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# 6 GROWING MORE HOLY

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*Matthew 5:8; Psalm 24:1-6*

**H**ow few of us live one life and live it in the open! We are tempted to wear a different mask and play a different role according to each occasion. This is not reality but play-acting, which is the essence of hypocrisy. Some people weave around themselves such a tissue of lies that they can no longer tell which part of them is real and which is make-believe. Alone among all people Jesus Christ was absolutely pure in heart, being entirely guileless.

## Open

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■ When is it difficult for you to live out in your action what you believe in your heart?

## Study

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■ In Jesus' first beatitude the words "poor in spirit" indicated the kind of

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poverty he meant. In this beatitude the words "in heart" indicate the kind of purity he is alluding to.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8)

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1. What distinction do you see between being "pure in heart" and being pure in outward behavior?

The popular interpretation of this beatitude is to regard purity of heart as an expression of inward purity, the quality of those who have been cleansed from moral—as opposed to ceremonial—defilement. There is good biblical precedent for this, especially in Psalms. Jesus took up this theme in his controversy with the Pharisees and complained about their obsession with external, ceremonial purity.

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2. In what senses will the pure in heart "see God"?

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3. How can you tell if a person whose life is outwardly correct is truly "pure in heart"?

4. Think of someone you know whom you would describe as pure in heart. What are the distinguishing marks of that person's life?

This emphasis on the inward and moral, whether contrasted with the outward and ceremonial or with the outward and physical, is certainly consistent with the whole Sermon on the Mount which requires heart-righteousness rather than mere rule-righteousness. Nevertheless, in the context of the other beatitudes, "purity of heart" seems to refer in some sense to our relationships. It is single-mindedness, having a single heart. More precisely, the primary reference is to sincerity. The pure in heart have their whole lives, public and private, transparent before others. Their very heart—including their thoughts and motives—is pure, unmixed with anything devious, ulterior or base.

5. What are some of the distractions which draw Christians away from singleness of heart?

6. Why is insincerity so destructive to Christian relationships?

7. What does sincerity do for relationships?

**Summary:** Only the pure in heart will see God, see him now with the eye of faith and see his glory in the hereafter, for only the utterly sincere can bear the dazzling vision in whose light the darkness of deceit must vanish and by whose fire all shams are burned up.

8. Read *Psalm 24* to see how David described a person who is pure in heart. What concepts and word pictures in these verses show what it takes to be worthy before God?

9. How does the fact that everything belongs to God (vv. 1-2) encourage us toward purity of heart?

10. Verse 4 sets forth conditions for coming into God's presence. In your own words, what qualities are called for?

11. For those who live sincerely before God, what outcome is promised (vv. 5-6)?

12. Only Jesus was absolutely pure in heart. Even the ideal person described in Psalm 24 must still be a sinner by nature. What phrases in this psalm give hope that a sinner can still be pure in heart?

13. On what do you rest your hope that you will "see God"?

**Summary:** The person with "clean hands and a pure heart" is one "who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false." (v. 4). This is a person whose relations with both God and other people are free from falsehood.

### Apply

■ Consider ways in which you would like your relationships to be purer, that is, more single-minded and sincere. What risks are involved?

What would make the risks worth it?

### Pray

■ Thank the Lord for being the perfect example of purity of heart. Ask him to show you areas where you have mixed motives or any hypocrisy. Pray for greater sincerity and singleness of heart before him and others.