

The Power of Promise

Part 4

The Promise of Purity

2021.5.2



TALKING POINTS WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide



A publication of **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Community Group Discussion

- Pastor Doug spoke of "The Law of Sowing and Reaping":
 - 1 Who could tell us about a **sad** example of this law?
 - 2 Who could tell us about a **uplifting** example of this law?
 - 3 Do you think people more often learn from others' errors/misfortunes or from others' wise, godly choices and behaviors? **Why** do you think that is?
 - 4 Have one group member read Galatians 6:7-8 aloud. Now, with Bibles open...
 - 5 What does v. 7a say is at risk of happening? What is implied by this command?
 - 6 What is the connection between God being "mocked" and us being "deceived" (v. 7)?
 - 7 This passage says that we reap exactly what we've sown, but some people "get away with it", don't they? Explain.
 - 8 What would be some concrete examples of "sowing to please the sinful nature" as well as some examples of "sowing to please the Spirit" (v. 8)?
 - 8 What promise does Psalm 119:9 make?
 - 9 What is really involved in "*keeping your way*" **according to God's Word**?
 - 10 What do you currently "keep your way" according to?
 - 11 What does it mean that "*Wherever sin lives, intimacy dies. Wherever purity lives, intimacy grows*"? How have you seen this to be the case in your own marriage?
 - 12 As a Community Group, what are some things **do for each other** to help us live pure lives?
 - 13 Are we willing to commit to do these for each other?

*Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a lifestyle.
Sow a lifestyle, reap a destiny.*

Application

- Get close to God.
- Seek a high standard of purity.
- Practice forgiveness.
- Find an accountability partner.

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- 1 Read this statement, then the Law of Sowing and Reaping, then ask the question. Feel free to clarify that this sad example can be from anyone's life you know. Be prepared to show sympathy—especially if the example is from “close to home”.
- 2 This is straightforward. It should be encouraging that the Law of Sowing and Reaping works both ways, not just negatively. You can point that out to folks.
- 3 After getting folks' answer, don't forget to ask “**Why** do you think that is?”. This is probably the more revealing element of this question.
- 4 This is the biblical “Law of Sowing and Reaping”. It is fascinating that Paul warns us not to be deceived. This implies that it's easy to be tricked into thinking that “Although **others** have experienced negative consequences from this action, **I'm sure** that won't happen to me!” It's called a “law” because of its universal application!
- 5 To “mock” is to deride; to laugh at; to ridicule; to treat with scorn or contempt. Dig into this question—we typically think, “Hey, it's my life—if it doesn't work out, it's **my** problem.” Yet somehow **God** is diminished by us thinking that we can escape the consequences of our choices. How so?
- 6 Some folks **appear to** get away with sin, because God does **not** always bring the consequences immediately (Psalm 73 illustrates this truth). But they **do** come; God has promised (Romans 12:19b).
- 7 Take time to make a list. It will come in handy when answering 12.
- 8 This question is straightforward—but of course, it applies to all people, not just “young men”. A follow-up could be, “What if we don't want purity enough?”
- 9 This question will require some brain-storming. Don't settle for shallow or simplistic answers.
- 10 After clarify what exactly it means to “keep one's way according to God's Word”, it will be easier to come up with other values/governing principles which might rule one's decision-making processes. Again, don't settle for easy answers. This is the time for honest evaluation.
- 11 Again, a straight-forward question, but the answers could be rather revealing and painful. Don't settle for easy answers. This is the time for honest evaluation.
- 12 If you need to “prime the pump”, remind folks of what the answered for 7. Make sure you dig until you get concrete, realistic answers. This is what “doing life together” is all about.
- 13 Although this question is phrased as a simple “yes/no” question (which typically are to be avoided), the key here will be to say, “OK, what will that look like? What will it take for us to be that for each other?” Again, don't settle for easy answers or generalities. “Change doesn't happen in ‘fuzzy land!’”

Sermon Summary

The fourth and final promise we must make to our spouses is “The Promise of Purity”, which says: “I commit to loving you with the purity of Jesus Christ.” But how can we gain and maintain the personal purity we need to become the kind of lovers God desires? It begins by establishing a right relationship with God. The Bible is clear that on our own, we don’t have the capacity to love our spouses the way that God intends. We can’t love them with the purity of Jesus Christ if we don’t have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus can’t express his life and his love through us if he doesn’t live in us.

The Christian life is impossible to live. Only one person has ever lived it: Jesus Christ. But when we place our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, he comes to live within us—and as we surrender to him, he expresses his life and his love through us (Galatians 2:20). So the first step we must take to live out the Promise of Purity is to get close to God through his Son Jesus Christ, and you do that by placing your trust in him as your Savior, and then allowing him to express his life through you.

Next, as Christians, we must seek a higher standard of purity. As long as we take our cues from our culture, we are not going to love our spouses with the purity of Christ, because our culture has rejected God’s standards of purity. God is our standard-setter. He created us, and he knows the moral parameters within which we best operate. He has revealed those standards in the Bible. God’s standards are different from the world’s standards. They are higher; they are purer; they are wiser. They are designed to protect us and to provide for us. But to love as God loves we must think as God thinks. To love as God loves we need to renew our minds with God’s standards as revealed in the Bible.

To love purely, we must learn to think purely (Philippians 4:8). Now admittedly, that is a high standard. But it merely reflects the dignity of our created status as God’s image-bearers in this world. According to Genesis 1:26-27, mankind was created in God’s image. Because God is pure, we are to be pure. That is who God created us to be. Challenge yourself to test what you watch, what you read, and what you think about by the standard of Philippians 4:8. You see, when we sow seeds of impurity, intimacy dies. But the good news is that the converse is also true. When we sow seeds of purity in our marriages, intimacy grows. A byproduct of a life of personal purity is greater marital intimacy, trust, and transparency.

The third step in the Promise of Purity is to practice forgiveness in your marriage. For the Christian, forgiveness isn’t optional. We, of all people, should appreciate forgiveness and grace, for we are a forgiven people. As Christians, we have an obligation to forgive others who sin against us. In Ephesians 4:32, dealing with those who sin against us, Paul tells us that we are to be kind, we are to be tender-hearted, and we are to be forgiving. And why are we to do that? Because that is how Jesus responds to us when we sin. We are to forgive just as we have been forgiven by God. Without forgiveness, you will never experience intimacy in marriage. Forgiveness erases the sin that seeks to move our marriages toward isolation.

There is one additional way that we can gain and maintain the personal purity we need to love our spouses with the purity of Jesus Christ: find an accountability partner of your same gender who is committed to a biblical worldview who will hold you accountable to living a life of purity. Someone who will point you back to your marriage vows when you are tempted to move away from them. There is power in accountability (Proverbs 27:17). We all need someone in our lives who will help us keep our ethical edge sharp. An accountability partner can serve that role.

Church family, let’s make an effort to put into practice each of the four promises we have covered in this series: the Promise of Priority, the Promise of Pursuit, the Promise of Partnership, and the Promise of Purity. With God’s help, it is possible to follow his blueprint for your marriage through any trial or tribulation you may encounter—while enjoying a stronger, more loving relationship with your spouse that will last a lifetime.

The Promise of Purity says, “I commit to loving you with the purity of Jesus Christ.” How can we possibly make this promise when the Scriptures teach that “The human heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick—who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)? Each of the following passages examine human deceitfulness...

Monday—In light of the depressing news of Jeremiah 17:9, let’s begin with a bit of encouragement! Read John 1:43-51.

- Jesus is beginning his public ministry, and calling people to be his followers (see v. 43-44). Philip responded and followed. What did Philip do next (v. 45)?
- Where was Nathanael before Philip brought him to Jesus (v. 48)? (It appears that Nathanael enjoyed studying the Scriptures under his fig tree, and that day Nathanael must have been meditating on Genesis 28:10-16; see Jesus’ comment in v. 51.)
- When Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus, what evaluation did Jesus make of Nathanael (v. 47)? What is Jesus saying here—that Nathanael is not a sinner? Is that possible? (Read Romans 3:23)
- Notice what Nathanael **didn’t** say (v. 48a). He didn’t say, “Aw shucks! You’re being too complimentary Jesus!” Nathanael agreed with Jesus’ assessment of him! How can that fact give **you** hope regarding **your** “deceitful, desperately sick” heart?
- What **promise** does Jesus make in Matthew 5:8? What promise does he make to Nathanael in v. 50b-51? (Notice the word they all have in common: “see”. In seeing Jesus, we see God—John 1:18 and 14:7-9).
- How do we overcome our deceitful hearts, and become pure? Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. Have you experienced this?

Tuesday—Read Mark 7:20-23

- Jesus is talking about “defiled/unclean” people again. According to v. 20-21a, **from where** does defilement come?
- We often think of our hearts as a pump in our chests that keeps blood flowing. But in v. 20a Jesus equates the heart with what?
- List all of the things that v. 21-22 say come “from within, out of our hearts”. Now, look each of those terms up in a dictionary (either <dictionary.com> or <webstersdictionary1828.com>).
- Let’s explore just one of those things which “comes from within, out of our hearts”: murder (v. 20). When there’s a shooting at a school or workplace, the media always asks, “How could such a horrible thing happen?!” What is **Jesus’** answer to that question? What is **your** answer? What is **the media’s** answer?
- Verse 20 says that “murder” resides in evil hearts. Is **every** heart evil? **Why** do you think that?
- Are we **all** murderers? What answer does Jesus give in Matthew 5:21-22? What do you think about that?
- So, how can anyone ever be as Nathanael was (see John 1:47)?

Wednesday—Read Romans 1:18-32

- Are the people spoken of in this passage “especially bad”? (Verses 18-23 certainly could give us that impression!) **But are they?** (And, is it a question of “they” or of “we”?!). Reread v. 28-29. “Filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice...” Pretty bad people, aren’t they? But then v. 29 continues: “they are gossips...disobedient to parents...” Uh oh! These folks sound kinda “normal”, don’t they?
- Does Romans 1:18-32 describe all of us? Does it describe...you?
- So, are we **all** “ungodly and wicked” (v. 18)? What do you think about that?
- So, how can anyone ever be as Nathanael was (see John 1:47)? (Maybe Romans 3:21-26 holds the key?)

Thursday—Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- In 1 Timothy 1:12-15 Paul calls himself “the foremost sinner”. What do you know about Paul’s (Saul’s) former life (v. 13)? [For background, read Acts 8:1-3 and 9:11-14, just to name a few.]
- Now, compare Paul’s **current** personality and behaviors (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12) with how he was formerly (Galatians 1:13). In v. 7, to what does Paul compare himself? In v. 9a, what does Paul call other believers? In v. 11, to what family figure does Paul compare himself? One more image of family connection is obscured in the Greek of v. 17. Paul says that he has been “taken away” from them. That word is “orphanizō”. Drop the suffix (the final three letters) and what do you get? Paul felt like an orphan without them!
- Remind yourself again what Paul was like **before**. **How in the world** can a change of **that magnitude** be explained?
- Have you experienced change such as that? Explain.

Friday—Read 1 Peter 1:22—2:3 (Remember, the chapter and verse numbers are artificial, so the word “therefore” in 2:1 flows directly out of the ideas contained in 1:22-25.)

- In 1:23 we see that Peter’s readers had been “born again”. What does that mean? (See John 3:1-16 for background.)
- Verse 22a uses different words for the “born-again experience”. How is it described? According to v. 22b, Peter’s readers were born again **so that they could do something**. What is it?
- Right after someone is born (or, in this case, born again), we call them a _____ (2:2a). For what do newborn babies long? (2:2) For what are newborn Christians to long? (2:2) When newborn babies drink milk, what happens to them? When newborn Christians drink “the pure milk of the word”, what happens to them? (Note that v. 2 ends with “...so that...”)
- Are you “growing up in your salvation”? The concrete evidences of Christian growth are found in 1:22 and 2:1. (Note: If you are “growing up in your salvation”, then you **are** becoming like Nathanael and Paul! **Praise God!**) If you’re not “growing up in your salvation”, what is the reason? It is either because you’re not born again or else because you’re starving for the pure milk of the word. If you’re not growing, which one is it?

Saturday—Read 1 Peter 3:8-12

- Verse 10 talks about people who “desire life, love, and to see good days”. Does that describe you? How do you think one goes about achieving that sort of life? What does “conventional wisdom” say?
- Now let’s see what God’s wisdom says about how to have that sort of life! You must...
...keep from talking in certain ways (v. 10b). What are they? Are you doing that?
...turn away from doing something (v. 11a). What is it?
...start doing two things (v. 11). You are to “do _____ and seek/pursue _____”. Are you doing those things? What other positive traits does v. 8 say you must do? Are you doing them? What does v. 9a say you must never do? Are you obeying that command? Instead of repaying evil with evil and insults with insults, what must you do (v. 9b)? Are you doing that?
- Verses 9c and 12 give us two reasons why we are to live this way. What are they?