

Teaching About Sexual Purity

by Ryan Boyer

Something happened to me last year that I was not expecting. First, let me give some background about the way I think about my role as a teacher and preacher. The Bible is a really big book, and there is a lot in it about how we are supposed to think and live inside it. I am in constant awe that God's message can be understood by a child, and yet, every single day I learn something new about God and life that I did not already know. For this reason, I try hard to not preach the same five sermons. I want to make sure that our kids know the basics, and that we are reminded of God's fundamental truths on a regular basis; but I also want to learn and grow beyond the first principles. I want to know the depths of what God has revealed, and I want to share what I have learned.

Now, my constant temptation is to preach about sexual purity. I could find a place in every sermon and every class to talk about this subject. Maybe the reason is because I am male, and I think about it all the time. Maybe the reason is because of the hyper-sexualized society that we live in. After all, "sex sells." Just wait until you're standing in the check-out aisle at the grocery store this week and you see the cover of this month's *Sports Illustrated*. Surely, you have already seen previews for *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which was released today. Maybe the reason is because of my work with young people and the reality that this is a serious trial that every single one of them will face soon if they haven't already; and out-of-control hormones sure don't help us any. For whatever reason, I am tempted to talk about this subject all the time; but I suppress it.

So, I said something happened to me last year that I was not expecting. Becky and I read the New Testament with our kids in 2014. Last year, Luke was 9/10 and Lily was 7 years old. Do you know how much sexual purity is discussed in the New Testament? If you don't have a feel for it, then I would suggest reading it with your young children because you will feel the burn every single time the words adultery, fornication and sexual immorality are spoken out loud (even in the ICB, International Children's Bible). The super-fun part is when your 7-year-old starts to pick up on the recurring theme, and finally asks, "What is sexual immorality?"

For all of my effort to not talk about the same handful of subjects over and over again, I am reminded that God himself has not made this same effort. He talks about it A LOT! Consider some basic stats: Some form of the word *porneia*, which is translated "sexual immorality" in most of our Bibles (sometimes "fornication"), is found in half of the 27 New Testament books. That's just one word! Other fun words like orgies, sensuality and adultery help us to find the theme of sexuality in ¾ of the New Testament books. Having spent just five minutes in my Bible software searching for key words, I can find this theme in every NT book except Philippians, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and 1-2-3 John. (As a side note, I think I can make a case for the theme in Philippians and Titus. Also, Paul already addressed the theme to Timothy in his first letter, so I don't think it should count against my stats that it's not found in the second.) The point is clear: God talks about the subject all the time. Additionally, God brought it up to almost every person or congregation that he spoke to in the New Testament.

Somebody might say (and, in fact, I have experienced this), "Sexual sin is sinful just like every other sin. We should not constantly talk about sexual sin, and should spend more time talking about things like grace, love or getting along with one another, which is often a problem in local congregations." Every time homosexual marriage is in the news somebody writes about it, and some do-gooder Christian puts out an article along these lines: We should not focus so much on sexual sin. On January 21, 2015, Matt Walsh wrote about women wearing yoga pants. On February 5, Kelly Givens responded with an article called, "10 Things We Should Get Angry about before Yoga Pants." True enough, the weightier matters of the law should not be overlooked; but my point above makes it clear that God doesn't take the same approach. He talks about sexual sin over and over again to almost everybody he talks to.

I think C.S. Lewis emphasizes this same point in *Mere Christianity* (see Book 3, part 5 on Sexual Morality). To the argument above, we might say, "Gluttony is sinful just like sexual immorality. We should focus on every sin and not over-emphasize one or the other." Lewis says, "Now if we eat whenever we feel inclined and just as much as we want, it is quite true that most of us will eat too much: but not terrifically too much. One man may eat enough for two, but he does not eat enough for ten. The appetite goes a little beyond its biological purpose, but not enormously. But if a healthy young man indulged his sexual appetite whenever he felt inclined, and if each act produced a baby, then in ten years he might easily populate a small village. This appetite is in ludicrous and preposterous excess of its function." Remember that C.S. Lewis wrote this in 1952 before the "sexual revolution!" I wonder what he would say if he were writing today.

Whether we are addressing homosexuality, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, yoga pants, the cover of *Sports Illustrated* or sexual purity to our young people (and older folks for that matter), it is a subject that cannot be over-done. Until the temptation is gone—a biological drive that Satan manipulates for his own purposes—our conversation about this subject should not subside. God talked about it to everyone and so should we.