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Emotional Purity

Tags: high school modesty

Emotional purity – what comes to your mind when you hear that phrase? We know we should not trust our emotions, but how do we keep them pure? It seems that this whole idea of emotional purity is a new concept, and for most of us, it takes some time to process.

I believe a contributing factor to the rise in the problem of the lack of understanding emotional purity has to do with the past few generations. In our American culture it seems as though old people hang out with old people and young people hang out with young people. Generations are not mixing together and sharing ideas, thoughts, wisdom and feelings. This saddens my heart because there is so much to learn from each other.

Society today is different than it was in the past. Think back 100 years ago, just 100 years ago and young men and women were not allowed to be free with their time together. It was generally supervised and when they spent time together it was for the prospect of a process to marriage. The couple was guided and chaperoned. This guidance prevented emotional intimacy and more people were married. So, more people were married when emotions were not doled out without some form of commitment. Interesting?

Unfortunately, it was the evolutionist thinkers that started the trend of independence dating and our Christian society has accepted the school of thought. In Christopher Schlect's Critique of Modern Youth Ministry he examines why, as a society, we have this idea of separation of generational influence. Schlect's states that, "Grandville Stanley Hall taught that each generation is, or should be superior to the previous one, and therefore needs to break free from those which precede it." G. Stanley Hall was a pupil Horace Mann, the evolutionist thinker. With this idea we can see how years later it has played out in all spectrums of life. Most believe that they can gain more insight from their peers than from their old fashion parents or grandparents. Because most of us believe this idea that Hall presented we have looked towards our peers and not our parents, for spiritual growth and emotional guidance.

John Dewey, a pupil of Hall, is considered to be the father of the modern public school system. Before Dewey, one-room schoolhouses were the mode of education, meaning all ages of children were together. This idea about the younger generation being superior to previous generations lead right into the modern public school system. With this as a foundation of the public school system, we can see how easily it has become a part of our own thoughts and culture. One has to admit that each one of us has been influenced by the public school system. Knowing this we can see how our Christian society has applied these beliefs. We see youth groups and single groups looking towards each other for spiritual growth and fellowship, when we need to look to our parents or older members of the body of Christ.

A recent article posted in Discipleship Journal, Joining the Generations, Erik Johnson says is well, "Since we were told in the '60's to not "trust anyone over 30" generations have developed a vague distrust of one another. It is a subtle suspicion that has even infiltrated the church, where it is common for activities to be segregated according to age brackets.

This is unhealthy…if we examine biblical attitudes towards the generations, we discover that generational separation is squarely against the tenor of scripture."

All through out the bible we see mixing of generations taught. Paul addresses this issue in his letter to Titus. In Titus 2 we see both older men and older women are to teach and exhort younger men and younger women in different areas. Older men are to teach younger men to be sensible, be an example of good deeds, purity in doctrine, dignified, and sound in speech. Younger women are to be taught to love their husbands, love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind and being subject to their husbands so that the word of God will not be dishonored. These qualities are to be taught by the older men and women of the church. Do groups that have peer teachers follow this example?

When people separated themselves by gender, not age, there was less emotional intimacy that took place. Men came calling to a young woman's house, not to be friends with her, but to look to her as a marriage partner. In times past and in other

cultures, young people could see the importance of having guidance from their parents, grandparents or a wise Christian mentor in this decision. They were not prideful in thinking they could do it on their own. And it is obvious today's methods are not successful.

When we have this "free for all" method, emotions will be hurt and feelings stepped on. Friendship with the opposite sex is a delicate matter and should not be taken lightly. You may be playing with the heart of another person's husband or wife and not even be aware. So, the person you are having a relationship with could be another person's husband or wife! Emotional purity is protected when there is older guidance in our life. We are more protected from falling into an emotional trap.

Since there has been such a major culture change in the past 100 years the church has tried to fill itself with programs that actually encourage emotional intimacy to take place. But I think it is beginning to backfire. Co-ed Bible studies are springing up all over. At these studies men and women are challenged to share deep spiritual issues with one another. This can lead us down a path of staleness with the Lord by taking our focus off of Him and placing it on a group or a person in the group. Remember the devil can appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11: 14), so it may look "right" to have these close emotional relationships, but really it may be a scheme of Satan to pull your focus off of God.

Why do I say this? As I see it, men and women who share deeply spiritual issues and gain an emotional and spiritual bond with a peer group, can become almost married to the group. They cannot seem to go out on a Friday night alone without a section of the group or the whole group itself. They find all they need spiritually and emotionally within that group without a commitment to any one person. Yes, I do mean all they need. Once a friend said to my sister, 'Why do I need to get married? I find all I need in this singles group." There are not just emotional and spiritual needs being met but also physical. Making-out, heavy petting and in some cases, casual sex is common and almost accepted. There is a promise of accountability in these groups, but I have rarely seen it occur.

The way I see it, when we separate into peer groups with men and women together what we end up having is "emotional fornication." Chew on that for a second…repeat it out loud. "Emotional Fornication" I remember the first time those words were put together in my thoughts. "What?" was my first response, "Yuck!" was my second. I didn't really care to define my past male friendships with such a disgusting thought. Consider this carefully and I think you'll agree that "emotional fornication" is an accurate definition for what goes on between single and married people when they share their hearts with someone who is not their spouse.

When a person fornicates before marriage we normally associate it in a sexual context. I'd like you to think about emotional fornication. Here's a word picture to help you understand where I'm coming from.

Imagine for a moment one of those huge lollipops, the kind that you buy at an amusement park candy store. Take off the wrapper and pass it around to ten people. Allow them to lick as much as they want. Then whatever is left over is saved for their husband or wife, the rightful owner of the lollipop. YUCK, who would want that! When we give pieces of ourselves emotionally and spiritually to ten different boy/girl friends what is left over for the RIGHTFUL OWNER? Just the leftovers! The rightful owner is God, then a mate of His choice. Keeping yourself emotionally pure is a gift that left unwrapped and should be given to the rightful owner, your spouse.

When that lollipop is passed around for anyone to taste, it is not being kept pure. When we spread our heart around and share deep emotional feelings with a boy/girl friend or even a handful of boy/girl friends we are cheating our future husband or wife from parts of our emotional selves. In a word: Fornication. You can see that when emotional intimacy is experienced in the wrong context purity and holiness are thrown out the window. Being pure is the goal of the believer, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" Matthew 5:8. Also, in Mark 7:20-22 Jesus is telling us what defiles us: "…That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceeds the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." So what this boils down to is purity and holiness from within that Jesus is asking from us and we have to examine what in our lives helps or hinders us from finding that purity.

You might be trying to reason this all out by asking, "sharing myself or my thoughts isn't bad, is it?" Or, "It's not hurting anyone, so what's the problem? The problem, when intimate ideas or dreams are shared with wrong motives or unclear relationship boundaries, and when people in those unclear relationships, break-up or start dating someone else, the effects are felt by the heart. Tracy and Luke's relationship seemed harmless but look what took place to Tracy's heart. The more times this scenario takes place in a person's life, eventually walls are raised and the heart becomes protected with a massive, hardened wall. Imagine handing this shielded heart over to a bride or groom. Let's hope this imaginary couple registered for a pickaxe and received it as a wedding gift. Because that's the tool needed to breakdown those walls. Definitely, this is one tool that shouldn't get lost in a corner of the basement or garage. Through the years this tool will become dull from the slow process of chipping through all the walls that have hardened to protect tender emotions. Of course, God in His power can make this process much less painful and shorter when either or both partners look to God and trust Him to heal past hurts.

Now that I have learned to look to my parents, or in your case it may be an older Christian mentor, I find such freedom to

pursuing God with all that I am. My parents have gone through the "dating" scene and have experienced the negative consequences and to have that hindsight is incredible. It is that 20/20 perspective from my folks that gives me such a safeguard in repeating generational mistakes. Solomon repeats himself a number of times in the book of Proverbs, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching"(1:8). "My son, give attention to my words, incline your ear to my sayings " (4:20). "My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you" (7:1). "Now therefore, my sons, listen to me and pay attention to the words of my mouth" (7:25). Do you think that the wisest man in all of history should be listened to? He knew the importance of having godly parental guidance. Freedom comes with this protection and my sensitive heart loves having the safety net of my parents. I know that in the long run I will be thankful that I have not spent the last few years giving emotions to men that they do not rightfully deserve to have!

When you have intimacy without commitment you are playing with the heart of a fellow brother or sister in Christ and will violate emotional purity. With so many singles receiving intimacy: spiritually, emotionally and physically with members of the opposite sex, marriage is not special. When someone has this closeness with many boy/girlfriends or even "tennis friends", in the end it's their future husband or wife who will not receive their whole heart, because they have given away so many pieces along the way. They become emotionally impure. Would you feel like a special guest if someone invited you over for dinner and brought out impure, half eaten or regurgitated food? Let's see, your choices are Tuesday's meatloaf, Friday's chicken soup and three-day-old Chinese!

Emotional purity is a complex issue that each one of us has been effected by. I have had the chance to talk to many people about this concept of emotional purity before marriage. It is amazing how I get the same response from older people, married people, single people, Christians, non-Christians, young people and even my grandma, every knows someone or has been in a relationship that has left them emotionally hurt. It seems that many were grateful that their feelings are being put into words, as if they were saying, "Thank you for helping me put together a vocabulary to why this or that friendship did not seem so right." Emotional purity before marriage allows us the greatest opportunity to become emotionally intimate with our mate during marriage.

Strive towards emotional purity and one day you will reap the rewards. God blesses those who desire purity and holiness. Those qualities are beautiful and should be desired by a believer.

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