

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

HOW TO BE GROUNDED IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

STUDY FOUR

Strengthening Your Grip on Purity

Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–5

In my ministry, I have seen the fierce battle for sexual purity take its toll on numerous lives. But I can attest from personal experience, as well as from the lives of many others, that the battle is winnable through the power of God. There is no power like the power of Jesus Christ to make a man or woman pure. But that power is not automatic. Living a pure life is a matter of choice.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FLESHLY eye candy lies at our fingertips in our sex-saturated world. Sensual images bombard us everywhere we turn—from billboards and magazines to big screens and little screens. Ads in every corner scream, “Pleasure now!”

Our culture’s glossy image of sexual freedom, however, doesn’t show the destructive side—the victimization, exploitation, betrayal, shame, physical disease, and not to mention the heartache experienced by innocent family members.

God created us as sexual beings. No one knows better how our bodies work than our heavenly Father, and He has set moral boundaries for our good—to protect us from sin’s harm and provide real love, security, and fulfillment when we live according to His design.

In our morally broken world, we stand at a fork in the road with two very different paths and destinations before us. Voices without and cravings within lure us onto the broad way, which Jesus said, “leads to destruction” (Matthew 7:13 NASB). The narrow way of purity is far less traveled, but oh, the rewards it brings! With divine wisdom and spiritual strength, we can walk in it and experience true freedom as we follow our Savior on His path of purity.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Where do we find the wisdom we need to study and apply the Holy Scriptures?

The LORD grants wisdom!

From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

Ask the Holy Spirit, the source and giver of wisdom, to take the lead in this study. In your own words, make known to Him your request for His insight to guide your heart and choices.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Pastor Chuck Swindoll uses observation, interpretation, correlation, and interpretation as the four steps of Bible study.¹ These steps will help us study our passages, beginning with 1 Thessalonians 4:1–5.

Paul wrote his first epistle to the believers in Thessalonica around AD 50 during his second missionary journey. A prominent city in the Greco-Roman world, Thessalonica had flung open its gates to all kinds of sensuality. Pagan myths described gods and goddesses flaunting their gross licentiousness, and the temples were cesspools of depravity. Immorality ran just as rampant then as it does today, even without talk shows, music videos, and pornographic websites. In such a permissive cultural milieu, Paul pleaded with the Thessalonian Christians to live in a way that showed they belonged to God, to choose a *different* path.



Observation: The Path of Purity

Begin by using your observation skills to read [1 Thessalonians 4:1–5](#) in multiple translations. Note your initial impressions below.

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Moral Purity: An Attainable Goal—1 Thessalonians 4:1–5

In *1 Thessalonians 4:1–2*, how did Paul admonish the Thessalonian believers?

In what area did Paul encourage them to excel, according to *4:3–5*? Summarize Paul’s counsel in a phrase or two below.

How did Paul emphasize his command in *4:4*?

God desires that the church be a pure place that models His message in life as well as in doctrine. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Moral Correction: A Biblical Mandate—Matthew 18:15–17

If a believer strays off the path of purity, he or she doesn’t need shaming criticism but loving, courageous correction—which Jesus taught in *Matthew 18:15–17*. Note the various steps to moral correction in the family of God. Describe each step precisely.

18:15: _____

18:16: _____

18:17a: _____

18:17b: _____

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Matthew 18 was written to the church. We need it. We need divine accountability. It is essential for purity. Is it to devastate the person? No! It is to bring restoration, to uphold the distinctive mark of purity, and to be obedient to God's Word. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding Purity

Now, let's clarify specific terms. We observed in *1 Thessalonians 4:3* that the will of God for the believers of Thessalonica was their sanctification, which means “to set apart as holy or distinct.” Abstinance from sexual immorality sets believers apart. It makes them distinct from the world.

The Greek word for sexual immorality is *porneia*. Find it in the Greek lexicon available for free at billmounce.com. Note its meaning below and explain its significance for the Thessalonians living in a sex-crazed society.

Paul mentioned in *1 Thessalonians 4:5* that their lives ought to be different, not characterized by the passion of lust like the pagans who do not know God and His ways. Look up the Greek word translated “lust,” *epithumia*. Write its definition below and record its modern-day relevance.

Let's look closer at the word *sanctification* (also rendered *holiness*), which appears twice in *1 Thessalonians 4:3–5*. Deepen your understanding of this term by looking it up in a Bible dictionary. You have free access to *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary* at biblestudytools.com. There, scroll down to the section titled “The Holy Spirit Is the Dynamic of Sanctification.” Read it carefully.

Write your own paraphrase of *1 Thessalonians 4:3–5* integrating your understanding of Paul's key words and the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in choosing purity.

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The command to live a holy life comes from a holy God (*1 Peter 1:15*). In Christ, all believers are sanctified, holy, and set apart. God calls us to reflect our holy identity by living holy lives by the power of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 5:16; Titus 2:11–12*). Choosing the path of sexual purity leads to *true freedom*—freedom from sin’s devastating consequences and freedom to love others with a pure and genuine heart.



Correlation: Two Paths, One Choice

In *correlation*, let’s take a look at the choices two men made regarding their moral purity and the consequences of those choices.

Read *2 Samuel 11–12* and *Genesis 39* and visualize the episodes from the lives of these two men. Compare the two accounts. What similarities and differences do you see in David in *2 Samuel 11:2–4* compared with Joseph in *Genesis 39:7, 10*?

Formerly the cherished son in his father’s house, Joseph became a slave in Potiphar’s mansion. When his master’s wife pressured him to sleep with her, he chose the *purity pathway*, even if it meant going to prison. Reread *39:9*. Write the reason for Joseph’s choice.

David is well known for slaying Goliath, Israel’s terrorizing and towering enemy. Yet, he let his passions slay him. When Nathan confronted David in *2 Samuel 12:9*, what did he say was the root cause of David’s adultery, according to the Lord?

Adultery occurs in the head long before it occurs in the bed. It occurs in the mind long before it has even begun to plan out its strategy. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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The impact of our decisions should not be underestimated. Write the immediate and long-term consequences of David's choice in [2 Samuel 12:10–14](#).

Note [12:13](#), sandwiched between the consequences. Write down what David found when he admitted his wrongdoing.

What were the consequences of Joseph's choice? He went to prison! But God walked with him through his mistreatment. God's favor blessed him in prison ([Genesis 39:23](#)), and God used Joseph as a sanctified instrument in His hand.

I have to know what my eyes can take and what they cannot take. If my eyes are weakened by looking at things that weaken my nature, I am to get my eyes off of them. If my ears are weakened by taking in certain things that I cannot handle personally, I am not to let those things be taken in. I am an agent that says the most basic word in the human language and says it regularly—NO! And no one else can say it for me. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Choose Purity!

It is time to open the door of our lives for God's Word to come in. As Pastor Chuck explains, "Application means that we take God's Word personally. It means we see how it addresses specific areas of our everyday lives. It's allowing the Bible's truths to grip us in areas that need attention and to call us to action!"²

Has the Holy Spirit revealed to you any specific area of temptation where you might stray from the path of purity? If so, name that area and why you might be vulnerable in this way.

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Think of some practical ways you can strengthen your grip on purity and enjoy the peace of God's presence. Write them below.

Walking the narrow path of purity isn't easy, but it is rewarding. As you seek guidance from the Holy Spirit, put in place guardrails of moral purity in your life—convictions about what behaviors are strictly out of bounds. Name these convictions.

What does a life of purity offer? No regrets, no looking over your shoulder for past secrets to catch up to you. Instead, you'll enjoy honor, integrity, and a clear conscience before the Lord.



A FINAL PRAYER

Holy Father, I bow before Your throne of grace, acknowledging Your holiness and my own weakness, my propensity to take the wrong path. Forgive all my wrong turns. I come to You to claim the forgiveness, the cleansing, the real transformation, and the restoration that only Jesus Christ can provide. Help this study be a turning point in my life. Help me live in the awareness of Your presence and seek to be pure in my heart and my mind. Help my life reflect who You are. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 161.

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1980, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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