

Lesson 14 Lecture
Proverbs 5, 6, 7
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Lesson 14 covers the issue of moral purity. For many people in today's world, the concept that there is such a thing as definable moral purity is dismissed as an outdated doctrine of repressed religious fanatics who are simply trying to enforce their preferred way of life on others who don't subscribe to such a standard. Their responses and reactions to a claim that moral purity matters often become retaliatory and heated. Have you ever wondered why? What are they so angry about? I think today's lesson offers some insight into what drives this hostile reaction to those of us who are seeking a higher moral ground for not just ourselves but to the rest of a fallen world.

"Why is the issue of moral conduct such a hot potato"? Well, the Bible tells us so in 2 Timothy 3:12, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," As true followers of Jesus Christ – seeking to live a life pleasing to God – a life of holiness – we will be persecuted. It is not a matter of "if" – it is a matter of "when". Why? Jesus said in John 3:19: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Jesus – the ultimate example of holiness – was persecuted to the point of death. He was the Light of the World, but the world loved darkness because their deeds were evil.

Speaking of light, Ephesians 5:13 offers, "But everything exposed by the light becomes visible." I think one of the reasons people respond so negatively to the issue of moral purity is they are ashamed of their *lack of it* when the light is shown on their darkness. When you come face to face with a perfect and holy God with all the light of His glory shining and exposing every dark place, it is a painful and shameful experience.

So why should we seek to live a moral and pure life? Leviticus 11:44, "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy." Well – that's pretty clear. We are made in God's image; therefore, a portion of our inheritance is the responsibility of being holy examples of the God who gave His Son to us in order to accomplish His will – to make us holy.

The Apostle Paul confirms this truth – we are called to be holy in:

1 Thessalonians 4:7: "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

Ephesians 1:4: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

Why do we need to be holy? Remember, we were created for a purpose and out of the good pleasure of the LORD. He desires to have a deep and intimate relationship with us because He knows that what we need the most – He should know, He created us! But you can’t approach God in an unholy state. God cannot tolerate uncleanness, so we must be made clean. Now we’re tap-dancing on the issue of grace and works, so let’s define the difference of being holy vs. holiness.

First, we’ll start with an important truth in Psalm 12:6: “And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.” Everything that we do here at POW is rooted in the truth of His pure Word. We cannot forget that – our eternal lives hang in the balance without our trust in the Bible. Jesus’s half-brother, James tells us in the chapter 3, verse 17 of his epistle the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. What does that mean? God’s ***motive*** is always holy and out of it flows the fruit of His presence in our lives noted here.

In John 17:19, Jesus tells that He sanctifies (or sets apart) Himself in order that we may be sanctified or made holy. In Titus 2 – the Apostle Paul also points to the role of Jesus and our being set apart. These are clear and undeniable statements that our sanctification, or the action of being made holy, ***begins and ends*** with the grace of God which is purposed through Jesus Christ as well as our faith in His shed blood that cleanses us. In other words, the moment we claimed Jesus as our savior we were made holy in the eyes of the Father. Do you know you are holy right now in the eyes of God? If you don’t believe that, then you aren’t listening to God or reading His Word. Moreover, you need to reject any voice that tells you otherwise – that voice is coming either directly or indirectly from Satan. One more thing - according to 1 Thessalonians 4:3, God’s will for the believer is to be sanctified.

So, as I move forward, please understand that your identity as a holy child of God is established ***solely*** by your faith in Christ. There is nothing you can do to change that. Everyone gets that? Now the process of being set apart from the world and being identified with a perfect and holy God (living a holy and moral life) requires effort, or works, on our part – but not without the help of the Holy Spirit. Without our faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit, our efforts to live a more holy life will fail. The forces of darkness are too strong for us. Let’s examine the process

of immorality, and I think each of us will be identify in our own way how easy it is to live immorally. Okay – now let's get into what is one of the greatest threats to our existence as a civilized nation – immorality.

Let's read James 1:13-16: "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but 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. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers." This section of the book of James illustrates the process to immorality. Let's go over it step by step. First, he makes sure that we understand that temptation does not come from God (nor can He be tempted). This is critical as it is a statement about the character of God. While He will allow temptation into our lives for the purpose of testing us by revealing our vulnerability to sin or showing us that with His Holy Spirit, we can withstand the temptation, **He is not the author or initiator of the temptation.** It's *very* important that we understand this point.

He then acknowledges that we all have a sinful nature, and out of that nature produces evil desires. The word "dragged" is especially interesting. That word implies there is another party involved in our trip down the road to immorality. We've already established it isn't God, so who do you think this person is? Satan – and this verse proves he's a real drag. It also says we're dragged away – away from where? Or maybe the better question is from Whom?

We are then enticed. That is an action word which means to lead on with exciting hope or desire; allure. Again, this implies another party is involved doing the enticing. Guess who? The word conceived is yet another term that indicates two parties – an egg and a seed. An egg is nothing until it receives the seed. I believe we're the egg, so that makes Satan the bad seed. The fruit of the conception is sin. What do you think he means by saying "when it is full-grown"? That sounds like sin has a life of its own – it starts small and overtime grows into something much bigger. That should get our attention as we examine our lives – is there something that we're doing that we've rationalized is "small or no big deal"? This section of the verse tells us that small thing will indeed become a very big deal at some point. It's very important that we understand that while there is clearly another party that is with us on the road to immorality, we have the choice to stop and go the other way. We are weak, but we are not helpless victims. There is accountability.

We then arrive at the inevitable conclusion to sin – death. Romans 6:23 tells us the wages of sin is death. In taking our place on the cross, Jesus was our sin, and He

had to die. He gave His sinless life for our sinful life. There is no clearer way of describing the truth of sin's consequences than the Son of God pinned to the cross. James ends with the exhortation – “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers”. What is the deception he is talking about? That Satan wants us to not believe that everything James just said is not true. The fact is, though, it is and it always has been – let’s take a quick look at the most famous example of immorality in the Bible.

If you would like to and have your Bibles, turn to 2 Samuel, Chapter 11. King David’s path to immorality is documented in Chapter 11 of 2 Samuel. His path begins with temptation - he’s not where he should be – in battle with the Ammonites and besieging Rabbah – he’s sent Joab to do the work for him. He turns into a Peeping Tom and watches Bathsheba taking a bath. He’s allowed himself to be in a situation he shouldn’t be in (dragged away), so in this unfamiliar territory, he’s weakened his ability to defend temptation (enticed). Instead of not looking away or returning to his room, it says that Bathsheba was very beautiful to behold – this is where his immorality was conceived.

He then inquired about her – and notice the warning (which I believe is from God) identifying her as someone’s daughter and wife. He ignored the warning and sends for her – this is the birth and the beginning of the sin. He still could have stopped this, but he *chose* not to. We know the rest of the story, and look at the path of death it produced – Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah; the baby that was conceived by the act of adultery; David’s reputation – he was never the same again; and, I believe it was the root of many of the sins in his family.

Jesus understood the path to immorality, and twice Matthew 5:29-3 and again in Matthew 18:8-9 He made startling and vivid statements about the seriousness of beginning the path of immorality and sin. Twice He said that if our eye causes us to sin, we should gauge it out. The eye is typically the launching pad of our temptation – we’re looking at something we shouldn’t be looking at. When thinking about immorality and the eye, we can’t help but to arrive at pornography as a central problem. The pornography business is one of the biggest industries in the world, and the breadth of people patronizing this sick world is growing daily. With the accessibility to the internet, children are becoming exposed to and addicted to pornography. There are mountains of data that point to the damaging impact pornography has on people as individual and society as a whole. The beginning of the problem is, though, what we’re doing with our eyes.

Jesus also talks about cutting off our hands and feet should they cause us to sin. Our hands and feet deal with what we're doing and where we are – or our location. Our hands are on the keyboard of our computer that takes us to places we shouldn't be. Our feet take us to places of entertainment we shouldn't be attending.

Before I go to the next step in immorality, I want to comment on the issue of deceit in immorality. Let's look at a couple of verses:

Proverbs 20:9: "Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?"

Proverbs 16:2: "All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD."

These two verses in Proverbs speak to our delusion of our purity. The world wants us to believe we are basically good people, and there is always someone else who is in worse shape than we are. This secular relativism is one of the greatest lies Satan has pulled over on us. We are not measured against each other. We are measured against a perfect and holy God. That is why the Bible says we have ALL sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Proverbs 16:2 confirms this truth – it doesn't matter what we think – what matters is what the LORD thinks. We can be deceived. He cannot.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the greatest deceits of immorality is that they're no big deal – and we can get away with it. Check out the truth in Proverbs 5:21: "For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths." We have our memory verse and three other verses which all basically say the same thing:

Jeremiah 16:17: "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes."

Hebrews 4:13: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

1 Peter 3:12b: "but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

One of the greatest lies anyone can ever believe is they will get away with their sin. These verses tell us the **truth** – our sin will always be revealed – **ALWAYS** – God is not mocked – He sees all, and sin does not go unpunished.

In the following verses, we read that there are indeed consequences to immorality and sin.

Psalm 38:3: “Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin.”

Psalm 38:18: “I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.”

Psalm 51:3: “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.”

Isaiah 30:13: “this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant.”

Note that his sin and God’s wrath is weighing heavily on David in these Psalms. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul describes the wrath of God against all the godlessness and wickedness of men. We read that our unconfessed and unforgiven sin is always before us, and it is troubling

In Isaiah we get a picture of the crushing burden of sin that at some point will crash down on us. Ever felt like that?

I would like to speak specifically to types of consequences. The first is the issue of witness and reputation. Ezekiel 18:24a: “But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered.”

Immorality is bad for everyone – but it carries a heavier load for Christians.

There’s a saying that for every 100 people, one will read the Bible and 99 will read the Christian. Because we have chosen to follow Christ, we should be ascribing to a higher moral standard of living. Remember, sanctification means being “set apart”, and our conduct should demonstrate that we are seeking to set ourselves apart from what the world deems as acceptable. Ezekiel is making it clear that for those who claim to follow Christ but commit an evil or immoral act, all of the good that has been accumulated in their service to Christ, or their witness, will be lost.

This especially applies to leaders such as pastors and public Christian figures. Much good was done by these men, yet when we hear their names, what do we think most people think about? Their immorality – their sin. Don’t forget the people who were following these men as well – almost certainly they were impacted. How many churches have been ruined because a pastor has been exposed for his immorality? The consequences of immorality for Christians are very heavy and far reaching.

Numbers 14:18: “The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.” In this passage of Numbers, we see the impact sin and immorality has on families – multiple generations are affected. Children watch what their parents do and more

often than not repeat the behavior. This doesn't bode well for the next generation's chances of a solid marriage. Immorality often leads to divorce, and the devastating impact of divorce on the American family is well documented. The scars of humility, embarrassment, shame, rejection, and all the other damage that comes with immorality is too much for most marriages to handle. Again – the children are the biggest victims and typically get no guidance as to how to prevent themselves from repeating the same acts which will in turn hurt their children. You can see the punishment get handed down through the generations.

The consequences of immorality are heavy – but they don't have to be the end of the story. God is a God of multiple chances, and this applies even to situations involving immorality. But this can only happen when we seek the One who has the true power to restore us. 1 Peter 4:3-6: "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 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. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit."

These verses in 1 Peter speak to the person who has sinned but have a hope for recovery – at least in the light of God's perspective. For those who have been victims of immorality, the damage is tremendous. The bond of trust has been broken and the feeling of rejection is overwhelming. In the case of a marriage, the Bible even states that adultery is grounds for divorce. The Bible also says God hates divorce, so that should tell us how seriously God takes the issue of immorality. He makes a provision for something He hates.

Earlier I stated that the road to immorality involves two people – the individual and Satan (or one of his minions). The road to recovery from immorality also involves two people – the first one is the same, but the second One is Jesus.

Hebrews 2:18: "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Hebrews 4:15-16: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

These two verses remind us that Jesus relates to what we're going through – and that makes Him more approachable in our time of need. For the victim of immorality, this person has lost the concept of trust. That can even extend to God – “Why would God allow me to be married to such an immoral person?” or “Why would God allow this to happen?” Free will is a wonderful thing until we take the brunt of God **honoring** the bad choices. If He didn’t, we really wouldn’t have free will, would we? I am not going to stand up here and preach to you or judge you in regards to the way you’re handling being victims of immorality. What I am going to do is ask that you consider the cross. It is the symbol of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the beginning of restoration – for the victim and the transgressor. For the victim, the path with the least burden in life (and also the one Jesus walks) is blanketed in forgiving those who have harmed you. It isn’t easy, and I don’t think it is possible without Jesus’ help. I’ve also found that walking down a path of forgiveness takes us to surprising places – restoring things that seem to be beyond restoration. Please give it a try.

As for the one who sinned, you also have a decision to make. Do you want to repeat what you’ve done and cause more harm to yourself and to those around you (and typically closest to you) or do you want to restore what you’ve broken? It’s an important question to consider, because the road to restoration for the transgressor is paved with mistrust, doubt, and pain. Philippians 1:6: “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Jesus promises that He will work with you to the finish for your life. But it starts with a **choice**.

All of us have either participated in or been victims of immorality. It leaves us feeling dirty, unclean, and often very ashamed. I just suggested one thing will help us go from *immorality* to *immortality*. I’ve talked a lot about the road to immorality, its consequences, and the possibility of restoration through Jesus. At the beginning of that road, it involved a choice – how about we consider what tools we can use to help us prevent traveling down that road and staying on the right path. If you remember, the road to immorality starts with temptation – ***it will come***, and we need to prepare ourselves for this.

I believe the first line of defense is our mind. Philippians 4:8: “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.” We are daily bombarded with filth and complete disregard to a world that God would approve. Because of our sinful nature, we need to train our

minds to focus on the things which are noted in this verse – these are all character traits of God – so we need to focus our thought life on God. Paul knew all too well how easily deceived we are; therefore, the state of our mind is critical.

Romans 12:1-2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Remember, I earlier established that God's will for us is to be holy. That begins with the transforming of the mind.

Scripture is full of defense mechanisms to help us from going down the road to immorality. Below are some of them:

Romans 6:12: “Do not let”

Ephesians 5:1-5: “There must not be even a hint”

Ephesians 5:11: “Have nothing to do”

Philippians 1:27: “Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”

Colossians 3:3: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature”

Colossians 3:8: “You must rid yourselves of all such things”

2 Timothy 2:22: “Flee the evil desires of your youth”

Hebrews 12:12: “Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees; make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy”

1 Peter 1:13: “Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled”

1 Peter 2:11: “Abstain from sinful desires”

Notice that every one of these verses involves action. Why? Because Satan is going through the earth, to and fro, looking to devour you. If we don't take action to prepare for the inevitable attack and temptation, we will find ourselves vulnerable and in pain. We cannot underestimate the powers of evil – they are indeed formidable.

As Christians, we have a clear responsibility with the issue of immorality. In Titus 2:1-8, Paul seven times admonishes us to teach? Think about how you got to this point in your walk with Christ. You were either instructed by your parents, siblings, and pastors – or maybe you were self-taught. The teaching Paul's talking about isn't just “you shouldn't do this” or “you should do that”. It's “**God says,....**”. Our personal examples to others will ultimately disappoint them, so that is why our source of instruction needs to come from the Bible. Throughout my

preparation for this lesson, a theme kept coming to my mind that I would like to share with you as I conclude. I'm hoping you will agree with me and use it as an incentive to avoid the road to immorality and instruct others to do the same.

The theme that weaves through this issue of moral purity is love. In the Bible, there are three types of love noted as described in the Greek language. The first is Eros, which is where we get the word erotic. This is the type of love that the world wants us to believe is what love really is about. Its focus is on the physical or the flesh. Phileo is where we get the idea of brotherly love – the City of Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love. Agape is the kind of love that is associated with God.

Typically, with each type of love there is a level of intimacy associated with it. With the Eros type of love – there is little or no intimacy. By intimacy, I mean sharing something more than physical, and physical is what the focus of the Eros type of love. With Phileo, the level of intimacy increases as love extends beyond the physical and begins to address the emotional needs we need. For Agape – we achieve the highest level of intimacy – a type of love that only God can offer or supply. Agape love meets are deepest needs – our spiritual needs. In regards to where we are in the sanctification process in our lives – or how much we are separating ourselves from the world's idea of love, the progression is the same as intimacy. As we seek to become more holy which will set us apart from the world, we move from the Eros type of love to Agape love.

First Corinthians 13 is Scripture most of us are familiar with – it is known as the love chapter, and we often hear it quoted at weddings. I would like to invite you to consider these verses in the light of the issue of moral purity. If someone is living their life according to these standards, moral purity will be a natural fruit of his/her life. More importantly, it helps us avoid going down the road of immorality. Immoral behavior is a failure to love – a failure to love God, a failure to love your spouse, a failure to love your family – basically a failure to love anyone but yourself. The type of love that is described in this chapter is Agape love. Verse 8 sums up Agape love – ***it never fails.***

As I said earlier, the best defense to immoral behavior is to take action. 1 Peter 1:13-16: “Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” For us to respond to the commandment, “Be holy,

because I am holy”, Peter tells us to “prepare our minds for action”. The first step of preparation has to be to grow closer to God and allow Him to show us and fill us with His Agape love. It is the only kind of love that truly satisfies us. The best way to grow closer to God is to get into His Word. We are defenseless to this immoral world without it.

First Thessalonians 5:23a: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.” The peace that passes all understanding that Paul writes about comes only from God and the knowledge that He loves us more than we can possibly imagine. If you will allow Him, His love will change you – it will set you apart and overwhelm the fiery darts of temptation. Located at the entrance of every road to immorality is temptation. God knows this, and out of His love for us and knowledge of the destructive circumstances of immoral behavior, He only allows so much temptation – He knows us better than we ever will. He will always provide us a way out. And what, or I should say “Who”, is that way? Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” It is Jesus. The power of the love that He had to go to the cross to be the substitute sacrifice for our sins to be forgiven is available to us to help us withstand the temptation to travel down the dead-end road of immorality.

I’ve talked a lot about this road to immorality, the consequences of going down it, and how to avoid it. There is a different road – a road we are meant to travel. Instead of temptation which is at the beginning of each road to immorality, this road has Someone else at the beginning. Isaiah 35:8: “And a highway will be there [*the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God*]; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.” Sounds like a good place to go, doesn’t it? It’s available to the victims of immorality, to the transgressors of immorality – it’s available to everyone. And at the end of this highway of holiness is our Lord Jesus Christ with His arms open wide saying, “Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord”. Let’s pray.