

## Ezra 9 - Purity of Heart

Ezr 9:1-15 NIV After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves **separate from the neighboring peoples with their **detestable practices****, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. 2 They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this **unfaithfulness**."

### Separation helps us remain **Faithful to God**

This was the very same thing that led to their being carried off to Babylon to begin with

- 2Ch 36:14 NIV Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people **became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations** and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

### **This is also a NT concept**

- Jas 4:4 You **adulterous** people, don't you know that **friendship with the world** means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.
- Jas 4:8 NIV Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and **purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

### **The Downfall of Solomon - "THE TURNING AWAY OF HIS HEART" - this is the real issue**

1Ki 11:1-11 ESV Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, **for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.**" Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And **his wives turned away his heart.** 4 For when Solomon was old **his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.**

### DETESTABLE PRACTICES

**Many things that are detestable to God are acceptable in our culture -- We must distinguish between light and darkness**

- Isa 5:20 NIV Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, **who put darkness for light and light for darkness**, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

### **Homosexuality**

- Lev 20:13 NIV "If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman

### **Coveting of Silver and Gold**

- Deu 7:25 NIV The images of their gods...**Do not covet the silver and gold...** you will be ensnared by it, for it is **detestable** to the LORD your God.

### **Dishonesty in business**

- Pro 11:1 NIV The LORD detests **dishonest scales**, but accurate weights find favor with him.

### **Sacrificing of children**

- Deu 18:9 NIV ...**sacrificing children** in the fire

### **Sorcery and witchcraft**

- Deu 18:10-12... **practices divination or sorcery**, interprets **omens**, engages in **witchcraft**, (11) or **casts spells**, or who is a **medium** or **spiritist** or **who consults the dead**

### **The seven things that are detestable to Him**

- Pro 6:16-19 NIV There are six things the LORD hates, **seven that are detestable to him:** (17) haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, (18) a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, (19) a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.

## Returning To Faithfulness & Purity of Heart

### **1) Godly sorrow - repentance**

- 3 When I heard this, **I tore my tunic** and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled.

### **2) Responsive to the word of God**

- 4 Then everyone who **trembled at the words of the God** of Israel gathered around me because of this **unfaithfulness** of the exiles.

### **3) Am I appalled [stunned or devastated] or have I become callous regarding the nature of sin?**

- And I sat there **appalled** until the evening sacrifice.

### **4) Confession of sin**

- 5 Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my **self-abasement**, with my tunic and **cloak torn**, and **fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God** 6 and prayed: "I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because **our sins** are higher than **our heads** and **our guilt** has reached to the heavens.

### **5) Take personal responsibility for your actions**

- 7 From the days of **our** ancestors until now, **our** guilt has been great. Because of **our** sins, **we** and **our** kings and **our** priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

### **6) Understand God's desire for grace, mercy, kindness and forgiveness**

- 8 "But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been **gracious** in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives **light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage**. 9 Though we are slaves, our **God has not forsaken us** in our bondage. **He has shown us kindness** in the sight of the kings of Persia: **He has granted us new life** to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and **he has given us a wall of protection** in Judah and Jerusalem.

**7) The importance of scripture guidance vs cultural norms - He knew what they were doing was wrong BECAUSE of the word**

- 10 "But now, our God, what can we say after this? For **we have forsaken the commands** 11 ***you gave through your servants the prophets when you said:*** 'The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. 12 Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.'

**8) Acknowledge the righteousness of God in dealing with our sin**

- 13 "What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our **great guilt**, and yet, our God, **you have punished us less than our sins deserved** and have given us a **remnant** like this. 14 **Shall we then break your commands again** and intermarry with the peoples who commit such **detestable practices**? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? 15 LORD, the God of Israel, **you are righteous!** We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our **guilt**, though because of it **not one of us can stand in your presence.**"

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**Pornography**

Survey of those who identify themselves as *born-again* Christians

- 95% admit that they have viewed pornography;
- 54% look at pornography at least once a month;
- 44% viewed pornography at work in the last 90 days;
- 18% admit being addicted to pornography (and another 9% think they may be).<sup>1</sup>

We will be addressing this issue during our annual men's retreat [January/February]

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<http://www.provenmen.org/press-releases/2014-pornography-survey-of-christian-men-shocking-new-national-survey-reveals-high-levels-of-pornography-use-and-rampant-extramarital-affairs-among-christian-men/>