

Series Title: Agent I²

Session Title: Powerful Purity

Date and Time: _____

Number of Students: _____

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Two large clear bowls with clean water in them
- ☐ Food colouring or water-based paint; eye droppers
- ☐ Fish bowl (optional)
- ☐ Large space to play capture the flag
- ☐ Duct tape (lots of it)
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Prepare the room ahead of time according to the first task

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Review 1 Timothy 4:12.
- Identify that agents of evil actually work to destroy their purity.
- Identify the pathway of desensitization.
- Be challenged to commit to a life of powerful purity.
- Identify Joseph as a model of powerful purity.

Pastoral Objectives:

Lead In:

This is Capture the Flag with a twist. This game would best be played outdoors but can be played indoors. If you want to go all out, announce ahead of time that you will be playing so that students can come in the right clothing.

Divide the students into two teams. Give each team a large bowl filled with clean (clear) water. Give half the students on each team an eye dropper with some kind of colouring in it (water-based paint works well because it doesn't stain clothes or church furniture). The students with the droppers are the offensive players. The other students are the defensive players. The goal is for the offensive students to empty as much colouring into the enemy's water as they can; defensive players defend the water. The rules are like capture the flag; if you get touched you must go to a guarded prison. Have a leader run the prison and have jail breaks every few minutes. Set a time limit on the game and being. Darkest water wins!

After the game, transition into the session by saying something like:

Tonight we are going to finish up our five-week series entitled Agent Irresistible Influence by talking about purity. Paul challenges young Timothy to set an example in his speech, his conduct, his faith, his love and in purity, and tonight we are going to talk about purity. In the game we just played, your team was given two jobs: first, to protect your clean water from impurity, and second, to taint the enemy's water. What you will have noticed is that even the slightest drop of food colouring or paint changed the colour of all the water. Keeping your water clean was hard work, particularly because there were people assigned to ruin your clean water. (At this point it would be helpful to have a fish bowl up front and some red food dye. Using an eye dropper, drop some of the red food dye into the clean fish bowl).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been challenged to live pure lives with the help of the Holy Spirit. While that is a hard enough job by itself, it is important to note that there are people in our world who work very hard to attack our purity. Advertisers spend enormous amounts of money on television, magazine, radio, and billboard ads to get us to think in a certain way. We have all seen how beer, car, jean manufacturers, or almost anyone else uses sexuality to attempt to make their product more desirable.

Last summer two of the top hit movies, The Wedding Crashers and The 40 Year-old Virgin, both worked hard to convince people that carefree sexuality is the norm, that everybody plays the field, and that when we are young, we are expected to indulge our wild side. But while Hollywood may be promoting those values, the values that we find in Scripture are very different. I believe our purity is worth protecting, but before we go any further, let's research what the Bible has to say about purity!

First Ladder:

For this task, you must set up the room ahead of time. On the floor of your meeting space you are going to draw what will look similar to the spokes of a wheel. Use duct tape to mark

out a circle in the centre of the room. Now use duct tape to make four ladders that emanate from the circle, one at north, west, east, and south. Each ladder needs to have rungs (just like a ladder) of duct tape that you can use a marker to write on. There should be eleven rungs. If this set up is impossible for you, make the same design on paper and use that.

Without drawing attention to the design, ask students to turn for little groups with the people around them and to read the story of David and Bathsheba found in 2 Samuel 11:1-7. As they read, they must decide what steps David took as he walked into sin (adultery and then murder). These are not clearly defined steps so much as a pathway of desensitization. Here is a possible progression:

- i. David didn't go to war when the kings went to war.
- ii. He walked on the roof of the palace, knowing he would be looking down on roof tops and back yards that people regularly used for bathing.
- iii. He saw Bathsheba bathing, and lingered in his look.
- iv. He inquired after (fed his growing lust).
- v. He sent messengers to get her.
- vi. He took her into his room.
- vii. He slept with her.
- viii. He schemed to cover up her pregnancy.
- ix. He got Uriah drunk.
- x. He schemed to get Uriah killed.
- xi. He was responsible for Joab's actions.

When the groups have developed a pathway or progression, run through it with them. As they agree on the progression, use your body to indicate the progression on one of the ladders. Stand in the circle and walk away from the centre, stopping at each rung to indicate a progression of desensitization. When the group agrees on the steps, write them on the duct tape rungs.

Next Ladder:

Divide the students into three groups and assign these three topics one to each group: sex, greed, rebellion. Send each group to the centre circle to brainstorm and create a ladder or conceptual progression from the inside (purity) to the outside (terrible sin). You may want to help the students out by identifying a concrete outer action, such as the Enron scandal (for greed) or running away from home (for rebellion). Give the students pens, markers, and scrap paper for their use. Once they have brainstormed the progression they should mark it out on the rungs with a marker.

For feedback, have each group share with the whole group the pathway that they have created for their "act of impurity". Remember that there is an infinite number of ways to complete this task; as long as the progression makes sense, it is a good progression. Have students give each other feedback (check if the progressions make sense) and ultimately, give clarification or correction if needed.

The Alternative:

Now ask the students: *“What would have happened if after David saw Bathsheba from the rooftop, he had turned away and gone back to the palace for a cold shower or to visit with his wife?”* The answer is: nothing bad! *When we look at David’s ladder we see that David took further and further steps into sinfulness. What these spokes don’t tell us is how hard it is to go back towards the centre once we have started walking outwards.*

Consider the sex ladder that some of you created. When you first make furtive glances or have eye contact with a potential boy/girlfriend it is thrilling isn’t it? Then you start with small conversations; you are nervous and get sweaty. Soon maybe you are holding hands and the first time you reach over to touch each other’s hands is electric. But what happens after you have held hands for six years? It gets a lot less exciting, doesn’t it?

This is the pathway of desensitization. Each step we take away from the centre isn’t even always a step of sinfulness. I can’t think that holding hands would be considered sinful by many in our culture. But after a while we want to move forward and that is where the trouble begins. You see, it is easy to move down the ladder, but incredibly difficult to move back up. Once you have kissed, holding hands takes second place.

Most young people want their youth leader to help them come up with an answer to the question, “How far is too far?”. We put up the fence and then say, “Don’t cross this line!” Sometimes, like the Pharisees did in Jesus’ day, we even build the fences quite a way from the cliff of sin just to be on the safe side.

But the problem we find in Scripture is that Jesus doesn’t help us build these fence lines. He says, “Be pure as I am pure,” or, “If you even look at a woman with lust you have committed adultery” Matt 5:27-28. At the same time Jesus challenges the Pharisees’ fences as acts of legalism.

Let’s now turn to another Old Testament story to see what we can learn. This is a story that moves towards the centre instead of away from it.

Joseph’s Choice:

Ask everybody to turn to the person next to them and scribble down this question:

1. How would you illustrate Joseph’s decision on our wheel?

Instruct the pairs to read the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39:2-12) and to answer the question. Invite a volunteer onto the wheel to suggest an answer. The desired answer is that Joseph leapt back into the centre of the wheel when tempted (or something close to that).

You could teach further on this. Here are some thoughts on the matter:

There are two directions we can move when dealing with our own purity. Maybe you have heard people say that they fell into sin. While that might sound convenient, even like it was someone else's fault, it isn't really accurate. As we discovered from the wheel we made tonight, people don't usually fall into sin; they walk into it. At first it seems innocent enough, but because we can walk down towards sin so easily the first innocent steps matter. Similarly once we have begun to walk down the ladder, it is very difficult to walk back up towards the centre of God's purposes and plans. We often find that eventually step by step we end up in a place we never intended.

But the pathway towards purity isn't so much a step as it is a leap. When confronted with the possibility of sin, Joseph didn't walk away; he leapt into action by running away.

Walking into sin often doesn't seem to have many consequences. It seems so easy, so fun, and so rewarding. It isn't until we get to the bottom of the mud pit that we discover that it is muddy and smelly and gross. On the other hand, leaping into purity often has an immediately negative impact. A girlfriend who leaps into purity regarding sex is given a threat. A friend who leaps into purity regarding drugs or alcohol is mocked for his decision. Joseph was wrongly accused and then thrown into prison. At the time Joseph must have asked himself, "Is it really worth it? Is this purity thing worth the hassle and the pain?". I think almost all of us will have to ask this question of ourselves. Is purity worth the hassle, the pain, the lack of reward?

We read in Genesis 39:21b-22 that after Joseph made his decision and was punished for it, God blessed him. God blessed Joseph in prison? That is messed up! You see, God was preparing Joseph for a far better reality, one that he would have never experienced had he settled for the easy way out with Potiphar's wife. Prison became a character-building experience for Joseph that resulted in him eventually proving himself, through God's intervention, and becoming the second most powerful person in all of Egypt.

The term that is often used for this is delayed gratification, or also discipline. Joseph's discipline prepared him for much greater glory, just like an Olympic athlete denies him or herself Twinkies and Mars bars so that they can experience the much greater satisfaction of doing their very best. The joy of living a life close to the centre of purity is that the rewards are so much greater. The pain of being dumped because you won't put out or of being mocked for not going with the crowd, is actually overwhelmed by the blessing of a much greater reward.

But this is hard... and summer is coming.

Conclusion:

Instructions:

In conclusion, I would like you to get into groups of two or three, but these must be special groups. I want you to find people that you are very comfortable being with and sharing with. I want you to find these people and then to pray together for God to give you the courage to leap like Joseph did, into the centre of the circle (they could jump into the circle as they say this). Some of you might be ready to actually share the real temptations that this coming summer has to offer you. Some of you may simply want to pray for one another without sharing all the details. Either way, I want to give you time now to hold each other up before the throne of God in prayer: prayers of courage and of wisdom.