

Knowing and Following Christ – Purity

What Are the Questions?:

Matthew 5:27-30 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

LAUNCH

Today's topic is purity. As Christians, we are called to be pure in many things. For example, pure in our devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 1:3), our thoughts (Phil. 4:8), and our heart (Matt. 5:8). But for this study, we will be looking at what God has to say about sexual purity. It's important to understand God's standards in this area. Why do you think it's important to live in accordance with God in the area of sex?

EXPLORE

In keeping with our theme of "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6), let's take a look at what Jesus had to say about sexual purity.

Read Matthew 5:27-30

1. The Jewish crowd Jesus was talking to would have known that the seventh commandment said, "Do not commit adultery." How does Jesus take the importance of sexual purity even a step further?
2. What is lust? Why is it considered sexual immorality?
3. Given what Jesus says in v. 28, is He more concerned with sexual sin or what's going on in our hearts? (see Matthew 15:10-20)
4. Look at verses 29 & 30. What do they have to say about the seriousness of sexual sin?
5. What things have caused us to sin sexually that we might consider cutting out of our lives?

Now let's see what Paul wrote about sexual purity:

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

1. Looking at verse 1, what do the writers of this letter (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) want the recipients to do more and more?
2. By whose authority did they give instructions in Verse 2? Verse 3?
3. What is God's will for us? What does sanctified or sanctification mean?
4. What does sexual immorality mean and what sort of things would fall under the category of sexual immorality?
5. In dating relationships, what would constitute sexual impurity?
6. Verse 5 asks us not to be like the pagans (simply unbelievers). What are the common sexual practices in our culture that we should be different from?
7. Verse 6 says not to "wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister." How could we wrong others in the area of sexual impurity?
8. What has God called us to according to Verse 7?
9. In v. 8, whom do we reject if we ignore these things? Whom did God give us to help us live a holy life?

APPLY

1. Jesus taught us that sexual purity is a heart issue. Share with each other in groups of 3 about what is going on in your heart in this area?
2. Is sexual immorality coming between you and your relationship with Christ?
3. Given what we have learned in past studies about forgiveness, confession, the Holy Spirit, fellowship, and God's Word, how might transformation of our hearts take place?
4. What steps do I need to take to be sanctified in the area of sexual purity?

For the Leader:

- This study is designed to help people see that sexual sin is serious. Hopefully this study can help you address this issue with those who come to faith with us in a culture that is sexually promiscuous
- This study doesn't touch on relationships with non-believers. If that subject comes up, a good passage to go to is 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
- Another great passage about sexual immorality is 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. If there is any confusion as to why it is wrong to have sex before marriage, this passage speaks to it. It says if we join ourselves to a prostitute, we are one with that person. The bible says a man and wife are one. Sex is part of what makes marriage what it is. In a sense, to have sex is to get married.

What are the Answers?:

Matthew 5:27-30

1. He makes it about what's going on in our hearts
2. It's desiring something- in this case, sexual desire. If we desire something that belongs to another, the bible says we are coveting (the 10th commandment). Biblically speaking, before marriage a person belongs to their Father's household, and in the future, to their husband or wife.
3. Our Hearts
4. It's really serious
5. Discuss

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

1. To please God more and more
2. By the authority of Jesus
3. To be sanctified. This means to be set apart and be made holy. In other words, to be made like God
4. Living sexually in a way that is not pleasing to God. Discuss what things this might be
5. Anything sexual. Discuss what this might be
6. Discuss what these are for our culture
7. If we have sex with, or touch someone else in a sexually immoral way, we are wronging them. We are also wronging the family they belong to before they are married by taking something that belongs to them. We are also wronging their future spouse by stealing from what will be theirs.
8. To a Holy life
9. We reject God who gave us his Spirit to make us Holy

What's the Big Idea?

Sexual purity is something that God demands from us. He calls us to be holy as he is holy. Sexual purity is something we all need to think about because we have all struggled with it one way or another. By looking at the issue biblically, hopefully we can learn together what God's will is in this area, and how we can change.

What's the Problem?

Sexual desire is a powerful force. If left unchecked, it can cause much hurt both for us, and for others. We also live in a culture that embraces many forms of sexual immorality. It's easy for believers to be tempted to sin in any number of ways sexually. If we are serious about knowing and following Christ, we need to confront it.

What's Our Response?

Our response is to recognise the authority of scripture and to heed its warnings. We all struggle with sexual immorality somehow. The only way we can change is through the power of God's Spirit. We need to apply all the things we have learnt so far about knowing and following Christ. We need to revisit the concepts of confession from study 2, and then living in the power of the Holy Spirit from study 3. This will be a daily thing. God desires for us to be reliant upon him for strength and empowerment every day. We need to spend time with our father through prayer and his word, and in the context of fellowship with others. As we do these things, we will see God change our hearts and make us Holy, not by our efforts, but by his life changing Holy Spirit