purity

BIBLE STUDIES ON A PURE HEART

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STUDY 1: PURITY IN SOCIETY

Sam[1] worked for a steel processing company that enabled its employees to buy scrap steel. Scrap being steel that did not meet specifications, often the end of coils. Sam[2] purchased a piece of scrap to make a hotplate for a BBQ. He also bought some bolts and nuts from a local hardware store to make legs for it. He got permission from the workshop foreman to work on it during his lunch break.

Another trainee, who was working in a different section of the plant, came to the workshop and asked Sam: "why did you buy the bolts when you could have got them from store stock for free?" Sam told him: "I believe in Jesus and want to obey him.". The other trainee swore at Sam and said: "In future get things from store stock or you will create problems for all of us and we won't be able to do foreigners (foreign orders)[3] anymore." Then he left.

1. What would you do in this situation? John 13:34-35

In our world, people who strive to lead a pure life are considered to be losers who miss out on the fun in life. In this study we look at the benefits that flow as a result of God giving us a pure heart. Our self-discipline to obey Jesus' commandments is observed by others. In this study we look at purity in society with the Puritans as an example.

2. How can a young man or woman stay pure? Ecclesiastes 12:1

The word pure describes your state since you believed in Jesus. God saved you by his grace because you could not get a pure heart by your own effort. When you believed in Jesus God gave you a pure heart and made you one of his children. Great blessings flow to you because you are pure.

[1] Stories shared in these studies are confidential. Only repeat them with members of this group and if appropriate with your marriage partner on the basis of Genesis 2:23-24.
[2] All the Sam stories are based on real events with names changed.
[3] Foreign orders are materials, product, and time that you have stolen from your employer. Many companies lose a lot of money from employees doing foreigners. One company set up a foreign order store and employed four retired staff to run it. Employees could purchase items at cost price. The number of foreigners dropped significantly.

3. **What does Jesus promise to people who accept his commandments? John 14:21**

4. **What has God blessed you with since you believed in Jesus? John 3:16, Ephesians 1:3**

5. **How have the three blessings that Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 1:5 been manifest in your life?**

6. **Can you count the blessings you have received from having a pure heart? Matthew 5:8**

Describe the following five blessings and what they mean to you:

I. Forgiveness - Matthew 6:14

II. A relationship with God - John 17:21

III. Peace - John 14:27

IV. Joy - Galatians 5:22-24

V. Worship; including reading the bible, singing, prayer and fellowship 1 Peter 3:15-17

7. **What are you to do in response to God giving you a pure heart? Ephesians 2:10**

8. **Who may stand in God's Holy place? Psalm 24:3-6**

In 1620, the pilgrim fathers fled from persecution in England to Holland on their way to settle in North America where they had the freedom to worship as Puritans and escaped being forced to worship as Anglicans. In Holland they worshiped in the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam. One of their descendants had the verse "Create in me a pure heart" (Psalm 51:10) painted across the front, inside wall of the church in bright red letters in memory of the Pilgrims.

While both the Anglicans and the pilgrims believed that the bible is God's word in human

language, they differed on how to handle issues that are not discussed in the bible[4]. The Puritans felt that if the Bible did not specifically authorise a practice, they stayed pure by rejecting it. The Anglicans believed that if the Bible did not forbid a practice, they could do it and remain pure.

9. Which one of the following four criteria for understanding Scripture are you most comfortable with?

I. Catholic - should do what the priest says

II. Anglican - should not do what the bible prohibits

III. Puritan - should only do what the bible commands

IV. Charismatic - should do what the Spirit moves you to

10. Apply the above four criteria to develop biblical practices that develop a pure heart for the following four social activities; practices.

In each case, how does a Christian keep his or her life pure?

I. Gambling Apps, Luke 12:15, Proverbs 16:33

II. Divorce, Matthew 5:31

III. Tattoos, 1 Corinthians 6:19

IV. Moving in with your partner, 1 Corinthians 7:8

11. How can a young man or woman stay pure? Matthew 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:5

Think back to the story at the beginning of this study. What has changed in your answer to Question 1?

Have you been challenged to stay pure in this study?Do you need help to solve a purity problem? You could start by meeting your pastor[5] to confess your sin and to ask them where to go to get help. Or, you could contact the Anglicare Counselling directly by phone: 1300 651 728 or through their web page:

https://www.anglicare.org.au/community/mental-health-services/counselling/

[4] Elwell, W.A. editor,1984. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Baker Book House

[5] The role of the pastor / minister in this situation is to support the person not to condemn him or her.

STUDY 2: PURITY IN JESUS

Sam worked as a trainee engineer in a large steel processing company. To gain broad experience he was moved to a different section of the company every six months. When Sam was working on the maintenance of overhead cranes, he spent a lot of time in the cabin of one crane waiting for jobs to come in. The electricians were not supposed to jump on and off moving cranes, but Sam's supervisor did. He told Sam not to but to go to the cabin and work on his studies.

The walls of the cabin were covered in centre fold photographs of naked women from *PlayBoy* and similar magazines. Sam didn't like to sit in the room with all that temptation to impurity around him, so he decided that as a Christian he should act. Act he did, and scraped all the photos off the walls. Word soon got around the company, and he received lots of criticism and some questions about his faith.

1. **What would you do in this situation? Luke 6:45**

Christians living in the 21st century struggle to remain pure. They live in a society that actively encourages the pursuit of pleasure through sexual sin and promotes self-interest through expectation.

2. **How can a middle-aged man or woman stay pure? Psalm 119:9**

The word purity describes physical cleanliness, for example the state of a person after being washed in water. In this study we look at the call of Jesus to individual purity with pornography as an example of facing that struggle.

3. **What is spiritual purity? Psalm 51:7 (chastity)**

4. **What is the problem that God sees when he looks at your heart? Jeremiah 17:9 Psalm 139:23**

5. **How did you become spiritually clean? I Peter 1:22; 1 Timothy 4:8**

6. **What is the reward for keeping your heart pure? Matthew 5:8**

7. **Why will you keep yourself pure? 1 John 3:1-3**

8. **What is your status before God that is reflected in your purity? 2 Corinthians 7:1**

9. **The world lures Christians into impurity with promises of enjoyment, empowerment and fulfilment when they get involved in impure activities. What impure activities have you been tempted to be involved in? Ephesians 4:17-19**

10. **How have you replaced impure activities with pure activities? Ephesians 4:17:20-24**

These impure activities are pleasurable for a time but often they make you unclean and you become addicted to them. Such an activity is pornography. Porn is often a video with nude people performing staged, edited performances of sexually explicit acts, including penetration and ejaculation, that don't reflect reality.

It is difficult to avoid porn. A State of Surveillance report claims that porn enables the worst in humans. It is difficult to avoid porn. For example: that statement claims that 96-98% of all online deepfakes are non-consensual porno-graphic images6, with around 99% depicting women.

Viewing porn is considered dangerous. It can result in addiction, cause erectile disfunction and distort sexual expectations. It can lead to severe mental health issues such as anxiety, low self-esteem, poor intimate relationships, unrealistic expectations of women. and violence. Difficulties appear in relationships when porn begins to take the place of intimacy rather than support it.

11. **Do you consider watching porn to be sin? 1 Corinthians 3:16**

[6] https://stateofsurveillance.org/articles/surveillance/deepfake-crisis-identity-theft/

A survey that was published in November 2024 by the Barna Group found that in Australia, 54% of Christians[7] and 68% of non-Christians had viewed porn. The survey identified two issues that indicate that the church is not teaching that viewing pornography is sin. The first issue is that well over half of the Christians who use porn say they are comfortable with their porn use. Half of them claim that using porn improves their sex life.

The second issue is that 82% of people who are struggling with viewing porn say that no one is helping them. A significant reason for the failure of the church to help people struggling with this addiction is that many of the shepherds of the flock are also struggling. Only 14% indicated that they wanted to remove porn from their lives.

12. **How is looking at a woman walking along a beach in a skimpy bikini different to porn? 1 Timothy 2:9**

13. **How many sins do you commit when you look at porn?**

14. **As the shepherd of a flock what can you do to help someone who comes to you to confess the sin of viewing pornography?**

Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:5) "The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith."

Think back to the story at the beginning of this study. What has changed in your answer to Question 1?

Have you been challenged to clean up a porn or sexual fantasy habit in this study?

Do you need help to solve your purity problem? You could start by meeting your pastor to confess your sin and to ask them where to go to get help.

[7] 75% of Christian men and 40% of Christian women

STUDY 3: PURITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

When Sam graduated from his traineeship, he changed jobs to work for another company. The receptionist was an attractive red head. One day, when Sam went to the office to organise a job, she said to him, “My TV stopped working last night and my husband is away, I don’t like being at home alone, will you come around after work and see if you can fix it?”

That afternoon Sam went to her house. It took him only a couple of minutes to fix the TV. He couldn’t help noticing the very seductive clothes she wore, clothes that that revealed considerable cleavage and firm breasts. Fortunately, Sam had taken his two children with him. When they met the receptionist, they misbehaved. Sam’s frustration with his children killed the sexual desire that he was feeling.

1. **What would you do in this situation? 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12**

In survey data collected from Australians in 2024 approximately 60% of men and 45% of women report having an affair at some time during their marriage. Millennials are more likely to cheat on their partners than Generation Z. In this study we look at Jesus’ call to purity in relationships with domestic violence as an example.

2. **How can an older man or woman stay pure? Matthew 5:8-11**

The word purity is used to describe the characteristic of not having sex. Some pastors teach that sex in a marriage should cease after the children have been born so that the couple can focus on ministry.

3. **Does the bible teach that sex is only for making babies?**
   1 Corinthians 7:32-35

4. **When is it good for a married couple to abstain from sexual intimacy?**
   1 Corinthians 7:5

Christians practice delayed gratification by abstaining from sex before marriage and by being faithful to their partner within marriage.

5. **What are the benefits of delayed gratification? Song of Songs 8:4; Hebrews 13:4-6, Proverbs 4:18**

6. **What would you consider to be a godly sexual activity? 1 Corinthians 7:36-38, Proverbs 5:15-20**

The bible story about sexual temptation that illustrates a believer under pressure is that of Joseph. After Joseph was taken to Egypt he became the trusted servant of Potiphar, but Potiphar's wife desired an intimate relationship with him.

7. **How did Joseph remain pure? Genesis 39: 6b-18**

8. **Why should we run from sexual sin? 1 Corinthians 6:18-7:1**

The relationship between a man and a woman is an area where actions by both genders are often impure. The failure of men to love their wives and women to respect their husbands has resulted in women experiencing violence by their intimate partner. Tragically, some Christians believe that such violence is encouraged by the Bible and ignore the fact that the Bible portrays men and women as equal and different.

9. **When the bible says that a wife is to submit to her husband does this mean he is permitted to force her to do his commands? Ephesians 5:22**

10. **Would we see a decline in domestic violence if couples lived in accordance with Ephesians 5:33?**

Sam's father taught him two rules: 1. He must never hit a woman and 2. He must look after his sisters.

11. **If these two rules were taught to all boys, would the level of domestic violence decrease? Job 31:1**

12. **How is a husband to treat his wife? Ephesians 5:25-28, Hebrews 13:4**

A 2026 poll of Australians found that 42% of men did not consider sexting with AI to be cheating, while 44% of women believed it was. A man is to worship his wife, not an image of a nude, whether it is of another woman or a computer-generated object.

13. **When a woman becomes an object what happens to the purity of her marriage? Matthew 5:27-29**

Data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in November 2023, claims that 21% of adults have experienced partner violence, emotional abuse or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner. Roughly, 12% of divorces are attributed to domestic violence.

When Jesus was asked about divorce he replied: “I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.” Traditionally the phrase “has been unfaithful” has been interpreted as “has committed adultery”.

More recently some scholars, such as Tim Keller, have said that adultery is too narrow an interpretation. A broader more accurate translation is: “breaks the marriage covenant”. In which case domestic violence, emotional betrayal, and abandonment, as well as adultery, all become valid reasons for Christians to divorce.

14. **What are the elements of the marriage covenant? Genesis 2:20b-25, Malachi 2:14-16, 1 Corinthians 7:10-17.**

15. **What do you think: is remarriage after divorce due to domestic violence the result of a pure heart? Matthew 19:9**

16. **What is your new identity? 1 Corinthians 15:50-53**

17. How does your identity as a Child of God encourage you to be single minded about living a pure life?1 John 3:1-3

18. How can an old man or woman stay pure? 2 Samuel 22:26-27

Think back to the story at the beginning of this study. What has changed in your answer to Question 1?

Have you been challenged to repair a broken relationship in this study? Do you need help to solve your relationship problem? You could start by meeting your pastor to confess your sin and to ask them where to go to get help.

STUDY 4: PURITY OF IDENTITY

Sam slumped onto the lounge. He stared at the wall, feeling deflated. His granddaughter Joe had just left. She is a beautiful young woman, his joy. But she told him that her friend Mary was moving in with her to be her husband. In future, Mary would be called Alex. Sam was devastated.

Memories of Joe as a little girl flooded his mind. Sam had taken her to Sunday school where he had watched her love of Jesus grow. Sam told her that he did not approve of what she was doing, but he still loved her and she was welcome to visit their home at any time.

1. **What would you do in this situation? Ephesians 4:15**

After Joe left Sam began to think: "I don't know much about identity, transgender, homosexuality, and body image." His identity as a thinking Christian resulted in him setting out to understand what these terms mean and what the Bible teaches as right and wrong actions.

He learned that his identity includes his core values, gender, roles, and self-worth. His gender identity is his personal sense of his own gender. His personal identity includes his traits, values, memories, and choices that make up his unique character. His social identity includes his connection to groups or categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality.

2. **What distinguishing characteristics should define your identity? Galatians 5:22-23**

Homosexuality denotes identity based on sexual attraction between people of the same gender. The bible says homosexual acts are an abomination and people who practices homosexuality must be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offence.

3. **How can a person who feels sexual desire for another person with the same sexual identity stay pure? Can he choose his identity or is it the result of natural processes? Romans 1:26-27, 1 Timothy 1:8-11**

Transgender refers to people whose gender is defined by their genitals but they don't feel comfortable in their own bodies. Transgender people can choose their gender identity and not be homosexual.

Today, personal identity is considered to be fluid. Cross-dresser[8], **L**esbian, **G**ay, **B**isexual, **T**ransgender, and **Q**ueer (LGBTQ) describe different forms of sexual orientation and gender identity.

4. **Do we treat people as Jesus would when we place gender identity and homosexuality in the same group LGBTQ? Matthew 19:12**

5. **Is it sin to change your identity? Genesis 10:31-32**

Christians talk about God's big story: the story of his relationship with human beings starting at creation and finishing with a new creation.

6. **What was the original identity of people? Genesis 2:15-17**

7. **What problem did the man have with his identity? Genesis 2:18-20**

8. **How did God solve the man's identity crisis? Genesis 2:21-22**

9. **In what ways is the identity of a woman different to the identity of a man? Genesis 2:23-25**

God created male and female in his image, to be like God in character but with different body types. Humans were given a physical body while God had a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). They were pure - free of sinful elements of any kind, having no faults. In their relationships they expressed the truth in love.

[8] The name transvestite is considered to be an offensive term for a cross-dresser.

10. **When woman disobeyed God and encouraged man to disobey God too, what changed in their identity and how did that impact the purity of our relationships? Genesis 3:16-19**

11. **What was their new identity? Genesis 3:16-19**

The identity of people was to obey the commandments given to Moses so they would bring glory to God (John 3:5-6). They failed to glorify God when they chose an identity opposed to God. This is called sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

12. **What blessings did God promise Abraham? Genesis 12:1-3**

13. **What commandments were given to Moses? Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

The identity of humans remained the same until Jesus rose from the dead (Romans 8:16-17. Now God gives you a choice: First, continue rejecting God's offer of eternal life and go to eternal punishment (Ephesians 2:8-10).

14. **Can you inherit the Kingdom of God in your physical body? 1 Corinthians 15:45-50**

Or second, believe in Jesus and receive a new identity as a Child of God (1 Peter 2:) including a pure heart. This new identity will include a new body that is perfect and not spoilt by sin. (1 Corinthians 15:44). Jesus loves the people who obey his commands (John 13:34).

15. **What is your new identity? 1 Corinthians 15:50-53**

Think back to the story at the beginning of this study. What has changed in your answer to Question 1?

Have you been challenged by your own identity? Do you need help to solve your identity problem? You could start by meeting your pastor to confess your sin and to ask them where to go to get help.

STUDY 5: PURITY OF BODY-IMAGE

Sam saw his grandson Pete pour white powder into a glass of water and then drink it. He asked his grandson what the powder was. Pete replied, “This is creatine. All the kids are drinking it to increase the energy available to their muscles and to increase their height.”

1. **What would you do in this situation? Amos 4:1**

It seems that creatine is the drug supplement of choice when you want to strengthen your muscles. It is not known to be addictive, has no known bad side effects and may be good for your body image.

Creatine is a naturally occurring compound that plays a crucial role in energy production within muscles. It is primarily composed of three amino acids and is stored mainly in muscle tissue. Your body produces creatine in the liver, kidneys, and pancreas, and it can also be obtained from dietary sources, particularly red meat and seafood.

When you tune up your muscles your skin tightens and your body looks better. Influencers promote it online to encourage teenagers to drink creatine to improve their self-image. We live in a time when self-image and self-esteem are all important.

2. **What distinguishing characteristics define your body image? Song of Songs 5:10 or 16, 7:1-9**

Body image refers to the thoughts and feelings you have about your body and the way it functions or fails to function. This includes your, shape, weight, gender identity, hair colour, facial beauty and movement. Your body image is influenced by your personality, your culture, your social environment, your hereditary, the environment you live, the media you watch and the purity of your heart.

3. **Describe a healthy body image that you would like to have? 1 Peter 3:3-6**

Having a healthy body image means that you can respect your body and look after its health. You can appreciate it for what it does and how it looks, regardless of its shape.

4. **What body image did God give Adam? Genesis 1:26**

5. **What happened to Adam's body image when he chose to disobey God in Genesis 3:7?**

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God they experienced shame because their hearts were not pure anymore. To cover the change in their body image they tried to hide their bodies. Shame is a feeling of embarrassment or humiliation that arises from the perception of having done something dishonorable, immoral, or improper. Also they felt guilt because they were guilty.

6. **Can you hide from the shame of being naked? Genesis 3:10-11**

Guilt is generally about something that you have done. It refers to something you did wrong or to a behaviour that you feel bad about. While guilt is about wrong actions, shame is about being wrong as a person.

7. **What is the relationship between body image and a pure heart? 1 Corinthians 6:19, Romans 12:1**

Shame refers to something about your character or who you are as a person that you believe is unacceptable. Shame is not about doing something wrong. It is about a feeling that you have when you perceive that you are not good enough in some way.

8. **How can we use our body image to model our relationship with Jesus? Ephesians 5:1-2, Romans 6:12**

Body image and identity are deeply connected parts of who you are. Body image is how you view, think, and feel about your physical self. When self-worth is dictated by your looks you may harm your identity when you struggle to achieve a desired appearance. Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to another person. It is claimed to be an inherent part of human identity, distinct from gender identity.

9. **How do we encourage people to develop a positive body image? 1 Peter 3:3-4, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27**

People who want to change their body image claim that feeling at home in your body is one of the most important aspects of achieving a satisfying identity. An identity crisis may cause a person to be confused when choosing between right and wrong. Their attempts to live up to their identity may cause feelings of guilt.

10. **Is it sin to change your body image? Genesis 10:31-32, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

A tattoo is a change in body image that has become very popular. People choose tattoos that represent something about their identity. Often, these people are willing to talk about their tattoos.

11. **How can Christians see the tattoos on a person's body as an opportunity for the sharing the gospel? Leviticus 19:28; 21:5; Deuteronomy 14:1, 1 Corinthians 9:20** [9]

Sam went to the barber for a haircut. His usual barber was away so another barber, Wendy, cut his hair. He noticed that Wendy had a cross shaped tattoo on her arm. Their conversation went something like this:

Sam asked, "Wendy, I see you have a tattoo, what does it mean to you?"
Wendy replied, "It's my favourite verse - 1 John 4:13".
"Do you have a favourite verse?" she asked him.
"John 3:16" Sam replied
"What does it say? I don't remember the numbers, I remember the words," said Wendy.

"Do you go to church?" Sam asked.

"Sometimes" she said.

[9] https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/hebrew-bible/what-does-the-bible-say-about-tattoos/

"Then where did you learn this verse?" he asked.

"I use Bible Chat" she replied.

12. Has God written your name in a tattoo on the palms of his hands? Isaiah 49:16, Leviticus 19:28

13. What is your identity as a Christian? 1 Corinthians 15:50-54

14. Ask a friend, "What does your tattoo mean"?

15. How can a person with a tattoo stay pure? Matthew 6:33

In these studies, we have asked: how can people in three age groups stay pure? Spend some time thinking about the differences between the age groups and how you might help people of different ages to stay pure.

Think back to the story at the beginning of this study. What has changed in your answer to Question 1?

Have you been challenged by your own body image? Do you need help to solve a body-image problem? You could start by meeting your pastor to confess your sin and to ask them where to go to get help.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Phillip McKerrow is a Robotics Engineer who seeks to understand how bats and blind people use ultrasonic sensing to navigate. His research includes developing mobile robot systems, including drones, to conduct experiments to test theories of echolocation for navigation and object recognition. In retirement Phillip writes Bible studies to help people believe in Jesus. With his wife Ann he enjoys visiting their grandchildren. When not writing he enjoys woodcarving, photography, and fishing.

RESOURCES

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