

HOLINESS & HONOR

Godly Discipline for Love and Intimacy

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SHOTS**

Holiness and Honor: Godly Discipline for Love and Intimacy
By Christa Lord, with Jim Lord

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Introduction

Teens need biblical principles to guide their sexuality and relationships. If we remain silent on the subject, others will rush in to fill that void with incorrect or unhealthy ideas. Teens may get the impression that sexuality is shameful and taboo, then turn to cultural messaging that carries dangerous consequences.

Nor can we simply hand young people a list of rules to follow, hoping that something will stick and prevent them from ruining their lives. At best, rules may curb unwanted behavior; but they aren't enough to reach the heart.

If you have a pet dog, you want your dog to run and have fun, but you also don't want your dog to run away or get hit by car. So you modify the dog's behavior—by putting it on a leash, by keeping it within a fenced yard, or by training it with an electric collar. That can protect the dog, but it doesn't help the dog understand why one place is safe and another isn't.

People aren't animals. We can't simply restrict a child's behavior for 18 years and expect them to understand what's right and what's wrong—what's healthy and what's abusive. Yes, we put plastic caps over light sockets to keep children from sticking their fingers into a high-amperage circuit, but if we send our teenagers into the world without a healthy respect for electricity, we've failed. An adult is mature when they make good decisions without another person forcing them to. They must *understand*, not simply *react*.

So by introducing the topic and explaining biblical principles, we can affirm sexuality as a gift from God—a blessing that ultimately glorifies Him, if expressed in a way that reflects His love. We can help teens understand the right context and motivation for sexual activity.

We pray that this study will be a useful tool as you share God's grace and truth to young people.

To the Teacher

Purpose of the study

While it's impossible to cover the topic of sex comprehensively in just five short lessons, this study . . .

- Introduces terms essential to clear and effective discussion
- Lays a foundation for a biblical philosophy of sexuality
- Evaluates harmful philosophies regarding sexual activity
- Discusses godly marriage as the positive context for sex
- Outlines a foundation for a godly marriage
- Emphasizes the need for biblical self-discipline as it applies to sexuality

If you're interested in exploring these topics further, check out *Love and Truth: Navigating Relationships with God's Grace*, a 30-lesson study on relationships. You can order this study at positiveaction.org.

Preparing to Teach

Depending on their backgrounds, your teens may view this study with nervousness, apprehension, curiosity, flippancy, or just apathy. Many of them will watch their teacher's attitude toward the subject and use it to define their own.

So celebrate that God has revealed His truth to us—that He's given us the chance to respond and pass it on to others.

Before you begin this study, we recommend that you do the following:

- Read through all lessons and note their objectives.
- Keep communication open with parents and guardians.
 - Explain the topic and approach ahead of time. Share the study's objectives, which target biblical principles and philosophy.
 - Note what the course does *not* cover—namely, conventional sex education or health topics.
 - Encourage parents to be available for their teen's questions. Give young people time to process and internalize these principles, and direct them to reputable resources when they have questions regarding matters of health.
- Pray for God's wisdom and rely on His grace, trusting God to work through you.

Class Interaction

When addressing matters of sin and conscience, be sensitive to the knowledge and needs of your students, and tailor the content accordingly. We've included several application notes that deal with specific issues. You can choose whether to include them in the lesson or simply use them to respond to student questions.

Because the material focuses on biblical principles and philosophy, you should not need to separate your class by age or sex. But depending on the background and maturity of your students, you may find that temporarily separated classes lead to better, more open discussion.

Finally, you may choose to host a Q&A session after Lesson 5. At the end of Lesson 3, you'll find a note about distributing question forms for your students to fill out anonymously and return the following week. This will give you a week to review the questions before the Q&A session. You may wish to invite an additional youth worker or your spouse to help answer questions.

Lesson Format

God's Word is the primary catalyst for our spiritual growth. And as God teaches us His truth through His Word, He does so in a way that captivates our attention and opens our understanding. Just as Christ illustrated His teaching with tangible objects—a coin, a tree, or a sheep—you can use illustrations to cement biblical principles in the minds of your students. As you teach, instead of simply talking about how God's Word reveals our heart (cf. James 1:22–25), bring a mirror to show your students.

Hot Shots encourage interaction between students and teacher through exercises, handouts, and lively illustrations. Use the suggestions provided in each lesson, but feel free to enrich the lesson by using your own ideas.

Each Hot Shot lesson follows the same format.



The Warm-Up introduces the lesson topic to your students through activities such as songs, games, handouts, and discussion questions.



The Bridge transitions from The Warm-Up to the main text of Scripture for the lesson.



The Content introduces and expands the main points. Throughout the lesson, you'll use handouts and discussion questions to help students internalize what they've heard.



The Closing concludes the lesson by reviewing the main points and applying them to your students' lives.

Handouts may be copied for church use. They are also available as a free PDF download on the *Holiness and Honor* product page at positiveaction.org.

Before Each Lesson . . .

1. Read through the lesson and take note of the Lesson Aim, Objectives, and any preparation needed for creative teaching segments.
2. Adapt the lesson if necessary. Determine ahead of time if you'll need to modify teaching methods or activities to fit your equipment or facilities.
3. Plan your schedule for class time. Each lesson can be taught in 30–45 minutes, but feel free to shorten or lengthen the lesson to fit your needs.

4. Be enthusiastic! Excitement on your part will help cultivate your students' interest. If you don't feel that one of the teaching ideas or Warm-Ups provided will excite your teens, modify it to fit your group.

Course Objectives

This study will . . .

- Introduce the principle of disciplining our sexuality
- Evaluate common views regarding sexual activity
- Discuss the purpose and functions of marriage
- Challenge students to exercise Spirit-motivated discipline of their sexuality

Overview

Lesson 1: Spiritual Self-Discipline

Aim: To introduce the principle of self-discipline, as applied to sexuality

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:2–8

Lesson 2: Wrong Views of Sexual Activity

Aim: To identify and evaluate common views of sexual activity

Text: Various

Lesson 3: Marriage, Part 1

Aim: To outline a broad philosophy toward marriage—including its form, purpose, and functions

Text: Matthew 19:3–12

Lesson 4: Marriage, Part 2

Aim: To present sexual activity in marriage as an expression of relational intimacy

Text: Various

Lesson 5: Moving Forward

Aim: To encourage teens to practice godly discipline regarding their sexuality

Text: Various

LESSON 1

SPIRITUAL SELF-DISCIPLINE

It's easy to think of *discipline* in purely negative terms. Yet this word gives us valuable insight into how we, as Christians, should live our new life in Christ. It defines our response to the ever-present battle between our flesh and the Holy Spirit—a battle revealed by our values, our desires, and what we do with them. To glorify God, we must discipline ourselves and submit to the Spirit.

Aim: To introduce the principle of self-discipline, as applied to sexuality

Objectives: Students will . . .

- Understand key terms used throughout this study
- See the biblical basis for the principle of sexual discipline
- Appreciate the interdependence of men and women

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:2–8

Lesson



Begin the class by announcing that you'll play a game called "Sleuth." Explain the rules.

In this game, two teams will each write a list of clues to help their chosen "sleuth" correctly identify items in a room—without tipping off the opposing team's sleuth.

Divide the class into two teams and instruct each team to pick a person to be their sleuth.

Send the two sleuths out of the room until the game is ready to start.

Give Team A and Team B their respective lists of items and tell them to write a clue for each item on their list. During the game, they will share each clue with both sleuths. Ideally, the clue should relate to the item enough for their own sleuth to find it—but not enough that the competing sleuth will find it first.

Preparation

You will need . . .

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Candy
- Copies of Handout 1, one per student
- A thick rope and masking tape for a game of tug-of-war

Below is a suggested list for each team, but feel free to substitute any item with things unique to your room. Set a time limit of five minutes for writing the clues.

Team A

1. Table
2. Paper
3. Shoe

Team B

1. Lightbulb
2. Window
3. Carpet

Bring the sleuths back into the room and allow each team to take turns reading off a clue to both sleuths. The two sleuths will look for each item at the same time. They must race to correctly identify the item by touching it, but they can only touch one item.

The first sleuth to touch the correct item scores a point for his or her team. If neither sleuth touches the correct item, neither team gets a point. The team with the most points at the end wins.



Obviously, the game would have gone faster if the teams had been able to name the item for the sleuth to find; but that wouldn't be fun.

One of the first things we have to do in a conversation about a difficult topic is to define our terms. It doesn't matter if the issue is science, philosophy, theology, emotions, or whatever—to communicate well, we have to speak the same language.

This study dives into the biblical principles, philosophy, and morality surrounding our sexuality, all summarized in two big concepts: holiness and honor. Sexuality as a topic is difficult, however. It's surrounded by a lot of ignorance, embarrassment, misconceptions, and of course concerns about privacy.

So sometimes we talk *around* things instead of naming them directly, or we use different names for the same concept. As a result, two people can be part of the same conversation but discuss two entirely different things.



So let's start by defining the terms we'll be using and what they mean for the purposes of this study.

Defining the Terms

Sex or Sex Designation

People use the word *sex* to refer to different things. In this study, we'll use the term *sex* to mean “the categorization as male or female based on physiological characteristics.” We could also use the phrase *sex designation*.

Side Note: Intersexuality

Intersex people are born with chromosomal or anatomical variations that don't match the usual male or female characteristics. Doctors call these “differences of sex development.” While people with intersex characteristics can face enormous challenges, they are no less image-bearers of God. Our identity and worth are not based on our biology.

Gender

Sometimes people use the term *gender* to mean *sex*—but doing so loses an important distinction between the two terms. *Sex* is a binary categorization—male or female—but *gender* encompasses much more. Gender refers to the expression of our sex designation, and it's influenced by sex—our biology—and by our culture and environment.

Sexual Activity

Broadly defined, *sexual activity* refers to the acts by which people express physical attraction toward each other. When we use the phrase *sexual activity* in this study, we're talking specifically about actions and words intended to stir up or fulfill sexual desire. In this study, this phrase may be abbreviated as simply *sex*.

Now, there's a difference between sexual activity and *attraction*. Attraction is one of the early steps in finding a spouse. We meet someone, and we feel pleasantly compelled by their personality, their looks, their actions. There's something about them that makes us interested in getting to know them better.

But if we interact with others in a way that primarily draws attention to our sexual desire—or if we try to stir up their sexual desire—that is sexual activity. The big difference is in our intent or motivation. What part of ourselves are we putting forward—our whole person, or mainly our sexuality?

Discussion: Is it OK to flirt with others? When does flirting cross the line into sexual activity—or can all flirting be considered sexual activity?

Flirting can mean many things, but when it describes actions that emphasize our sexuality above all else, it can be considered sexual activity.

Interaction between the sexes doesn't have to be characterized by an emphasis on sexuality—and all love doesn't need to be sexual. We can enjoy others' company, care for them, and share blessings with them without drawing attention to our sexuality. God calls on us to love people—especially our brothers and sisters in Christ—in this way.

Sexuality

In this study, when we refer to *sexuality*, we refer to our capacity to offer or respond to sexual activity. This doesn't mean that sexuality *necessitates* sexual activity; it merely means that God originally designed humans to have a sexual nature.

This is the part of our self that makes us feel like half of something better. Our sexuality includes a variety of gifts, physical and cultural, that God gave us so that we could connect with our spouse.

Self-Discipline

Here is the main topic of our study. By *self-discipline*, we mean the control we exercise over our body, words, thoughts, actions, and desires in order to reach a goal.

To *discipline* means to train ourselves, to keep ourselves on the right path, to correct ourselves when we stray. Discipline isn't punishment; it's a tool to reach a specific goal. We may have to put away pleasant, even good things, to reach that goal. And that isn't fun.

But discipline is necessary for us to grow more like Christ. The term has its root in the Latin word for “student”—the same word from which we get our word *disciple*. Just as a student pursues mastery of a subject, so a Christian trains to become like Christ.

We don't practice discipline for its own sake—there's nothing admirable about self-discipline if we don't have a goal. Discipline is a tool to help us choose the things that move us closer to our goal, and to reject what hinders us.

And as God grows us—as we become more like Christ—He gives us not only joy, but also the capacity to enjoy more fully the good things He created.

Handout: Pass out copies of “Pare It Down” and give students a few minutes to check off the items they find important. Discuss their answers as time allows. Explain that every activity of life requires self-discipline in order to do it well.

Self-Discipline in Scripture

Where does the idea of spiritual self-discipline come from? In His Word, God commands us to practice self-discipline, specifically in our sexual desires and actions.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:2–8. This command is given to us by the authority of Jesus Christ (v. 2). That’s reason enough for our obedience, but God gives us another.

Discussion: According to this passage, what is the point of abstaining from sexual immorality, or fornication (vv. 3, 7)?

This is God’s will for our sanctification. We believers are *sanctified*—that is, set apart for a holy, good purpose. We must live up to the holiness and honor God called us to. We have a mission to reflect Christ.

If we indulge sexual desires any way we want, we aren’t acting like followers of Jesus. Sexual immorality is characteristic of the way people live before salvation (cf. Col. 3:5–7). Sexual sin has no place in a believer’s life.

Note that God doesn’t restrict this command to the unmarried; He applies it to everyone regardless of their relationship status. So just as God expects a single person to exercise self-discipline, He calls a married person to do the same. Don’t think that marriage will cure someone’s wrong sexual desires.

Practicing the Principle

Again, self-discipline isn’t just changing our behavior—after all, it’s possible to keep the rules outwardly, but still sin in our thoughts. True obedience to God begins in our attitudes and beliefs. If we practice self-discipline simply to stay out of trouble or to promote our own self-righteousness, we’re doing it for the wrong reasons. And it’ll be harder to stick with it over time.

Unfortunately, we all have a naturally sinful heart. At our core, we cannot live righteously (cf. Gen. 6:5). Our sin begins on the inside. Nothing *makes*

us do wrong. Christ said that we are defiled not by what goes into us—but rather by what comes out of our heart (Matt. 15:10–19).

So how can we discipline ourselves if our sinful heart—our “flesh”—doesn’t want us to? How can we submit to God instead of submitting to evil?

Read Romans 8:5–8. Our flesh and the Holy Spirit are complete opposites. The flesh pulls us toward spiritual death, but the Spirit gives us life and peace.

We can only live righteously and practice discipline through the power of the Holy Spirit. But how do we allow the Holy Spirit to control us? Doing so requires humility and dependence on our part, stepping back to allow God to direct our thoughts, decisions, beliefs, and actions.

- We focus on God’s holiness and respond with worship, and we examine our hearts for impurity.
- We meditate on what He calls true and lovely and excellent (cf. Phil. 4:8).
- We repeatedly acknowledge the grace He’s shown us, and in turn, we show grace to others.

It’s a continual struggle—we always feel the pull of our flesh. So long as we live on this corrupt earth, we’ll feel the tension between right and wrong. The Holy Spirit and our sinful desires oppose each other.

Activity: Tug-o-War

To illustrate this point, play a quick game of tug-o-war.

Pick two volunteers from your class. Place a piece of tape on the floor between the two players. See which player gets dragged across the line first.

Set up the game again, but this time, allow the whole class—yourself included—to help the player who lost the previous round. Compare this round with the way the Holy Spirit helps us. The side with the most support wins, and we defeat the flesh when we rely on God’s strength.

As we open up to the Holy Spirit’s control and rely on Him, He gives us the strength to resist the flesh. Self-control is a characteristic of a Spirit-controlled life (Gal. 5:16–23). It’s really hard to control our desires, but God promises to give us the grace we need to resist temptation (James 4:5–8).

God's Brilliant Design

Intimacy, Not Selfishness

When we talk about the command to discipline our sexuality, we might get the idea that our sexuality is bad or shameful—like it's a monster we have to keep in a cage. But nothing is further from the truth.

When God created humans—their sexuality included—He declared that act of creation as good. He blessed the first man and woman (cf. Gen. 1:26–31), along with the intimacy they shared.

Side Note: Life Without a Spouse

Though God designed humanity with the capacity for sexual activity, not every person will have that capacity or interest. Some people, due to physical difficulties or atypical development, may be unable to engage in sexual activity. Others have zero interest in sexual activity—and that's OK.

In Matthew 19:3–15, when speaking of marriage, Jesus says that not everyone will be able to receive His teaching. He explains that some are “eunuchs”—people who abstain from sexual activity. Whether they are so from birth, or from other people's actions, or from personal choice, Jesus does not condemn them. They're no less members of God's kingdom.

Interdependence, Not Conflict

God designed men and women with differences—wonderful differences—that, when brought together, form a more complete picture of His image. Sometimes we get frustrated at the differences between men and women, but we should view this diversity as a rich and beautiful gift.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:11–12. Here Paul is explaining how men and women of different cultural backgrounds can learn to worship together with respect and sensitivity. So he argues that men and women are not *independent* of each other, but *interdependent*.

Our differences let us support each other more fully—filling in each other's blind spots, serving more effectively together, and bearing each other's burdens. So we should appreciate our differences, not allow them to divide us.

When the first people, Adam and Eve, chose to reject God and disobey Him, that sin corrupted the relationship between men and women.

Suddenly, the fellowship between man and woman devolved into shame, domination, and manipulation (cf. Gen. 3:8–24). A good thing was tainted and twisted into something unrecognizable.

But in Christ we have a better way. Within our churches, we can love and respect our brothers and sisters in Christ. Within marriage, we can express our sexuality in a way that reflects the original good God designed it to be. Christ calls us, His followers, to live differently than the world (cf. Eph. 4:19–24). By God’s grace, we do not use His gifts to control or manipulate—rather, we’re now free to show love.



It would be easy if we could make one decision to reject sin and then never have to face temptation again. But we have to reject it daily, hourly, even minute-by-minute, over and over. And if we’ve never said no to our flesh, the first few times will be the hardest.

But to follow the Spirit is to follow freedom—He gives us the grace to choose a higher, better path. When we choose to walk with God, we show that we’re more than the sum of our desires—we’re more than animals, and we aren’t bound to the whims of our flesh. We don’t *need* sin like we did before Christ.

So each of us has a choice: to resist sin by God’s grace, or to give in and betray our new identity in Christ. What decision will you make?

Later, in the final lesson, we’ll cover some practical ways to deal with temptation, along with some notes about turning from sexual sin. But before that, in the next lesson, we’ll look at some wrong views surrounding sexual activity. Our philosophy of this topic—how we think about it—is just as important as what we do or don’t do.

PARE IT DOWN

Discipline helps us focus on essentials by getting rid of the things that hold us back. Spiritually speaking, we let go of anything that hinders us from growing to be more like Christ.

You're in charge of an expedition to climb Mount Everest, and you're deciding the most important items to bring. You can carry only 8 of the things on the following list. Check which 8 items you think are the most important to bring.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A PIANO | <input type="checkbox"/> PAJAMAS | <input type="checkbox"/> FLARES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LAPTOP | <input type="checkbox"/> CONTACT LENSES | <input type="checkbox"/> RUBBER TIRES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GRANOLA | <input type="checkbox"/> BATTERIES | <input type="checkbox"/> TOILET PAPER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COFFEE MAKER | <input type="checkbox"/> PAPER TOWELS | <input type="checkbox"/> A NOVEL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FIRST-AID KIT | <input type="checkbox"/> A TENT | <input type="checkbox"/> CAST-IRON SKILLET |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CLIMBING ROPE | <input type="checkbox"/> CLIMBING SHOES | <input type="checkbox"/> SATELLITE RADIO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CAR KEYS | | <input type="checkbox"/> FROZEN MEATBALLS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LANTERN | | <input type="checkbox"/> A PENCIL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BEANS | | <input type="checkbox"/> PHONE CHARGER |

