

PREFACE

Throughout this book's three-year development, its pages have undergone so many revisions that I can scarcely remember them all. In many ways this book's slow evolution has mirrored my own journey toward a deeper grasp of sexual purity. Through it all I have learned that true purity is found not in the mastering of one's will but in the mastering of one's desires. Someone once said that those who protest most loudly about a given vice are often themselves most vulnerable to that vice. Such a sentiment has not been lost on me, and I readily admit that my initial desire to write about sexual purity stemmed in part from my own quest for the same. And though my journey is not complete, it is with deep thankfulness to God that the completion of this book finds me far beyond the place where I was when it began.

Perhaps the biggest difference between this final version of the book and the earlier versions is its emphasis upon the gospel. Great theologians throughout history have often talked about the difference between Law and gospel. Law, they have said, is what we should do. Gospel, on the other hand, is the power to do it. The Christian must have both. Without the Law, we do not know how we are to live. Without the gospel, we do not possess the power to live according to what we know. My earlier versions of this book emphasized the Law but were short on the gospel. This was true of the book partly because it was true in my life.

But I have since learned that God's grace is not only the freedom of forgiveness but also the blessings of power, of new life, and of transformed desires. God, being rich in mercy, has made us alive with Christ and has begun the work of transforming our sinful hearts after the image of His Son. And with this new heart comes holy desires. This book stands as a testimony to the overpowering goodness of the grace of God, a grace that can transform the hearts of sinful individuals and cause them to delight in holiness even more than they delight in sin.

I want to thank the many people who have helped with this project: Barb Pierce, whose careful reading of my manuscript was of great value in bringing out many issues that I had neglected to originally include, as well as excluding items that were superfluous; Bill Edmondson of Ryver Media, who resurrected this project when I had all but moved on; Eric Spragg, for his help with the graphic design; Melissa Meyer, for her proofing and having an eye for the details; Jason Barbieri and David Hill for reading through early versions of the manuscript; and the many friends at Fremont Evangelical Free Church, Fremont, Nebraska, where the initial bulk of the writing was done. And most significantly, I am deeply grateful to my wife, Jill, who has been both an encouragement to me and a model of grace throughout our eight years of marriage.

—Gerald Hiestand, September 2005