Pure - Purity in an Age of Porn

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[0:00] Okay, so reading from 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verses 12 through to 20. Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial.

Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?
Never. Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, the two will become one flesh, but he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.
Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?
[1:17] You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body.
Thanks very much, Ralph.

Well, we're in our third of our series, Pure. And this morning we're looking at purity in an age of porn. And just to remind people that we are going to be having discussion evenings, ladies meeting in the Newnham House at 8 o'clock, and the men can meet in the Grant's House at 8 o'clock.
So before we look at this subject, and we're going to be staying in that passage there of 1 Corinthians 6 verses 12 to 20.
So we're going to pray and ask for God's help. Our Father God, we thank you for your word.
We thank you for how practical it is, how relevant it is, speaking into our lives and speaking into the context of the world in which we live.
[2:25] And we realise that we do live in a world that lives very different from your good design and your good order.

Father God, we pray that we live in a world that lives very different from our lives. We pray that this morning, as we look at this subject of purity, that you would help us to realign our own lives where we need to, that we would speak up where we have to, and that we would be encouragers of those around us.
And we pray, Father, that you would also keep our minds pure as we think through these issues this morning. And we ask for your Holy Spirit's help to be present with us in understanding and in applying.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Three clicks of the mouse and you have entered into a world of sexual fantasy.
Unhindered in the privacy of our own home, we can explore our secret desires. Unhindered in the privacy of our own home, we can explore our own home, we can explore our own home, with exits, but they were very rare.
[4:14] Very few people had the nerve to lift Playboy from the top shelf of a crowded newsagent. There were rumours, of course, of the odd video in senior years, but that was about it.

Thanks, Alex. You're reminding me that, er, if you're getting a pen now... I've got notes here. Sorry. Hold all those thoughts there. Everybody want to take those as they can. And there's pens here as well.
Sorry for the interruption. OK.
The point is that in the past, you either stumbled upon it or you had to search for it. Today, we can't escape it.

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We're bombarded by explicit images on TV from adverts right the way through to films. Sex scenes on TV have doubled in the last ten years.
[5:42] And what were once under the shelf mags are today popular reading for both men and women. But perhaps most of all is the impact of the internet.

Psychologist Dr. Alvin Cooper talks about the triple A engine that drives cybersex and makes it so enticing.
He calls it accessibility, affordability and anonymity. Practically, everybody has a computer where you can log onto the web with ease.
Faster download speeds mean we can type in a three-letter word and we have immediate access to unlimited porn. But what makes it so accessible is, it's for free.
Of course, there's lots of websites where you are asked for your credit card details. But to entice you in and to entrap you, you can watch endless videos without paying a cent.
[6:42] However, I think it's the anonymity that has caused such a rise in online porn. The internet brings an unlimited supply of porn directly into your own home.

From the privacy of your own home, you can surf the web with absolute freedom and no one is ever going to know. No longer do we have the embarrassment of having to go to the local news agents.
The PC and the internet have seen porn become part of our daily diet. As one writer has put it, our culture has become pornified.
Yesterday, in the paper in the Independent, I read an article which talked about one website and it had the tagline, Life is short, have an affair.
And the journalist noticed that when they logged onto this particular website, there were 3,000 members from her own locale of central Dublin, all online on a Thursday afternoon looking for an affair.
[7:53] And that's just in one part of Dublin. But it's not just our culture that we find this issue. It's also an issue within the church.

Look at 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 18. It says there, flee from sexual immorality. Now that phrase, sexual immorality, comes from the Greek word pornea, which we get our word pornography from, or a shortened version to porn.
And if you want a definition, we could say porn is anything that we use to promote sexual desire outside of God's design.
So it can be the internet, it can be magazines, it can be television, it can be what you see, it can be anything that you do. Now, back to Corinth in chapter 6, verse 18.
There may have been no internet cafes available at that time, but they did have easy access to the local prostitutes at the local temple. Back in verse 16, it says, Sexual immorality was a big issue for the Christians in the first century.
[9:16] And as we've seen over the last couple of weeks, it was a big issue within the church. So we shouldn't be surprised then that it's also an issue in the 21st century.

And the statistics are frightening. Of one survey conducted, 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women struggle with porn.
That breaks down to one out of every three. Now, if we're to believe even half of those statistics, it's still very worrying. The figures are the same for pastors and for leaders.
A survey in the US revealed that 30% of pastors had viewed online porn in a period of 30 days. One student worker said porn addiction was 60-70% with single young men in universities.
So it's not restricted to the dark alleys and somewhere away out there. It exists in virtually every home in Ireland and within every church.
[10:28] Now, before we move on, let me say that while it's not exclusive to men, it is a particular issue for men. So much of what we say this morning will be directed to the men.

Generally speaking, men are turned on visually, while women are turned on relationally. So for men, online porn is more enticing. But for women, the slow romantic novels, which develop over time and eventually end up in the bedroom, are far more satisfying.
So sexual purity is an issue for us all. And we all have to be aware of the dangers behind what is often portrayed as just harmless and good fun.
So first, what we want to ask is, what are the dangers or what are the problems with pornography? Is it not just a little bit of stuff on the side?

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Really not much problems there? Well first, there's two things. First, it destroys God's good gift of sex. Chapter 6, verse 12.
[11:41] Everything is permissible for me. But not everything is beneficial. Now it seems that the church in Corinth were twisting the truth to excuse their immoral behaviour.

Everything is permissible, they said. We can do whatever we like. Perhaps they had discovered their new found freedom in Christ, and they were using that freedom in a wrong way, an excuse to do whatever they like.
Christ has set us free. We can do what we want. But the reality is, as Paul makes clear, not everything is beneficial. You may be free, but it's not all beneficial.
In fact, it can be destructive, just like porn. You see, sex is not wrong. It's a wonderful gift from God. It's part of his design for his creation.
But it is only good within the context of an exclusive married relationship between a man and a woman. And anything outside of that is a distortion of God's good design.
[12:50] And porn radically distorts God's good design. What people view and what people see in porn sex is not real sex.

It's mechanical. It's performance for a camera. The so-called stars are airbrushed in and out, giving the impression that it's all fun and enjoyable. While off screen, they deaden the physical and emotional pain with a cocktail of drugs.
It sets unrealistic expectations and exaggerated standards. It's not real. But more than that, porn separates physical intimacy from relational intimacy.
Let me quote to you from a book I'll mention in a little while. It says, Sex in porn is just physical activity, nothing more.
But real sex, sex as God intended, is the celebration and climax, quite literally, of a relationship. Godly sex is part of a package that includes talking together, sharing together, deciding together, crying together, working together, laughing together and forgiving each other.
[14:08] Sex that disregards these things is hollow. It will drive you apart rather than bring you together as God intended.

So, the first big problem or first big danger is that it destroys God's gift of sex. Second, it destroys God's gift of relationships.
The second part of verse 12. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.
You see, distorted sex leads to distorted relationships. And the big lie of porn is that you control it. You determine the quantity and you determine the quality.
But the reality is, it actually controls you. It masters you. It enslaves you. And that seems to be Paul's point here in the second part of verse 12.
[15:11] Sexual freedom is not real freedom at all. You become its slave. They were saying, everything is permissible for me. We can do what we like.

But Paul says, I will not be mastered by anything. What they didn't realise is that their freedom to do whatever they liked, they were becoming mastered by their choices.
And this destructive control is worked out in our relationships. Apart from degrading men and women and turning them into objects of gratification, the same way.
The same way, porn replaces your spouse with an image on screen. In the context of a married relationship, not only does intimacy go, not only does communication go, but so does affection and care and practical love.
Men in particular cease to be able to relate to their wives as their sexual appetite is fulfilled through cybersex. Porn is a vicious circle.
[16:21] The more that you see, the less you become fulfilled. The more that you watch, the more you want. All the while, it's distancing yourself from the one that you are married to.

And let's not just confine it to married lives. It affects all of our relationships. You don't relate to the opposite sex properly. You cease to communicate in a right way.
It has terrible consequences on all of our relationships. Porn is destructive as it distorts God's good gifts.
Look at verse 13. Food for the stomach and stomach for food, they say. You see, the Christians in Corinth were good at separating the physical with the spiritual.

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The body, the physical body, they saw, was just, well, food for the stomach and stomach for the food. Eat what you like. That's what the stomach is there for, isn't it? Put food in.
[17:27] The implication being that the physical body can be used however you want. If you want to go down to the local temple and visit the prostitutes, so what? Go and do it.

That's what the body is for. Why not watch whatever porn you want? Isn't that what the body is for? Let's be honest. That porn is pleasurable. But the problem is its pleasures are only temporary and they are destructive. Look at the rest of verse 13.
It says, God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.
Our bodies were made for the Lord and the Lord is there for us. In other words, we have been created and designed in a special and a particular way to serve the Lord within the context of right and good and healthy relationships.
[18:34] And it is serving God within these contexts that we find our true satisfaction and our true fulfillment. We were made for the Lord. We were made for the Lord.

To serve Him and not to serve our sexual appetite. So, we must beware of the dangers of porn. Which brings us on to ask the question, how are we going to control or deal with such destructive behavior? Well, we can give out lots of rules and for the rest of the time I could give you lots of rules and say, don't do this and do that.
But that's just legalism, isn't it? It's just lots of rules. It may bring an external change, but what we want is internal heart change.
A heart that finds its delight and joy in Christ so much so that it has no need or desire for porn. So, there's two things that we want to look at under this.
[19:43] The first is, remember the gospel. Firstly, the cross. Look down at verse 20 of chapter 6.

It says there, you were bought at a price. It's talking about Jesus' death on the cross.
Through His death, the price has been paid for your sexual immorality. The cross is there to remind us that Christ was treated as a porn user for us.
He paid the penalty for our sin. He took the blame and He suffered the wrath that we deserve so that we might be treated as sexually pure.
Sexual sin, I think you would agree, is often portrayed as unforgivable. Perhaps because of its broad, wide consequences.
[20:47] They can do so much damage. And people say it's unforgivable. Feelings of guilt and shame crush us as we view the web again and again.

And we feel there's no way that God is going to forgive me. Not this time. No, we must remember the cross. We must remember that Christ has paid the price for all sin.
So, the invitation is for us to run to Christ because He is running to us. He is ready to forgive us. We genuinely repent. He forgives the past.
He forgives the present. And when we fall again, He will forgive the future. The price has been paid. There is nothing more for us to do.
Only accept His free gift of forgiveness and to be able to learn to enjoy His acceptance of you.
[21:49] So, we must start by remembering the cross. The point where we are forgiven. But we've also got to remember the resurrection. Because not only have we got to put porn to one side, we have to replace it with something else.

Look at verse 14. By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself?
You see, through the resurrection of Christ, through our trust in Him, we have been united with Christ. Just as Christ rose from the dead, He had a perfect body, perfect resurrected body.
So, one day, we are going to rise with a perfect resurrected body. We will be free from sexual immorality. Free once and for all from its struggles and its temptations.
That means that we have a new way to live today. If that's what's ours to come, it's saying, if that's what you're going to be in the future, this is the way you are to live today.
[23:03] Look at the rest of verse 15. He says, Shall I take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said that two will become one flesh. But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

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You see, we have been united to Christ. We have been set free from our unity, if you like, with sexual immorality and our sinful desires.
And we have now been united to Christ. We are servants of a greater master. A king who loved us, who died for us, who treasures us, who welcomes us and who satisfies us for all eternity.
Porn which once controlled us, that once mastered us and enslaved us. That master has now been replaced with a new king.
[24:13] The risen Lord Jesus. So through the resurrection we are reminded that we have been united with Christ. That we belong to him.

And that it has been replaced that we have a new master in which to live for. And when we give ourselves completely to this new master, to the Lord Jesus, we discover that we have everything that we ever need.
So in dealing with issues such as sexual immorality, remember the cross, remember the resurrection and remember the spirit. Because you might say, well it's great, I do believe in the cross, I do believe in the resurrection.
But I still struggle. Well, welcome to the club. Who doesn't struggle with all kinds of sin? You see in this life, while the penalty of porn has been dealt with, the presence of porn is still ongoing.
Sin's penalty has always been dealt with. But sin's struggle is always going to be there. We're going to fight it till the day we die.
[25:33] You may go weeks and months without viewing inappropriate sites. But some days you may discover that you fall. As with every sin.

So how are we going to fight it? How are we going to deal with it? Well we cannot do it on our own, we need the spirit. Look at verse 18. He says, flee from sexual immorality.
All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?
You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body. Now we know that the temple in the Old Testament was the place where people went to meet with God.
It was the presence of God. And you went there in celebration for who God was, but it was also a place of awesome fear to come into the presence of God.
[26:45] But now he's reminding them and he's saying, but because of Christ, because of his death and resurrection, you, your bodies, have become the temple.

That means that Christ, by his spirit, actually lives in you. So wherever you go, Christ is there. He's present with you in your life.
So Paul is saying to these Christians in Corinth, as they're dealing with these issues of sexual immorality and running off to visit the local prostitutes. He's saying to them, listen guys, when you're involved in sexual immorality, you are not only doing what you are doing in full view of Christ, because he's with you by his spirit.
But dare I say it, you are involving Christ in your very acts, because he is present within you by his spirit.
How can you do this, he's saying to them. You have been united with Christ. This is not the way.
The spirit of Christ in our life gives us a new way, a new direction.
[28:04] He gives us his desires. He gives us his wants. And it's only when we reflect and give ourselves time to think about the cross and think about the resurrection that the Holy Spirit takes that and helps us to see that we don't need to indulge in sexual immorality.

We don't need porn because we have everything that we could possibly ever need and want in the person of Jesus Christ. He satisfies us. He completes us.
He fulfills us with everything beyond our expectation. As we so often say, the gospel is not just for unbelievers, a message that we are trying to throw down people's throats out there.
The gospel is something that we need to continually apply to believers each and every day. We need to be reminded of the gospel.
Well, remembering the gospel is primary and that's where we must start. But in addition to this, we need to take practical action.
[29:17] There's no good saying, well, help me to live a pure life and then doing nothing practically about it. We've got to be ruthless to remove the temptation.

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So let me encourage three ways in which we can do this. And I'm not just speaking now to adults. I'm speaking to parents who have responsibility for their younger children and for you having control of your own home.
So here's three things and I'm sure there are others. First of all, install software. The web is easily accessible. So it's important for you to have filters on your computer.
You can set your computer up to search in safe mode to disallow sites that you don't want accessed. Now the problem with that is you can turn off safe mode, can't you?
You can control the settings to whatever you want and nobody's going to know. So the best way is to use accountable software such as CovenantEyes.com.
[30:21] If you want to know more about CovenantEyes.com you can ask me afterwards. CovenantEyes means your internet activity is all recorded and it's all monitored and a report is sent on a monthly basis or a weekly basis to an accountability partner.

There are people who send their reports to me and I can see what they're looking at. In the same way, my reports are sent to somebody else.
I have an accountability partner. It doesn't stop access to whatever you look at on the computer, but it does help prevent it. And it does mean others know what you're looking at and they are there to intervene and to bring support.
So I would strongly recommend that every home, every computer should have something similar to CovenantEyes on their computers.
But don't stop with your computer. You've all now got fancy gadgets with your mobile phones. Thankfully I don't have a mobile phone. And some of you do. That not only makes phone calls but you can access the internet with your mobile phones.
[31:32] Don't just have it on your computer and then play around with your mobile phone. Sort out your phones as well. You've all got access to unsuitable apps. You don't need them. Get your phone sorted too.

So that's install software. The second one is to block channels. Most people today have Sky or Free2Air.
And it beams into your home unwanted programs and explicit channels. Recently we had some Free2Air installed. And we discovered that there's a channel on it called Movies4Men.
And it's not just Rambo. I don't want movies for men in my home. So we've put a security code on it so it can't be viewed.
And if you're going to have TV in your homes, make sure that you remove what is obviously not helpful. And again, parents, you've got to take the first steps in doing this.
[32:35] So install software, block channels. Thirdly, read well. There are lots of books and magazines that promote and push sex outside of God's good design.

So you have to be very careful what you read. Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. And perhaps I'm right in saying that the women would read more novels than men.
Be very careful, ladies, what books you're reading. Read books that are going to help and not distort God's good design for relationships and sex.
I encourage us all to read, men in particular, Captured by a Better Vision, Living Porn Free, written by Tim Chester. He's the same author as the one who's written The Gospel Centred Life, the books that we're studying on Wednesday.
And there will be other suitable material as well. The simple point is, let's not pretend and lie to yourself that you're in control and that you can manage everything.
[33:44] And it might not be a problem for you today, but we need to take action. Make it your priority this afternoon to sort out some of these details.

So that's a very practical way of taking action. Sexual immorality was an issue in the early church. It's an issue today, and it's going to be an ongoing issue into the future. So we need to be prepared how to deal with sexual immorality, how to deal with porn.
So let me suggest two things in closing that will help us as a community together. First of all, we need a community where people are open.
We are all sinful people, let's not pretend. We all have different struggles with all kinds of different sins. But we ought to be open with one another as to where we are at.
[34:52] I don't mean that you write in all your sins into the local news sheet and tell everybody what you've been up to. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that the Christian life was never

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meant to be walked alone.

God saved us, not to keep us as individuals, but to save us into a family. To bring us into a community that is there to support us and to care for us.
So you all know people within the family of the church. Go to people who you know who are going to help you and encourage you. Be honest about your struggles.
And let God use the people within the family of the church to be a means of healing in your life. Not just with sexual immorality, with all sin.
But in particular as we are thinking today with these issues. So let's have a community of openness, encouraging and supporting one another.
[35:58] But also let us be a community of grace. We need to be a people that receives grace, not condemnation. It's so easy to point the fingers at other people.

It's so easy to write people off and say, did you see what they did? Did you hear about what happened in their life? And just write them off completely. Well let's remember we all need grace. And without Christ, not one of us is good enough. The church should be the safest place to be in for all of our struggles.
Christ came to us. He said you are not your own.
You were bought at a price. You're precious to God. He doesn't want you to leave you where you're at. He wants to change us, to transform us.
[37:03] Therefore, honour God with your body. Let's pray together.

In the quietness, let's do business with God. Commit ourselves to making changes in our lives that we need to.
Admit to God the way our life is and the things that we need to put right.
Our Father, we thank you so much for the Gospel, for the good news of Christ. We thank you for his cross that we have been forgiven. That there is no sin that is unforgivable.
Thank you that you have been raised from the dead. That we are united with you. One day we are going to be like you. Perfect in every way. With no more struggles.
[38:23] But help us to remember that today we have a new master to live for. The Lord Jesus. One who is kind and good. And gives us and fills us with all that we ever need.

And please that you would fill us all with the power of your Holy Spirit. Reminding us daily that Christ is present with us. That everything that we do, everything that we say, we are bringing Christ into that.
May we be so turned off from that, that we would be turned to Christ. That we would be filled afresh with the wonder of who you are and all that you have done.
To realise that you alone satisfy. Father, please bless us as a community. May we be open to one another, supporting and caring.
And may we forever show grace and the help that we need. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.
[39:30] Before we sing our last song.

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