

When we think of purity of heart we might think of having completely pure, blameless, sinless lives, or perhaps a heart that is pure from sexual temptations and sins. Sometimes our connotations of what the Bible means actually limit drastically the implications of its teaching for our lives. Jesus isn't saying if we don't get involved in sexually active relationships we're pure in heart and will see God no matter what else we do with our lives, and he also isn't saying we better be 100% sinless or we can wave goodbye to the change of ever seeing God. What he is saying is much better than that!

The Bible doesn't leave us in the dark and guessing what purity of heart is; it talks about it in many different places and sets out stark contrasts to what purity of heart defiantly isn't.

#### **James 4:8**

Purity of heart is about having a single minded attitude which looks like living by faith in God. The double minded people James talks about in this verse and 1:6-8 come to God, then immediately doubt God and worry and stress about the things they've just prayed about, relying on themselves to find answers. They compartmentalise their lives into "holy time" like praying and church, and then "regular time" when they are at work or uni or just hanging out, instead of doing everything for God. People with pure hearts live in faith, offering up their whole lives to God and then trusting him to work out his will for good in their lives.

#### **Psalm 24:3-4**

Purity of heart is about prioritizing God in front of everything else. People with pure hearts don't sideline God, or reduce him to being the understudy to whatever their other motivations or priorities might be. They don't split their minds between God and other fakers; they are single-mindedly focused on God.

#### **Matthew 23:25-26**

Purity in heart is about being open and transparently honest in everything we do. People with pure hearts don't insult God by trying to spoof him and other people into thinking they are good, when in fact they are disgustingly dirty behind the masks they're wearing. They don't try and cover their dirt with fake lives; they don't split their hearts between two separate lives. They live their lives openly and show that when you take off the masks there is a life that God is working to make beautiful.

#### **Hebrews 12:14**

Purity in heart is about living at peace with all men and being holy. People with pure hearts don't mask the harbouring of cold war grudges and hate with fake smile of an artificial, plastic peace. They're not wishing they could get a dig in, but knowing that they can't. That might be living at peace, but it's certainly not living in peace. They seek out peace and work towards resolving differences. They live a lifestyle totally devoted to following God and strive to be holy, just as God is Holy.

The collage of what purity of heart isn't might be all too familiar to us; and that shouldn't be too much of a surprise seeing as living in a world where our core beliefs and our cultures collide head on doesn't make for the easiest time. Stott says, "How few of us live one life and live it in the open!" and it's true.

We let stress of our courses or jobs stop us from fully relying on God, we don't believe that he knows best for us, and chose to try and fix things on our own. It is also pretty easy for us to get caught between two sets of friends, or be different people when we are in class than we are at home, or at work than we are at church, sometimes we mask who we really are and what we really look like so much that we completely forget our own face and have no idea which one is the truth and which one is the lie.

Our sinful attitudes can stop us from seeing God, but being pure in heart isn't being completely sinless. Take the transfiguration for example; Peter, James and John saw Jesus in all his glory, but we know that the disciples were far from being perfect, on the contrary Peter goes on to vocally deny that he even knew Jesus. What these disciples did do, however, was give up their jobs and leave their family situations behind and devoted all their time to following Jesus and learning from him and they saw God work in many miraculous ways and even saw him in all his glory here on earth.

If we are to devote all our time to following God with a single mind, we need to react to our sin in a way that follows God. Where it might be easier to try and cover things up, we need to take off our masks and be open and honest with God, seeking forgiveness, instead of feeling scared. We also need to be honest with other people that we have hurt or wronged, even if it would be easier to cover up those things we said or did and we need to ask their forgiveness also. Then we need to properly repent and ask God to help change our sinful attitudes behind the outward, action based sins that people can see. Having a pure heart means following God, even when we know it will come at a cost to us.

When we follow God with a pure heart we will see God, the Bible promises that, and that applies to when we follow God in the aftermath of making mistakes. Following him in this way and having a pure heart should change our attitudes towards sin so that we learn that it is something, although still undesirable and evil, is also something that, due to God's immeasurable wisdom and unquestionable sovereignty, he can use for good; to challenge and discipline us, and it's through these challenges and the discipline that we can see God working in us as we mature and grow.

Dramatic growth periods can stop for reasons like the summer team you were on finished and you had to come home, for the previous three weeks you had spent serving God everyday, and then once you came home old habits kicked back in. Reasons can vary depending on each individual situation, but perhaps it is more to do with our attitudes than with our circumstances; practical things are important and if they are stopping us from seeing God we need to address them, but when we look at the beatitudes they are all about how our mind sets should be, and those are the things that God really wants to change in us.

Circumstantial reasons shouldn't stop us from being able to live lives that are undivided and focused on serving God. In fact, when we are back at uni we have so many different ways in which we can serve God. It's not really that we had to stop serving God everyday because we had to come home, we can still serve God everyday through the way we do our work at uni, our attitudes towards our classes, lecturers and class mates, our relationships with our housemates are just some examples. What is really stopping us are divided schizophrenic hearts, which allocate "God time" like going to church or cu, during which we serve God, and "regular time" in which we hang out with our class mates, or do an assignment or have dinner with our housemates. Someone who is pure in heart sees all their time as God time, and uses it all to serve him.

In the flow of the beatitudes the first four teach us about where we stand before God and how we should deal with that, then the focus changes to how we should treat other people. If we are poor in spirit, realising we are helpless without God we will be lead mourn over our sin, showing a true remorse and repentance, we will then become meek, treating other people as if they are better than us. We can't stay in that position so we're given a hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness for ourselves and others, and realising our own need for righteousness we will then become much quicker to have mercy on other people, because we're able to identify with their sinfulness. Being merciful, and receiving mercy from God and other people will stir up a passion in us to live open, transparent lives, serving God in everything we do.