



*August 15th  
The Coptic Centre  
Birmingham*

# **PURITY RETREAT 2014**

*"You are the light of the world"*

*Matthew 5:14*

# Schedule

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## Friday

|                |                                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1.00 – 5.30 pm | Registration/ activities/ bible study |
| 6.30 - 8.30 pm | Mass                                  |
| 8.30 – 9.00pm  | Dinner                                |
| 9.00 – 9.30pm  | Talk 1 – Dating                       |
| 10.30 pm       | 12 <sup>th</sup> Hour Prayer          |
| 11pm           | Lights out                            |

## Saturday

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 7 am             | WAKE UP!!!!                               |
| 7.30 am          | Quiet time                                |
| 8.00 – 8.45 am   | 1 <sup>st</sup> Hour prayer and breakfast |
| 9.00 - 10.00 am  | Workshop 1 – Dating                       |
| 10.00 - 10.30 am | Break                                     |
| 10.30 - 11.00 am | Talk 2 – Alcohol and Drugs                |
| 11.00 – 11.30 am | Break                                     |
| 11.30 - 12.30 pm | Workshop 2 – Alcohol and Drugs            |
| 12.30 – 2.00 pm  | Lunch and games                           |
| 2.00 – 2.30 pm   | Talk 3 – Sex                              |
| 2.30 – 3.00 pm   | Break                                     |
| 3.00 – 4.00 pm   | Workshop 3 - Sex                          |
| 6.00 – 8.30 pm   | Asheya, tasbeha                           |
| 8.30 – 10.30 pm  | Fifa/ movie and bonfire / worship         |
| 11pm             | Lights out                                |

## Sunday

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 7.15 am         | WAKE UP!!!!     |
| 7.45 - 10.15am  | Mass            |
| 10.15 – 11.00am | Breakfast       |
| 11.00 – 11.30am | Concluding talk |

# Ground Rules

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- Participate in all of the scheduled activities
- Be attentive and don't distract others
- Share what is on your mind because someone might have the same question and be shy to ask as well
- Attend all scheduled activities on time
- Be mindful of your language (profanity, gossip, inappropriate comments)
- Use of mobile phones is not permitted for any reason during all prayers, lectures and workshops
- Clean up after yourself (group activities, room, eating food)
- You are not allowed to enter any bedroom except your own



# Guide to Quiet Time

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## What is Quiet Time?

Quiet time is a daily time I set aside to be alone with God to get to know Him through the Bible and prayer.

## How do I get started in my Quiet Time?

### 1. SELECT A SPECIFIC TIME

The best time to have a quiet time is when I am at my best. Morning is recommended, because that is the example that Christ Himself set for us. It shows that God is my top priority and my mind is not yet cluttered with the day's events. Whatever time you select, be CONSISTENT.

### 2. CHOOSE A SPECIAL PLACE.

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Mark 1:35

### 3. GATHER THE RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED

You will need three things: a Bible, a pen and a notebook/journal. Your Quiet Time journal should be used to write down what the Lord speaks to you about, and to keep your prayer list.

### 4. BEGIN WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDES

Reverence: "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10 Faith: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." Psalm 119:18 Obedience: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33

## The 15 Minute Plan

### 1. RELAX (1 minute)

Be still and quiet! Slow down! Prepare your heart. Take deep breaths and ask God to: Meet with you. Set aside distractions. Reveal to you His Word for today. Bring comfort and clarification to your life

### 2. READ A PASSAGE (4 Minutes)

Read and re-read a passage slowly, perhaps repeating a verse several times, expecting God to make it come alive with relevance for your situation. Read until you feel God has told you something.

### 3. REFLECT ON THE VERSE (4 Minutes)

Here are 6 ways to help you meditate on a verse: Picture it! Visualize the scene in your mind. Pronounce it! Say the verse aloud, each time emphasizing a different word. Paraphrase it! Rewrite the verse in your own words.

Personalize it! Replace pronouns or people in the verse with your own name Pray it! Turn the verse into a prayer and say it back to God. Probe it! Ask the following 9 questions [S.P.A.C.E.P.E.T.S.]. Is there any...

- Sin to confess?
- Promise to claim?
- Attitude to change?
- Command to keep?
- Example to follow?
- Prayer to pray?
- Error to avoid?
- Truth to believe?
- Something to thank God for?

### 4. RECORD WHAT GOD DID (2 Minutes)

In your journal, write out the verse that spoke to you most personally. Then write out a personal application statement that is practical and measurable. What does the passage say generally (What is it teaching me?) What does the passage say to me personally (What should I do specifically?) Refer back to your verse and application several times throughout the day. Try to memorize the verse and meditate upon the application all throughout your day.

### 5. REQUEST (4 Minutes)

Conclude your Quiet Time by talking to God about what He has shown you and making requests from your prayer list

# Quiet Time

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My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

## **James 1:2-4**

How often do we question our Saviour and feel sorry for ourselves regarding sin? Ask God for strength and patience to endure the trials we are facing and clarity to learn the lessons set before us by Him. When we fall in sin we must lift up our hands and thank God for protecting us from pride and acknowledge that every good thought within us is from Him, and therefore ask that we grow closer to Him!

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Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

## **2 Timothy 2:22**

Pray now for the wisdom to see temptation early before it is too late! Fleeing does not show weakness it shows strength and a desire to please our God. Although we flee from sin we must be fleeing TO something. We have been given these tools already! Quiet time, prayer, fellowship can all turn us from sin and bring us closer to the Lord. Pray for vigilance and pray that God awakens in us the Spirit, which calls us to purity!

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# *Dating - Notes*

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What is dating?

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Why, when and how do we date?

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What's the danger of this especially at this age?

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So what is the actual purpose of dating?

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What are the chances of marrying the people we date now?

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So what about flirting?

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# Not even a hint!

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Let us learn ONE verse a week to make it engraved in our hearts to combat the lies of the devil.

*'How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.'* Psalm 119:9-11

Lie: **'Lust is no big deal'**

Truth: *'For that [LUST] would be wickedness; yes, it would be iniquity deserving of judgment. For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction, and would root out all my increase.'* Job 31:11-12

Lie: **'A little fantasising won't hurt'**

Truth: *'For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.'* Romans 8:6

Lie: **'Relax, don't make such a big deal out of sin'**

Truth: *'If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.'* Matthew 5:29

Lie: **'God is understanding and easy going'**

Truth: *'Therefore put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience'* Colossians 3:5-6

Lie: **'What I do with my own body is my business'**

Truth: *'Flee sexual immorality...Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in you body and in your spirit, which are God's.'* 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Lie: **'I can't control my lusts'**

Truth: *'For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God'* 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Lie: **'A little look won't kill'**

Truth: *'Don not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes...Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?'* Proverbs 6:25-27

Lie: **'Lust is harmless, it has no consequences'**

Truth: *'So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.'* Romans 14:12

*'The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!'* Matthew 6:22-23

*'In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore'* Psalm 16:11



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# Alcohol & Drugs - Notes

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Why do people take alcohol / drugs? What comes under the same definition of these?

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Is there a difference between pleasure from alcohol / drugs and joy with God?

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If I have free will, why can't I take alcohol / drugs in moderation? What are the risks?

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Why does God hate alcohol / drugs and addiction to them?

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What steps can I take to cope with pressure from others to avoid alcohol & drugs?

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Who can help me stay away from alcohol / drugs?

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Does God love those who take alcohol / drugs?

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# The Miracle of Recovery

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1. *"For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."* Romans 7:18

2. Admit you have sinned. Admit you are powerless over your compulsive behaviour, addiction or sin and your life has become unmanageable. Believe you are God's child. (John 1:12)

3. *"For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."* Phil 2:13

Admit you need something...that you are perhaps wounded or operating your of lack. Realize that only God can change you and choose to trust in His acceptance over the devil's accusations of grief, guilt or shame. Believe you are free from condemnation in heavenly places (Romans 8:1-2)

4. *"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"* Romans 2:4

Look outside of yourself, your own resources and might, for the solution. Resolve to turn your life and your decisions over to God. Believe you are born of God and the evil one cannot touch you. (1 John 5:18)

5. *"Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the Lord;"* Lamentations 3:40

Consistently and fearlessly search your moral inventory to see the areas in your life that are not honoring God. Believe you cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39)

6. *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* James 5:16

Confess to a priest the nature of your wrongdoing and anyone that it is affecting

7. *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."* James 4:10

Be ready to have God remove all your defects of character because He will only cleanse what you are willing to be cleansed. Believe you have been united with the Lord, and you are one with him in Spirit (1 Cor 6:17)

8. *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you"* Ezekiel 36

At the core of the issue of habitual lust is probably a deeper issue of the heart. Now we all struggle to submit our desires under the authority of Christ. But if retreating to a fantasy world is where you go when you're tired, fed up and frustrated or feeling alone and unloved, what you are saying to your Creator – whether or not you consciously think this – is that He has somehow disappointed you. Your life was not ordered as you would have preferred it. You know He could have brought fulfillment in this area. But since He hasn't you attempt to fulfill it your own way because you believe you're entitled to more than He's given. You're not only unsatisfied, you're passively angry with your Creator. If your thought-life is consistently your battlefields, harnessing sexual desire may only be treating a symptom of the cause. The battle for our minds is as old as the Garden of Eden, where we, like Eve, believe that God is holding something back from us (Gen. 3:5). For true victory, and authentic obedience, we must repent of being angry with our Lord, acknowledge His authority over every part of our lives and rest in the knowledge that He is good to us (Psalm 119:68) and that He is for us (Psalm 56:9). Humbly ask Him to remove all shortcomings and continue to ask Him daily.

# The Miracle of Recovery

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9. *"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."* Matt 5:23 -24

Make a list of all those that have been harmed by your actions and make amendments.

10. *"If it can be done, as much as is possible on your part, **live in peace** with all men"* Romans 12:18

Reconcile with all those that have wronged you. Believe God is not holding people's sins against them, but has reconciled the world to himself in Christ. (2 Cor 5)

11. *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."* 1 Corinthians 10 :12

Continue to take moral inventory and reconcile with those that have sinned against you and those you have sinned against. But don't spend more time thinking about how you're doing, if you're growing, whether you're doing it right or not; pondering over your spiritual failure and brooding over your spiritual success. Instead pay more and more attention to God's righteousness and less and less attention to our own. Believe the good work God began in you will be perfected. (Phil 1:6)

12. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* Colossians 3:16

Pray and meditate daily to improve conscious contact to God. Pray for the knowledge of God's will and the strength and grace from above to carry it out. The Father does not find our desires too strong - but too weak. Pray through the spirit for a revelation of how fascinating Jesus is. Pray for God to show you how He is infinitely better than avoiding sin. Infinitely better than sin itself.

13. *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."* Galatians 6:1

Carry the message to others. Believe You are God's workmanship, created for good works (Eph 2:10)

*But when you don't live out Truth, you give power to the lie.*

Romans 6:12 – 18 says, *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not! Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were transferred to, and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness."*

Forget what is behind and reach for what is ahead. Did you know that elephants are pretty brilliant animals? They never forget things making them highly trainable circus performers. Have you ever wondered why an elephant, as large and powerful as they are never run away from their master? They never leave, even though they're not chained to anything or bound to anything. When they start to train an elephant, they always begin when they're a baby, small...well...smaller. I mean, it's still an elephant. When they're in this small and weakened state of infancy, the baby elephants are chained by large heavy ring around their leg. They feel the weight of that chain and know that when

# *The Miracle of Recovery*

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they tug on it nothing happens; no freedom is found. They are still a captive. As the elephant grows, the heavy ring remains on their foot, however, the chain which held them captive is removed; they are free but don't know it. They can't forget that once they tried to break free and it didn't work, so they must still be a prisoner, afterall, they still feel the weight of the ring but they are free....free to leave. But they can never forget their former bondage. When Paul talks about his desire to know Christ there's one important roadblock he addresses: "Forgetting what is behind and reaching for what is ahead, I press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul knew that our memory, our past can be our greatest downfall. He had one. He understood. And Paul knew if he really wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection...he had to forget. As Christians, we so often think that we're still living life with that big heavy ring on our foot, like we're still carrying our load of sin, like we're still a slave to it. But we're not. If we're saved, we aren't just saved from Hell...we're saved from a life enslaved to sin here on earth – we're saved to walk in newness of life. "How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Ro.6:2-4) You have to live it God's truth out in order to break free from addiction in your life. Paul reminds us that we choose to whom we are going to be slaves by our obedience to that master. If we choose unrighteousness, death and addiction is our master. When we choose righteousness, a loving God who seeks our good is our master. But either way you slice it, you're a slave to someone. The question then is: to whom do you want to be a slave? A mean slave master who seeks your demise or a loving one who seeks your holiness. The power is in your obedience. You will always be an addict controlled by your demons if you limit truth to just knowing and believing and never allow Truth to impact your living.

We are not our failures. You are not your shame. At the cross, Jesus scorned shame and became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. Your definition comes from the God-man who concluded, "It is finished!" as he died to purchase your perfection before the throne of God. Porn holds no power before that throne. It is my prayer that Jesus Christ would become your deepest desire, so that all other lesser pleasures pale and disappear in comparison to his majesty. We are not saved and sanctified by our checklists. We get to be obedient because we already stand as sons and daughters loved, forgiven, and justified by our Dad. Come home, son.

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# Sex - Notes

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What common myths do we hear about sex?

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What is sexuality?

*"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:26-27*

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To help us understand why we wait for marriage to have sex we need to ask: What is sex a picture of?

*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:31-32*

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What does God honouring sexuality look like?

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How far is too far?

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4:4-8*

# Sex - Notes

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“If you don’t kill lust, lust will kill you” Do you agree?

Why should I take the time, discipline, pain, sweat and toil to fight lust?

*“In The Great Divorce, C.S. Lewis tells an allegorical story about a ghost of a man afflicted by lust. Lust is incarnated in the form of a red lizard that sits on his shoulder and whispers seductively in his ear. When the man despairs about the lizard, an angel offers to kill it for him. But the fellow is torn between loving his lust and wanting it to die. He fears the death of the lust will kill him. He makes excuse after excuse to the angel, trying to keep the lizard he says he doesn’t want. (Are you starting to see yourself?) Finally the man agrees to let the angel seize and kill the lizard. The angel grasps the reptile, breaks its neck, and throws it to the ground. Once the spell of lust is broken, the ghostly man is gloriously remade into a real and solid being. And the lizard, rather than dying, is transformed into a breathtaking stallion. Weeping tears of joy and gratitude, the man mounts the horse and they soar into the heavens. In this story, C.S. Lewis shows the connection between killing lust and finding life. It feels as if destroying our lust will destroy us. But it doesn’t. And when we destroy our lustful desire, we come not to the end of desire, but to the beginning of pure desire (p. 27-28).” Joshua Harris in Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*

*“What is a lizard compared to a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.” CS Lewis*

How do I kill lust?



# Sexual Purity

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***But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Eph. 5:3)***

Some practical ways to maintain sexual purity . . .

- Practice discretion with your eyes, dress, speech, and behavior. Avoid conversation, eye contact, and prayer of an intimate nature.
- Learn to be modest, rather than enticing men and causing them to lust.
- Keep free from emotional entanglements. Guard your heart!
- Do not indulge in mental fantasies.
- Do not indulge in unholy thoughts and desires such as a crush on another woman's husband.
- Do not act bold and flirtatious.
- Do not use sexually explicit or coarse language.
- Do not be entertained by off-color humor that legitimizes sexual sin.
- Abstain from physical contact that could stimulate illegitimate sexual desires.
- Keep the marriage bed undefiled—yours and others'.
- Do not withhold sex from your spouse (making him more vulnerable to sin).
- Put high hedges up in regard to email and cell phones.
- Do not feed on books, movies, or music that fuels romantic desires that cannot be legitimately fulfilled.
- Meditate on and practice Phil. 4:8 in your entertainment choices: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
- Be willing to do battle when tempted.
- Be accountable.
- Resolve to be pure and to *wait* until marriage. It's a whole lot harder to wait once you have tasted it.

# *What God has said about YOU*

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- You were made in my image (Genesis 1:27).
- You are my treasured possession, my peculiar treasure (Exodus 19:5, niv, kjv).
- If you seek me with your whole heart, you will find me (Deuteronomy 4:29).
- When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you (Psalm 34:18).
- Delight in me, and I will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).
- I know everything about you (Psalm 139:1).
- I know when you sit down and when you stand up (Psalm 139:2).
- I am familiar with all your ways (Psalm 139:3).
- You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).
- All your days were written in my book before there was one of them (Psalm 139:16).
- My thoughts toward you are as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore (Psalm 139:17–18).
- As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you (Isaiah 40:11).
- I knew you before you were conceived (Jeremiah 1:5).
- My plans for your future are for good, to give you hope (Jeremiah 29:11).
- I have loved you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).
- I will never stop being good to you (Jeremiah 32:40).
- I want to show you great and marvelous things (Jeremiah 33:3).
- I rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).
- I am your provider. I will meet all your needs (Matthew 6:31–33).
- I know how to give good gifts to my children (Matthew 7:11).
- I am the Bridegroom and you are my bride (John 3:29).
- I have prepared a place for you. I will come back for you and take you to myself so that we can be together forever (John 14:3).
- I love you even as I have loved my only Son (John 17:23).
- I revealed my love for you through Jesus (John 17:26).
- In me you live and move and have your being (Acts 17:28).
- I am for you and not against you (Romans 8:31).
- I will never allow anything to separate you from my love for you (Romans 8:35–39).
- I gave my Son so that you and I could be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:19).
- I am your peace (Ephesians 2:14).
- I am able to do more than you could possibly imagine (Ephesians 3:20).
- I am at work in you, giving you the desire and the power to fulfill my good purpose for you (Philippians 2:13).
- I did not give you a spirit of fear but of power, love, and self discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).
- Every good gift you receive comes from my hand (James 1:17).
- My love for you is not based on your love for me (1 John 4:10).
- I gave the ultimate expression of my love for you through Jesus (1 John 4:10).
- I will dwell with you in heaven. You will be mine, and I will be your God (Revelation 21:3).
- I will one day wipe away every tear from your eyes, and there will be no more crying or pain or sorrow (Revelation 21:4).
- I have written your name in my book (Revelation 21:27).
- I invite you to come (Revelation 22:17).
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# Additional Resources

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## Website:

<http://www.stmarkdc.org/puritylust>

## Books:

Sex Is Not The Problem (Lust Is) - Joshua Harris

What Are You Waiting For? - Dannah Gresh

## Books for Girls

And the Bride Wore White – Dannah Gresh

Authentic Beauty – Leslie Ludy

Uncompromising - Hannah Farver

## Books for Boys:

Finally Free - Heath Lambert

Who Moved the Goal Post? – Bob Gresh

Wild at Heart - John Eldredge

## The Church Fathers on Purity:

“Concerning your body, and the passions which afflict its members.....reverence the honour with which God has dignified the body, and do not reduce it to the vile conditions of sinful lust.” -St. John Chrysostom

“Christians practice self-control and exercise continence, observe monogamy, guard chastity, and wipe out all injustice, destroying sin with its root.” – St. Theophilus of Antioch

“In the sixteenth year of the age of my flesh..., the madness of raging lust exercised its dominion over me (through sexual desire), and my invisible enemy trod me down and seduced me. In my sexual involvements, I drew my shackles along with me, terrified to have them taken off me. What made me a slave to lust was the bait of satisfying and insatiable momentary urge.” -St. Augustine of Hippo

“Living a chaste Christian life is sometimes more difficult than suffering a martyr’s death.” - St. Mark the Ascetic

“Lustful stories and drawings set up market-places for immorality, and establish infamous opportunities for the young to practice every sort of corrupt pleasure.” -Athenagoras (2nd cent. Athenian Christian philosopher)

“The princes of evil have blinded me with their passions and by their cunningness they have robbed me of the beauty of my youth. What can I do, now that I have lost my purity? I will cry out to Christ, that He might return my beauty to me- and then will the evil ones be ashamed. My Savior cries out to me, to His disciple: do not despair of the salvation; I will restore you and forgive you your sins. I have found you and I will not leave you; for I have redeemed you with my very own Blood. Cry out, O sinner, with all your might, and spare not your throat; for your Lord is merciful and loves those who repent. As soon as you return, your Father will come out beforehand to meet you. He will slaughter the fatted calf, clothe you in a fine robe, and rejoice in you.” -St. Ephraim the Syrian

“Only the lifeless are exempt from the battles of lust. We know, then, that the struggle of flesh and the spirit is extremely useful to us.to gain self-control and mastery over our desires.” -St. Cassian the monk



[www.birminghamcopts.org](http://www.birminghamcopts.org)