

The background of the page is a complex, abstract design. It features a series of overlapping, concentric circles and curved lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The lines are thin and light-colored, contrasting with the darker, textured background. The overall effect is reminiscent of a globe or a series of orbits.

FOCAL TEXTS

Psalm 24:1-6;
Ephesians 5:1-16

BACKGROUND

Psalm 24:1-6;
Ephesians 5:1-16

LESSON NINE

Purity

MAIN IDEA

Disciples pursue a life of purity.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

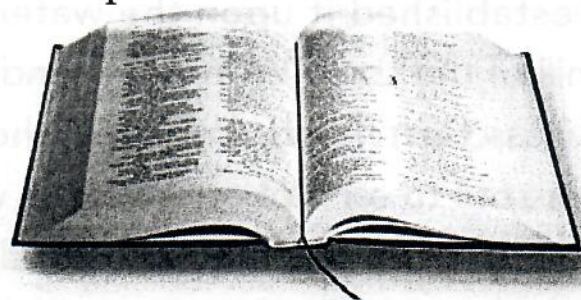
How can I pursue purity
in an impure world?

STUDY AIM

To choose to pursue purity in my
thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions

QUICK READ

God calls his followers to live pure
lives in the midst of an impure
world. Doing so results in authentic
worship that reflects Christ to all.



Introduction

The cable television show, *Hoarders*, chronicles the trials and tribulations of people who can't throw anything away. One apartment manager had a couple whom she had to evict. They were living in total squalor. She had warned them in writing about their behavior. Finally, after months of pleading, she had to forcefully evict them. Why? During their entire time in the apartment, almost a year, they hadn't once taken out the trash. The property management company needed to bring in a forty-foot dumpster just to clean out the apartment!

If we are not watchful, filth can fill our lives. In fact, slavery to sin doesn't occur overnight. It is a process of hoarding evil thoughts, attitudes, and actions over a long period of time. The Bible's call to purity is the antidote to a life of suffocating sin.

Purity Lesson Nine

Focal Texts: Psalm 24:1-6; Ephesians 5:1-16

Background: Psalm 24:1-6; Ephesians 5:1-16

Teaching Aim: To lead members to identify any areas of sin in their lives that fail to measure up to God's expectations for their lives and to make a recommitment to deal with this (these) sin(s) in light of this study.

Connect with Life: Begin by reading the following material by Oswald Chambers: "Continually restate to yourself what the purpose of your life is. The destined end of man is not happiness, nor health, but holiness...The one thing that matters is whether a man will accept the God who will make him holy. At all costs a man must be rightly related to God..."

"God has one destined end for mankind, namely holiness. His one aim is the production of saints. God is not an eternal blessing-machine for me; He did not come to save men out of pity; He came to save men because He had created them to be holy. The Atonement means that God can put me back into perfect union with Himself, without a shadow between, through the death of Jesus Christ.

"Never tolerate sympathy with yourself or with others any practice that is not in keeping with a holy God. Holiness means unsullied walking with the feet, unsullied talking with the tongue, unsullied thinking with the mind-every detail of the life under the scrutiny of God. Holiness is not only what God gives me, but what I manifest that God has given me."

Encourage members to share responses to this reading and its high mark for Christians. Is this too unreasonable? Do we have to be perfect in order to be accepted by God? (Make certain that they understand holiness as a willingness to be set apart by God in order that we might grow in his likeness, not toward our perfection, but His.) Then share with members that we will examine the passages for this study in order to renew our commitment to holiness in our lives today.

Guide Bible Study: Then lead members to discover reasons for the importance of holiness in our lives. Suggested reasons and related commentary include the following:

1. God created us for holiness (Psalm 24:1-2). "The psalmist established God as the creator of all things. The critical point was that God was present before creation came into existence." "These verses are a strong affirmation of the sovereignty of God as king." "Purity is a state of being, a condition of the heart firmly established by regular personal and corporate worship in light of a high view of the sovereignty and worthiness of God as Maker, Sustainer, and Redeemer." "Worship then becomes the fuel enabling the disciple to consistently seek purity. The pursuit of purity without consistent heart-overflowing worship results in legalism."
2. There can be no worship of God without a commitment to holiness (Psalm 24:3-4). Only those who have accepted the complete plan of God for their lives can approach

God in worship. This place of worship “referred to Mt. Zion in Jerusalem where the temple stood. It was considered the most holy spot on the face of the earth. This psalm was most likely sung by pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for one of the annual festivals.” (See the commentary related to the temple on p. 94 of the Study Guide.) “Hands were most often used as a metaphor for action. Clean hands, therefore, were a metaphor for right actions. A pure heart signaled an ethical life established on the motive of absolute love of God.” “To right actions, right attitude, and right trust is added right words, words that do not misuse God’s name or seek to deceive others.”

3. A commitment to holiness makes it possible for us to receive God’s gift of salvation and an abundant life (Psalm 24:5-6). “Blessing is a powerful Old Testament concept inclusive of both spiritual and material well-being. The pure also experience vindication, which at its root means righteousness, justice, innocence, and prosperity. The reward and outgrowth of purity is an intimacy with God that is deeper than simple adherence to rules and regulations as an attempt to avoid punishment.”
4. A commitment to holiness makes it possible for us to grow in His likeness (Ephesians 5:1-2). Share background material about Ephesus and the temple built for the worship of Artemis. This had greatly affected the society at Ephesus. “As Paul attempted to strengthen the Christian church at Ephesus he was concerned about the strong pagan influence in Ephesian society, and the syncretism that was common in the Greek world. He was afraid that some of the Christians were incorporating cultural traditions associated with the worship of Artemis into Christian worship.” “His call was set in the larger context of calling Christians to a new life in Christ.” “Purity for disciples stems from hearts of worship and their status as beloved children, children who live according to the example set before them. In verse 2 the model is that of the self-sacrificial love of Christ, as Paul beckons his followers to imitate his example.”
5. It cannot be said of a Christian that it is characteristic of them to practice the same kind of sins that are characteristic of those who live by worldly standards (Ephesians 5:3-7). Some of the Christians at Ephesus must have been continuing to practice the sins they formerly practiced such as sexual immorality, impurity, greed, and misuse of the tongue. A commitment to holiness would make this impossible for a born again Christian. “He combined these together and considered all of them forms of idolatry based on self-indulgence. Idolatry was defined in the Mosaic Law as placing anything before God. Paul indicated that God is the one who is offended by our sin because in our self-indulgence we have placed ourselves above God.”
6. A commitment to holiness makes it possible for us to be light for a lost and dying world (Ephesians 5:8-16). “Finally, Paul drew a contrast between those who live in the light and those who dwell in darkness. He encouraged Christians to avoid all involvement with evildoers. Those who walk in the light of Christ will produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is goodness, righteousness, and truth. He reminded them that these things are pleasing to God. He commanded them to expose the evildoers

because their works are shameful. In the end, the light of God will show the true character of a person's works."

Encourage Application: Share the following quote from Jim Denison: "In Genesis 3 we read that 'the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.' The Bible calls him 'that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.' His strategy hasn't changed, because human nature hasn't changed.

"Here's his lie: 'you will be like God.' If the forbidden fruit looks good, eat it. If you want something, ask for it. Be your own God and Lord. Every temptation is this temptation. Be your own God when you're tempted by greed or gossip, or lust. Be your own God when you want what you know you shouldn't have.

"What would Jesus say to that? 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.' What would Paul say? 'I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.'"

Then ask members to share the connection between this quote, the one by Oswald Chambers and the study for today. (Holiness is important to God and should be to each of us.) Ask them to identify any sin or sins to which these reasons for holiness should be applied. Close with a time of prayer for this application to be made in their lives this week.