Sin created a huge God-sized void in our lives that affects us the core of our being. As a result, our sexual identity and security has been extremely distorted. God’s desire is to restore to our original, created design. Read the following verses to determine how we are to realign ourselves with his purposes.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (NIV)
3 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

How would you define “sexual immorality”?
Sexual immorality includes any action or thought that seeks sexual fulfilment outside the covenant of marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 (NIV)
8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)
9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Why is sexual immorality so significant that it tops Paul’s list of people who will not be in heaven?
Note: This passage is not saying that the sin of sexual immorality immediately disqualifies someone as a child of God. It is saying that someone who persists in this lifestyle is revealing that they have not truly been indwelt by the Holy Spirit who convicts us of sin and righteousness. (1John 3:5-10)

Sexual immorality is rooted in our sin nature that is longing for fulfilment and a sense of identity apart from God and his design for life. It is an expression of the distorted image of God. To pursue sexual immorality is to make a decision to align with our sinful nature as opposed to the design and purposes of God for our lives.

If sexual immorality is, ultimately, the result of a broken relationship with God, then it only makes sense that sexual purity is rooted in a desire to return to God. Those who love God cannot continue in sin without a
disturbed conscience that calls them back to holiness. Sexual immorality though, is especially offensive to God in that it distorts the image of God at the very core of our lives.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (NIV)

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Why is sexual immorality a sin against one’s own body?

If your body belongs to Christ and is the temple of the Holy Spirit, then sexual sin pervades to the innermost part of the temple.

Sexual sin also has the potential to bring about disease and death which will not happen with sexual purity. What God created as good within covenant marriage, becomes very destructive outside of marriage.

Sexual sin has a lasting impact on the body which affects chemical levels, memory, and neurons leading to symptoms such as depression, dysfunction, concentration problems, anxiety and addiction. Sexual sin can become so imbedded on the mind that guys can often remember pornographic material they may have seen decades earlier.

Why do you think pornography is so luring and addictive to guys?

Guys’ greatest and deepest-rooted fear is inadequacy. The one common theme of all pornography is the implied statement, “You are adequate!” There is no judgment and no fear of failure, just unquestioned and unchallenged adequacy. The guy gets the sense that he has the ability to make the other person feel complete and fulfilled. This feeling of adequacy conveys a sense of power and control. Over one’s own life and even over the lives of others. This statement adequacy hits home to the core longing of every male and as a result can become very addictive.

FOUR CHEMICALS AT WORK IN YOUR BODY

1) Adrenaline (Epinephrine)

This hormone is released in reaction to danger, anticipation of excitement, stress and pornography. It increases the heart rate and sends more blood to the muscles and oxygen to the body. Adrenaline is only meant however, for short bursts. Too much adrenaline and the body can start having adverse side effects such as a weakened immune system, digestive problems and an overworked heart.

People can get addicted to the rush of adrenaline, always craving the sense of thrill. Sexual stimulus, in this way, can become extremely addicting as one chases the ongoing thrill.
2) Dopamine

Dopamine is associated with the brain’s sense of reward and pleasure. It helps the brain identify what brings pleasure and then encourages you to pursue that activity. The more pleasure you experience, the more dopamine is released and the more you will want to continue that behaviour.

Examples: eating high calorie foods, buying new things, winning, sex, etc.

The amount of dopamine released over time drops demanding a new experience in order to achieve the same level of excitement. New purchase, more food, more intense pornography, more sexual partners, etc.

This is why one is never content with the amount or nature of sexual activity. There is a compelling desire for things to push further for the same level of excitement.

3) Endorphins

Endorphins give the body a sense of well-being. They are released through events such as exercise, food, laughter and sexual stimulus. They minimize pain and make one feel better about life. People who feel negatively about life may excessively turn to these activities, in much the same manner as a drug such as morphine.

The problem comes in when a person chases the “feeling of well-being” instead of dealing with the life issues causing the problem. All these activities are healthy, except when out of proportion and used as an escape for life.

4) Oxytocin

Oxytocin is known as the “bonding” hormone. It is released during relational connections such as breast feeding (child to the mother) or sexual activity (husband to a wife). It creates a relational bond to the other person physically, emotionally and spiritually. (1Corinthians 6:15-17)

Oxytocin balances the longing for new sexual partners by creating a stronger bond with your present sexual partner. This is also why couples who engage in sexual relations and then break apart, feel such an emotional tearing.

The problem with pornography is that it causes the person to feel a “bond”, not to an individual, but to the activity of viewing pornography itself. One then feels loved and valued when they bond with the images. Unfortunately, it is all a relational lie.
Why does pornography leave people feeling unfulfilled and ashamed?
Despite how pornography may make people feel at the time, they ultimately know that it is a lie rooted in a fantasy. Instead of making men feel more adequate, it brings to the surface the fact that they are unfulfilled and must rely on a lie to make them feel like a full man or woman. To be dependent on this lie brings a sense of shame and failure, requiring the act to be concealed.

Why do you think romantic stories and movies are often compelling for women?
Women’s greatest longing is to be relationally fulfilled. Romantic stories can provide women with the fantasy that they have found the ideal relationship and are now safe and secure. Women long for men who will value and treasure them for who they are and would be willing to sacrifice their lives for them if necessary. It is the complete opposite scenario to Adam’s failure to protect Eve when he accused her of the death-deserving sin.

Why are women sometimes tempted to dress in ways that evoke guy’s sexual attention?
Because women long for intimate relationship, it is tempting to dress in ways that will capture men’s attention. There is a tendency to believe that if a guy is physically attracted to a woman the woman will be more highly valued and it may also open a door to deeper relationship.

In what ways might dressing in revealing clothes actually work against what women long for?
Women long for deeper relationship and to be valued for whom they are. However, when a guy is visually stimulated, apart from an already existing relationship (marriage), there is a tendency to view the woman more as an object of sexual gratification than as a real person.

Consider pornography: When a man looks at a pornographic picture, the woman merely becomes an object of gratification. There is no relationship, no love and no value for the woman apart from how she makes him feel at that moment. Sinful men can go to a prostitute and feel no emotional attachment whatsoever. Just because there is physical attraction does not mean there is respect and value. In fact, when pure physical attraction is the basis for the relationship, the relationship will have a very fragile foundation.

When a woman captures a guy’s attention through evocative clothing, she may get his attention, but it will be precisely the opposite attention that she truly longs for. Instead of being valued and treasured for who she is, the woman will be devalued and related to more as an object. When a relationship is built on this foundation, there is a lack of healthy respect and no possibility for true intimacy.

Sometimes, the most beautiful women find it the most difficult to find a relationship where she is valued for who she is.
Matthew 15:16-19 (NIV)
16 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. 17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

Why does Jesus say sexual immorality is really a heart issue?
We commit sexual immorality because our hearts are striving for fulfilment apart from God. Instead of turning back to God for our sense of worth and identity, we look to feel fulfilled through having our sinful desires met. Because our hearts have wandered from God and distrust his love, we pursue sinful sensation to fill the emptiness.

Read the following verses and discuss God's advice to men:

Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV)
27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

What does Jesus mean by these words?
We often focus on our actions, but God is more concerned with our heart. What we act out is merely an extension of what we have already been rehearsing in our heart. Every case of adultery happened only because there was already a desire planted in one’s heart to sin.

When men look at a woman lustfully, the heart has already moved away from God and is laying the foundation for acting out that sin. The man may never actually commit, but his heart is already there.

The key for men is to guard their hearts. Actions merely follow what our hearts desire.

1 Timothy 5:2 (NIV)
[Treat] … younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

If young men treated women as sisters until they were married, how would that change the dating scene?

Why does scripture tell men to treat women in this way until marriage?
In North American wedding services you often hear the statement “You may now kiss the bride.” implying there was no intimate, physical touch before the wedding (in theory). How might that approach to relationship actually strengthen the relationship and the marriage?

Why might a young couple find it so hard to follow that practise in today’s culture?

Haddon Robinson:
“Sex and its passions are like fire. Under control, fire serves us by cooking food and heating our homes. But, if you let fire burn out of control it will destroy everything in its path. It is the nature of this powerful force to do one of two things – to create or to destroy.”

What do you think of the above quote? In what ways do you see this as being true?

If sexual impurity is really a heart issue rooted in a lost sense of identity when we broke relationship with God, then what will it take to restore us to sexual purity?
Ultimately, the answer is to turn back to God and allow him to fill the void in our lives. The problem is that we know this intellectually, but are not sure how to apply it practically in ways that create change.

Read the following verses and share the insights you gain about how to live a pure life?

John 6:35 (NIV)
Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

In what ways does Jesus fill the needs in our lives?
We feel inadequate and empty because we abandoned relationship with the Son. As we turn back to Jesus and trust his approach to life, we will increasingly be restored to who he created us to be. Our fears and insecurities will fade away as we understand our true value and significance to God. Intellectual belief in Jesus is not adequate. True life change requires an authentic, intimate relationship with Jesus. Many people in the church know Jesus from a distance, but fewer truly walk with him daily through life. It is only this intimate walking with Jesus that brings the true freedom we desire.
2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)
3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

How does this passage give us hope?
We do not have to be controlled by our sinful impulses and desires of the flesh. We have the power we need to defeat sin in our lives through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Any time we give in to sin is not because we have to, but because we choose to; there is always a way to escape corruption.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)
Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?
To be filled with the Spirit means that we allow the Holy Spirit to have influence and control over every area of our lives. He will convict us of sin, but he will not force us to live righteously. He wants us to willingly and lovingly submit to the Father’s will and die to selfish desires. As we bow to the Holy Spirit, we will discover he gives us increasing strength to say no to sin.

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)
1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

What does it mean to offer our bodies as living sacrifices?

What does it take to truly renew our minds so that we end up thinking differently about sin?

Romans 12:9 (NIV)
Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Sometimes change simply requires a decision. What are some things you could decide to hate this week that would pave the way for a heart of purity?