

Help Teenagers Strive for Moral Purity



Thanks to pop singers, purity rings have become a hot trend. Many young people are publicly announcing their intentions to abstain from sex until marriage. For some kids, these rings mean even more. About his purity ring, Syracuse University freshman Stephen Chang says, "It also means that I won't drink, smoke, or date until I know I'm ready to date for marriage. It's a symbol of me saying that I want to live a life that's more pleasing to God."

Maintaining a pure, God-pleasing lifestyle in our sinful world is tough. Kids are tempted to enjoy immediate pleasure rather than wait for long-term rewards. As parents, you play a vital role in your teenagers' moral decision-making. Not only do kids look to you as examples, but they want you to listen and be available to talk. Surveys show that kids crave moral information from their parents. Research also shows that kids whose parents had talked with them about tough topics were more likely to turn to their parents first in difficult situations.

Kids crave control over their lives, and the quest for purity is one area they can control. It's also an area where kids can assert their individuality, think for themselves, and not follow the crowd. So encourage your teenagers to make a commitment to a morally pure lifestyle. Even if you don't give them a purity ring, you can let them know that Jesus, who died to make them pure, expects sexual integrity from his children. Just as importantly, when we mess up, Jesus offers forgiveness and the chance to renew our commitment to live for him.

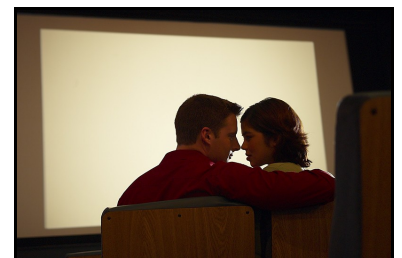
The book *Guy Talk, Girl Talk*, a small-group resource from SimplyYouthMinistry.com, offers these three reasons why purity is more than not having sex:

- 1. It's about purity of your heart.** Every commitment begins in the heart. Purity is about resisting the world's way of doing things. The challenge is to make a commitment that guards your heart, mind, and body from anything that would contaminate you with the sin of the world.
- 2. It's about purity of your mind.** Our thoughts and what we put in our minds can be just as damaging as what we do with our bodies. Think about the magazines you read, the movies you watch, and the songs you listen to. What messages are they sending? Purity isn't about avoiding "the world" but about making daily decisions that maintain the purity of your mind and prevent it from being contaminated.
- 3. It's about purity of your motives.** When your heart and mind are pure, the results are actions motivated by purity. Wrong motives are about fulfilling only your own selfish desires, such as instant gratification



Contrary to what's seen in the media, not all teenagers engage in premarital sex. Consider these stats from a variety of online sources:

- More than half (52%) of high school students have never had sexual intercourse.
- 87% of teenagers don't think it's embarrassing for kids to say they're virgins.
- Of teenagers who have had sexual intercourse, 63% say they wish they had waited.
- 82% of teenagers desire to have one marriage partner for life.
- When the Barna Group asked 1,000 U.S. parents about the most important outcomes of raising their kids, the top answer (39%) was "getting a good education." Only 4% answered "helping to establish



or approval from others.

appropriate moral values.”

Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Use these discussion starters to help kids open up about purity and sex:

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word "purity"? What are some ways, besides sexual abstinence, that people can stay pure?
2. How much control do you have over your own purity?
3. What are the biggest temptations that can thwart a pure lifestyle? What are some ways to resist them?
4. How do you think God views sex? How does your view compare to God's?
5. What are the pros and cons of making a public commitment to purity? Do you want to take that step? Why or why not?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. God will give your teenagers the desire and self-control to be morally pure in all aspects of their lives.
2. Your teenagers will make a commitment to stay sexually pure until marriage.
3. God will help you truly listen to your teenagers and give you opportunities to connect with them about important topics.
4. God will strengthen you to be an example of purity for your family and for everyone you encounter.

Verse of the month

"Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts."
(2 Timothy 2:22)

God offers great advice for fleeing impure temptations: Run! But he also provides Christlike alternatives that offer more joy, as well as eternal rewards. A great way to avoid facing temptations in the first place is to hang out with other people striving for purity. When you're surrounded by Christians who provide support and accountability, it's easier to keep your commitment to stay pure.

Due to low sign up and after much thought, I have decided that we need to make a switch in the camp that we will be attending this summer. The deadline came and went and

only a few students were able to come up with the \$75 deposit needed to secure a spot at Student Life Mission Camp. With the struggling economy, this may just be God's way of directing us to another camp this year. Therefore, I have decided that our students will attend Super Summer Arkansas. This camp will take place at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, AR. Super Summer is structured differently than most camps in that the jr. high (6th-8th grade) and high school (9th-12th grade) students will attend camp at different times. The Jr. High camp called Super Summer JV will be June 20-23 and the High School camp will take place June 23-27. By switching camps there are some positives and negatives. The major positives are that Super Summer JV is only \$150 and H.S. Super Summer is only \$170. This is compared to \$309 for Student Life Mission Camp. Don't worry if you have already paid \$75 for Student Life, you have not lost your money. We will simply transfer the money to the Super Summer fund. All money will need to be in by April 5th. The registration process for Super Summer will occur over the internet. Registration opens March 1st and you will receive further details at that time on how to register. The major negative about switching camps is that Super Summer does not have the mission's emphasis that Student Life does. In an effort to keep our mission's emphasis, we will be planning a separate mission trip that will happen during the same week that Student Life was schedule to take place. It is likely that both trips could take place for the same cost that it took for Student Life alone. More information will come later about this trip. I would encourage students to attend both, but understand if only one of these trips is affordable for your family. If you wish to learn more about Super Summer Arkansas before you receive further information from me, you can visit, www.supersummerarkansas.com. Thank you for your understanding during these uncertain economic times.

In Christ,
Cory



MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: Lady GaGa, born Joanne Germanotta, is a singer-songwriter in the electronic genre. She worked her way to the top by playing New York City clubs, and last October her debut album released atop Billboard's Electronic Albums Chart. The single "Just Dance" hit number one in the U.S. Lady GaGa recently toured with New Kids on the Block and is now on the road with Pussycat Dolls.

Albums: *The Fame* (2008)

What Parents Should Know: Lady GaGa's musical style is pop and electro-pop, rock and disco. Her album addresses fame, glamorizes partying and alcohol, and uses some foul language. Lady GaGa's musical acts are eccentric and full of self-designed scant clothing.

What Lady GaGa Says: "I've just been growing. I think everybody grows.... I'm constantly changing. I am constantly pushing the envelope to be more and more creative and different and original to create this beautiful, graphic, important imagery."

Discussion Questions: Is being different a good or bad thing, and why? In what ways are you growing and changing? Do you like to "push the envelope"? What are some God-pleasing ways that young people can stand out from the crowd?

Christian Artist

Background: Stephanie Smith's debut album is driven by her compelling redemption story. At age 14, she met her father, who called her the wrong name, wounding her deeply. During the next few years, Smith did lots of soul-searching. After going on mission trips, she won a vocal contest and was signed to TobyMac's Gotee Records. Smith's music expresses the healing power of forgiveness.

Albums: *Not Afraid* (2008)

What Parents Should Know: In the vulnerable piano ballad "First Words," Smith opens up about the encounter with her father. The catchy breakup song "Not Afraid" reminds listeners what relationships are all about. "Beauty" deals with having inner peace.

What Smith Says: "I ended up going to Guatemala on a mission trip. If anyone is struggling with pride or self-righteousness, you need to go haul cinder blocks up a mountain. The hard work will cure you!"

Discussion Questions: Read Proverbs 11:2. How would you define pride and self-righteousness? Do you struggle with either of these traits? If so, explain. What experiences humble you? What are some ways to ensure that you're characterized more by humility than by pride?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (releases Feb. 13)

Genre: Comedy

Rating: PG (for some mild language and thematic elements)

Synopsis: Despite mounting debt, New Yorker Rebecca Bloomwood (Isla Fisher) lives out her passion for shopping every day. She dreams of working for a favorite fashion magazine but instead writes a financial-advice column. Rebecca goes through extreme, funny adventures to hide her inexperience and reach her ultimate dream job.

Discussion Questions: How important to you is financial success? Would you be happy working in a career that pays little money? Why or why not? What's your dream job? What steps are you taking right now to achieve it? While trying to reach an important goal, would you be willing to compromise your integrity? to go into massive debt? to sacrifice friends or relationships? Explain.



February 2009

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			Shift Student Services 6:30			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Junior High Life Groups 6:00-7:30		High school Life Groups Bruce Love's House 6:30	Shift Student Services 6:30	HIGH SCHOOL LIFE GROUPS Cory Major's House 6:30		Happy Valentine's Day!
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Junior High Life Groups 6:00-7:30		High school Life Groups Bruce Love's House 6:30	Shift Student Services 6:30	HIGH SCHOOL LIFE GROUPS Cory Major's House 6:30		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Junior High Life Groups 6:00-7:30		High school Life Groups Bruce Love's House 6:30	Shift Student Services 6:30	HIGH SCHOOL LIFE GROUPS Cory Major's House 6:30		