

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:22 and selected Scriptures

Sermon Title: *Flee Youthful Lusts and Pursue Purity*

Theme: I want to focus on the many different aspects of purity in our Christian Walk. I will specify sexual purity which is being overlooked in our society. Songs may target holiness

### **Intro:**

While I was in seminary I was required to watch a DVD titled, *Affluenza*; the point of the DVD was the affluence in America. This DVD was created as a PBS special in the late 90's. Even in a struggling economy we live in affluence. This means that we are a very wealthy people. Now, I know the economy is struggling and many are hurting financially and I don't mean to ignore that. But, I have also been to two other countries and generally speaking our poor live better than their common people. A few years ago, I was speaking with someone who was formerly a missionary in India. This man told me when he first came back to the states it took a while before he was able to walk through a Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is a perfect demonstration of how many things we can have. Now, Meagan and I end up at Wal-Mart about once a week, but look at all the choices! Their prices are low too! When Meagan and I first found out we were going to have a baby we went to Babies R Us to register, that was overwhelming. They have so many things, all just for babies! I wonder how people have had babies all these years without all this stuff. One only has to turn on the TV to see the advertisements for stuff. The commercials make it sound like we can't live without something, don't they? The commercials often use sex to sell; Some of their advertisements make you think if you buy their product you receive a certain super model as well. The commercials advertised things we might be able to use, yes, but mostly what I see is what Paul might call, *evil desires of youth*.

Let's turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 2:22 and see that the Bible says to FLEE *evil desires of our youth* and to pursue good.

### **Read 2 Timothy 2:22**

*Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

- I. First notice that the Bible says to FLEE *evil desires of youth*.
  - a. I want to start by focusing on that verb "to flee." "To flee" means: run away; escape; shun, avoid, turn from; disappear, vanish
    - i. Now, I realize that many of you know what it means "to flee" from something. We all read over that verb in various stories as children and hear the verb as adults.
    - ii. But do we practice that verb in our lives?
    - iii. Let's dissect *evil desires of youth*.
  - b. Okay, so Paul makes it clear that the desires he has in mind are not good, but evil. This means that they are wrong, they are inappropriate. These desires harm others and

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offend God. I want to be clear here and so I will be repeating this statement: *Our motivation for fleeing these desires is because these desires don't love others.*

- c. But these desires are modified by "youth." They are called *desires of youth*.
- d. Does this mean that these desires relate to people between 13 and 18 years old?
- e. Does this mean that this has to do with adults who are having desires that normally affect youth?
- f. Let me explain that to the Greco/Roman society that this was first addressed to, a youth could be someone much older than a teenager. However, I believe this idea of *evil desires of youth* has to do with growing up. I think Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is exhorting the followers of Christ to essentially "grow up." He doesn't literally mean "grow up," instead Paul is addressing the people to grow up in the faith. Paul is addressing the people to eliminate these wrongful desires that make them think and/or act like children.
  - i. You can be a grown up and still live desiring things like a child.
  - ii. Think of some of the actors and actresses and athletes that people look up to. How many times are they on the news talking about drugs and women and things of that sort, continuing to show that they do not have a clue about the reality people face in life?
  - iii. One can be fully mature, work hard and fairly successful but still battle with certain passions that reflect *evil desires of youth*.
  - iv. So, what are *evil desires of youth*? Some translations will call this *youthful "lusts."* Instead the NIV calls it "desires." The adjective "lusts" makes us think it is all about sexual things, but it is not. I have a list of some youthful desires that can be and most of the time are evil.
    - v. Love of money
    - vi. We may want money, lots of it. Now I think we are all battling this and we always will. There is nothing wrong with wanting your bills paid off. I don't think there is anything wrong with having money, even lots of it. It is the love of money, the lust of money that is wrong. It is the idea of wanting to do anything, even immoral things for money.
    - vii. Materialism is an evil desire of youth, isn't it?
    - viii. Again, this is something we will all have to do deal with.
    - ix. We want to have more than the neighbor does, don't we?
      - x. We want the best car, the newest cell phone, the newest computer, the newest and greatest house, and many more things. Oh, we also want them now, don't we?
      - xi. We want the newest gadget, don't we? I remember a professor in college who said, "The students had better cars than he did."

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- xii. A few years ago Rick Warren was talking to Ann Curry of the Today Show. She asked him about our country and its' problems. Rick said that we have lost certain things that made us great. He listed "thrift." Rick's right. We are not good at being frugal anymore, are we? Debt is on the rise.
- xiii. I want to acknowledge that many of you have lived through tough times. Many of you are extremely frugal and I want to applaud that.
- xiv. Love of power: This is another evil desire of youth. There is nothing at all wrong with a position of power. Someone has to be President of the company, or the country. Someone must be the manager of the store. Someone must be the owner. But there is a desire, a lust for power and that is when it is wrong and evil. The verb "to lust" carries this idea of wanting something at any cost. But this word doesn't mean action, it may mean action, but it may all be in our thought life.
- xv. What is talked about in this passage is a desire, or a lust for youthful things.
- xvi. Generally what is prevalent is the idea that we are so eager for power that we will go to any cost for such power.
- xvii. Now, why is this a big deal? Why is it wrong? The Bible is not about just trying to make you feel bad simply for the purpose of feeling bad. God loves us; He doesn't simply want to give you a list of do's and don'ts. This is about love. God loves us and He wants us to love others. When we have this desire, this lustful desire for power, or money we can and many times will harm others for a certain position or for money. Remember our motivation for recognizing these as evil is that they don't love others.
- xviii. About 12 or 13 years ago there was a country song that came out called: "How do You Like Me Now" by Toby Keith. The song an adult man talking about a woman who he could never date in high school. She made fun of him while he went to Tennessee for a music career. But now, he is famous. The chorus:

*How do you like me now?  
How do you like me now,  
Now that I'm on my way?  
Do you still think I'm crazy  
Standin' here today?  
I couldn't make you love me  
But I always dreamed about living in your radio  
How do you like me now?*

- Love of power and love of fame

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- g. The third evil desire of youth that I want to talk about is Love of inappropriate sex:  
Jesus said:
  - h. Matt 5:28:  
*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
  - i. This passage affirms that sins start in the mind, mentally.
  - j. Condoning and endorsing inappropriate sexual activity is all over our current culture. I want to challenge you to take this seriously. God has created sex as a good thing, please understand that, but it is good within marriage between a man and a woman.
  - k. In the Bible, many times you will see a word translated as “fornication” or “sexually immoral.” In the Greek there is one word that defines many, many sexual sins or wrong doings. Now, the Bible could make a list of the many, many things that are wrong sexually, but then we would find one thing left off the list. Instead, there is one word that basically means “sex outside of marriage.”
  - l. I heard a few reports last week about sex trafficking. Whatever city hosts the Super Bowl has an increase in sex trafficking. There is an increase in sex slaves brought in. If you haven’t heard this is on the rise. There is a strong problem with minors being sold as sex slaves right now, even in our country.
  - m. But all sex outside of marriage is considered wrong; it doesn’t matter whether you are 16, 18, 35, or 85 years of age. There is a physical, emotional and spiritual bond created in sex and that is for marriage.
  - n. Sometimes we agree with this, yet we condone inappropriate sex with the type of TV we watch.
  - o. Let me add about pornography, stay away from this. This is lusting after a woman and Jesus says you committed adultery in your heart. Sadly, pornography addictions are on the rise in women and even older people.
  - p. Now, I know this is focusing on the negative so far, so I want you to know that God created sex as a good thing, very good, but it is designed for marriage. This is for our best interest.
  - q. This desire is evil because sex outside of marriage creates broken homes and broken people. This is sharing something emotional, spiritual and physical with someone and God created that bond for marriage. The Bible says that in a sexual relationship the two become one-flesh. Paul even calls that a mystery (Eph 5:31-32).
  - r. Sometimes love of power and love of inappropriate sex are mixed.
- II. Instead we are told to pursue...
- a. Righteousness: Righteousness means things that are right.
  - b. Faith: this has to do with a sincere confidence in God.

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- c. Love: you know what love is. Many of those *evil desires of youth* harm other people either physically or emotionally. But instead we are to love people. Instead of having such a love of power that we will trample anyone to get to the top, we are to care about other people. Instead of a love for money that harms others, we are to love others and respect others.
  - d. Peace: we are to pursue peace with other people. Look at the rest of that verse without the comma: “Peace along with those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart.” As followers of Christ we should pursue things that foster a peaceful relationship with other people.
- III. An example: Phil 2:3-11: I am going to read verses 3-4:
- <sup>3</sup> *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,* <sup>4</sup> *not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*
- a. Look at verse 3: don’t do things out of selfishness, that would be an *evil youthful desire*
    - i. Instead consider others above yourselves. This would be pursuing love.
      - 1. As you go from day to day, don’t think you are better than someone else. Don’t think the cashier at the store is lower than you, or the custodian, or the person who never graduated high school, or even the person who has served time in jail. We are all just a few mistakes away from being in a very bad place.
      - 2. Look at verse 4: look out for the interest of others. Again, pursuing love.
        - a. Help someone by opening the door for them
        - b. Smile: that is helping the interest of others. There was a chapel speaker when I was in college. She shared a time when she was going to kill herself. She was in high school and things were difficult for her. She had a plan; she would use her dad’s gun. But when she walked out of school, one of the more popular students smiled at her and opened the door for her. That reminded her that her life had value. She went home and got the bullet out and instead of shooting herself, she put it in an envelope and gave it to that young man with a note that said something like, “You saved my life.”
        - c. A smile and a hello goes a long way.
      - 3. Verses 6-11 show us that our attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus. Christ was and Is God. Yet, He lowered Himself to become one of us and live in poverty.

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### **Close:**

So, Wal-Mart, commercials and many other things tend to show our evil youthful desires, don't they? This doesn't mean that Wal-Mart and the commercials are evil youthful desires, this just means they show them. Walking through a Wal-Mart can show our excess, our love of money and things; commercials can certainly show this as well. Commercials, especially the Super Bowl commercials certainly show our desire for inappropriate sex.

Evil youthful desires don't pursue them in thought or action. Instead, pursue loving God's people in peace, faith, and righteousness. I strongly believe there is more joy in loving and building others up than in pursuing your youthful desires. **But, hear this:** there are second chances. We serve a God who gives us second chances.

King David desired a woman who was not his wife. He then took that woman committed adultery with her. He then had her husband killed. David was later confronted and he repented. Psalm 51 is his prayer of confession listen to the verses that were read as our call to worship today:

#### *Psalm 51:10-12*

*<sup>10</sup> Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*<sup>11</sup> Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*