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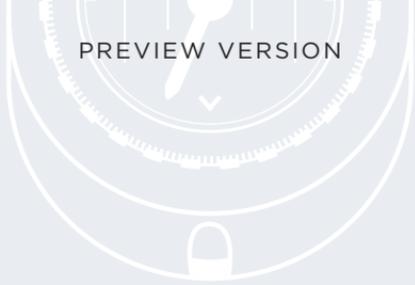


Parenting in a Sexualized Culture



 PUREHOPE

P R E V I E W V E R S I O N



PREVIEW VERSION

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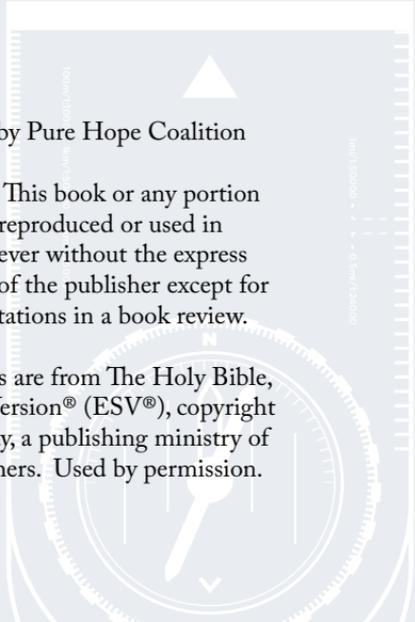


TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD — 4

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY — 6

THE FOUNDATION — 8

THE CONVERSATION — 22

THE TECHNOLOGY — 34

THE LEGACY — 46

APPENDICES — 56

FOREWORD

At pureHOPE, we know firsthand that parenting is hard work, and that it is harder than ever in this sexualized, digital age. As we interact with parents across the country, we hear how difficult and anxiety inducing it is to raise kids in the twenty-first century, and we're not surprised: we're experiencing those same challenges ourselves!

Yet, we also know that with tools and strategies rooted in an understanding of God's truth, we as parents can train up our children in a way that equips them in a biblical, grace-based manner to pursue Jesus Christ and to cultivate a pure life just "as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). This resource is intended to be a toolkit for your use in that endeavor.

At the heart of our parenting ministry is the belief that our role as parents is not simply to protect our kids, but also to lead by example and impart to them the knowledge and discernment they will need to thrive. That belief is embodied in our protect/equip/model parenting strategy. Look for recommendations

throughout this resource on how you can protect your kids, equip them to pursue Jesus in a sexually exploitative world, and model the pursuit of purity in your own life.

We should note that pureHOPE's ministry is built around the core belief that a *pure* life is rooted in faith in Christ and sustained by prayer, understanding, resolve, and engagement. You will see suggestions on how you can apply those elements to navigate successfully the challenges we're all facing.

With that, thanks for making us a part of your team and we hope God will speak to you right where you are as you implement these ideas in your life and your home.



NOEL BOUCHÉ
Chief Executive

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

In each section you will find relevant content to use right where you are. You'll see stories, strategies, and solutions to strengthen your own personal pursuit of purity as well as support your leadership within your household.

We know as parents it's easy to operate in panic or reactive mode and you want to get to logistics immediately. We'll get there. But fair warning, the first section, *The Foundation*, will be the meatiest by far. The Divine Narrative is what sets the tone for the practical conversations and strategies that come after.

As parents, you have the amazing privilege of sharing this story with your children, but chances are you didn't grow up with a biblically rooted "story" of sex. Most of us were either handed a heaping platter of rules and regulations, or a skimpy diet of virtual silence on the matter. We suggest taking your time

to really dive into His story through prayer, scripture reading, and meditation with each section, but *especially* the first one!

Following the content in each segment, you will find the “Loop” – that is the P/U/R/E loop. A lifestyle of prayer, understanding, resolve and engagement will create momentum on your journey of sanctification. “Pray” will have verses and ideas for cultivating intimacy with God. “Understand” will allow you to answer questions and journal new insights. “Resolve” will challenge you to make personal decisions you can model for your children, and finally “Engage” will give you a next step to try in your home.

We’re so excited for the way God will impact you through this content and study.

THE FOUNDATION

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11

Sex. That word can stop us in our tracks, and terrifies many of us as we think about talking to our kids about it. Yet, sex is central to both human existence and the human experience, and parents have a mandate to educate and equip their kids to understand and glorify God with their minds and bodies in their adolescence and adulthood (1 Corinthians 6:20).

To fulfill that mandate, we need a firm foundation on which to build, and that foundation, as with everything in the Christian life, is Jesus Christ. When we recognize that sex was designed by Him to point us to Him, we put ourselves in the right position to both live a sexually pure life and lead our kids into the same experience.

God says it is His will that we be purified and know how to possess our bodies in sanctification and in honor rather than lust (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). If He wants us to know how, it implies that He longs to teach us. He is our Father after all and just like we desire to disciple our children in the way they should go, He wants to speak to us on the matter. It is the truth of His great love

for us that compels and sets free. Our prayer as you go through this study, is that the Lord will give you ears to hear, the ears of a disciple—one who follows Jesus with humility and boldness to ask Him for the meaning of His parables. He answers those who ask and seek and knock. He is a good Teacher.

A quest is “a long and difficult search for something” and we believe that’s what a godly life in a sexualized culture is all about. It is a long, difficult, but ultimately glorious search for meaning, for joy, for healing, for love and relationship with a faithful, holy God who draws near to us, even when we feel far from Him. All of us are on that quest, and as parents, when we engage in that journey we can turn to our children and say, “follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

GOD’S STORY OF SEX

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. — Ephesians 5:32

“God,” “story,” and “sex” are three words that aren’t usually used in the same sentence, but how we think about and navigate sex indeed proclaims a story to those around us; and that story is ultimately about God’s creation, His salvation, and His own very character.

We hear a lot of stories. Stories in the news, legendary fables, classics, fairytales, drama on screen, family lore... We read them, see them, hear them, live them. But not all stories are equal. Sure, all stories portray a hint or whisper of *something* true, but let’s face it, most stories are *just* stories, and the ones we’re fed these

days—on the silver screen or smartphone screen—are usually *just* empty entertainment. But God’s story of sex, is a different kind of story. It’s not like the fantastical false narratives the world will shout—those shallow, selfish lies that lead to cheap thrills at best and then leave a wake of disappointment and devastation. Neither is it the fear-laden counterfeit you’ve heard on repeat in church tradition—that shame-ridden rulebook that cannot sanctify. No, this story is by far the most compelling. Written into your very nature, etched into eternity. Hush little children, and come close, bring your oohs and aahs and questions... He will tell you His story. Quiet your souls and listen in. He will tell you the *Truth*. It is a profound mystery to be sure and can only be told in the secret place: your innermost being.

Christ is the Author and Perfector of our faith, we are the adulteress people He gave Himself up to purify and make into a radiant, spotless, righteous Bride. He cleanses us by the washing of the water, which is His Word. This scandalous relationship and ultimate plan of God is the grand mystery into which angels long to look. The ocean, the sunrise, the stars—for all their worth and wonder are far less breathtaking than the transfixing beauty He has woven into His image bearers. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as the seal and guarantee of His perfect promise to treasure us as His own forever. The Holy Spirit also searches the depths of the wisdom of God and is the only voice that can narrate, illumine, and bring understanding to the story of sex.

If there is one thing you get out of this series, let it be this: His story is supreme and to know it is to read it and live it every day. To teach it is to trip all over it as you model it and share it with your children. It’s invaluable wisdom with a lifetime of

growing room. We can tell you some of the basic premises of this grand tale, but as with all of the greatest stories, you have to experience it for yourself. We'll give you the best glimpse we can, but consider the following merely a back cover summary. And then go to His Word prayerfully and seek continually more and more and more of the Author Himself.

THE BASIC PLOT

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! — Romans 11:33a

God speaks about sex positively, candidly, and frequently from Genesis to Revelation. In the beginning, humans were created male and female sexual beings (Genesis 1:27). We, and our children (gasp!) are sexual beings. Yes, even our children are sexual beings, not because they're "sexually active" in terms of behavior; they are sexual beings, because they are *male* or *female* persons. For centuries in the English language, the word sex has meant primarily maleness or femaleness in the biological sense; only in the last hundred years or so has the word sex been applied to the act of intercourse or other behavior.

That identity aspect is the starting point for understanding *God's story of sex*—Inscribed into our souls and displayed in our bodies is the powerful mystery, romance, epic, thriller, drama, comedy of God. As male or female sexual beings, we embody the vulnerability, tension and victory of a redemptive narrative.

Society says sex is a transactional act that produces momentary gratification. YHWH's message to us is that sex is a covenantal

identity out of which flows love, joy and faithfulness.

The sexual union between husband and wife, not just the act of sex but the entire relationship that the sex act strengthens, is full of meaning because it represents and proclaims Christ's union with us, the Creator united with the creation, the immortal with the mortal, the male with the female.

In the same way, our abstaining from the act of sex in our singleness proclaims our hope and represents the expectant preparation of His church for His return at the end of the age, which the last chapters of Scripture describe as the consummation of the ages and a wedding feast.

And guess what, if sexual sin, abuse, pain, or betrayal is part of your journey, and it's a part of everyone's one way or another, by turning to Him and confessing our secrets and receiving His grace, we experience and proclaim the love of a God Whom the prophet Hosea said betroths to himself an unfaithful spouse—us—with love, justice, and faithfulness.

Isn't that amazing? The moment you realize God is more of a romantic poet or novelist than a regulation-obsessed disciplinarian, it changes you. And the Bible suddenly becomes a love story, not a rulebook. Because that's what a story is—an account of connected events, and that's what the Bible is—an account of connected events involving God and us, His creation. Our unfaithfulness being overwhelmed by the love of a faithful God Who pursues us right into a union with Him that will last forever.

This is God's story of sex, and we've been entrusted with it as parents. It's when we lose the heavenly plot of that story that all hell breaks loose, and as the Bible makes clear, we as

parents have a central role in redeeming the true narrative of this tale. That's why we start this series here, with this foundation, because we have to grasp it and experience it ourselves before we can communicate it to our children. You will find that as you continue to grow in truly understanding it, you won't be able to help but communicate it to your kids with ever-increasing clarity, creativity, and consistency.

THE 4 P's

It's important to share a few basic elements about sex with our children or young people in our sphere of influence. We like to refer to these as "The Four P's"

01 PLEASURE

Yes mom and dad, we need to inform our kids that sex is pleasurable, and that God intended it to be that way. Sex within God's design of a covenantal marriage relationship between a man and a woman ought to be greatly pleasurable (Song of Solomon 7:6-10), which reflects the pleasures of eternal relationship with the Triune God (Psalm 16:11). He is good, He is perfect, He is pleasing. At His right hand are pleasures forevermore. When we draw close and tell this tale in our bodies, we whisper a reminder to each other: we are fearfully and wonderfully made, His works are wonderful, we know that full well.

The dominant culture around us talks a lot, and insanely loudly, about what it pushes as sexual

pleasure, but that's where the world's offering stops. And even the "pleasure" that is sold to us, whether in a sitcom, romcom, hit song, and especially a porn scene, essentially elevates a brief, orgasmic rush that is a disconnected release of frustration rather than an experience of intimate delight. The world's promise of pleasure is cheap. It's based on selfish taking rather than sacrificial giving and finds its end quickly when that physical high subsides and leaves the soul ache.

02 PROCREATION

God blessed the sexual union of a husband and wife and instructed them to be fruitful and increase in number (Genesis 1:28), which, from a parenting perspective, allows us to teach our children about the biological facts and outcomes of sexual activity. This aspect is ultimately a reflection of God's creative nature and a representation of His covenantal love, which produces new life. Not only the new life of a child that the sexual union can yield, but that one flesh union is its own mysterious new entity. What an imaginative God!

The world's story? No procreation—not a lot of pregnancies or births in porn or music videos, nor any emotional life-giving to speak of.

03 PROTECTION

Sexual desire is God's idea, and ongoing sexual intimacy between a husband and wife strengthens their relationship and guards against temptations outside of

the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:3-5), a reflection of the shelter we find in loving relationship with God (Psalm 17:8).

This may be the most obvious and devastating contrast. No protection in the world's story—quite the opposite, human beings with souls and dignity are promiscuously used and abused.

04 PROCLAMATION

In the words of Paul, it is no trouble for us to write the same things again (Philippians 3:1). As with virtually all aspects of the natural world, sex proclaims God's great love. Fidelity in the marital union proclaims the faithfulness and steadfast love of Jesus for His Church (Ephesians 5:25-32), just as celibacy outside of marriage proclaims His perseverance and patience for His future union with His Bride (John 14:2-3; Revelation 19:7). The story of sex is ultimately the story of God's love for His people.

From the world? No proclamation of a beautiful, divine, self-sacrificial love story—a sexualized culture just gives us portrayals of debased self-gratification.

WHY IS PURITY SO IMPORTANT?

And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. — 1 John 3:3

We've talked about the basic plot, so now, why all the fuss about purity? Sexual purity is important because it is a testimony of God's great love and holiness. As we hope in Him, it will be a natural overflow to purify ourselves.

The great news about this is that no matter what we have done or how we have fallen short, we are being sanctified and made pure through faith in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). Even though sexual sin feels different and can have consequences that are far more painful than other transgressions (see 1 Corinthians 6:18), Jesus came to purify a people for Himself (Titus 2:14), a magnificent promise that must form the foundation of our conversations about sexual purity with our children.

Sadly, the discussion of "purity" in the church too often becomes about sin management, behavior modification, and lists of do's and don'ts. Because of this, the primary approach many Christian parents take is to emphasize to their kids "staying pure" (or, remaining a virgin) until marriage. The tactics they tend to employ in that approach, if they do not avoid the subject entirely, include scaring their kids into abstinence, focusing narrowly on virginity as an end in itself, or trying to convince their kids that sex is dirty and shameful... so keep it for your wedding night! While the approach is rooted in good intentions, it sends a different message to kids than parents intend.

The problem is that defining sexual purity simply as “abstinence” or “virginity” doesn’t capture the full story we’ve been talking about, and it doesn’t cast a vision that produces conviction and perseverance for a lifetime. In short, it puts purity in a negative light, which is not at all the Bible’s message to us.

So what is sexual purity? Yes, it is abstaining from sexual activity outside of a marital relationship. Yes, it is fidelity in mind and body to one’s spouse within marriage. But it is more than that. It is not an accomplishment, it is a relationship with the Pure One, a lifelong pursuit of Jesus, a continual process of sanctification that relies on God’s grace and requires repentance, faith, and obedience to the truth that purifies us in the inward being (1 Peter 1:22).

THE SEXUALIZED CULTURE

The challenge, of course, is that the pursuit of purity is resisted and opposed as never before. Along with the weakness in our own human hearts, we are living in a culture where sex is cheapened, packaged, commodified, and distributed into our lives 24/7. And it is in this culture our kids are coming of age.

As parents, we have to realize that we are in a battle, and that we and our kids face an enemy who is after our hearts, minds, and souls. We must be self-controlled and alert because we have an enemy who prowls around like a lion looking for vulnerable people to devour (1 Peter 5:8). And in the age of the mobile Internet, this enemy has never had more tools at his disposal.

Perverse sexualized content and imagery is everywhere, from checkout aisles to mobile phones to restaurant commercials. Sex

education is taking place every day. The only question is the source.

To contest the prominent and potent lies of our culture, Christian parents need to be brave and speak out about God's design and purposes for sex as part of a plan to lay out a solid foundation of biblical truth for their kids.

Too many parents today have given up on trying to teach their children about sex and the pursuit of purity, often because they have bought into the lies of our sexualized culture that purity is impossible or unimportant. They have also believed the lie that the Bible is outdated and doesn't apply to our day and age; they wrongly believe God doesn't really care about our sexuality. If we've hit a bit close to home, don't worry—you are not alone, and you are not out of time.

PARENTS, YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES!

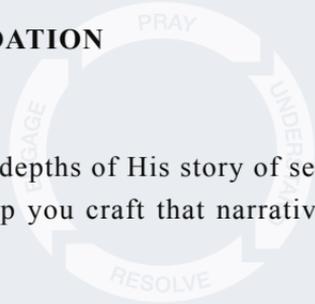
Each day, we parents have a choice as to who will be the primary source of information about sex and sexual ethics for our children. Will it be the broader culture, which is concerned only with grooming our children to be sexualized consumers, or will it be us, who love them as no one else can and are positioned to guide them into a life that is conformed to the image of Christ?

It is our hope and prayer that you will make that intentional decision to be your kids' go-to source for information about sex, and that you regularly engage in an ongoing dialogue with them about God's purposes. God has uniquely positioned you to do this. He has equipped you with Scripture, which is sufficient as a guide and authority in matters of faith and practice, including the

gift of sexuality (2 Timothy 3:16). And, most importantly, our kids want us to engage them! No matter how they squirm, we all desire love and security. Our kids care more about their parents' values and beliefs than they may let on, and they deeply desire parental dialogue and counsel in the area of sexuality.

Be encouraged, and accept the challenge!

LOOP THE FOUNDATION



PRAY ———

Pray for God to reveal more profound depths of His story of sex to you personally, and ask Him to help you craft that narrative for your children.

Meditate on 1 John 3:1-3.

UNDERSTAND ———

- 01** Why is it important to understand God’s purposes and design for sex? How would your life look different if you had been told this story as a youth?

- 02** Which of the “4 P’s” do you tend to emphasize most when you think about God’s story of sex? Which do you acknowledge the least?

- 03** How can a view of sexual purity that is broader than just abstinence and virginity affect your interaction with your kids on this subject?

04 What impact have the messages of the sexualized culture had on you and your kids?

05 What negative experiences have you projected on God's story of sex? Where is our Hope?

RESOLVE ———

Make it your resolve to get into the story. Search God's Word this week for anything related to sex and see what He might reveal to you. Genesis 1:27 might be a good place to start. Commit that personally, as a male or female image bearer of God, you will seek to understand your part of the larger narrative.

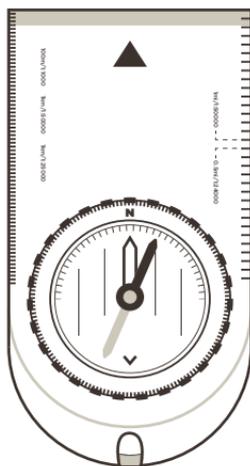
ENGAGE ———

Read a favorite story with your kids this week. Toddlers to teens, find time to sit around a story you all love and discuss the characters, their roles, desires, and purpose. See how this inspires your family to dream and desire to be a part of something bigger and wilder than yourself. Set sail on a great adventure together, because that is what the pursuit of purity is – a journey you take together.

Read the creation story (Genesis 1-3) and Psalm 139 together. What is the redemptive story God is trying to tell? How have each of you been “fearfully and wonderfully” made to play a role in this grand narrative?

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