

SOUL PURITY



A WORKBOOK FOR COUNSELORS AND SMALL GROUPS

David A. Coats

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Dave Coats's *Soul Purity* is a rich, robust, relational resource. Other materials on this vital topic often move toward extremes: they are either too abstract or they are so "practical" that they lack a theological foundation. This work, on the other hand, beautifully balances theological depth with practical implementation. Coats's focus on the heart and conscience reminds me of the great Puritan soul physicians who blended the holiness of God and the horrors of sin with the forgiveness of Christ and the wonders of grace. I highly recommend this Christ-focused, gospel-centered workbook.

**Bob Kellemen, Ph.D., Chair of the Biblical Counseling and Discipleship
Department, Crossroads Bible College**

Our small group used this resource for several weeks in an intense discipleship study. The most remarkable thing is the flexibility in design. It can be used in private or group study and should be used in both.

Bill Hallady, Staff writer, Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga TN

In a world filled with trash
disguised as cheap pleasure,
some have exchanged the wonder
and the glory of God
for the weak repulsiveness of man

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Foreword

S*oul Purity* has been forged in the battlefield of personal sanctification as pastor and biblical counselor, Dave Coats, has fought for purity in this muddy world. Also, having worked with people in this area of spiritual struggle for many years, he concludes that the best way to help people who already lack personal discipline and self-control is to provide a workbook format that “forces” them to study the Word of God daily. Over an eight-week period of manageable daily lessons, Dave systematically dismantles the heart idols that surround the sins of impurity, and gradually builds a new and powerful sense of the greatness and goodness of God. The mind is nurtured with daily readings, songs, meditations, and questions, all intended to renew the heart in the process.

Structured Approach

If someone is incredibly self-motivated and determined to break with their sensual sins, then they will find this a good structured resource to work through on their own. However, most people who are losing the battle with lust will likely need someone in their lives—a biblical counselor, pastor, or friend—to help push them through the workbook. If you are losing more than winning, and you really want to win, take this book to someone you can trust and ask them to keep you accountable with the daily readings and exercises.

Pre-emptive strike

This is also a good workbook for “prevention,” a sort of pre-emptive strike, especially for teenagers. Maybe parents could ask their teenage children to work through it to weaken sin before it gets its roots in too deep, and also to build up defensive walls through raising the twin bulwarks of the goodness and greatness of God.

Four Features

I especially appreciate four features in this book.

- First, the *God-centered focus*. There’s no question that delighting in God is the most powerful enemy of sin. Dave’s relentless focus on the greatness and goodness of God will produce deep humility before God as well as profound love for God.
- Second, throughout and especially in the appendix, *it deals honestly, bravely, and plainly with masturbation*. No punches pulled. Straight between the eyes. Repent of this sin.
- Third, it does what very few other books on this subject do. *It calls into serious question the reality of conversion if people keep falling into this sin*. Through personal testimonies, Dave shows that one of the greatest ways we can love people is not to say, “Oh, well, God forgives, it’s tough, no one’s perfect, etc.”

Rather it's to say, "How can you do this and say you know and love God?" If in the past the church has been too unforgiving of those who fell into sexual sin, we are certainly at risk today of "over-forgiving" in the sense that we rarely question the compatibility of repeated offending with real conversion.

- Fourth, the weekly focus on the cross, keeps hope alive and points all sinners and saints to the only source of purity for the head, the heart, and the hand.

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Professor at Puritan Reformed Seminary
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and author of *Jesus on Every Page*, *Christians Get Depressed Too*,
and *How Sermons Work*

Preface

Mission Statement

The purpose of discipleship in life purity is to practice necessary *patterns of protection from evil* (standards we set up personally), to develop the *pursuit of a holy God* (allowing His *goodness and greatness* to move us), and to build *open and honest relationships* so that believers will love God supremely and hate evil continuously.

This work is the result of a number of studies I have carried out to help people build a life of purity. The goal is to help them turn from what seems to be satisfying and pleasurable but is found to be sinful and destructive to the total fulfillment found in Christ. I hope that through this, readers will begin to rebuild their view of God.

I worked on this book while spending a week with my family on the East Coast, close to the beach. The need to address the issues discussed in this study was reinforced by the seemingly continual exposure to temptation and worldly attractions we experienced there. Men and women of God cannot be hermits and retreat from the world God has called them to reach, yet some families and individuals are choosing such isolation, having as little to do with the outside, unsaved world as possible. However, what they often find in the process is that they take the desire for the things of the world into their homes. Why? Because the problem isn't the world: it is the sinful desires of our hearts.

The opposite response is not good either. Assimilating into the world—becoming like it by accepting its philosophy, standards, values, and pleasures—turns Christians into people who are irrelevant. They become no different from those they are called to reach with the gospel that changes lives. Godly believers need to go out into their cultures and neighborhoods with hearts that are engrossed with the glory of God. We must refocus on God so that we can show Him to our world.

Pastors, deacons, women who teach Sunday school, wives who are alone, and the multitudes of Christians coming out of our churches looking for something other than an irrelevant Christianity are crashing and burning on the runways of life. We must address the problem of purity destruction that is happening today. As Christian students arrive at college each fall, a high percentage of them are already struggling with purity. The Word of God has the answers to this problem. We need to get into it and find God's help to be pure people in a world overcome by sensuality in all its forms.

I thank all those who have had a part in helping me with this study and giving me suggestions as to what needs to be addressed or included. It has been my privilege to counsel and disciple many men and women over the last couple of decades of ministry. Being a youth pastor, camp director, and now a pastor has helped me interact with many people who have come looking for help. Being in a college setting

for the last decade has increasingly challenged me with the need to put together materials that will help disciple those who are trapped in their own worlds of lust. Furthermore, raising three teens into adults has given me a fresh burden to help young people love God with their whole hearts and be less attracted to the world that wants to capture their souls. I hope this study is a right step in that direction.

I would like to dedicate this work to two people. The first is my dad, who labored quietly in obscurity, planting churches in North America. God has given Dad much fruit for his labor.

The second is my wife, Judi, who has patiently encouraged me and prayed for me through my own journey from lust for cheap things to a longing for our glorious God. Judi, you have made this journey an incredible one (often full of laughter), always mirroring the love of God for a sinner in your love for me. Thank you for editing and checking my writing.

Dave Coats

Longview Farm, Pembine, Wisconsin

My Testimony

Each of us has a journey to take. This journey is what the Bible calls “the Christian life,” or “becoming like Christ.” This journey is only possible for those who know Christ. I began my journey at the age of seven. By that time I had already been exposed to cheap pornography magazines which I found in a field and which were passed around by older guys in the neighborhood. As a teenager my lust was fueled through TV, books, and destructive relationships with girlfriends. Christian college helped me learn that I should say “no,” but that was all I knew. “Memorize verses and avoid temptation,” I was told. “God hates this sin.” I understood that. But as I tried to change my thought-life and sensual desires, a huge battle was taking place in my inner man. Getting married did not help. Studying theology in seminary did not win the battle for me. Heading to the mission field did not solve my struggle. As a youth pastor I prayed with young men and helped them look at Scripture to see how wrong pornography in the mind is. We memorized verses such as “flee youthful passions” (2 Tim. 2:22). But for me, something seemed to be missing. Why? Eventually I would feel that the battle was too strong again and I was going to fall.

So when the Internet was created I was stunned. I saw the Internet as a huge hole of sensual depravity into which men (including myself) would fall. Up to that point the issues were “Be willing to turn off the TV, say ‘no’ to friends who want to watch porn videos, and turn away from magazines and books in the store.” Now we really had a problem. How to escape? How could we be pure? “The apostle Paul certainly did not deal with Internet pornography,” I thought to myself. But in my desperation to help others and help my own feeble, spiritual life become strong and biblically pure, I looked in the Bible for the hope and help I had not before considered. I knew that I could not simply hibernate to hide from the attacks of Satan. If Paul could minister the gospel with thousands of ritual prostitutes in town and all forms of fornication going on outside in the streets, surely he had answers.

When I began working with college men and realized for the first time how widespread this problem was (not just Internet pornography as such but specifically the battle with the lusts of the flesh) I decided I needed to pursue intensely the biblical means to gain personal and corporate help in battling the idolatry of the heart. Several books and studies got me going in the right direction. I appreciate those who have gone before me in this field. Interestingly, women have now joined men in this struggle against the sensually saturated mind. Our culture is inundating us with sensual images and our minds are becoming saturated with sensuality, irrespective of gender.

I am especially burdened that this process of turning from the cesspool of sensuality to the awesome glory and beauty of Christ begin in the local churches and our homes. I believe that waiting till college years is too late. God gave us the

home and the church in which to build believers, and we must do so in those places. As I recently met with the elders and small-group leaders of an inner-city church, I encouraged them to “get the conversation going” among the men about their struggles with the sensuality of our culture. They have to get past the superficial discussions of life to the deeply spiritual and personal part of who we are. You will notice that I have put notes to small-group leaders throughout this study.

I am confident that what God has done to change my heart into a place where He is cherished, worshiped, and seen as supreme can happen in your heart too. I pray that you will commit yourself to this process so that your journey will be one of grace and truth, wrapped in the cross of Christ.

How To Use This Book

In a study such as this the danger is that, despite all my good intentions to be of help to you, there will still be something lacking in the presentation of the material that keeps you from gaining the desired benefit. So I hope that this brief overview will help you get started well and follow the direction of the workbook.

Workbook Layout

The material has been laid out so that you can work through it day by day over eight consecutive weeks (or longer if you slow down and take extra time on parts of it). This process of meditation is the most practical and helpful way to benefit, as most struggles go in cycles and most temptation points arise in similar situations. By following the daily schedule you will be helped daily to think through scriptural principles and to meditate on God's nature. In order to gain the maximum benefit it is vital that you commit to working through the book for the whole of the eight weeks, if not longer, rather than dipping in from time to time.

There is a daily meditation focus every day except Day 7. The Scripture passages selected focus on aspects of the goodness and greatness of God and reflect ways of expressing His glory, majesty, power, and works. Sometimes the focus is on creation and the Creator; other times it is on God's sustaining grace toward us or a great event in which God has shown the world His power. Take time to allow these events or words to make God real to you. I cannot emphasize too much how necessary this daily God focus is for you. You may understand all the truth and be able to answer all the questions, but if you do not fill your heart daily with God you will miss replacing the cheap, earthly pleasure of sensuality with the glorious wonder of Almighty God.

The need for this activity can be illustrated by imagining that someone has become infected with a virus after stepping on a nail. This person can take aspirin, drink lots of water, take vitamins, and do all the other good things that people do to maintain or even build the body. But the infection is gaining steadily, moving through the body. Antibiotics are needed to directly attack it. Nothing else will work. Likewise, meditation on the wonder and pleasure of knowing the God of glory is the only thing that is sufficient to make a sensual thought-life and sexual struggles appear cheap and wicked and thus no longer so appealing. Reminding ourselves of the cross and God's goodness magnifies in our hearts the riches of His glorious work toward us and humbles us so that we want to find our total fulfillment and joy in Him alone.

***Note to small-group leaders:** Please check how the people in your group are doing in their meditation on God. If they are struggling with this activity, take them to "Before We Go Further" just before the start of Week 3 and work through the material there. Help them to see the difference between knowing information and memorizing*

truth, and really having a heart that embraces their position in Christ and the glory and goodness of God.

The end of each week (Day 7) is structured to help you reflect on the cross and God's goodness. This focus is particularly well suited for a Sunday. Doing this at least once a week is critical, but you may decide that the focus on the cross is something you want to include daily. Each week on Day 7 we will take a journey through the events of the last twenty-four hours of Christ's life before his crucifixion. We need to take time to expose our hearts fully to the reality of this event. The journey into the Garden of Gethsemane and on to Golgotha should be a regular walk in our mind's eye that we take to experience afresh the effects of our sin and the commitment of our Savior to redeem our wretched, vile lives from the depths of hell.

Part of the meditation material is worship through music. Very few things in life encourage us in our pursuit of purity like music can and will if used correctly. Thus, it is essential that our music draw us to God. Our music should be true to Scripture. It should celebrate God's character and glory. The Psalms give examples of how people praised and exalted their God in song. God inspired the psalmists to write words that reflected a deep passion for His glory and holiness. Don't be satisfied with shallow music. Never accept a cheap version of God in music. Don't compare a glorious and eternal God to low and worldly things. God is beyond compare and above all things on this earth. Your music should never bring God down to man's level (in Rom. 1:19–23 God explains how this happens). Instead, our music should bring us up to God.

In order to build your meditation on God and renew your mind in Him, choose songs and hymns that lift up God, His grace, His mercy, His love, and His sacrifice on the cross.¹ Find hymns that help you marvel at the holiness and majesty of God. Then use these songs and hymns on a daily basis. I have found that the best way to begin my day is in praise to God through one of these great and wonderful explosions of worship. I am so grateful for those who can write words that express how great God is. If you visit my house in the morning you will most likely find me on my treadmill, enjoying God through these songs. I don't care what the rest of my household thinks of my musicality at that point: I am enjoying the wonder of a great God. I have included some examples of hymns and songs to encourage you in the joy of worship and praise.

Note to small-group leaders: Get the members of your group to share with one another how God has used the Scripture passages, the music, and the focus on God to penetrate their hearts and change their longings and joys during the week. When they start sharing about God it is a powerful encouragement to others in the group. They need to see that godly men and women can and should share their struggles and the spiritual joys of their hearts. You, the leader, should be the first one to get the conversation going on temptation and also joy in God. Let them know that you aren't perfect, but that you are pursuing God. Openness may come slowly in your group. Encourage it. Model it.

The sidebar material, questions, and other helps are an integral part of this book. On this page is an example of what one of these sidebars will look like when you fill it in. Make the most of these opportunities to reflect on what you are reading and studying.

The Goal

The goal of this workbook is to see Ephesians 4:22–24 and Colossians 3:9–19 worked out in our lives. Memorize one of these two passages and meditate on its meaning for you as a believer. You must give yourself to this task of becoming Christlike (Rom. 8:29).

For Counselors, Disciplers, Mentors, and Local-Church Small-Group Leaders

ASSESSING THE INVOLVEMENT

You will need to distinguish the level of involvement in pornographic material and sensual struggles in the lives of those you are discipling. Some people may only recently have been exposed to these temptations. They may not have been interested in them before or they may have been sheltered from them. They require what I call “Level 1 involvement.” The intensity of their struggle and the degree of temptation they face will be less for them than for others. Don’t make assumptions based on their age. Interview them and question them about how long it has been going on, the frequency of the struggle, and the extent of defeat suffered. Find out what help has been received up to this point and who knows about this struggle other than you.

Others need more specific help in becoming pure in life. They require “Level 2 involvement.” They have struggled on and off for some time and probably have developed some level of masturbation activity. They have established patterns of choosing wrong desires and seeking to satisfy them. Their heart-desires have been turned toward thoughts and actions that they hate to admit. They do not find satisfaction in their sin and are trying on their own to solve this before it “gets too big or costs too much.” Alternatively, they may have made a few halfhearted attempts to get help from those who don’t know how to solve the problem other than by “saying no.”

Write out your thoughts on the wonder of the cross.

When I think on the cross, it does not take long for me to come face-to-face with my sins. Sometimes I stop and consider some of the specific sins that put Christ on the cross. When I take time to thank God for Gethsemane and the cross, my heart is moved.

Take time to read, sing, and meditate on the words of the song “My Redeemer” and write out how this is a blessing to you.

This song always challenges me to appreciate God and my redemption. He paid the price. I know that, but until I stop and consider this price, I am not deeply affected by this truth. I am so thankful that He could pay the price for my sin.

“Level 3 involvement” concerns a depth of sin and degradation that has no end in sight. People at this level are burdened by their hidden lives, the depths of wickedness to which they have fallen, and the amount of chaos this addiction has caused, and they feel that there is little that can be done. They have no hope of ever leaving this trash behind. They have lived it out, acted it out, and found themselves doing things they vowed they would never do. These people need others to help them take intense and drastic measures so that they can set themselves apart to seek God. *Note that, if this has been their lifestyle for a while, you may want to go to Week 8 early in the process to check out the reality of their spiritual lives.* There is a huge difference between a person who struggles with pornography and one who has lived with it for a good period of time and now sees it as a “normal” part of life. For the latter, you have to figure out why this person has reached this point. If he or she just did not understand how victory was possible, that is a very different problem from knowing but not changing.

Note to small-group leaders: Think about how these different levels of struggle will affect interaction in the local-church setting. Things you should look for are (1) group members who don’t speak out at all; (2) group members who talk of purity as something they have dealt with and from which they have now moved on; (3) others who say that this was never a problem for them; (4) those who are satisfied with occasional forays into sensuality and masturbation, but who don’t see the need to change. Remember, those who are not entrenched in pornography don’t feel too bad. They know people who are far worse off than them. Those who are entrenched in failure as a life pattern won’t speak out because they fear being labeled as an “addict” rather than someone Christ is rescuing from sin. They may feel that an “addict” will be ostracized. We have to find ways to gain the confidence of those in our groups. Use the one-on-one times outside the group sessions to assure members individually of your love and God’s love for them.

Furthermore, we know that victory in the struggle to put away pornography or say “no” to the temptation is not the main goal. This only deals with the surface issue. Recently, I sat in a session with a well-known counselor/author who related how, early in his dealings with addicts, he focused on this surface level of sin, only to miss the underlying cause. The man he counseled gave up his addiction to drugs, only to replace it with an addiction to long-distance running. The man left his family, got involved in ultra-marathon competitions, and is now a major success in this area.

You are seeking to find out what drives this lust for sensual pleasure in those you are helping. Finding the source of their sensuality will not be something that you can accomplish in one discipleship or counseling session. Over time you will need to work out what drives and motivates them in life. What do they want most? What do they feel they have been missing in life? What one thing will make the difference for them?² This pinpointing of their heart-idols will show you what *really* needs to change. It is the one god that must be dethroned in their hearts. The heart of the matter is, what is the matter with the heart?

Notes

1 Through counseling people I have found that the theology of the cross is critical to the heart that would be pure. Beginning each day of our journey close to the foot of the cross helps us avoid the problem of Rom. 2:1–5 while pursuing the good of verse 4. We should daily be drawn by God's goodness and mercy to a humble walk with Him. Focusing on the cross will do this.

2 See **David Powlison's** list of "X-ray questions" to expose the "Idols of the Heart" in Appendix 6.

Week 1.

Reset the Conscience

Remember that these meditation themes are the key to renewing your heart. You must give yourself time with God every morning. You must find your satisfaction in Him. I recommend you commit to spending somewhere between ten and thirty minutes daily in this communion with God. Your problem is not first and foremost the pornographic images in your brain; it is your idolatrous heart seeking comfort, satisfaction, and pleasure in something other than your God. It is this idolatrous heart that seeks its solace in pornographic and sensual images.

Day 1. What Is the Conscience ?

Daily Meditation Themes

- *Goodness of God:* “I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart” (Ps. 9:1); “and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:14).
- *Greatness of God:* “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

What did you enjoy about God today?

Song: “How Great Thou Art”

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy pow’r throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

But when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in:
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim: My God, how great Thou art!¹

Meditation

It is helpful to spend some time looking at a biblical explanation of the conscience so that we can pave the way for victory in our battle for purity. As believers we know that we have the Holy Spirit within us (Rom. 8:9). This presence of the Spirit is the fulfillment of a great promise given by God to his children. We will never

Take time to thank God for His moral compass that He implanted within you. Ask Him to help you keep it true to His Word and sensitive to His Spirit.

Assess how you have drifted in your setting of your conscience.

lose the Spirit. He is the down payment for our eternal salvation. He is also our teacher, guide, comforter, and helper in time of prayer—to list just a few of his activities. We can quench the Spirit, the apostle Paul tells us (1 Thes. 5:19); we can also grieve the Spirit; but he will always continue to do his work within our hearts. Not all people have the Spirit, but all people do have a knowledge of God and of what is right.²

The conscience is not the same as the Spirit of God. The conscience is like the alarm of our souls. All people have a conscience at birth and will battle their conscience up to a certain point. This God-given characteristic of humans makes us unique; in this respect we are different from the animal creation around us. We are implanted with the knowledge of good and evil. The problem is that we come into this world dead in sin and determined to turn from God. This bent away from God is the basis for our rebellion against Him and our desire for autonomy. Our consciences remind us that this is a problem. However, we can work against our consciences and what we innately know to be right.

When we receive salvation, we acquire a new sense of what is undesirable and unacceptable. However, this sense of right and wrong can be adjusted. The world slowly influences us to accept what was initially despised. The self starts to desire that which our new natures in Christ show us to be undesirable and unacceptable. We adjust what our consciences respond to and so begin to ignore God’s truth and His criteria of right and wrong. Some of this is even done under the guise of “grace.” How perverted!³

When through the Scriptures we realize that we have drifted from our once pure walk and passion for God, we desire that simplicity and purity again. We want to have our consciences alert us to those times when temptation appears

and to those places we need to avoid. Conscience is not our guide, but it is a guard that we can set near our hearts.

Notes

- 1 Tr. from the Russian by **Stuart K. Hine** (1899–1989).
- 2 Rom. 1:18–20 explains man's natural state.
- 3 Read Jude's explanation of the twisting of grace in Jude 4.

Day 2. How We Set the Conscience

Daily Meditation Themes

What do you see about God here?

What does it mean to be complete in Christ alone? Make this thought personal and praiseworthy.

- *Goodness of God:* “I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High” (Ps. 9:2). “How precious is your steadfast love, O God!” (Ps. 36:7).
- *Greatness of God:* “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? ... Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are counted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust” (Isa. 40:12–15).

Song: “Complete in Thee”

Complete in Thee! no work of mine
 May take, dear Lord, the place of Thine;
 Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
 And I am now complete in Thee.

*Yea, justified! O blessed thought!
 And sanctified! Salvation wrought!
 Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
 And glorified, I too, shall be!*

Complete in Thee! no more shall sin,
 Thy grace hath conquered, reign within;
 Thy voice shall bid the tempter flee,
 And I shall stand complete in Thee.

Complete in Thee—each want supplied,
 And no good thing to me denied;
 Since Thou my portion, Lord, wilt be,
 I ask no more, complete in Thee.

Dear Saviour! when before Thy bar
 All tribes and tongues assembled are,
 Among Thy chosen will I be,
 At Thy right hand, complete in Thee.¹

Meditation

In order to be truly broken over our sin (expressing godly sorrow and repentance), we must see our thoughts and actions the way God does. Understanding the biblical concept of the heart is crucial to helping reset the conscience.

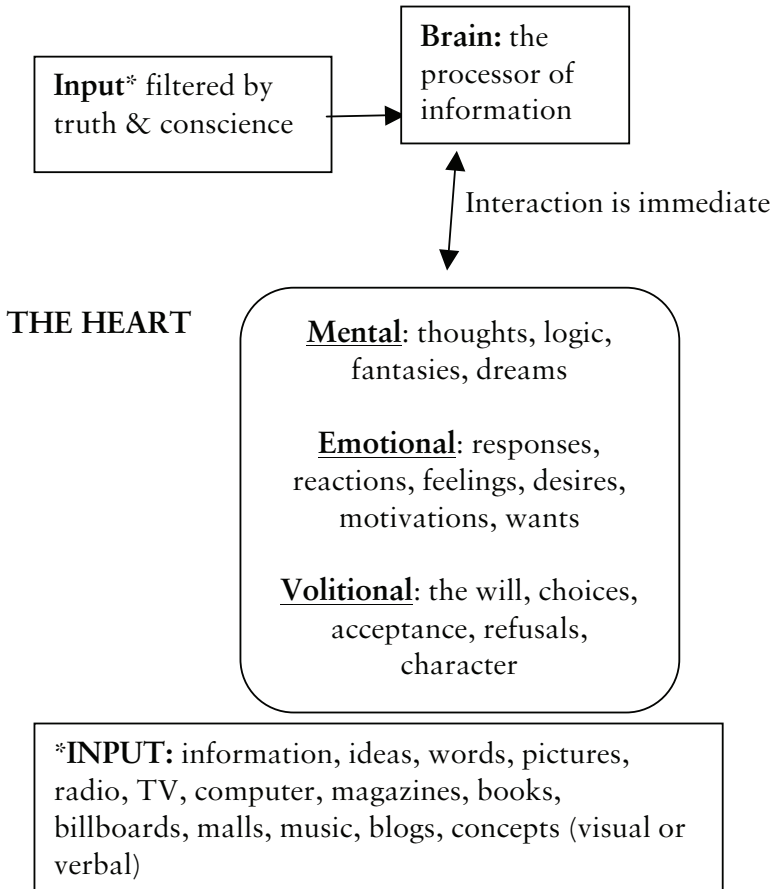
We must understand how the Bible describes the innermost part of man. In a biblical sense, “the heart” is made up of three parts: mental, emotional, and volitional. It is immaterial, but in some ways it is more real than any other part of man. The heart is part of what makes humankind different from the rest of creation. We are rational beings (i.e., able to think and choose for ourselves) who make moral choices based on good and evil. We are influenced by our old nature, which desires to live for self; but as children of God we have a new nature that moves us to desire right ways before God. Jesus said that what we are and what we do come directly from the heart (Matt. 12:34; 15:18–20). According to how we think in our hearts—how we purpose in our inner being and desire in our hearts—so we will be.

In today’s Christian culture and popular literature very little is written about the heart. Focusing on outward actions and symptoms, however, does not help people. You can change a person’s habits (don’t go to that porn store), you can stop the influences (don’t watch that porn flick), you can have a person do good things (memorize Scripture and pray every day), but if you have not addressed the longings, desires, passions, and beliefs that drive this person to wicked and lewd behavior, you will not see a long-term change in his or her life. The writer of Proverbs 4:23 instructs us

Dave’s testimony: I have found that one of the best ways for me to keep a sensitive conscience is to have others help me check to see if my standards are helping me. I must, however, avoid making my standards my badge of holiness. Instead, my standards should be a tool to keep me steadfast in my purity and godliness.

I remember my pastor quoting these words: “Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.”

The heart and conscience



cranked up so that I can enjoy the sensual input my heart has decided to take in. I have decided to take in that sensuality.

The will (the other part of my heart) is already influenced by the way I have thought through this event and how I have been affected in my desires by it. My will is now overwhelmed by the amount of feedback it has received that is of a sensual, worldly, and fleshly nature. My conscience is just along for the ride, as will, desires, and thinking have reset their sensitivity to accept the sensual input.

Now I will choose to go down this path to the cesspool of sensuality again and again, feeling as if I can't change. I will say, "I'm addicted to something that controls

Journal some thoughts about the lusts, passions, and desires of your heart.

Small groups: Help one another sort out the biblical difference between “heart” and “brain.”

me.” But what really controls me? My heart. My passions. My desires. Those are the parts of my inner being that I have fed again and again.

Notes

- 1 **Aaron R. Wolfe** (1821–1902).
- 2 “The heart, according to scripture, not only includes the motives, feelings, affections, and desires, but also the will, the aims, the principles, the thoughts, and the intellect of man. In fact, it embraces the whole inner man.” **Robert B. Girdlestone**, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 65.

Take time to use biblical terms to describe your own sin. Use them in prayer to God. Thank Him for His forgiveness for your corrupt heart and its wicked choices and longings.

Small groups: Help one another to watch out for unbiblical labels or terms when discussing the sins of the heart.

Thou from the sin that stained me
Hast cleansed and set me free;
Of old Thou hast ordained me,
That I should live to Thee.

'Twas sovereign mercy called me
And taught my opening mind;
The world had else enthralled me,
To heavenly glories blind.
My heart owns none above Thee;
For thy rich grace I thirst;
This knowing, if I love Thee,
Thou must have loved me first.¹

Meditation²

Some time ago, I spent a number of weeks counseling a college man who was overwhelmed by a struggle that he desired to quit. He came to me seeking help in the battle. It took me a while to realize that, although he did not like doing the action (masturbation), no one had ever really spent time showing him biblically why it was wrong before God. He said he had tried to stop it, but that it was difficult since no one had ever shown him why God would call this action “sin.”³ I recommended that he meditate on Bible verses that could help him visualize sin the way God sees it.

The more we view our acts, thoughts, desires, and motives as God does, the more we will make choices that reflect desires, thoughts, and passions that are driven by the glory of God. This change of heart is the first step in the process of turning from our sin back to God. We will not hate our sensual thoughts, pornographic tendencies, and illicit activities unless we realize that God calls them evil. In the Bible God often gives us pictures that help us gag over our sin. If we are revolted by our sin, we are much more likely to remove it from our lives. The passages that we will look at below are helpful in this process of renewing

was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you *wallowing in your blood*, I said to you in your blood, “Live!” I said to you in your blood, “Live!” [emphasis added].

Another image that God uses concerning sin is that of the blood and mess of birth. He pictures our sin—our abominable desires for adultery and fornication—as the mess that is cast aside after birth. It is something not desired but loathed. So it should be with our views of our thoughts and acts of sensuality. We must loathe and hate them. They must be disgusting to us. You don’t see a father or mother enjoying the afterbirth when a newborn baby comes into the world. Instead, parents focus on the beauty of the cleansed and bathed newborn child.

EZEKIEL 24:3–13

And utter a parable to the *rebellious house* and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: “Set on the pot, set it on; pour in water also; put in it the pieces of meat, all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it with choice bones. Take the choicest one of the flock; pile the logs under it; boil it well; seethe also its bones in it. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: *Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose corrosion is in it*, and whose corrosion has not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece, without making any choice. For the blood she has shed is in her midst; she put it on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust. To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed, that it may not be covered. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: *Woe to the bloody city!* I also will make the pile great. Heap on the logs, kindle the fire, boil the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the bones be burned up. Then set it empty upon the coals, that it may become hot, and its copper may burn, that its uncleanness may be melted in it, its corrosion consumed. She has wearied herself with toil; its *abundant corrosion* does not go out of it. Into the fire with its corrosion! On account of your *unclean lewdness*, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you” [emphasis added].

A third image God uses is that of a pot which has a crust of leftover food stuck at the bottom. No one will want to eat any of the food put in that pot. It is not useful. It needs to be boiled and cleansed of its filth. The scum must be removed. Similarly, a pattern of pornography, immoral desires, and base pleasures will leave a scum on your soul that will take much purifying to remove.

2 PETER 2:17–22

These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter

Appendix 9. Purity Survey

If you are counseling, discipling, or meeting with others in small groups, this survey can help you gain an understanding of the personal journey of those you are helping and of their specific battles. You may also find that by working through the survey with others, it will provide common ground for the help to be found within the Christian community.

Help on Purity

1. Did anyone ever discuss your body and its development with you? Yes / No
 Parent Pastor/Youth pastor Friend Sibling/relative
2. Did you have help in setting up personal purity standards as a teen? Yes / No
From Parent Pastor/Youth pastor Friend Sibling/relative
3. Did these standards involve use of the Internet?
4. Did these standards involve TV or movie watching?
5. Did you have help in finding Bible principles for purity? Yes / No
6. Did your parents set dating guidelines for you? Yes / No
7. Did you date or have some kind of serious relational involvement with someone of the opposite sex as a teenager? Yes / No
8. Did you allow physical contact in this relationship? Yes / No
9. Did you get more involved physically than you planned? Yes / No

Internet

1. Have you had access to the Internet? Yes / No
Where? At home At school Other places
2. Was there a filter or accountability in this setting? Yes / No
3. Have you ever accessed material on the Internet that was immoral? Yes / No
 Accidentally stumbled across it. Did you go back and find more?
 Intentionally found some.
4. Which area of the Internet is the most tempting for you?
 Sports sites Social networking Gaming Movie sites Other

Personal Morality Struggles

1. Have you struggled with pornography in any form at any time? Yes / No
If yes, did you get help in overcoming this struggle? Yes / No
From whom: Parent Pastor/Youth pastor Friend Sibling/relative
Would you like some help/further help in this area? Yes / No
2. Have you ever struggled with masturbation? Yes / No
 - Did you have help in overcoming this problem? Yes / No
 - Would you like some help/further help? Yes / No
 - Has anyone ever discussed masturbation to you using Scripture? Yes / No

- Do you understand the difference between masturbation and “wet dreams”?
Yes / No
3. Do you believe that the accountability you have is enough to help you be victorious in purity areas? Yes / No
If not, would you come and talk about this with us? Yes / No
4. What was or has been the length of your struggle?
- Short
 - Some months
 - 1–2 years
 - Off and on over several years
5. What would you call “success” in this area?

Appendix 10. Renew the Mind

As part of the process of renewing the mind and building new patterns, it helps to make a comparison between what I *was* (“putting off the old man”) and what I *want to be in Christ* (“putting on the new man”). In the chart below, the “Pride” versus “Humility” columns explore the ways in which pride will control us and keep us from humbly seeking help and desiring to change. The “Desires for more” come out of hearts that are not thankful toward God. We must see what a thankful heart looks, thinks, and acts like. Finally, finding pleasure in self must be contrasted with finding pleasure in God. The more we see the ways in which we live to please self, and the more we hate it, the more satisfaction and pleasure in living for God we will find. This new kind of life (pleasing God) is radically different from a life of pleasing self.

Pride v. Humility
Desire for more v. Thankfulness
Self-pleasure v. God Pleasure

Pride	Humility
I can handle this	I need God's Spirit & grace
I am doing well	I could fall anytime without God
I went 6 months without falling	I have been free from sensuality by God's grace
I won't let this control me	I want God's control
I am different from porn addicts	I could be addicted to sin as well
I would never let sensuality go that far	I won't see how far sin takes me
I can give up my sin when I want to	I can't put sin away on my own without God
I can't admit to the church what I do	I need to embrace the church's loving discipleship
I am driven by the fear of man and a love of myself	I am driven by the fear of God and a heart of love for Him
I have lived for God and done a lot of good work for His church	God has helped me please Him and I am humbled to serve His church
Desire for More	Thankful for God
I need a better wife	God is all I need
I want things this world enjoys too	His gifts are wonderful beyond description
I want more self-pleasure	My greatest pleasure is in God not self
I prefer many friends but not too tight	God is my most intimate friend
My goal is to be the best	I will go as far as God takes me

I deserve a break from pressure	I deserve hell, but have been given God
I should get the approval of others	I am accepted in Christ by the Father
I have been treated poorly	I will never be treated by God as a sinner
Self Pleasure	God Pleasure
Dominated by self	Dominated by God
Satisfying the lust of the flesh	Finding satisfaction in Him alone
Longing to see the forbidden of this world; tantalized by what I shouldn't have	Longing to enjoy His grace and goodness; longing for what I can't see in the next world
Wanting to be free from controls	Wanting to be free from the power of sin
Opening the doors of my heart to the lusts of the flesh	Opening my heart to the wonders and glories of God in all His awesome beauty
Captive to and controlled by my flesh and its desires	Captive to Christ, the gospel, and His cross
Serve self and its wretched longings which are never quite satisfied	Serve the One who has already given me the Water of Life that never runs dry
Blown away by the senses of the flesh	Overwhelmed by the God of Glory in my spirit
Pornography pleasure	Pure pleasure and joys of God

Resources

Alcorn, Randy, *The Purity Principle* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2003). Includes practical guidelines for singles, married couples, and parents who wish to train their children in purity. This short book challenges us to take the high road in remaining pure and to reap the benefits that come from it. Some mature content.

Arterburn, Stephen, Stoeker, Fred, and Yorkey, Mike, *Every Man's Battle: Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2000). A strong text for mature men. If you struggle with sensual images, you may want to move quickly through or avoid entirely the story lines included.

Bridges, Jerry, *I Exalt You, O God* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001). A great help in worship of God. Use it daily.

—*Joy of Fearing God* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1999). An exposition of this theme as it applies to life.

Harris, Josh, *Sex Is Not the Problem, Lust Is* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2003). Excellent material. He has a great chapter on a biblical view of masturbation. Previously titled *Not Even a Hint*, this book is great reading for any man, married or single.

Hughes, R. Kent, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991). Good, practical sections.

Hummel, Rand, *Lest You Fall* (Greenville, SC: JourneyForth, 2005). This short book is excellent for getting started with biblical meditation. A needed help in today's church.

Janz, Jason, *Alone With God* (Greenville, SC: JourneyForth, 2006). An excellent help in building a walk with God. His material on meditation is helpful for a pure life focus on God.

Lambert, Heath, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013). Heath has written a readable and practical help that is based on solid theology.

Lundgaard, Kris, *The Enemy Within: Straight Talk about the Power and Defeat of Sin* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1998). Drawing from *Indwelling Sin* and *The Mortification of Sin* by Puritan John Owen, Lundgaard aims for the heart with a battle plan for radical spiritual transformation.

Piper, John, and Taylor, Justin, (eds.), *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

Tozer, A. W., *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978). A great primer on the attributes of God and a basis for meditation on His character.

Booklets

New Growth Press produces titles on behalf of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). Many are very relevant, such as:

Clark, Jayne V., *Single and Lonely: Finding the Intimacy You Desire*

Lane, Timothy, *Sex Before Marriage: How Far is Too Far?*

Powlison, David, *Renewing Intimacy: Closing the Gap Between You and Your Spouse*

Smith, Winston T., *Help! My Spouse Committed Adultery: First Steps for Dealing with Betrayal*

—*It's All About Me: The Problem with Masturbation*

Croft, Brian, *Help! He's Struggling With Pornography* (Leominster: Day One, 2010). The blurb says, "How can a Christian man find victory over pornography? This booklet presents the only true solution: God's power working through the gospel within the context of the local church."

Related Topics

SEX

Schaumburg, Harry, *Undefined: Redemption from Sexual Sin, Restoration for Broken Relationships* (Chicago: Moody, 2010). Schaumburg writes about finding redemption from sexual sin and seeks to help couples find restoration for breaking or broken relationships. Monergism Books has bundled a whole lot of resources into one “Sexual Redemption Bundle” based around Harry Schaumburg’s *Undefined*—visit www.monergismbooks.com.

—*False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997). This book includes the struggle with homosexuality and cybersex.

Wheat, Ed., M.D., and **Gaye**, *Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Sexual Fulfillment in Christian Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010). This is a nuts-and bolts kind of book that is often given to newlyweds to help them get “oriented” in the bedroom. Many couples who aren’t given one before they get married end up trying to track one down during their honeymoon.

WOMEN

Mahaney, Carolyn, *Feminine Appeal* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003). A book for women in which Mahaney challenges them on a host of issues related to love, sex, and marriage.

Jaynes, Sharon, *Becoming the Woman of His Dreams* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2005). I haven’t done more than skim this one, but it comes highly recommended by others. I found Jaynes particularly strong in her description of how men perceive sex and its importance to them.

DeMoss, Nancy Lee, *Lies Women Believe* (Chicago: Moody, 2002). Helps uncover how everyone, including men, is subtly deceived by today’s society. DeMoss inspects popular beliefs held by most Western women and clearly shows how they deviate from the simple, undeniable truth as written in God’s Word. Great for small groups.

Thorne, Hellen, *Purity Is Possible: How to Live Free of the Fantasy Trap* (Epsom, Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2014). Hellen describes her own struggles with lust and shares how she has gained increased victory over the sin. She writes in a friendly and conversational tone.

Web Sites

www.ccef.org/ The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation offers counseling and excellent resources on a number of issues (including the New Growth Press titles mentioned above).

www.boundless.org/ Boundless Webzine, targeted at Christian singles and young adults. A great resource.

www.stonegateresources.org/ Stone Gate Resources offers brief intensive counseling for couples who are in need of immediate help. If your marriage is on the rocks due to sex-related issues, this is a good place to seek help.

www.challies.com/topics/pornography. As an online blogger, few people have access to more resources and information like Tim Challies.

Dr. Dave Coats is a pastor, counselor, and teacher who enjoys the privilege of serving God. He has been on a journey of faith and ministry that has taken him from the western mountains and desert of the United States, to the beautiful backwoods of the north Midwest, to the Caribbean of Haiti, and to the eastern coast of Canada.

Dave's passion is learning of and living out the reality of the death of Christ and the power of His resurrection in his own life as well as helping others to know the same. His journey has been greatly enhanced and made more fun by having his wife Judi at his side through all the adventures and challenges of living for God. They enjoy sharing in the fellowship of the gospel with their grown children and young grandchildren that God has given them.

Dave is a certified biblical counselor with ACBC and loves to see how God uses the Word to address people's problems. He has also taught biblical counseling in three different countries and has lead a counseling program at the university level. One of his desires is to help people to put aside the secular means of dealing with the troubles that they experience in this world and to help them to see that God has a superior understanding and power to help people change and to become what God designed them to be.

Dave and Judi wrote the Life-Line mini-book Help! My Teen Is Rebellious. They are also presently working on a book about the proverbs of Solomon. Judi does editing and writing for publications and serves as a resource for teaching grammar, having taught English at university level for almost two decades. Dave pastors, teaches, and does work in their rural, northern Wisconsin area. Dave and Judi run Longview Farm Vacation Rental, a place where people come to enjoy the beauty and fun of the northwoods of Wisconsin.

You may connect with Dave at www.coatscounsel.net.
or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/david.a.coats.9>