

THE NEED TO KNOW WHY

SEARCHING FOR CLARITY

“Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”
—The Apostle Peter

Welcome. I invite you on a journey—a journey into the heart of purity and the image of God. We will not be searching for an empty moralism—a pharisaical, legalistic list of dos and don’ts. We will not be seeking after outward obedience devoid of heartfelt submission. We will not be looking to control our children for our own ends, nor even to spare them from harm. On this journey we will be searching for the heart of God, expressed fully in the person of Christ. We will be searching for a Son-exalting purity that is not defined by what it isn’t but by what it *is*. Ultimately—though perhaps you didn’t realize it—we will be searching for the gospel.

But before we can raise up a *spirit* of purity in the hearts of our children, we must first raise up a *picture* of purity that is clear, obtainable, and knowable. Such a picture, I believe, has been lost in much of the church today. Do we know what God-centered purity looks like beside the external commands regarding premarital sex and adultery? Can we speak with certainty and clarity—indeed with divine authority—about how our children should relate sexually to members of the opposite sex? Or is the advice we give merely the sum total of our own wisdom, derived loosely from Biblical principles and our past experience? What is purity? What does it look like, and what lies at its heart? Why should we even care? These are the questions we will seek to answer on our journey.

But why another book on sexual purity? Will your time spent here be worth the investment? I believe so. This book, unlike others, ties together sexual purity with the image of the gospel. To my knowledge, this connection has not been explored at length nor applied to our contemporary Christian culture. Many books on sex, dating, and purity instruct on right behavior, but I have seen an absence of books that adequately explain *why* God commands such behavior.

I believe the answer to this “why” question is rooted squarely in the interconnectedness of sex, the gospel, and the image of God. When we help our children understand the “why” of God’s commands, we inevitably testify to the glorious truth of the gospel, we nurture a heart of purity, and we eliminate for our children much of the subjectivity that would otherwise surround this issue.

FOR YOU, THE PARENT

Unlike many books that address issues of sexuality, dating, and romance, this work is directed primarily toward the parent. As a former youth pastor, I have observed firsthand just how important parental influence is. For a child to grow straight and true when the parents are crooked and bent is a miracle of divine intervention. It can and does happen, for this is the power of the gospel, but the normal and natural course of spiritual nurturing in the life of a child reflects the dependency of a positive parent-child relationship. It is the parent’s job, even before the church’s job, to “train a child in the way he should go.” My primary aim, therefore, is to help you as a parent understand God’s perspective on sexual purity, for if it is not clear to you, it will likely not be clear to your children. We as parents can give only what we possess.

Further, the principles prescribed in this book (and, I believe, in the Word of God) are fairly conservative compared to the views of much of our current Christian culture. This is perhaps the most significant reason I have chosen to address parents as the primary audience. Many students I have taught have understood the truths of God’s Word and have given verbal assent to the direction advised here. But intellectual assent and willful obedience are not the same thing. Because many parents do not question the status quo of our culture, young people often find it difficult to choose a conservative path. Christian young people have an incredible ability to live for God, but we as parents must do everything we can to protect this desire and bring it to fruition.

It is important to mention from the outset that this book is not only for those of you who have children just entering the preteen years but also for

future parents and those whose children have yet to begin thinking about the opposite sex. If you are part of this latter group, you have a tremendous opportunity to begin guiding your children's expectations toward a godly path. Your children, will develop expectations. Will they develop them based upon what they see on television, hear from their friends, or read in books? Or will their expectations be shaped by the Word of God?

DEFINING AND APPLYING SEXUAL PURITY

Though two chapters of this book address the subject of dating, the focus of this book is not really about dating, courtship, or how to find a spouse. I have intentionally limited myself to the simple aim of clarifying and applying the nature of sexual purity. I touch upon these other topics only as they relate to this central aim.

Further, unlike many books on sexual purity, this book does not contain a host of data carefully detailing the repercussions of sexual immorality. An approach to sexual purity that uses the fear of STDs, unwanted pregnancies, and emotional scars as a means of motivating a child to remain sexually pure is based upon the faulty assumption that God's commands exist solely for our own protection. Though it is true that God's commands do protect us from harm, Scripture makes it quite clear that God's commands are not about what works best for us but about what brings him the most glory. Consequently we will not be relying on the "fear factor" as we seek to help our children strive for a life of purity.

As we will see, God has created the sexual relationship between a man and a woman to be a living image of the gospel. It is this truth that provides the "why" of all of God's commands and acts as the primary motivator that he sets forth for a life of obedience. As we explore the topic of sexual purity, we will learn that God calls our children to sexual purity, not because it is good for them (though it *is* good for them), but rather because through the proper use of our sexuality, we portray a picture of salvation—a deep and profound image of the gospel.

CONCLUSION

So, parents, this book is for you—that you may have clarity in your heart and mind about what God has ordained as appropriate within male/female relationships and that you will pass along to your children a clear picture of purity, enabling them to grow into young people who honor God with their sexuality.

For too long we have allowed our young people to wander aimlessly in their search for godliness in the arena of sexual purity. The road is long for both parent and child—longer perhaps than when you and I had to travel it. It is wrought with pitfalls and moral hazards that threaten destruction and death, both literally and spiritually. I know that you long to see your children succeed. You long for their good and their happiness. God longs for this as well, and he promises a good return for our investment of faith.

As you read through this book, I challenge you to think carefully about how well our current culture fits with what Scripture teaches about the connection between sexuality and the image of God. It is my prayer that above all God will use at least some of what I have written here to bring clarity and focus to that image, that the glory and image of the gospel might be seen ever more clearly in the lives of our children. May he turn our children's gray world of relativity into a black-and-white world of Christ-honoring sexual purity!