

## THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 14: PURITY

“For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.” (Mark 7:21-22, NIV)

**P**AUL AZINGER’S ROLE IN THE GAME HAS TURNED TO INSTRUCTION. The former PGA Champion doesn’t hide the fact that he is convinced he has isolated the secrets of putting. What he hides are the facts about these secrets. He reserves them for those who employ him.

Fair enough. Corporations closely guard their R&D work as well. There’s money in doing what no one else can.

But how far does secrecy extend? And how good for us is it?

Surely you’ve heard, for instance, the idea that what happens in someone’s bedroom is nobody’s business but their own. One well-known vacation destination has picked up on that idea and made a slogan of “what happens here stays here.” Perhaps it’s no surprise that this town—Las Vegas—is also known as “Sin City.” Jesus drew a certain distinction about the deeds of unrighteous people: they were done after nightfall. Darkness is the shroud of evil. Sin hides in secret places.

This is perhaps no truer than when we are talking about sexual purity. At least that once was the case. Now sexual immorality is a staple of the entertainment industry, and pornography inches toward the mainstream. While culture still speaks ill of two-timers and users, it has no itching desire to rein in “sexual freedom.”

The righteousness of God was established in the Old Testament as a way to set God’s honoring people apart from the cultures around them. These surrounding nations, like our own, often gave themselves over to the demands of the flesh, including a wide web of sexual relations. That’s not for you, God said, and he lined out a number of unholy sexual connections. *Don’t do these*, was his command. Pretty simple.

When righteousness is threaded into the New Testament, then, it makes sense that honoring God’s holy standard is maintained. So Jesus spoke openly about sexual immorality, grouping it with other evil acts. He didn’t need to go through the list again—he was speaking to Jewish men and women who knew well the laws of the Torah. He just needed to say, “Purity still matters.” And so it does. Pretty simple.

**Opening questions** How does secrecy cut into a person’s confidence? Why do you think we hesitate to be forthcoming about our weaknesses? What helps you to remain honest in your relationships?

**READING** Leviticus 18:1-30; Matthew 5:27-30; Hebrews 13:4

**Sexual sin**  
In the Leviticus laws, how do these acts undermine a holy relationship between people? How do they undermine holiness between a person and God? Why do you think God wanted his people to stand out?

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**Mind and heart**  
Mark 7:21-22 and Matthew 5:27-30 address the underlying evidence of sin. How might we fight to keep our heart and mind right before God?

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**The holy bed**  
How does Hebrews 13:4 reiterate God’s desire that our sexual activity be pure and holy? In what ways does this blend with the fact that he has also made sex to be enjoyable?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/RmSdzB5-kI8>