

How Can a Young Person Stay Pure?

Eight habits from Psalm 119 that keep your heart, your words, and your life clean

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

PSALM 119:9

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Purity isn't just about avoiding bad things. It's about filling your life with God's Word. Psalm 119 gives eight practical habits that keep a young person clean.
SCRIPTURE	Psalm 119:9-16 · 1 Timothy 4:12
LENGTH	About 20 to 25 minutes
BEST FOR	Middle school and high school
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and a clean glass of water with a bottle of food coloring (or a few drops of dirt)

Start here: what does "pure" mean?

Hold up a clean glass of water and add one drop of food coloring. Ask: "Is this water still pure?" Most will say no. Just one drop changes it. The dictionary defines *pure* as "free from anything that weakens or pollutes; containing nothing that does not properly belong; free from moral fault or guilt."

When most people hear "purity," they only think about sex. That matters a lot, but Paul gives young Timothy a much bigger picture:

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." **1 TIMOTHY 4:12**

Purity touches everything: your speech, your daily activities, your friendships, your faith, and your relationships with the opposite sex. So how can a young person stay pure in all of that? The writer of Psalm 119 asked the same question.

BACKGROUND FOR THE LEADER

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible: 176 verses arranged as an acrostic. Each of its 22 sections begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and almost every verse mentions God's Word (law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commands, judgments). Verses 9-16 are the second section, *Beth*. The question in verse 9 is literally about a "young man," and the eight verses that follow are the answer.

Eight habits that keep you pure

1. Live by God's Word (v. 9)

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." To "take heed" means to guard, watch, and pay attention. Purity starts with letting the Bible, not your friends, feelings, or feed, set the standard for your life.

2. Seek God with your whole heart (v. 10)

"With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!" Half-hearted faith drifts. When you go after God with everything, it's much harder to wander. Notice it's also a prayer: we need God's help not to stray.

3. Hide God's Word in your heart (v. 11)

"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." **PSALM 119:11**

"Hidden" means stored up like treasure. When you memorize Scripture, it's there when temptation hits, even when you don't have your Bible or phone. That's exactly how Jesus fought temptation: "It is written..." (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

4. Praise God and let Him teach you (v. 12)

"Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes." Worship and learning go together. A heart that praises God is a teachable heart.

5. Say God's Word out loud (v. 13)

"With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth." Speaking Scripture out loud helps it stick, and it changes the way you talk. Pure speech starts with filling your mouth with good words.

6. Rejoice in obeying God like finding treasure (v. 14)

"I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches." Think about how you'd feel if you found a thousand dollars. The psalmist feels that way about following God! Purity isn't a list of things you're missing out on; it's a treasure you get to enjoy.

7. Meditate on God's ways (v. 15)

"I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways." To meditate means to think about something over and over, like chewing slowly. Whatever you think about most will shape what you do. Fill your mind with God's ways, and there's less room for impure thoughts.

8. Delight in God's Word so you won't forget it (v. 16)

"I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word." To delight means to take real pleasure in something, even to be drawn to it. What you love, you don't neglect.

BACK TO THE GLASS

Here's a way to "clean" the colored water: keep pouring clean water into the glass. As the clean water overflows, the color gets lighter and lighter. That's what God's Word does. We don't stay pure only by trying not to let dirty things in; we stay pure by constantly pouring in what is clean. (And when we do fall, 1 John 1:9 promises cleansing through Jesus.)

Putting it into practice

Look at the eight habits again. Every one of them is about God's Word: living by it, seeking God through it, hiding it, praising, speaking, rejoicing, meditating, and delighting. Purity is the overflow of a life soaked in Scripture.

You don't have to do all eight perfectly this week. Pick one or two to start. Memorize Psalm 119:9-11. Read a psalm a day. Swap one thing that pollutes your mind for something that fills it with truth. Ask a friend to keep you accountable. Little by little, God will keep your way clean.

TALK IT OVER

1. 1 Timothy 4:12 lists several areas of life. Which area of purity is hardest for students today? Why?
2. Why do you think the psalmist connects purity so closely to God's Word?
3. How has memorizing Scripture ever helped you (or how could it help you) when you were tempted?
4. Verse 14 says obeying God is like finding treasure. Do you see purity as a treasure or a restriction? Why?
5. Which of the eight habits will you start this week?

TAKE IT HOME

Memorize Psalm 119:9-11 this week. Write it on a card and read it out loud each morning. Then choose one thing that has been polluting your mind (a show, a playlist, an account, a conversation) and replace it with something that fills you with what is clean.

Keep pouring in what is clean.

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