



Heartfelt Purity

An I Don't Get You Companion Study

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As a young bride, I was surprised to discover how deeply my heart and sexuality were connected. I had no idea that physical purity and emotional purity were tied together—that purity in one area carries over to the next. Not understanding this led to missteps in my journey to maintain physical purity when I was single.

Emotional purity helps keep the level of intimacy in a relationship equal with the level of commitment. The more we attach emotionally to men, the more we will desire to attach physically. Maintaining emotional purity can be very difficult if we are used to being “filled up” by pouring out our heart to the men closest to us. Paula Rinehart, a well-respected Christian counselor and author says, “It is a strange irony that sometimes it is *less vulnerable* to be sexually involved—to be two strangers in the night—than it is to share your life and your heart with someone.”¹

As women we long to be known. Yet when we let others meet our emotional needs before God, they become an “idol” in our lives. We give into emotional impurity because it feels good and seems to meet our needs. Even in marriage when one partner looks to the other to meet all their emotional needs, an idol is born.

Living out our Christ-won purity starts with our hearts. Let’s look together at what God says about idols, His incredible love for us, and the inner workings of our hearts.

I. Read: What does God say? Read the verses and briefly answer the questions to get an understanding of the passage

1. Exodus 20:4-6. What did God ask of His people, the Israelites?

2. Exodus 34:10-15. What does this passage show us about why God asked them not to make any other idols? What did God want to do for His people if they obeyed Him? What does that teach us about His heart toward us as His children?

3. Zephaniah 3:17. What does God long to do in our lives if we will trust Him with our hearts?

4. Jeremiah 2:13. What did the Israelites do? What human tendency does it show? (Note: a cistern is a tank or receptacle for holding liquids, usually water.)

5. Jonah 2:8. What do idols do to us?

6. Matt. 15:18-20. What does Jesus say defiles us? How is this radically different from what we think makes us impure? (Look around this

passage at the context if you aren't familiar with this story.) What does this have to do with idolatry of the heart? How does this make the truth of the Gospel as our starting point for purity even more important?

Jesus teaches us here that purity (and impurity) does not start with what we *do*; it *starts in our hearts*. We cannot heal our own hearts; that is where the Gospel makes living out purity possible.

What we believe

(Jesus gave me a clean heart)

affects our attitude

(I am pure in Christ)

and changes our actions

(I choose to live out my Christ-won purity)—

and our actions bring consequences

(I make choices that either bless my relationships or hurt them).

7. Luke 11:24-26. What is the danger of sweeping our lives clean of idols but not replacing them with the Gospel?

8. Romans 12:1-2. What is our part and what is God's in our heart transformation? Who does the transforming? Why did God make this a partnership?

9. John 15:1-5. What can we learn about growing in purity from this passage? What does God long to do inside us? (Picture a branch drawing nourishment from a vine.)

10. If we are branches connected to a grapevine, where does our life come from? What would happen if we cut ourselves off, thinking we could grow on our own? Jesus longs for us to cling to Him, to nourish and fill our hearts so that we grow in Him.

11. Proverbs 4:23. What does this verse teach us about our hearts? How does practicing emotional purity relate to our overall well-being? Our ability to love God with all our hearts? Our ability to love others selflessly?

II. Respond: How can I identify with these truths? In this section you will take a more personal look at the verses above.

1. Exodus 20:4. Why do you think God asked the Israelites to not make any idols?
2. Exodus 34:12. As you enter into new “lands” or seasons of life (high school, college, workplace), you are surrounded by other people’s idols and beliefs. How can you protect yourself from succumbing to them?
3. Jeremiah 2:13. How are idols like broken cisterns? What does this look like in your life? What idols or broken cisterns do you have?

(i.e., What places are you looking to fill that only God can satisfy? Is that thing or person leading you into impurity?)

4. “An idol is something more than a grotesque statue with big lips and a ruby in its navel. It’s a God-substitute. It’s something—anything—that we value higher than God. In order to cling to such an idol, we make a trade.”² What are ways you are making this trade in your life?

5. Zephaniah 3:17. How can knowing God’s heart to love you and fill you help you to surrender these idols?

6. Matthew 15:18. How has your heart attitude affected your actions in regard to purity?

7. Think back to Luke 11:24, when an unclean spirit is cast out of a body. Have you ever seen this happen in your own life? When have you given up one bad habit only to replace it with another? In what ways can you fill up your heart with more of God's love (the Gospel) to replace the void left by the habit, whether porn, masturbation, sex outside of marriage, or other purity struggles?

8. What does it mean to be a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1-2)? How is this related to purity? Imagine yourself standing on an altar. Are you firmly planted in the middle, surrendering every area to God? Or are you teetering on the edge of the altar with one foot on and one foot off, not willing to give Him total control in your life?

9. John 15. Why is abiding important in order to grow in living out our purity? Would you say you are abiding or trying to live like a broken-off branch right now? If you are broken off, what would it take to become connected to the Vine again?

10. Proverbs 4:23. What does it mean to “guard your heart”? Why is this important in learning to love God with all your heart? What does loving God with all your heart have to do with emotional and physical purity?

On your own or as a group, engage with singer-songwriter Shannon Wexelberg’s backstory to her song “Exalted Alone” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GGaY0QG_OM). How can you relate to her struggle with idols?

III. Receive: How can I receive God's transforming work in my life?

1. What would it look like to put that idol on the altar so you can be a "living sacrifice" this week? How would that free your heart to love God more?
2. What will abiding in Christ, the Vine, look like as you grow in purity? Make a measurable, attainable, practical goal, and write it down here.
3. Write out a prayer asking God to help you with this. Share it with your prayer partner. Pray together asking God to give you the

power to apply His Word effectively to your life. If it will help, ask your prayer partner to check in with you later in the week about how it is going. (Sometimes, knowing someone will be asking you about something gives you the extra conviction to grow.) Keep praying for each other throughout the week.

4. From all we have looked at this week, what is one thing you want to see God transform in your life? If you were to take steps in this direction, how would your life be different?

Any area that we fail to give God complete control over becomes a “heart idol.” Money, school, friendships, or our sexuality can all draw our affection away from God’s heart and ultimately leave us empty. They don’t offer what we truly crave deep down, to be loved unconditionally. Only One can offer us that satisfaction.

When we realize how much God longs to meet our heart needs and know us completely, we respond to His love. God first draws us to Himself through the Gospel, our source for shameless purity. Then, the more we get to know God and His incredible love, the less we are lured away from Him by empty idols. Removing these idols unburdens us to love Him with more and more of our hearts.

As we. . .

(1) Remove any heart idols God points out
to us

(2) Replace them with His incredible love
for us

(3) Practice emotional purity

—we will find new freedom to love Him with all our hearts. This is a process—we will find

ourselves loving Him a little more each day, week, month, and year. It will not work to simply say, “I’m not going to look at porn anymore” or “I’m giving up masturbation or _____.” If we are going to lay down our heart idols, we have to replace them with something. Christ’s love is that something!

As we lay down our idols and replace them with God’s love, we will find that our hearts are freer to love others unconditionally. We no longer look to others (or things) to meet all our emotional needs because those needs are met first in Christ. This takes work and doesn’t happen all at once. It takes a lifetime of surrender to His transforming power within us.

IV. Remember: Fixing my mind on His truths.

Memorize Mark 12:29-31 and John 15:5 (or any other verses from this study that spoke to you).

If you’re interested in the full version of this seven-week Bible study on purity, please contact Sherry Graf at sherrygraf@gmail.com.

NOTES

- 1 Paula Rineheart, *Sex and the Soul of a Woman* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 164.
- 2 Randy Alcorn, *The Purity Principle* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2003), 12.