

The Value of Purity

Thoughts on How to Deal with Sexuality

The aim of this article

In this article, we want to help people to become aware of the responsibility that is connected with the right behaviour concerning sexuality. It should also encourage especially those young people who still have a sense for the value of sexual purity to resist the massive pressure from their peers or the glorification of sexuality in the media.

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⚓ 1 Only Few People Are Aware of God's Standard

Sexuality is an issue every person is faced with. Few people, however, are aware of the importance of taking the right course, especially in this area, for the development of their conscience and their whole personality, as well as for respectful behaviour with others, especially those of the opposite sex.

We see that very many people—the so-called Christian world or “churches” included—in their feeling, thinking, speech and behaviour are far removed from God's standard in this point—a fact made clear by the following examples. For instance, whether or not masturbation is a sin is unclear for many and you can seldom find people who still believe that it is right to enter marriage chastely, that is to say, to wait with having a sexual relationship until they have made a public commitment to one another. Such opinions are commonly regarded as old-fashioned and narrow-minded. Pornography is still often seen as something bad or abnormal, and yet even among “Christian” young men, you can find precious few who have not “consumed” such dirty pictures which so utterly despise human dignity. Purity within marriage is rarely discussed, and re-marriage following divorce is widespread in church circles. The contribution that girls and women make to this problem by the way they present themselves, so that men are seduced to impure looks and thoughts, is hardly addressed....

⚓ 2 The Holy Scriptures Urge Us to Be Pure

In the Bible we find clear admonitions and encouragements to remain pure in the area of sexuality. The high moral standard for the behaviour of the sexes with one another which is commanded in God's word is a hallmark of the revelation given to us by God concerning his nature and will, and in this point it stands in contrast to other religions and world views.

To begin with, some passages from the letters in the New Testament:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (*Ephesians 5:1-5*)

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (*Hebrews 13:4*)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practise homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 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. (*1 Corinthians 6:9-11*)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. (*Colossians 3:5-6*)

It is worth noting that fornication and impurity are often mentioned along with greed in one breath. In Ephesians 4:17-20 this connection is made clear:

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, *greedy to practise every kind of impurity*. But that is not the way you learned Christ! (*Ephesians 4:17-20*)

The Bible exposes the egotistic and greedy character of this kind of sin, and demonstrates how greatly it contradicts love—which is selfless by nature—and thereby destroys a person’s ability to love.

⚓ 3 Love

It may sound strange to some, but love and sexuality are not identical. Sexuality is only the physical part of the relationship between man and woman, and should be *one* expression of their love for one another. Sexuality can also “function” without love, but God never intended it to be that way. The fact that people often mean sexual satisfaction when they speak about love is a sad indication of the loss of higher moral values.

These words from Paul give an insight into what should characterize love:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does

not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

Love seeks the best for the other person, even when it means bearing difficulties. Love is not egotistic and does not live in expectation of having one's own wishes or ideals fulfilled. Love wants to protect others from everything that would destroy what is lovable and respectable about them. For this reason, love can express itself in strictness towards others, and above all, strictness towards one's own selfishness and vanity. Love does not want to possess others, but respects their freedom and responsibility in front of God, their maker. Love is selfless, and does not turn into bitterness when it is not loved in return or is despised.

⚓ 4 Many People Confuse Love with “Being in Love”

...an emotional high, which can easily fall to a deep low. This “rush” often occurs when two people make themselves the centre of attention for each other, and by doing so, take the place that only belongs to God. Many, whether consciously or unconsciously, seek their value in how desirable they are for the opposite sex. When such a relationship breaks up, the disappointment is very great. The confrontation with the reality of not being as important for someone as was thought is very difficult for many to bear—leading people even to despair of any sense in life.

However, even in relationships in which both marriage partners remain faithful to the end, they will finally be separated—by death. It is at this point, at the very latest, that it becomes clear that we cannot build our happiness in life on people, who we will certainly lose sooner or later. Only those who find security and comfort in God's love will be able to escape the despair arising from the loss of a loved one. The security in God protects us from building a partnership on feelings which can change so quickly. This does not mean that feelings don't belong to a relationship to a certain extent, but lifelong faithfulness requires sober, selfless love. This love expresses itself in the readiness to put aside one's own wishes, concepts and feelings, and to take on a serving attitude toward one another and to seek God's will together and for each other.

Most young people lack the maturity to assess and to deal with such emotional forces of attraction, and they easily get entangled in a sexual relationship. Before they develop a sense for sexuality as something which carries with it as much responsibility as it does value, they destroy the very foundation. For the use of sexuality for the satisfaction of one's own lusts feeds the insatiable appetite of the ego, and drives a person to a disastrous dependence on the sexual rush. It ends up having little to do with relationship, for relationship is connected with being focused on the needs of the partner, and seeking the best for them and what truly serves them. It is precisely this ability to love and to honour the other person—to approach them as a person and not as an object of desire, which is destroyed more and more by this egotism. An early search for such excitement is supported by the uninhibited and unashamed presentation of this topic in the media. Impure, seductive and suggestive innuendos used in images, texts and advertising slogans are unfortunately ever-present in our societies.

The basis for this kind of relationship is, more often than not, the external appearance of a person. They are “loved” for their body—the beautiful facade—without really knowing the inner character. Accordingly, among the young and not so young, much effort is focused on “improving” the exterior, rather than working on the beauty of the character and the soul and working on becoming established as a person—a person who rules over their desires rather than being ruled by them. The shamelessness of fashion must be mentioned in this context, which aims to present the body as especially “desirable” and to tempt the thoughts of the opposite sex in an impure direction. People who are dependent on the “success” of their external appearance reveal their inner poverty and emptiness.

The way God wants women to be beautiful is described in this passage from the New Testament:

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. (1 Peter 3:1-4)

⚓ 5 Sexuality

God gave humans sexuality as a way for a man and a woman to give expression to their selfless and self-giving love through passing on the gift of life to their offspring. It belongs to human dignity for a person to keep himself pure for this great act of trust in sexual union within a marriage partnership—in which each belongs to that one partner and no other. This relationship must be born out of the wish for lifelong faithfulness, care and responsibility. These higher values are what give sexuality the value God intended for it, which is missing in so many relationships. The result of this is visible especially in high divorce rates and large numbers of single parents.

⚓ 6 Partnership Without Commitment?

It is so normal today for young people to begin a partnership without marrying. However, when a man and a woman want to live together without the public declaration of marriage, they call the love of unconditional faithfulness and responsibility for one another into question. In a relationship where two people first want to “try each other out”, they cannot build deep trust because this attitude reveals that they expect their own wishes to be fulfilled, rather than having the aim to serve and give. The relationship suffers under the omen that if it doesn’t “work”, they can easily break up.

Many want to have their desires fulfilled, but they don’t want the responsibility. They want to be “adult”, but don’t want to bear the consequences of their actions. They want the sexual experience, but don’t want to pass on the gift of life. At this point, the abuse of sexuality becomes a threat to life. When pregnancy results, many turn to the deadly “solution” of abortion. Unfortunately, even the grotesque statistics of the killing of unborn children hardly lead anyone to the recognition that a basic turnaround is required regarding the question of sexuality.

The “pill” would seem to be a harmless solution, and its use by young women can be found as frequently as can sex before marriage. Many are uninformed however, of what serious health risks these drugs pose (information on this can be found easily). Still more serious however, is that fact that the “pill” is also abortive. The “pill” does not only aim prevent pregnancy, but in case fertilization occurs it also prevents the

fertilized egg—that is, the person who has just begun their existence, from finding their first essential shelter in the womb—and they die.

Respect for God's order of creation, respect for mankind and for life itself therefore obliges us to deal with the question of sexuality with utmost responsibility. Such partnership serves the purpose of passing on the miracle of life and in order to be capable of bearing the responsibility for a family, a person must first educate themselves. The distinguishing mark of someone who is mature is, among other traits, the ability to rule over their own desires. For this reason, it is of great importance for every adolescent to deal strictly with their own sexual desires in order to be able to direct the sexual drive to its proper place within a marriage partnership.

⚓ 7 The Value of a Pure Heart

As Christians, when we speak about purity, we do not refer only to the issue of sexual purity. Our pursuit of purity touches every aspect of who we are: our thoughts and feelings, attitudes and motives, relationships, words and deeds. Jesus calls people who are pure in heart “blessed”, because a pure heart grants a person access to God, who is himself entirely light (see 1 John 1:5).

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (*Matthew 5:8*)

Even the believers in the Old Testament were aware of this:

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. (*Psalms 24:3-4*)

For the Jews, the heart was the centre of all thoughts, motives and decisions. Our inner being, which is invisible to the outside world, should be entirely light, crystal clear and pure—for God sees the heart.

The pure heart is upright, free of all selfish background motives. It desires to serve in simplicity and humility, and shies away from everything which is dishonourable. It seeks a clear conscience and does not cast curious side-glances at worldly enticements. It finds rest in God and in the knowledge that he provides for our every need.

The love which God wants to lead us to should also be characterized in this way:

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (*1 Timothy 1:5*)

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.... (*1 Peter 1:22*)

The perfect role model of this love, we find in Jesus. He came to mankind in truthfulness and uprightness. With the same clarity with which he exposed the hypocrisy of religious people he also called sinners to repentance. He went after the lost souls and spoke comfort and forgiveness to those of contrite heart, who were truly sorrowful about their sins. He set the hopes of those who are humble on God's mercy, and dashed the false hopes of those who were self-righteous. By his readiness to die an unjust death he gave testimony to the truthfulness of his words and the selflessness of his love. God raised him from the dead and this joyful message was what his disciples, who had witnessed him after his resurrection, preached.

It was from this testimony that the Church arose—the fellowship of those who seek God seriously and want to live a pure life. Although there are not many people who have this wish, the Church still exists today.

Some of us were deeply trapped in the sins mentioned above. When Jesus called us to repentance, we experienced a great change. Earlier we were enslaved to impure desires and sins, but through turning to Jesus we found the strength to say no to such things. Our life has been given sense through the love that God has for us. We know and experience that he wants the best for us and is always there for us, to help us in our temptations and fights. In this way, we no longer need to seek our value in being desirable for people. We experience freedom from selfishness so that we can do good to others and truly love them in all purity. On this journey together we are able to strengthen one another in our commitment to our decision to live a life pleasing to God.

We invite you to get to know this life with God!

Here we have only been able to give a brief insight into our convictions on this matter, and are open for questions and thoughts that come from an honest interest in understanding more.

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