

PURSuing
PURITY



JON REDMOND

Original Cover Graphic: “A Haven For Troubled Hearts,” Igniter Media, May 17, 2011, www.ignitermedia.com.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

For the sake of clarity, all Scripture quotations and parenthesized Scripture references have been placed in italics.

*“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.”*

Matthew 5:8

Introduction

I read a story about two scandalous brothers who lived in a small East Texas town. They were thieves, vandals, fighters, and liars. If those qualities aren't bad enough, they were also known as lazy drunkards who used filthy language. Let's just say they were up to no good, and since they lived in a small town, everybody knew it.

Well, in the process of time, one of the brothers died. Since they never went to church, the surviving brother didn't know a minister who could officiate his brother's funeral. So, he went down to the Baptist church on the corner of the town square and asked the pastor if he would be willing to preach the funeral for his brother. The pastor agreed to do so. The man said, "Preacher, I'll give you \$10,000 if you'll call my brother a saint during the funeral service." Surprisingly, the pastor made that deal, and the man gave him \$10,000 on the spot.

Word got out about the \$10,000 deal in that small East Texas town. So, on the day of the funeral, hundreds of people gathered at the Baptist church to see if the pastor would really call this scoundrel a saint. After the opening hymn, the pastor approached the pulpit and

began making his remarks. Here's what he said: "Today, we have come to remember the life of one of the most evil, wicked, dishonest, good-for-nothing men who ever lived in our town. But compared to his brother, he was a saint!"¹

The pastor kept his word. He called the man a saint. But he was only able to do so by way of comparison.

Isn't that what we do? We compare ourselves to someone who is a bigger sinner than we are, and we feel pretty good about ourselves. We might not call ourselves a saint, but we certainly consider ourselves to be good enough...at least in terms of comparison.

The problem with that rationale is that we aren't supposed to be comparing ourselves to others. Instead, we're supposed to compare ourselves to Jesus. If you compare yourself to me or to some other sinful human being, you might have a justified reason to feel pretty good about yourself. But if you look at the life of Jesus as revealed in the Bible...as you read about His holiness, His purity, His innocence, His love, His patience, His kindness, His faithfulness, and His gentleness, you will begin to feel uneasy about yourself by way of comparison. You will begin to be convicted

about your own sinfulness, your own harshness, your own rudeness, your own impurities, and your own unfaithfulness.

In the pages that follow, we're going to be thinking about how to pursue purity in every area of our lives. The first step, though, is to admit that, in and of yourself, you're not pure, you're not holy, you're not innocent. You have a problem. You have a sin problem. And until that sin problem is dealt with, you have no hope of ever being pure in the eyes of God.

How Can We Become Pure in God's Eyes?

The first step to becoming pure in God's eyes is to admit that you're not pure. Without *confession* of sin, there can be no *forgiveness* of sin. And without forgiveness of sin, there is no real purity.

One of the clearest examples of this in the Bible is that of Isaiah. On one occasion, he had a clear vision of God. He was able to see God in all of His glory, in all of His holiness, in all of His purity. It was an overwhelming vision that shook Isaiah to the core of his being. He described it like this:

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged’” (Isaiah 6:1-7).

Isaiah saw God seated on the heavenly throne. Isaiah heard the seraphim (a special category of angels) praising God for His holiness. As Isaiah saw God in all of His glory, holiness, righteousness, and purity, an interesting thing happened: Isaiah became aware of his own sinfulness. He said, “Woe is

me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5). Then he confessed that he was “a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5).

As Isaiah saw the *holiness* of God, he became aware of his own *unholiness*. He confessed his sins to God. Perhaps he had used bad language. Perhaps he had told a lie. Perhaps he had been rude to someone. Whatever it was that he had done, something sinful had come from his lips. And when Isaiah saw the *purity* of God, he was convicted of his own *impurity*.

Upon Isaiah’s confession, God sent one of the seraphim with a live piece of coal from the altar, and that seraphim touched Isaiah’s mouth with that piece of coal. Isaiah’s sin was forgiven. But notice that it wasn’t forgiven until he confessed it. And he didn’t confess it until he saw how *holy* God was and by comparison how *unholy* he was. He wasn’t made *pure* until he admitted his *impurity*.

The message of the Bible is this: We have sinned. We stand guilty before God. We need forgiveness. But in order for there to be forgiveness, a price must be paid for our sins. The price is high. “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). Jesus mercifully paid that price for us. Jesus, the sinless One, died for us, the

sinners. He took our sin and shame upon Himself. He shed His blood so that we could be forgiven. He died. He was buried. And three days later, He rose from the dead thus conquering sin and the grave.

The good news of salvation is that if we will admit our sinfulness, ask for God's forgiveness, and trust Him to save us that He will cleanse us of our sins and come to live in our hearts. If we will give Christ *our sins*, He will give us *His righteousness*. It's what theologians call "the great exchange."² We exchange *our sins* for *His righteousness*. The Bible says, "*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (II Corinthians 5:21). I once heard Pastor Gregg Matte say it's like we give God a rock and He gives us a million dollars. It truly is the greatest exchange we could ever make.

One of my favorite verses in the Bible gives a beautiful description of what happens when we repent of our sins and receive Christ by faith. It says it this way: "*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness*" (Isaiah 61:10).

Visualize that. God clothes us with “*the garments of salvation*,” and He covers us with “*the robe of righteousness*.” From that moment on, we are pure in His eyes. Let me clarify that. We are “positionally” pure. God no longer judges us for our sins because Christ took that judgment for us on the cross. Our sin debt has been paid.

But there is another type of purity. And that is what has been called “practical” purity. “Positional” purity has to do with our salvation. “Practical” purity has to do with our daily lives and our intimacy with God.

The remainder of this booklet will be devoted to pursuing “practical” purity in our daily lives. But it seems to me that before we begin that discussion, we should make absolutely certain we have been made “positionally” pure in God’s eyes by doing what Isaiah did...confessing our sins and receiving God’s forgiveness.

If you’ve never done that, you can now. You can be forgiven and saved if you will confess your sins to God and trust His Son, Jesus Christ, to save you. You can do that through prayer. Just say this to the Lord:

“Dear Jesus,

I have a sin problem. I need to be forgiven. Please cleanse me of my sins now. I confess that I am impure and unholy and that I desperately need Your forgiveness.

I believe You died on the cross to pay for my sins and that You rose from the grave three days later. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it.

Welcome to my heart, Jesus. Thank You that I’m now clothed in Your righteousness and that I’m “positionally” pure. Begin now to make me “practically” pure in every area of my life.

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.”*

If you prayed that prayer, I want to welcome you to the family of God. Congratulations! You are a new person now in Jesus Christ. The past is forgiven. Now let’s think about how we can live a pure and holy life going forward. Let’s think about how we can be “practically” pure in every aspect of our lives.

Developing a Desire to Live a Pure Life

After we have been made pure in God's sight by being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we should naturally have a desire to live a pure life. We are new creatures in Christ. We have a new nature. And that new nature desires to live a life that is pleasing to God.

The problem, though, is that while we now have a new nature, we still have our old nature to contend with. When we received Christ, our old sin nature didn't disappear. It's still there. So now, we have two natures. We have our old sin nature that wants what it wants, and we have a new spiritual nature that wants to please God. These two natures are literally at war with each other. We, though, get to decide which nature will win.

When we listen to the indwelling Holy Spirit and obey His promptings, we please the Father. When, on the other hand, we ignore His voice and follow our natural, sensual, selfish desires, we sin. When we obey God, we *win*; when we ignore God, we *sin*. And that sin separates us from intimacy with God. We don't lose our salvation, but we do lose our enjoyment of it.

Sin creates feelings of guilt, shame, and distance from God. Purity, by contrast, creates harmony with God, a sensitivity to His Spirit's leading, and a clarity of mind and focus. Sin promises to satisfy, but it never does. Purity, though, always leads to the peace and oneness with God that we so desperately long for.

So, how can we live lives that please and honor the Lord after we have been born again? It all begins by having a desire to do so. Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled*" (*Matthew 5:6*). Think about that. Jesus said that if we simply have *a desire* to live righteously that He will satisfy that desire.

Let me ask you some pointed questions: Do you have a desire to live a godly life? Do you have a desire *not* to sin? Do you have a desire to please God? If you do, you are well on your way to living the right kind of life.

If you don't have that desire, let me ask you this question: Do you at least have *a desire to have that desire*? Then ask God to place deep within your heart a desire to live a pure life. He will answer that prayer. And once the desire is there, you are at least in position to live a life that God will be pleased with.

What Exactly Is Purity?

I like to define purity as “*the condition you are in when your thoughts are godly, your heart is clean, your motives are right, and your actions honor the Lord.*” When you are in a condition like that, you are in a good place. You are in the right place. You are in a “blessable” and “usable” place.

Let’s think about those four areas and give ourselves an honest evaluation:

1. Are your thoughts godly? (Yes or No)
2. Is your heart clean? (Yes or No)
3. Are your motives right? (Yes or No)
4. Do your actions honor the Lord? (Yes or No)

What Are the Benefits of Purity?

When we seek to live a pure life before the Lord, there are several positive benefits we experience in our lives. Let’s consider some of these benefits:

1. We have a clear conscience.

When we sin, we feel guilty, shameful, and dirty. When we live lives of purity, we don't have those feelings. There is a lightness in our spirit and a clearness in our conscience. We aren't worried about being "found out" because we aren't doing anything we're ashamed of. We aren't hiding anything. We aren't living a double life.

2. We have an open line of communication with God.

Sin messes everything up in our relationship with God. It drives a wedge between us and God. It distances us from God. And, in a very real sense, it causes there to be "static" on the line of our communication with God. The psalmist said, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear*" (Psalm 66:18). That's a frightening thought. If we have *unconfessed, unrepented of, undealt with* sin in our lives, God won't hear us when we pray. There is also a sense in which we won't be able to hear God's voice very well either. That's a high price to pay for the short-term "thrill" of sin.

3. We are able to see God more clearly.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8). But what exactly does that mean? Well, certainly we will see God in heaven one day, but was Jesus just talking about heaven? He seems to be talking about life on earth as well. But how do we see God?

Well, if our hearts are pure, we will see Him *in nature*. The sunrise reminds us of His mercies which are new every morning (see *Lamentations 3:22-23*). The sunset reminds us of His faithfulness throughout the day (see *Psalms 113:3*). The birds remind us of His promise to provide for us (see *Matthew 6:26*). The clouds remind us of the nearness of His presence (see *Nahum 1:3*). The stars remind us of the fact that He knows everything about us (see *Psalms 147:4*). And the rainbow reminds us of His unfailing promises (see *Genesis 9:12-17*).

Not only can we see God in nature when our hearts are pure, but we can also see Him *in our circumstances*. We know that every circumstance we encounter was allowed into our lives by a loving, all-knowing, good God. We are able to see the happy, joyful, exciting circumstances of life as blessings from God.

And we are able to see the difficult, heart-breaking, painful circumstances of life as trials that God intends to use to strengthen our faith, develop our character, make us more empathetic towards others, and make us better representatives of His name.

Additionally, when our hearts are pure, we are able to see God *in other people*...even in difficult, combative, stubborn people. The Bible says that we are made “*in the image of God*” (*Genesis 1:27*). Even those who don’t know God in a personal way were created in His image. He loves them just as much as He loves us. Jesus died for their sins just like He died for ours. When our hearts are pure, we are able to look at people differently than we otherwise would. We are able to see them as people who were made in the image of God.

4. We have greater joy.

Purity leads to greater joy than we would otherwise have. God the Father said the following words to His Son, Jesus: “*You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions*” (*Hebrews 1:9*).

God anointed Jesus with “*the oil of gladness*” because Jesus loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Jesus had more joy than His companions. Have you ever thought about that? Jesus was actually *happier* than His disciples were because He was *holier* than they were. Holiness *leads* to happiness; it doesn’t *prevent* it. The *purser* and *holier* you are, the *happier* you’ll be. Jesus is proof of that.

The Bible says that “*to the pure all things are pure*” (*Titus 1:15*). When we are living pure lives, we have a clear conscience, and we enjoy an open line of communication with God. Additionally, we have the ability to see God in nature, in circumstances, and in other people. We also have greater joy in our lives than we otherwise would. The benefits of pursuing purity are obviously well worth the effort.

What Are the Burdens of Not Being Pure?

In addition to having a guilty conscience, losing your open line of communication with God, not being able to see God clearly, and not having an abundance of joy, there are some other burdens we bear when we fail to live lives of purity.

Perhaps the best example in the Bible of a person who experienced the burdens associated with some sinful choices is David. The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart (*see Acts 13:22*). And yet, David sinned. The man who loved God so passionately and who was used by God so greatly (he wrote approximately half of the psalms in the Bible) had moments of impurity that hurt him deeply.

David committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba. She became pregnant. David then tried to get her husband, Uriah, to go home (during a war) so Uriah could be with his wife so everyone would think the child was Uriah's. Uriah, though, refused to go home while his peers were in battle. So, finding no other way to cover for himself, David had Uriah killed by sending him into the heat of the battle. As King of Israel, David had that authority. David was hoping people would think that Uriah and Bathsheba had come together physically before Uriah's death so they would assume the child was Uriah's. It was a devilish scheme.

So David, the King of Israel, the man who was passionate for God, had committed adultery and murder. He had lost his "practical" purity. And he had broken the heart of God. The Bible gives this sad commentary on the

whole situation: “*But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD*” (II Samuel 11:27).

It appears from the biblical account that David spent the better part of the next year keeping that sin to himself. He didn’t confess it to God until he was confronted by a man named Nathan. We read about Nathan’s confrontation of David in II Samuel 12.

We then read about David’s repentance in the Book of Psalms. Psalm 51 is an actual record of his repentance towards God. Psalm 32 (actually written *after* Psalm 51) is a record of David’s joy after he had received God’s forgiveness.

As we read both of these psalms, we discover some of the burdens David had to bear after he committed those unthinkable, impure, sinful acts. These are the same burdens we bear when we sin. Let’s consider some of these burdens:

1. *We feel dirty and shameful.*

David’s sins caused him to feel like a hypocrite, like a failure, like an unclean, defiled man. We pick this up from his prayer to God:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me...Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation” (Psalm 51:1-3, 7, 9-10, 14).

One of the reasons we should pursue purity and avoid sin is because of how guilty sin makes us feel. Nothing is worth that feeling of shame...nothing in the world.

2. We lose our joy.

It only makes sense that if we feel dirty and shameful that we cannot at the same time feel joyful. You can't feel *shameful* and *joyful* simultaneously. David lost his joy, and he asked God to give it back to him. He pleaded, *“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Psalm 51:12).*

Sin is a joy stealer. It makes us miserable. Purity, though, results in an abundance of joy. It's a better path to pursue.

3. *We lose our strength.*

As David reflected on what his life had become *after* his sin and *before* his repentance, he said this: “*When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer*” (Psalm 32:3-4).

David's sin had taken the energy out of him. It had sapped his strength. Sin does that.

Someone has said: “Sin takes us farther than we want to go, costs us more than we want to pay, and keeps us longer than we want to stay.” That was certainly David's experience.

The burdens we bear when we depart from the path of purity are extremely heavy and hard to carry. The Bible says that “*the way of the unfaithful is hard*” (Proverbs 13:15). Jesus said that His way, by contrast, is easy (see Matthew 11:30). Doesn't common sense tell us that we would be wise to take the path that's *easier* on us? Shouldn't we take the path that is filled

with *blessings* and *benefits* and free of the awful *burdens* David had to carry?

When I was in the 7th grade, I had an experience I can still remember. School had ended for the day, and I was walking down the hill from the school building to the football field. It was time for football practice. On this particular day, I was walking by myself. As I was walking down that hill, God spoke to my young heart. It wasn't audible, but it was nonetheless real. Here's what He said: "It's easier to *do right* than it is to *do wrong*. People have to go out of their way to do wrong. It's just easier to do right." What an incredibly practical word of instruction to a thirteen-year-old boy.

Living a pure life, to be clear, is not just about being sexually pure although that's a big part of it. It's about being pure in our dealings with others, pure in our business ventures, pure in our thoughts, pure in our speech, pure in our attitudes, pure in our motives. Purity is all-encompassing.

As we continue our discussion of this incredibly relevant topic, I want us to think about some practical steps we can take to live a pure and godly life. A pure life doesn't happen automatically. There are some practical things

we have to do. As we will see, there is a sense in which each of these steps is easy to take. At the same time, though, each of these steps requires a great deal of *desire*, *discipline*, and *determination*.

How Can We Live a Life of Purity?

1. Pursue purity.

Purity isn't something we just stumble into. *Temptation* is something we stumble into. Purity has to be pursued. We have to go after it like we would go after a goal at work, in the gym, or on a diet. We have to intentionally pursue purity.

The Bible instructs us to “*pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*” (*Hebrews 12:14*). Just like you would attempt to restore peace to a broken relationship, you have to pursue purity and holiness. It doesn't happen automatically, but in some ways pursuing purity is actually easier than pursuing peace. When you pursue peace with another person, you are dependent upon that person to cooperate with you in order for there to be peace. When it comes to purity, though, you aren't dependent upon any other human being. Purity is something you can

experience all by yourself. It's only dependent upon you. Certainly, we are dependent upon the Lord to help us live pure lives, but we aren't dependent upon anyone else.

I encourage you to make it your goal to live a pure life. And then, in each and every situation you encounter, *look for* and *pursue* the pure and holy path in that specific setting. In a business deal, for example, pursue the path of honesty and integrity. In relationships, pursue the path of forgiveness, kindness, and love. When you find yourself in a conversation where unkind things are being said about someone else, pursue the path of building up and giving the accused person the benefit of the doubt. When someone is rude to you, pursue the path of peace and non-combativeness. When you're tempted in the realm of sexual immorality, pursue the path of escape and remember that God will always help you to avoid sinning.

The Bible says, "*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*" (1 Corinthians 10:13). There will always be a door, an exit, an escape of some kind when

you're tempted to commit sexual sin. I encourage you to take that exit as quickly as possible. The Bible says that we should "*flee sexual immorality*" (*I Corinthians 6:18*). And God will assist you in your escape.

It takes *determination* and *discipline* to pursue purity. It also takes *a desire* to remain on the right path and to pursue the right thing.

The apostle Paul explained to his protégé, Timothy, the importance of pursuing the right things in life. Listen to these insightful words: "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness*" (*I Timothy 6:10-11*). Paul was telling Timothy that instead of pursuing *money* and *wealth* he should pursue *holiness* and *purity*.

We all have goals in life. We have family goals, work goals, financial goals, and health goals. I encourage you to add to your list of goals the goal of living a pure and holy life. God will help you to achieve that goal, but without the goal being in place, you won't pursue it with much intensity.

2. Watch what you watch.

As I have mentioned, sexual purity is not the only kind of purity there is, but let's be honest...a major part of living a pure life is rooted in the sexual realm. And interestingly, sexual sin doesn't begin with the sexual act. It begins with *a look* and *a thought*.

That's how David's sin with Bathsheba began. One night David couldn't sleep, so he got up and walked out on the roof of his house. From that vantage point (at the top of a mountain), David looked down and saw a woman taking a bath on the roof of her house. The Bible says that "*he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was beautiful to behold*" (*II Samuel 11:2*). He couldn't help it that he initially saw her. There was no sin in that. He sinned because he kept looking. And *the prolonged look* led to *impure thoughts*, and those *impure thoughts* led to *an impure act*.

That leads me to say that we need to be very careful what we allow our eyes to look at. We need to *watch what we watch*. At another time in his life, David wrote these words: "*I will set nothing wicked before my eyes*" (*Psalms 101:3*). Perhaps David wrote those words years after his sin with Bathsheba. As he reflected upon that experience, he thought to himself, "It all

began with *a look*, then *a prolonged look*, then *a thought*, then *the act itself*.” Now he made a commitment to protect himself going forward. He made a commitment not to set anything wicked or sinful before his eyes.

In this media-crazed age in which we live, we all need to be careful here. There are some movies we should never watch, some cable plans we shouldn’t even have, some television stations that should be off limits, some computer sites we should never visit. Maybe these four words will prove to be the most important words in this booklet: *Watch what you watch*.

3. **Guard your heart.**

When we see something we shouldn’t see, it has a way of getting into our mind and heart. In time, if we let that thought remain, it can form a stronghold. We have to be very careful when it comes to our thought life.

After David saw Bathsheba, he couldn’t stop thinking about her. We read that he “*inquired about the woman*” (*II Samuel 11:3*). What he saw with his eyes was now running wild in his mind. Those *sinful thoughts* led to a *sinful act*. He failed to clear his head.

That's why Jesus said, "*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matthew 5:28). Before there is an *immoral act*, there is an *immoral thought*. Jesus made clear that the thought itself is sinful. And if it's not *repented of* and *replaced with* a godly thought, it will lead to further and greater sin.

One of my favorite verses in Proverbs says it this way: "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it*" (Proverbs 4:23, NIV). Just like you lock your doors every night before you go to bed, you have to guard your mind and your heart. We should *fill our minds* with thoughts of Jesus, Bible verses, and all the blessings God has given us. And we should *free our minds* of any and all sinful thoughts. By pursuing purity, we are actually distancing ourselves from sinful thoughts.

4. Be careful what you do and where you go.

For David, his affair with Bathsheba began with *a look*. It turned into *a prolonged look* and then *an obsessive thought*. And then, there was *the act itself*. The Bible records it this way: "*Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her*" (II Samuel 11:4).

I have a friend who didn't grow up going to church. She had never really read much of the Bible. Then, later in life, she became very committed to God, the Bible, and the church. She told me that she had never read the story of David before. When she started reading it in I Samuel, she was captivated by his life. His youthfulness, faithfulness, courage, and trust in God inspired her. Then she got to the part about Bathsheba. As she read the biblical narrative, she had no idea what David would do after he saw Bathsheba. Then, as the story progressed, my friend said she started talking to David and saying, "No, David, No. Don't do it. No, David. This is wrong."

When we begin to move closer to some specific sin, that's exactly what God says to us: "No, don't do it. No. This is wrong. No. No. No."

And so, not only do we have to watch what we watch and guard our hearts, but we also have to be careful what we actually do and where we actually go. We have to stay away from those "temptable" places.

In Proverbs, we read a lot about the adulterous woman. One verse in particular is worth mentioning: *"Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house"*

(*Proverbs 5:8, NIV*). The advice Solomon gave to his son applies to all of us, men and women, when it comes to sexual sin. We shouldn't go anywhere near it.

A Childhood Song

One of my favorite childhood songs sums up what I've been trying to say. Perhaps you used to sing it, too. Think about the meaning of these words, and if you can remember the tune, sing it to yourself:

*“Oh be careful little eyes what you see
Oh be careful little eyes what you see
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love
So, be careful little eyes what you see*

*Oh be careful little ears what you hear
Oh be careful little ears what you hear
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love
So, be careful little ears what you hear*

*Oh be careful little tongue what you say
Oh be careful little tongue what you say
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love
So, be careful little tongue what you say*

*Oh be careful little feet where you go
Oh be careful little feet where you go
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love
So, be careful little feet where you go”³*

If we’re going to pursue purity, we must learn to watch what we watch, guard our hearts, and be careful what we do and where we go. It really is easier (and better) to *avoid* temptation than it is to try to *overcome* it. Stay away from that “temptable” place.

A Warning and a Word of Encouragement

***A Warning:** *Never assume that you’re “too good of a Christian” to commit a sexual sin.*

No matter how long you’ve been saved or how deeply you love God, you are still a human being. You are still capable of committing this sin. The thought of that should put the fear of God in you. Billy Graham used to say, at the thought of sexual sin, “I stay frightened.” So should we.

The Bible says, “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*”

(*I Corinthians 10:12*). If you think you are “too far along spiritually” to commit this sin, you are in a dangerous place. The Bible says, “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*” (*Proverbs 16:18*). When it comes to sexual sin, we would all be wise to *stay frightened* and to *stay on guard*.

Let me add here that if you are currently involved in sexual sin of any kind that the wisest thing you could do would be to stop it immediately. Break the adulterous relationship off. Turn away from the fornication, the pornography, the immorality. God will forgive you, but first you have to make *a decision* and *a commitment* to stop doing what He has identified as *sinful* and *wrong*.

***A Word of Encouragement:** *Never assume that if you've committed a sexual sin (or any sin for that matter) that it's too late for you to be pure.*

I think this is one of the most effective lies the devil uses against us. He convinces us that since we've messed up in some area in the past that we could never really be pure again. While that argument may be *logical*, it isn't *biblical*. From beginning to end, the Bible is a book about forgiveness, new beginnings, and second chances. Consider these verses:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1).

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’” (Isaiah 1:18).

“For You have cast all my sins behind Your back” (Isaiah 38:17).

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25).

“He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Over and over again in Scripture, we see God forgiving people of their sins and giving them a new beginning. The woman who was caught in the act of adultery in John 8 received forgiveness from Jesus. He then told her to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11). He gave her a fresh start. He gave her a new beginning. He told her to pursue purity from that moment on.

The devil, though, will try to convince us, whether it's in the sexual area or in some other area, that if we've messed up that it's too late for us. The devil uses this logic to take away our motivation for holy living. We begin to think: “What's the use in trying to do right? What's the point now? I've already blown it.” And so, sin begins to reproduce itself in our lives because we think it's too late for us.

Friend, as long as you're still breathing, it's not too late! You're not too far gone. You haven't outsinned the grace of God. Ask Him

to forgive you. Accept His forgiveness. Begin to pursue purity in your life. And refuse to call yourself *impure* when God has called you *forgiven* and *clean*!

I think we have to draw a line in the sand and move forward from there. We can't let yesterday's sins trip us up today and hold us back tomorrow. We have to draw a line in the sand and start over. We are new people once we've been forgiven by God. The Bible says, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (II Corinthians 5:17).

And yet, just because we've been saved, that doesn't mean we never sin anymore. We still sin at times, but God's forgiveness is no less real for us *after* we get saved than it was *when* we got saved. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from *all* of our sins. His blood *equally* and *thoroughly* washes away both *pre-conversion* and *post-conversion* sins.

A Changed Life

When I was in school, one of my professors told us the story of Augustine. Augustine was one of the greatest theologians in church

history. He lived from 354 to 430. Before he got saved, though, he lived a wild and sensual life. He was very involved in sexual immorality. His mother, Monica, though, never stopped praying for him. Her prayers were eventually answered. Augustine got saved, and his life was radically changed.⁴

My professor described how Augustine was once walking down a street in a certain city. He noticed one of his former companions on the other side of the street walking in his direction. She cried out, “Augustine, Augustine.” But Augustine ignored her. He just kept walking. She called out even louder, “Augustine, Augustine, don’t you remember me? It is I. It is I.” He responded, “Yes, but it is no longer I.”

What was Augustine saying? He was saying that he was no longer the same person that he used to be. He was saying that God had forgiven him and cleansed him of all of his impurities. Augustine had drawn a line in the sand, and he refused to go back.

Maybe you need to do the same thing. Draw that line in the sand. You can’t undo what you did thirty years ago, or twenty years ago, or ten years ago, or last week. But you can confess it to God. You can receive His forgiveness. You can be cleansed and made as pure as the freshly

fallen snow. And you can draw a line in the sand and begin now to pursue purity with all of your heart. You can have a new beginning.

We won't be perfect until we get to heaven, but we can pursue purity now. And by doing so, we can honor the Lord in our pursuit, and we can live lives that bring honor and glory to His holy name.

On your list of goals in life, be sure to put "Pursuing Purity" at the top of the list. I can say, without a doubt, that it will be the best goal you ever pursue!

¹ Jackson_Simmons, "Jokes: Get Your Funny On!" */Jokes*, https://www.reddit.com/r/Jokes/comments/7cssk6/my_preacher_started_a_sermon_with_this_joke_the/ (accessed October 24, 2022).

² John Piper, "The Great Exchange," *Desiring God-Articles*, April 28, 2012, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-great-exchange> (accessed October 7, 2022).

³ "Be Careful, Little Eyes," Bibilium.com, *Sunday School Songs*, December 18, 2019, <https://bibilium.com/be-careful-little-eyes/> (accessed October 13, 2022).

⁴ "Chronology of the Life of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (A.D. 354-430)," <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~rdwallin/syl/GreatBooks/202.W99/Augustine/Augustine/AugustineChron.html> (accessed October 14, 2022).

Booklets by Jon Redmond

- *How to be a Happy Christian*
- *Riding Out the Storms of Life*
- *Finding Freedom Through Forgiveness*
- *Never Alone*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home (Spanish)*
- *When God Says, "Wait"*
- *How to Have a Peaceful Heart*
- *In the Twinkling of an Eye*
- *Angels Among Us*
- *What Happens at the Moment of Death?*
- *Discovering God's Will*
- *The Lord Is My Shepherd*
- *How to Lead a Child to Christ*
- *On Eagles' Wings*
- *Living on the Edge of Eternity*
- *The Problem With Procrastination*
- *The Lord's Prayer*
- *Lessons from the Lions' Den*
- *How to Survive a Satanic Attack*

-
- *Lessons I Learned From My Mother*
 - *When My Heart is Overwhelmed*
 - *Don't Take the Bitter Pill*
 - *The Judgment Seat of Christ*
 - *When Life Gets Interrupted*
 - *When the Heart Breaks*
 - *How to Handle a Crisis*
 - *The Danger of Anger*
 - *Pursuing Purity*
 - *Understanding the Bible (Its Message, Manuscripts, Composition, and Greatest Translations)*
 - *Hiding His Word in Our Hearts (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
 - *31 Timeless Truths for Victorious Christian Living (A Fresh Thought for Each Day of the Month)*
 - *Meeting God in the Psalms (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
 - *Pondering the Proverbs (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
 - *Prayer & Fasting (3 Days of Seeking the Lord)*

**The Life of Christ (As Depicted in the Chapel
Windows of First Baptist Church in
Pasadena, Texas)*

**Bible Reading Plan (6 Different Plans are
Available)*

Most of these booklets can be read online at
www.fbp.org. All of the booklets are available
at First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas.

Jon Redmond

Jon Redmond is the associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. He has served on the church staff at First Baptist since 1995.

A graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.), Jon's desire is to lead people to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and to help them grow in their relationship with Him.