

Sexual Purity

By Pete Bullette

"Galen, the great second-century doctor from Asia Minor, which we know as Turkey, says he only knows two things about the Christians: one, that they believe in resurrection, and two, that they show remarkable sexual restraint." –

Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened by Craig Evans and NT Wright

"With persuasive words she (*the seducer*) led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.
All at once he followed her
like an ox going to the slaughter,
like a deer stepping into a noose
till an arrow pierces his liver,
like a bird darting into a snare,
little knowing it will cost him his life.

Now then, my sons, listen to me;
pay attention to what I say.
Do not let your *heart turn to her ways*
or stray into her paths.
Many are the victims she has brought
down;
her slain are a mighty throng.
Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of death." --
Proverbs 7:21-27

An Important Topic

The topic of purity is extremely important for college students. We all have had our own journey in this area. Some of us, by the grace of God, have been able to walk in continual sexual purity. Many of us wrestle with guilt and shame from our failures in this area of our lives. It is my desire that this article will help us all, whatever our backgrounds, discover that by the grace of God we can honor the Lord with our sexuality, walk in purity and avoid brokenness and heartache in this area of our lives.

The words quoted from Proverbs above are the words of a wise and loving father to his son, warning him of the danger of compromising his sexual purity. I am sure this father would have written the same words to his daughter as well. In the middle of glossy seduction and sexual temptation, he paints vivid pictures of the reality of what lies on the other side. It will not fulfill what it promises. It will cost him dearly. In fact, sexual sin brings the mightiest of people down to the grave.

God is not anti-sex. On the contrary, He is the one who created it and He created it to bless humanity. However, as the author of sex, He knows the power of sex, the nature of sex and the intended context for sex. We learn in the Scriptures that if sex is removed from its intended context of marriage it quickly moves from a blessing to humanity, to a curse. It is like fire. Fire can bring comfort and warmth into your life, or it can be one of the most destructive forces in nature, scorching forests and destroying neighborhoods. It all depends on the context in which you encounter fire. So, it is with sex. In the right context it blesses and in the wrong context it destroys.

We see in Scripture that compromised sexuality and ungodly romantic relationships were the downfall of the wisest person to live before Jesus, Solomon; the strongest person to ever live, Samson; and the man after God's own heart, David. *What does this show? It shows that there is no one who can be casual with their purity*, especially in this culture. Currently, the average college student has more hook-ups than dates during their college career and one out of every four searches online is for pornography. So, whether we are talking about purity in

relationships or personal purity, our culture is missing the mark of what God would desire for our lives—and as it says in the ancient proverbs, the cost of impurity is more than any of us want to pay. Therefore, we must be vigilant in guarding our purity if we are going to honor God with our sexuality.

Guardrails

I was recently on vacation in the mountains and while I was driving up what I call “white-knuckler” mountain roads, I realized just how much I missed something that we often take for granted—guardrails. It seemed like at any given point I was one small move away from plummeting hundreds of feet to my death and the death of my family. When I arrived, at the destination I was a bit shaky from the stress of the death defying drive. What I love about guardrails is that they are put in places that are safe to keep you from going into places that would be destructive for you. Have you ever thought about that? Guardrails are actually placed in the “safe places” to keep us from ever getting near destruction. A guardrail on the opposite side of the ditch or river would be a useless guardrail. When it comes to our sexuality we must do the same thing. We must place guardrails in our lives that will make sure we stay away from the places that can bring destruction to our lives and relationships.

It is interesting that in Proverbs 7:25 it says “Do not let your heart turn to her ways (*speaking of the seducer*), or stray into her paths.” It is interesting that the father tells his child to not let his (*or her*) heart begin to turn towards lust or begin to stray into the seducers path. So, how do we keep our heart from heading towards lust or straying in that direction? One key way is by putting up guardrails. In Proverbs 4:23-27 we are told to guard our heart and then the next couple of verses tell us the guardrails that we all need in our lives to keep our hearts pure. It says we need three kinds of guardrails: Guardrails on what we **say** (v24), **see** (v25) and **do** (v26).

When we look at the lives of Samson, David, and Solomon, they all lacked one of these three guardrails and when they did, there were destructive consequences. We see David lacked guardrails on what he saw when he set his eyes on Bathsheba and began to entertain lustful ideas (2 Samuel 11). We see Samson lacked conversation guardrails, as he shared his heart with the wrong person and he told Delilah the secret to his power (Judges 16). We see Solomon lacked guardrails on what he would do, as he married outside of the faith (1 Kings 11). When we lack one of these three guardrails the consequences will be destructive.

In the book the Purity Principle, Randy Alcorn tells this story about a young man who lived without guardrails around his purity.

Eric stormed into my office and flopped into a chair. “I’m really mad at God.”

“Okay...so why are you mad at God?”

“Because,” he said “last week I committed adultery.”

Eric explained that for several months he’d felt a strong, mutual attraction with a woman at his office. He’d prayed earnestly that God would keep him from immorality.

“Did you ask your wife to pray for you?” I said “Did you stay away from the woman?”

“Well...no. We went out for lunch almost every day.”

Slowly I started pushing a big book across my desk. Eric watched, uncomprehending, as the book inched closer and closer to the edge. I prayed aloud, "O Lord, please keep this book from falling!"

I kept pushing and praying. God didn't suspend the law of gravity. The book went right over the edge, smacking the floor.

"I'm mad at God", I said to Eric. "I asked him to keep my book from falling...but He let me down!"¹

I like this story, because it gives a picture of the foolishness of living without any guardrails. We can pray for purity all we want, but until we decide to actually put some guardrails in place and live wisely, our prayers may be in vain.

Let me help you think through what it looks like to have guardrails. Let's look at a few questions that I would encourage all of us to answer in order to put guardrails around our relational purity and personal purity:

Personal Purity

1. What are the guardrails you have around your computer usage?
A few ideas to think about are as follows: Do you need filters on your browser? Do you need an accountability partner that sees your Internet usage? Where do you use your computer? Perhaps you may want to consider keeping your door open while you are on your computer. Is there a time at night where temptation is the strongest? If so, perhaps you should not be on your computer after a set time.
2. What are your guardrails for watching television or movies? Many people get nervous when we talk about this, but the fact is if we let our minds get inundated with sensual images we are foolish to think it will have no impact on us. When Amy and I were dating, we decided we were not going to watch movies that were rated R. We made a decision that this would be a guardrail for what we see.
3. What are the guardrails on where you will go?
4. What are the guardrails on what you will wear?
5. What other guardrails do you need that will help you walk in personal purity?

Relational purity:

1. Do you have guardrails around who you would date? We see that when Solomon lacked this guardrail it was his fatal flaw.
2. Do you have guardrails on when you will spend time together? I have a strange feeling that more stuff happens that is destructive than constructive after 1:00 a.m. Just a thought.
3. Do you have guardrails on how much time you will spend together?

¹ The Purity Principle, Randy Alcorn, pg 9-10

4. Do you have guardrails on where you will spend time together? Chatting while laying on your bed together with the door closed may not be the best idea for purity.
5. Do you have guardrails around what your physical relationship will look like in a dating relationship? If you don't establish these guardrails early on I am fairly certain you will end up with regrets. Ephesians 5:3 tells us to not let "even a hint of sexual immorality" to be in our lives. So, I would encourage you to set your guardrails before you get there.
6. Have you asked someone outside of the relationship to ask you the hard questions about the details of your relationship? This could be a great guardrail to put in place.

I would encourage you to start establishing guardrails by responding to these questions. These questions are not meant to be exhaustive but to help you begin to think about guardrails you can establish in your life.

If you are reading this article and you have lived a long time without any guardrails in the area of your sexual purity and you have the scars to prove it, let me encourage you that there is hope. As we read the Gospels, over and over again we see Jesus offer forgiveness, hope and restoration to people who are sexually broken. We see Jesus talk with a woman who had been divorced 5 times and is now shacking up with another man and he offers her living water, which would quench her deepest thirst and begin to bring restoration. We see Jesus at a dinner when a prostitute comes and cries at his feet and he tells her that her sins are forgiven and to go in peace. He doesn't push her away. He welcomes her, offers her forgiveness and tells her to go in peace. So, if this is you, let me encourage you to bring your sexual impurity to Jesus, let him forgive you, cleanse you and restore you to wholeness.

May we guard our hearts! May we live with guardrails! May our sexual purity be a symbol of our allegiance to Jesus!

Other Scripture:

Proverbs 5
Proverbs 7
Matthew 5:27-30
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

Other Resources:

My Single Treasure by Rick Stedman
The Purity Principle by Randy Alcorn
The Thrill of the Chaste by Dawn Eden
Real Sex by Lauren Winner

Questions:

- What has your journey been in this area of your life?
- What are the places you know you most need to have guardrails?
- What guardrails do you currently have in your life to protect your sexual purity?
- Look at the questions that are listed in the article concerning guardrails and discuss them.
- How can I pray for you in this area of your life?