



faith PATH

PURITY

PURITY

*giving a vision for god-honoring
thoughts and actions*

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

Purity is much more than refraining from sex or heeding a list of “do’s and don’ts”. It is a positive, passionate existence that frees us to experience all that God created us to enjoy. Sadly, pop culture bombards our kids with images of masculinity and femininity that are a far cry from the intent of their Creator. Many adults adopt the mentality that pushing back against pop culture is an impossibility, especially when it comes to sex. So why even try?

We try because we, as parents, have the ability to create a different culture in our own homes—a Christ-centered culture—that recaptures purity as an exciting and liberating adventure. How can we help our children go against the norm and live lives filled with the intense joys only purity can bring?

STEP 1: CLARIFY THE STANDARD

Psalm 119:9 says, *“How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”* From the very beginning, God calls his people to come out of their cultural surroundings to be set apart, to be pure, to be holy. When it comes to purity, your child needs to understand that his or her body is an incredible gift from God. And so is sex! But the gift of sex will become a curse, unless it stays within the context for which it was made by God. And that context is marriage. The problem is not that the biblical norms are out of touch with modern reality, but that modern reality is out of touch with God.

STEP 2: GIVE A POSITIVE VISION

Give a positive vision of the purpose and joy of sex within 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 3: BE HONEST

Christian discipleship, now more than ever, requires a radically counter-cultural way of life. It will not be understood by others, it will not be accepted, and it will not be “cool”. Be sure your child understands that what you stand for as a family and as a Christian will meet with resistance in this world. Jesus said to his disciples: *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first”* (John 15:18). He also says, *“Whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me”* (Luke 10:16). If your child feels “rejected” and “weird” because of his or her beliefs, remind them (and yourself!) that they are united to the suffering and rejection of Christ.

STEP 4: FOCUS ON PURITY, NOT JUST SEX

It is vital to emphasize holistic purity. Purity affirms that the only appropriate context for sex is marriage. But this means much more than “just 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 chastity involves every area of life.

STEP 5: TALK ABOUT PORN

The statistics are staggering about young people and addiction to pornography. You need to talk with your child about porn. A question that is often asked is this: “Why is it wrong, if I’m not hurting anybody?” Help your child to understand that the pornography industry exploits women and damages men. Almost all illegal sexual activity begins with porn. Pornography gives us a false vision of sexuality, a false vision of masculinity and femininity. It is highly addictive, and it damages marriages. God calls us to be witnesses to his love, and if our minds are filled with evil, evil will inevitably come out instead. It is important to talk to your child about other less-explicit forms of advertisement as well, such as commercials, billboards, etc., that contain suggestive content. Practically speaking, there is actually a lot you can do to help your child avoid this temptation. Keep screens in your house as “public” as possible. Keep computers and tablets in the living room instead of bedrooms. If computers are needed in a bedroom, make sure screens face toward the door and not away from it. Use SafeEyes or other computer software (internetsafety.com) to protect your children. There are also many confidential ways for adults to receive help with addiction. Talk with a priest or go to saa-recovery.org for more information.

STEP 6: PRAY AND TRUST GOD

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. The evils of impurity are not an unconquerable foe. Jesus conquered all sin on the cross, and he can provide your family with the strength to navigate purity with courage, joy, and peace. But it won’t happen by accident—so be intentional. St. Benedict of Nursia says, *“As soon as wrongful thoughts come into your heart, dash them against Christ”* (The Rule of St. Benedict).

PRACTICAL IDEAS

- 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 to see if they fulfill that list. Ask the following questions: What would your future spouse want from you in terms of purity? What do you want from your future spouse?
- Help your child solidify a commitment to purity by 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.

- Stay up-to-date on internet and phone safety. Technology is changing all the time, but remember that there are many other parents who have the same concerns you do. Search the internet for up-to-date best practices and parental controls.
- It's important to note that even if you have made mistakes in regards to purity in your own life, it is never too late to ask for forgiveness. Your past does not define your child's future. Don't let your mistakes lower the expectations of purity you have for your child. God rejoices in restoring the innocence of a repentant heart.

INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

CHILD'S NAME _____

How will you be intentional this next year?

- Pray daily for and with my child.
 - Attend church regularly.
 - Schedule regular family times.
 - Create a habit of worship with my child, teaching them "why we do what we do".
 - Consistently spend time in God's Word with my child.
 - Help my child develop the habit of giving some of their money back to God.
 - Talk with my child about the upcoming changes of puberty.
 - Sign my child up for Confirmation.
 - Coach my child to set healthy boundaries.
- _____

The next step on the FaithPath is *Teenagers*, recommended at age thirteen. You will receive an email in the month of your child's birthday, and the resource will be available for you with your child's name on it at the Bringing Faith Home Center, right outside the Incarnation Bookstore.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- We highly recommend the *Birds and Bees* curriculum found at birds-bees.com for parents of children of all ages.
- *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship Between Man and Woman*, by N.T. Wright, et al. is a small book with many famous contributors about the meaning of masculinity and femininity.
- *Theology of the Body Made Simple*, by Anthony Percy, is a great resource about what it means to be human from coming from a Roman Catholic perspective.
- *Feeding the Mouth that Bites You: A Complete Guide to Raising Adolescents and Launching them into the World*, by Ken Wilgus.

INCARNATION'S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

Bringing Faith Home: incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home
 Children & Family Ministry: incarnation.org/grow/children