

When Life Pollutes You, Seek Cleansing Leviticus 15

We live in a sinful world and we sometimes become polluted by this world through no fault of our own. Sometimes people are victimized by the sinful actions of other people and brought into shame and guilt even though they are innocent of wrongdoing. Children, but also youth and adults, can be victimized by spouse abuse, rape, acts of violence, pornography, incest, satanic ritual abuse and so on. Often these victims suffer silently for years from what happened, dealing with shame and guilt within the inner recesses of their heart, engaging in numerous hurtful defense mechanisms, but never getting resolution from their past hurts. They need to be cleansed and freed from their past.

The ceremonial purity laws we will look at today taught that a person sometimes becomes unclean not through any sin on their part, but simply because they live in a fallen world and cannot escape becoming contaminated by that world. I invite you to turn to Leviticus 15 in your Bible. Leviticus is the third book in the Old Testament. Leviticus 15. I will summarize the chapter for you and then talk about the principle it teaches and how we can apply it today.

In verses 1-12 God says that a man with a bodily discharge becomes unclean as well as anything or anyone he touches. He remains unclean for seven days after the end of his discharge and then he bathes and washes his clothes. Anyone he touched or who touched him must bathe and remains unclean until the evening. On the eighth day after the end of his discharge the priest offered up a sin offering and a burnt offering for the man. Remember the sin offering was to remove the pollution picked up by living in a sinful world.

Uncleanness is not a synonym for sin. Uncleanness could be acquired through no fault of his own but it prevented the Israelite from entering God's presence. The sin offering removed the pollution picked up from living in a sinful world. The person who was touched by the man with a discharge or accidentally touched him became unclean for a day and needed to wash, but he became clean in the evening.

In verses 16-18 God says that a seminal discharge makes a man unclean until the evening, and he would need to wash himself.

Menstruation makes a woman unclean and whatever the blood touches or whatever or whomever she touches. She also remained unclean for seven days after the blood stopped and then on the eighth day she was clean and the priest offered a sin offering and a burnt offering on her behalf. The person who touched her or was touched by her would wash and become unclean until the evening.

These states of uncleanness resulting from body fluids were not considered to be sinful conditions, but causes of uncleanness that needed to be washed away. The person who touched them or was touched by them had not sinned, but had become unclean because of the touch. They did not have to offer any sacrifice. All they did was bathe and then they became clean in the evening.

So, here is the principle these regulations teach concerning uncleanness. Through no fault of our own, we can become polluted by living in a sinful world and need cleaning from the harmful effects of sin. I am going to apply this principle to a large category of people who have become victims of incest, pornography, child abuse, rape, satanic ritual abuse, victims of violence and all sorts of similar categories.

In those cases the person is not guilty of sin, but they have become polluted by other people's sin and they need cleansing from that pollution. All sorts of people have been wounded and hurt by the actions of others and they need cleansing from the negative effects of what they experienced. In a crowd of this size some are here who have been victims of some of the things I have described. You're not at fault for what happened, but you need cleansing, because trying to ignore it by repressing the hurt or trying to drown it out in alcohol and drugs will only further damage you.

I'm going to take a few minutes to lay out the size of the problem and then I have invited Mario Guel, a professional counselor in our church to come talk about what individuals need who have experienced these traumas.

According to a National Institute of Justice report in 2015 as many as 25% of women in US Universities will be victims of rape or attempted rape. In the general population one out of every six women is a victim of rape or attempted rape. Seventy percent of 18-24-year-old men visit pornographic websites each month according to the Baptist Press. This pornography usage in turn fuels acts of rape, child molestation, and sexual trafficking by a few. The Facts has recently reported sexual trafficking of teenage girls out of some of the hotels on Highway 332 here in Lake Jackson and Clute and the Angleton School District hosted a forum on sex trafficking here in Brazoria County. CNN recently reported that about 40 million people worldwide live under some form of enforced slavery sexual or physical.

About 1 in 4 American women will experience violence from their partner at some point in their adult life according to Christianity Today, Jan. 2015. More often it will be from a boyfriend rather than a husband. Probably everyone here knows someone who has been mistreated in one of these ways.

What does an individual need to be cleansed of these past hurts so that they are no longer having to live with the consequences of what others have done to them? I am going to do a little tag team with Mario Guel and let him answer that question.

[Mario speak]

How can we as brothers and sisters in Christ minister to those who have been wounded by others?

First, our church and our fellowship needs to be a safe place where people can share. Whether it is in a life group or a mentoring relationship or in the context of a friendship we need to cultivate an atmosphere of safety. How can we do that?

First, never be shocked by anything. At least don't be outwardly shocked. The Bible clearly states that all people are sinners and so when someone becomes a victim of a sinful act, that should not surprise you. When you act outwardly shocked you reinforce to the victim that they belong to the category of abnormal people. They don't want people to think of them as strange or abnormal. That kind of reaction reinforces the shame they feel at what happened and will likely cause them to retreat back into their self-imposed isolation. They need compassion from you, not shock.

Instead, you want to respond by saying, "I'm so sorry that happened to you. I love you and it grieves me that you had to go through that. I want you to know that I support you. How can I help?" In Romans 12:15 Paul writes that we should rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. You want your first response to hearing about a traumatic event to be an

empathetic or feeling response. In most cases, I think, a gentle hug, a light tap on the shoulder, or some other non-threatening physical touch is appropriate. What you want to communicate is that upon hearing your story I am moving toward you in acceptance rather than away from you.

Be very quick to hear their story and avoid giving advice. When they ask for advice or counsel, then you can offer some, but unsolicited advice often contributes to feelings of worthlessness. You may think you're being kind by offering them advice, but they may be thinking: "Oh you don't think I can solve my problems, so you need to immediately give me advice?" It's best to ask permission to give advice. You can say, "Would you like me to just listen or do you want me to suggest some solutions?"

A safe place requires confidentiality. Assure them that you will obtain their permission before you share with anyone else. If you think further intervention would be helpful, ask them if you have their permission to share this with Pastor Mark or whoever might be appropriate.

Do pray for them and with them. Ask God to heal their memories and to bring good out of evil. Encourage them to seek wise counselors. Significant traumas usually require outside help to work through the multitude of issues those traumas generate. There is no shame in seeking counseling help just like there is no shame in going to a doctor if you are physically hurt.

You are welcome to come speak to me if you are a victim, but I wanted you to know that there are Christians like Mario here whose life calling is to help people with these kinds of situations. That is why God raises them up. Mario has a counseling practice with many counselors so that even if you don't want to talk to him, there are other people available.

I want to close by speaking to those here who are laboring under the burden of some past abuse or event that has filled you with guilt or shame or self-loathing because of what someone else did to you. God loves you and he wants you free from the pain of the past. He wants to cleanse you from guilt you may feel and from shame and the fear associated with it. He never intended for you to bear this burden alone. Hiding from it, ignoring it, or repressing it will not make things any better. It takes a lot of emotional energy to do those things and any time we rely on our own strength to protect us or make us feel better, we end up trapped in some kind of ineffective defense mechanism that only makes things worse.

You have to face the past with God and with others who can help you gain healing. Jesus' words are especially appropriate for you. "Come unto me you who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my load is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

I'll close with a story that Rick McKinley shares in his book, Jesus in the Margins. The story describes part of the journey 31 year old Tiffany made in healing from a past trauma. Read.

God understands that we live in a sinful world and sometimes through no fault of our own we become dirtied by living in that world. When that happens we need cleansing. Let's pray.