

# Family Legacy Institute

Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

## Why Purity Works A Conversation for Parents and Kids

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**This is one of two articles written for parents to read together with their kids, particularly their teens. The content is aimed at providing conversations regarding the most potentially damaging issue facing kids today: cultural sexualization.**

Here's a little quiz dealing with our sexualized culture. See how you score. As you look at each "item" on the left, circle a number on the right that expresses your opinion regarding **how sexually oriented** the "item" appears to be:

| Item                                              | Low |   |   |   |   | High |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|---|---|---|---|------|
| Magazines in supermarket checkout lane.....       | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Magazines in the men's section of a magazine rack | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Teen magazines.....                               | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Primetime television shows.....                   | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Hollywood movies.....                             | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Pop music .....                                   | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Cell phone use.....                               | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| The Internet.....                                 | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| MTV.....                                          | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |
| Advertising in the windows of shopping malls....  | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |      |

Add up the numbers you circled. What's your total score? \_\_\_\_

There are ten items, so the highest possible score is 50. If you scored anything lower than 25, you either live on another planet, you're legally blind, or you've become so used to our sexualized culture that you've accepted it as normal.

Here are three "sandwich advertising snapshots" of where this culture is at right now. Burger King has run an ad depicting oral sex with one of their new sandwiches. Hardees advertises a woman essentially having sex with a burger. Carls Jr. is selling their burgers using model in a bikini so small it has more to do with three band-aids than swimming suits. We're talking about

selling *sandwiches*. Yet no women's organizations are picketing. No churches are preaching or praying about it. This manipulation has become so normalized into our culture and into our minds that we shrug our shoulders and walk away.

Our grandparents would roll over in their graves if they saw the level of sexual stuff our kids see every day. The Madison Avenue ad agency message is clearly challenging the church's historic teaching. Today's advertising blitz says, *sex is for personal recreation ~ God is irrelevant*. The "rules" by which we now operate include a) the two-consenting-adults rule, which has no boundaries, and b) the if-it-feels-good-it-must-be-OK," which means kids in grade school are experimenting with oral sex. (Not kidding.)

Yet scripture teaches the value of purity. So the question calling for an answer is, which approach to sexuality works better – the way of the world, or God's way? The rest of this booklet will examine that question. We'll provide research findings to support our conclusions.

### Definition Of What "Purity Works" Means

The first thing we must do is define what is meant when we say, "Purity works." To understand this, we have to define and prioritize our goals. Here are two different lists of goals. Put an "X" beside the ones you would like to build into your life.

|  | List A                                                          |  | List B                                                                        |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Ability to intimately attach and remain attached to your spouse |  | Freedom to try other spouses if the first one doesn't pan out                 |
|  | Ability to remain true to your spouse                           |  | Ability to experiment with numerous sexual partners                           |
|  | Desire to maintain a "clean mind"                               |  | Ability to check out a little porn, maybe have an affair or two               |
|  | Desire to know God and be known by God                          |  | Intent to either ignore God, or hope He doesn't exist                         |
|  | Desire to deepen and strengthen personal character              |  | Desire to flex with each situation, regardless of character issues            |
|  | Desire to control and focus your own sexuality                  |  | Desire to let your sexuality "find its own level," wherever                   |
|  | Desire to leave a godly legacy in the lives of your children    |  | Assumption that your kids will figure life out by themselves, just as you did |

If most of your "Xs" are in List A, then the rest of this booklet is oriented to help you. If most of your "Xs" are in List B, and if that's OK with you, then the rest of this book may lead you to reconsider some of your goals.

### Purity Works Because It's Simple

The sexual sophistication of today's culture leads to many layers of complexity ~ layers that are debilitating if your goals are found within List A above. One layer of complexity involves the probability of contacting one of the 25-30 forms of sexually transmitted diseases. Most people

who carry them don't know they have them and so STDs are passed routinely, sometimes leading to disastrous medical problems years later.

I'll always remember the "Barbie Doll" beauty who came for counseling, and began by tearfully explaining that she'd just been diagnosed with Herpes. "And he was such a nice guy ~ I honestly fell in love with him, and thought we might one day marry." As a pastor and therapist I have thus far successfully fought the urge to leap across my desk, shake a client by the neck, and scream, "What were you THINKING?!?" Simply stated, STDs make life more complex.

Another form of complexity involves what the counseling field calls "attachment issues," which basically means that the person has problems establishing and maintaining relationships. Something is broken somewhere. Often, these people's clinical histories involve multiple sexual partners. This is a bit of a chicken-and-egg thing. On one hand, people who come out of painful families of origin often have attachment problems, so they turn to sex as a way to feel good about themselves. On the other hand, people who use sex as a "feel-good" drug, usually develop attachment problems. So it works both ways.

Human beings were created by God to be intimately attached to one person for a lifetime. We're a bit like German Shepherd dogs, preferring one owner, or one family. Although scripture doesn't articulate all of the consequences of pushing back against God's instructions, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century the field of psychology began to understand the relationally destructive results of maintaining dual or multiple intimate sexual relationships. One of these results is a growing inability to maintain emotionally connected and intimate relationships ~ i.e., we develop "attachment issues." When we have multiple partners, **a)** we lose the ability to establish and maintain attachment ~ if we're married, the strength of our attachment to our spouse is eroded; and **b)** we lose the ability to participate in any level of intimacy other than sexual relationships.

While the "chase" can be intense and can help us feel very connected, the proof is in the person's ability to form deep and lasting relationships. By "lasting" we mean something a little longer than six months or a year. Actually, we're talking about *decades*. Any bozo (male or female) can perform well during the "chase" and the "falling in love" phases of a relationship. That's the easy part. But it takes maturity, stability and commitment for a relationship to last 40 – 60 years. People who have "attachment issues" frequently cannot sustain long-term relationships. This makes life more complex.

Another format of the complexity born of sexual sophistication involves the addictive spin-offs from sexual self-focus. In its simplest form, the problem is as follows: As a person participates in sexual activities that are not approved by God, sex often becomes more of a slave-driver and less of a bonding agent. When the Apostle Paul wrote of slavery in Romans chapter six, he might well have been writing about sexual slavery. Some forms of sexual behavior (e.g., pornography) become addictive in the purest sense of the word. Indeed, research has found that *porn addiction is just as addictive as cocaine or heroin addiction*. Addiction makes life dramatically more complex. Among other complexities, porn addiction is currently one of the top reasons given by divorcing couples.

Yet another aspect of complexity involves the residual wounds in other's lives. A man unknowingly brings home an STD. A wife is caught having an affair. The kids find dad's porn stash. Suddenly the family's heart has a dagger in it. Trust is shattered. Children's sense of right and wrong is crushed. The ripples of sexual sin spread rapidly and run deep within families. This is pain which if not addressed, can last a lifetime. Complexity.

STDs, attachment problems, addiction, family destruction ~ these are some of the complexities of sexual activity that is not approved by God in His Word.

By contrast, purity leads toward simplicity. Life is far more simple when one chooses to remain pure and chaste within marriage. There's nothing to hide ~ nothing you wish you could forget ~ no addiction ~ no fear of discovery ~ no shame ~ no sexual diseases. Life is far more simple.

This is not to say that husbands and wives don't have to work out some of their unique sexual issues. There are almost always sexual adjustments in marriage. A few normal adjustments of marriage include frequency of love-making, place/time, kinds of sexual interaction, initiation, etc. But these issues are simple compared to the complexities outlined above.

### **Purity Enhances The Staubach Effect**

Joe Namath was a Super Bowl winning quarterback and a hall of famer, playing most of his career with the N.Y. Jets. Outside football, his reputation was that of a rebel and a womanizer. Namath was quite open about his "playboy" status. He opened a chain of bars called, "Bachelors III," aimed at attracting men and women who were on the make. He then opened another chain of bars called, "Broadway Joe's." His personal roster of sexual partners was reported<sup>1</sup> to include Barbara Streisand, Janis Joplin, Raquel Welch, Mamie Van Doren, Randi Oakes, and Deborah Lynn Mays. In one interview he hinted that his sexual exploits numbered upward of a thousand women.

Contrast Namath with Roger Staubach. Staubach was another of the great quarterbacks of football history. His accolades include Heisman Trophy winner, college hall of fame, Super Bowl MVP, six time Pro Bowl nominee, and pro football Hall of Fame inductee. Dallas Cowboys coach, Tom Landry once said that Staubach was "possibly the best combination of a passer, an athlete and a leader to ever play in the NFL." As such, Staubach had more than ample opportunity to have any number of women. Yet in a television interview in 1975, Staubach said, "I enjoy sex as much as Joe Namath – only I do it with one girl."<sup>2</sup>

Is it possible to have as much sexual enjoyment with one partner, as one can have with a thousand? Ancient King Solomon experimented with that question. He had 700 wives plus 300 concubines<sup>3</sup> ~ a thousand women at his service ~ a different woman every night for three years before repeating the cycle. He wrote a treatise about his experience. In his own words, here's part of what he said:

***"I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men***

*and women singers, and a harem as well -- the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure.” (Ecclesiastes 2:6-10 ~ NIV).*

It has been said that the best cure for hedonism, is its practice. In the same treatise, King Solomon made the following statements: *“Meaningless! Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” (1:1); “I hated my life” (2:17); “I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been [born]” (4:2-3).* The most meaningful measure of a life is found in its relationships, not in its conquests, its wealth or achievements.

Perhaps the clearest way to understand what we’re calling “The Staubach Effect,” is to consider two musicians. One of them is able to play Chopsticks on 10 different instruments. Another is has mastered playing Chopin, Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, Rachmaninoff, and other grand masters ~ but only on a single instrument, a piano. Which of the two do you think gains the more profound enjoyment? Obviously, a lifetime commitment to one instrument will bring with it far greater depth and meaning. So it is with sexuality and marriage. Simplicity enhances the Staubach effect.

## Purity Limits Regrets

In fascinating research it has been found that of those who were sexually active during their teen years, between 67 and 72 percent later wish they had not been.<sup>4, 5</sup> The more mature a person becomes, the more they understand that sex outside of marriage produces aching memories and regrets ~ mental issues one wishes they could be rid of ~ regrets of character ~ of betrayal ~ spiritual regrets ~ sometimes physical regrets ~ memories of broken attachments ~ memories that create mental comparisons. Some of these last a lifetime. Some leave a permanent ache.

The world of pop music often does a great job of expressing many of the emotional experiences of life. One of the great songs of regret is, “Send in the Clowns,” written by Stephen Sondheim. The song is a ballad from Act II of the play, “A Little Night Music,” and is sung by the character, Desiree. In this song Desiree reflects on ironies and losses of her life, one of which involved an affair with the character, Fredrik. Read the lyrics slowly ~ sense her memories and regret.

*Isn't it rich? Aren't we a pair?  
Me here at last on the ground, and you in mid-air,  
Send in the clowns.*

*Isn't it bliss? Don't you approve?  
One who keeps tearing around, and one who can't move,  
But where are the clowns? Send in the clowns.*

*Just when I stopped opening doors,  
Finally finding the one that I wanted was yours,  
Making my entrance again with my usual flair,*

*Sure of my lines ~ nobody's there...*

*Don't you love farce? My fault, I fear.  
I thought that you'd want what I want ~ ~ sorry my dear,  
But where are the clowns? Send in the clowns.  
Don't bother, they're here.*

*Isn't it rich? Isn't it queer?  
Losing my timing this late in my career,  
But where are the clowns? Send in the clowns,  
Well, maybe next year.*

Another song of regret is Paul Simon's "Still Crazy After All These Years." Read the lyrics and ponder the memories and regret in this song.

*I met my old lover on the street last night,  
She seemed so glad to see me, I just smiled,  
And we talked about some old times, and we drank ourselves some beers ~  
Still crazy after all these years,  
Oh, still crazy after all these years.*

*I'm not the kind of man who tends to socialize.  
I seem to lean on old familiar ways,  
And I ain't no fool for love songs that whisper in my ears,  
Still crazy after all these years, oh, still crazy after all these years.*

*Four in the morning, crapped out, yawning,  
Longing my life away;  
I'll never worry, why should I?  
It's all gonna fade.*

*Now I sit by my window and I watch the cars,  
I fear I'll do some damage one fine day,  
But I would not be convicted by a jury of my peers.  
Still crazy after all these years, oh, still crazy,  
Still crazy, still crazy after all these years.*

This is not to say that marital fidelity doesn't have its own challenges. In this discussion of why purity works, there are challenges on either side of the coin. *The issue of wisdom, is to choose which side of the coin to bet one's life upon.* Marital fidelity certainly has its own challenges. Common marital challenges include:

- Boredom, repetition and the desire for variety
- men who "give it all" to the corporation and have little left for their wives
- women who "give it all" to the kids and have little left for their husbands
- loss of one's figure or physique
- partners who are too dominant or forceful; or too wimpy



- partners with debilitating body-image issues
- partners whose physical illnesses make sex impossible
- partners who are emotionally distant
- partners who are too insecure to fully trust their spouse
- partners who bring unresolved anger into the marriage

This is just a beginner's list ~ it could be a lot longer. The point is that there are a lot of reasons why infidelity sometimes seems to make sense. Yet the sadness, potential harm and complexity of affairs make infidelity a terrible choice. If people gave the same level of effort to sprucing up their marriages as often given to an affair, all marriages would be exciting.

After having been a pastor and therapist for decades, I have seen hundreds of people decide it would be easier to junk their marriage and “find someone else better suited to them.” There's a joke about trading one's 40 for two 20s. The problem with this solution is that the divorcee leaves a wounded marriage, only to take his/her issues along and infect the next relationship with his/her pathology. Issues that challenge marital fidelity will always be present, in every marriage. Infidelity is not a helpful or positive solution to marital problems.

Yes, fidelity and purity have their challenges. But in the end, people seldom regret having chosen fidelity and purity. And if *both* partners are willing to work at pleasing their partners (rather than just focusing on themselves); and if *both* partners are willing to work at creatively developing their sexual lives ~ then sex can become a never-ending garden of exploration and enjoyment. That was what God had in mind when he first created sex. In this regard, purity limits regrets.

## Purity Is Blessed By God

In this booklet we're exploring why purity works. It is likely that *the greatest reason purity works, is because it is blessed by God*. As we obey God, He blesses us. Here are a few thoughts from scripture that reinforce this premise:

***Ps 119:1-2 ~ “Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.”***

Christ taught, “***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled***” (Mt. 5:6). “***Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God***” (Mt. 5:8). However it happens, scripture teaches that God blesses those whose hearts are pure ~ and this purity of heart certainly includes sexual purity.

***Luke 11:28 ~ “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”*** God apparently has a thing about purity ~ the Bible says that He blesses it.

After King David sinned with Bathsheba, and when he finally came to his senses, he wrote Psalm 51. Here's part of it, in which David cried out to God, asking for a newly clean heart. That is to say, David grieved for the loss of his purity. Picture a 45-year-old king, faced flushed, tears streaming, uncontrollably sobbing, brow tight with grief, eyes red, hands trembling as he

cries out to God: ***“You deserve honesty from the heart; yes, utter sincerity and truthfulness. Oh, give me this wisdom. Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires. Don't toss me aside, banished forever from your presence. Don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you” (Ps. 51:6, 10-13 ~ TLB).***

The proof of David's brokenness is found in those last six words, *“Make me willing to obey you.”* That is the key ~ a greater desire to obey God than any other desire in our lives. God knows when we are tempted, and he knows when we yield to temptation in our minds ~ often *long before* our mental yielding turns into sinful action. A heart that desires above all else to please God, represents what we might call the “core of purity.” It is a heart that is so desirous of pleasing God, that we pray, “Make me willing to obey you.”

## **Purity Develops Character**

Here's a story as told me by a college buddy years ago. (We'll change the names for obvious reasons.) Let's call him Smitty. One evening Smitty had a date with a girl who had a reputation for being wild. We'll call her Wendy. Smitty confirmed Wendy's reputation on their first date ~ he later said they'd had a “wild and frisky time together.” The morning after their date, Wendy committed herself to the psych ward at a local hospital ~ she was suicidal. Smitty quipped, “If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

Why was Wendy suicidal? Why was Smitty so calloused? Later conversations with both confirmed the following. Wendy had been sexually active with lots of guys. She suffered from low self-esteem and after each “wild and frisky” date she came home and cried herself to sleep. Smitty was predatory in nature, trying to get as much from each girl as he could, for his own gratification. He really didn't care for the girls he dated. He just wanted to have sexual fun.

Let's now ponder each of their characters. Wendy was an emotionally wounded girl, trying to find love and meaningful attachment in all the wrong places. Each time she gave away more of herself, she felt she had less to offer. After that “wild and frisky” date, she felt totally depleted and didn't want to go on living. Her character was weakened by each attempt at finding love.

Smitty's character was clearly weak in that he was able to use another human being for his pleasure, without feeling any sense of responsibility or compassion. Using people is always a symptom of weak character. God didn't put us on earth so that we could step on people, using them as some kind of ladder in order to prove to the world that we are meaningful. He put us on earth to serve one another, and any deviance from that purpose weakens our characters.

There are many reasons why people become sexually involved outside of marriage, but here's the point of this story: Any use of sex outside of marriage, weakens character. This is always true, in every circumstance, for both males and females. By contrast, purity strengthens character. A few components of character that are strengthened through purity include self-control, wisdom, patience, obedience (to God), a deeper understanding of love, commitment, and emotional stability.



Purity works *for* us. Impurity works *against* us. Purity *strengthens* us. Impurity *weakens* us. Purity prepares us for a lifetime of love. Impurity prepares us for the destruction of love. And in the end, our characters become the primary expression of who we are, as our actions demonstrate our true beliefs and core values. As you think about the lives of Smitty and Wendy, it's not hard to understand how impurity weakened both of them. Scripture makes this observation: ***Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right (Prov. 20:11).***

### Purity Builds Self-Respect

Have you ever looked into a smooth lake and seen your face on the surface of the water. If the light of the sun is just right, sometimes the surface of water can be almost like a mirror. In fact, there's a scripture verse that builds on this idea: ***As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man (Prov. 27:19).***

Imagine looking into a mirror and instead of seeing yourself, you saw a hideous troll. Yikes! Would it be time to get a different mirror? Or would it be time to change what was being reflected? Obviously, mirrors don't have the power to do anything but reflect what's really there.

One day Smitty took a deep look in the mirror of his life and what he saw made him sad. That sadness was the beginning of self-respect for Smitty, because until that moment in his life he'd been pretty much self-centered. Part of the quest for his own maturing involved his journey toward purity. He had begun to see the disrespect in other people's eyes when they looked at him, and he decided it was time to change the man in the mirror.

One day Wendy looked in the same mirror and what she saw made her embarrassed. In that moment she realized that love was not the same as sex. Part of the quest for her healing involved her journey toward purity. She had begun to understand how the emptiness and loneliness of her life were tied to her promiscuity, and decided it was time to change the woman in the mirror.

One of the greatest byproducts of purity, is self-respect. It's the ability to look into the mirror of one's own life and respect the person they see. In my office I have a picture that I ponder from time to time. It's a picture of Christ standing behind a man, holding him up. The face of Christ is somewhat hidden by the hood of his robe, as he bows his head and prays for the man whom he is holding up.

The man's face is filled with grief and it's obvious that without Christ holding him up, the man would collapse in despair and hopelessness. What makes this picture come alive is that in the man's hands are two items. In his right hand is a heavy wooden mallet. In his left hand is a spike. The message of this picture is reminiscent of the moment in Christ's crucifixion when he prayed, ***"Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing."***

Neither Smitty nor Wendy truly knew what they were doing when they were being promiscuous. They undoubtedly thought they knew, but they didn't really know. It wasn't until they came face to face with the hideous troll in the mirrors of their lives that they recognized the damage to their own self-respect that they'd done. The next question was, "Now what?"

The answer to that question holds the key to the door of self-respect. As a person shapes their character in a manner that when they look in the mirror, they see the face of Jesus Christ, self-respect is built. To be like Jesus, builds self-respect. To deviate from Jesus, destroys it. The decision to truly follow Jesus Christ is the single most powerful builder of character and self-respect that exists. Both Smitty and Wendy would tell you that their decision to become Christ-followers, gave them back their lives. Sexual purity was just one of the gifts Christ gave them. Both are married today, with children, and both are pleased to look in the mirror.

## Wrap

We've been pondering why purity works. Here's a quick summary. It works because sexual purity is how God made us to work best. It's not just a matter of His making up a bunch of rules regarding what is right or wrong. Rather, it's a matter of His thoroughly understanding how human beings work (since He created us), and then His teaching us *how we work best*, versus how we work worst.

Purity works because it's the least complicated way of handling the very complex gift of human sexuality. It works because it allows us to dive most deeply into the pool of sexual enjoyment, as expressed by Roger Staubach. It works because it shapes and strengthens our characters, giving self-respect and a sense of personal integrity.

There is one final thought worth pondering in this chapter. Religious hypocrites sometimes confuse people. These folks put on a mask that says, "I am sooooo pure," but it's just a show because at the same time they keep nasty sexual stuff tucked away in their heads. Christ put it bluntly. He said, ***A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them (Matthew 7:18-20).*** So if you see someone who claims to be a Christ-follower but they're demonstrating bad fruit by being sexually impure, don't be confused. Religious hypocrisy has been around forever ~ wearing masks, playing mind games and being disobedient while pretending to be good. Hypocrites know the truth but ignore it ~ in the end, the cost of hypocrisy is the destruction of character.

People who take God seriously are easy to spot. They're not perfect (nobody is), but their hearts are aimed at pleasing God. They have learned to take the mental and spiritual trash of their lives to the foot of the cross, and leave it there. This journey to the foot of the cross isn't a one-time thing, as in driving your car once in your life to Juneau, Alaska. Rather, it's more like building a cross in your living room and every time you walk past it, you leave today's trash there. Carrying trash gets heavy. Leaving it at the foot of the cross is the better choice.

## References:

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3. 1 Kings 11:3

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