

Biblical Counsel to Walk in Sexual Purity

by Jesse Barrington | *Interview*

Question: As you counsel people on the topic of sexual purity, what advice do you find yourself giving time and time again to help believers walk in purity?

Jesse: One of the areas I begin with in talking about sexual purity is in the area of understanding the depth of the gospel and the blood of Christ to forgive even in the area of sexual impurity. So often, I see so many people who struggle in this area and are convinced – I cannot come back to God; I can't come back to Christ because I've done this this many times. And often, I'll bring them to David's psalm of confession. In verse 1, David says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love." And I'll just sit there with people sometimes and go over that again and again. You have to believe that God is able to forgive, but you have to believe that He's willing to forgive. And we have to remember the basis of His forgiveness. It is not our performance.

So when a brother or a sister struggle in the area of sexual purity, so often I see them trying to earn their way back into a right standing with God. Whether it's: I've got to be more committed next time. Or, my repentance needs to be more perfect. And I remind them you have to understand the basis of God's mercy is His love. And the basis of God's love is not performance. And I'm not saying God's indifferent to our repentance or continuing in sin that grace may abound. But I see men and women that have genuine marks of conversion struggle in this area. And when they do sin, we'll spend sometimes days or weeks laying around, if you will, in the guilt of the sin. There needs to be an urgency of coming back to God believing that in Christ, if they confess their sins, He's faithful and just to forgive them and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

In regards to proactively here – I think there's a proactive and a reactive sense of how we guard against sexual impurity. I think of the verse "Flee youthful lust." So, I'll say to the men sometimes, "Hey, flee youthful lusts. There's one way you can guard against sexual impurity. And they'll say, "Amen. Flee youthful lust." But I'll say, "What's the rest of the verse?" In fact, we were in a men's meeting once on the topic of sexual purity, and I stood up and I said, "Flee youthful lusts." And they all said, "Amen!" And I say, "Men, what's the second half of the verse?" Pursue. In other words, there is a putting off. There is a guarding of the heart where we do flee. We obey Proverbs 7. We don't go on the corner. We don't tempt ourselves to be tempted. We guard those things. We run from those things. But there's the other

side of the battle against sexual impurity, which is the pursuing. It is looking. It is the putting on of Christ.

Inevitably, James, what I find in these areas when people have given in to sexual temptation, is that they've stopped nurturing and nourishing their soul; the guarding of their heart; the reading of the Word; the meditation of the Word. As the old saying goes, the Word keeps you from sin, and sin keeps you from the Word. And the majority of time I find is they're trying to practice the guarding of things, but they're not fulfilling the pursuing of righteousness, love, and Christ. And if your heart is not satisfied in treasuring and savoring Jesus Christ, it will look somewhere else to worship. So it's not just putting off; it's putting on.

Question: When someone comes to you, how do you discern, is this a true Christian who's struggling or is this someone who is lost? Or how necessary is it to even discern that?

Jesse: I look where their struggle is regarding their sin. In other words, is it a godly sorrow? Remember Paul in Corinthians speaks about a worldly sorrow versus a godly sorrow. The worldly sorrow – you can take an atheist who's caught with pornography. There's embarrassment. There's shame. There's guilt. What is my wife going to say? What are my kids going to say? What are my co-workers going to think? Well, that's not godly sorrow. Now the genuine Christian will think those same thoughts, but they will have a Godward sorrow regarding their sin. And so I'm looking at where is the sorrow for sin? Is it merely for the embarrassment of what they've just done? Or is it a Godward – “Against You and You only have I sinned, O God, and done what is evil in Your sight.” And so I think regeneration produces a love for God, a reverence for God, an affection for God and His glory. And so when we sin, we are sorrowful not only for what we have done and how we'll look before others, but we're sorrowful for what we've done to God; the robbing of His glory, and against Him have we sinned. So that's an indicator. Where the trajectory of their sin and their sorrow?