

We will only grow spiritually as we should when we do so together as true children of God and members of the Body of Christ. But sin not only brings conflict, it requires us to be on guard in many areas for our own sake and the sake of our fellow believers. Living in purity is one such area that we work at together.

I. *The meaning of purity*

To be pure is to be clean. Nothing is present that should not be there. Like the purity of a physical substance, moral purity involves cleanliness, i.e., clean hands and a pure heart (*cf.* Psalm 24:3-4).

II. *The heart of purity*

The core issue of purity concerns our hearts. What comes out of our hearts makes us “unclean” (Mark 7:20-23). Being clean or pure involves keeping our actions “clean” and keeping our hearts “clean”. God does a major job in cleaning our hearts when we come to Him through Jesus who died that we might be forgiven and cleansed (*cf.* Titus 3:5-6). But we still sin, and when we sin, He is always ready to forgive and cleanse us (1 John 1:9).

Though God cleanses us, he wants us to avoid getting dirty. *Cf.* Ephesians 5:3, “among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity” (NIV).

III. *How do we help keep ourselves – myself and others – pure?*

1. We must guard what goes into our own hearts. Things get into our hearts primarily through our eyes and ears. “The eye is the lamp of the body.” (Matthew 6:22-23 NIV) Our eyes show what we desire and influence what we desire. If we look to fulfill sinful desires, we will fill our hearts yet more with sinful thoughts. *Cf.* Proverbs 23:26. We need to be careful what we listen to, because, like our eyes, what we choose to listen to shows our character and influences our character.
2. We must guard our actions, since wrong actions make me unclean and may cause others to sin which is particularly blameworthy (*cf.* Luke 17:1).

IV. *Purity in speech*

Examples of areas of speech to guard can be seen in Ephesians and Colossians.

1. Don’t lie but tell the truth (Ephesians 4:15, 25) because truthfulness conforms to the character of God, the character which we should display and is part of our spiritual armor. It is important for us and for others that we speak the truth.
2. Stop “unwholesome” talk but rather build others up (Ephesians 4:29). Like rotten food, we shouldn’t want rotten words in our mouth because it makes us unclean and sickens others. Instead our words should be good and bring healing (Proverbs 12:18).
3. There should be no obscenity, no foolish talking and no coarse or crude joking (Ephesians 5:4). Obscenity is behavior including speech which would be considered filthy or shameful. Foolish talking is speaking as a fool would speak, failing to consider God, giving no forethought or care for others. Coarse or crude joking attempts to be funny about things which should be personal and private, often focusing on body parts and bodily functions. Such speech is totally out of place. Giving thanks to God is better.
4. Slander, i.e., putting another person down or saying abusive things to or about them, must also be gotten rid of (Colossians 3:8-9). Slander hurts the person about whom it is spoken, the person who says it, and those who hear it said. *Cf.* Proverbs 18:8.

Though it might be easy for some to make light of such purity in speech, the warning in Ephesians 5:5 is solemn: No immoral, impure or greedy person ... has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ”.

V. *Sexual purity*

1. *The challenge of teaching sexual purity:* sexual activity is beginning at an ever lower age. Sex education in schools has increased without godly, moral guidelines. Sexually explicit material is more accessible than ever before.
2. *A biblical definition towards sexual purity:* sexual purity confines sexuality to the Biblical framework of marriage. Sex is right and pure within marriage but wrong and impure outside of marriage. *Cf.* Hebrews 13:4.
3. *Commitments to make in order to live together in sexual purity:*
 - a. I will not have a sexual relationship with anyone besides my spouse, i.e., fidelity within marriage and abstinence outside of marriage.
 - b. I will not do or say anything that might provoke a sexual response in anyone other than my spouse (*cf.* 1 Thessalonians 4:2-7). We should control ourselves so as “not to transgress, that is, go beyond proper limits in behavior, and to defraud in this matter a brother”. Crossing these proper limits stirs up passions and desires which cannot be rightfully fulfilled and thus the other person is cheated or defrauded. This can happen through words, clothing, touch, etc.
 - c. I will not look at another person to desire them other than my spouse. *Cf.* Matthew 5:28; Job 31:1. Women are not exempt, though generally face the different temptation of romanticizing.
 - d. I will flee temptation and anything that arouses wrong desires. *Cf.* 2 Timothy 2:22.
 - e. I will not listen to flattery, a primary tool of the “wayward woman”. *Cf.* Proverbs 5:3; 7:5, 21.
 - f. I will not participate in joking about sex (or being entertained by such).

God wants us to be pure (1 Thessalonians 4:7) and we must therefore be careful to live wisely (Ephesians 5:15). The challenge to live a pure life is great, but true children of God have the Holy Spirit and are joined together into one Body. Together it works better.