of course, for men to be immodest as well. It used to be primarily, I think it was something that started with women, because women's styles changed so frequently. And men's styles remain kind of the same for long periods of time as women's styles go through different fashions and so forth.

But now, even men's styles are changing to the point where men's styles are trying to accentuate, you know, parts of their body. I mean, tight pants and things like that that really allure women or are designed to do so. That is not something that Christians should be doing.

Now, they don't have to wear clothing styles that are 30 years old. There are, after all, in our society, styles that are current that are not immodest. And Christians have a great variety of things they could wear that are not immodest.

But for some reason, a lot of Christians don't get a clue and they follow the immodest styles of the world. It's not a wise thing. Paul talked about modesty, especially of women.

I think historically, it's usually been a problem with women more, their clothing styles. But, of course, he would apply it to men if that was a problem in his society. But in 1 Timothy 2.9, Paul says, In like manner also, that the women should adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

Now, it's interesting. Paul says women should be clothed primarily with good works. That's the wardrobe that women who profess godliness should be concerned with is am I clothed with good works? I don't want to go out in public without my good works.

Now, a lot of women don't want to go out in public until they've got their makeup on or until they've got fashionable clothes on or their hair done right. And, you know, I don't want to criticize too much that. I mean, but I would say that if women were as concerned

about not going out until they were clothed in good works, it would be a better church and probably in time a better world.

But I think Christian women take their cues from worldly women and many respectful Christian men tend to take their cues from worldly men. And this has got to stop if the church is going to have a witness of purity to the world because those who design clothing styles are not generally concerned about sexual purity. In fact, the opposite is true.

They're generally concerned about turning heads. They're generally concerned about getting attention. Women will wear clothes that accentuate their breasts in ways that I think in biblical times Christian women would have been shocked to even suggest that they would do that because Paul indicated that they wanted to be dressed in modest and moderate apparel.

And modesty doesn't always just refer to how much skin is showing or how tight, how much shape is showing. Certainly any clothing that shows a lot of skin or a lot of shape more than necessary is in the realm of immodest clothing. It's that which draws attention to the parts of the body that are actually supposed to be concealed.

But even if clothing doesn't particularly show a lot of skin or a lot of shape it can still be immodest if it is such an outrageous style or such bizarre colors or something that it's very obvious that the clothing is designed to draw attention to itself. That is what immodesty is. Immodesty isn't just showing a lot of your private parts.

Immodesty is where you're drawing eyes to yourself and that can be done with clothing, that can be done with the volume of your speech, or the way you talk, the way you carry yourself. Modesty means that you basically try to become as obscure as possible in society. Remember, Christianity is not about getting attention and becoming famous and popular and well-liked.

Christianity is about pleasing God quietly, going about your business and not being too much of a distraction to other people. And a truly modest person thinks not too highly of himself or herself and does not feel that there's really any reason why people should be noticing them and does not dress in such a way as to try to encourage everybody to notice them. And I'm not saying you can't wear nice clothing.

I mean, if you're in a situation where everybody's dressed in clothes that are, you know, pretty in color or whatever and you're not going to stand out, it's not there and it's, you know, in other ways, not immodest. I'm not someone who thinks everyone has to wear gray clothes. I'm just saying that there are people who wear such wild clothes sometimes that there's no question but that they're wearing them saying, look at me, look at me, please.

Everybody, look at me. And that's not what modesty is. Modesty is trying to kind of fade into the woodwork as far as your personal attractiveness is concerned outside your marriage.

Now, you might say, well, Steve, that's kind of a, that seems like kind of a strange standard in this day and age. But it would seem strange in this day and age. It would seem, my standard would seem tremendously immodest in certain cultures.

Like if you go to a Muslim country where women aren't permitted to have anything but their eyes showing past their veil, I don't recommend that. I don't think that's, I don't think the Bible advocates that. But I'm saying that the sense of shame about being immodest is greatly eroded in our society right now.

Our culture actually has an assault against our modesty as you can see in the notes that's coming up here. But let me just say this. My wife told me that before she was saved, and she didn't get saved until she was in college.

So she went through her whole teenage years without knowing the Lord. And she lived in a beach town. She lived in Santa Cruz, California.

Surf City, USA, really. And so the beach culture, the beach scene was everything in that town. And she said that like everyone else, she wore whatever swimwear was in style at the time.

And as you can imagine, most swimwear is not exactly made for the purpose of being modest. And when she was not even a Christian, she said when she pulled out her swimsuit the first summer day that she went out in her swimsuit to the poolside or to the beach, she said she felt embarrassed to go out in it. Even though she had no Christian upbringing, she had no Christian conscience, she was not a believer, she was a worldly person, but she said she felt embarrassed to go out in her swimsuit the first few days of the summer.

But she said after a few days, she didn't feel that anymore. Got over it. And for the rest of the summer, she could go around and pray or stuff like that.

She didn't feel anything about it. Now, I think that's interesting because she was not a Christian who was embarrassed because of some Christian convictions. She had a native modesty that God put in her that her culture and her actions simply overwhelmed, overcame.

Modesty is not affirmed by our culture. And Christians need to restore a strong sense of modesty and that requires a bit of humility because the temptation is, especially of our pride, is to have people notice what we're wearing. And I'm not saying it's wrong if people do notice what you're wearing.

The question is a matter of the heart. You might not be trying to get people to notice particularly and people might notice. You don't have to feel bad about that.

It's just that if you pick your clothing, your clothing styles, with a mind of drawing attention to yourself and hoping that people will notice you in the crowd and you'll stand out and especially if the cut of the clothing is particularly revealing in order to get that kind of attention. Obviously, that is immodest and Christians are not to be that way. You're not supposed to be immodest.

You see, the reason is that Jesus said that if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery already in his heart. Now, adultery is about as bad a sin as any in the Bible. It's right up there with murder and a bunch of other things as a capital crime in God's book.

Adultery is not something to be tolerated. And therefore, when Jesus said, a man who does this commits adultery in his heart, He's not saying it's a light thing. He's saying it's a heavy thing.

It's a big thing. It's a soul-destroying thing. It's a thing that offends God.

Now, if I were a woman and I knew that if a man looked at me with lust or to lust after me, that he is destroying his soul, then I would not think myself a very good Christian if I dressed in such a way as that might encourage a man to look at me and lust after me. It might flatter my ego if I was a beautiful woman to think that the way I was dressed was turning all the heads and all the men thought I was great looking. But ego is not what we're living for.

To protect the souls of other people is far more important. And men need to consider that these days too. You know, I really think that there was a time when I was younger, I could be wrong, but at least the general conventional wisdom back when I was a kid was that men are attracted to women visually more.

Whereas I was told that women aren't so much visually attracted and aroused, but they're more aroused by tenderness and touch and things like that. And that it wasn't so much an issue for a woman whether men were being modest or not because that's not the way women were wired. Men were wired in such a way that visual things turned them on, but women were turned on by other things than that.

But I think that's changed. I think the feminist movement has basically tried to condition women to think that they are just the same kind of creatures sexually and otherwise as men. And therefore you had not only, you know, Playboy's been around, but then Playgirl magazine came out.

Now, is that magazine even still around? I think it flopped. I think some feminists tried to persuade us that women have the same amount of visual turn-on buttons as men do and

thought they were going to make some money on it by putting up Playgirl magazine with revealing photos of hunky men. But I don't even know if that magazine is still around.

It probably flopped. But the thing is, even if it did, it may be around, but even if it did flop, the mentality that produced that magazine has had its impact on our society. And men need to know this, that women, I'm hearing more and more, actually do stare at men's bodies.

And men need to make sure they don't wear revealing clothing. I don't know that women always did that. I'm not sure.

But they do now. And they've been conditioned to do that. So both men and women have to be concerned about modesty issues.

And then, of course, there's another principle feature of the Christian life that works favorably toward a higher degree of purity in Christians than non-Christians, and that is that we are given the resources by God to control our impulses, and we are required to do so. And we endeavor to do so if we're Christians. Now, some Christians don't control enough of their impulses, but we all know that we're not just free to do whatever it is that we get a hankering to do.

Just because I got an urge doesn't mean that I got to fulfill it. Just because I got an itch doesn't mean I have to scratch it. And we live in an impulsive society.

People want to grab all the gusto they can. They want it now. And, you know, if I want a cigarette now, I've got to go down and smoke a cigarette now.

If I want a drink, I'll go get a drink. If I want food, I'll go to the refrigerator. I won't wait until mealtime.

I want what I want now, because I can get it. And that's more and more the case in areas of sexual behavior in our society, too. Instead of waiting, instead of being patient and waiting until marriage, people say, why should I wait? I've got this impulse.

It's strong. Who could blame me? Other people know. No jury would convict me.

Everyone knows how strong these urges are. What am I supposed to do? You know, restrain myself? Well, as a matter of fact, Christianity teaches that that's exactly what we're supposed to do. But it's not a popular message in the culture, and it isn't really one that's followed very faithfully in Christianity either in our modern churches, because we see a great deal of sensuality and even immorality and even adultery in the churches where it's clear that many times Christians have not been much better than the non-Christians at restraining these impulses.

Well, Paul told us something about the normal Christian approach to such things in 1

Corinthians 9, beginning verse 24 through 27. Paul said, Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is self-controlled in all things.

Now, they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we do it for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air, but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul says, I discipline my body. I say no to my body. I bring it under subjection.

Paul admitted that there are plenty of urges his body has, many impulses that, well, that wouldn't be agreeable with Christian behavior. And he indicates that it's not all that easy to say no to them. It takes discipline.

It takes moderation in all things. It takes self-control. It takes the kind of determination that an athlete striving for the Olympic gold has, or in those days they didn't strive for Olympic gold, but an Olympic wreath.

He says, they're doing it to get a crown that's going to perish. We're striving for a crown that doesn't perish. How much more, in other words, should we discipline ourselves? Well, one of the areas where we need the discipline the most is our eyes.

Some people, no doubt, need more discipline of their hands and other parts of their body too. But most of us, I hope, if we're sincere Christians, are not going about actually getting involved in illicit sex. I know I'm not.

I doubt if many of the people I'm associated with are doing that. I know the churches have a lot of people in them who do illicit sex, but they're not in my circles. I mean, I don't know many people like that.

However, I would say that control of the eyes and the urges and the impulses of the eyes is something that probably a lot of Christians in my circles, myself included, have to really maintain a discipline on. Because everywhere we go, our eyes are exposed to things that really we're not supposed to be looking at. Eyes should not be exposed to the things that we are exposed to on a daily basis.

You know, in the Bible, the Bible has some chapters that talk about the need not to... Well, it basically talks about moral purity. And certain sins that are forbidden are uncovering the nakedness of your sister, uncovering the nakedness of your father's wife, uncovering the nakedness of your father's sister, and so forth. There are a bunch of different categories of relatives that you're not supposed to uncover the nakedness.

I didn't say anything about sleeping with them, but of course that's implied too. The issue was you shouldn't get so far as to see them naked, much less sleep with them. I'll

tell you what, if you don't see them naked, you probably aren't going to get around to sleeping with them.

Although, I did hear one pastor who boasted that he'd never seen his wife's arms above the elbows, because that was the standard of modesty that they recommended in their church. They didn't have any children, so I don't know whether... I don't know, a man who's been married to a woman and hasn't seen her arms above the elbows, maybe they don't have sexual relations. I don't know.

I guess Jacob and Leah had sexual relations without seeing each other until the next morning, but the fact of the matter is illicit sex doesn't usually take place where people are careful not to see each other unclothed. And yet we see people unclothed everywhere we go. We see them, not this time of year, but we see them walking down the street in certain cases.

We see them plastered on billboards and magazine covers. If you turn on the TV, you're going to see them there. That's a fact.

You're rarely going to find a video that doesn't contain them. And these are all things that really are not wholesome for Christian eyes to be looking at. And it's very hard even to divert your eyes away from them sometimes.

I remember when I was single living in Southern California, I was driving from a Christian ministry house where I lived to another house 40 miles away where I held a weekly Bible study. And on the freeway that I had to drive, there were these billboards everywhere. And I remember noticing on one of the drives that they'd put up a suntan lotion billboard on one side of the road, on my side.

And it had a picture of a woman laying on the beach on her stomach. She obviously had no top to her bathing suit on, and there was a guy, you know, rubbing suntan lotion on her back. And as a single man, that wasn't something that I felt was wholesome for me to look at.

So I began to memorize where that thing was coming up so I could look away when I got to that point on the road. And I did that for a while until it turned out one day I looked away across the road and there was another billboard that had just been put up of a bunch of Las Vegas dancers from some casino or something. And they weren't very well dressed either.

And I realized that there's no getting away from this. If I look where I normally would look, I'm going to see this suntan lotion thing. If I deliberately look away, I'm going to see these Las Vegas dancers.

What am I going to do? Well, I had to look at the hood ornament on my car when I got to that point. And it's not easy. It's hard to go into a store and not see magazine racks.

It can be done, but it's difficult. But it requires a higher than average commitment to controlling impulses that we don't really have that much experience controlling sometimes. I mean, where your eyes are looking, you may not even be thinking about where your eyes are looking until long after they've been staring somewhere they shouldn't have been staring.

Well, if you're like me anyway. I know I can be looking at a magazine cover for a long time before I realize I'm looking at the magazine cover. I'm waiting for the groceries to be checked through, and I'm looking at the headlines, and I'm looking at the picture, and then I'm staring, and then I think, wait a minute.

That's not wholesome. I shouldn't even be looking at that. That shouldn't even be here in the same building with me.

I shouldn't be in the same building with it, but I'm not sure where to get my groceries otherwise. I'll tell you, Job said, Job 31.1, he says, I've made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon a maid? He'd made a decision.

He would not even look at a young woman. Period. Now, you might say, well, that doesn't seem very reasonable.

How can you live your life without looking at a young woman? Well, maybe you can't in most cases. If you live out in the desert, you know, where he lived with his camels, maybe he could have avoided it more easily than we can. But when we live in a society where we buy our food from stores, and there's, you know, women in the workplace instead of in the home, and you see them when you go out, and they're not always modest, and all kinds of things, you really have to work at it.

The question is, is it worth it? Is it worth it to go to the trouble of controlling your eyes, controlling your impulses, the impulse to look at something? Well, only you can decide whether it's worth it to you. It certainly is worth it to God. God is concerned about your purity.

And in a world where visual stimuli of the wrong type are everywhere around us, it's going to take a lot more discipline than it might have taken in a day when women largely were working in their homes. There weren't photographs. There weren't televisions.

There weren't... I mean, there were always prostitutes around, but you could probably avoid their streets if you didn't want to be there. Nowadays, the prostitutes are on the magazine covers. And they're in all the places where you buy your food, where you buy your gas.

It takes much more commitment than in previous times to keep your eyes off of things that they shouldn't be on. And I don't envy my children's generation trying to grow up and trying to keep pure because it's getting worse all the time. So, these are some of the

issues about biblical purity that we need to be sensitized to because we've been desensitized to it.

I remember myself being very desensitized to this when I was in my... I guess I was in my 20s. I lived in Southern California, kind of a party environment. I was a Christian.

I was a good Christian. I mean, good as any around. You know, I mean, most people thought I was a superior Christian in those days.

I wouldn't say so looking back. But I was trying harder than a lot of people were and I was more serious about following the Lord than a lot of people I knew in the church were. But I still, you know, I'd watch some TV at home.

I was living with my parents. Some of that time, you know, they had a TV on. I'd watch some of that.

I'd go to movies with some of my Christian friends, some of which I can't imagine how we as Christians ever allowed ourselves to see them. But I was just desensitized to it. I just figured, well, you just can't pretend like the world isn't there.

I mean, you've just got to keep your mind pure and, you know, you've just got to see some of this stuff. And I suppose there comes a time where that is unavoidable, where for all your best efforts you can't avoid seeing something that's a temptation that you would rather not see. But when we become so desensitized to it that we're not trying to avoid it anymore, then we've really fallen.

We've fallen far. And we've lost the edge to our holiness that we need if we're going to be a witness along these lines to the world.