

Sexual Purity

By Pastor Alan Utting



'The body is a battlefield for holiness, and purity is one of its greatest victories.'

Randy Alcorn

I realise many people don't read all my blogs, but I suspect this one may catch more attention! God designed marriage to be a partnership where husband and wife give mutual support, raise children, and share the gift of sexual intimacy as an expression of love. Yet whether married or unmarried, we may all face struggles in sexual purity. Sadly, this precious gift from God has often been misused, and many have lost their ministry because they gave in to the temptation of sexual immorality. For those in ministry, this temptation can come even without deliberate fault on our part. After all, as Scripture reminds us, 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Jeremiah 17:9). This blog is mainly based on wisdom found in the book of Proverbs.

Biblical Perspective

'... each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband' (Ephesian 5:33).

'Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God' (Matthew 5:8).

Although King Solomon in the book of Proverbs constantly refers to seductive women, men can likewise be the perpetrator.

Observations

Root causes - There are four areas in life that we need to guard against so that an emotional affinity with someone other than our spouse does not take place.

- a. Spiritual unity.
- b. Mental affinity.
- c. Personality compatibility.
- d. Physical attraction.

Believe it or not, physical attraction rules lowest as the primary cause for immorality to occur as it normally commences with one of the other factors first.

'Attachments occur when someone attaches themselves to you with the understanding that you can bring them fulfillment. This can then be transferred into love, but that love is not authentic' (quote unknown).

A typical way a wrong relationship can develop

1. A person seeks out the company of the other person they are attracted to. 'Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house' (Proverbs 5:8). This can happen in several ways:
 - a. spend too much time with them in the office.
 - b. hope you will run into them up town.
 - c. look out for them at church.
 - d. gravitate toward them for a conversation.
 - e. find excuses for phone calls, visits etc.
2. Unhealthy conversations. 'Her speech is smoother than oil' (Proverbs 5:3).

- a. joking, empathising where flattery may occur.
 - b. you thoroughly enjoy each other's company.
3. Fantasising can develop. 'Do not lust in your heart after her beauty' (Proverbs 6:25).
 - a. fantasy can lead to lust.
 - b. it can also lead you to consider how things would be different if you were married to that person.
4. A wrong use of the eyes. 'or let her captivate you with her eyes'.
 - a. eyes are the light of the soul and can be very powerful in conveying feelings' (Proverbs 6:25).
5. A lack of knowledge. 'But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment' (Proverbs 6:23).
 - a. They rationalise the situation, e.g. this attraction is harmless.

The slide is normally gradual and is like stepping into a river for a little harmless enjoyment with the opposite or same sex. However, the longer a person stays in that river the more likely they are to move down it. The relationship never stays at the same place. It is possible initially to move back onto the riverbank and break off that growing unhealthy relationship, but pressure and false reasoning can take over. As a person moves further down the river the current flows more powerfully until it is flowing so swiftly, that it is impossible to climb out even if one desires to. A short distance further is the waterfall, which has destroyed many a person's ministry and family.

Way of escape

Many know 1 Corinthians 10:13, but how many remember the verse before it? It says, 'So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall'. Too many men and women of God have fallen because they thought that they were safe from such temptations.

1. If you feel attracted to a person of the opposite sex, make certain that these feelings are not conveyed to the person concerned.
2. Immersing yourself in the Word of God is a most helpful way to remain morally pure. Many who have fallen have confessed to having ineffective quiet times with the Lord. 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night' (Psalm 1:2).
3. Prayer. It is harder to break up a home when you are praying for the people in it.
4. Be accountable on a regular basis to a friend (as well as your marriage partner) and be prepared to share with them inner conflicts as they occur. Men often find it difficult to share in this way, but it is essential to overcome strong temptations. Sometimes, if a person or leader shares with me about some unhealthy attraction, I thank them for sharing and mention that next time I see them I will inquire as to how they are getting on in this area. This is normally enough of a deterrent to prevent them from being further swept down the river. Genuine accountability can be a lifesaver!

If you fall in this area of sexuality, remember that sincere repentance brings forgiveness and can lead to restoration, though possibly in a different role. 'There's a purity in Christ which cannot be defiled'.

Resources

John L Sandford, *Why Some Christians Commit Adultery*