

From *The Purity Principle* by Randy Alcorn

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Suppose I said, “There’s a great-looking girl down the street. Let’s go look through her window and watch her undress, then pose for us naked, from the waist up. Then this girl and her boyfriend will get in a car and have sex – let’s listen and watch the windows steam up!”

You’d be shocked. You’d think, What a pervert!

But suppose instead I said, “Hey, come on over. Let’s watch **Titanic**.”

Christians recommend this movie, church youth groups view it together, and many have shown it in their homes. Yet the movie contains precisely the scenes I described.

So, as our young men lust after bare breasts on the screen, our young women are trained in how to get a man’s attention.

How does something shocking and shameful somehow become acceptable because we watch it through a television instead of a window?

In terms of the lasting effects on our minds and morals, what’s the difference?

Yet many think, **Titanic?** *Wonderful! It wasn’t even rated R!*

Every day Christians across the country, including many church leaders, watch people undress through the window of television. We peek on people committing fornication and adultery, which our God calls an abomination.

We’ve become voyeurs, Peeping Toms, entertained by sin.

Normalizing evil

The enemy’s strategy is to normalize evil. Consider young people struggling with homosexual temptation. How does it affect them when they watch popular television dramas where homosexual partners live together in apparent normality?

Parents who wouldn’t dream of letting a dirty-minded adult baby-sit their children do it every time they let their kids surf the channels. Not only we, but our children become desensitized to immorality. Why are we surprised when our son gets a girl pregnant if we’ve allowed him to watch hundreds of immoral acts and hear thousands of jokes with sexual innuendos?

But it’s just one little sex scene.

Suppose I offered you a cookie, saying, “A few mouse droppings fell in the batter, but for the most part it’s a great cookie –you won’t even notice.”

“To fear the LORD is to hate evil” (Proverbs 8:13). When we’re being entertained by evil, how can we hate it? How can we be pure when we amuse ourselves with impurity?

God warns us not to talk about sex inappropriately:

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity... because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place” (Ephesians 5:3-4).

How do our favorite dramas and sitcoms stand up to these verses? How about **Seinfeld** and other nightly reruns? Do they contain “even a hint of sexual immorality” or “coarse joking”? If we can listen to late night comedians’ monologues riddled with immoral references, are we really fearing God and hating evil?

Jesus, the radical

Consider Christ’s words:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30).

Why does Jesus paint this shocking picture? I believe He wants us to take radical steps, to do whatever is necessary to deal with sexual temptation.

Now, the hand and eye are not the causes of sin. A blind man can still lust and a man without a hand can still steal. But the eye is a means of access for both godly and ungodly input. And the hand is a means of performing righteous or sinful acts. We must therefore govern what the eye looks at and the hand does.

If we take Jesus seriously, we need to think far more radically about sexual purity.

Doing what it takes

The battle is too intense, and the stakes are too high to approach purity casually or gradually.

So ... if you can’t keep your eyes away from those explicit images, don’t ever go to a video rental store. *Come on. Everybody goes into those stores.*

No. If it causes you to sin, you shouldn’t. Period.

Do your thoughts trip you up when you’re with certain persons? Stop hanging out with them. Does a certain kind of music charge you up erotically? Stop listening to it. Do you make phone calls you shouldn’t? Block 900 phone sex numbers so you can’t call them from your home.

If these things seem like crutches, fine. Use whatever crutches you need to help you walk.

Some men fall into mental adultery through lingerie ads, billboards, women joggers in tight pants, women with low cut blouses or short skirts, cheerleaders or dancers, movies, TV shows, and commercials of the beer-and-bikini variety. Some men's weakness is the Sunday newspaper's ad inserts or nearly any magazine.

So, *stop looking*. And then *stop putting yourself in the position to look!*

If you have to get rid of your TV to guard your purity, do it.

If it means you can't go to games because of how dancers or cheerleaders dress and perform, so be it. If it means you have to lower your head and close your eyes, so be it. If you're embarrassed to do that, stay home.

Tell your wife about your struggles. Or if you're single, tell a godly friend. If you need to drop the newspaper because of those ads, fine. If you need your wife to go through it first and pull out the offending inserts, ask her.

Romans 13:14 instructs us to "make no provision for the flesh" (NASB). It's a sin to deliberately put ourselves in a position where we'll likely commit sin. Whether it's the lingerie department, the swimming pool, or the workout room at an athletic club, if it trips you up, stay away from it.

Proverbs describes the loose woman meeting up with the foolish man after dark (see Proverbs 7:8-9). We must stay away from people, places, and contexts that make sin more likely.

If it's certain bookstores or hangouts, *stay away from them*. If cable or satellite TV or network TV, old friends from high school, the Internet, or computers are your problem, *get rid of them*.

Just say no to whatever is pulling you away from Jesus. Remember, if you want a different outcome, you must make different choices.

If you can't be around women wearing swimsuits without looking and lusting, then don't go on vacation where women wear swimsuits. If that means not going water-skiing or to a favorite resort, fine. If it means being unable to go on a church-sponsored retreat, don't go.

Sound drastic? Compare it to gouging out an eye or cutting off a hand!

"But..."

But there are hardly any decent TV shows anymore. Then stop watching TV. Read books. Have conversations.

But all the newer novels have sex scenes. Then read the old novels. Read fiction from Christian publishers.

But I've subscribed to Sports Illustrated for thirty years, back before they had the swimsuit issue. They have it now. So drop your subscription. And tell them why.

But it's almost impossible to rent a movie without sex and offensive language. There are Christian movie review sites that can help you make good selections for family viewing. There are also services which offer edited movies, television adaptors which edit profanity, and DVD software that cuts offensive scenes from movies.

But suppose there were no decent movies – what then? I enjoy good movies, but the Bible never commands us, “Watch movies.” It does command us, “Guard your heart.”

It's a battle – battles get bloody. Do whatever it takes to walk in purity!

A friend wrote a daily contract that asks these questions: “Are you willing to do whatever's necessary to protect your sexual sobriety? Ask God for help? Call on others? Go to meetings? Read literature? Set boundaries and not cross them? Be brutally honest?”

Too radical?

But you're talking about withdrawing from the culture. What you're saying is too radical.

No, what I'm saying is nothing. Jesus said, “If it would keep you from sexual temptation, you'd be better off poking out your eye and cutting off your hand.” Now that's radical.

Many claim they're serious about purity, but then they say, “No way; I'm not going to give up cable TV,” or “I'm not going to have my wife hold the computer password.”

Followers of Jesus have endured torture and given their lives in obedience to Him. And we're whining about giving up cable?

When Jesus called us to take up our crosses and follow Him (see Matthew 10:38), didn't that imply sacrifices greater than forgoing Internet access?

How sold out are you to the battle for purity? How desperate are you to have victory over sin? How radical are you willing to get for your Lord? How much do you want the joy and peace that can be found only in Him? Purity comes only to those who truly want it.

Controlling the Internet

- Use family-friendly Internet service providers. Install a pornography-filtering program on your computer, realizing it can't screen out everything. Ask someone else to hold the password. Ask someone to regularly check your Internet usage history.
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- Move computers to high-traffic areas. Unless you have a proven history of going on-line safely, don't log on to the Internet if you're alone. Be sure the monitor always faces an open door, where others can see what you're looking at (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- If you're still losing the battle, disconnect the Internet — or get rid of the computer.

Taking charge of the TV

- Consult a schedule to choose appropriate programs. Channel-surfing invites temptation.
- Keep your television unplugged, store it in a closet, or put it in the garage to prevent mindless flip-on.
- Use the “off” switch freely. Use the remote quickly when temptation comes. Have a safe channel ready to turn to.
- Don't allow young children to choose their own programs. As they get older they can choose, but parents have veto power. Avoid multiple TVs that split the family and leave children unsupervised. Don't use television as a babysitter.
- Spend an hour reading Scripture, a Christian book, or participating in a ministry for each hour you watch TV. Even when television isn't bad, it often keeps us from what's better.
- Drop cable, HBO, your satellite dish, or your TV if it is promoting ungodliness in your home. (This isn't legalism — it's discipleship.)
- Periodically “fast” from television for a week or a month. Watch what happens; see if you like what you can do with all that time (including feeding your passion for Christ).