



PARENTING RESOURCES SEXUAL INTEGRITY, LUST, & MODESTY

WHAT DOES GOD HAVE TO DO WITH SEX?

Everything. He created it, and it is good. God is not surprised by our sexual desires; He gave them to us. And as the Creator of sex, God gets to decide how sex is used. The Scriptures tell us God designed sex to be a powerful source of oneness and unity in marriage. So, we were created to enjoy sex, in the right context.

OUR GOAL: SEXUAL INTEGRITY

So if we want to experience the power of sex in a way that is a blessing, and not destructive, then it means sex on God's terms. A life lived with sexual integrity is one in which all of your sexual energy and activity goes toward your spouse, present or future. 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. As unmarried high school students, living with sexual integrity means managing and storing up that energy and “waiting in faith” to fully embrace it in marriage. This will require purity and transparency under God's design and authority.

WHAT EXACTLY CONSTITUTES SEXUAL SIN?

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. The word used here for “sexual immorality” in the Greek is **pornea**, which means all sexual energy and activity. Sex includes much more than just the act of intercourse. So to pursue sexual integrity, 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.

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 Timothy 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.

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.

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.

SO WHAT DO I DO WITH ALL OF MY SEXUAL ENERGY NOW?

The key to overcoming sexual sin is activity, NOT inactivity. We must actively pursue godliness in place of sin.

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 in valid ways, including 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?

Our goal should be to get to the end of each day and be exhausted. Once we have depleted all of our energy because we have been working on legit stuff God has for you then we'll have no energy or need left for lust and other sinful applications of energy.

You can't shut down your desires and thoughts, but we can recognize them, take them captive under Jesus' authority, and begin to take serious steps towards Him and His better plan for you.

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.

ACTION STEP

If we are going to have sexual integrity, we need to embrace the role of spiritual authority in our lives. Students need to share the details of their struggle with someone they can regularly talk to, and obey their direction. Step one is ensuring that conversation is in place, starting now.

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?