

DAY ONE

DRESSED FOR HONOR

When it comes to sex, two words are commonly used in student ministry: modesty and purity. Those conversations tend to be awkward for both leaders and students. But it's important to be clear on these ideas because we often misunderstand what they mean.

Write out definitions for the following in your own words:

- **Modesty:**
- **Purity:**

When we discuss modesty, we typically talk about the way people dress. While you might want to roll your eyes when you hear the word *modesty*, it is actually important for a healthy sexual ethic. Think about it this way: If we are called to honor God with our bodies, then shouldn't this influence how we dress? Out of respect for our brothers and sisters in Christ, who aim to love God in both thought and deed, shouldn't we dress with modesty? Although this teaching is often directed at girls, guys need it too.

We are all responsible for our own lustful thoughts. But does this mean we have no responsibility to one another about how we present our bodies? Do we have God-honoring motives when we dress in a way that invites others to look at us with lust? Modesty asks us to consider that how we dress contributes to the broader environment. So we ask ourselves: How can we dress in a way that brings honor to God and helps create a loving environment for others?

Take a minute to think about your own life and how you dress. Are you dressing in a way that brings honor to God and shows love to others? Explain.

For some, the word "purity" carries baggage. The idea of living in a pure way becomes misguided when it is a means to shame people rather than a way to encourage others to live within the abundance of God's grace. That doesn't mean we can throw purity out the window. In fact, let's see what the Bible has to say about purity and sexual immorality.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

What does Paul say your body is? Why is this important to sexual purity?

Our culture likes to say, "I can do whatever I want with my body." What do these verses reveal about this mentality?

What do these verses say we must do with our bodies?

God's commands are for our good, and we thrive when we live as God has designed us to live. The motivation to avoid sexual immorality isn't about us. Rather, the motivation should be to honor God with our bodies. The question should be, "How do we best use our bodies to love God and love other people?"

Ask yourself: Am I honoring God with my body? Write a few sentences in response.

DAY TWO

BALANCE

Finding the balance between grace and truth is not always easy. Your generation faces difficult ethical questions that previous generations never had to consider.

DESCRIBE HOW YOU WOULD RESPOND IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS WITH TRUTH AND GRACE.

You are invited to a same-sex wedding. Do you attend out of love for your friend or family member or do you decline because it goes against God's model for marriage?

A transgender classmate wishes to be addressed by her or his preferred gender pronoun. Do you comply out of grace or does that reject the biological truth?

Scripture does not give us simple answers, but Jesus invites us to follow His lead by responding with both grace and truth. He invites us to truly love people, whether they realize we're loving them or not. Let's see how He exemplified this.

READ MARK 2:15-17.

And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus? How did Jesus explain eating with "sinners"?

Why was it important that Jesus ate with known "sinners"? What would this accomplish?

Jesus was criticized for dining with "tax collectors and sinners." Since they were "sinners," Jesus knew they would be more open to His message than self-righteous religious leaders. Rather than requiring them to change their moral behavior first, He built loving relationships with them, knowing they could only experience spiritual transformation *after* they experienced His grace.

Here's another example of Jesus exercising grace and truth.

READ JOHN 4:7-18 IN YOUR BIBLE.

Why did the woman find it odd that Jesus was speaking with her?

How did Jesus exercise both grace and truth with the Samaritan woman?

In both scenarios, Jesus interacted with people who the social and religious traditions of His day said He shouldn't associate with. This shows Jesus's great love for everyone, including those society shunned. Because He showed them grace, He was then able to share truth.

What do these two interactions of Jesus with "sinners" teach us about how we can love others with grace and truth?

Think of someone in your life who isn't living according to God's sexual ethic. List some practical ways you can show this person grace and truth.

Once people know we love them, they may also be more open for us to share the truth with them. By loving them well, we show that we truly want what is best for them, just like God does.

DAY THREE

YOUR BODY MATTERS

One of the first heresies in the early church, Gnosticism, viewed the body as evil. Gnostics believed that salvation occurs when the soul escapes the “prison house” of the body.¹ But this is incredibly unbiblical. Genesis 1 tells us that creation—including the human body—is good.

With that in mind, consider the importance of Jesus taking on a human form.

READ THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. — Hebrews 4:15

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:13

What was Jesus able to show us and do for us by taking on a human body?

Jesus took on human flesh to identify with us, to show us how to love, and ultimately to redeem us. This is why Scripture calls us to love God and others with our bodies and our souls. One way we love God with our souls is by learning to think like Christ.

READ ROMANS 12:2.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

What does the “renewal of your mind” mean? What does this enable us to avoid?

What does a renewed mind empower us to do?

We are transformed in part by learning to see the world through a biblical perspective. This is one of the main goals of this book—to help you think with the mind of Christ about sex, love, and relationships.

But we can’t stop there. Not only are we called to renew our minds and transform our thinking, but we are also called to responsibly steward—that is, manage or care for—our bodies.

READ ROMANS 6:13 (CSB).

And do not offer any parts of [your body] 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.

How does this relate to properly taking care of your body?

In other words, as believers, we have died to sin and been born as new creations in Christ. Our “old selves” were crucified with Christ and we have been set free by grace to honor God with our bodies (see Rom. 6:6).

List some actions and behaviors you resolve to do—or stop doing—so that you can honor God with your body.