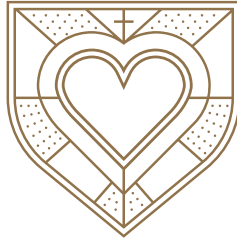


# PURE IN HEART

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*Sexual Sin and  
the Promises of God*



*J. Garrett Kell*

“*Pure in Heart* is honest, hopeful, and helpful. Kell is joyfully and carefully God-centered and direct. He does not give the false hope of simple, immediate answers. In fact, this thoughtful book will challenge you with its questions. It carefully exposes distortions and reminds us of practices that can help—the role of the local congregation, confession to God, and confession to others. Kell reminds us of the freedom from sin we already know, and shows us how it is worth the cost of any repentance. Read this; it’s worth your time.”

**Mark Dever**, Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church; President, 9Marks Ministries

“If you’re looking for a resource on sexual purity written by someone who’s never struggled, this is not the book for you. Garrett Kell has been in the trenches. And while he’s enjoyed a great measure of deliverance, the smoke of battle still lingers over his life. *Pure in Heart* directs our gaze to the promise, spoken and secured by Jesus, that the pure in heart will see God. Laced with vivid illustrations and saturated with Scripture, Garrett brings years of pastoral wisdom to a topic we often wish to avoid. If you’re looking for a resource that will reinvigorate your heart with biblical truth and concrete steps for the fight, this is the book for you.”

**Matt Smethurst**, Managing Editor, The Gospel Coalition; Pastor, River City Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia; author, *Deacons* and *Before You Open Your Bible*

“This is a book we were hoping Kell would write and one that we’re praying every member of our church will read. The content is not mere theory—Garrett Kell has struggled himself, and helps others fight for purity. *Pure in Heart* redirects our eyes off this world and onto Christ as the only one who can satisfy our souls. In a world where we’re bombarded with impure images, this book is an excellent reminder that when we fight for purity, we see God. Whether you struggle in this area or not, read this book, and then pass it on to a friend.”

**Dave and Gloria Furman**, Senior Pastor, Redeemer Church of Dubai; author, *Being There* and *Kiss the Wave*; and his wife, Gloria, author, *Alive in Him*

“From the pulpit to the pew, sexual sin is a gaping wound within the lives of countless men and women. Seemingly insignificant at the beginning, it grows into a gangrene of darkness that seems incurable. *Pure in Heart* is like a surgeon’s scalpel flaying open the wound of sin, administering the promises of God, and applying the balm of the gospel of Christ. Revealing his own venerable wounds, Garrett Kell uses biblical and theologically precise truth for those hurting from the past, battling in the present, and desiring freedom in the future. His message is simple: there is hope and healing in Christ.”

**Dustin Benge**, Provost, Union School of Theology, Wales

“Garrett Kell comes alongside you in this book as a kind, thoughtful, and wise older brother who’s not immune to struggles with sexual purity himself. This is Bible-infused, gospel-centered gold—helpful, practical, and encouraging writing that raises the bar, saturates with grace, and shines the spotlight on Jesus.”

**Shelby Abbott**, campus minister; author, *Pressure Points* and *DoubtLess*

“*Pure in Heart* faithfully opens the Scriptures to expose the sin that hinders us from seeing God. Yet rather than leave us to despair, Kell points to Jesus, who is able to make us pure. Marked by urgency and practical wisdom, this book encourages the church to see that Jesus is enough as she fights for purity.”

**Harshit Singh**, Pastor, Satyan Vachan Church, Lucknow, India

“We unreservedly recommend Garrett Kell’s book to anyone struggling with sexual purity. We do so because it is an honest and transparent book written by someone who has struggled in this area and achieved genuine victory. This victory was not through a self-help program but through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. What we also love about this book is that it pleads with those wrestling with sexual impurity to come out of hiding and seek the help of God’s people. It is in the loving community of the church that the wounded are healed.”

**Conrad and Felistas Mbewe**, Pastor, Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia; and his wife, Felistas

“*Pure in Heart* is clear, honest, and direct, revealing both the severity of sexual sin as well as the beauty of God’s grace. This biblically rooted guide, practical at its core, delightfully guides anyone who reads it into an encouraging route to freedom from sexual bondage. Garrett Kell shows the reader a roadmap to truth and grace; his book is a great gift to share with anyone who seeks gospel truth in the relationship between God, mankind, sin, grace, and sexuality.”

**Christopher Yuan**, speaker; author, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story*

“I know from my pastoral and discipleship ministry to young people—and from personal experience—just how devastating pornography and other sexual sin can be. This is why I’m incredibly grateful to God for Garrett Kell’s new book, *Pure in Heart*. It brings biblical wisdom, pastoral insights, and practical applications to bear in the battle every believer must fight against the lusts that distract us from the glory of the Savior who loves us.”

**Jared C. Wilson**, Director, Pastoral Training Center, Liberty Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri; author, *The Imperfect Disciple*

“This is an honest, practical, and challenging book that continuously points the reader to Christ. Drawing from his own experiences, Garrett has produced something that is easy to read and extremely relevant. We both highly recommend this book.”

**Mez and Miriam McConnell**, Niddrie Community Church, Scotland, United Kingdom

“This book is thoroughly biblical, refreshingly personal, full of grace and truth, and focused on what matters most: seeing God and experiencing full happiness in him. Toward that ultimate end, we both gladly commend this book to you, men and women alike.”

**David and Heather Platt**, Pastor, McLean Bible Church; author, *Radical*; and his wife, Heather

“Once we allow sin to come into our lives as a supplicant, it will remain as a tyrant. The Bible has taught this since the very beginning. However, it also teaches that, with the grace of Christ, sin can be overcome. Garrett Kell’s book is not only for those who have already fallen into temptation, but it’s also for those who are being tempted. Biblical, honest, straight to the point, this book needs to be read by all who love the Lord and struggle against impurity of the heart.”

**Jonas Madureira**, Professor of Philosophy, Mackenzie Presbyterian University; Senior Pastor, Word Baptist Church, São Paulo, Brazil



# Pure in Heart

*Sexual Sin and the Promises of God*

J. Garrett Kell

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WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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*For Christ's bride, the church.  
May we present ourselves pure to him.*





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## Acknowledgments

AS A SEASHORE IS SHAPED by the endless influence of breaking waves, so I have been shaped by many influences. Supremely, my heavenly Father rescued me from my sinful wandering through the grace of his Son and the power of his Spirit. Since that day, his kind providences have guided my every step.

Next to my Savior, no one has affected me more than my beloved wife, Carrie. She knows the best of me, and the worst, yet she loves me still. Her wisdom has marked me, and her continual forgiveness serves as a living reminder of God's love for me in Christ.

My children are still young, yet regularly show me God's love. I pray they will avoid the snares I have endured and that Jesus will be their refuge, as he has been mine. Eden, Haddon, Phoebe, Graham, and Simeon—walk with Jesus; he will never lead you astray.

My father, mother, and sister comprise a wonderful family in which hospitality, tough love, hard work, and lots of laughs were commonplace. I remember our days with joy.

In his church, God has given me family, friends, and mentors. Tom Nelson took me in as a spiritual son after my conversion. He taught me nearly every book of the Bible and instilled in

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me a love and trust in God's word that I cannot imagine living without.

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Finally, editors are a writer's best friend. Matt Smethurst, Ben Robin, Heather Robinson, Steve Coleman, and Johnny Antle have worked to make my feeble efforts more faithful.

To those mentioned, and many more, I am greatly indebted. To God be all glory.

## Introduction

EARLY IN HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*, Ulysses receives a warning of dangers awaiting him on the journey to Ithaca. A certain island must be avoided at all costs. It's an enchanting place inhabited by Sirens—dangerous creatures who sing a beautiful song to passing sailors.

Their song, however, is a trap. It captivates the hearers and lures them closer. Once at the feet of the Sirens, the victims are shackled, not by chains but by their desire to hear more of the melody. The intoxicating music overtakes the sailors' senses, leaving them to die beside the victims of ages past.

As Ulysses nears the forbidden island, his curiosity eclipses the warning. He orders the crew to plug their ears with wax before fastening him to the mast, so he can hear the Sirens sing. When the island finally comes into view and he hears the Sirens' song, his sobriety fades and he becomes hypnotized by their call to draw closer.

Though Ulysses can see the pile of bones at the Sirens' feet, he longs to move closer. He fights against the restraints. More of the enticing song is all he wants. Yet mercifully, the restraints hold

long enough for his ship to sail past and for Ulysses to regain his senses.

The themes of this mythical tale may sound familiar to you. Like the song of the Sirens, the temptation to sexual sin cries out, summoning listeners to come and take their fill of fleeting, deadly pleasures. It tickles the ears of men and women, young and old, godly and godless. At times the seductive song of sexual lust seems irresistible. What are we to do? White-knuckled willpower cannot restrain our desires.

### **My Ear for the Song**

Sadly, I know the song of the Sirens all too well. My first exposure to pornography was at age nine. I still remember the sunlight glaring on the wrinkled magazine a friend had stolen from his father.

Corrupted curiosity awoke in me that day. The next twelve years were devoted to feeding my lustful hunger. Yet no picture or fantasy or relationship could fulfill me; in fact, my longing only grew. At times I controlled my lusts, but more often I imitated the blind men clawing at Lot's door, scrambling to satisfy their passions (Gen. 19:11). I indulged every desire I could and used anyone I needed to in the process. I was a liar, a cheat, and a perverted manipulator.

Thankfully, the God of grace intervened in my life through the witness of a friend, and I met the Savior who shed his blood for Siren-lovers like me. I began to walk with Jesus and love him. He transformed my life and introduced me to the sweetness of his holiness. I quickly learned, however, that old loves die slowly. I delighted in hearing the voice of the Shepherd, but—to my shame—my ear remained tuned to the song of the Siren.

One Wednesday morning still scars my memory. I was a three-year-old Christian and had just begun seminary. I attended an

early morning Bible study, but no later than the final Amen did the Siren's song reach my ears. At this time in my life, though, the song had changed key. It used to come as an invitation; now it came as a command. I felt as if I had no choice but to obey its orders.

I went home from Bible study that morning and looked at pornography for hours—page after empty page, feasting on the mirage of sin. Afterward I was left with a horrifying thought: *I guess I'll always be like this*. Sin had sapped all hope that freedom in Christ was actually possible.

But I wanted freedom—so I employed every tactic I could. I tried cold showers. I increased exercise. I joined a legalistic club (we put a dollar in the “pervert pot” if we compromised). I listened to purity pep talks and searched for magical Bible verses—but all to no real avail. To my shame, some of my most grievous sins were committed against the Savior *after* he made me his own. I needed something more powerful than man-powered tactics to help me.

### A Sweeter Song

In 2007, the Lord graciously intervened. I was three years into pastoring a church in a small Texas town. Though the ministry was thriving, I was hiding my dark secret. Sure, I confessed to friends that I was “struggling with purity,” but I assured them the worst of it was “in the past.”

In truth, however, I was deceived. My pride and fear of man kept me from being honest about how deep my darkness had become. I assumed that because I loved Jesus—I was a *pastor*, after all—I would be able to overcome it. But I couldn't. Eventually, God led me to confide my entire struggle to a pastor friend in another city, then used him to help me be honest with my own



elders, which eventually resulted in confessing my sin before the whole church I was pastoring.

What followed was probably the worst year of my life. My reputation became ruined. Worst of all, I saw how my sin had shattered some of my closest friends' trust in Jesus. The refining furnace of God's mercy burned brightly in me, and after the brutal year had passed, I was left with a peaceful fruit of righteousness that could have come no other way (Heb. 12:10–11). I knew I'd been forgiven through Christ's blood, but until then I didn't understand that the good news is just as much for *believers* as it is for unbelievers. Through the brokenness, I began to hear the song of grace as a better, sweeter tune than the song of sin.

What followed was a small revival, surely in my heart, but also in our church. In several ways God emptied us of hypocrisy and led many to repent of their own sins. It is true that “where sin increase[s], grace abounds all the more” (Rom. 5:20).<sup>1</sup>

I share all of this because I hope you will see that this book is not birthed out of a squeaky-clean study, much less an impeccable ivory tower. It comes from the wrestlings of a wanderer. It comes from someone God has graciously helped.

The Lord has brought other brothers and sisters alongside me and lifted my eyes to see that he provides a pathway to a better beauty than lust. And that pathway is found in this promise: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

### Seeing God by Pursuing Purity

As you hold this book, Jesus's promise is for you. Whether you're reading to help someone else or to find hope for yourself, God de-

<sup>1</sup> To read more about this story, see my article “I Was a Pastor Hooked on Porn,” The Gospel Coalition website, August 22, 2017, [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/i-was-pastor-hooked-on-porn/](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/i-was-pastor-hooked-on-porn/).

lights in helping you. He desires us to see him more clearly, which is why he gives us this precious promise. He wants us to know how to enjoy sex, avoid sin, and love him. Jesus's promise in Matthew 5:8 provides wisdom for the pursuit.

This book is arranged in two sections, each meditating on his promise. The first section points us to the *promise of purity*. This lays the foundation for understanding who God is, what he promises, and what makes pursuing sexual purity so difficult. While you may be tempted to skim this section, I encourage you not to jump ahead to the “practical” suggestions in the second section. As with building a sturdy home, a solid foundation is essential.

The second section introduces long-term strategies for pursuing purity and resisting temptation. I call them *pathways to purity*, since completing a checklist or flipping a switch doesn't accomplish change. Rather, we need radical approaches to killing sin and delighting in the beauty of God. These strategies—applied by faith over time, in the context of a healthy church community—will prove to do what wax earplugs and the restraining ropes of self-effort cannot. God will use these concrete steps to transform your heart, and your life.

Finally, throughout this book you'll find real-life examples of men and women, single and married, straight and those struggling with same-sex attraction. You may not relate to all of them, but my prayer is that God will use something here to help you see him more clearly—and to help others do the same. Holiness is a community project, and fostering an informed empathy is a vital part of loving both one another and the King who invites us to behold his beauty.

Let's begin our journey of seeing him.



PART 1

---

PROMISE OF PURITY



## Promise

*“I have spread my couch with coverings. . . . I have  
perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.  
Come, let us take our fill of love till morning.”*

THE SEDUCTRESS (PROV. 7:16–18)

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

JESUS (MATT. 5:8)

COMPETING VOICES CALL TO US. They offer promises. One is calling from heaven, the other from hell. We must choose which voice to follow.

Sarah felt trapped in her marriage. Passion for her husband grew cold while passion for a coworker warmed. Each day the coworker complimented her. He noticed her appearance and sought her company. The attention awakened something in her she thought long dead. Sarah liked it. She wanted more of it, though she knew it was wrong.

Slowly she walked along a perilous precipice of temptation. On the one side: intrigue and seduction. On the other: the voice of the good shepherd, summoning her to the sweetness of his pastures.

### Truly Blessed

A temptation invites us to sin against God while promising happiness apart from God. The lips of the seductress “drip honey, / and her speech is smoother than oil” (Prov. 5:3). She knows exactly what to say—and how to say it. Slyly she affirms our attractiveness and importance. Escaping with her holds endless possibilities for enjoyment. You can bend the rules; she promises not to tell. Restrain sexual passion? That would be unnatural and unnecessary, she insists. The offer of her embrace is an invitation to ecstasy.

Now, Jesus also fulfills our passions and serves our pleasures, but of a distinctly different kind and in a vastly different way. “Blessed are the pure in heart,” he proclaims. The happiness he offers is unique. It cannot be known apart from holiness, and it arises from faith and obedience. It requires devotion, a willingness to forsake the flash of instant fulfillment for a joy that cannot be seen or tasted or touched.

The word *blessed* is rich with meaning. It refers to a deep and happy fulfillment. This kind of happiness does not blow away with the wind; it weathers the storms of life. It looks to riches stored in heaven, not on earth. The blessed person of Matthew 5 looks to God for satisfaction.

Why are the pure in heart blessed? Because “they shall see God.” According to Jesus, God will bless those who pursue clearer sight of his glory. In other words, the sinful images we seek or forbidden embraces we crave are illusory. They do not provide true blessedness—especially that of seeing God.

Jesus invites us to “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps. 34:8). Follow his commands, he beckons, “that [his] joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). Embracing his promise requires trust in his promises over and against sin’s promises.

Sin draws strength from the promise of immediate satisfaction. It offers a retreat from reality, whispering, *You deserve it*. Lust assures that a rendezvous with secret sin will not be costly, and a return to the Lord will be easy—or unnecessary. *God is love, so he will certainly forgive you, right?* But drinking sin’s lies only leaves us longing for more. A glass of saltwater may look promising to a thirsty man, but it only leaves him more parched. Jesus’s promises offer us a better drink. His living water does not turn our soul’s tongue dry, but refreshes it with everlasting happiness.

The question is simple: *Will you believe his promise?*

Sarah wrestled to believe God’s word. She read about the destruction promised to adulterers, but she was certain she could stop at any time. Yet with every deleted text message and inappropriate encounter, her resolve slowly faded. Her flesh screamed for more, and assured her any indulgence would be worth it.

### **Promise for Then—and Now**

Again, sin can offer only immediate satisfaction. Sure, forbidden fruit is exhilarating when you bite into it, but its sweetness quickly vanishes. The bitter aftertaste of pornography or adultery—which seemed so promising at first—now haunts many of us. Sin promises sweetness, but its pleasure expires immediately and its aftertaste is always bitter. This is where we discover a chink in its armor. It has nothing to offer you down the road but regret and shame. As Matt



Smethurst has said, “Sin always looks better through the windshield than the rearview mirror.”<sup>1</sup>

God’s promises are better. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” is a promise for the present and for the future. One day, the dim mirror of this life will give way to an unveiled encounter with the Lord (1 Cor. 13:12). Our “eyes will behold the king in his beauty” and we shall “see the glory of the LORD, / the majesty of our God” (Isa. 33:17; 35:2). Jesus’s promise of blessing for the pure in heart has that coming day in mind. A day when faith becomes sight and hope is fully realized. A day when sin will be a memory and temptation silenced forever. Sin’s corruption will be destroyed along with all desire to sin again.

Imagine being enraptured into the Trinitarian love that knows neither beginning nor end. Glory! “He will dwell” among us and will forever “be our God,” and forevermore we shall “see his face” (see Rev. 21–22). Those who love God are promised such a day.

But his promise is also for today. Right now, the pure in heart shall see God. Today we can know the blessedness—the happiness—of purity. I didn’t always believe this promise. I felt powerless over porn’s seduction and was easily charmed by the thrill of the moment. I conceded to being a child of God in chains. But Jesus came to free people like me from Satan’s propaganda.

Today, Jesus lays before your heart a more compelling beauty than the seductress. Yes, sin’s offering *feels* like it will fulfill you, but God’s offering *will*. You will never regret resisting sin. You will

1 Matt Smethurst (@MattSmethurst), *Twitter*, December 21, 2017, 9:44 a.m., [twitter.com/MattSmethurst/status/943854703540088832](https://twitter.com/MattSmethurst/status/943854703540088832).

always regret giving in. I have never looked back on obedience with regret, nor on compromise with gratitude. Seeing God is both our eternal destiny and our daily delight.

God's wisdom merges the promised *then* and present *now* in a way that strengthens us. Consider the words of the apostle John:

Beloved, *we are God's children now*, and what we will be has *not yet appeared*; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3:2–3)

Longing to see God on *that day* propels his people to purity *today*. As we long to be with him *then*, we loathe for sin to be with us *now*. Hope in his presence *then* forces us to crucify anything that would make us unlike Jesus *now*. The promise associated with purity gives calendar-spanning hope.

### **Purity Clarified**

Throughout the ages, religious subcultures have both tolerated and perpetuated clouded conceptions of purity. Some churches and “Christian” movements have forbidden sex apart from procreation, encouraged fleeing temptation in monasteries, or even outlawed marriage for church leaders. In the 1990s, thousands of teenage Christians vowed to wear “purity rings” as a pledge of abstinence until marriage. This well-intended gesture presented a narrow understanding of purity. For some, it gave the wrong impression that refusing to “go all the way” before marriage was enough to be pure. Those who embraced this perception of purity could have been prone to either pompous self-righteousness, if they kept on the right side of the line, or profound shame, if they caved to their passion.

But according to the Scriptures, purity can't be reduced to a pledge to keep our pants on. Yes, God calls us to purity in our actions, but he also demands it in our affections. This, I believe, is a fuller understanding:

Purity is an orientation of the faith-filled heart that flees the pleasures of sin and pursues the pleasures of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For too long, I assumed “being pure” meant staying within a collection of lines in the sand. If I didn't have extramarital sex or look at hardcore pornography or masturbate, then I was pure and kept God happy. If I crossed one of those lines, though, I dirtied myself and irritated him. This perspective produced a wearisome tossing between self-righteous assurance (when things were going well) and shameful guilt (when they weren't). But Jesus teaches that purity is a posture of the heart, not a line in the sand.

Consider Jesus's teaching on sexual purity: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27–28).

According to Jesus, sexual purity entails far more than virginity until marriage. Never masturbating or watching porn or committing adultery or experimenting with homosexuality are mere tips of the iceberg. Those are godly ambitions, but they're not purity of heart. But Satan tempts us to reduce purity to mere dos and don'ts. He wants us to think lightly of wandering glances and to minimize forays into porn that aren't “hardcore.” As long as we don't take off clothes or “go all the way,” Satan assures us, we're just fine.

In high school and college, conversations about sex often reveal ignorance of real purity. Hearing the command to “abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:3), students often ask, “Okay, but how far is too far?” In other words, “How close can I get to sin before I’m really in trouble?” Far better, though, are questions like these:

- “What would please God and show my love for him?”
- “Does what I do with my body bring God honor?”
- “Will doing this help me, and others, to better see God?”

In recent years, pondering one particular question has revealed my own heart:

- “If you had one hour to do anything you wanted, and would face no consequences, what would you do?”

I don’t know about you, but that question exposes an abiding darkness in me. Too often I resist porn or sexual flings for fear of consequences to my life rather than fear of the Lord. This isn’t to say fear of consequences can never be a helpful motivation, but simply abstaining from sin for this reason, or because I don’t have access to it, is not the same as being pure in heart.

Sarah’s adultery only happened after a thousand small steps toward a mirage of happiness. Her mental boundaries slowly toppled as her heart was taken captive by the thrill of fleeting pleasure. And once ensnared in the darkness, she felt there was no way out.

### **Purity Is a Pathway**

Hear this: purity is not the end—it is a means. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, *for* they shall see God.” The word “for” tells

us that purity is the *cause*, or *explanation*, for seeing God. The implication is clear: purity is a pathway to seeing God.

Purity for purity's sake is a powerful form of self-serving idolatry that hinders us from seeing God. Jesus continually rebuked religious leaders for being outwardly clean but inwardly dead (see Matt. 23:27–28). We must not succumb to the same trap of settling for mere external purity. Not wanting to confess sin or feel guilt or face consequences has nothing to do with God. It is an empty ambition that stokes pride and weakens your ability to slay sexual temptation.

What we need instead is to fix our eyes on the beauty of God himself. We must kill the sin that tempts us to look away from him—and we kill it *by* looking at him. The battle begins in our hearts and demands diligent effort. Purity will not just happen. We must fight for it.

Satan is laboring to blind you from seeing God today. He raises doubts and whispers promises laced with lies. But we must “resist the devil,” and “by the Spirit . . . put to death the deeds of the body,” and “strive for . . . the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (James 4:7; Rom. 8:13; Heb. 12:14). We fight for purity because it leads to seeing God.

Purity requires fleeing both from sin and to God. We “flee from sexual immorality” and “flee youthful passions” (1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:22). But we also unite abstaining from sin with the equally important command to indulge in God. We are not created to simply “not eat” forbidden things, but first and foremost to freely eat all of God's good provisions (see Gen. 2:15–17). Losing this perspective saps motivation for the journey.

So I must ask, Is God your greatest delight? Does your heart long to know and enjoy him? Can you say, with the psalmist, “Because

your steadfast love is better than life, / my lips will praise you” (Ps. 63:3)? Do you believe God is better than porn, better than sexual pleasure, better than another human to hold you at night?

If your answer is no, then I encourage you to keep reading. This book is not a magic spell to fix all your struggles, but it contains truth God can use to help you. Keep digging. Keep praying. Keep asking for help.

Augustine said, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”<sup>2</sup> Whether you are a believer in Jesus or not, your heart will find rest only in God himself. Jesus lays before you a promise that will give rest to your weary soul. He died on the cross for all the ways we have traded God for lesser loves, and then he rose to show us the way to enjoy his presence, both now and forevermore.

The hope and power that set Sarah free were contained in the promises of Jesus Christ. As her idol began to betray her, God mercifully reached into her brokenness and gave her eyes of faith to see him. Repentance began when he helped her realize that purity was not a stifling prison, but a pathway to lasting joy.

2 Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. J. G. Pilkington, in vol. 1 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887), 1.1.1.

*“We unite abstaining from sin with the equally important command to indulge in God.”*

**J. GARRETT KELL**

Many women and men trapped in sexual sin believe willpower is the key to overcoming temptation, but your shaky self-discipline doesn't have to be the source of your strength. Sharing from his personal struggles, J. Garrett Kell explains that life-long transformation rests in the supernatural power of the Savior and the support of a local church. He offers profound insights into Jesus's teachings on purity and provides you with long-term strategies for your own pathway to freedom.

Written for both men and women struggling with temptation, this book is a vital resource for the church, encouraging a healthy, empathetic community to help brothers and sisters in Christ resist sin. The goal isn't purity for purity's sake, but delighting in God and trusting him for ultimate victory.

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*“Pure in Heart* is honest, hopeful, and helpful. It carefully exposes distortions and reminds us of practices that can help—the role of the local congregation, confession to God, and confession to others.

**Mark Dever**, Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church; President, 9Marks Ministries

“We unreservedly recommend Garrett Kell's book to anyone struggling with sexual purity.”

**Conrad & Felistas Mbewe**, Pastor, Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia; and his wife, Felistas

“This book is thoroughly biblical, refreshingly personal, full of grace and truth, and focused on what matters most: seeing God and experiencing full happiness in him.”

**David & Heather Platt**, Pastor, McLean Bible Church; author, *Radical*; and his wife, Heather

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SEXUALITY / CHRISTIAN LIVING