



PARENT RESOURCES

SEXUAL INTEGRITY, LUST, & MODESTY

When it comes to sex, God has spoken: God's Word tells us how we are created with a legitimate desire for intimacy with others, but that desire can only be rightly fulfilled in the context of a committed marriage relationship. For students, the call is to refocus their legitimate desire for intimacy (and all the sexual energy that comes with it) and strive to live in a way that is pleasing and honoring to God with their sexuality.

SEXUAL INTEGRITY

A life lived with sexual integrity is one in which all of your sexual energy and activity goes toward your spouse. As unmarried high school students, living with sexual integrity requires harnessing that energy and "waiting in faith" to fully embrace it in marriage. This will require purity and transparency under God's design and authority.

The term integrity gives the idea of wholeness—of one who is the same in private as they are in public and who is true to whom they claim to be. Ephesians 5:3 sets the standard for sexual integrity: "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality or of any kind of impurity..."

"Not even a hint": that's the standard for the life of godly sexual integrity. Our goal is to strive for purity in thought and conduct as we pursue Christ and set our eyes on the pleasures of God rather than the paltry pleasures of the world. To do that, we must tackle the two greatest obstacles to sexual integrity facing young people today: lust and modesty. We must get clear on what lust and modesty are and fight to replace our heart's idols with the greater affections offered to us in Christ.

LUST

Lust is a strong, unrestrained desire for what you don't have and weren't meant to have presently; an insatiable sexual craving for something God has forbidden. It means looking upon another person sexually and wanting to take from them something that has not been promised to you. At its most basic level, lust is entirely selfish and unloving. Where God-like love would ask, "What can I

give?" lust asks, "What can I get?"

The allure of lust is its promise to give us the joy of intimacy and satisfaction in exchange for our pain, stress, and disappointment. But like all idols, lust is deceptive. You may think that lusting can satisfy your desires for intimacy, but the payoff for lust is always only more lust. Only God can truly sustain us and fulfill our longings for intimacy.

Overcoming lust can't just be about not doing something; we must actively pursue godliness in place of sin. Don't just suppress wayward thoughts and desires, but fight to bring them into captivity by denying them access into our hearts (2 Corinthians 10:5).

For guys:

The battle of lust is waged in two areas: your eyes and your thoughts.

- Guys are highly visual, with lots of testosterone. Lustful thoughts will lead a man to undress others with his eyes or pull up pornography on his smartphone, looking on and craving things he cannot have. We must strive to be like Job, who made a covenant with his eyes to not look lustfully upon others (Job 31:1).
- Lust also leads a guy to dwell on thoughts of fantasy, taking advantage of someone in his mind and entertaining ideas about something or someone he doesn't have and isn't meant to have. To this point, we must "capture our rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

For girls:

The idea that lust is only a guy problem is a myth.

- Girls undress with their eyes and fantasize about others, too. Girls are just as likely to look at pornography, and in fact are more likely than guys to act on what they view.

- Lust can also be seen in a longing for your body to look like another girl's body, or for your life to look more like her life.
- There is also a romantic/relational lust that finds young women captivated, defining their worth based on fantasies and stories told by culture (e.g., *The Bachelor*). This lust cultivates unrealistic and unhealthy expectations that can never be fulfilled because they are not godly.

You can't shut down your desires and thoughts, but we can recognize them, take them captive under Jesus' authority, and ask God to provide a way out when we are tempted (He's promised that He will; 1 Corinthians 10:13). Even asking God to change our desires to become godly desires is a critical piece in the fight to overcome lust.

One of the primary ways that God provides a way out is through using the core capacities that He has given us. We can "un-translate" that sexual energy into godly energy that can be spent towards the benefit of others.

- For guys, we must take those desires, make a choice to wait until marriage, and then use that energy to pursue, provide, and protect for others. Who do you need to be around to encourage, to make an impact, or to be built up? How can you invest in the future by getting a job, learning new skills, or mentoring? Who do you need to take care of and make sure they are thriving?
- For girls, we must take those desires, make a choice to pursue intimacy with Jesus instead of intimacy in a relationship, and then use that energy to invite, nurture, and partner with others. Who do you need to invite into your life and what you are doing? Who would benefit by righteously receiving your comfort and love? How can you spend your energy to benefit someone else and what they are doing?

MODESTY

To live with modesty is to present yourself in a way that honors God and serves others in love. Modesty is more than merely the way you dress, including anything from speech, actions, attitudes, and even mannerisms. Really, modesty is about the motivations of the heart: do we desire to honor God with our bodies and attract people towards Him, or do we carry ourselves in a way to attract attention to ourselves?

Modesty is not anti-pretty; your modesty should show that true beauty comes from within based on how God is redeeming and restoring you to look more like Christ. "For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do" (1 Tim. 2:8-10).

At its core, immodesty is choosing to be your own authority and being dismissive of true, loving authority; and we must fight against this at all costs. To follow Jesus with modesty, you must be motivated by a hatred of sin and a desire to draw attention to God, not yourself.

MOVING FORWARD

God's will is for us to be holy and dwell in His presence; to know Him and be known by Him. Ultimately, He wants us to flourish, not destroy ourselves, which is why His word points us to the superior joy offered to us in the path of sexual integrity.

The root of dissatisfaction is thinking that God is holding out on us and keeping us from maximizing our comfort and pleasure now. When you willfully disobey His word, it shows that you despise God's will for your sexuality and you chip away at His design for your character and influence. Jonah 2:8 says, "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs."

Sometimes we must forgo lesser pleasures now in order to experience greater pleasures promised us later. Waiting in faith is one of the greatest acts of trusting Jesus, and we must be able to wait and suffer now in order to take hold of these great pleasures. Ask any married person and they'll tell you: when your wedding day comes, you will not regret all the things you did not do before you were married.

Fighting for sexual integrity as a student involves pursuing intimacy with Jesus now, waiting in faith until later, and using the energy you've been given to serve and bless others. If you pursue these things, you will certainly find satisfaction – even in the waiting.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS

In order to see any change or transformation occur, we must engage our students on a heart level to help them understand the motivations and attitudes that affect their decisions. If your student desires to follow Christ, these questions could be helpful to create intentional conversations around these issues.

- In order to fight for sexual integrity, we must be transparent with our thoughts and behavior. Who are you “fully known” to, and how can we help you fight for sexual integrity?
- Everyone struggles with lust, so where are you in your struggle? How do you find satisfaction in God and use your energy for the benefit of others?
- How are you living modestly? Do you draw attention to yourself, or do you show true beauty through your actions?
- If immodesty is choosing to be your own authority and being dismissive of what others say, then how should we handle those situations when they arise?