

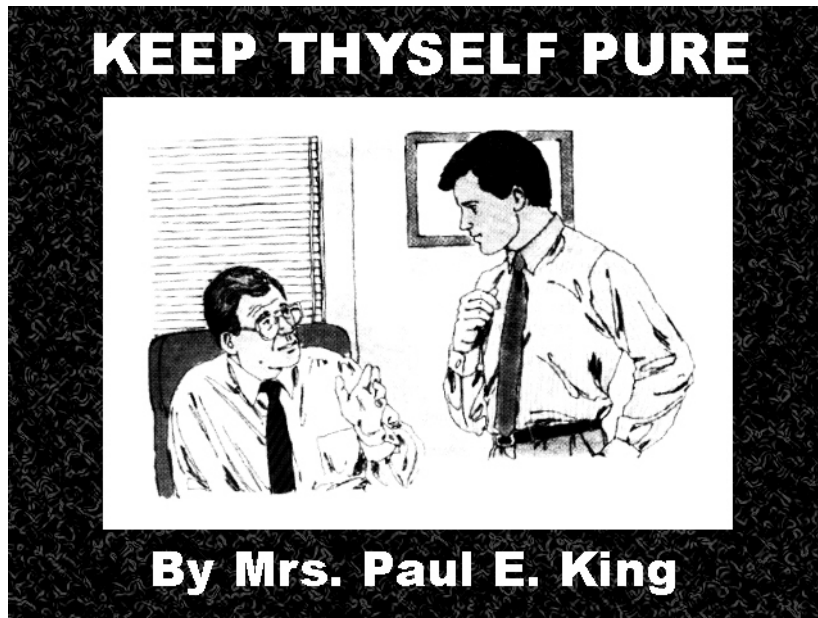
Copyright 2001 By Lucille King
All Rights Reserved and Duplication
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,
Except For Personal Use

* * * * *

Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

The Sunday School Beacon
February 26, 1995



KEEP THYSELF PURE
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Parke Innis sipped the soda he'd ordered, slowly and meditatively. He'd heard the comment Bart made about him; heard it plainly, distinctly and clearly. And he had heard the loud guffaws of the fellows, too, and the squeals of the girls.

He was a prude, Bart had said; an 'out-of-it, not-with-it' fellow. Not a bad accusation at all for someone almost out of his teens and with one full year of office work behind him, Parke mused silently. No, not bad at all. In fact, it was a compliment, he felt. Yes indeed, a compliment of the highest order. Especially so since his body was the temple of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle Paul had written, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy . . ." (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

And again, in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Parke recalled his first ever date and shuddered with the recollection. He'd been sixteen, just barely so; Nan was sixteen, almost seventeen. He had asked his father if he could take her with him to a youth meeting in another town.

"You know I trust you, Parke," his dad had replied. "But I think you're too young for dating."

"It's just a youth meeting, Dad. I tried to get several of the fellows from church to go with me but they all had other plans," Parke remembered having said.

His father gave him a long, searching, penetrating look; then he replied, "My better judgment would forbid it, son, but like I said, I do trust you. I have confidence in you and in what you profess. For this once, I'll give you permission. But let's wait till we're older to begin dating. Is Nan OK? I mean, well, she's rather new here, isn't she?"

"Yes. But she's been coming to church faithfully and she says she loves the Lord. So far as I know, she's all right, though."

His dad was silent for so long that Parke remembered he'd almost told his father he would go alone rather than cause him any worry. And then Mr. Innis had said, "I'll be praying for you, Parke. Keep yourself pure, no matter what."

Immediately I Timothy 5:22 came to Parke's mind -- ". . . keep thyself pure." It was Paul's injunction to his son in the faith, Timothy. With positive determination he had promised, "I will, Dad. And thanks for those prayers that will be following me. But I believe Nan's OK."

"You keep your standards, Parke; remove not God's ancient, time-proven and holy landmarks. Set the pace towards holy living in both your words and your actions. May God go with you and make you a standard bearer. In my day, it was generally the male who was the aggressor, if there was any aggressiveness shown or displayed. However, I'm hearing that in today's modern society it is the girl who is the aggressor in many and many an instance."

"Thanks Dad, I appreciate the advice and your wise counsel. Count on me; with God's help, I'll heed it."

Parke remembered how he wished he hadn't asked Nan to go along, after having talked to his father and sensing his father's reticence and concern over her going. But he was taught to be a man of his word and he had kept his word and picked her up at six o'clock sharp, like he had told her he'd do.

The ride to the church was pleasant; the scenery was spectacular and beautiful in the early twilight. Nan seemed to appreciate God's magnificent handiwork as much as he did. The youth meeting was spiritual and blest with God's presence, and Parke was thankful that he had gone. Nan, too, seemed to enjoy it.

He had helped her into the car after the service by opening the door on her side and seeing that she was seated before sliding behind the steering wheel and fastening himself with the seat belt and pulling out onto the open road. Once out on the highway, however, she scooted over real close to him and wrapped her arms around his neck, cooing softly in his ear that he was ever so handsome and that she was so proud of him as he led the singing.

In utter shock and disgust, he told her to please move over to her side of the car and to fasten the seat belt. She had replied that the night was "too divine and too romantic to be locked in by a seat belt" when she could be "cuddling up to a dream boy -- her dream boy." And then she put her head on his shoulder and asked him to kiss her. He refused. She nearly begged him then.

Parke shuddered now as he remembered that night. In utter disgust, he pulled the car off the road and unfastened his seat belt, a thing hard to do since Nan was all but sitting on the contraption that locked the belt in place. He jumped out of the car and once again asked her to please move over to her side of the car and fasten the seat belt. Her rebellion amazed him. She refused to budge an inch.

"Look Nan," he finally said, "unless you obey me I'll go over to that nearest farm house where the light is shining and call your mother."

"You wouldn't do any such thing!" she had declared angrily.

"I will," he had promised, starting toward the farmhouse.

"Don't. Please don't, Parke," Nan had called after him.

He turned around and walked back to the car and found her on her side of the seat, fastened in by the seat belt. Then he slid behind the steering wheel, buckled his seat belt around him and pulled out on the highway again, saying softly and kindly to her, "I haven't meant to hurt you, Nan, but there comes a time when a fellow must stand up for what he believes and for what he knows is right. You forced me to take my stand tonight. You see, I belong to the Lord, body, soul, mind and strength and spirit. I'm His to control and to please; and since my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost I want to keep it clean and pure and holy and undefiled. For, you see, the Holy Scripture tells us that if any man defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy. I want my body -- and my mind -- to stay as clean and pure as my heart is, and petting is a sure enough way to lose one's purity of thought. And once the thoughts become impure and unholy and defiled, it's only a short distance down to utter depravity and the fall of immorality and actual sin. God's Word tells us that 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'"

Nan made no further comment, and all the way home she remained silent, sullen and sulky. Parke was more grateful than ever he could remember having been for his father's prayers which he knew without any doubt were ascending heavenward for him. And he was thankful, too, that in his heart and his mind he had established certain noble, God-ordained guidelines for dating to which he meant to adhere and stick by.

He wanted a girl who was like his sister Julie. She had been the perfect example of true womanliness and Christ-likeness for him. His mother too, of course. Only, he had observed Julie's dating habits and her carefulness -- her watchfulness -- before she married Alton. Julie had helped him to set goals for his dating years and for the girl whom he would eventually date. Julie never knew how carefully he had watched her, nor how proud he was that she was his big sister. He was thankful that she had not disappointed him; not once.

Parke looked over at Bart now, and the motley group around him -- Nan included -- and he felt sorry for them. They were like strays that had never known the value and the benefits of discipline. In fact, Bart had bragged about the fact that his parents didn't care what he did so long as he had graduated from high school. They felt it would be a shameful thing for him not to have graduated, he'd said one time. "So," he had said, "I can do whatever I want to do. Dad's graduation worries are over and I'm free to do as I like. So I'm going to live my life the way I enjoy living it. Dad said he had his share of good times when he was my age and he wanted me to have mine too."

Poor Bart, Parke thought, as he saw the overcrowded booth of noisy boys and girls, nearly sitting on each other. If only Bart -- and his friends -- could realize that their so-called "freedom" could well be their undoing. How many were there, he wondered solemnly, whose freedom to "do their own thing" had given them sexually transmitted diseases and, even, AIDS?

Parke shuddered, thinking of one of the upper classmen whose untimely death from AIDS had caused great fear and alarm in the school for a period of time. For some, there was a complete turn-about and turn-around that was permanent; they changed their way of living. For others, the incident, while not forgotten, seemed to soon fade from their "alarm button" and they continued down the road of promiscuity and sinful living.

One of the girls in Bart's group now made a wisecrack and one of the fellows challenged her to sit on Bart's lap, which she did immediately. Throwing her arms around Bart's neck, she called over to Parke, "Don't you wish this were you?"

The fellows guffawed loudly; the girls shrieked wildly.

Parke felt sorry for the entire bunch, not one of which seemed to have any respect whatever for God's code of moral ethics nor for His standard of purity and chastity.

He finished the soda, got to his feet and hurried to the cash register.

"They're giving you a hard time, aren't they, Parke?" Mr. Beesom said, adding quickly, "Don't let them nettle you, my boy; you're on the right road. They're headed for trouble, every last one of them; see if I'm not right! But you stay on the track you're on; it's the right track."

"Thank you, Mr. Beesom. I mean to stay on this 'track' -- it's God's highway to Heaven. I'm completely satisfied on this way."

"I'm glad to hear that, Parke. You won't have the regrets some of them are bound to be having one of these days."

"I wish I could help them. I really do. I tried several times. . . ."

"I know. I know," Mr. Beesom declared. "Some people prefer learning their lessons the hard way, it seems. Have a good evening, Parke. It always does my heart good when I see a young person who was brought up the way most of us oldsters were brought up in our younger days."

"Thanks, Mr. Beesom, I appreciate your kind remarks."

All the way home, Parke thanked the Lord for salvation from sin and sanctification of heart and life. The Word of God was his standard-for-living Book. Paul's admonition for Timothy to keep himself pure was his -- Parke's - - standard for dating. That meant there would be nothing done by him which would hinder his testimony in any of the church services nor anywhere. There would be no parking in a lonely place; no petting and fondling his date's body; nothing at all that would grieve the gentle Holy Spirit and cause Him to take

His departure from his heart. With God's help, his dating would be a time of wholesome, clean fun and of getting to know the girl better.

Parke smiled. He had someone special. In his heart, no other girl was equal to her. Soon, God willing, she would be graduating from the Christian high school where she was going and then she would be coming home to live. She had promised that she would begin dating him upon her graduation, God willing. Each of them held the same views and had the same values. Becky was spiritual and Spirit-filled. How different she was from the girls in Bart's group of friends, Parke mused silently, as he walked homeward in the early evening.