



“Pursing Passion & Purity” - November 10, 2019

OPEN

As a young widow she and her young daughter went to live among a primitive tribe in Ecuador, at that time known as the Auca. This was astonishing. Why? The Aucas had killed her husband and four other missionaries in 1956 while they were attempting to reach out to them with the Gospel.

I was deeply impacted by the story of Jim and Elizabeth Elliot in my youth, especially the book [Through Gates of Splendor](#) which chronicles how each of them responded to the call of God on their lives. I vividly recall hearing Elizabeth Elliot speak about the time they sat in a graveyard and observed a shadow of a cross between them.

For every follower of Jesus the shadow of the cross falls across our lives. All that He has accomplished for us by His death, burial, and resurrection impacts how we live. The righteousness of Jesus makes it possible for believers to live the sixth Beatitude – “blessed are the pure in heart”.

DIG

In Matthew 5:8 we find Jesus’ invitation and encouragement to His followers: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”.

The Beatitudes welcome us to live in the present reality of God’s Kingdom. They describe the transformed or “kingdomized” life. As we respond to Christ’s rule and reign we can have purity of heart. Now, are we just talking about some strict puritanical code for living? Yes, “do nots” are involved...but so also is passionate pursuit!

Where are we in this study? So far we have covered five blessings: *poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, and thirsting for righteousness, and being merciful*. Today we are focusing what it means to be pure in heart and thus to see, know, connect with God. The next two Sundays we will cover the themes of peacemaking and persecution.

[1] Blessing Number Six

At first this Beatitude sounds restrictive - “those whose hearts are pure” (NLT). We might rightly respond – “that leaves *me* out!” However, *every* follower of Christ is included in this important blessing...and it is not isolated from the others. For example, we’ll never have a pure heart if we do not have poverty of spirit! Blessed are the clean or pure in heart, stated Jesus. Who are these

people? Are they the perfect and morally pure ones? Psalm 24:2 sets the standard of those who can “stand in [God’s] holy place” as those who have “clean hands and a pure heart”?

Who can measure up to this!? We know the moral muck of our hearts – anger, bitterness, lust, resentment, jealousy, impatience, envy. But we cannot define the “pure in heart” by human performance. To be “pure in heart” is also about single mindedness (James 1:8).

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard said, “purity of heart is to will one thing.” Paul wrote, “no one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs.” (II Timothy 2:4) Moral purity and single focus belong together in a clear understanding “pure in heart”. Blessed are the “whole-hearted”! “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

a. *It’s complicated...*

Yes...our hearts have capacity to love God but they are corrupted by sin. The Bible emphasizes the heart as the “seat of our emotions” or central place of our being. Paul prays for the Ephesians that the “eyes of their hearts” would be opened to God’s greatness and goodness. Our lives were designed to be in relationship with God. He made us “to see Him”. But it is also true that “everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” (Romans 3:23 NLT) In Romans 7:7-25 Paul confesses to the significant battle that there is to have a pure heart.

b. *It’s possible...*

This corruption is resolved at the cross. There is no more condemnation for the one who is in Christ! (Romans 8:1) “*Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.*” (Romans 3:24-25a NLT) God has, *in fact*, given to the Christian a new, clean heart. And now, we walk in the exciting possibility of living that way – made possible by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Consider how Christians have attempted to practice purity of heart.

- **Community** - Some groups like monks or Hutterites try to create a context in which moral failure is minimized. The focus is on keeping sin “out”. T. S. Eliot described this as “finding a system of order so perfect that we will not have to be good.” (Dallas Willard, **Renovation of the Heart**, NavPress, 2002, 15) Of course, such a community is not possible.
- **Activity** - Some groups rely upon a set of rules in which the focus is on doing the right thing while not doing the wrong thing. Rigid rules and regulations are the result.

“The Beatitudes simply cannot be ‘good news’ if they are understood as a set of “how-tos’ for achieving blessedness. They would then only amount to a new legalism....a new brand of Phariseeism”. (Dallas Willard (*Divine Conspiracy*, HarperOne, 1997, 106)

- **Interiority** - The answer is to live the exchanged life when we, by faith, allow the risen Christ be active and alive in our hearts (see Galatians 2:20). To *the Colossians Paul described it as putting off the old self and instead “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”* (Colossians 3:10). We do not gain purity of heart by human systems but by “the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5). This is about our *interior life* or learning to “live from our depths”. (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, NavPress, 2002, 13)

[2] Dare to be a Daniel

The OT provides an example of purity of heart in Daniel. His life reveals a pure, singular passion in knowing God in an intimate way. This was not system based but made possible by the Holy Spirit in response to two things.

a. Daniel made a decision - Daniel 1:8

Though Daniel was a captive to Babylon he “resolved not to defile himself” with the diet of the foreign kingdom. It was a matter of declaring his allegiance to God. In making this intentional decision to follow God in his life he welcomed God’s power, protection and blessing. God is not going to force our decision; we must want to know Him...He takes that longing and brings His power to bear upon it.

b. Daniel practiced diligence - Daniel 6:8

Though forbidden by law he “prayed...just as he had done before.” Daniel continued to do the right thing over time. Many times he may have felt he was just going through the motions. But he could have a pure, holy passion in that pivotal moment (which caused him to be thrown to the lions!) because God shaped him over time.

REFLECT

What motivates a person to put God’s Kingdom before romantic feelings? What motivates a person to risk life and limb to share the Gospel? A pure and holy passion! How do we move towards living in this way?

The stories surrounding the tragic deaths of five missionaries in the remote Ecuadorian jungle in 1956 have had a far reaching effect. Learn more at...

[Testimony of Elizabeth Elliot](#)

[Testimony of End Of The Spear](#)

So...today, in 2019, how can believers work towards having a pure heart?

- **Think about saturation...**

Martin Luther wrote, “We need to hear the Gospel every day because we forget it every day.” Freedom and joy in seeing/knowing God does not come from human performance. Christ died for the *powerless* – see Romans 5:6.

- **Think about temptation...**

James 1:14-15 suggests that the *existence* of temptation does not mean our heart is impure. It is when temptation is *entertained* and *executed* that we sin. In fact, greater discomfort with temptation indicates a heightened sensitivity to sin, produced by the Holy Spirit! God blesses the pure in heart with provision for ongoing cleansing – I John 1:9.

- **Think about questions...**

“The unexamined life is not worth living” said Socrates. The Methodist reformers John and Charles Wesley would open small group meetings with, “How is it with your soul?” In an article by the same name, [Joseph Yoo](#) suggests questions we should ask

- ✓ *What are the things that I’m engaging in that bring my soul closer God?*
- ✓ *What are the things that I’m doing that are putting a wedge between God and myself?*
- ✓ *What are the things that I’m doing in my life that really make my soul shine brightly and flourish?*
- ✓ *What are things I’m engaged in that are draining the life out of my soul?*

- **Think about clarification...**

At www.cornerstoneneighbourhood.com/about/relationships is an attempt to clarify what moral purity looks like for a Christian in the quagmire of sexuality and gender issues today. It concludes: “*Our goal is to live according to II Corinthians 5:15 (NLT), “[Jesus] died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.*”

Are you being kingdomized in regards purity of heart? Do you have one pure and holy passion? [Mark Altrogge’s song](#) by the same name offers this prayer...make it yours today...

*Give me one pure and holy passion, give me one magnificent obsession
Jesus, give me one glorious ambition for my life to know and follow hard after You*