

# Purity: Helps and Hindrances

Over the past few weeks we've talked about...

- The fact that our children will be husbands and wives and the need to be thinking ahead
- Not awakening love before it's proper time
- Some pretty shocking statistics
- Moving through regret to hope... working towards a better future than statistics forecast

I believe we need to know enough of the negative to understand something of the magnitude of the problem but not so much that we never get around to talking about what we can do about the problems!

We will never be able to stop all the negatives of life. As parents our job includes preparing our kids to meet their futures and to do what we can to minimise the negative effects of whatever culture we're in.

If we spent all our day telling our toddlers all the prohibitives of life they would never learn what *to* do - and we would never run out of negatives to counteract.

Instructions like:

- Don't hit
- Don't scratch
- Don't take that away from your sister

... are all important but without positive instruction, the child still won't know what it is to *be kind!*

My husband has a saying that I've made into a poster... (included in this pack)

"We cannot give you a list of everything in life that you must not do. You have to take what you know to be right and wrong and think how that applies to the situations you find yourself in"

So it is with parenting for purity. It's not enough to give them the prohibitions. We need to give them the positive instruction and the equipping to live it.

Last week a caller rang in concerned for her teenage children... I mentioned "Family Identity" at that time and perhaps later on we can give that a whole session, but for now I just want to give the definition which is "*the shared acceptance of who we are as a team*". This is done through the ordinary things of life - work and play, fun and tough times. It is building reliance and trust between the members of a family. It is connectedness and a place of belonging - over and above independence. Independence is good too, but we all need a place of belonging and of support.

It is by building that shared acceptance that will help young people stand against not only their peers, but their culture also.

Another important facet of equipping a child to live out the values of the family is to provide them some form of moral community. This may be through church or school, but also in finding ways for them to spend informal time around people whose values are supportive of each other. Values that will build each other up - not pull each other down.

Last week's session may have left some with more concern than encouragement so I want to move forward into some of the answers.

Change is possible - at many levels. Personal, family, community. We talked about the amazing changes taking place in Uganda...

In 1994, 60% of 13-16 year olds were sexually involved. By 2001, 60% had become just 5%  
National statistics for HIV in Uganda dropped from 15% prevalence to 5% prevalence between 1991 to 2001. That's a drop of over two thirds!!!  
This decline is unique worldwide!!!

Case study published by the U.S. Agency for International Development  
(2002),

"What Happened in Uganda? Declining HIV Prevalence, Behavior Change, and the National Response."

If Uganda can do this on a nation-wide scale, what might be possible for us? While we may never see that scale of change - our nation will probably never be that desperate to do what it takes at that scale - but we can begin in our families, churches, youth groups and schools touching those in our care and reaching out to whomever we can.

I said last week that Uganda instituted Health programs which flew in the face of the generally accepted Public Health measures already in place. They dared to go against the grain of institutional thinking...

What public health measures were already in place?

The ones that taught 'safe sex'.

That then had to be amended to 'safer sex'.

These same measures that handed out birth control and educated as to how to be sexually active and lessen the chances of getting an STD/STI.

The measures whose major birth control device (the condom) is mistaken as protection from STD's but is in fact only protection if used 100% correctly (and without mishap or failure) 100% of the time. The same device that people are rarely taught they are still exposed to skin born disease if not fluid born.

What did Uganda change?

They changed to uncompromised teaching on abstinence and fidelity in marriage.

As a mother though, I want much more for our kids than 'mere' abstinence or monogamy or freedom from sexual disease. I long for leadership and joy and freedom and purity and Life with a capital "L"!

Purity has some boundaries - yes. Abstinence can be about life at the edge of the limits - the "how far can I go?" approach, where purity is about "how free can I live?!"

In my search for answers - more than information on problems - I've discovered some interesting things.

I've had opportunity to glean from the teachings and studies of a great many others. One of these areas has been "True Love Waits". This is a major U.S. based abstinence program. Looking back, they have investigated the successes and failures of various Abstinence campaigns.

From True Love Waits:

Richard Ross's comments come after the release of a study by faculty at Columbia and Yale universities of data collected from 12,000

teenagers ages 12 to 18 who were questioned again six years later. Researchers found that 88 percent of those who pledged to be abstinent reported having had sexual intercourse before they married.

[www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=17818](http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=17818)

They then moved on to research *why the those who waited had been successful* and found some common threads.

I've done significant work myself in my bid to confirm this and found the same themes through reading hundreds of studies into youth sexuality.

[www.youthandreligion.org/resources/ref\\_sex-activity.html](http://www.youthandreligion.org/resources/ref_sex-activity.html)  
[www.rand.org/health](http://www.rand.org/health)

The first question I posed last week was...

What five areas are almost universal in those who wait?

The answers are:

- 1 Parental influence
- 2 Ongoing teaching and visitation of principles
- 3 Godly mentors
- 4 Positive Peer Pressure
- 5 Relationship with God

I've put these points together in a graphic of a flag with five coloured bands with "Parental Influence" represented by half of the flag and the other four areas divided between the remainder. Parental Influence is overwhelmingly the winner in the stakes!

It's not enough to take them to a one-off event where they'll hear about purity. Or to give them a one-off sex talk. Or to give them no information. Or to overwhelm them with information.

It's to be lived around them by authentic relationships in authentic community. Frequently visited in conversation and teaching and built into their hearts with solid reason, encouragement with practical tools to live these choices.

The next two questions will have to wait till next time...

- How can we implement these findings?
- What are the threats?

But the fourth question can be answered very simply:

- Why does all this matter if my children are still little?

Because you have the opportunity to set a direct course from the beginning.

I've done up a table of points indicating predictors and inhibitors of adolescent sexual behaviour (contact me for a copy by email).

These findings are significant - not for mere information but as a foundation for action. To help us see what we need to emulate and encourage, what we can lay down as fruitless, and what we need to counteract.

I've mentioned George Barna's work before...

#### Reactions to America's Moral Condition

Barna says "The emerging generation of parents is the least likely of any demographic subgroup in the nation to possess - and, therefore, to transmit - biblical moral values. They will naturally impart to their children their own beliefs, and model and reinforce behaviors that fit their own values. The result is that busy people, regardless of their faith affiliation, wing it when it comes to moral decisions. Religious institutions could greatly influence people in these areas, but they'd have to substantially alter their existing strategies."

[www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)

I mentioned above about authentic community and authentic relationships. This doesn't mean perfect or we'd all be sunk!

I love this quote:

Very often what God helps us towards is not the virtue itself but this power of always trying again...this process trains us in habits of the soul...It cures our illusions about ourselves and teaches us to depend on God. We learn on the one hand that we cannot trust ourselves even in our best moments, and...on the other hand - that we need not despair even in our worst for we are forgiven. The only fatal thing is to sit down content with anything less than perfection.

CS Lewis

Learning to think with a purity paradigm takes time. It takes deliberate decision, action and perseverance (not to mention a thick skin) to stand against the tide of culture. It takes vision. Light. Truth and surrender. It will take people who can see and commit to the long haul.

Proverbs 29:18a KJV

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

Proverbs 29:18 The Message

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.

It takes time to change a culture - we can see that through various educational or propaganda campaigns throughout history. But look at what Uganda achieved in just 10 years. What might be achieved in one school in this same chunk of time?

What if we you as a concerned parent or teacher or Principal could be the starting point for flipping those statistics we mentioned last week?

91% have had intercourse by 20 years of age<sup>1</sup>  
(Only 40 of 400 abstinent at age 20)

[www.latrobe.edu.au/cleu/sexual\\_health.htm](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cleu/sexual_health.htm)

As Uganda's numbers dropped from 60% not abstinent, to only 5%... what if in ten years time the young people graduating from *your* school were to drop from 91% not abstinent to just 9%!!!

What a difference could be seen in the lives of our present day kindergarteners when they emerge as adults!