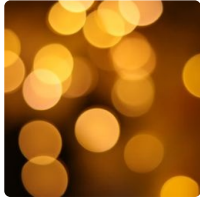


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Purity and Self-control



Charisma and Character - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the concepts of purity and self-control in his lecture. He first explores the biblical understanding of purity, which relates to moral defilement rather than simply avoiding physical contamination. He emphasizes that self-discipline is required to cultivate fruit of the spirit and avoid moral defilement. Ultimately, maintaining personal purity is necessary for Christians to achieve their highest goal of loving with a pure heart and becoming an undefiled bride for Christ.

Transcript

Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23, where we find the fruit of the spirit, we have nine fruits listed, and we have looked in an earlier session at some additional lists in other parts of scripture, in Paul's writings, and seen that what Paul lists, the nine fruits that Paul lists in Galatians 5, actually the list is supplemented with additional items in other lists that he gives. He doesn't always in those lists refer to what he's listing as the fruit of the spirit. But in one of our lectures a few weeks back, I gave you a handout that showed that there are at least six lists in Paul's writings, which have which overlap considerably the list of the fruit of the spirit, but have additional items on it.

And from those six lists, we called a larger number of fruits of the spirit out of Paul's writings. I'd like to talk about two of the fruit of the spirit tonight. One of them comes actually from the Galatians 5 passage.

The other does not. The two fruits we're going to be talking about are purity and self-control. And the reason that I've selected to put these together is, well, if it's not obvious already from my announcement of the subject, it will become obvious as we look at the meaning of these words.

Purity, the first of these is actually a word in the English language that is found more times in the New Testament than the Greek word that we're going to be looking at. There are in others is more than one Greek word for purity, not all the occasions in the Bible that you find the word purity. Will it always be the same Greek word or exactly the same concept? In many cases, the word pure or purity in scripture refers primarily to

ritual purity, according to the Jewish law under the law of Moses.

Contact with certain unclean things would would defile a person, would make them impure. And many times the Greek a Greek word that means pure is used in scripture with reference principally to this kind of purity being being undefiled ritually or ceremonially in terms of those things which the law declares to be unclean for a person to have contact with. But the word pure or purity, which appears in one of the lists that Paul gives of fruits, the spirit, and that list is in describing his the fruit of his own ministry in Second Corinthians, six, six is a word only is found one time in the New Testament and its meaning would appear to have to do with chastity.

It has to do with freedom from defilement, just like any word for pure would mean, but sexual defilement is is one of the principal types that this word refers to. Now, it's hard to learn or discover the range of meaning of a particular Greek word if it's only used once in the New Testament. And depending on the way it's used that one time, you can get more or less information about it.

Unfortunately, the only time this word appears in the New Testament is just in a list of things, purity and other traits that Paul lists in Second Corinthians, six, six. And therefore, the list itself does not convey any specific information about the meaning of the word that Paul uses. Fortunately, however, there are other words in the same family of Greek words related to it.

The word that Paul uses in Second Corinthians, six, six is the Greek word hagnotis. And while we don't have that word appearing twice in the New Testament, we do have related words. Hagnotis comes from an adjective which is used several times in the New Testament.

That adjective is hagnos or hagnos, and it is used quite a few times in the New Testament. And it's like the relationship of the two words is like in our English, the difference between purity and pure. Pure is an adjective.

Purity is a noun. And the same is true with hagnos, which is pure. And hagnotis, which is the word we're considering, which is purity.

Obviously, the words give a great deal of information about one another. If you can get the meaning of one of them, if you know what pure is, then you'll know what purity is. And the same is true of the verb.

There is a verb from the same root, and that is we would translate to purify. That is hagnotis, and that appears a number of times in the New Testament as well. Sometimes in the New Testament, it appears with reference to ceremonial purity, as does the some other words for pure.

But when we talk about the fruit of the spirit being purity, we're going to be talking about

a character trait, something that is a spiritual grace in the life of the believer. And therefore, we're not going to be considering specifically the issues of ritual purity or avoiding of ritual defilement. Now, when we come to the word self-control, the older English version, the King James, translate this as temperance.

And again, this word does not appear very often in the New Testament. It does appear in Paul's list of fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5, 23. Temperance or self-control is found there.

The word only appears two other times in the New Testament. Once is in Acts 24, 25. And there the apostle Paul, who is a prisoner in Caesarea and awaiting trial before the Roman courts.

Actually, he's awaiting at this point, I believe he's awaiting shipment of himself to Rome so that he can stand trial there. He has opportunity to talk to Felix, the governor, in private situations. And we read in Acts 24, 25.

Now, as he reasoned, this is in a private conference with Felix, the governor. He says, now, as Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, go away for now. When I have convenient time, I will call for you.

So that's one of the other three times or other two times that this word appears besides in the list of the fruit of the spirit. It also appears in one of the other fruit lists. That is in second Peter, chapter one, where it says, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge and knowledge, patience and so forth.

And temperance or self-control is in that list in second Peter one six. So we have Peter telling us to add to our lives, to our character self-control. It is a grace of the Holy Spirit that needs to be cultivated.

We have Paul listing it as a fruit of the spirit. And we just the only other time we read of it in the Bible is when it's in a list. Paul talked to Felix about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come.

Obviously, Felix was not a very self-controlled man. And so he trembled with conviction. And yet he was not convicted enough to repent.

But like the word purity, there are cognates of this Greek word that are used more often in the New Testament, the verb form, which would be to control yourself or to exercise self-restraint is found in the New Testament twice. And also the adjective, which we would translate self-controlled or temperate in the older English. Literally means strong in a thing, it's made from two Greek particles that mean one means strong and the other means in.

So that's a strange translation, but it's self-controlled. The Greek word, the adjective is in Grotos, and that means strong in a thing or self-controlled. And if you'll look at the notes I gave you, I've given you actually the dictionary definitions taken from Strong's dictionaries and from some others.

But the word self-control, the noun, which is ungratea or ungratea, excuse me, means self-control, especially continence. Now, the word continence today is often used with respect to old people who have to wear diapers, but continence in biblical times refers to the ability to restrain your sexual drive and also other drives. To control and to contain yourself, and that's what.

Temperance or self-control means in in these instances in the scriptures, the verb means to exercise self-restraint in diet and in chastity. Or to contain oneself, one of the places where Paul uses this word is in first Corinthians seven, nine, where it speaks of a man. It's good for a man not to marry, but if man cannot contain himself, if he cannot exercise self-restraint, then let him marry, he says.

So obviously, self-restraint there is with reference to chastity, with reference to sexual purity. And the adjective, which is in Grotos, means masterful or strong, self-controlled in appetite, etc. The only time that word, the adjective is used in the scripture is one time in Titus chapter one in verse eight, where it is one of the traits necessary for an elder or a bishop in the church is to be self-controlled.

By the way, when we think about the things that qualify a person for eldership or disqualify a person for eldership, if you're one of those people who is concerned about such things, you may look at the pastor carefully or the elders carefully, see if they qualify the things that often we think of disqualifying would be if his family is not in order. Or if he maybe has a bad temper or something like that. And those things, in fact, the Bible says are among the things that would disqualify a man for eldership.

But in other studies, self-controlled and there's an awful lot of overweight pastors. Now, if they want to be overweight, well, then I guess we can say they're self-controlled. If, however, they'd rather be underweight, but they're overweight or they'd rather the average weight, their weight, we have to say they don't have control over one of their appetite.

And self-control has to do with more than one appetite. It is the Greek word is used most often with reference to sexual appetite. But it's quite obvious that the sexual appetite is simply one of the natural hormonal, glandular appetites that resides in the body.

And there are others, too. And these appetites have something in common with another, especially the appetite for food and the appetite for sex are often compared with one another and for good cause. Both of them are God given appetites.

Both of them arise out of glands. They don't arise out of the presence of the devil in the world. They rise out of glands which were present before the devil ever encountered man.

Man was made with an appetite for food. In fact, he was given tremendous liberty in indulging that appetite long before he ever encountered the devil and long before he sinned. Likewise, man was born with an appetite or created, I should say, with an appetite for sex.

And he was even commanded to use it. And to be fruitful and multiply. These were God given appetites.

But it seems clear that these appetites have gotten the better of many people. There are many people who have simply never learned to govern their lives by anything other than those appetites. Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 14, he says, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance, but as he who has called you as holy, be ye holy in all manner of conversation, all manner of behavior.

Now, he says, as obedient children, we should not be fashioning ourselves, our character, our life. According to our former lusts, our appetites, which governed us when we were in ignorance, he says, back before we knew God, when we're non-Christians, there was no higher principle to govern our lives by than our appetites. Now, I shouldn't say that in a universal, absolutist way, because there are non-Christians who govern their lives by something other than appetite.

I mean, there are non-Christians who govern their sexual appetite and keep it within boundaries and their food appetite, too. There's some incredibly self-disciplined people out there who aren't Christians. However, they generally do it for some other unworthy goal, like to get rich or to be attracted to the opposite sex or to or whatever it is they do it for, or even just to be proud of themselves, you know, just to feel good about themselves, to have high self-esteem.

I mean, there are, in fact, non-Christians who do bring their appetites under a measure of control, more than maybe the average person does, and that without God, without the Holy Spirit in their lives, but because they are driven by some other carnal, you know, unworthy, self-centered thing. The Christian has an entirely different principle for ordering his life. We do not fashion ourselves according to our former lust.

We fashion them according to the call of God, which is to be holy as He is holy. In other words, it is a desire to be like Him. It is a desire to please Him by being like Him.

That motivates us to bring these appetites under control. Now, if God made these appetites, why should they have to be brought under control? It seems like a logical

question. If God made the appetite for food, God made the appetite for sex, then I presume that other things that our bodies enjoy, sleep, alcohol, or whatever, cigarettes, whatever, you know, whatever is pleasant to the body, I suppose it is pleasant because of built-in stuff that is in our biology.

It is not the devil who makes cigarettes relaxing, or drugs, you know, I mean, the devil did not, he might use those things, but he did not create them. As far as I know, God created tobacco. I have never smoked, and I am not sure exactly what the pleasure is in smoking.

To me, it is irritating to be around such smoke, but some people obviously enjoy it. Whatever makes it enjoyable is something probably physiological, I am sure. I am sure it is glanular, or it is an appetite of the flesh.

But these are the kinds of things that get control of people. And it is quite clear that since the fall of man, these appetites have not been brought consistently under the restraint of God's will. You see, a sexual urge, or a desire for food, is not always a wrong thing, but it is wrong if it is a desire for that which is not lawful for you to have.

If you are a married person, and your sexual urge is toward your spouse, that is not wrong. If you are a married person, and your sexual urge is toward someone else's spouse, that is wrong. Now, your sexual urge does not know the difference between your spouse and another.

It is just an animal there with a spirit inside, you know. Your body is just a bunch of glands, and organs, and cells, and things like that. I mean, the urges come from hormones, and those kinds of things.

Now, your hormones do not know the difference between your wife, your husband, or someone else's. The hormones are just hormones. What it requires is commitment to principle on the part of your spirit committed to God, governed by God, to determine where those glands, and hormones, and desires can be legitimately exercised, and where they will be restrained.

The same is true of the appetite for food. God created you with an appetite for food, and it is a good thing. You might neglect to eat and die if He did not.

Maybe some of you cannot imagine ever being in danger of neglecting to eat, but the reason you eat is because you enjoy it. Suppose you did not. Suppose God had not built into it an enjoyable factor, an enjoyment factor, in eating.

Then, in all likelihood, you probably would not eat so much. You would just have to remember, oh, let us see, I probably do not have enough calories, I do not have enough... I better go... Boy, I almost got through two days without eating. I better eat before I die, you know.

The enjoyableness of it is necessary for our good, but the problem is, because it is enjoyable, a man whose heart is not submitted to God often can live for the gratification of self, of the flesh, of the appetite. And it is clear that some eating is not okay. When you have already had too much, when there is not enough to go around and you take more than your share, when it is not your food and you are stealing it, when you are supposedly fasting... I mean, there are times when the legitimate desire to eat is not the right thing for you to do.

And at times like that, you have to exercise self-control. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10, in verse 30 or 31, I forget which, Paul said, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Yes, even your appetite for food has to be governed by this overriding principle that you want to glorify God.

And you cannot do that by just letting your appetite run rampant. You have got to reign it in. You have got to bring it under control.

Or as Paul says, I keep my body under submission to some higher principle. Now, when we talk about purity and self-control, the majority of the scriptures on this subject, and probably the principal meaning of the words themselves in the Greek, has to do with sexual desire. But the meaning or the concept does spill over to other desires that are equally natural as much as sexual desire.

But we are going to have more to say about the sexual craving than anything because I think that is the primary use of these words in scripture. It is the primary problem most people have too. And it is an area that Christians need more help with.

They need more insight from God. They need to know how to conquer it. And so that is what we are going to be working on here.

Now, we are not going to work separately on the issues of purity and self-control because they are obviously related. Purity is what you obtain by self-control. If it is sexual self-control, chastity, I should say, if it is sexual restraint of your sexual appetite, what you obtain is chastity or purity.

And so these are closely related things. One is the means and the other is the end. But the fruit of the spirit in the life is to be pure.

And this happens by remaining self-controlled. And so we will talk about that issue as a combined issue. I should point out, and many of you have already discovered just in experience, that the fruit of self-control and of purity doesn't just appear automatically in your life as a Christian.

Now, I should clarify, with some people it might, more than with others. Most Christians I have talked to have not found it to be automatic and instantaneous at conversion, that they suddenly have total control over all appetites. Now, the reason I allow that some

may is because I have, in fact, met some Christians who say that their former promiscuity and their lust for drugs or their lust for alcohol or their lust for women, that when they got converted, that was gone.

Now, I trust them. I cannot confirm that from my own experience. That is, it did not happen to me when I was converted.

But I will say this. There are some fruits of the spirit that did seem to come instantaneously in my life. Those weren't among them.

But I believe that the work of God is individual in each person. That's because you're not just joining some kind of club where everyone has a uniform experience. You're in a relationship with God.

And all relationships have their own individual features. God relates to you as an individual. And it may be that you, upon being converted, suddenly, instantaneously lost your inordinate craving for food or sex or drugs or some other thing.

But you have other struggles. You know, whatever those are, you might know. Others of us got victory in some other area, maybe instantaneously.

There was a radical change in our life. But the struggle is in the area of self-control of appetites. I would say, if you are one of those people who automatically obtained the fruit of self-control and purity in your life and in your character the moment you were saved, then a lot of what I have to say probably won't be what you won't need.

And I don't say that sarcastically. There's a good chance that someone here may be able to testify to this change in their life. But I suspect that most people are like me and like almost everyone I've ever talked to who's a Christian who say there is a problem and there needs to be a solution.

Now, don't be discouraged about that. That is what we would expect to be the case. The Bible speaks of these things as fruit of the Holy Spirit, not weeds of the Holy Spirit.

You see, weeds grow by themselves. Fruit has to be cultivated. Weeds grow when you don't want them to grow.

Fruit has to be labored over. Weeds have to be removed so that fruit can grow. And when God came and found you, He sowed the seed of His Word in your heart like soil.

And some people, there were thorns and thistles in that too. And it chokes out the good seed. And there has to be work done to make sure that the fruit is produced.

Now, the work is not our work. The work is the Holy Spirit's work. But it cannot happen if we don't cooperate.

If it was only the Holy Spirit who did it and no one else, then we'd all be perfectly pure because that's what God wants us all to be. It's clear that if we are deficient in any of this fruit, it's because, not because God is defective, but because there's our part that is, we're letting down somewhere where we're supposed to be doing something we're not doing. And yet, it is the Holy Spirit's work to produce the fruit, just like it's the Holy Spirit's work to produce a crop in the field.

I don't have a background in farming and gardening, but we did get a little bit of acreage a few years ago. And every year, my wife and children are growing some of the food we eat. And I know they put in a lot of work.

And they work hard. They pull the weeds. They turn over the soil.

Sometimes I do a little bit of it myself, but I'm not out in the garden very often. There's the work of protecting it from insects and of harvesting it and so forth. They work hard, but they can't make one thing grow.

The thing grows by some power, some force beyond human control. And Jesus even said that in one of his parables in Mark chapter 4. He said, you know, the kingdom of God is like when a man goes out and sows seed, then he goes to bed. And he sleeps and he wakes and he sleeps and he wakes and the seed grows up.

He doesn't know how. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. He said it ripens, it grows.

The man sows the seed, he cultivates it, but it grows even when he's asleep. There's a force beyond human control that produces. Now, the man has to labor.

We are laborers together with God. Paul said, I planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase. And that was true.

Of course, he was talking about planting a church. But it's true also in the individual producing the fruit of the spirit. It's the Holy Spirit that gives the increase.

But you have to plant and have to water and pull the weeds and you have to cultivate. And that's why we don't ever read of the weeds of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. We only read of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

So what we want to deal with tonight is how this particular fruit is to be cultivated. And there's fortunately a great deal of information in Scripture, truth that can set us free. Let me begin by clarifying what the concept is of purity.

Purity is freedom from defilement. Therefore, I want to talk to you about what defilement is, because that's not a word we use. If we use it, we're not very familiar with it.

If I ask you, what does defilement mean? Many of you would say, well, I've heard the

word, but I'm not sure exactly how to define it. Obviously, it means something like some people think it has to do with being guilty of something or maybe just being dirty. And in the Bible, it has a range of meaning.

As I said earlier, defilement frequently in the Bible simply refers to the fact that you have become ritually unclean until evening or for seven days or whatever the law prescribes. If you've touched a dead body or if you're a leper or if you're a woman on her period or a man who's had a wet dream or you have internal bleeding or I mean, a number of things, a number of conditions, physical conditions would render a person unclean under the law or defiled. The word would be defiled.

In that state of defilement, a person could not enter the tabernacle. They could not approach God in the ceremonial way at the tabernacle because it is said in the scripture in Numbers 19, 20, that they would defile the tabernacle. If they did so.

Contact with a defiled thing or person will defile you in the Old Testament. If you touched a defiled person, if a woman had her period, she was unclean. But if you sat on a chair that she had sat on during a period, you'd be unclean, too.

Now, none of this has anything to do with germs. None of it has anything to do with hygiene. It is all symbolic.

It's quite clear that there's no moral content to ritual impurity in the Old Testament. It can't be. How could a person be held responsible for having leprosy or having a period or having internal bleeding or, you know, or accidentally walking into a cave? It turns out to be a tomb of somebody who was buried there.

Now you're defiled for seven days. I mean, it's clear that the things that make up ritual defilement in the Old Testament are not moral issues. So why are they there? Well, like all of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament, they have symbolic value.

That is the value of ritual, is that it symbolizes something that is more real than itself. It is spiritual. There is something spiritual that it is to portray.

And as you study the Old Testament law, the ritual law, you'll find that there is not a single thing in the ritual law that doesn't have something spiritual that it corresponds to. A leper, for example, I believe is a type or a figure of a person who is being consumed with sin. And I think if you look at the law of leprosy in Leviticus 13 and 14, you'll find that there's tremendous correspondence to the progress of sin, the diagnosis of sin and the cure of sin in the ritual associated with leprosy and likewise, unclean foods.

We don't have time to look into all this in detail, but the things are said to be unclean, although there's nothing moral innately about them. They are a picture, a type and a shadow of something that is spiritual and is ritual. Now, one thing God was trying to point out to us by giving all these laws about defilement is that just as under the law,

under ritual law, you could become ritually defiled by contact with something unclean.

So also morally, you can be morally defiled by contact with moral evil. And each unclean thing in the law represents something else spiritual, but we don't want to go into all that. All I want to do is give you the general idea that what the Old Testament says about defilement ritually is a type and a shadow of moral defilement and purity that we seek in our character is the absence of this moral defilement.

You can learn lessons from studying the ceremonial law. Paul did. Paul often brought spiritual lessons out of the ceremonial law.

There was a law that you shall not plow with an ox and an ass together. Now, an ox was a clean animal and ass was an unclean animal. Why not plow together with them under one yoke? Paul spiritualized it, said, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

You're clean. They're unclean. Don't come under the same yoke.

Don't plow together with them. There's a law in the Old Testament that said you shall not muzzle the ox as it treads out the grain. Paul spiritualized that and said, you know, that has to do with ministers and they should be able to labor with the hope of eating, you know.

And so Paul was able to take the ritual law and see the spiritual things that came out of it. Unfortunately, he didn't write a complete commentary on the ritual. That would have been very nice if he had.

We would leave nothing to conjecture. But I believe that that ritual law is there to convey spiritual ideas. Although to be a leper is not in itself blameworthy before God, the plight of the leper, being separated from man and from God, is a picture of how sin in our life alienates us from God and from people and from society and so forth.

And so there are lessons there. So defilement in this ritual represents defilement in the spiritual, and it's that defilement in the spiritual realm that we are to avoid. It's interesting, though, that in addition to ritual defilement in the Old Testament, there is reference to moral defilement almost always in connection with sexual impurity.

I gave a lot of scriptures here in your notes. I certainly won't look them up in Genesis 34. All those references there in verse 2, 5, 13, 27, all of those have to do with the same event.

And that was the rape of Dinah, Judah's daughter. And excuse me, Judah's daughter, Jacob's daughter. And it says repeatedly that Hamar, or not Hamar, Shechem, the prince, had defiled her, meaning he slept with her and they weren't married.

So it refers again and again to the fact that she was defiled, that he had defiled her. Obviously, sexual immorality being the means of defilement in that case. In Leviticus 15, 32, and also in 18 verses 6 through 24, we have basically sexual behaviors listed that are said to defile people, particularly in Leviticus 18 verses 6 through 24.

As you can see right there, that's a lot of verses. What that section is basically is a list of misbehavior, sexual misbehavior, including bestiality, homosexuality, adultery, you name it. Anything that's sexual misconduct, they're all listed there.

And at the end of it says, do not defile yourself with these things. Sexual defilement. Numbers chapter 5, there's quite a few verses there in your notes.

Verse 13, 14, 20, 27, 28, 29. All of those have to do with one event too. And that has to do with the ritual of jealousy or the ordeal of jealousy when a man suspects that his wife has defiled herself, but he can't prove it.

And defiled herself means committed adultery. And the ritual is a means by which God would reveal whether she's guilty or not. But again and again, the woman who's committed adultery or suspected of it is said to have defiled herself or been suspected of defiling herself again, sexually.

First Chronicles 5, 1 tells us that Reuben defiled his father's concubine. We know the story. He slept with her.

She wasn't his wife. She was defiled by that. And so was he.

In Ezekiel, a number of places, there are places in Ezekiel that talk about people defiling themselves in sexual immorality. In Revelation, 14, 4 describing the 144,000, I never noticed before that 14, 4 looks like 144 on the page. And it's a description of the 144,000.

Oh, that's spooky, isn't it? But that shows the verse members are inspired. But of the 144,000, it says these are those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. Now, I don't personally believe these people are virgins in the literal sense, because it explains they are virgins in the sense that they have not defiled themselves with women.

If you are married, you're not a virgin, but you haven't defiled yourself because marriage is honorable in the bed undefiled. So marital sex is not defiling, but these men have not defiled. They are chaste.

They are pure. And I personally believe that that's even referring to spiritual purity, because in the Old Testament, the word defilement is sometimes used of Israel committing idolatry, which God in those contexts refers to as a spiritual adultery. So sometimes the idea of defilement is extended from the idea of mere sexual defilement to

that of the antitype of sexual defilement, idolatry, worshiping other gods.

The point, however, is that this is a moral defilement. This is not ritual impurity. This is moral impurity.

And it is, of course, that primarily that the word purity and self-control in the New Testament are speaking of the absence of this kind of impurity. So why is it important for us to be pure and to have self-control? Well, I would hope no one needs me to answer that question for them. But just in case you do, let's look at some scriptures in James chapter one and verse 27.

James says pure and undefiled religion, by the way, the words pure and undefiled are essentially synonymous. They're not the same Greek word, but they are synonymous in meaning pure and undefiled. Pure and 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, undefiled, unspotted from your contact with the world.

Now, you have to have contact with the world, but you don't have to pick up spots and stains. You don't have to be defiled by that contact. It's very important for us to remember that in the Holy Spirit, there is a dynamic that is more powerful than the dynamic of sinful defilement itself.

And this, too, is seen ritually and symbolically in the fact that Jesus, when he touched a leper, an act which under the law would have defiled Jesus. Instead of defiling him, it made the leper undefiled, it made the leper clean. When a woman who had an issue of blood in the New Testament who would have defiled ceremonially anyone who touched her, whom she touched when she touched the hem of Jesus garment, he didn't become defiled, which the law would have made.

She became undefiled. Her issue of blood ceased. She was now clean.

And what we see in the ministry of Jesus is the power to have contact with that which is defiled without becoming himself defiled, but rather his cleanness is transmitted to them. It goes the other way. And this power to overcome the power of sin is the power of the Holy Spirit in the life, the Spirit of God in Jesus.

You know, when the woman touched Jesus hem of his garment, it says he felt power go out from him. And that power was the dynamic of power of the Holy Spirit rendering her clean. And so Jesus was able to hang out with tax collectors and sinners, and he was criticized by the Pharisees because they knew that if they hung out with that kind of crew, they'd be carousing and so forth, too.

They weren't they were spiritually weak individuals. They didn't have the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus hung out with them.

And you know what? Jesus never did become a tax collector or a sinner by the contact. Rather, most of them stopped being tax collectors and sinners because of his contact with them. Now, what I'm saying is we can, because of the power of the Holy Spirit, be self-controlled and pure, though living in the world.

Contact with the world does not have to spot and defile the Christian pure religion and undefiled before God is, among other things, to keep oneself unspotted from the world. That doesn't mean aloof from the world. Paul said over in First Corinthians five and verse nine, he says, I wrote to you in an epistle not to have company with fornicators and that kind of folks.

And then he says, but I didn't mean fornicators in the world. So you have to go to the world to do that. Remember that here it is in First Corinthians five, nine, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world or with the covetous or the extortioners or idolaters. Since then, you'd have to go out of the world. And he goes on to say, I'm talking about Christians who do those kind of things, people who claim to be Christians and don't have any company with them.

But he made it clear, I don't expect you to leave the world and have no contact with sinners in the world. How in the world would you ever reach them? You don't go off into a monastery to keep yourself pure. And by the way, those who did so in the Middle Ages found that it didn't work.

I mean, there were some godly people who lived in monasteries, some godly monastics, but you know what? Archaeological excavations have found that many of the monasteries and nunneries had tunnels connecting them and they found the bones of babies and things like that in these tunnels. It's well known that there was a great deal of sexual immorality that took place in many of the monasteries. To remove yourself from the world doesn't make you pure.

It does not impute to you self-control. You can get yourself out of the world, but you can't get the world out of you that way. And that's where the change is needed.

You need to have the Holy Spirit work the worldliness out of you or overcome the world. This whosoever is born of God overcomes the world, it says in 1 John chapter 5. So you need to learn to overcome the world, not run away from the world. To be pure and undefiled in true religion that pleases God requires that you are able to be undefiled by the world.

Not that you go out of the world. Jesus prayed in John 17, verse 15, Father, I don't pray that you take them out of the world, but that you just keep them from the wicked one. It's possible to be in the realm of the wicked one, geographically speaking, but kept from

him, spiritually speaking, and not only kept from him, but rescuing others out of there at the same time.

Look over at Jude. That was John 17, 15. Over in Jude, verse 23.

Well, actually, 21 and make it 22 and 23. Actually, I read this, I think last week in connection with another point we're talking about, but this one fits here to Jude versus 22 and 23 speaking, I believe, with reference to reaching people for Christ. He says on some have compassion, making a distinction, but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Now, hating the garment defiled by the flesh is figurative. In Christianity, garments aren't defiled, but in Judaism, they were. Any clothing you wore while you were in a state of ritual defilement was a defiled garment.

You had to wash your body and your garment at the end of the day or at the end of seven days, depending on the prescribed length of time. The point is, if you touch the garment of an unclean person under the law, you would become defiled. And therefore, Judas speaking figuratively, he's saying not only should you avoid touching a defiled person, you should avoid touching even their garment.

That is, don't don't even compromise in any way with uncleanness, avoid defilement like the plague. Snatch the people from the fire, but do not participate in their defilement. Do not pick up any of their defilement.

Hate even the garment defiled by the flesh. His point is to reach people. You must have compassion.

You must be among them. You must snatch them from the fire. But you need to do so in such a manner as to avoid all defilement of yourself by that content.

And by the way, I do believe that many Christians overestimate their ability to do this. And especially people who are zealous for evangelism, which is a good zeal to have. To desire to win sinners for God, it's easy to say, well, where are the sinners? But in the bar, where are the sinners? But in the red light district, where are the sinners? But on the street? Well, let's go get them.

Well, but if you happen to be spiritually weak and perhaps especially in one of the areas where of sin that is prominent in that place, maybe I'll let someone else go. Or if you go, go with somebody else who isn't weak. Go with fear.

And if you snatch people in that circumstance, do so with a light touch. Avoiding contact with any defilement because you need to watch over your soul. So your religion before God and the Father be pure and undefiled and you'll be unspotted from the world.

Why is that so necessary? Why should pure religion require us not to be spotted? Well, there's a number of reasons I've given them. And, you know, I've given five reasons. There's probably more, but that's enough for one lesson.

Because here's why pure religion requires that you be undefiled. One, because appearing in the presence of God requires purity. What good is a religion that doesn't allow you to appear in the presence of God? Pure religion, if it's going to do you any good, will bring you into the presence of God.

Yet you cannot come into the presence of God without purity of spirit. It says in Psalm 24, my Bible left Psalm 24 out. No, here it is.

Verses three and four, who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? Who can come before God? Who can reside in the presence of God? And what good is a religion that can't put you there? The answer is given he who has clean hands and a pure heart. The pure heart and the clean hands. Clean hands only remain clean by exercising self-control.

Purity of heart and self-control are essential to pure religion. You must remain undefiled because without it, you cannot appear before God. Those who have clean hands, those who have a pure heart, they can come before God.

And that's why Jesus said in Matthew 5, 8, blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God. If you wish to be in the presence of God, if you want to see him, you've got to have a pure heart. That's one reason it's so important for us to remain pure.

Hebrews 12, verse 14, it says, pursue peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Pursue holiness without which, without holiness, no man will see the Lord or woman either. I wager.

Okay, so we then see that the first reason that pure religion requires it remain unspotted and undefiled is because you can't come before God. If you're not pure. Secondly, another reason that pure and good religion requires purity is because it is an aspect of divine wisdom.

In James 3, verse 17 says, the wisdom which is from above is first pure and peaceable, and it gives a long list of characteristics. But pure is right there at the end of the list. The wisdom of God is pure.

If you've got impure reasoning, it's not the wisdom of God. Now, he says, if you have bitter envy and strife in your hearts, glory not and do not lie against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish, earthly.

It's of the world, sensual. It's of the flesh, devilish. It's of the devil.

That ain't God's wisdom. And you got that kind of wisdom. It isn't pure religion and undefiled to have the wisdom of God to be instructed by God requires that that wisdom be pure.

And purity is a necessary component of divine wisdom. A third reason that pure religion requires that you be undefiled is because the goal of Christianity is to love out of a pure heart. Many of us love, but that love can be defiled by selfish motives.

There are often, it's very easy to mistake lust for love. And it's easy to convince ourselves that we love somebody when, in fact, we just like them because they make us feel good. Love is something that is not self-interested.

It's self-disinterested. And it's strictly concerned about the other party. That's real love.

But that only can happen if you have a pure heart. A pure heart is unmixed with, you don't have mixed motives in there. And it says in 1 Timothy 1 5, Paul says, now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith.

The purpose of God's commandments to us is that we would love out of a pure heart. But good is a religion that can't create love out of a pure heart. If you don't have a pure heart, you can't love out of a pure heart.

In Titus 1 15, Paul says that to the pure, all things are pure. To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. But even their mind and conscience are defiled.

If you have a pure heart, everything in your experience emanates purity. If you're defiled in your heart, everything about your life is defiled. No doubt this is what Jesus was saying when he said the light of the body is the eye.

If that light which is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness? If your heart and your mind are not pure, everything about you is in the dark. Everything is defiled. Everything is bad.

But if your eye is single or pure, then that's different. The fourth reason why pure religion requires personal undefilement is because purity is an aspect of Christ's likeness. And pure and genuine religion requires that we be like Jesus.

That is at least the goal. Now, none of us are completely like Jesus yet. But the Bible indicates that we are moving in that direction.

And that is certainly our goal. Our goal is not just to go to heaven the way we are. We wouldn't fit in there at all.

The only one who really fits well into heaven is Jesus. That's his home. And for us to be like him will fit us to be in his presence.

We are accepted in the beloved. Fortunately, because we're in Christ, our own imperfections, God is able by his love to overlook a number of sins. But that doesn't mean we're fit for heaven.

Just because I can go there as an imperfect person doesn't mean I want to. Those imperfections in my character, if I died today, would not keep me from heaven because of the grace of God. But the more I can become like Christ, the more I will be at home in heaven.

I'm not saying I'll be kicked out of there without it. But it's like I'd be like a fish out of water if I went to heaven and was not at all like the inhabitants there. Now, some people think, well, we'll just become instantaneously perfect when we go to heaven.

Maybe that's true. Maybe it isn't. We have a verse here that's relevant to the topic in 1 John chapter 3, verses 2 and 3. It says, Beloved, now we are the children of God.

It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we should be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is. Do you hope to be like Jesus? Then you will purify yourself.

It is if you want to be like Jesus, you will pursue purity. Because why? He's pure. You want to be like him? He's pure.

You've got to purify yourself to be like him. Now, it says when he shall appear, we'll be like him. Does that mean when he shall appear, all the things about us that are unlike him will instantaneously change, will instantly be like him? Maybe.

I always grew up thinking that, but I'm not sure that that's what it says. It may be saying that Jesus isn't really going to appear until we become more like him. He may be waiting for something in his church before coming back.

There are indicators in the scripture that he's waiting for something. It says that God has given apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building of the body of Christ, for how long? Until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God into a perfect man. That's how long he's working in the church before he comes back.

Now, so I suspect that there may be something in what John's saying that we're not yet what we shall be, but when he comes back, he's going to come back. We'll be like him at the same time. Whether one causes the other or vice versa is not stated clearly, but one thing is clear that if you have that hope in you, you will aim at purity.

You will purify yourself even as he is pure. Being like Christ requires personal purity. Finally, a fifth reason why pure religion and undefiled before God the Father requires

personal undefilement is because Christ deserves and desires an unblemished bride, an undefiled bride.

In Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 27, it says that Jesus gave himself for the church that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot. That is a defect, a blemish, a defilement or wrinkle or any other such thing, and that it should be holy and without blemish. Actually, the word without spot is the same Greek word as is translated in James, unspotted from the world.

The church that Jesus wants, the bride that he wants is going to be clean, pure, and that certainly gives incentive for us to seek purity in our own lives. So there's many reasons why it's reasonable for James to say pure religion and undefiled before God before the Father requires that one remain unspotted, undefiled from the world. Now, let's look at specifically avoiding sexual defilement.

Now, I realize that some people who hear this message may have struggles with other areas of the flesh greater than they have struggles with sexual drive. And therefore, much of what I have to say about avoiding sexual defilement can possibly be applied to other kinds of defilement. Actually, earlier in the notes, I didn't make the point earlier, but I probably should have up there under Roman numeral two, capital B near the top of the notes, I list some other things that are said to defile a person, particularly idolatry.

In 1 Corinthians 8, 7, if a person eats meat sacrificed to idols without a clear conscience, he defiles himself. Although another person with a better conscience toward it can eat meat sacrificed to idols without defiling his conscience because he's not involved in idolatry because he's not into it. He's just eating food as far as he's concerned.

But someone who's weaker in the area of idolatry, he goes and eats at that feast and his heart gets wrapped up in the idolatry and he gets defiled by it. This is, as I said, one of the ways that the Old Testament frequently speaks of defilement, not only as sexual defilement, but also idolatry, which is the spiritual counterpart for Israel of sexual defilement. It's adultery against God.

But idolatry to us takes different forms. I haven't met anybody in the church today who has idols in their home. Now, if you went to some lands, you could find them.

You go down to South America or you go over to India or you go to someplace in Africa and you'd find Christian homes that have little idols and little voodoo dolls and those kinds of things because there's a lot of superstitions. But the Christians I know around here don't have images that they bow down and worship as people have in many other cultures. But we have our own forms of idolatry.

Anything that we allow to dominate our lives, that is contrary to God's will for us, we're putting ahead of God. And as such, it becomes an idol. Paul indicated in Colossians and

Ephesians, it's Colossians 3.5 and Ephesians 5.5, that covetousness is idolatry.

If you put your craving for money and possessions above your loyalty to doing the will of God, in other words, if you do what you want because it'll make you richer, rather than doing what God would do because it will mean you have to sacrifice something in that area of material things, that is idolatry, Paul said. And anything that dominates your life, that you will not quit, or maybe you'd even argue cannot quit, is an idol to you if it's not God himself. I heard one of those radio psychologists the other day.

I don't like to listen to this particular psychologist. But in fact, I don't like any psychologist. Sometimes I listen out of curiosity.

This one I can only listen to about 30 seconds and I have to change the dial. But a caller on this program said, I have two sisters who, for various reasons, can't support themselves or something like that, I think, or have debts and they can't pay them off or something. And the psychologist said, why can't they pay them off? He said, well, they're lazy.

Well, a lot of people say they can't do something. In fact, the fact is they won't do something. If somebody's lazy, that's not a can't do it.

That's a won't do it. And a lot of people who have what they would call addictions or life-threatening problems, they say they can't quit. But in many cases, they simply won't quit.

Now, I will say this, that a person without Christ can't quit sinning. Some people can quit drinking without Christ, but they can't quit sinning altogether. There are other sins that will replace drinking.

Their giving up drinking will create a vacuum that they'll fill with some other carnal thing. And it is true that there are some non-Christians who simply can't quit smoking, can't quit drinking, can't quit gambling, can't quit womanizing, can't and the psychologists say that's an addiction, but it's not an addiction. It's just bondage.

It's just sin. OK, sin is sin. And I agree people without God are in bondage to sin.

It may be this sin or that sin or all sin, but it's a bondage. And I agree they can't stop on their own. They may be able to stop one sin, but they can't get rid of it all.

It's they're enslaved. That's why they had to be delivered. That's why they have to be saved.

His name should be called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins, which had formerly captivated them and kept them enslaved. Paul says in Romans 6, we were formerly slaves of sin, but now having been made free from sin, we're made slaves of

righteousness. But a slave can't just walk away.

A slave can't stop doing it. But you're a Christian. You're not a slave of sin.

Sin shall no longer have dominion over you, the Bible says in Romans 6. And for that reason, if a Christian says, I just can't quit my use of pornography, I just can't quit going out and getting drunk on weekends. I just can't quit this or that sin. I say, well, I think this has got to be a case of won't rather than can't.

I realize that there are tremendous struggles even for Christians. But there are factors at our disposal. The Holy Spirit, for one, the power of the word of God working is for another.

The truth that makes you free for another. I mean, there are there are resources given to us that make it impossible for us to be in bondage without our cooperation. Okay, we can be free.

And that is what we want to talk about how to do so. Now, let me turn your attention to Second Corinthians, chapter seven. In Second Corinthians, chapter seven, in verse one, Paul says, therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

That means defilement. And I looked that up, by the way, and the dictionary definition of the word filthiness in the Greek lexicon is that which causes bodily defilement. OK, so he's talking about defilement here.

Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Ooh, that's a steep order, but it sure sounds attractive, doesn't it? Being cleansed of all filthiness of flesh or spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Man, I'll tell you, that sounds good to me.

But it's still a bit elusive, but it's definitely what I want. Now, one thing that's significant that Paul reveals here is there is defilement for us to be rid of flesh and spirit. There's outward behavior that defiles, and there's inward behavior.

There's spirit. The inward man needs to be cleansed, too. And, of course, Jesus brought that out when he told us that, you know, if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he's defiled himself, he's committed adultery in his heart.

But we know it's also possible to go beyond that and defile yourself in the flesh, too, and go out and defile yourself bodily. As well, the Apostle Paul indicated that a person who defiles a Christian's body is defiling the temple of the Holy Spirit, and God does not take kindly to that kind of thing. It says that in, what, the third chapter of 1 Corinthians? I believe it is, 1 Corinthians chapter 3. He says in verse 16 and 17, Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the

temple of God, God will destroy him.

For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. You defile the temple of God, that's not a small matter. You know, this scripture is often used sometimes to try to put people, you know, under conviction about smoking.

And if you say, well, where in the Bible does it say smoking is a sin? They say, well, the Bible says you should not defile the temple. But defilement is a moral issue. Jesus himself said it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him.

You don't defile your body by eating the wrong kind of food, for example, like unclean food. And you don't really defile your body by smoking a cigarette. You may destroy your body, and that's another issue.

But then you can do that by eating too much of the wrong kind of food or too much salt or sugar or fat. I mean, lots of things destroy your body about as much as cigarettes do. This, there's a selective condemnation on its cultural here, because Christians in Europe, if they smoke, they don't think that much of it.

But there are other things over there that would be maybe more sensitive about. But I would say this, that a habit of smoking that you can't break. And again, I say this as a person who's never smoked and never will.

But I don't consider that if I would smoke a cigarette today, it would be a sin, depending on my reason and my attitude. You know, I mean, my heart, God looks on the heart. He's not looking at how much smoke is in my lungs or how much sugar is in my bloodstream from eating, you know, a Twinkie.

It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles. It's the heart. But if I'm smoking a cigarette because I have yielded myself against what I know to be the will of God.

I know God wants me to put away these things. It's bad stewardship of my money. It's not good for my health.

It's not a good testimony. I have every reason to believe God wants me to stop, but I'm going to do it anyway. That's defiling myself.

That's disobedience. That's sin. And if I say I'm going to keep doing it because I can't quit, then that's an idol.

That's idolatry. And there are other forms of idolatry, too, of course. And that can be food.

It can be excitement, by the way. An addiction to excitement. This is probably going to be one of the rising addictions or idolatries of the younger generation with all these graphic video games and, you know, the movies that get more and more special effects.

Back when I was a teenager, the great impressive movie of special effects was 2001 Space Odyssey. I never saw it because I was never into science fiction that much. But when Star Wars came out, I forget what the figures were.

They said 2001 used something like 11 special effects, and Star Wars used about 350 or something like that. But, you know, the problem with these special effects, they're dazzling. But after you've seen a few movies with these special effects, they're not dazzling anymore.

So you've got increases like a drug. You know, the same amount of the drug doesn't get you as high as usual. You have to increase the dosage.

It's that way with emotional stimulation and excitement, too. And so there are people who just, their craving for stimulation and excitement escalates continually because eventually it's boring what used to excite them. And so there's these people out there who aren't satisfied.

They don't get stimulated unless they see raw sex on a video or actual murder on video, snuff flicks. I mean, it's dangerous stuff. Excitement can be like a drug to some people, not to everyone.

But it's kind of scary to see these kids who, you know, now they're getting into virtual reality, and they've got to get more into their fantasies and more stimulation. That's kind of a scary thing. I'm not saying it's going to hurt everybody, although I'm not sure how it would do anyone any good.

But not everyone will become addicted to it. But it's sort of like not everyone who drinks the first drink in their life gets addicted to that, but you never know if you're going to. Might as well avoid the first time, play it safe.

But there's also a problem with certain habits of the mouth, too, that can be an idolatry, things you just won't quit. Gossip, lying, blaspheming, cursing, things like that. There are people who have a tongue that just won't come under control because they won't control it.

But the Bible says in James, if any man says, you know, professes to be a Christian and godly, seems to be religious, but does not bridle his tongue, that's self-control, his religion is empty. And that comes immediately before the statement, pure religion undefiled before God and the Father is this, to keep yourself unspotted from the world. If you don't bridle your tongue, it defiles you.

You're defiled by the idolatry of an untamed tongue. So, it's not just sex. It's not just sexual drives.

It can be any habit that you simply will not give up because it's so habitual. You're so

used to it. You don't want to put out the effort.

You kind of like it. And you know it doesn't please God, but you're going to not give it up anyway. That's idolatry.

That's defiling. And, you know, you defile yourself. You defile the temple and God's not pleased with that.

God will destroy those who defile your body, the temple. And you can defile spiritually or physically, by physical acts or by mental acts. And the verbal part is mental.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, Jesus said. So, it's the defilement of the heart that comes out in bad speech. Now, Paul said, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit.

When it comes down to issues of sexual misconduct, many Christians have problems with sexual misconduct. And I hope a not very large percentage actually get involved in sexual intercourse outside of marriage, although I'm afraid an awful lot of them do. But sexual misconduct exhibits itself in other ways among people who've never ever gone out and had an actual affair.

Fascination with pornography, or if not pornography outright, not hard porn, soft porn. Just looking at the advertisements in magazines can be virtually pornography. I've heard people say they've struggled with the underwear ads, the laundry ads in Penny's catalogs and so forth.

I mean, we might say, well, that's okay because that's just Penny's. J.C. Penny was a Christian, you know? Well, he might have been a Christian, but if you're getting stimulated by that, you've got a problem with sexual desire that's out of control. There's an awful lot of Christians, especially males, who struggle in the area of masturbation.

I know this because I've talked to many of them. Many people come and ask me, is masturbation forbidden in Scripture? I think it is implicitly. It's not stated outright by that name, but I think the principles of Scripture do make it wrong.

There's nothing edifying about masturbation, and it certainly falls under the condemnation under certain overlapping categories that I think we'll see as we go through here. But sexual impurity of various kinds, sexually impure behavior, stems from sexually impure inward condition. And it originates with the heart.

If you can get the heart clean, you'll have a whole lot less trouble with the outward part. Let me show you something that Jude says in describing, or excuse me, Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 2, in describing false teachers that creep into the church. 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 13 and 14.

Peter says these people will receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes. They defile the church, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin.

Now, these people cannot stop it. They cannot stop sinning. Why? Well, for one thing, they have eyes that are full of adultery.

They have, through their eyes, encouraged adulterous fantasies. They have used their eyes to defile their hearts. And now they're in a condition they can't cease from sin.

If you want to come to a place where you can overcome sexual misconduct, you need to look to the heart. And you probably will find in every case, I think, that there's something going on that's cultivating the wrong kind of thought life. Very few people fall into sexual misconduct outwardly if they have not been compromising in the thought realm first.

I'll show you the scripture teaches that a number of ways, not only with Jesus saying that if a man looks on a woman to lust after he's committed adultery, while that's relevant to it too, that doesn't necessarily in itself say that physical adultery results from it. But there are places in scripture, like Proverbs 11, that give us some insight here. Proverbs 11, 6, it says, The righteousness of the upright will deliver him, but the unfaithful will be taken by their own lust.

Now, those who are taken by their own lust are described as those who are unfaithful. What is faithfulness? Well, we're going to talk about that as a separate fruit of the spirit probably next week. But unfaithfulness basically is the lack of faithfulness, and faithfulness is loyalty and tenacity in sticking by your word, standing by the convictions that you espouse, and not allowing yourself to be moved from them.

You have principles, you have integrity, and you will not allow yourself to be moved from your integrity, from your principles, from your convictions. That is faithfulness. Now, the person who's unfaithful, who doesn't have this quality, he's going to be taken by his own lust.

When young people have on occasion come to me and tell me they want to get married, and they want me to talk to them about that, and so forth, I never ask them, do you love each other? To my mind, that's not the first question. It's probably not even the second question that has to be asked. Marriage, let's put it this way, a couple's suitability for marriage to another has very little to do with whether they think they love each other.

People can learn to love somebody. Many people in biblical times married people they'd never met before, but they were instructed to love one another, and they could learn it. We have a different concept of love in our society because we're corrupt.

We think of love as that which gratifies, titillates, and so forth. And obviously, there's

certain people who would never, you'd never find very gratifying, or titillating, or attractive, but love in the Bible is laying down your life for someone. You can learn to do that, and by the way, you can learn to enjoy that with almost anyone if you're walking in the Spirit.

But the point that is first to ask, if people say, you know, I want to marry so-and-so, I want to ask them things like, do you pay your bills on time? Do you keep your appointments? Are you punctual? In other words, do you do what you say you're going to do? Are you faithful is what it's all about. Because for a marriage to survive doesn't require that you be in love, it does matter that you be faithful. It does mean that you have to be capable of keeping your commitments, whether you feel like it or not.

That you will not allow anything to blast you off the foundation of your convictions. And if two people make a covenant before God in a wedding, and say they'll be true to one another for life, and forsake all others, all it takes is faithfulness on both their parts for that marriage to work. They may or may not be in love with each other, and you might say, well, it's going to be a pretty dry marriage if they're not.

True, but an awful lot of people are very much in love with each other at the wedding, it still turns out to be a dry marriage. Because feeling in love is one of those things that kind of comes and goes, or at least it exists at different levels at different times. And at those times where it's not real gratifying, at those times when it's not real, there's not a lot of enthusiasm about it, it's faithfulness that saves the marriage.

It's the unfaithful who falls into his lust, it says here in Proverbs 11, verse 6. The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the unfaithful will be taken by their own lust. If you've made a commitment to be holy before God and you don't, it's because you're unfaithful. If you've sworn off pornography or masturbation or some other sexual crime, and you still do it, it's because you're being unfaithful to your commitment to God.

It is a sin of the heart that brings about the sin of the action. It starts with the problem in the character, with the problem in the heart. In Proverbs also, chapter 22 and verse 14.

Proverbs 22, verse 14, it says, The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit. He who is abhorred by the Lord will fall there. Who falls to the seductress? Who falls into immorality? The one who's abhorred by the Lord.

Well, God doesn't just go around abhorring people for nothing. If somebody is abhorred by the Lord, it is because they already have been in sin. They are already in rebellion.

They're already disobedient in some area, and they fall as a result of the lack of God's blessing and protection on them, because they are abhorred because of prior sin on their part. The person who is abhorred by the Lord will fall to sexual temptation. Now, the flip

side of that is found in Ecclesiastes, chapter 7 and verse 26.

Ecclesiastes 7 and verse 26 says, And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. The person who succumbs to seduction is the sinner.

The person who pleases God will not fall. Well, in other words, the person who doesn't fall is one who already has an established pattern of living in a way pleasing to God. The person who falls has already compromised somewhere else prior to that.

You just don't find it the case that a godly man who's walking in the Spirit and not making any compromises in moral purity in his heart, that he falls instantly into sin with a woman. When you hear of a man, a minister who runs off with a choir director, or a woman who runs off with her boss at work or whatever, but she seemed to be a good Christian up until then, just know that she wasn't. It didn't just happen.

It was allowed to happen by compromised inside. External moral impurity is a result of internal moral impurity. It starts with the heart.

Therefore, we need to change the heart. How do we do that? Well, there's several things, motivations of the heart, that the Bible gives us as incentives. One is the fear of God.

It says in Proverbs 16, 6, By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. Do you fear getting cancer? If you fear getting cancer, you might quit smoking or eating foods that you think are capable of giving you cancer. If you fear getting AIDS, you might give up sexual immorality.

Why? Because you know there are consequences, and the thing you fear is one of those consequences that could happen from your misbehavior. There are unbelievers who quit certain bad habits because of their fear of something. But nothing is more worthy of your fear than the fear of the judgment of God.

Even if you were immoral and never got AIDS, even if you smoked like a chimney and never got cancer, but if you were in rebellion against God, and this action was what is displeasing to God, you've got much to fear. The eternal wrath of God, the fear of the Lord, is the best motivator to keep men from sin or to make them depart from sin. In Proverbs, also in chapter 5, Solomon is giving advice to his son with reference to his sexual conduct.

And also in chapter 6 and in chapter 7, too, of Proverbs, quite a bit there. But in Proverbs 5, verses 20 and 21, Solomon says, Why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman and be embraced in the arms of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. You know, most people who get wrapped up in sexual immorality think they're keeping it a secret.

They wouldn't do it if there were television cameras in the bedroom. They wouldn't do it if they thought it was going to be shouted from the housetop the next day and broadcast in the headlines that they had done it. They... Secrecy is something they're pretty much counting on.

Why? They fear the disapprobation of man. They fear that men who would not approve the behavior will find out, so they keep it a secret. But if we fear men, how much more should we fear God? The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the good and the evil.

Solomon gives as the incentive for his son to not get involved with the seductress because the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord. God's checking you out all the time. There is no secrecy.

All things are open and naked before him with whom we have to do, it says in Hebrews. And therefore, the fear of God is a great motivator and is intended to keep us from this kind of sin. When Joseph was being tempted by Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39.9, he says, how can I do this horrible thing and sin against God? Now, God had never appeared to him.

In fact, he wasn't around one person who believed in God. He was in Egypt, a pagan land. The only person he was hanging out with was this woman who is a pagan and immoral.

But he was aware that God was there and that God would disapprove. And that made him run away from temptation rather than succumb to it. The fear of the Lord causes it.

In 1 Peter 3.2, it says that a woman who's a Christian can possibly win over her unsaved husband as he beholds her conduct, which is described as her chaste conduct. That's morally pure conduct coupled with fear. Now, those things go together, not unnaturally.

The fear of the Lord inspires chaste conduct. If a person is unchaste, if a person is compromising in the area of sex, it is because they are deficient in that which is the beginning of wisdom. And that is the fear of the Lord.

In fact, it seems almost like in talking about the fruit of the spirit, there should be a whole study given to the issue of the fear of the Lord. The reason I have it is it's not listed as a fruit of the spirit. And I think the reason it's not is because it's the beginning of wisdom.

It's like the soil from which the fruit grows. If you don't have the fear of the Lord, none of the fruit's going to be there. It's the start.

If you haven't started, then you're not on the road. You're not producing anything. The fear of the Lord must be present in the Christian life all the day long in order for the

Christian to please God.

And it is a great motivator for sexual purity. It's also a matter of intelligent self-interest that you remain pure. This is a less noble motivator, but some people need it.

The Bible in a number of places tells us that if you commit immorality, that you'll get in trouble one way or another. There's all kinds of bad things that can happen in your life because of immorality. Your marriage can break up.

You can get disease. You can lose your reputation. And you can lose your birthright.

There's all kinds of things like that. None of those are as important as the fact that you're offending God. That's the great offense that should keep you from sexual immorality.

But these other things, if you're even smart enough to care about your own well-being, it should motivate you to keep from it. It says of Esau in chapter 12 of Hebrews that for one morsel of food, he sold his birthright and could never get it back. And it says, let there be no fornicators among you like Esau.

A fornicator sells his birthright for one moment's pleasure, just like Esau did. His was food. The fornicators is sex.

But both are short-lived pleasures. And yet the loss is long-term. We should be aware of the role that seduction plays in our sinning.

We saw that the Bible says if we sin outwardly in this area, it is because we had sin in our hearts. But there are some people who have sin in their hearts but would still not succumb, except for someone pushing over the edge. It is true that you may be having a weakness someday toward sexual temptation, but you may never end up going out and doing anything about it.

And if you do, it may well be because there was influence from outside sources. And you can't blame them for it. But it is nonetheless true that others may share in the guilt.

Jesus spoke of those who cause one who believes in him to stumble. It's better for them to have a millstone put around their neck and be cast in the sea than to cause a little one who believes in him to stumble. If you tempt others, if you seduce others to sin, then it is a grievous thing.

Now, we need to be hip to what seduction looks like so we can beware of it. We also need to be hip to it so that we can make sure we're not doing it to others. Now, you might say, well, I would never allure someone to go to bed with me.

Maybe not. But remember, to lust in the heart is adultery, too. And we may allure people to do that by the way we dress, the way we carry ourselves, simply by immodesty, by flirtatiousness.

Both men and women can be guilty of this. And there may be no intention in their heart that they want to go to bed with anyone. And if it came to that, if someone actually propositioned them, they'd be shocked.

But it's the way the world has taught us to behave and look and act and dress. And we need to awaken to the fact that a lot of that is stumbling to other people. And it is seducing.

If not seducing them into the actual sack, it is seducing them into mental adultery, which is maybe in some ways not as bad, but it's bad enough. It's terrible in the sight of God, apparently, from what the scripture tells us. In Proverbs 23, verses 27 and 28, it says, For the harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well.

She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men. Now, here's an interesting thing. A seductress increases the total number of people who are unfaithful to their wives.

How does she do so? It must mean that if not for her, some men would remain faithful who actually become unfaithful because of her. There are people who would not cheat on their wives, even though they may not be altogether pure in their heart. They would still stay basically faithful to their wives, but they become unfaithful because of the presence of another factor, another person alluring, tempting, seducing.

Now, again, if you are a person who falls into this kind of thing, you can't blame the seductress. But the seductress certainly bears some blame before God. You have to bear blame for your falling, and for your being susceptible, and for your not reacting properly to the temptation.

But the person who's seduced also has guilt before God for increasing the unfaithful among men. In Proverbs 5, how many minutes are left there on that? Nine? Thank you. In Proverbs 5, maybe I shouldn't look up all these scriptures since we're running out of time, but there's more on this particular point.

Proverbs 5, 3 says, For with the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. Obviously, it's saying that a seductress, an immoral woman, has ways of pouring on the charm. Of getting a person to yield to temptation, which perhaps many of those people who yield would not yield, if not for the smoothness of the seductress's presentation.

In chapter 7 of Proverbs, there's an extensive insight given to the factors involved in seduction. In chapter 7, verses 8 through 12 of Proverbs, it says, he's talking about a young man he saw at his window who fell into adultery. It says, passing along the street near her corner, that is the immoral woman's corner, the red light district, he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night.

And there was a woman who met him with the attire of a harlot and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious. Her feet would not stay at home.

At times, she was outside. At times, she was in the open square lurking at every corner. Now, this woman is your classic seductress.

And how did this person get seduced? Partly by his own action, partly by hers. He went down her street. That was not very smart.

He did it in the dark of night. Not much accountability when no one can see you. The man was not behaving wisely.

He's described as a fool. He was responsible for his actions. And he can't blame her.

But what was she doing? She was loud. She was a flatterer. She was in the attire of a harlot.

I've been in churches where women are loud and flatterers and in the attire of a harlot. They don't think of it that way, but that's what they are. But these are the things.

Loud mouth men and women often are such to get people to turn their attention around to them in a crowd. I mean, people lift up their voices to get attention to themselves. A woman who's attired like a harlot wants to make sure everyone, at least all potential customers, will notice.

She's loud. She flatters. I mean, these are the things that get, in many cases, a person to yield to a temptation that he wouldn't have thought of, perhaps, otherwise.

Now, the woman and the man share the blame here. But there is a seducing going on here. Her feet don't stay at home.

You know what? I think an awful lot of adultery happens because, in our society, women are not thought to have their place at home. I can't, you know, whenever I hear of a woman who commits adultery with a man who's not her husband, I think, where'd she run into him? And, I mean, my wife meets men in town doing business, but she doesn't hang out with them. And I don't hang out with women.

How could I have an affair with someone unless I'm hanging out somewhere other than with my family, with my wife? Well, of course, it's very easy if the wife works outside the home. And you might say, well, shouldn't the man stay at home, too, then? I believe that the Bible indicates the man is the one who's supposed to be out there earning the living for the family. The woman should be home.

If the woman was at home, as the Bible instructs her to be, she wouldn't be out there meeting guys to be tempted by, and the guys that she meets wouldn't be meeting her. And I wouldn't mind at all, although I don't want to be hard or legalistic, but I wouldn't

mind at all if our society took a shift back to the point where all women did stay home and let the husbands earn the living. I wouldn't mind if I didn't meet attractive women, you know, wherever, at the checkout counter or at the bank or wherever they might be.

You know, I'd just as soon. I never ran into such. Now, you might say, well, you can't turn the clock back.

Well, the clock is reading the wrong time. I think that the clock needs to be turned back so it'll be accurate again. I think our assumptions about roles of men and women have to be revamped.

And the woman here, that was the seductress, is entering insignificant. She wouldn't stay home. Paul says the women should learn to be keepers at home, to raise their children and so forth.

I mean, a woman who's raising her children at home, she doesn't have an awful lot of opportunities to have an affair. And back a generation ago, when most women did stay home, the big stereotype was the milkman, you know, because he had to come to her because she wasn't out where he was, see? Of course, you might say, well, see, sin can take place even when a woman's a keeper at home. Well, that depends on who you welcome to your home and in what capacity you do.

But the point here is that God has created the home as a protection for women. And I realize that to single out women as people who need protection might seem to be demeaning to our modern feminist culture. That says, hey, women and men, they're all the same.

Women are no more susceptible than others. Paul talks about guys who seduce women just as much as he talks about women who seduce guys. Guys and women can equally be seduced and can equally be seducers.

But the fact is the woman is described as the weaker vessel. And the man is said to treat her considerably and so forth because there is a need for her to be protected from certain influences. The man needs protection too.

And he needs to be in his proper role. But the point is, we have here a description of why some men fall into sin who might not otherwise. And the woman who seduces him is very much like the typical modern woman in the business world today, except this woman, her business was seducing men.

Women in the world today have other business ostensibly, but often end up in the business of seducing men. I'm not saying they go out there to do it. A lot of them would never think that they're out there to do it.

But because of them not being in the place that God describes, there is that danger. And

I'm not sure if all of the problems with immorality in the church can be solved until Christian women end up being in the place that the Bible says they're supposed to be. It's not tradition that says it, it's the Bible that says it.

Titus chapter 2 says it plainly. First Timothy chapter 5 says it plainly. It's plain.

And therefore, we need to be aware of where our violation of prior things leads to the... We say, why is sexual sin running rampant in the church today? There's a reason for that. But it's not just because we're just a bunch of more lustful people. It's because we have ordered our lives other than the scripture determines that we should order them.

And having done so, we fall into traps that the Bible or God anticipated and we would have prevented had we done what he said in the first place. Well, how many? One and a half, two and a half minutes. The last point, how to maintain sexual purity and self-control.

First of all, God has made marriage for that. Paul said it's better to marry than to burn. If a person can't contain, he should marry if possible.

That doesn't solve all the problems. A married man can be tempted also and can fall into sin. But it helps.

If a man is called to be single, the Bible says in Titus or in 1 Timothy 5 too, that men, young men should treat younger women as sisters with all purity. I'd say that the dating habits that are practiced by some Christians, a man would never do with his sister. What he does with those young women, the Bible makes it explicit that men who are not married should treat unmarried women as sisters with all purity.

Purity is the fruit of the Spirit. And you see, if we would abandon some of the impure dating practices and so forth that are so common both in the Christian and non-Christian world around us, I think we'd have a lot less problems with this. The Bible instructs and commands men to treat single women as sisters.

The Bible also commands us to exert upon ourselves tremendous restraint over our lusts. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9, where he says, I keep my body under, I buffet it like an athlete who is tempered or self-controlled. I'm doing it for an eternal crown.

They do it for a temporal crown. But I don't want to be a castaway after I've already preached to others. Daniel, when he came to the king's court in Babylon, he refused to be defiled by the king's foods.

He says he determined in his heart in Daniel 1.8 that he would not be defiled by such things. Jesus indicated if your hand or your eye or your foot causes you to stumble, you should cut it off and cast it from you. He didn't mean this literally, but he meant that whatever habit, whatever pattern in your life, whatever is valuable to you, that causes

you to recurrently sin, get rid of that thing.

It doesn't matter how valuable it is to you. You need to watch your eyes, you need to watch your hands, you need to watch where you go, you need to watch who you hang out with. There are scriptures on all those points in your notes.

Those things you choose to do and expose yourself to are the things that will go a long way toward determining whether you remain sexually pure, whether you're married or not. Unfortunately, we've run out of time, and I wanted to look at all those scriptures. But we don't have the time to do so.

Fortunately, you have a handout. I recommend that you look those things up yourself. You didn't think I could cover 10 points in two minutes.

Oh, you have little faith. All right.