

A Study on Sexual Purity

The following is a Bible study that discusses the importance of sexual purity in the life of a Christian. Satan will try anything he can to destroy us, and this is one of his favorite tools to use against every one of us. As your elders, we want you to consider the importance of sexual purity for you and your family, especially with respect to relationships, television programs, movies, reading material, and recreation.

Sexual purity is an important topic, not only for our young people, but for all of us. None of us is immune to the temptations that Satan will throw at us. Those of us who are parents should study this with our children of appropriate age, seeking the Bible's answers, direction and strength.

We encourage you to look up these passages in your own Bible. The NIV text is provided as a convenience.

If we can pray with any of you, or assist you in any way, please let us know. If you are a woman and would prefer to speak with another woman, we ask that you contact our wives. *In any case, do not let Satan get a foothold in your life.* Know that the elders love each of you, and we pray that God will continue to watch over all of us and our families.

The elders

Introduction

Definitions

What is “sexual immorality” as is mentioned in the Bible? It is a number of things, to be sure. Let’s start by taking a look at the word in the original Greek, and what that word meant. Here is what the Enhanced Strong’s Greek Lexicon says:

4202 **πορνεία** [*porneia* /por·ni·ah/] n f. From 4203; TDNT 6:579; TDNTA 918; GK 4518; 26 occurrences; AV translates as “fornication” 26 times. 1 illicit sexual intercourse. 1A adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc. 1B sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev. 18. 1C sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman; Mk. 10:11,12. 2 metaph. the worship of idols. 2A of the defilement of idolatry, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols.¹

Notice that “sexual immorality” is the word is *porneia*, the root of the word pornography, which essentially means the depiction or written description of illicit acts for the purpose of sexual enticement. Pornography today is found on television, the internet, in printed material, in theatres, and even on the radio.

Another word the Bible uses in discussing sexual purity is “lewdness”, also sometimes translated as “lasciviousness” or “debauchery”. The Strong’s reference on this word is:

766 **ἀσελγεία** [*aselgeia* /as·elg·i·a/] n f. From a compound of 1 (as a negative particle) and a presumed selges (of uncertain derivation, but apparently meaning continent); TDNT 1:490; TDNTA 83; GK 816; Nine occurrences; AV translates as “lasciviousness” six times, “wantonness” twice, and “filthy” once. 1 unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence.²

n n: noun or neuter

f f: feminine

TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

TDNTA Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume

GK Goodrick-Kohlenberger

AV Authorized Version

¹Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G4202). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

AV Authorized Version

²Strong, J. (1996). *ibid* (G766).

Some of these words may not be familiar to us, but notice that “lewdness” refers to unbridled lust, excess, and shamelessness. These are things we can all understand.

So when the Bible speaks of sexual immorality or impurity, it essentially is referring to thoughts and activities which are outside of God’s purposes and teachings regarding our sexuality. With this background, let’s take a look at the scriptures, to see what God’s purposes and teachings are for us.

God’s plan for a man and a woman

1 Corinthians 7:2-4

² But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.

- ☞ How many wives should a man have?
- ☞ How many husbands should a woman have?
- ☞ When you are married, to whom does your body belong?
- ☞ Are the husband and the wife to meet each other’s sexual needs within their marriage?

God’s plan was that the sexual relationship be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. Along with all of the other ways they are to help each other, they are to meet each other’s sexual needs as well.

So often the struggle comes before marriage, when young people who are sexually mature face the challenges of keeping themselves pure. But don’t think that the problem of impurity evaporates at the altar. Satan will try to destroy our relationship with our spouse through a variety of temptations. Not only should we learn to exercise self control and discipline in our lives before marriage, but we must also guard our hearts and actions once we are married.

Turning to God's Word

The source of the problem

Matthew 15:19

²*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

- ☞ Where does sexual impurity originate?
- ☞ What other things can originate in our heart?
- ☞ Understanding this, why is it important for us to be careful about our thoughts?

Mark 7:20-23

²⁰*“What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’”* ²¹*For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,* ²²*greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.* ²³*All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”*

- ☞ What really makes us unclean or impure - what people see on the outside, or what is on the inside?
- ☞ What are deceit, lewdness, and folly, and why are they listed with sexual immorality, theft, murder and adultery?

1 John 2:16

¹⁶*For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.*

- ☞ Do sinful cravings come from God?
- ☞ Where do sinful things come from?

Our behavior

Romans 13:13-14

¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

- ☞ From the passage, how are we to behave?
- ☞ How are we to be clothed?
- ☞ Are we to be thinking about ways to gratify our sinful nature?

Acts 15:29

²⁹You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

- ☞ What things were the new Gentile Christians told to avoid?

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

¹It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ²And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

- ☞ What was the sexual immorality that the Corinthian church was facing?
- ☞ How were the Corinthians dealing with this problem?
- ☞ How did Paul say that should have handled the problem?

Ephesians 5:3-5

³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

- ☞ How much sexual immorality should a Christian have in their life?
- ☞ Is it proper for God's people to be involved in sexual immorality or impurity?
- ☞ What other things did Paul say were out of place in a Christian's life?

- ☞ Instead of obscenity, foolish talk and coarse joking, what should be in a Christian's life?
- ☞ Who does Paul say will not inherit the kingdom of Christ and of God?

Matthew 5:27-28

²⁷ *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'*^a ²⁸ *But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

- ☞ Is "just looking" wrong?
- ☞ What did Jesus say has already happened when someone looks lustfully at a woman?
- ☞ Would you expect that looking also means watching on TV, the internet, or magazines?
- ☞ Would you expect that it is also wrong for women to look at men this way?

James 1:27

²⁷ *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

- ☞ If we really want to be religious in God's eyes, what does James tell us we should do?
- ☞ What does it mean to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world?

Job 31:1

¹ *"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl."*

- ☞ How did Job work to keep his thoughts pure?
- ☞ Does it take a strong personal commitment to live a life of sexual purity?

Galatians 6:7-8

⁷ *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.* ⁸ *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature^a will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

- ☞ Is it possible to fool or deceive others, such as friends, family, or the church, with regards to our sinful nature?

^a Exodus 20:14

^a Or *his flesh, from the flesh*

- ☞ Can we fool God with regards to our sinful nature?
- ☞ If we sow (plant) to please our sinful nature, what will we reap?
- ☞ What will we reap if we sow (plant) to please the Spirit?

James 4:7

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you.

- ☞ What will happen when we resist the devil?
- ☞ What will happen when we draw close to God?

The Costs

Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸ *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

²¹ *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

²⁴ *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

²⁶ *Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

²⁸ *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

- ☞ How were these men suppressing the truth (verse 18)?
- ☞ Has God made the knowledge of himself plain and understandable (verse 19)?
- ☞ Instead of glorifying and thanking God, what happened to these men (verses 21-23)?
- ☞ What are the truths of God regarding our sexuality (see the Introduction)?
- ☞ What lies might Satan tell us so that we would engage in sexual immorality?
- ☞ What does it mean to “worship and serve” – how much attention does that involve (verse 25)?
- ☞ What do verses 26 and 28 mean when it says “God gave them over”?
- ☞ What did these people not think worthwhile (verse 28)?
- ☞ What was their attitude toward God’s warnings about their behavior (verse 32)?

1 Corinthians 5:9-11

¹¹I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

- ☞ When Paul told the Corinthians not to associate with sexually immoral people, what did he mean?
- ☞ What were Paul's instructions about associating with someone who calls themselves a Christian, but is sexually immoral?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- ☞ Will sexually immoral people inherit the kingdom of God?
- ☞ Were some members of the Corinthian church sexually immoral at one time?
- ☞ How were they made pure in God's sight (verse 11)?

Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- ☞ What are the acts of the sinful nature?
- ☞ Will those who follow their sinful nature inherit the kingdom of God?

Jude 7

⁷In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

- ☞ What punishment has been given to those in Sodom and Gomorrah who were perverted and sexually immoral?

Revelation 21:7-8

⁷ *He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.* ⁸ *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*”

- ☞ What does this passage say is reserved for those who are sexually immoral?
- ☞ Who will God claim as His own son?

Revelation 22:14-15

¹⁴ *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.* ¹⁵ *Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*”

- ☞ Who will have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city of heaven?
- ☞ Who are outside the city of heaven?

1 Corinthians 10:6-10

⁶ *Now these things occurred as examples^a to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.* ⁷ *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.”^b* ⁸ *We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.* ⁹ *We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.* ¹⁰ *And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.*

- ☞ What happened when some of these people committed sexual immorality?
- ☞ Is it reasonable to expect that God will exact a cost in our lives if we commit sexual immorality?

Hebrews 13:4

⁴ *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

- ☞ Are we to honor marriage?
- ☞ What does it mean to keep the marriage bed pure?
- ☞ What will happen to adulterers and the sexually immoral?

a Or *types*; also in verse 11

b Exodus 32:6

Our Bodies

1 Corinthians 6:13

¹³*The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

- ☞ How are we to use our bodies?

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁸*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.* ¹⁹*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ²⁰*you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

- ☞ Are we to flirt with or walk casually by sexual immorality (verse 18)?
- ☞ When someone commits sexual sin, who are they really hurting?
- ☞ As Christians, who lives in our bodies?
- ☞ Why is a Christian not their own?
- ☞ What are we to do with our bodies?

Repentance

2 Corinthians 12:21

²¹I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

- ☞ Why was Paul concerned about his return to the Corinthian church?
- ☞ What should those who have sinned done?

Revelation 9:20-21

²⁰The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

- ☞ Are there people who will not repent of sexual immorality, even after seeing God's punishments?

Revelation 2:14

¹⁴Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. ¹⁵Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

- ☞ What did the Lord have against this church?
- ☞ What did the Lord tell this church to do?

Revelation 2:20-21

²⁰Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

- ☞ What was going on at the Thyatira church?
- ☞ Was this person repenting of what she was teaching others?

Old Nature, New Nature

Colossians 3:5-10

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ^b ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

- ☞ Why is the wrath of God coming?
- ☞ What is it that we should put to death? What does that mean?
- ☞ Paul also tells the Colossians that they should rid themselves of what things?
- ☞ How is our new self being renewed? What does that mean to you?

2 Peter 2:17-22

¹⁷These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. ²⁰If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. ²²Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,”^f and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

- ☞ How were these men trying to get Christians to return to their old lives (verses 18-19)?
- ☞ What is reserved for people who try to lure Christians back to sin (verse 17)?
- ☞ Are those living sinful lives really free (verse 19)?
- ☞ What does Peter say about the condition of those who return to their sinful nature (verses 20-22)?

b Some early manuscripts *coming on those who are disobedient*
f Prov. 26:11

Holy Lives

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

³*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control his own body^a in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

- ☞ What does this passage say is God's will (verses 3 and 4)?
- ☞ Does Paul also warn that it is wrong for Christians to hurt or take advantage of each other in this matter (verse 6)? What does this mean?
- ☞ To what kind of lives does God call us?
- ☞ If someone rejects these teachings, who are they rejecting?

Hebrews 12:14-16

¹⁴*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. ¹⁶See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.*

- ☞ Will we get to see the Lord if we do not lead holy lives?
- ☞ Is it right to take steps to teach God's will regarding sexual immorality?

1 Peter 4:3-5

³*For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*

- ☞ Can we expect that others will tease or ridicule us for living a life of purity and holiness?
- ☞ Will they have to give an accounting of their own lives? To whom will they give account?

^a Or *learn to live with his own wife; or learn to acquire a wife*

The Progression

Ephesians 4:17-19

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

- ☞ What is the progression described in verses 18 and 19?
- ☞ What does indulging in impurity lead to (verse 19)?

James 1:13-15

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

- ☞ Does God tempt people?
- ☞ What is the progression of temptation and sin described in this passage?
- ☞ What is the end result of sin?

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Discussion questions

- ☞ Can we really repent if we keep pictures, magazines, mail, email or internet addresses? How would we really repent of sexual impurity?
- ☞ What are some subtle ways that Satan will try to tempt us into sexual impurity?
- ☞ Read Genesis 39. What did Joseph do when faced with sexual temptation?
- ☞ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 says that sexual sin is against a person's own body. However, is it true that sins of sexual immorality may affect others? Discuss how this happens.
- ☞ What responsibility do you have in helping others to live sexually pure lives? How might your commitment to help others in this way affect your dress, speech, and entertainment?
- ☞ How do you think God will reward you for living a life of sexual purity?

Jerry and Lynn Jones conduct seminars as part of their *Marriage Matters* marriage enrichment ministry. During those seminars they share the dangerous *progressive steps* of infidelity as is often seen in the workplace, school, or recreation. By recognizing these steps, this Model for Infidelity, we can avoid the tragedy that has come to so many marriages and lives. We share this with you in hopes that it will help you to guard yourselves (included here with permission).

Attraction	Physical or personality We can't help the attraction, but we can decide what to do with it!
Proximity	Often in the same place with the other person... at work, church, ball game, neighborhood.
Interaction	Planning one's day in order to be with the other person. Deciding what to wear, where to go and when...because this other person will be there. RED FLAG!
Disclosure	Private, personal things; things about spouse, problems between you and spouse. Becoming better friends with other person than with spouse.
Equity	Other person begins to reciprocate, share personal things with you, problems between him/her and spouse. EMOTIONAL ADULTERY!
Physical Adultery!	

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 2 Timothy 2:22.
The protection: God centeredness, as Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

For information on *Marriage Matters* by Jerry and Lynn Jones, please visit <http://www.christianity.com/marriagematters>, contact them via email at marmatsem@aol.com, or phone them at (636) 936-1076.