

LESSON 2 Before Marriage

God's standards of right and wrong are intended to make His sons and daughters fit and able to live to the fullest. First Corinthians 9:24–27 reminds us that a runner undergoes strict discipline to be physically fit for a race. Because he runs to obtain a prize, he denies himself certain *immediate* pleasures that he may receive a far greater one.

In the relationship between a man and woman, God's standards are not meant as ways of denying them pleasure, but of directing them to the greatest pleasure possible. God created humans with natural appetites, some of which find expression in the sexual union, but His Word affirms that these intimacies are to be reserved for marriage.

Generally, a husband and wife, whose lives are characterized by discipline and unselfishness, adopt these patterns of behavior *before* marriage. Others who, before becoming man and wife, indulge in immediate pleasure at the cost of moral restraints carry scars that may never heal.

In this lesson we will study how those who treat God's laws lightly are denied the greater pleasure, the better prize God has in store for them.

The Plan

- A. God Prepares You for Marriage
- B. God Expects You to Keep Pure
- C. You Can Keep God's Standards

The Goals

1. Explain what God's moral standard is for a man and woman before marriage.
2. Name some of the ill effects of those who disregard God's standard for marriage.
3. Give the scriptural basis for ways to keep oneself pure.

A. GOD PREPARES YOU FOR MARRIAGE

Goal 1. Explain what God's standards are for a man and woman before marriage.

When God created the human race, He made man and woman according to His own perfect plan. He made provision for family life and formed the human body in such a way that children could be born from the sexual union of a man and woman.

God also built into the body of the child a process of development which would prepare the child in due time for the responsibilities of an adult.

As boys and girls pass from childhood into youth, many changes take place in their bodies. With these physical changes come new interests, feelings, and desires. The boy begins to take an interest in girls. The girl is attracted to boys. There is nothing wrong with this. It is part of God's plan to prepare them for marriage.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

However, it is very important for young people to understand that God has standards for their behavior before marriage—rules that they must follow if they expect to have a happy home later on.

Application

1 Is it wrong for a young man to feel attracted to a young woman? Explain your answer.

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2 Who gave us the sexual urge?

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3 Who has the right to say how the sexual urge must be used?

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B. GOD EXPECTS YOU TO KEEP PURE

For God to Live in You

Goal 2. Name some of the ill effects of those who disregard God's standard.

God wants you to respect the body that He has given you and treat it in a way that will honor Him. You are to keep it clean both physically and morally for three reasons:

- For God to live in you.
- For the sake of your family.
- For the sake of your health.

Since you belong to God, you have become God's temple or dwelling place. This means that you have a solemn responsibility to keep your body sacred, for God's Spirit lives in you (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). And while you have other responsibilities as a Christian, such as to your family and to yourself in terms of your own health, your primary responsibility is to maintain yourself as a holy, pure, and sanctified vessel appropriate for God to dwell in. First Timothy 5:22 advises, "Keep yourself pure."

The Bible warns young men against going after prostitutes or loose women. It absolutely forbids sexual relations outside of marriage, homosexuality, and other forms of sexual perversion. Read carefully 1 Corinthians 6:15–17, 19.

Notice some of the consequences that result when principles of purity are ignored. First, immoral persons often contract venereal disease. Not only does this result in the loss of health and cause shame; it may also result in permanent defects that are transmitted from those who have become infected to their children, causing blindness, mental illness, and other serious physical defects.

Where immorality results in pregnancy, the young woman may have to raise the child in great hardship outside the normal marriage relationship, without the security she would derive from a legitimate marriage union. Thus, her child may be deprived of the love and care of both parents.

Application

4 Name three reasons why God expects you to keep pure.

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5 A verse in the Bible which tells us to keep pure is

- a)** 1 Corinthians 6:16.
- b)** 1 Timothy 5:22.
- c)** Genesis 3:15.

6 According to 1 Corinthians 6:15, the Christian's body is a part of

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7 What can a Christian home provide for children that children born outside of marriage may not have?

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8 Name at least two defects which children may have as a result of the immorality of their parents.

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For the Sake of Your Health

Do not think that lack of sexual relations before marriage will harm you. Keeping God’s standards is much more important than self-indulgence. The book of Proverbs, in the Bible, has some excellent advice about this. Read carefully Proverbs 7:1–27.

Even if a person does not contract venereal disease, there are other threats to the health in premarital sex relations, or sex before marriage. For the woman there is always the danger of an unwanted pregnancy. And for both there is the damage to the emotions and to the health in general that comes from the sense of guilt and fear. The fear may be of pregnancy, of discovery, of other results of the affair, or of punishment for violating social moral principles or breaking God’s laws.

And, of course, disobedience to God, if not remedied by repentance and spiritual renewal, brings spiritual sickness and eventually spiritual death. So, for the sake of your own physical, mental, and spiritual health, keep yourself pure.

Flee from sexual immorality . . . he who sins sexually sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Application

9 What specific sin mentioned in this part of the lesson is a sin against a man’s own body?

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10 Name three things mentioned in Proverbs 7 to which the man led astray by an immoral woman is compared.

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11 How do premarital sex relations endanger the health of a person?

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C. YOU CAN KEEP GOD'S STANDARDS

By Controlling Your Feelings

Goal 3. Give the scriptural basis for ways to keep oneself pure.

Learning self-control is a very important part of growing up. Self-control is also an essential part of a happy marriage. Thus, God gives each person the opportunity throughout his or her adolescent years to develop self-control. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

Satan especially tempts young people sexually. They experience strong sexual urges and desires. These feelings are normal in a developing body, but they must be controlled.

Do not say that you cannot control your desires. God has given you a spirit that makes you different from the animals. You do not have to be a slave to your feelings. God gave you the following things to help you control yourself:

- Intelligence to understand what to do
- His Word to guide you
- A conscience through which He speaks to you
- A will or the power to choose what to do

Best of all, God himself will help you control your desires if you ask Him to.

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Application

12 The best source of help in controlling your desires is

- a) your conscience.
 - b) your intelligence.
 - c) God's Word.
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By Controlling Your Thoughts

The desire to do wrong comes to us through our thoughts. The more you think about the temptation, the stronger the desire will be. So you need to control your thoughts.

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14–15)

Many of your thoughts come from what you hear. So do not listen to dirty stories or take part in conversation that would lead you toward immoral living. Paul teaches,

Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Ephesians 5:3)

Temptation also comes from what you look at. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He got Eve to look at it and think about how good it would taste until she finally ate it and gave some to Adam to eat. Then they were punished for disobeying God.

Satan still tempts people by getting them to look at things that will stir up lust. He uses indecent pictures, movies, sex-filled books, some types of dance, and suggestive fashions in clothing to tempt people. Do not let him persuade you to participate in these things. Be extremely cautious about where you go on the internet. Internet pornography is easy to find and is very addictive. It will consume your life if you indulge in it.

Guard your thoughts and do not let them wander. If you find yourself thinking the wrong kind of thoughts put them out of your mind. Think of something else. Start doing something that will keep your mind busy. Paul writes,

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

Application

13 Why is it important that you control your thoughts?

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14 Name several things Satan uses to tempt people to sin.

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By Overcoming Temptation

To overcome temptation you should do two things: avoid it as much as possible and refuse to give in when faced by it. Do not go into places and situations that will tempt you to do wrong. Also, too much familiarity between men and women may lead to temptation. So be friendly but treat people with respect and expect them to respect you.

Live by God's standards—not those of the worldly TV programs and movies—in your courtship. Learn to respect the companion you have chosen to be with. Try to develop the kind of relationship that will deepen your respect for each other and at the same time please God, and avoid the kind of familiarity that will cause you to lose this respect and inflame your physical passions. So avoid temptation and do not give Satan an opportunity to excite you to indulge in a “liberty” that can only lead to shame and spiritual failure.

The Bible tells us the story of Joseph, a young man who loved God. By running away from temptation, he set a good example for young people. He was a slave in the house of Potiphar. The wife of Potiphar tried to get Joseph to be her lover but he refused. One day when she and Joseph were alone in the house, she tried to seduce him. But Joseph refused: “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). When Potiphar's wife kept on insisting, Joseph ran out of the house and escaped from the temptation.

Potiphar's wife was so angry that she accused him falsely and had him put in jail. God took care of Joseph, delivered him from

prison, and made him prime minister of Egypt. Thus, Joseph’s high moral standard paid tremendous dividends. This example demonstrates a principle that we can count on: God blesses those who uphold His standards.

They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (1 Peter 4:4–5)

Application

15 A man in the Bible who set a good example by resisting a woman’s immoral advances was

- a) Potiphar.
- b) Joseph.
- c) Peter.

16 What can you do if unsaved friends and relatives make fun of you for not taking part in some of the things they do? (Use your notebook.)

17 How should members of the opposite sex treat one another, so as to avoid temptation?

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By True Love

True love includes respect and honor. So the man who truly loves a woman will consider her welfare and her reputation as more important than his own personal desires. True love would not want to ruin the girl’s reputation or risk making her pregnant before marriage. True love demands self-control.

Do not trust too much in your own power of self-control. The wisest thing to do is to avoid temptation. So wait until after you are married for the intimate caresses that should be exchanged only between husband and wife.

Some men try to get a girl to “prove her love” by letting them do whatever they want to with her. Remember, the man who asks this does not do it out of true love, but out of selfish desire.

Your love for the person whom you plan to marry will also help you avoid the temptation to get involved with other men or women. You know that you can have a much happier marriage if both you and your partner wait and keep yourselves pure for each other. So even your plans for a happy marriage will help you avoid immorality.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God. (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5)

Application

18 What does true love include?

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19 Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5 several times. What is the sin spoken of in these verses?

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By God's Help

It takes the power of God to make you strong enough to overcome temptation under every circumstance. You need God's help to control your thoughts and your actions. Unless you have His help, sin in your heart will come out in evil thoughts and wrong behavior. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19). So you need to give your life to God. Ask Him to forgive all of your sins and help you to live right.

Jesus came to save us all from the power of sin. Many young people who found it impossible to live a clean life by themselves have been completely changed by the power of God. Now they live pure, happy lives.

Satan will tempt you after you are saved, but with the Word of God to guide you and the power of God to help you, you can overcome temptation.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. (1 Peter 4:1–2)

Application

20 Is it impossible to live up to God’s standards for our lives? Explain your answer.

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21 What is the very first step you must take before God can help you live right?

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22 Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 Peter 4:2 several times; then circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a) You need to be saved so that Satan will no longer tempt you.
- b) Only as we depend upon God for help are we able to overcome temptation.
- c) Because God is a God of love, nobody will be kept out of His kingdom.



Check Your Answers

12 c) God's Word.

1 No, it is part of God's plan to prepare them for marriage.

13 Temptation comes through the thoughts, and the more you think about it the stronger it becomes.

2 God

14 Indecent pictures, movies, books on sex, dancing, drugs, suggestive clothing

3 God

15 b) Joseph.

4 For God to live in you, for your family, for your health

16 Your answer. I would pray for them, and ask God to help me live by Bible standards and be a good example.

5 b) 1 Timothy 5:22.

17 With respect

6 The body of Christ

18 Respect and honor

7 The love and care of both parents

19 Sexual immorality

8 Blindness or mental illness

20 With God's help, it is possible.

9 Sexual immorality

21 Give Him your life

10 An ox going to slaughter, a deer walking into a trap, a bird going into a net

22 Statement **b)** is true.

11 The person may contract a venereal disease or may experience guilt and fear.