

The Problem with Purity, Part 1

QUESTIONS FOR CUBS

NOTE TO PARENTS/TEACHERS:

The goal of this questions-and-answers section is to initiate interaction between you and your kids. Please do not just read the questions and answers to your kids. These answers are given for you at an adult level to think about and to process. Once that is accomplished, you can then translate them into appropriate answers for your kids.

LESSON

Sharing Jesus with others in a simple way

KEY VERSE

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:22)

EAR CHECK (STORY COMPREHENSION)

- Q: Where does Paw Paw Chuck deliver the desk?
A: To the Big White Church
- Q: Who does C.J. meet in the village?
A: Saint Merrion
- Q: In order to be a part of the Big White Church, what must the members be?
A: Pure
- Q: What does Saint Merrion think that Barnabas did to her?
A: She thinks he stole her bag
- Q: What does Saint Merrion decide to do now that she is 18 years old?
A: Stay in the outside world

HEART CHECK (SPIRITUAL APPLICATION)

Q: Sometimes I want something so bad; it's all I can think about. Isn't that the way I know what I should go after?

A: *Desires are tricky things. We need to realize that they are like little pet monsters that want to be fed all of the time. Your desires will try to make you feel like you will never be happy until you give in to them. If you give in and feed them too much, they will not be satisfied like they promised—these desire monsters will grow. And if you continue to give in, they will grow completely out of control.*

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They will become stronger than they should be, and they will begin to dictate what you will think about and care about. Desires need to be tamed, or they will take over your life. To complicate things even more, some of our desires are not monsters at all. They are good, helpful, and even God-given. These are desires that we need to feed regularly, grow as big as we can, and listen to often. The tough part is to know which desires are good and which are little monsters trying to get out of control. That is why the rules and laws in the Bible are so helpful. King David said, "My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times" (Ps. 119:20 NIV). He understood that he could avoid all kinds of harm and disaster by trusting that God knows what is good for us and what might be a monster in the making.

"I" CHECK (PERSONAL APPLICATION)

1. What does purity mean? Take some time and look it up in the dictionary. Name some ways you exhibit purity in your own life.
2. If you believe that because you are a Christian, you are above others, how do you think people will react when you try to share Jesus with them?
3. In this episode, Saint Merrion and the others from the Big White Church went out into the village to share Christ with others. What did they do wrong? Does how we share Christ with someone matter? Why?
4. Give some examples of everyday situations in which you might be able to share Christ with others.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

These two episodes were largely inspired by Tim Downs' book *Finding Common Ground*. I highly recommend it. Downs describes how we Christians have a tendency to spend our time, energy, and resources trying to talk to a secular world about God in ways that they cannot possibly understand or accept. This is the kind of thought that launches my brain into orbit. We have been commissioned to go out and share God's Word, but if we do it badly, we can be offensive and push people away.

When I was a kid, I was sitting on the bridge of the Starship Enterprise (OK, it was really the box our refrigerator came in), playing with my best friend. I was in kindergarten, and he was in first grade. While we talked and saved the galaxy, it became clear that he did not believe in God. I was shocked. This boy, my best friend with whom I had spent my whole life, did not believe that God was his heavenly Father. In fact, he had the audacity to tell me that he only had one father and his name was Bob. I reached down into the theological treasure trove in my kindergarten heart, and I told him that I didn't play with people who didn't believe in God. He quietly and calmly stood up and beamed himself off my ship. In a couple of days we both forgot about it and played like we always had. What I found so jarring that day was not that his soul was in jeopardy, but that he did not think like I did—he was not on my team. My offence that afternoon was all about me! I had that same impulse many times while I was growing up, but I just was wise enough to keep my trap shut. We were not commissioned by Christ to go out and make church members, but disciples of Christ!

This first of the two episodes is the extreme (I hope) example of a church run amok. It was more concerned with itself than with Christ—not to mention the villagers. I wanted to paint Saint Merrion not as an instigator, but as a product of legalism. The predictable fallout of legalism is anger, frustration, and confusion. Anger happens because no one can bear the weight of living under the pressure of constant, unrelenting failure. Frustration comes because we instinctively know we never will be able to live up to the impossible standard, and confusion results because legalism seems to make sense at first.

To avoid using vague terms, let's define legalism. Legalism is the conviction that our good behaviour is the way to earn God's approval and acceptance. Legalism is deceptive, because at first blush that statement seems so true. Our behaviour is indeed important to God. However, the lie is that our behaviour, even nearly perfect behaviour, can make God like us more. Our souls are broken beyond our ability to repair. So the only thing we can do is cry out to God to save us and change us from the inside out. That's the kind of behaviour that God finds pleasing. We are helpless, and we need an ever-deeper relationship with God. That perspective is very different than the belief that we can win God's favour through our enormous efforts.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES (CONTINUED)

Legalism demands conformity. A legalist will give you an ultimatum, "do as I do or get out." Christ never displayed this kind of behaviour. If He had, none of the disciples would have been left standing. The members of churches like the Big White Church described in the episode care nothing for your soul; they care only for your willingness to conform. I must confess that I've thought that way when someone has entered my church wearing something inappropriate, unkempt, or just different. One day it dawned on me that my reaction would be similar to an emergency room doctor sending patients away because they were dirty and messy and, well, sick! That would be just crazy.

Part 1 is the setup of this problem. Purity is not an end in itself. If it is used to move up in the ranks of your group, it becomes offensive and destructive. Yes, the pursuit of purity can be offensive and destructive! Pursued properly, purity is a natural response to a loving and holy God. As we love God more, we will want to become more like Christ. Then He will change our hearts. We will want to be holy because He is holy!



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