

Be Clean!

The Blessed Battle

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well on October 23, 2022

Matthew 5:8

So what? The church has caused a lot of confusion and hurt about what it means to be CLEAN and in right standing with God.

Feel what? The inability of religion to CLEAN us up and the invitation of Jesus for Him to CLEAN us up.

Now what? Experience Jesus purifying your heart so you can enjoy the presence of God.

VISION CASTING – Become a church where people can come out from hiding and experience healing and the grace of God over their shame.

Invite Maris to read the Beatitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture Memory:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

What comes to mind when you hear the word pure?

- Pure honey
- Pure gold – 100% purity is unattainable so anything above 99.95% counts as pure gold
- Pure = Clean (in the Greek)
- Purity Culture

What is Purity Culture?

“Purity culture” is the term often used for the evangelical movement that attempts to promote a biblical view of purity by discouraging dating and promoting virginity before marriage, often through the use of tools such as purity pledges, symbols such as purity rings, and events such as purity balls.

True Love Waits campaign

- True Love Waits (TLW) is an international Christian group that promotes sexual abstinence outside of marriage for teenagers and college students. TLW was created in April, 1993 by the Southern Baptists, and is sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources.

- In the first year of the campaign, over 102,000 young people signed the pledge, which was also taken up by other church groups including the Roman Catholic Church and Assemblies of God.
- I was an early adopter of True Love Waits, signing my purity pledge on September 4th, 1994 when I was thirteen years old.
- By 2004, groups supporting abstinence numbered in the hundreds. During the preceding decade, approximately 2.5 million American youth took the pledge of abstinence.
- The messaging at these youth rallies was you're either pure or impure.
- Two of the analogies being used that I remember was the damaged flower analogy and the chewed gum analogy. "You don't want to be used goods, do you?" I remember these analogies being directed at the girls primarily. And then as I've listened to podcasts almost thirty years later and read about Purity Culture my experience has been confirmed.
- I've been thinking about this not only as a church leader in 2022 but just personally as I want to grow in intimacy with Christ and also develop healthy relationships.
- Strict rules:
 - Side hugs only.
 - Never be alone with a girl.
 - Modesty dress codes.
 - Looking back on the experience, it reminds me of the culture around women in Islam that forces women to cover their bodies and heads to ensure that men do not lust after them.

I Kissed Dating Goodbye by Joshua Harris in 1997

- Yet others have suggested that the book promoted 'condemnation and shame' among young women in the True Love Waits movement. The book has been characterized as portraying ideal young Christian women as 'sexually passive, emotional, and patient' and discouraging young Christian men from forming relationships with women.
- Christian psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend who wrote *Boundaries* suggest that avoiding dating in order to avoid suffering, as Harris advises, causes those who do so to forgo opportunities to mature, especially through learning how to create healthy boundaries.
- Joshua Harris separated from his wife in 2019 and announced he no longer considers himself a Christian.
- *The impact of Christian purity culture is still being felt – including in Britain* article on The Conversation website on June 28, 2022 – “The permeation of purity culture into church teachings and cultures can be seen in anxieties around male-female friendships, relationship expectations, the Christian idolisation of marriage, the equating of virginity with value, and inferences that women are responsible for gatekeeping men’s sexual behaviour.”
 - <https://theconversation.com/the-impact-of-christian-purity-culture-is-still-being-felt-including-in-britain-182907>

Navigator Never-Dater

- Even into my college ministry experience. I was involved with the Navigators. I loved the Navigators. Still do. But the subculture around our collegiate ministry at the time embodied Purity Culture. We were known as the Navigator never-daters...and if you date, date a Crusader.

Purity Culture Made Big Promises

- Purity Culture is a form of the Prosperity Gospel – If you keep your body pure then you will be rewarded with amazing and abundant sex for the rest of your life after marriage.
- Blessed are those who remain “pure”, for they will be in good standing with God and receive a life of great sex once married.

Purity Culture Has Major Problems

- External behavioral conformity breeds hidden sin and produces shame and doesn't get to the heart.
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- Purity culture produced a religious environment of hidden sin and hidden hearts.
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- Purity culture doesn't work!

American Academy of Pediatrics study released in an article on January 1, 2009

- Five years after the pledge, 82% of pledgers denied having ever pledged. Pledgers and matched nonpledgers did not differ in premarital sex, sexually transmitted diseases, and anal and oral sex variables.
- The sexual behavior of virginity pledgers does not differ from that of closely matched nonpledgers, and pledgers are less likely to protect themselves from pregnancy and disease before marriage. Virginity pledges may not affect sexual behavior but may decrease the likelihood of taking precautions during sex. Clinicians should provide birth control information to all adolescents, especially virginity pledgers.
- <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-abstract/123/1/e110/71972/Patient-Teenagers-A-Comparison-of-the-Sexual?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- I'm committed to God's design for human flourishing including our sexuality. But the reality is that we all fall far short of that optimal design. The question is, what's our motivation and means for moving towards human flourishing?! Is it Law or Grace? Is it external behavioral conformity or addressing internal matters?

Southern Baptist Church scandal – *Southern Baptist leaders covered up sex abuse, kept secret database, report says* article in *The Washington Post* on May 22, 2022

- The findings of nearly 300 pages include shocking new details about specific abuse cases and shine a light on how

denominational leaders for decades actively resisted calls for abuse prevention and reform. Evidence in the report suggests leaders also lied to Southern Baptists over whether they could maintain a database of offenders to prevent more abuse when top leaders were secretly keeping a private list for years.

- The investigation finds that for almost two decades, survivors of abuse and other concerned Southern Baptists have been contacting the Southern Baptist Convention's administrative arm to report alleged child molesters and other accused abusers who were in the pulpit or employed as church staff members. Many of the cases referred to in the report were considered outside the statute of limitations, the time survivors can report sex abuse, so it's unclear how many abusers were criminally charged.
- "I knew it was rotten, but it's astonishing and infuriating," said Jennifer Lyell, a survivor who was once the highest-paid female executive at the SBC and whose story of sexual abuse at a Southern Baptist seminary is detailed in the report. "This is a denomination that is through and through about power. It is misappropriated power. It does not in any way reflect the Jesus I see in the scriptures. I am so gutted."
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/05/22/southern-baptist-sex-abuse-report/>
- The hypocrisy of the most powerful religious leaders wreaks havoc on people who are trying to find God and experience healing in their lives.

Is Purity Culture Biblical?

- Purity Culture would not have been helpful to the woman at the well or the woman caught in adultery or King David or King Solomon or anyone in the Scriptures.
- The way Jesus interacted with these women and with men who Purity Culture would've discarded as chewed gum is amazing. I want to become like Jesus in the way He related to people who weren't "pure". I want to experience Jesus relating to me in the way He related to people who weren't "pure."
- Jesus and the New Testament authors destroy the Purity Culture messaging.
- **Matthew 5:17-20** ¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- **Matthew 5:21** “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’”
 - Then Jesus talks about anger and the heart.
- **Matthew 5:27** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”
 - Then Jesus talks about lust and the heart.
- **Matthew 23:25-28** ²⁵ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. (Like when I clean my water bottle.) ²⁷ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.
 - The religious leaders were throwing a bunch of hand sanitizer at Covid-19. It doesn't work! But when people think it does and you have the corner market on hand sanitizer you can have a lot of power and make a lot of money!
- Jesus had to hold the line on what good living was to try to get through to the religious leaders who were missing it completely.

- **Romans 3:23** ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...
- Jesus simultaneously throws everyone under the bus while providing the means for immediate cleanliness and a pathway towards feeling clean.
- He fulfilled the Law in the life He lived. He paid our penalty for our failure to fulfill the Law in the death He died. He paved the way for us to experience power for healing in rising from the dead.
- He shows us the optimal path for human flourishing while demonstrating that every single person needs help moving that direction.

Humans look at the exterior. God looks at the interior.

- **1 Samuel 16:7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his (Eliab's) appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
- **James 4:8** Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- But when I look into my own heart, it's often not good. I'm not sure how to purify my own heart. What if I feel like the Pharisees who are filled with unclean things on the inside? What do I do?
- Here we come to our response to the Word of God this morning.

- Follow the flow. The Sermon on the Mount ratchets up the requirements for righteousness. Righteousness is a big word for relational right standing. Purity of heart is more about relational fidelity than moral purity.

THE BLESSED BATTLE – BE CLEAN!

RESPONSE & ACTION

1. Come to Jesus to become clean.
 - The Leper – **Matthew 8:1-3** When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ² A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” ³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.
 - “Unclean! Unclean!” Like a badge of shame. I can’t be in community. I can’t be in relationship with God. I can’t go to the Temple. I’m on my deathbed. I’m like the walking dead.
 - Immediately cleansed of his leprosy but had a long way to go to experience healthy relationships.
 - King David – **Psalms 51:7, 10** ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

- The Disciples – **John 15:1-4** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
- The Jerusalem Council – **Acts 15:8-9** Peter speaking...
⁸ “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.”
- Paul
 - **Titus 2:11-14** ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.
 - **Ephesians 5:25-32** ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a

radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

- We want to be a church where people can come to Jesus to get clean.
- We want to be a place where people who didn't keep their pledges and promises to God can be restored to relationship with God.
- We want to learn from Jesus about how to develop healthy relationships between men and women and how to cultivate healthy marriages and healthy relationships for those who are single.
- We want to cultivate a church culture of grace over shame and healing over hiding.
- Jesus does the heavy lifting, Jesus does the lion's share of the work, but we still have work to do. Jesus teaches us that.

2. Come to one another for foot washing.

- **John 13:4-9** Jesus got up from the meal (the Last Supper), took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." ⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

- **John 13:10a, 12-15** ^{10a} Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean..." ¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."
- **James 5:16** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
 - Attunement to one another in sharing our stories of shame so that we can experience healing!

Invite the Worship Team up

3. Come into the Presence of God.

- We may not be able to see God physically...yet...but we have full access to come into His presence...together.
- **Hebrews 10:19-25** ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty

conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

CONCLUSION—REFLECT & REPENT

PRAY – O Come to the Altar

Are you hurting and broken within?

Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin?

Jesus is calling

Have you come to the end of yourself

Do you thirst for a drink from the well?

Jesus is calling

O come to the altar

The Father's arms are open wide

Forgiveness was bought with

The precious blood of Jesus Christ

Chopping Block:

Sermon Structure (according to Andy Stanley):

1. **ME** (Orientation) – Introduce yourself and your topic – find common ground with your audience.
2. **WE** (Identification) – Build an emotional common ground with your audience – build as many bridges emotionally as possible.
3. **GOD** (Illumination) – God has a solution for us today – engage your audience with the text – Don't just read it. Don't explain it to death. Make it fascinating!
4. **YOU** (Application) – Find one point of application everyone can embrace. Don't ask them to make a life-altering decision. Give them a measurable or reachable goal. Encourage them to try something for a week, a day, or even a month.
5. **WE** (Inspiration) – cast a vision – prompt a decision by briefly describing what would happen if this group of people would follow what has been taught. Tell them to imagine what WE could do together.

Notes:

- Wisdom Literature – polarization; black and white thinking
- Mark 1:15 (Dallas Willard paraphrase) All the preliminaries have been taken care of and the rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living and base your life on this remarkable new opportunity.
- Sound Doctrine – Hygienic Teaching
 - 1 Timothy 1:10 for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine
 - 2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.
 - Titus 1:9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
 - Titus 2:1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.
- Pure in Heart? According to...
 - David – Psalm 24
 - James – James 4:4, 8
 - Jesus – Matthew 22:37
- The Pure in Heart See God?

- Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
- Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?
- Matthew 19:26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
- "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves." –Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (thoughts, reflections, aphorisms)
 - 17th-century mathematician and philosopher
 - Died at age 39
 - Contemporary of René Descartes
- Pure Definition – καθαρός (katharos; 2513) – clean, pure
 - physically
 - purified by fire
 - in a similitude, like a vine cleansed by pruning and so fitted to bear fruit
 - in a leitical sense
 - clean, the use of which is not forbidden, imparts no uncleanness
 - ethically
 - free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt
 - free from every admixture of what is false, sincere genuine
 - blameless, innocent
 - unstained with the guilt of anything
 - properly, "without admixture" (*BAGD*); what is separated (purged), hence "clean" (pure) because *unmixed* (without *undesirable elements*); (figuratively) spiritually *clean* because *purged* (purified by God), i.e. free from the contaminating (soiling) influences of *sin*.
- Articles
 - <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/new-cdc-stats-on-teenage-sexual-activity-show-parallel-to-true-love-waits-movement/>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purity_ring#True_Love_Waits
 - <https://www.lifeway.com/en/product-family/true-love-waits/history>
 - <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/03/purity-culture-evangelical-church-harms-women/618438/>

Passages:

- Psalm 24:3-4, 7-10
- 1 John 2:1-2
- Isaiah 1:18
- Isaiah 6:1-8
- Mark 7:1-23

- Matthew 23:23-39
- Matthew 5:21-30
- Matthew 15:15-20
- Matthew 12:33-35
- Titus 1:15

READER: From the fifth chapter in the Gospel of Matthew:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and
falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

This is the Word of the Lord.