

IX

GOING BEYOND THE LAVER

Life Guidelines 2

Once again – “Beyond the laver” is where we press deeper into some of the issues of sexuality, applying all the foundations spoken up until this point. Most importantly – that of Jesus sacrifice for us and the participation in His purification processes in our lives.

GUIDELINES FOR SEXUAL PURITY 9-15

By R. Alcorn

9. Since God doesn't want you to have premarital sex, neither does he want you to do that which prepares your body for premarital sex.

"How far can I go?" This is a common question, but it isn't the best question because usually it means "how close can I get to disobeying God without actually doing it?" If a parent tells his child "Don't step out on the freeway," an obedient child won't go dangle his leg over the freeway, he'll stay far away from it. By putting himself close to the freeway, he subjects himself to unnecessary temptation to act on his impulses, disobey and put himself in grave danger.

"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

10. Once you let your body cross the line, it will neither know nor care about your Christian convictions.

Some Christians pray God will protect their purity, then willfully put themselves into temptation and wonder why God didn't answer their prayer. This is like putting a book at the corner of a table and praying "God please don't let this book fall," when all the while you keep pushing it further and further off the edge. No matter how fervently you pray that the book won't fall, it will fall if you continue to choose to push it. No matter how fervently you pray that you will not fall into immorality, you will fall if you continue to make choices that feed your temptation toward immorality. Don't allow your choices to undermine and invalidate your prayers.

11. If you have sexual intimacy with someone outside marriage, you are stealing from God and the other person.

Since he or she belongs to God, not you, that means you are borrowing this person for the evening. Be careful what you do with what doesn't belong to you. You'll be held accountable to his or her Owner.

12. God has your best interests in mind when he tells you not to have premarital sex.

What's right is always smart, and always for your good. Sex is not just something you do—sex is someone you are. It is linked to the welfare of your whole person.

Having sex outside of marriage is self-destructive in every sense. Sexual purity is always for the best—not only for God and others, but for you.

13. God would not tell you to abstain from impurity if it was impossible to obey him.

God is not cruel. He doesn't command you to abstain from necessities, such as eating or drinking or breathing. Sex is something everyone can abstain from—it is a strong desire, yes, but never an emergency, never a necessity. Christ has given us the resources to resist every temptation:

"The grace of God teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:12).

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:3-4).

You do not have to watch that video. You can turn it off, walk out, go in the other room. You don't have to click on that link to an ungodly website. You don't have to fondle the person you're dating. You can and should draw upon your resources in Christ, and say "no" to temptations to sin.

14. Satan will lie to you about sex, but Jesus tells you the truth.

Jesus said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:43-44).

Satan is an expert at telling lies, and he tells them smoothly and convincingly. He has persuaded many young people "it's okay to touch her there, it's okay to let him touch you, it's natural, it won't hurt anything." Soon there's lust, sin, devastation, disillusionment, loss of respect, conflict, insecurity and sometimes unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Many young people end up angry and bitter at themselves and others because they bought the lie, the relationship is ruined and now they are paying the price.

Satan is a liar, but Jesus is the truth and the truth-teller (John 14:6). He said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Those who believe Satan's lies about sex end up in bondage. Those who believe Christ's truth about sex end up free.

Identify and meditate on the truths Christ tells you. Identify and reject the lies Satan tells you.

15. You must learn to think long term, not short term.

Good or bad, you will always reap what you sow—you will always harvest the consequences of your choices.

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:7-9)

It doesn't matter how smart you think you are. It doesn't matter whether you have a Ph.D. in physics, if you step off the tenth story of a building, you will fall to your death. Gravity is law—there's just no getting around it. Likewise, God has set up spiritual laws that govern the universe, including laws concerning our sexual behaviour. If we break his commandments, ultimately we get broken.

Scripture teaches two basic alternatives in life, the way of God and the way of men, the way of holiness and the way of sin. Proverbs speaks of the path of wisdom and the path of foolishness, and calls upon us to make right choices, which are also wise, and avoid wrong choices, which are also foolish. After laying out the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience, God said,

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

The lifelong consequences of sexual impurity are worse than we can imagine. The lifelong rewards of sexual purity are greater than we can imagine.

SEXUAL PURITY PART TWO: WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

(Excerpts)

1. Realize where you go and who you go with will influence your sexual desires.

It's our nature to be influenced by our surroundings. When we put ourselves in a godly atmosphere with godly people, we are influenced toward godliness. When we put ourselves in an ungodly atmosphere with ungodly people we are influenced toward ungodliness.

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (1 Corinthians 15:28)

"He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm." (Proverbs 13:20)

"Stay away from the foolish man, because you will not find knowledge on his lips." (Proverbs 14:7)

". . . rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God . . . Have nothing to do with them." (2 Timothy 3:4-5)

2. Realize this person is your brother or sister in Christ—not your "lover."

"Treat older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:2). Don't go into dating with the goal of romance, but the goal of spending time with your brother or sister. When you begin a relationship, a rule of thumb is, don't do anything physically you wouldn't do with your brother or sister.

If a Christ-centered and positive relationship develops, then you might move to cautious displays of affection such as hand-holding. But be alert to the difference between appropriate affection and intimacy. You must stay safely back from the line where either one is propelled toward sexual intimacy. It's very hard to move back once you've crossed a line—so don't cross it in the first place.

This person may end up being a lifelong friend, or married to your best friend. Don't do anything with him or her that would cause you to be embarrassed or self-conscious if you end up being best man or maid of honour at his wedding.

3. Be accountable to someone

This should be a committed brother or sister in Christ, usually the same gender as you. It should be someone who takes sexual purity seriously, someone with wise advice, who will pray for you and help hold you accountable to high standards.

Parents should talk openly with their children involved in dating relationships. They should go over these guidelines for purity and tell their kids, "Because we love you and it's our job to protect you, from time to time we're going to ask you how you're doing in maintaining purity in your relationship." It is not only a parent's right to ask such a question, but his responsibility.

We all need someone to be honest with us. It's a great help just to have someone ask you, "How did it go last night? Did you honor the Lord? Did you maintain your purity?" If you know someone's going to ask, it's a great motivator to choose wisely.

4. Imagine your parents and church leaders are watching you through the window.

Would that change how you behave? Then realize your life is not private, it's an open book to be seen by a watching world:

"What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs" (Luke 12:3).

Meditate on the fact that someone much more holy than your parents and church leaders, and to whom you are even more accountable, is watching you, even when you tell yourself you're alone. God is omniscient and omnipresent. He is the Audience of One:

"Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:23-24).

"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).

"My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes." (Jeremiah 16:17)

God not only sees our actions, he knows our thoughts:

"You perceive my thoughts from afar. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord." (Psalm 139:2, 4)

"[God] knows the secrets of the heart." (Psalm 44:21)

"I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind." (Jeremiah 17:10)

In temptation our theology becomes very cloudy. The truth is, there is no such thing as a private moment. God is never in the dark. He is always watching. We may fool ourselves and others, but never God. He knows what we're thinking about and what we're doing. And it is his appraisal of our life that ultimately matters.

5. When you sense the temptation coming, before things start to get out of control, RUN.

"Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). When it comes to sexual temptation, it always pays to be a coward. In this battle, retreat is always the first line of defense. He who hesitates (and rationalizes) is lost.

Joseph demonstrated this with Potiphar's wife:

"And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her...She caught him by his cloak and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house." Genesis 39:10 12

Joseph not only refused to go to bed with her but to **"even be with her."** He saw the danger signs and avoided her. And when she finally pushed herself on him, he did not trust himself to stay where he was, but ran out of the house. Don't stay and try to "resist" temptation when you have the option of running from it. And don't choose to be near someone when that person is a source of temptation to you, or you are to her.

