

7 Life-giving Virtues: Chastity
Purity of Conduct and Intention
1 Corinthians 6:12-13
WRCoB 6.12.22

There's been some question as to the origin
Of the following story

Strangely enough

Some say it originated from a sermon by Billy Graham
Others say it is an old Cherokee proverb.

No one knows for sure!

Either way it is a good illustration
For what I hope to accomplish
In this next sermon series.

An old grandfather was giving instruction to his grandson.

*“Grandson, there are two wolves living in your heart
And they are fighting each other.”*

*“One is vicious and cruel
The other is wise and kind.”*

*“Grandfather,” the grandson said in alarm
“Which one will win?”*

The grandfather replied, “The one you feed.”

From a Christian perspective
The two wolves are virtue and sin
Good and evil.

Three years ago, I preached a sermon series
On the 7 deadly sins here at West Richmond.

1. Lust
2. Gluttony
3. Greed
4. Sloth
5. Wrath
6. Envy
7. Pride

You won't find this list in the Bible

It is not one like the Ten Commandments
Or the Nine Fruits of the Spirit.

Nonetheless, the 7 Deadly Sins are biblically-based
Created by the early church
As a form of instruction and discipline.

Over the course of this summer
I want us to look at the counter-virtues
To the 7 Deadly Sins.

Virtues that shape our life.

They "hold sway" over the 7 deadly sins.

Serve as a fortress against them.

1. Chastity over Lust
2. Temperance over Gluttony
3. Charity over Greed
4. Diligence over Sloth
5. Patience over Wrath
6. Kindness over Envy
7. Humility over Pride.

Many of these words are not found in today's vernacular.

But let's learn what they mean
And apply them to our daily living.

Today we look at chastity

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According to Wikipedia:

Chastity is sexual behavior of a man or woman that is acceptable to the moral standards and guidelines of their culture, civilization or religion.

All major religions teach chastity
Christianity, Islam, Judaism,
Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Throughout the world in almost all religions and cultures
Sex before or outside of marriage is forbidden.

I know a few exceptions in African cultures.

In the Islamic law called Sharia
Premarital sex or adultery is punishable by death.

Sounds harsh doesn't it?
Do you know where the law originates?
The Book of Leviticus.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary has a definition I really like.

Chastity—purity in conduct and intention, restraint and simplicity in design or expression, personal integrity.

I begin with two examples from the Bible.

They involve the two Josephs.
The one in the OT, and the one in the NT.

Joseph, the son of Jacob
Was sold into slavery by envious brothers.

In Egypt, he served under Potiphar
A high-ranking government official.

Due to his savvy and trustworthiness
Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his whole household.

Joseph was young and handsome
And Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him.

But he refused her advancements saying.

Genesis 39:9 NLT No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

Joseph exemplifies what it means
To be pure in conduct and intention.

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In the New Testament
When our second Joseph
Heard of his fiancé Mary's pregnancy

Rather than breaking off the engagement

Matthew 1:24b-25 NRSVUE He took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus

Here again is an example of purity in conduct and intention.

This is chastity.

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Jesus taught purity in conduct and intention.

In his Sermon on the Mount

Jesus offered a series of challenges

Based on his interpretation of Jewish Scripture.

He starts by saying.

Matthew 5:27-28 NRSVUE “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Not only can our actions be sinful

Jesus says our thoughts and intentions as well.

So, what do you think?

Is Jesus being prudish and unrealistic?

I mean, who hasn't lusted at one time or another?

We live in a sexually liberated society, don't we?

Jesus was single. He should have had a wife. Right?

William Willimon in his great book

Sinning Like a Christian, writes

That we should have such curiosity about the sexuality of Jesus, his possible romantic attachments, Mary Magdalene as a girlfriend, and so on, is telling. We can't imagine a human being who is not obsessed with sex.

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Interestingly, Jesus and the Apostle Paul

Also lived in a sexually liberated society.

Not the Jewish society, of course

But the forced-upon-them Roman society.

The Greek and Roman societies
Had an unquenchable thirst for sex.

Jesus taught against its permissiveness.
The Apostle Paul did too.
And we need to, too.

Sociologists are discovering the truth concerning chastity.

An article from the website Harvard Anscombe Society
Entitled, *Chastity, The Forgotten Virtue*.

The facts are startling: In 2006, the Guttmacher Institute reported that about 95% of the American public had sex before marriage. Now, 40% of births in the United States are to unwed mothers (while it was just 4% in 1940).

*The research in the social sciences increasingly shows how destructive sexual permissiveness has been. According to *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate and Think About Marrying* by sociologists Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, sexually active young adults often feel “guilt, regret, temporary self-loathing, rumination, diminished self-esteem, a sense of having used someone else or been used, a sense of having let yourself down, discomfort about having to lie or conceal sex from family, anxiety over the depth and course of the relationship, and concern over the place or role of sex in the relationship.”*

Noted in the article was that girls who were sexually active

“were about 11 times more likely than virgins to report elevated depression symptoms.” Virgins, on the other hand, “tend to be a self-confident and accomplished lot.”

Not only are the young women affected
Pornography and casual sex harm young men

“by creating a kind of insatiable desire for more sex and a wider variety of sexual experiences.”

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Let's unpack this word, chastity.

Ryan Dueck from the Lethbridge Mennonite Church
In Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada writes

Chastity. For some, it might almost be synonymous with “celibacy” (it’s not). Or, it might call to mind a time when women’s virtue was policed by men, or when people were ruled over by puritanical religious leaders who set forth restrictions around sex and desire that were not only virtually impossible but also unhealthy.

Healthy chastity affirms

The power and goodness of sexual desire
When expressed in healthy ways

In a marriage characterized by trust

Commitment and mutual agape love.

Sexual desire is a God-given good thing.

But sexual desire is very powerful

And it can easily be distorted or perverted
Overpowering purity and the best of intentions.

With the help of the Holy Spirit

We can control the strongest of sexual desires.

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In our passage from Corinthians

Paul says since we (him and us both)
Live in a culture where pretty much
Everything is permissible.

We need to discern what is beneficial.

When we become Christian
We are adopted into the family of God.

We belong to Jesus
Every part of us, body, mind and soul.

We become a dwelling place for the Spirit.

What we do with our bodies effects the Spirit.

From William Willimon.

We Christians overlook how countercultural it is for the church to assert that all of life, even our sexual life, is to be lived for the glory of God and the good of our neighbor.

Chastity may be an old term not much used any more

But the principle of chastity continues to be totally relevant.

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Sex permeates our society.

It is crazy thick on the internet.

Pornography makes up 60% of daily web traffic
Of all users in the US.

40% visit porn sites at least once a month.

90% Of 8-16-year-olds who have internet access
Have viewed pornography online.

The average age of exposure is 11-years-old.

We have got a problem.

What do we do?

The Apostle Paul offers some great advice.
In his second letter to Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:22 NLT Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

Luke Gilkerson calls it the 3 key strategies
For fighting lust.

1. **Run from** those cravings, passions and desires.
2. **Run to** righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
3. **Run with** committed and trustworthy friends that will help and hold you accountable

James 5:16a NRSVue Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

There are two wolves in each of our hearts
And they are at war with each other.

One is sin the other virtue
One is light the other is darkness
One is good the other is evil.
One is chastity the other is lust.

Which one will you feed?