

PURITY (13+)

Whether this is your first teenager or your fourth, the teenage years are full of many changes, trials, and triumphs. A very important discussion to have as your kid enters into those years is purity.

Webster's Dictionary defines "pure" as: "free from everything that might make dirty, change, or lower the quality; free from sin or guilt." Purity is much more than refraining from sex or heeding a list of don'ts. It is a positive, passionate existence that frees us to experience all God made us to enjoy. Sadly, our culture bombards kids with opportunities to tarnish their lives, even making fun of those who try to remain clean. How do we help our children go against the norm and live a life filled with the intense joys only purity can bring?

Step One: Clarify the Standard

Psalm 119:9 says "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word." While Jesus Christ was the only person to live a life of total purity, he invites us to follow his example by fulfilling the purpose for which we were made. When it comes to purity, our children need to understand that their bodies belong to God first and to their future spouse second. I Corinthians 6:18-21 says "Flee from sexual immorality...your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...you are not your own...Therefore honor God with your body."

Step Two: Focus on Purity, Not Just Sex

It is vital to emphasize remaining a virgin before marriage. But purity is much more than saying no to premarital sex. There is a current trend in teen culture to define purity as not "going all the way," while anything else is considered fair game. God desires for us to have much more than "technical virginity" before marriage. He has a great plan for our hearts, minds and actions. Teach your child that purity involves every area of life.

Step Three: Give a Positive Vision

Give a positive vision of the purpose and joy of sex in the context of marriage. Nothing gives a child a positive view of God's design for passion like basking in the love of parents who cherish one another and speak positively about the joys of marital intimacy.

Step Four: Delay Temptation

Kids want to start dating younger than ever before. One study showed that a child who starts dating at twelve-years-old has only a 9% chance of remaining a virgin at eighteen years old. If they wait until sixteen, however, they are 80% likely to be a virgin at eighteen. God made us with desires that are very good. But those desires can be awakened too early. So, talk to your child about purity before allowing them to date and continue dialogue after they start the process. The topic can be awkward so try to make the experience comfortable. For one child that could mean scheduling a regular coffee date; for another it might mean chatting while hunting or attending a sports event. Find some context for keeping the lines of communication open.

Step Five: Pray for Them

Commit yourself as a parent to cover your child in prayer. Pray specifically for his or her purity in relationships, a clean thought life, integrity in school and other activities. Pray for a heart that is connected to Christ and a mind immersed in God's Word.

PRACTICAL IDEAS:

- Write letters to your child. Share your heart and scripture instead of mere rules. Give them a vision of God's plan for their lives. Plan a time to talk about the letter after they have read it such as a special breakfast or coffee date. Take time to listen to what they say and try to steer clear of teaching or lecturing.
- Have your child write out what they want in a future spouse. As they get closer to dating, have them pull that list out and talk through the potential individuals that they are interested in dating to see if they fulfill that list. Ask the following questions: What would your future spouse want from you in purity? What do you want from your future spouse?.
- Help your teen solidify a commitment to purity by writing out their standard of purity and committing to it. Consider buying them a ring or other item as a symbol of their commitment. Remember this is your child's decision. Your job is to provide guidance, support and honest conversation.

The stages of raising young adults may feel tiresome and draining, but by you as a parent showing up for them everyday that will set an example to stay committed to the people you love through the highs and lows. We are here to walk alongside you as a church and community.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Passport to Purity
by Dennis and Barbara Rainey
Dateable: Are You? Are They?
by Justin Lookadoo and Hayley DiMarco
Choosing to Wait by Laura Gallier
The Purity Code by Jim Burns
Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality
by Jim Burns