

A person in a blue hoodie and grey pants is running away from the viewer on a rocky mountain path. The path leads up a ridge towards a large cross on a peak. The sun is rising behind the cross, creating a bright glow and long shadows. The background shows rugged, snow-capped mountains under a blue sky with some clouds.

Running the Race

Paul J. Bucknell

OVERCOMING SEXUAL LUSTS

Books by Paul J. Bucknell

Allowing the Bible to speak to our lives today!

Overcoming Anxiety: Finding Peace, Discovering God

Life in the Spirit! Experiencing the Fullness of Christ

Reaching Beyond Mediocrity: Being an Overcomer

The Life Core: Discovering the Heart of Great Training

The Godly Man: When God Touches a Man's Life

Redemption Through the Scriptures

Godly Beginnings for the Family

Principles and Practices of Biblical Parenting

Building a Great Marriage

Christian Premarital Counseling Manual for Counselors

Relational Discipleship: Cross Training

A Spiritual Map for Unity

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

The Bible Teaching Commentary on Genesis

The Bible Teaching Commentary on Romans

Life Transformation: Monthly Devotional on Rom 12:9-21

Book of Romans: Bible Studies

Book of Ephesians: Bible Studies

Book of Joel—Bible Studies: A Brief Study of the Future

Abiding in Christ: Walking with Jesus

Inductive Bible Studies in the Book of Titus

1 Peter Bible Study Questions: Living in a Fallen World.

Take Your Next Step into Ministry

The Lord Your Healer: Discover Him & Find His Healing

Training Leaders for Ministry

Satan's Four Stations: The Destroyer is Destroyed

Study Questions for Jonah: Understanding the Heart of God

Our Digital Libraries include these books as well as slides, handouts, audio/videos, and much more at: www.foundations-forfreedom.net

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts



Paul J. Bucknell

Book Information

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

by Paul J. Bucknell

Copyright 2011 by Paul J. Bucknell

Digital e-Book:

ISBN-13: 978-1-61993-094-0

All Rights reserved

Printed by Biblical Foundations for Freedom

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15212 USA

www.foundationsforfreedom.net

info@foundationsforfreedom.net

The NASB is used unless otherwise noted. The NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, (C) Copyright: The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988.

All rights reserved. Limited production is acceptable without prior permission for home and educational use. For extensive reproduction or questions please contact Paul Bucknell at info@foundationsforfreedom.net.

Foreword

The battle for sexual purity is for life. Jesus agreed, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8). Without purity of heart, we cannot grow in our relationship with God.

At some point in our lives, we need to realize that we will serve either our lusts or God. Our participation in this race is always before us.

In a real sense, I was one of the victims of modern society. “Natural is good.” “See what women are really like.” I swallowed the bait and got hooked. From the ordeal, I became convinced that lust is a horrible expression of my selfishness. The world’s barrenness became very apparent. I wanted to see God.

I was in the race for sexual purity, but what a poor runner I was. My coach (the Lord) must have been regularly disappointed with my poor decisions. “I’ll just step off the racecourse and relax a bit.” I had to learn the hard way that serious runners must not stop racing. It is a lifelong task to serve Christ as Lord rather than to follow one’s lusts.

Personally, I wish my friend had never given me a subscription to *Playboy*. It destroyed my young life. It misinformed me, guiding me into immorality. I trained my brain and body to respond wrongly to what I saw. This entrapment made it much more difficult to pursue what I knew all along in my early Christian life—the Lord wanted sexual purity for me.

This book is written for those who face a similar battle or those counseling others going through such times. We want to see the power of God and His Word enter His people, renew their spiritual devotion to Him, and bring great blessings into their lives, relationships, and marriages. You can be delivered from serving your lusts to serving others in love.

Looking back, I see how the Lord delivered me. It was not straightforward or sudden, however. How I wish that association with the dark world had ended much quicker. My biggest problems were my pride and privacy. Hopefully, you will allow the power of God's love to rule you much quicker than I did.

I have written this book as a side coach to foster discernment in what is critical—a breakthrough in one's inconsistent pursuit of sexual purity. I show you how the evil one works and how God's Word frees. I could have written so much more. Please note that three specialized articles are in the appendix.

I have written another book, [*Reaching Beyond Mediocrity*](#). It shows how to overcome all sorts of sins, including one chapter on overcoming lust. Another book, [*Building a Great Marriage*](#), sets your marriage on the right track after you have dealt with some basic issues spoken of here—even if you are single.

God works with His children to become strong men and women of God; purity is an integral part of your life and worship. Challenge those around you who say it is impossible to turn around by living for God, not for

oneself. It is not only possible but wonderfully liberating! Get released from Satan's cage now!

Sexual purity is not only possible but absolutely best. I say this without hesitation, having been married for over forty years. `

Paul J. Bucknell

A servant of the Highest Lord

USA

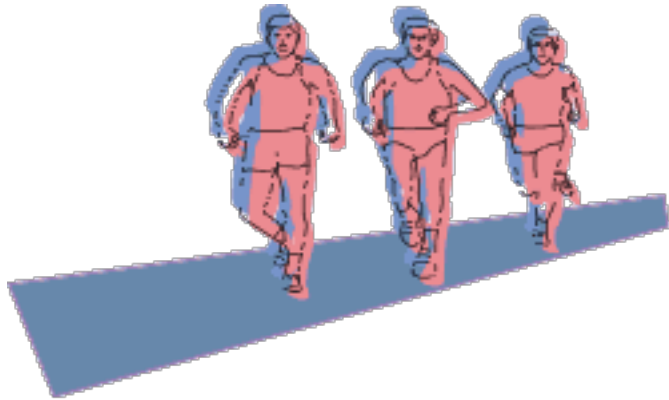
Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Sins

#1 Join the Race: Deciding to Run	13
You can't make it?	14
Two Choices	16
Making up our minds	18
Chains Broken	22
Let's Run for it	23
Three Steps to Winning	24
#2 Get Ready: Getting in Shape	27
Get Ready!	27
#1 The Training Process: A Checkup	29
The First Step	31
1• The Struggler	32
2• The Singed	35
3• The Singer	37
4• The Self-controlled	39
Congratulations!	40
Making a Commitment	42
Sign up for the Race for Moral Purity	44
#3 Cross the Line: Readying the Mind	47
Down and Up	49
Learning Well	50
Two Perspectives on Life	52
Gaining confidence	56
Perspective on pleasure	58
Designs are to Study!	59
Expert Procedures	63
Design and Freedom	66

#3 Cross the Line: Mastering the Course	69
Understanding the Four Designs	69
#1 A Special Design: Sexuality	71
#2 A Blended Design: Marriage	77
#3 An Exclusive Design: Whole-hearted	95
What if?	102
#4 Designed for life-long marriage	109
Questions: #1 A Special Design: Human Sexuality	115
Questions: #2 A Blended Design: Marriage	117
Questions: #3 An Exclusive Design: Whole-hearted	119
Questions: #4 A Permanent Design: Enduring	120
#3 Cross the line: Deciding to Win	121
Gaining a feel for winning	121
What is marriage designed for?	127
The Relevance of Marriage	129
Source of Love	142
Questions of love	146
Love Overcomes Lust	151
2) Inner Fulfillment	154
The Choice of Fulfillment	156
Problems of Fulfillment	159
Sources of Fulfillment	162
Questions of fulfillment	165
Fulfillment overcomes loneliness	170
3) Forever Secure	173
Choosing security	174
Overcoming loneliness	177
#3 Cross the Line: Running the Race	183
Our Three Coaches' Timeless Advice	185
Two Approaches to Life	191
Why do I still lust?	195
What about being single?	200

How does sexual purity improve the quality of a single person's life?	205
From Lust to Love	212
Picking up the mess	214
Gaining God's forgiveness	218
The Importance of Confession	222
Steps involved in confession	228
Forgiving a person and self	232
What are the 7 steps to forgive?	235
What if you can't forgive?	245
Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns	251
Personal Life Charts	253
What can I learn from my victories?	255
Charting Your Past	258
Testing our convictions	263
Strengthening our Convictions	266
True success is based on ...	269
Identify our present convictions	271
A Little Closer to God	276
Rescheduling Life's Priorities	282
Rescheduling Life Priorities	286
Running After Jesus	289
What is more important in life?	292
Final Summary	295
Appendix 1: Recovering Lost Affections	303
Appendix 2: Handling Pornographic Attacks	311
The Big Surprise	313
Shocked and surprised	314
1) Examine oneself	315
2) The Battle	316
3) Diligently Pray	317

4) Asking my wife for prayer	318
5) Desire for Purity	319
Appendix 3: Redeeming a Walk on the Beach	323
Appendix 4: More on the Author	339



#1 Join the Race: Deciding to Run

Overcoming Sexual Sins

Races are fun to watch, and join in if you are in shape! But what happens when you are not in good shape and discover that you are a participant in the race?

By default, we are in a race for sexual purity. God signed us up, and He, our family, and the world are our onlookers. Victory means life, but stepping out of the race means death. The consequences are eternal.

The image of a race¹ helps us in several ways to think through the challenge of battling and overcoming sexual sins.

- **The participation:** We belong. Sexual temptations are part of our life; we must run.
- **The urgency:** We must strive to win. No one wins by accident.
- **The course:** The Lord has designed our course so no temptation is too great.
- **The difficulties:** Many obstacles surround us, trying to hinder us from finishing the race.
- **The victory:** The Lord wants us to win. He is there cheering us on as He runs with us.

One of the first facts we must understand is that the race is not yet over. No matter how many mistakes we have made or how many people's lives we have fouled up, we can step back into that race and continue. There are two things that take us out of the race:

- Death - no more running
- A refusal to run

You can't make it?

So, if you can read this, then the race is on, and you can start running in that race again, a race for sexual

¹ Paul uses the word 'flee' to run away from. "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18), but we will focus on the positive goal of sexual purity.



purity. He has commanded each of us to pursue sexual purity.

There are many reasons for this. We will discuss them later.

You can run that race, and you can win it with His help. You might be ashamed of your past, like I am. That is unchangeable. But we need not be ashamed of the future! God has made a way for you and me to run steady to the end.

“For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to **various lusts and pleasures, spending our life** in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and **renewing by the Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:3-6).

You might wonder if there is any hope for you. Yes, there is! It doesn't matter how bad, evil, or even how long you have given yourself to sexual temptations. There is hope for you.

There might be consequences that will stay with you for the rest of your lives, but through God's grace, true recovery is possible for each of us. Many people, including myself, have been set back on the pathway of purity according to God's original design. We can see what God has promised us in Titus 3:3-6.

Help for us - no matter how desperate!

3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures,

Hope for us - through God's great mercy!

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy

The change in our lives that we need does not depend on how good we have been. Otherwise, there would not have been any hope for any of us. The opportunity to change derives from what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

The evil one doesn't want us to find this true love, power, and freedom in Christ Jesus but to keep us enslaved to our wayward desires.

Two Choices

Join me as I share the plan we have to overcome these strong sexual temptations. There are two options to choose from: **The Path of Reform** or **The Path of Repentance**. The two options described below may seem similar, but they are very different and have opposite outcomes. Learn them well!

Option #1
Path of Reform



STAY SAME

Option #1 Path or Reform: Stay the Same

“Life has been hard. I really hope God helps me out of this difficult situation. If He helps me, I’ll try not to do some of the things I’ve lately been doing. I’ll get better.”

“... sorrow of the world produces death ...”



“For the sorrow that is according to [the will of] God produces a repentance without regret, [leading] to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 6:9-10).

The path to do better doesn’t work. You will be out of the race before you know it because you do not have genuine repentance but only sorrow. Trying harder is not good enough. Only by God’s help can we escape this path of reform.

Option #2 Path of Repentance: Made new

Option #2

Path of
Repentance



MADE NEW

“I need to change. I’m wrecking my life. I’m destroying those I love and am fighting God. I want God to change me so that I am no longer driven by these evil desires in me.”

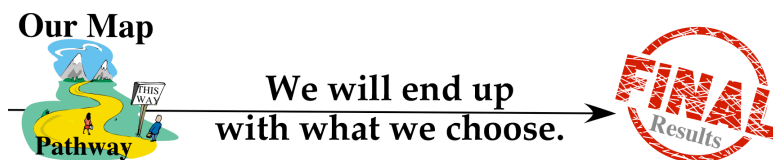
“...repentance without regret, [leading] to salvation...”

This person has learned how to get the shackles off his feet, which makes him a destined loser. He repents. Repentance is the utter hatred of what God hates. You might ask, “How does one repent?” We must make ourselves aware of God’s standard and see whether we perfectly live it out.

Repentance accepts God’s standards for what they are. Once accepted, we see our desperate situation, which deserves God’s anger; we then look for salvation.

Making up our minds

These two options have everything to do with where one will end up. The diagram below emphasizes this point.



God has put the choice before us. Many have given up on being sexually pure. Others are struggling hard to keep temptation down. You, like me, face a herd of e-mails in the privacy of my office, where I am invited to stop worrying about staying in that old race and to step into an adventure of sensual pleasure. Whispers,

like pesty flies, flurry about my head and haunt me with, “Everyone else is doing it.”



But it simply isn't true. Everyone isn't doing it. Many men are living out sexually pure lives, in or out of marriage. Job, a figure in the Old Testament times, didn't compromise. He and many others have pursued sexual purity, saying, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?”

I hope you will join Job, me, and a host of others in running this life race for sexual purity.

“I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?” (Job 31:1)

Two crucial questions face us as we contemplate living holy lives.

- (1) Will we run to the end?
- (2) Can we finish the race?

The first focuses on the fact whether we **will** live a pure life. The second focuses on our **ability** to stay sexually pure. Let me illustrate this through a personal story.

My Broken Trophy



My nicest trophy lay on the floor. Broken. Layers of smooth marble attached to wood once held firmly together with a heavy colored metaled core. But now the eagles were broken off, the king fallen. The

plate, describing the accomplishment, became another broken piece.

My son knew it was a special trophy. It was prized! I knew he also liked it, so I let him play with it. I didn't think that one day the trophy would come up to my study in broken pieces. My son asked, "Can you fix it?"

His somber eyes waited for an answer as my other children gathered around. "No, I can't fix it." I was surprised to say that, but after six steady examinations, I really didn't think I could fix the nearly 30-year-old trophy.

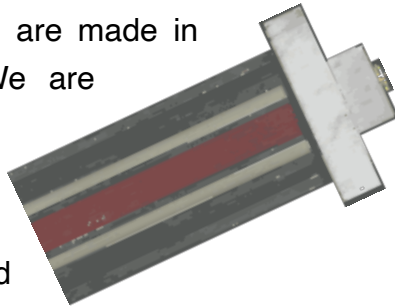
This brought to my mind how special each one of us is. We are made in the image of God. We are God's trophies of glory!

But we sometimes are careless, ignorant, deceived, betrayed, and just plain evil. It doesn't

take long for the most prized to become the most shameful.

Just like the museum statues, with missing arms and heads, so are our lives. Broken. Unsightly. We wonder if it is worth holding on to anymore.

When sexual purity is stolen, it is just like the initial shattering of the trophy on the ground. We immediately begin to live in a lie that we do not feel so bad and



that it really doesn't matter. "After all, everyone does it."

But our trophy lay broken and our lives stained. Our relationships are ruined, and our souls are darkened. It does matter!

Can anyone really put our lives back together? Can the pains and scars that seep so deep into our souls ever be healed? Hope seems to dribble out with the slightest defeat. Many of us have given up on ourselves. And rightly so. We can't repair what has been broken. We think our biggest problem with lust is our only problem. It is not.

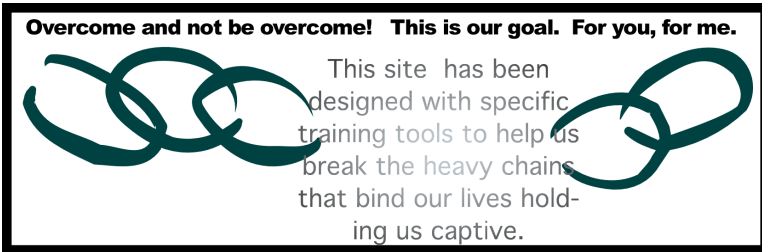
But thankfully, God specializes in repairing broken lives. Through our brokenness, others can see God's great glory more. God restores the worst of us so that we can become His prized trophies. He sets us up on earth, proclaiming to her onlookers God's glorious compassion, care, and power.

Sexual purity is generally despised in today's world, but it is important to hold onto it both in and out of marriage, in our bodies, as well as in our minds.

This series goes step by step through the process of how God restores the trophy. One must remember the restored trophy will be marked by some chips and cracks in the restored trophy. Still, far more important, the restored trophy symbolizes triumph, perhaps even greater than the original. We can join back in the race and stay right in it to the end.

Chains Broken

We might not be aware of the seriousness of the battle, but the sounds, the blood, and the wounded scattered all about us can be used to heighten our sensitivities. Fatalities abound.



Our spiritual battle weapons are the tools we need to be trained with. They might be different from what we are familiar with, but nevertheless, we must learn to use them well. Our lives and those lives around us are at stake.

The training tools provided in this series train us in tactics, strategy, defense, and offense. A plan is given to deliver one from bondage and lead one into true freedom.

We have a three-part plan to introduce, train, and implement these tools into your lives. We are not suggesting that this race will be easy. The enemy is mean and serious.

However, I do assure you that a taste of victory, the smell of genuine love, the freedom of true liberty and the depth of deep, transparent relationships are worth every drop of sweat put into this race.

Every once in a while, I tell my wife, “I love her.” She likes that. At other times, however, I share the depth of my love. “You alone are in my thoughts.” How wonderful to see how far God has brought me.

My little son, who was two years old and couldn't quite talk, once came to my study and put his shoes on my keyboard. Even if you are not a father, you probably understand his hint! He wants Daddy to take him for a walk. God's promises are like these little shoes. God has scattered 'His shoes' of scriptural promises throughout the scriptures to remind us of His good intent to make us winners in the race against sin and for purity.

Greater is the power within than without.

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Let's Run for it

Preparing for a marathon is a serious decision. If we are at all serious about our attempt to run, then we need to make life changes. We don't want you to believe that a casual approach will help you overcome your lusts. No.

My cousin has finished running the Boston Marathon several times. That was great news. The hard news is, however, that he went through difficult workouts

every day and had to change his schedule to prepare for the race.



Life changes are necessary to gain freedom from those surging sexual desires. These lifestyle changes are good. They are possible but require serious life decisions.

We highlight what these changes are and why they are good and necessary. If we were to run the marathon, we would probably ask a series of questions before undertaking such an event:

- What kind of race is it?
- Can I make it to the end?
- What do I need to make it to the end?

Three Steps to Winning

Here are the 3 steps of training to get you to that finish line:

#1 Join the Race: Make a decision to run

The first step is to join the race, which we have already discussed above. The initial decision is enough to get one in the right direction. More will be needed, but we are back in. Reading this book is like rejoining the race God originally placed you in.

#2 Get Ready: Get in Shape

After a general checkup, we will share why you can run this race against lust and win. We will even point out what keeps most people from winning and understand the layout of the race course.

#3 Run Hard: Cross the Line

The battle is won by special training for the mind! Those who win must have their minds focused on winning. That extra training necessary for winning will be provided here.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

OVERCOMING SEXUAL SINS

#2 Get Ready: Getting in Shape

This first step of training helps you reach the finish line.

After a general check-up, we will share why you can run this race against lust and win. We will also share what keeps most people from winning and the importance of understanding the race course layout.



Many of us are thoroughly convinced that we can't even reach the first-mile stretch. But God's power and love are sufficient for all those who genuinely want to live pure and wholesome lives.

Get Ready!

In this 'Get Ready!' section, we want to help you get ready for the big race. We are not thinking of advice to get you started on this marathon but that which sustains and motivates—until you victoriously reach the end of your life.

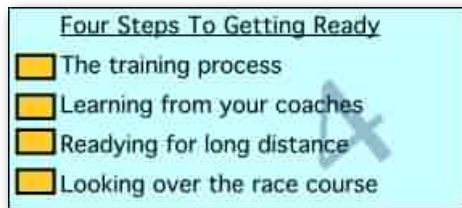


A coach's main responsibility is to discover the person's weaknesses and guide them through corrective procedures to train them to do their best.

Gaining an accurate picture of our lives is crucial to success. We need to be honest with what we do and do not have, honest with what we have done and hope to do. A person's analysis and assistance can be so helpful. Here are the four steps to getting you ready for this crucial race.

- The training process
- Learning from your coaches
- Readying for long-distance
- Looking over the race course

Although we will suggest overcoming difficult situations, you need more help than that. You need God



to coach you. God, the Holy Spirit, can wonderfully help His people in this process! That is much more than any man could do. If you are not yet a Christian, we strongly encourage you to learn more about gaining a new life!

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on

#2 Get Ready: Getting in Shape

His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you" (John 16:13,14).

Dear Lord, I need your help. I can't do it alone. I need your Holy Spirit to do a new work in my life today. I desire your presence and ask for you to keep me going in the right direction. In Christ's glorious Name I pray. Amen

Please note we provide possible prayers. Read those prayers aloud as your prayers to God, but feel free to modify them to fit your situation. Sincerity is what counts before God. Let's start now

#1 The Training Process: A Checkup

Let's now get started with the training by getting a check-up!

Here are four different categories you might identify with, perhaps one being more like you than the others. After reviewing the four categories, you choose the one most like you.

#1 The Struggler

The struggler cares enough to let it bother him; he is often isolated.



This person knows he has a problem but has not told others. He is ashamed. He covers up his

problems with busyness and success in other areas of his life. But he is aware of his failures and wishes down deep that this was a non-problem. This problem keeps him from being his real self. Phoniness haunts him, and he hates it. He hates himself and the guilt.

#2 The Singed



The singed has resigned to despair and basically given up.

This person has struggled so much that he mostly gave up the fight. He sees no value in keeping struggling. He has made some costly deals because of sexual experimentation and now must pay off his lost bet. He has nothing to boast about. He is humbled but admits his life goes on.

#3 The Singer

The singer brags about his sexual immorality.

This open person has become more common. Society, with its wavering mores, has encouraged those who have lost the fight for sexual self-control to announce their decisions of defeat proudly. Of course, they do not want to admit defeat, so instead, they pretend to have won. They claim to be in control, but they have brought themselves open shame and deep pain.

#4 The Self-controlled



The self-controlled is quiet, sincere, and serious about purity.

The self-controlled person faces sexual temptations like the rest, and maybe even with bouts of defeat. But each time, he came around again, found God's grace, and refixed his goal of purity. He holds himself accountable for his slip-ups. Temptation approaches him, but by God's grace, he overcomes it. Though these people might be in the quiet places of society, they are present. With the influx of web pornography, this group is constantly being challenged.

The First Step

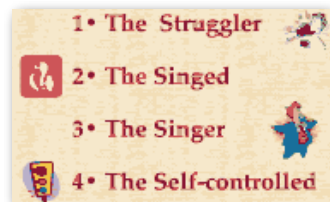
The first step to becoming an overcomer is to admit where we are in life. We need to assess ourselves honestly.

Our circumstances might change, but an accurate assessment of our lives is always needed if we are to improve. If we cannot admit to our true circumstances, then true help cannot come.

A doctor needs the correct diagnosis to prescribe the right medicine. A lost person must know where he is to ask for help. Complete the sentence by clicking on the category that best describes your life.

I am best represented by _____ (choose one):

- #1 The Struggler
- #2 The Singed
- #3 The Singer
- #4 The Self-controlled



You are likely to have many questions, but please follow through step by step. You will have the opportunity to ask those questions later. After the following prayer, follow the group that you best identify with.

*In order to reach a certain
goal, we need to know
where we start from!*
Starting Point

A Prayer

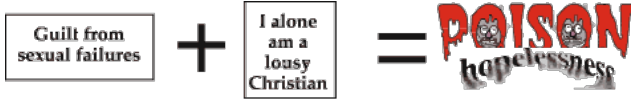
Dear God, confession has never been easy. But stepping into confession with the thought that I am turning aside from this kind of behavior is frightening, maybe because of the fear of failure or how to fit in. I know I need to change. Help me to be willing; I'm desperate. I don't want to come back here again, but I remain close to you. In the Lord Christ's Name, Amen.

1• The Struggler

Isolation compounds the struggler's problem. He has enough problems with his heavy load of guilt. However, isolation is a clever technique of the evil one uses to make a person conclude that he alone is inferior and can't live the proper life expected of him. He takes the failures of sexual self-control and combines it with the thought, "I alone have this problem." This produces a near-deadly drink, which he is too willing to take.



You are likely to have many questions, but please follow through step by step. You will have an opportunity to ask those questions later.



We will deal with this guilt later, but for now, we must take an antidote for the poison of hopelessness. Without hope, we have no way to take steps to improve our situation. This is why hopelessness is the greatest threat to all recovery. In the next section, we will more clearly discuss why we can find hope for our distressed situation. But before we go on, let me mention a few thoughts about this situation.

Find a Confidant

Of course, if we could eliminate the problem, we wouldn't need to tell anyone! But you are stuck with the lusts, at least for now. Part of the temporary solution to breaking this chain of hopelessness, then, is to find a mentor who can pray for you and hold you accountable.

You must make sure this support person is not a softy. He is not one of these people, paid or not, who only listens. Don't talk to those who believe that you have the solution way down deep and will arrive at it just by hearing yourself talk! Life is a spiritual battle. You want someone you respect, like a friend or a pastor, and can, if at all possible, understand the problem.

You will need to tell your spouse at some point. You need your spouse's support. Honesty will start with revealing your secrets to him (or her).

Your spouse has a deep concern for your welfare and will rally behind your efforts to fight your lusts and exercise self-control. Spouses should be one of the strongest support people you have.

Humble oneself

In order to break this chain of secrecy, you need to face your shame. This is probably the hardest part of all the struggles and where many contenders decide not to go on. Here, you face your pride. The fact is when you are driven by sexual lust, then you are manipulating people for your own selfish use. You are not loving others but using them. This issue worsens when you wonder whether you will be outright rejected by others.

In most cases, your willingness to deal with the situation will likely bring greater trust. Just remember, bring out all the stuff. Honesty breeds trust. Part of this honesty is the truth about our own lives, which breeds humility.

Half-confession is not a real confession because you are still being deceitful about other things in your life. Will your wife leave you? Yes. You deserve it. However, this is the only way to rebuild a good solid marriage. (You can even tell your wife you do not deserve her).

A Prayer

God, I've failed you. I failed others, too. I need your help to overcome these lusts. I have felt that everyone, including you, has deserted me, but this isn't true. Some people really do care for me, and even if they don't, you do. Help me in my desperate situation. Break the bond of hopelessness in my heart. In the Name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen

2• *The Singed*

If you can identify with the 'Singed' group, your need for hope is great. Your life has fallen apart to different degrees. However, the greatest problem is not all your past sins but that you, like a pig in its mud, are willing to remain dirtied in them.



More than likely, you share a cynical view of life. Your special temptation is to sit in the mess of problems as life goes on, trying to ignore the pain you give to others.

But that is exactly where the evil one wants you to sit, commiserating your wounds until hell's fire singes you. Jesus in John 10:10 says of the devil,

“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.”

Many consequences cannot be changed. Rape is rape. Divorce is divorce. Impurity has been done. The



past cannot be undone. However, cynicism, which says that the wrong cannot be corrected, is wrong.

God does promise a new life to those who live through Christ. We must not think in perpetual failure, “That is the way I am,” or “That is the way it has to be.” No, not at all. Note what the apostle says in Colossians 3:5-7:

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them **you also once walked, when you were living in them**” (Colossians 3:5-7).

The very church of Colossi, one of the best, had members who were stained with all sorts of immoralities. Every church is. What marks them different, however, is that they did not remain where they were.

Despair, depression, guilt, and anxiety do not need to rule one’s life continually. They will keep us from re-joining the race. We can, however, turn from our impure lives if we are truly the Lord’s. The apostle himself is not afraid to admit his past failures, but we must step into the power of a new life. Letting things stay the same brings even worse consequences upon our lives and those around us, now and for eternity.

A Prayer

Dear Lord, I don’t know where to begin. I have messed up my life—and it is not just my life, either.

I have given up any hope for recovery. I covered up my lostness, pridefully asserting that everyone was like me. That eased my guilt, but it was plain untruthful. I am sorry. This is not true.

If there is hope in putting my life back together, it won't be with me. I am the problem. I ask you to help me, somehow, somehow, to put my life back together again. Please forgive me and help me sort out the pieces of my life. Give me hope. In Jesus Christ's Name, Amen.

As you continue on, you can read more clearly what those steps are.

3• The Singer

If you are a 'singer,' there is little chance that you would read this collection of articles on overcoming sexual sins. But perhaps

....



1) You are fighting

You despise and criticize those things around you that go contrary to your own lifestyle. You might not realize this, but you are fighting. Fighting what? You might think you are fighting the hypocrites and moralists who impose their values on others, but there is another possibility.

More than likely you are fighting the deep inner guilt of your own life. You fight so hard because you desperately strain out the voice of guilt which haunts you. The less people say you can change or that you are

in the wrong, the more you can persuade yourself that your lifestyle is okay. They have the problem!

The reason you need to fight so hard is because your opponent is right and real. Your guilty feelings can be seen as your last gift from God to warn you of judgment to seek His help while He can be found. For further clarification, check out the *Three Stages of Degeneracy* or the *Two Steps in Rejecting God*.

2) Down Deep

Or perhaps you are reading this because down deep you sense that if you really knew there was a way to come out of that lifestyle, you would take it. You just don't believe there is a way. And yet you hope. You are scared of being wrong.

Perhaps you are not very conscious of these 'searching' thoughts, but if they are there, do consider them. It is very possible that God your Creator is calling you right now to real hope and freedom in Christ. Read the verses below aloud at least three times. Note how this person had admitted to living a dark life but turned to the living in the light. You can join him.

No one, of course, has exactly the same circumstances as you do, but the way out is the same. Those who sincerely seek the Lord and His way as written in His Word will live by the same power and grace to live pure and holy lives.

“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and

God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:5-8).

Step away from your darkened lives now, and let God in His mighty power wash you clean and ready you for a godly life.



4• *The Self-controlled*

The 'self-controlled' person might be looking at this book for several reasons. We might assume that some of what that has been shared on these pages have in part already been discovered by you. However, there are concerns.

-> You need encouragement to keep on going.

This cry for support is good. The onslaught is strong. If we find another brother seeking for purity, it is like a beautiful blue sky in a smog-covered city.

-> You want to grow in purity.

You want to continue your quest for purity in your life. You are making it, but you can grow in your knowledge of God's Word and the experience of other godly men. You want to be stronger and more pure.

-> You want to learn to help others who have this problem.

You are saddened to know there are so many men and women manipulated by their lusts. Friends are sharing the same bed; marriages are being broken. At the end of their party, you see sadness and barrenness written all over their faces. You want to find some tools to bring God's love, truth and power into their lives.

No matter what group you are in, we are so glad that you are here! Please share your thoughts and testimonies. I pray and hope that you will be built up in the excellent the power and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

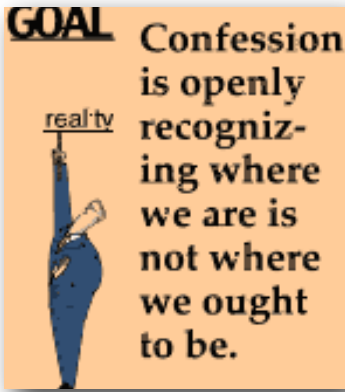
A Prayer

Dear Lord, keep me wholly for you. Protect me from temptation. Let not a stray or unholy thought dwell in my heart. Strengthen my endurance, guard my family and increase my intensity to genuinely love those around me. Let me have a whole-hearted love for my wife and be pleased with the one You gave to me. In Jesus Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

Congratulations!

Congratulations! You have now completed your general check up. Don't be discouraged!

Getting an accurate assessment is the first step toward effective change. These are the facts about our lives revealing who we genuinely are and a simple evaluation of our possible situation. We can't change



history, but the decisions we now make will shape the future.

Confession

Confession is good for the soul because we are coming closer to the truth about our lives and deepening our acceptance of God's design and purpose. If we reject God's goals for our lives, then we end up mocking them.

Confession is a two-fold act.

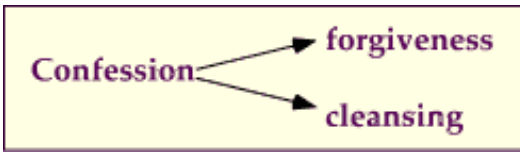
The first, as we discussed above, requires an understanding of what is expected of us against what we really have done. In this case, we see the stains of sexual sins against God's goal of sexual purity for our lives (this is God's design).



The second part is to make a follow-up decision based on these facts. This decision is to rigorously pursue that course set out for me because it is proper and right.

Confession speaks of what we cannot do for ourselves and therefore results in placing us at the altar of God, seeking forgiveness and cleansing. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us

from all unrighteousness.” Notice the connection between confession, forgiveness and cleansing.



There is more to share here, of course. We do not stop with cleansing

but want to go on in power. But it is here in confession, admitting our faults to the Lord, that we begin. Everyone can start here.

Luke ends his gospel with a powerful summary of the Gospel of Jesus Christ Luke 24:47, "... Repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations." Without repentance, there is no forgiveness.

A Prayer

Dear Lord, I am crying in my heart. I am broken in spirit. All these years I thought I had to prove myself to others to get accepted. Now I see that I have instead shown them how horrible the real me is. I have deceived them. They don't even know the true me. God break me and help me to confess my sin and hate the life I have been living. In Jesus Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

Making a Commitment

Training is rigorous.

Those who are not used to serious exercise will complain that it is waste of time or that it hurts. We agree!

But we also don't know of any short-cuts that by-pass this necessary work. My guess is, you have already tried to take the short-cuts that looked like they would work, but they didn't. This step is crucial to winning the race.

Please write down those areas that you have fallen short. We suggest you focus on the areas of sexual shortcomings, both thought and deed, but you might need to write down other areas in which you also manipulated and selfishly used others for your own sinful purposes. You have three options:

- 1) Email yourself what you wrote down
- 2) Write your thoughts on your computer/paper or
- 3) Print this page out as a starter.

Hang onto this list. Other things might come later to your mind. Besides, we will be using this sheet later.

Please don't skip this step! You should review this



list with God and probably one mentor. Be specific to names and don't be afraid how long it might be.

My personal shortcomings in areas of sexual purity include:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

A Prayer

Dear Lord, I am totally ashamed of all the things I have done. The list goes on and on. Please be patient with me. Please be merciful. I am quickly learning how far I have gone astray. May true repentance come in my heart. In Jesus Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

Sign up for the Race for Moral Purity

Signing up symbolizes that you know where you are and where by God's grace you will go.

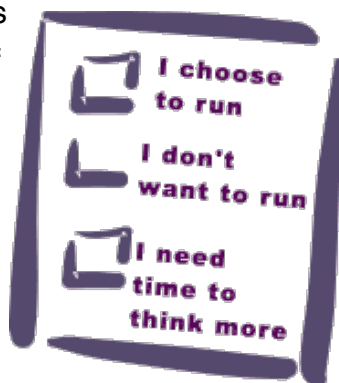


Like any race, you do not have to win before you sign up. We simply reflect our interest and determination to do our very best.

If you have sincerely made those prayers relevant to you, then you have taken a strong and important decision to again run in this race for sexual purity. What does it mean if you sign in? Let me suggest this,

“I would like to sign my name to join this race for sexual purity. I fully understand it is only by God’s grace I can win.”

The only way to make into this race is through confession. If you haven’t been able to pray and fill out that list, please go back and try to think why you did not pray as you did. You can of course continue on with us, but remember you need to come back here to sign in.



A Prayer

Dear Lord, I am crying in my heart. I am broken in spirit. All these years I thought I had to prove myself to others. Now I see I have just shown them how horrible the real me is by disguising my heart. God break me and help me to confess my sin and hate the life I have been living. In Jesus Christ’s Name I pray, Amen.

OUR Crossing the Line **DESTINATION!**

A cartoon illustration of a person with a red shirt and black shorts running over a green finish line. The person is holding a red ribbon that trails behind them. The background is a blue sky with a white cloud.

#3 Cross the Line: Readying the Mind

Purpose: Cross the Line! updates where we are going in this strategic race to overcome sexual lusts and find sexual purity.

Going places can be exciting!
In this third section we will discuss where the race ends up, the finish line of course! We will try to answer the questions,



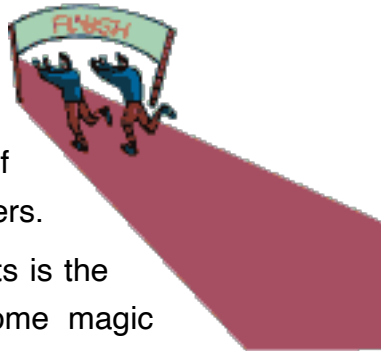
- “What does it mean to be sexually pure?”
- “Why did God design us this way?”
- “Why did He say, each part of us including our sexual aspects are ‘very good?’”

I have found that the more excited I am about where I am going, the more fun the journey is.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

Every race has a starting line, a finish line and some basic rules. Some basic rules that do not need to be said include the need for everyone to start at the starting line and pass the finish line.

After hearing my cousin finish the 26 mile–long Boston marathon, my daughter said she could beat everyone. We all wondered what she meant. She is not a runner. Her special rule was that she was placed five minutes before the finish line! Our whole family laughed. We all knew she was jesting. In real life no one can win if they start ahead of the others.



This battle with sexual lusts is the same. We would love some magic formula that all of a sudden cuts us clean from that painful lifestyle and restore us to a wholesome one! But there is no magic. Instead we have breakups, STDs and frustration.

However, there are many amazing helps. This is where we fit in. We hope that through the unveiling of God's truth on these particular matters, we will all cross that finish line of sexual purity. We need to reclaim the lost control of our lives and through God's power and love we can do it!

Let's first see how far we have already come. You might be surprised.

Down and Up

We all start at the same place of defeat. We have no purity to boast of.

We all must face our weaknesses and broken lives. We wish it were not so, but in fact we find many others are in a similar situation.



In the last section, we focused on where we came from. We got a glimpse of our failure. We identified specific areas where we have fallen short of God's expectations and wrote them down.

Through this section we want to dream about crossing the finish line. We must grasp firmly for the goal. The goal keeps us focused and steady. In the last section we tried to help you identify your deepest heart desires. Do you really want this purity? How much of your desire is only talk?

We now will go on and clearly define what this sexual purity is all about. This is our destination. This is what we are running for.

We want to gain those things that God has designed for us. We have not arrived there yet, but together we

have made a commitment to run the race for sexual purity.

The big question is, “What is sexual purity?” Where do we find the answer? Someone has rightly said,

“If we do not know what we are shooting for, then we will definitely miss the target!” One might be a fast runner, but if he is not clear of where the finish line is, his speed might go against him. He might run the wrong way!



So we need to clearly set before us what sexual purity is. False notions must be stripped away. New and proper understandings need to be formed and embraced

Learning Well

If we are going to run well, we may as well face it that we need good equipment. A person is not going to be able to run his best with those old running shoes. They have holes in them.



In order to get the benefit of the new running shoes, we must take the old ones off, break the new ones in and keep them on!

Sex education classes have seduced us into thinking God has nothing to do with sexuality. But it is the earliest words in the Bible that declare God's special design of sexuality.

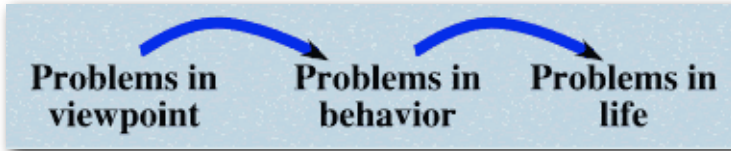
We have to remember we have developed our perspective of human sexuality through many different means. Much of it was negative. Probably most of it was wrong. If we learned our stuff prior to sex education classes, then we often learned it from friends, magazines and television. If we took sex education classes, then more than likely we were taught sexuality without God. Just think the horrible picture one can get from the web about sex.

Sex education taught apart from God's design and purpose creates more problems than it solves. People become confident of their right view. At least the older generation were not so assertive and vocal about their views. We need to understand these views if we are to lay a new foundation.

Sex education classes have stripped away the value of being of a certain sex because they have stripped God out of the process. To some one's sexuality is accidental. As a result, people are beginning to seek sex changes to change their lifestyle. God wants us to cherish the gender that He gave to us.

Have you ever tried fixing something? You buy the new part ... but as much as you try, it just does not work. It doesn't fit because you have the wrong part. In the same way, we cannot fix our life problems be-

cause we are using the wrong view. If our understanding was right, then our lives would improve. We know our views are messed up because our lives are messed up!



So let us look together at the two general views on sources for the viewpoints we might have on sexual matters.

Two Perspectives on Life

There are two general viewpoints on the origin of our sexuality. They might be broader than we would like, but they help us obtain a good overall picture of sexuality.

The world has changed the target from purity to impurity and glad it has hit the target!

(1) Man-made views

Man has thought up different viewpoints on human sexuality. The many evolutionary and materialistic viewpoints fit in here as well as many religious perspectives.

All of these views have as their common point that man has through his own thinking thought up the proper function and expression of sex in our world. They are dependent on their own viewpoint.

Their views are necessarily subjective. This is not just true for Playboy's view of sexuality - self pleasure, but also the concepts of different religions. Some propose celibacy while others say very little. But their sources always depend upon what certain people have thought about these matters.

The result of these viewpoints is a conflicting, faulty and disastrous life perspective. For example, the materialistic viewpoint denies any design or purpose of human sexuality. They believe the world is full of coincidences and accidents. Man guesses and tries to understand. Meanwhile man pays the painful price of sin.

(2) God-made view

God has revealed His viewpoint on human sexuality.

God as the creator of man has spoken quite clearly in the Bible on many issues including our sexual natures. He not only has told us how male and female were originally made different, but on how our sexual nature affects our behavior.

God only has one viewpoint. In a real sense He has given us the handbook on the human race. God designed man and woman and has let mankind in on the secret to His design. How much we pay attention to what our Creator has said makes every bit of difference on the quality of our life.

The result of this viewpoint is a cohesive and beautiful design. God has declared everything that He has made to be 'good' including man and woman along

with their sexuality. With design there is purpose. We have confidence that God wants to reveal this design to us and be fulfilled.

Puzzle Pieces

The two general viewpoints on all matters including sex and sexuality:

- 1) Man's view
- 2) God's view

The different arrangements of the 15 piece puzzle below reveal different ways man responds to his inward search for meaning in life. The pieces represent different significant observable or knowable items. The man-made viewpoint is represented below in the first three blocks. The God-made viewpoint is shown in the fourth block. What should this puzzle look like?

1) Some don't care about design.

They are busy about their own lives. They do not look for an overall pattern to life or meaning. They resist conformity to pattern. They comfortably put the pieces of their life where they wish.



2) Others notice common features.

They carefully observe and study the 15 pieces in detail and do note two



groups. In this case, they separate the curving patterns on the left and the straight line patterns on the right. Our question is why are their opinions sometimes so firm if they are making mere observations. They insist on protecting their mode of interpretation.

3) Still others insist there is no design.

They refuse to think about it. They simply pile all the pieces on



top of each other without trying to discern any pattern. By doing so, they lose sight of the different parts. They profess to not know any answers and do not like those who say they do.

“For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:20).

The Lord however has a design and purpose for the things He has made. Proverbs 16:4 says, “The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

LOVE

God has in the Bible revealed to us how sexuality fits into our lives. By studying the scriptures, we can clearly make out the pattern for these 15 pieces. The pieces make up the word ‘love’. What had looked like nonsense now makes complete sense. We should go about our study not with pride but humble recognition that there is meaning in what God has said in His Word.

Gaining confidence

Stop trying to hang on to the old! As long as the old is used, the new cannot be used. Here are two reasons to throw the old away as soon as possible. The old views affect our confidence in what we are doing but also distorts what is right.

One of the significant differences between these two groups is seen below.

Man’s View: No confidence

With so many different views fighting for recognition, there is no way any view could give much confidence. There is always another teacher, a newer view, an

updated version, etc. But just think, what makes them correct?

Any pressure put on their reasonings soon break apart as a shell of an egg. For them meaning is coincidental. Design is accidental. There are no absolute reasons on why these things have come into being. They profess to not know any answers and do not like those who say they do.

Our question is why are they so sure if they really do not know. They are only guessing. They do not believe in a pattern so they dare not see one. They only know they want to protect what they are doing. In the end, their desired behavior distorts their viewpoints.

God's View: Confidence

Meaning and purpose are built into God's created world. We observe the design and rules of the world. God has revealed to us the meaning of life in the Bible. Man's many viewpoints cannot compare to God's built-in design for the world and our lives. God's ways are good and pure while man's ways bring corruption and pain.

Just think of the child sex slave trade that goes on where children are sold as sex objects. Alternate lifestyles are pronounced normal! Divorce is suppose to be good for the couple. So much pain.

We all have come from the same pile of dirt. The difference is that we have experienced God's loving grace to bring us out of immoral behavior to be fully accepted in Christ as His adopted children through

Jesus. God's world runs on love. We all can come to God through Christ.

“But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:21).

Perspective on pleasure

Before we move on, let's highlight one other difference which often leads to confusion.

Man's View Leads to Pain

Without any supervision it is true that most people seek to gratify their own pleasures. Like eating, sexual practices bring a pleasure even in compromising situations.

In most of these cases, it is the pleasures that are chased after. These pleasures lead us into dangerous places. For example, adultery seems very attractive, but its result is ever so painful for those involved.

God's View is Fulfilling

Because of God's design, God is concerned with how man looks at pleasure. Pleasure in and of itself is not wrong. However, it is not to dictate our choices. God is very concerned with how we seek pleasure for we often choose ways that conflict with God's ways.

In this case, a Christian is not pleasure oriented, but other person oriented. Pleasure is better seen as a byproduct of good and right decisions. Pleasure rewards and encourages us to live God's ways.

God affirmatively affirms His design and plans through ongoing love while shows its pain through divorce and immorality. Just observe the increased pains and fears that come through sexually transmitted diseases. A couple that has kept abstinent until marriage and then faithful to that one partner is not normally vulnerable to STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). They do not need to worry about the necessity or safety of using condoms.

But with fornication, comes emotional scars, dependency problems, physical diseases, inability to have children, uncared for children, and the build-up of doubt that there is a person out there that would really love them.

Let's now turn to observe how God has designed us.

Designs are to Study!

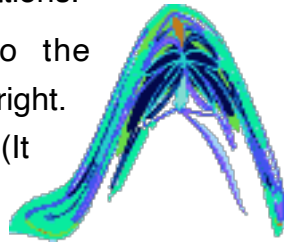
God's design is beautiful and yet intricate. Like a snowflake, it is simple and yet can be studied for hours. Each one unique.

Once we believe God has a purpose and design for our sexual natures, we can quickly learn much just by simple observation. But study is needed to appreciate its great design.



For example, look at the design on the left. What do you see? Look again. Keep looking. In about one minute you will probably be able to make quite a few observations.

Now do the same with the design on the right. How would you compare them? (It is in fact the same as the left but warped.)



Once we compare the perfect from the imperfect, the differences become quite obvious. Drive with an imperfect tire, and you will soon notice! So many people, though, are willing to live their lives not thinking of God's beautiful design inherent in their sexual designs, rather using them in a warped way.

Ruining the design

Only by a few reckless measures and a beautiful design can be ruined. By looking at a stained image, one will not be able to recapture the original image. So how do we get a picture of the real image? We need to turn to the Designer's instruction book, the Bible.

In the holy scriptures God has given us all that we need to know Him and His ways. We honor God when we live according to His instruction book, the scriptures. As Designer and Maker, He sets all the quality

controls. He knows what we were made for including the limits, functions, purposes and development.

Although we are largely addressing the social function, let us not forget that God's design incorporates the design at the physical microscopic level too. They are unified.

The reason modern studies end up with perverted conclusions is that they totally strip their studies out of their holistic context. The proof of this is easily seen through the increased pain from resulting from their advice. If you have any doubt in this, just compare the emotional, societal, crime trends from 1950 to 2010 in the USA. I wonder why people do not sue their psychiatrists and professors for their dangerous advice. To make matters worse, those in high places are assuring increased pain and isolation by penalizing those who speak up against their reckless advice.²

Importance of faith

Faith is needed to guide our lives according to His design. We need faith or confidence to study the Bible and conform our lives to the true design or we will live by the ruined image. I grew up only with perverted pictures of normality. Only by gaining confidence that His Word was right, could I step out of my distorted views. Remember, though, we are not just stepping out of the ugly and perverted, but seeing and appreci-

² Pressures are already being put on companies and media to forbid speaking against homosexual practices. They do not care about science and knowledge, nor are they concerned about the people's welfare. They are driven by other goals.

ating the beautiful design. His Word states what is best.

This kind of faith provides us the needed motivation. In Genesis God stated that the different aspects of His creation were ‘very good.’ In our fallen world we need confidence in Him to help give us strength and resolve to know and obtain this design for our lives. **This is the race our series is named after. We are striving hard to obtain the very best for our lives to His glory.**

Although we cannot be comprehensive here, we know that we all have heard people questioning the reliability of the Bible. The Bible is really worth our trust, though many malign it. At this point let us simply point out the wise perspective of Jesus on this issue.

“And He (Jesus) answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “for this cause a man shall leave and his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh”? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6).

Conclusions

- Jesus trusted in the Genesis records. If the grand teacher trusted in them enough to teach from them, so should I.
- Jesus taught on the topic of marriage from Genesis. The scriptures are reliable, profitable and sufficiently relevant for later generations.

- Jesus taught authoritatively about the structure of marriage from the scriptures. Specifically, marriage is defined as a man and a woman to live in a God-ordained monogamous lifelong relationship. This picture in Genesis, then accurately recaptures the perfect model of marriage and its important place among human beings.

Expert Procedures

Design

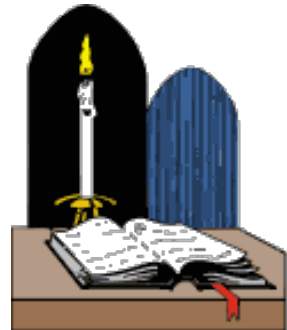
Once we have some confidence in His design for our lives including our sexuality, then we need to study the given pattern in the scriptures and apply those patterns to our lives.

Cross Cultural Principles

These patterns are God's cross-cultural principles for our lives. They are valid for different peoples living in different times and places. As we obey God's Word and observe the good that come from obedience, our confidence will grow in Him and His Word (This is so true with my life). This is what Christian growth is all about. It is not static.

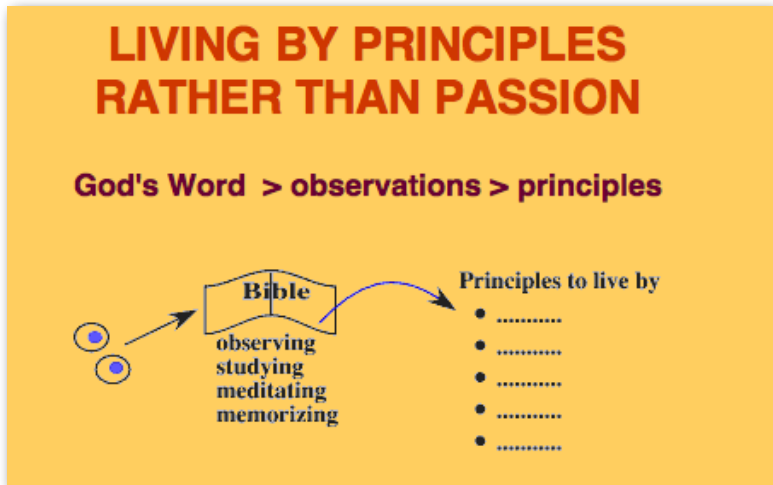
The principles, however, do not change. Our confidence in God's Word enables us to live by principles found in the holy scriptures.

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for for-



nicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

We can see this more clearly in the diagram below. Our eyes observe the scriptures through study, reading, preaching, meditating and memorizing. We agree to go by this instruction. His truth then dictates His will for our lives in that matter.



Transferring the principles of life

We take the heavenly principles from nature and the Word of God and apply them to our earthly lives. This is what Jesus meant in the Lord’s prayer,

“Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:8-15).

This is the way His design is known in this corrupted world. Part of His design is found in understanding ourselves as sexual beings. We should not think that

this sums up our purpose or design in life. It is merely one aspect, though a very important part.

Our study, then, purposes to accurately reflect the principles which are found in the scriptures. If the principles are disagreed upon, then we should go back to the scripture and study its assumed position as well as its intended purpose.

There are some who would disqualify certain arguments because they are not culturally sensitive or time relevant (modern). Jesus could make the same excuses as His generation was very different than that found in Genesis 2 in the Garden of Eden! But even Jesus was willing to subject His knowledge to the wisdom found in the scriptures.

The sexual part of our lives is more foundational than the culture and time issues. It is foundational because it has to do with our very make-up and existence. When the sexual mores of a society are repulsed, then that society quickly degenerates and ceases to be a functional society. This is because the family is the plays a foundational part of our society. Sexual mores and the strength of the family are strongly related.

Gene Therapy

One example of the training procedure that we are using is gene therapy.

#1 Eliminate as many bad cells as possible.

#2 Take good genes from the good source.

#3 Implant good cells among the bad ones.

#4 Induce growth of the good cells.

Merely eliminating the bad cells does not solve the problem. Good cells are needed so that the organ can properly operate. The success of the procedure will depend both on how well they have eliminated the bad and have inserted the good ones. How does this fit in with what is written above?

We are taking the truth (the good) of God's Word and implanting it in our minds in which still exist many wrong ideas. As we see joy, strength and hope, then the good cells (truth) is strengthened. Our success depends upon how thoroughly these principles from God's Word are nourished and strengthened. Although we can see immediate help, we should plan on means by which we foster trust in God's Word which would mean to stay away from secular media and close to God's people who share such values.

Design and Freedom

How does freedom relate to design?

Many people think that the best definition of freedom is the ability to do what one wishes.

That definition might work in some circumstances, but unfortunately it makes an assumption that is faulty for earth-bound humans. If what we felt or desired was always according to our given purpose or design, then this definition would be okay. However, our desires often lead us in a direction that is not best for us and

[contrary to nature](#). True freedom is defined by the ability to live within God's given design for us.

Handling desires

Many people affirm that our desires always lead us right. They tell us, "Do whatever comes natural."

We know, however, by laws and common observation that even when people say this, they do not mean literally mean it. We cannot take any woman we desire nor take what belongs to another without regard for their personal interests. These considerations reveal that our desires do not always present to us acceptable choices.

Have you not desired something that has brought you personal regret and pain? Sure. It is easy to think of the little child stretching out his hand to take something that belongs to another. This is part of life as we know it on earth at this time.

What about my freedom?

Freedom implies something which is good for us. When a slave gains freedom, he is released for a better life as a free man. A prisoner is set free. He is released from his confines into the world where he can go wherever he desires.

If our desires are bad and lead us to do things other than we were designed for, then we should not call that freedom but slavery. We should instead admit that we are bound to make foolish decisions that in the long run that can and will hurt our lives.

Free sexual expression has led to a generation suffering from STD (sexually transmitted diseases). There has been loss of [freedom](#).

Freedom then is not the ability to do whatever we desire, for our desires are often bad and evil; they are contrary to our purpose and makeup. We might be free to live under the water, but we would die.

This is not freedom. True freedom is the ability to live according to the purpose of our design and make-up. Regarding sexual expression, we must learn from God and His Word what we are free to do and what is not good for us.

The question is, "What were we designed for?" The question is crucial because without a firm conviction on this point, we will fumble and be thrown off the path and lose the race at great consequence.

Let's go now and see what that design for our sexual nature is.

OUR Crossing the Line **DESTINATION!**



#3 Cross the Line: Mastering the Course

The question is, then, what is that true and good design for our lives that enables us to live the most fulfilled lives possible?

Understanding the Four Designs

In order to understand God's design for us with regarding our sexuality, we will focus on four major principles found in the scriptures. This will build for us a strong foundational understanding of our sexual natures. After which, we will apply these truths to our lives and hope by so doing, many formerly unanswered questions will be frankly dealt with.

Please skip over material that is not applicable to your situation. If we are already trained in one area, then we do not need to spend extra time on it. We already believe it. These four aspects, however, are crucial. Whole societies are wavering because they are challenging God's basic principles.

When dealing with each in length, we will apply this to our life to see why these truths are so important.

But make sure you don't skip the last section which addresses the questions, "Why should I give up my lusts? Is the design that good?" They help us know the reasons God's rules so wonderfully work.

Four aspects of the design

The different questions for each of the four following sections are below. Click [here](#) to download the outline and main questions. If you prefer, click each picture below for the outline and questions for each section as you proceed. At any point in this section, you can click on 'Assessment time' to get to those questions.

#1 A Special Design: Sexuality

God designed human beings as sexual beings. He created both male and female as two distinct but complementary sexes. Foundational to a stable life is understanding, accepting and affirming one's own gender.

#2 A Blended Design: Marriage

God designed people for heterosexual marriage. (Singleness is acceptable but will be discussed elsewhere.) God has defined marriage as a special covenant relationship between one male and one female. When marriage and its purpose is redefined,

then the quality of life along with the whole society are broken down.

#3 An Exclusive Design: Whole-hearted

God has designed marriage for whole-hearted relationships. God has made marriage like ownership. A husband or wife literally belong to his or her spouse. Straying eyes and hearts strike against the foundation of marriage and love.

#4 A Permanent Design: Enduring

Marriage is for life. Marriage vows are for life. “Until death do us part.” God has not given us alternative choices for the crises of life. There are no escape hatches because the lifelong commitment is the very thing needed to force couples to work through the difficulties found in marriage.

#1 A Special Design: Sexuality

God designed human beings as sexual beings. He created both male and female as two distinct but complementary sexes. Understanding, accepting and affirming our gender is important to our lives.

Although this seems obvious to some, many are totally confused in this area of life. Some of this confusion comes from growing up in homes where gender roles were confused or abuse took place. Others have difficulty because they hear (and believe) sexual differ-

ences are merely physical differences for sexual intercourse.

Gender discussion

The truth, however, goes much deeper than this physiological fact. Our genders are part of who



we are. The situation is degrading

quickly in some

sectors of society. The press, for example, recently took some supposed expert seriously in his report claiming that there are five sexual categories rather than two.



God's viewpoint

God made only two kinds of sexual beings, male and female. He knows there are only two kinds of sexual beings.

“And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

We are either male or female.

Our sexuality

Our sexuality goes beyond our sexual organs. Our sexual identity has a lot to do with our roles and purposes in life. We will focus on this hotly debated topic at another point, but for now we should realize that we

are either male or female by God's choosing. Even our parents did not choose our sex. God chose our sexual identify for us, along with its many ramifications upon our lives.

Our parents might have rebelled against God's choice and early on got rid of us if we were not of a certain sex. This mindset which is gaining common acceptance is so different from God's perfect ways.

God in His wisdom and love chose our sex to be either male and female. Again observe how Jesus affirmed what the Old Testament had long ago affirmed.



"And He (Jesus) answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning **MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE...**" (Matthew 19:4).

Our sexual identities are precious parts of our person and to be highly esteemed. Others might look down on us because we are male or female, but not God. God integrated up our being with our sexual identify here on earth.

When we fuss about our sexual identity or someone else's, we are stepping into holy warfare. In such cases we are rebelling against God Himself and denying His wisdom and kindness.

Summary

God honored man with His exquisite design by making humans as either a male or female. This two-part creation reflects His own image. Here are some important conclusions.

- One sex is not better than another. They are designed differently so they can function in special ways.
- The functions of each sex are good and honorable when used as God appointed.
- Male and female were made to function together in an intimate relationship through marriage (we will see this next).

God's design then would encourage us to openly accept and embrace our own sexuality, whether it be male or female. God has His good purposes. We are sorry for those who are confused about their identity for it is confusion about God's special design for their lives.

Pray sincerely and aloud

Dear Lord, I am really grateful for the way you made me. At times I have had fears because of the implications of what sex I am, but I want to be grateful. I want to be faithful to the sexual person you have called me to be. It was important to you. It is important to me.

But teach me how to live responsibly according to the pattern you have designed me. I hear confusing sorts of things and am not very sure of what all the answers are, but I will follow you.

(Singles continue) Someday, I hope and ask that you would lead me to the right person to whom I should marry. In the meantime, please help prepare me for that person that together as a couple we might glorify You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Life applications

Sexual changes

Those who seek physical sex changes are not only confused but rebelling against God's very purpose for their lives. Man does make mistakes but our given sex has been chosen by God. We are sorry for any shame or ridicule that has confused these people to the degree that they would go and make these expensive changes.

We are horrified that doctors who are called to help people would further distort these people's confusion by making physical changes. They make it further difficult to restore these people to God's good design for their lives.

Cross-sex imitation

Those who dress up and act like those of the other sex are crossing lines of God's design. The clothes and role changes become confusing rather than affirming of God's call for our lives. Sometimes their intention is but playful, but we note that some have followed this course so far that they believe they are both sexes at once. God foresaw the danger of this and therefore warned His people on how much He hated them wearing clothes of the opposite sex.

"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Solutions

Solutions come through both a mind and heart change.

1) Even while single, we are either male or female. Our sexual identity goes far beyond our sexual functions. We need to be grateful for how God has made us and not change this. We might face particular dangers, opportunities, functions, physiological changes and roles because of our sex, but our sexual nature is God-designed, and we must not tamper with it.

2) We know our sex. God made this easy. Now we need to affirm our sexual personalities and roles no matter how odd it feels. Different roles require different responsibilities. We need to be faithful to those God has attached to our sexes.

As we learn to fulfill those roles, it will be easier to accept ourselves and see how we fit into life.

3) In our heart, we need to like what God likes and hate what God hates. We need to acknowledge the wrongs we have done before God. Take out your sheet and list the wrongs you have done. Add others as they come into your minds. Ask for forgiveness for each one. Focus on your own shortcomings and not those around you. God will ask you to change what you read, think and do in some cases.

Those who struggle with these kind of issues need to know more of the love of God. It is very difficult to change what one has been accustomed to doing. For example, you might have found your niche in life

through acting like someone from the opposite sex. People might laugh at you, and you like the attention. This feels like the true you.

In order for conviction and real behavioral changes to occur, a deeper knowledge of God's holiness, love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ must occur. Christ's life is about bringing peace between us who have angered God and God Himself. When our sin is properly dealt with through Christ, then we find that we no longer need to fight with God about the way He has made us.

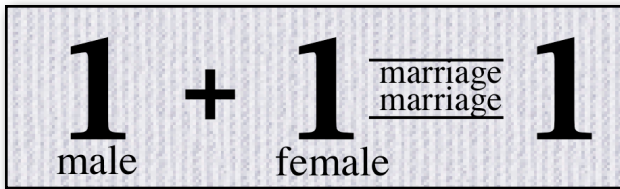
Prayer for the struggling

Dear Lord, I really want to follow you, but you know how much this topic troubles me. I really want to accept myself as You made me, but I am confused and have so many unanswered questions. I need you to break through this confusion and set my heart at peace with whom I am. Let me accept the fact that you have a special design for my life, and it is partly wrapped up in my sexuality. Forgive me for doubting you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

#2 A Blended Design: Marriage

There has been much aggressive promotion trying to 'normalize' homosexuality. Pressure has been put upon the government and different organizations to take the laws against homosexuals off the books and to protect their rights. Is this right?

Either our society has recently been enlightened or our society is getting increasingly depraved. It is clear



that marriage is defined as a lifelong intimate relationship between one male and one female. This clearly counters what the world is promoting, two of the same sexes getting married.

Jesus Himself quotes the ancient scriptures and affirms the authoritative teaching of God. There are no exceptions to the combination of male and female.

“And He (Jesus) answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, ‘FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH?’ “ (Matthew 19:4-5).

1 male plus 1 female joined
together in marriage and

With so much discussion of alternative lifestyles, it is rare to hear or see positive statements on marriage itself. Seems like modern man is missing out on the secret of beautiful marriages. Apparently, they do not believe they exist!

Marriage has been designed to be wonderfully fulfilling in every way. Most marriages today are not so, but they can be. Sexual intimacies are expected to express and deepen the special friendship between the husband with his wife. The book Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) portrays the beauty and depth of marital love. We are not to hide the love between the husband and wife, and yet it is to be intimate and private.

Some married couples experience physical intimacies but lack genuine care, love and trust. When this occurs, their relationship becomes a mere body and body contact. There is nothing wrong with their sexual intercourse but the potential of love is substituted for the connecting of bodies rather than hearts. Distorted understandings quickly develop. The marriage relationship was designed for much more.

In such cases the couple often resorts to stimulating and sometimes violent acts to continue to make it 'exciting.' Emptiness results from such activities because our selfishness has oppressed real love and guilt has struck deep against the chords of our soul. More will be shared later about the true nature of sexual intimacy.

Summary

God has designed the male and female to come together for a life long relationship not just for physical conveniences. There is the blending of hearts as well as bodies. Each contributes to the joy and fulfillment of the other rather than being focused on his or her

own needs and desires. In giving to each other, one finds fulfillment. The male and female, the husband and the wife, then find a greater life being blended with their spouse than in singleness.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I am looking to You to help me become a faithful and loving partner to my spouse. I am not what I should be. I desire to be a better spouse. I want to learn how to focus on the needs of my partner and the calling you have given to me in life. Lord, show me how I can grow in my affection for my husband/wife. I want to be totally satisfied with my partner so that I have no desire elsewhere. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

What does God say about homosexuality?

Life Applications

We should remember we are not concerned with tradition as much as the principles that God has revealed to us. We can learn from tradition, but it is important that we go to the roots of those traditions to see if they are worthy of our attention. Homosexuality is a hotly debated issue of late. Basically, it seems that there are two types of proponents.

- * Those that care about what the Bible says and
- * Those who do not care what the Bible says.

In whatever case, we see God has spoken clearly in His Word. In case we have doubts about the accuracy of the passage we have deliberately looked at differ-

ent parts of the Bible clearly addressing how marriage is only to be between a male and female. Other verses will support this.

“You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22).

“If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them” (Leviticus 20.13).

Homosexuality fails being compatible with God’s good design and therefore endangers those involved in such relationships. Furthermore, it brings harm upon our society.

Rejection of God’s design

In homosexuality one’s sexual function is rejected. Note the clear statements here.

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (Romans 1:26-27).

‘Exchanging the natural function for
that which is unnatural’
‘abandoned the natural function’

These are two strong descriptions of leaving what is natural. We are wrong to argue homosexual drawings and acts are natural. They clearly are unnatural because God did not make them this way. This is obvious to even the young. It doesn't match.

- 1) They also reject the command for the husband to cleave to a wife.

When the life roles attached to the two sexes, male and female, are stripped off, the focus becomes solely on one's personal sexual fulfillment. They think their arrangement is superior to God's. Clearly it is not.

When posturing as one of the opposite sex, does this not tell them that God's design is best. Does not physical nature itself tell them God's design is best. But their lusts have led them astray onto the wrong paths.

- 2) They reject the beauty of the blend between male and female for odd and unnatural acts.

The above passage speaks clearly of the due penalty for their waywardness. Physical problems such as AIDS are just one result for their error. Emotional, societal, family and personal problems escalate no matter how many people pretend it is natural. It simply is not.

Pray sincerely and aloud

Dear Lord, I really want to follow you, but you know how much this topic troubles me. I really want to accept myself as You made me, but I am confused and have so many unanswered questions. I need

you to break through this confusion and set my heart at peace with whom I am. Let me accept the fact that you have a special design for my life, and it is partly wrapped up in my sexuality. Forgive me for doubting you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Can one overcome homosexuality?

Life Applications

One might wonder whether God has a certain bias against homosexuals. We need to understand the situation from God's perspective. God has established how male and female should function. Homosexuals are rebelling against God's better plan for them. Everything is confused when people live contrary to God's ways. In one sense we do not even need scripture to tell us something is wrong. God has even built death into homosexual relationships as they cannot reproduce.

Unnatural acts show that they are going contrary to what is right and good. STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and AIDS which is associated with such behavior further speaks of God's anger against such people.

What about those who feel like they have inherited homosexual tendencies?

They need to retrace their path. In one way, it is not difficult. Check out a person's physical characteristics. Start there. At least one can be confident about this matter. Are you a boy or girl? What are the roles that God expects you to follow because of this? Under-

stand these tasks and attitudes toward life and affirm these roles for your own life.

However, and not denying what was written above, there are extra difficulties in pulling away from a certain lifestyle. If you look at the passage in Romans 1, you will see the scriptures say that they are ruled by passion rather than principle. They are 'burned in their desire toward one another'. They have been caught in a pattern and lifestyle of what is unnatural.

And making it further difficult, though it is unnatural and improper, there is still the security of friendships and support.

They have then, both unholy passions ruling them and the security of their support system. Of course, there is also the threat of blackmail. It is not easy to turn away from the threat that people will openly expose you if you turn back from this lifestyle (But doesn't this prove its evil tendencies).

Change comes about when we care more about what God says than what others might say or what we as individuals might feel.

This behavior is clearly an act of rebellion against God's ways. He said don't do it, but you insist on doing it. Granted some of what was done might be in ignorance, but there are three cases against you.

- 1) One's conscience speaks against such things.
- 2) Society and its laws speak against such things.
- 3) Nature speaks against you.

God is rightly angry with you. You have no valid excuse. More than that, if you have been practicing sodomy (homosexuality), you have hurt numerous people and perhaps even encouraged others to fall to the same depth of your own depravity. It is possible you already bear the anger of God on you through the 'due penalty' that He brings. As your last resort, you must turn from your ways. Repent and follow God's ways.

How does one escape homosexuality?

Life Applications

Allow me to list four issues that that need to be addressed to begin breaking out of homosexuality. This list is not meant to be a complete list. That would go beyond the scope of this book. Many of the other issues one needs to work through are more general and apply to those caught in other sexual snares.

So do read through this whole book, 'Running the Race'. But these four are specially addressed to help homosexuals escape their special predicaments. I understand you might be reading this to gain a better understanding of this topic. That is fine, but remember I will address it as if you yourself are dealing with the problem.

1) Discernment of spirit

First affirm that God has designed the blended marriage (one male and one female) as His design and

that homosexuality is contrary to it. Admit clearly what specific homosexual philosophy and practices that you have accepted. Confess each thought, desire and act as rebellion against God's design and God Himself. There is no escape unless you realize this is an issue between God and you. Either you will accept His design or you will insist your thinking is correct.

2) Rejection of passion

You also must face your lustful passion. Your desires have led you astray. The longer you have followed these passionate feelings, the greater your bondage is to them. You need to recognize that your passions are terribly wrong. You are led by them to do wrong things. As you look at the following statement, see how it might typify your own rebellious spirit.

“God, I don't care what you say about what I should or should not do. I want to do it my way. I like to do it my way. Leave me alone!”

Once we can see our silent or vocal rebellion for what it is, we need to repent and turn from such thinking and acts. We will discuss how to control our thoughts later on. This is similar to those with fornication problems.

3) Facing insecurity

Security is not a small issue. Businesses, for example, spend much money on good security systems. Most of us without knowing it also have a personal security system. Part of this security system is wired

through your lifestyle and your friends. How does one turn away from those which he has developed friends with?

As difficult as it might be, it is important that a clear break of lifestyle is necessary. You need to first prepare your heart and then physically remove yourself from them. There are many others who have come out. This is the demand of everyone living a sinful life. Everyone is called to leave something. One might need careful planning - even strategic planning. One might need someone on the other side to help.

But you know that you are doing what God wants, and He Himself will deliver you. You might think of the image on how God rescued Israel out from Egypt. Others formed your security before. Now it needs to be God. Ask Him to give you a set of verses to help guide you.

4) Accepting persecution

One might face the issue of safety. Someone might threaten to expose you if you leave your community. I hope you can see through this lack of love. If they really cared for you, would they really blackmail you? Of course not. They do not like what you are doing because it exposes their wrongness. The question is, "How do you handle the threats?"

Isaiah the prophet described this thing in his day in 59:15, "... And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey."

You must be willing to suffer any persecution if God so wills. How? You need to be honest with yourself, and if God requires, with others. In one sense, if they reveal your background, it will help you to isolate yourself from them. Do you dare risk it?

When you understand how far you have fallen, then you know down in your heart that you rather be alone and be friends with God than with the world. When you have seen the emptiness, the prison one has been locked into, then the taste of clean freedom is wonderfully fresh and strengthening.

Summary

These are particular problems homosexuals must face. The depth of darkness will shape the difficulty in escaping its shadow. But it is quite possible. Repentance is needed for all to follow Christ.

God has arranged a new community of God's people to support you. I can't vouch that many will know how to talk to a former homosexual (if it is ever made known). But it is true that few know how to talk to anyone who has been caught in any sin. Unless we have had exposure to such lives, we often do not know how to talk to former bank robbers, murderers, prostitutes, etc.

Pray for the right contacts. Seek God's help. You cannot leave these things by yourself. Only God can help you. Later on, more will be shared on how to overcome surging sexual feelings and temptation.

But for now, get out your confession sheet and continue on. Be as specific as you can. Take up every opportunity to apologize even if people do not agree or understand.

Prayer

Lord, please forgive me. I didn't know how far I was from you. I can now see my 'love' was just another name for fulfilling my sinful and unnatural desires. I need a clean break. I need your forgiveness through Jesus. I need you to teach me the right way. I need you to rescue me from others. I desire to be yours forever. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

What about homosexual tendencies?

What about homosexual tendencies? Some people say they are not practicing homosexuals, but that they have homosexual tendencies. They mean by this, that they do not get involved in physical relationships but that they still share those same sexual desires for those of the same sex.

We need to go back to God's Word and see what the Lord has said about this. Actually, there are several issues to deal with.

(1) Sexual design

One person wrote mentioning that the tendency to sexually prefer those of the same sex is not a sin but only a temptation.

It depends on what is meant by 'tendencies.' My original definition of 'tendency' described those who though refrained from physical relationships still nur-

tured thoughts about sexual relationships. The tendency to allow sexual desires for those of the same sex to guide one's thoughts is wrong.

If, however, one does not accept such thoughts as proper but rejects them, then this kind of 'tendency' is merely a temptation. Temptation becomes sin the moment we 'own' the sexual desire. If we hold on to the thought, then it becomes our own, and we will favorably respond toward it. Being sexually aware of someone of the same sex is not wrong.

One crosses the threshold when one responds favorably to that enticing thought of being sexually close to that person. Those sexual desires for that person then have become his (or her) own.

[Check out the podcast on temptation!](#)

Our view towards our sexual design becomes all important. What does one think about his own sexuality? Can you accept your sexual makeup? Can you be grateful for it? In this way, they are theological questions.

More than likely, if you have problems with homosexual tendencies, then you have problems with who you are. This confusion most often is derived by a father who has poorly led or abandoned the family so that the wife rules. God never made the woman to rule but to support. Because of this reversal of roles, confusion sets in. Review section #1 where these issues are dealt with in greater coverage. Again, we cannot discuss these things in full because we have another

purpose, but we have confidence that if you do not like where you are, God is calling you out and you can make it through His help.

(2) Design of Marriage

Second, one has to understand the real design of marriage. Do not assume one naturally has the right view of marriage. This is where our bringing up often becomes a distorted context for learning about marriage and our sexual roles.

Although you might feel or sense your view is perfectly okay, this does not mean it is right or good. If one is a practicing homosexual, one should recognize that he or she greatly differs with what God has established marriage to be. Again, you might feel it is okay, but from God's point of view these homosexual thoughts and actions are very unnatural.

Any thoughts or expressions of unnatural affection must be repented of. I suggest to go back to the beginning of this section and keep working through this section to its end where the reason God is so sold on His own design.

Steps to Restoration include:

- ◆ Making peace with God (repentance)

When we trust Christ, we find a forgiveness for all of our sins no matter how terrible they are.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I really appreciate your patience with me. I never knew how angry you were with me over my confused thoughts. I thought it didn't matter. But it does. I have committed my life to serve you and to be holy.

That means I need to change what I feel is unchangeable. But you are Lord. Right now I ask forgiveness for my rejection of your standards and ask through Christ's blood to forgive me. Completely wash away my sin and restore me.

Lord, I need your help to reshape my mind and life. I admit I cannot do it. You know how I have tried before. I refuse to follow these 'old' ways and ask for your leadership in my life.

As my Father, I ask by the power of Christ Jesus to renew my mind and heart with your Spirit and Word. Change me completely so that you are pleased with my thoughts and ways. In Christ I pray. Amen.

◆ Desire for God's will

- 1) Thank the Lord for making you the gender you are.
- 2) Thank God on how He made some male and female.

◆ Reflect on your background

Think about your parents' fulfillment of their roles. Was your father a good leader and protector of the home? Did your Mom usurp your Dad's role? Ask God for wisdom to understand the problems. You no doubt

will find resentment and bitterness in your heart. You need to ask for forgiveness of these sins.

◆ Changing one's environment

Break from any movies, books, magazines, sites, friends that foster a positive attitude toward homosexuality. Your friends might say, "Oh, are you Mr. Perfect now" or something like it. Just be honest. Tell them how imperfect you are and yet you found God's forgiveness for rejecting all the good things He gave you.

◆ Meditate on God's Word

Spend time meditating on God's Word and pleading for light. He will take you on a journey of delivery. It is day by day. Like any other wrong bent, it often takes a long time to be straightened out. But be sold on God's plan and timing. Anticipate God's help through this time.

◆ Reject false thinking

Do not accept those who say this homosexual tendency is okay or natural. When we allow these questions to linger in our minds, they produce doubt which certainly lead to a lack of confidence. Here are several viewpoints that have caused many to hold back from running to the end.

1) Some will say it is because of **body chemistry**. There is no proof to their assertion or assumptions. From God's Word we understand that faulty thinking can lead to wrong behaviors which possibly could affect one's body chemistry. The solution is to change

our thoughts. Our chemistry will straighten out in time by God's grace. We need time to restructure how we respond to such thoughts.

2) Others will reason that it is okay to have such tendencies because they do not hurt others. Look at it from God's perspective. As long as you are not fitting in with God's design, then you are living in rebellion. The Bible message again and again says that deceit comes from a rebellious heart. Equally important is the fact that harboring these 'tendencies' never allows one to rejoice and embrace your own sex.

What about those who profess to be Christian homosexuals?

If an apology helps, let me as a Christian state this:

"I regret from the deepest part of my heart that there are some who would claim to be at one with God through Christ and yet show their love for what God considers so vile and evil. I am sorry any confusion and pain they might have brought you."

I share the Word of God with you because it the source of restoration. Sodomy proponents unfortunately speak clearly against the foundations that have been developed by God. We need to keep going back to the truth: God did not make us this way.

If you have been hurt by such a person, realize you are not to take personal revenge. God will care for that. God does not speak of such people as His own. Instead He promises judgment on those who "do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

#3 An Exclusive Design: Whole-hearted

Too many have wished to get married so that they would get rid of their impure thoughts to others. This does release the frustration somewhat, but the young should realize that marriage does not solve all these problems!



After marriage, three of the old problems remain troubling you.

- **Impure thoughts** - having sexual thoughts with one who is not your spouse.
- **Lack of self control in thinking.** One's mind is trained to think sexually and lustfully of others.
- **Being of split heart** - not totally fixed on one's own spouse. This is different from the first by the lack of commitment to the one you made vows to.

We need to remember our passions and feelings often lead us in the wrong direction! They are not natural. They are not good. God's design for us is to have our whole heart devoted to our marriage partner. If our whole attention is on them, then it will not be

elsewhere. Note the two passages below that highlight violations of this whole-hearted devotedness.

Teaching #1

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

Jesus states in unqualified terms that adultery starts in the heart. If this be the case, then purity is needed in the heart. Purity must go beyond abstinence which is speaking of only limiting physical contact.

It is crucial to train ourselves to care for the needs of others rather than to use or abuse them for our own sexual excitement.

Teaching #2

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17).

God highlights another important command. Those we might be sexually interested in do not belong to us (other than spouse). They are not ours.

Greed and coveting are devious sins deceiving us to think we deserve what God has not given to us. The word covet strikes right at the heart of this ‘mind’ problem.

How do I gain a pure devotion for my wife?

Unfortunately, this question is not regularly asked by more husbands! We tend to be busy covering up our tracks and hiding our failures than seeking a whole-hearted devotion for our wives alone. (Yes, women have these problems but when necessary I will focus on the men who tend to have greater problems than women. Both are focused on in our *Building a Great Marriage*.)

When we are tempted,
our loyalty is being tested.

Stand faithful!

God's Word clearly calls us to that devoted life. If are going to protect our marriage from all the pornography, sensual talk, flirty, dirty sounds that are regularly bombarding our marriages, how will we do it? Here is a list of action items that you can do to help protect your marriage and develop your love.

- 1) Renew your pledge
- 2) Heighten your standard
- 3) Be vulnerable
- 4) Judge yourself
- 5) Confession time
- 6) Changing direction
- 7) Be accountable
- 8) Be committed
- 9) Constant prayer

Renew your pledge

Renew your pledge to your wife. Although you might not have fully understood the implications of your marriage vows on your wedding day, take it seriously now and make it one of your life goals.

“One of my life goals is to be devoted
to caring for my wife.”

This approach is not only right but helps ward off many attacks that would otherwise undermine your good efforts. Go out of your way to make her feel special.

Will you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife, to live together according to God’s commandments? Will you assume all the responsibilities of headship over your home? Will you love her, respect her, provide for her, comfort her, honor and cherish her, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, and forsaking all other keep yourself for her alone so long as you both shall live?

Heighten your standard

Heighten your standard to what is perfect and good. This is partly done through reviewing your vows. This is further strengthened through your own study in God’s Word so you can be better acquainted with His principles. Compromise always leads us closer to the slippery slope.

This does not mean that we will not fall, but it does have a lot to do with how easy it is to fall and how well we can through God's grace handle the recovery.

The plan is simple. Keep a tall hedge around your garden, and the dogs are less likely to enter and cause problems. If there is a tall wall, then others have a problem getting in.



Be vulnerable

Be vulnerable. If you scrutinize your own heart, then it will not be so difficult to open up with others about your real problems. Ask the Spirit of God to regularly search your heart. After this, ask your wife to help you identify your weak spots.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Judge yourselves

Judge yourselves by the standards set in God's Word. Don't make light of any command. Anything less than what God says is sin. God is not pleased. We must immediately stop it and apologize. Often restitution cannot be made for sexual sins. We need to recognize this and apologize for causing grief to the others.

Confession time

There are perhaps a number of sins you need to add to your confession sheet as you raise your standards. You are not only to mention illicit activities with those other than your spouse, but also write down and ask forgiveness for every impure thought that you had.

For example, Lord please forgive me for going to that bar last night looking for a ‘friend.’ Another example might be something simple but tragic like, “Forgive me Lord for delighting in the way that young woman wore real tight clothes today.” Be specific.

Changing direction

This means you need to change your ways. Confession without repentance is absolute meaningless.

Here is a list of some activities you must stop doing right now!

- Porno movies and games (cartoons included!)
- Illicit sexual encounters (even with your spouse)
- Flirting (impressing others to gain their sexual attention)
- Impure thoughts that you have dwelled upon.
- Rightly handle flirtatious coworkers
- If you have led your wife into evil activities, apologize and commit yourself to leading her rightly.
- Get rid of all magazines that might tempt you (even sports magazines)

- Stop watching any movie, show or reading any books, papers and magazines that cause you to be greatly tempted. Maybe later in your life you will be able to hold of those temptations but don't do it when you are down. Consider yourself weak because you are. You have failed. You need to be honest at the simple things that are used to cause you to stumble.
- Any other suspicious activities.

Be accountable

Tell your spouse and another close friend (of same sex) how you are living by your new standards. Discuss how they can regularly check on how you are doing in this area. We recommend that you choose someone who takes this area of life very seriously. My friend has a web service that sends me a report of what sites he surfs.

“My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me”
(Psalm 101:6).

Commit

Commit yourself to God's standards. Understanding and commitment are different. In the end we will be accountable to God and His Word, not what others say and expect. Many live to lesser standards than God's Word. We must not allow their lack of zeal to affect us.

“I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;

It shall not fasten its grip on me.

A perverse heart shall depart from me;

I will know no evil” (Psalms 101:3-4).

Be in constant prayer.

What are we asking the Lord for? Do we show our commitment by regularly asking for these things? Are we really committed to those areas of life? Perhaps, we have not been diligent here. In the Lord’s prayer, He taught us to say,

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:13).

Let’s move on to some “What if ...” questions.

What if?

Change is not easy. Our desire for change creates uneasiness in others. Even though they might not have liked our old ways, they might not like our new ones either! They probably do not understand what is really motivating you.

Here are some situations that could possibly happen with some people facing positive changes in their mates. We should be prepared for their ‘unwelcome’ responses. We need to stay faithful to what God wants in our lives. Here are a few, “What if?” questions.

- But what if your husband forces you to do evil?

- But what if a colleague continues to flirt with you?
- But what if you find you don't want to change?
- But what if you are threatened by your friends?
- But what if you are liable for a crime?

But what if your husband desires or forces you to do evil?

If your husband forces you to participate in evil activities such as watching and performing porno acts, swap partners, etc., then you need to gently speak to your husband. Tell him of your commitment to the Lord to live an upright life and that you are unwilling to continue or start such activities.

We acknowledge that this does bring a certain risk to your marriage, but the scriptures require this of our lives even if it does cost one his or her marriage. If you have agreed to such behavior before, then you owe him an apology for encouraging him in these ways. The scriptures tell wives,

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, **as is fitting in the Lord**”

(Colossians 3:18).

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace”

(1 Corinthians 7:15).

The Word of God only asks the wife to submit to the husband to what He Himself considers as good and pleasant. By God's grace, your husband will accept it. Remember to be humble and gentle when speaking

with him. And do submit to your husband with a quiet spirit as commanded. It is best not to talk to him about these matters when he is pursuing these things.

He will be more patient and objective at other times. And do tell him the basis of your decision. Where in the Bible? What principle? And share your history on how you were hesitant at first but went along with him. But now, you cannot do it any longer. Be truthful and sincere. Trust God with any consequences.

But what if a colleague continues to flirt with you?

What if your colleague continues to allure you? It would be fitting to give a testimony to that colleague of the changes in your life and the restoration of your marriage.

If needed, apologize for not discouraging any former inappropriate talk, gestures or touch. Confess the wrongness of it and that you no longer want to do such things so that you can keep your whole heart devoted to your spouse. Leave it there. If the colleague continues, then remind him/her of your change.

Tell him/her clearly that if it continues, you will need to talk to the boss because it distracts you from performing well on the job. If things do not clear up, change jobs. Joseph lost his job and was falsely accused because of his desire for purity. Read Genesis 39. If you are a wife, consider it might be a sign for you to come home full-time and serve your husband and family.

But what if you find you don't want to change?

If you do not want to turn from these behaviors but know you should, then you need to cry out to the Lord for mercy. This is the battle of the heart. Go back to “long distant training” and stay glued to that section until God gives you a new heart. Without repentance, you will perish. Faith without works is dead.

However, if you find down deep you want to change but are just scared and doubtful about taking the necessary steps, then you have the faith to do all the Lord requires because you are His child. Do not be overwhelmed with all the things you must do. Take each step, one by one.

The cleansing pattern goes generally like this:

- Acknowledge evil (confess);
- Ask forgiveness by Christ;
- Make life changes that get rid of that smut (repentance);
- Pledge your whole heart to the Lord and your spouse
- Make restitution

What if you are threatened by your friends?

If you are threatened by your supposed buddies to expose you if you drop their friendship, what should you do?

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

- 1) Do not threaten them back. Have mercy realizing how ensnared they are in their lusts - just as you were. Your step toward purity causes them to be insecure and guilty.
- 2) Always in prayer, share your story of why you are now changing. Tell them God's part in all of this. If you have been a Christian, then you need to apologize for leaving the Lord and setting such a poor example. Be honest. Teach them what you are doing (disassociating yourself from immoral practices - can't go to those movies anymore).
Also tell them what conviction the Spirit of God had brought on your heart. It would be good to share the actual experience (e.g. scripture, incident, message, etc.). Just be honest and let the Spirit give you words to say.
- 3) State you are quite willing to pray with anyone about anything. We should realize that God often wants to use us in the lives of others. (Don't go to their homes or compromised situations to do it though!)
- 4) Be prepared to let your whole impure life be shown to the world. Bullies do not usually carry out their threats but sometimes they do. If so, God wants you to be further humbled as well as purified. God will, in time, rebuild your whole life and encourage others to do the same.

What if you are liable for a crime?

If you are liable for a crime, then there is a good chance you might be put in jail or pay a sentence. In a sense we need to remember that we have all committed these immoral crimes before the Lord. God chooses to forgive. In a few cases they will reach your nation's legal courts and you will have fines to pay, etc. But the Lord does give you counsel in Matthew 5:25-26,

“Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent.”

The advice is solid. Jesus is anticipating some of His people will be convicted in heart of a wrong and find that the one he has wronged will take him to court. Jesus' recommendation is not to get the best lawyer but to personally try to make peace with that person.

For example, a teacher might have fondled a student, and the parent is threatening him with a legal case. Modern lawyers would advise never to admit to the wrong. Jesus says not only to admit to it but befriend them and see what you can do to appease them. The fact is that we should always be ready to give the shirt off our back to make amends for we have done wrong. After all, we did do wrong.

- 1) Sincerely acknowledge the wrong you have done; humbly and seriously apologize. Tell

them your change of heart. Bring your wife along. (Only say what is true!)

- 2) Confess what specific wrongs you have done to them.
- 3) Tell them you would like to make it up to them but know it is in one way impossible because of the personal hurt. (We know that the other person might have done wrong but let us focus on our own wrong). However, if you can give a gift to help soothe over the pain, then see if they are willing to accept any sort of gift rather than going to the courts.
They might want more than you can give. Then in this case, you should be open with what you can give and share what difficulties that you will face under such arrangements.
- 4) Bring your check and show your earnest with your cash. It is best to keep track of money.

Remember what is given here is Biblical counsel. There is no pretense that this is expert legal counsel or advice from a licensed professional counselor. If you choose to do these things, it is because you on your conviction of scripture and the will of God choose to do them.

It can get expensive. There might be a cost to our decisions. We might lose our status, our job, our partner, our friends, our security, etc. We need to be willing to give all away for the sake of obedience. Remember you are digging down to your foundation. Everything

on your old foundation has to collapse. Some things by God's grace will be rebuilt on your new foundation.

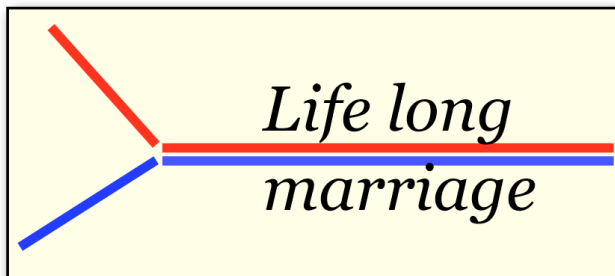
Isn't this what Jesus referred to, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

Who God purifies now, will not be lost later. Today's repentance insures us that we will forever belong to Him. "If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).

#4 Designed for life-long marriage

But what about the alternatives?

Marriage was to designed to be life-long. The beauty and depth of relationship that can result in such long term marriages are tremendous.



Death

Marriage is for life. It is tragic enough to have marriage cease at the end of our life here on earth. Usually the other spouse is left behind. There is so much adjusting to do. A couple, however, should not con-

template other things that might break up a marriage mid-course. In our next section we will discuss these reasons much more thoroughly. Marriage has been designed to be for life for many good reasons.

Marriage ...

- Portrays the beauty of the enduring quality of committed love and devotion.
- Produces the stable environment in which love can develop and heal wounds.
- Establishes a firm moral and loving foundation for the lives of their children.
- Creates emotional security for each other through different stages of life.
- Enables the couple to share on intimate and private matters that cannot easily be shared elsewhere.
- Pools financial resources for common purposes.

The two become a couple, a single unit. This infers that there should be no interference with this pattern either before or after marriage. In order to sanctify marriage, one must have complete purity both before and during the marriage. This ensures the purity and devotion one must have for his or her spouse.

Experiential marriage

Experiential marriage has become quite accepted now. The high rate of divorce and other difficulties in their parents' marriage has convinced many that living

together before they get married makes much sense. This of course is not right. They just do not realize that this situation does not at all serve as a good 'trial' marriage. Think of the differences.

- 1) A real marriage is secure while experimental marriage is defined by its temporariness.
- 2) The security in a marriage allows honest and real conversation to help each other mature. Insecurity in marriage leads to shallow relationships.
- 3) Marriage provides for a no-matter-what type of commitment. Experiential marriage is focused on what one wants.
- 4) Sexual intercourse for a married couple complements a union of hearts and wills. Sex for experimental marriages is focused on fulfilling ones own lusts.
- 5) Sex is immoral and abortions common due to inconvenience.

If people learn anything through experimental marriage, it is the wrong thing: life is fun; formality is troublesome; marriage is bothersome; relationships are superficial; children are immaterial; responsibility is old-fashioned. Unfortunately, it is not marriage that they learn about but the results of living immoral lifestyles – resulting so much pain.

Divorce

Divorce has become an option of working out our problems with our spouse! The point of a lifelong marriage is to produce that backbone relationship which enables a couple to work through those very difficult problems. Instead, our society has deceived us saying that divorce has little consequence and even some benefits. I have recently heard two people state divorce has helped them.

Divorce only hides problems; it doesn't solve them. The same hatred and anger is there but hidden away.

Divorce is always bad. It always hurts. Divorce is a mentality that states marriage is only good when I like my mate. When things get tough and arguments are not solved, then I give up on that one person I have made all sorts of life promises to. My word is broken. I have made a covenant and no longer respect it due to my unwillingness to work through some issues. I just don't get that affirmation from that one that I need.

The best cure for divorce is not to have one. Agree before marrying that divorce is not an option. Jesus has spoken about divorce because it is sometimes allowed because of adultery. It is not encouraged. God says, "I hate divorce!"

Making an assessment

Before we go on, let's take an assessment of where we are at.

#3 Cross the Line: Mastering the Course

Right now, take a pen, and write down what you really believe about the standards of sexuality that you have read about so far. What is your attitude toward them? Do you like them, tolerate them or somewhat control the decisions you make because you have no other choice.

The different questions for each of the four sections are below. You might prefer to download the outline/questions.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

Questions: #1 A Special Design: Human Sexuality



God designed human beings as sexual beings. He created both male and female as two distinct but complementary sexes. Foundational to a stable life is the understanding, accepting and affirming our own gender.

- ◆ Summarize what the scriptures teach about human sexuality.

- ◆ How many sexes are there? How come there is only that number? What sex are you?

- ◆ What roles in life does that gender call you to live out?

- ◆ From a number from 1 to 10 (10 strongest), what number best describes your acceptance of God's design for your life? Have you thanked God for so making you?
Yes _____ No _____

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

- ◆ What parts give you hesitation in writing a 10?
- ◆ Have you been able to talk about them with someone? Who?
- ◆ Why do you think you have difficulty with those areas?

Questions: #2 A Blended Design: Marriage



God designed us for heterosexual marriage. God has defined marriage as a special covenant relationship between one male and one female. When we try to redefine marriage and its purpose, then our lives along with the whole society are broken down.

- ◆ How did marriage get its start?

- ◆ How can you be sure?

- ◆ Why is there marriage?

- ◆ Can marriage be between those of the same sex? Why?

- ◆ How are you to relate to those of the same sex as yourself?

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

- ◆ How are you to relate to those of a different sex than yourself?
- ◆ Are there any rules governing such relationships? What are they?
- ◆ Why are rules needed?

Questions: #3 An Exclusive Design: Whole-hearted

God has designed marriage for whole-hearted relationships. God has made marriage like ownership. A spouse literally belongs to each other. Straying eyes and hearts strikes right against the foundation of a marriage and love.

- ◆ Why can't someone marry several partners?

- ◆ Are 'temporary' arrangements (such as affairs) okay? Why?

- ◆ Does what I do in my heart really make a difference in my marriage?

- ◆ Is lust really that bad? Why?

- ◆ How does your culture and God's Word differ on these issues?

- ◆ Why did God design a whole-hearted marriage?

Questions: #4 A Permanent Design: Enduring

Marriage is for life. The marriage vows hold “until death do we part.” God has not given us alternative choices for the crises of life. There are no escape hatches because the life-long commitment is the very thing needed to force us to work through our difficulties with each other.

- ◆ What is wrong about experimental marriage?

- ◆ Are there not some benefits of trying marriage before marriage?

- ◆ Divorce is legal. Why doesn't God go along with it?

- ◆ Isn't divorce a solution for some? For whom? Why?

- ◆ Why did God design marriage to be lifelong?

OUR Crossing the Line **DESTINATION!**

#3 Cross the line: Deciding to Win

Our goal is to reach sexual purity whether one is in or out of marriage. There are several parts to crossing the line.

The first part discusses the ambition to win. The second our determination or stamina to win. This last point helps strengthen that vision of victory in our minds to help us get beyond the stress points where we think of stepping out of the race.

Gaining a feel for winning

“Why should I run this race? What do I have to gain from being pure?” On the one hand, this question can be very self-seeking and reveals one’s unwillingness to be pure. However, there is a good aspect to this question that needs to be clearly responded to.

So many people have experienced such brokenness that they do not have a vision for what is good. They only see sadness and despair. After what has happened in their lives, they see no reason for pursuing sexual purity. They think, “It is too late for me. Not

much good can come out of it now.” Divorces are final. Children have suffered. Bodies have been ruined. But what prisoner ever denied that freedom existed? The very definition of captive includes the lost of freedom. The question is not whether sexual purity can benefit our lives. The problem is that because we have not experienced it, we do not know how to treasure God’s design. The song writer says,

“Restore our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South” (Psalms 126:4).

Join with us as we follow on in this section and look at what makes sexual purity so wonderful whether one is single, divorced or married.

Finding hope in Christ

We might now be like a barren water bed. No life. Deadness. But the gaining of sexual purity is like bringing the streams of the South into our barren lives.

Not as much time as expected is needed to restore a person to a flourishing life. In the early days of ecology, people wondered whether polluted streams could at all be restored.



The proof of several restored

streams and lakes instilled hope to a new generation that what was lost does not need to be forever given up.

Restoration is not only possible but a wonderful and exciting journey. God promises a new life for those who turn to His ways. God never lies.

My Story

I had no ideal home for growing up! Divorces were common. Change of fathers seemed normal. A psychiatrist predicted a cloud over my life and that in all likelihood I would end up in a similar situation. He was right saying so, that is, if there was no God at work in my life. The statistics attached to children brought up in homes like me are scary. What made a difference was the new picture of marriage and family life that God gave me.

Today with more than thirty years of marriage and eight children later, I am even more excited about marriage and the family. My wife and I are learning more things every year. The more committed my wife and I are to knowing and practicing the design for marriage in the Bible, the sweeter our relationship grows.

What makes up a marriage?

Just as in a race, one needs to know the place he is running to in order to get there.

But another point is of equal importance. The clearer our vision of where we are running, the easier it will

be to reach the goal. By aiming clearly at our goal, we can more easily put aside different distractions that we will meet up with. Let us positively present the beauty of the intimate marriage in these next pages.

When God considers something
important,
I should agree!

We are not trying to imply that we all will or should end up happily married. No, not at all. There is a place for singleness.

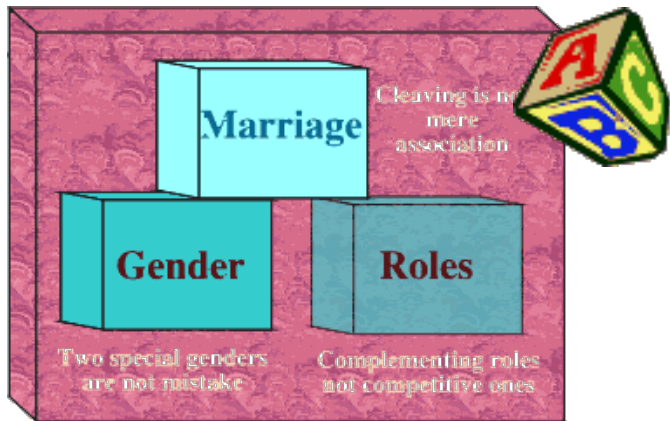
However, the beauty of sexual purity rewards each person in or out of marriage. It is through a proper understanding of marriage that we understand the importance of sexual purity.

If we can honor God's purpose in marriage, our esteem for sexual purity will be lifted up. God has prized the husband–wife relationship. We know this by three distinct acts of God.

Let's look at the three basic building blocks of marriage.

1) Two sexes

When God made male and female, He said that the two are made in the image of God. Only having one



sex did not give a complete enough picture of God. Both were essential.

“And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

Response

Each partner is important. Anytime we despise our God-given gender, we should realize that we are angry with God for making us so. Our gender does have a significant impact on who we are and what we do no matter how much the society is trying to change this.

2) Distinct roles

God created man and woman separately; He formed each with distinct roles. The beauty of marriage will be found in the complementing of each other with their own gifts, calling and insights rather than competing for the same role.



“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

“And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.” And the man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:22-23).

Response

Instead of trying to be someone we are not, let us focus on taking joy in the person that God has made us.

3) God-ordained marriage

God has ordained marriage as a unique and special arrangement.

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Response

The leaving and cleaving principle of marriage is the foundational organizing principle for mankind. There is a special relationship of intimacy in marriage. As much as we embrace the devotion and loyalty required in this relationship, we will see great love and blessing. The cleaving intends to unite the two at the essential body and heart levels.

Summary

The institution of marriage is founded upon these three building blocks:

- 1) Two different sexual natures,
- 2) Two resulting roles, and
- 3) The binding together of one of each sex to form a marriage.

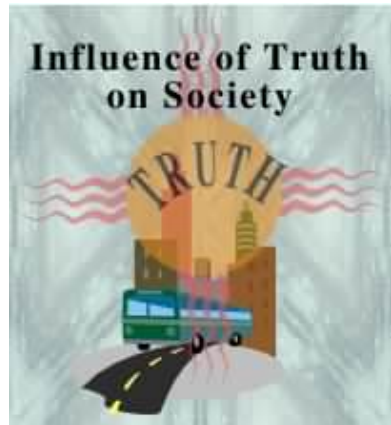
Continue on to see a yet greater purpose of marriage!

What is marriage designed for?

Although Jesus reaffirmed these foundational blocks in the New Testament in Matthew 19:1-12, let us leap forward into the lofty purpose of marriage from God's perspective.

Marriage is a symbol of something great. When we reject marriage, we reject God's very person and plan. This is the reason that societies which no longer protect and value marriage fall apart. The Chinese empire stood strong for several millennium because of the strong teaching of marriage and family.

The following New Testament passage serves as a crown for the Old Testament ones. This might sound



like an overstatement, but this is the way the writer speaks – marriage is one great mystery. The husband-wife relationship is used as a illustration to reveal the intimacies of Christ’s relationship with His people.

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31,32).

“This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

We must be careful to note that we are not talking about the sex act in itself, but the marriage, the bonding together in heart and body of the husband and wife. The mystery simply is a picture of how Christ left His heavenly Father to take a bride unto Himself to share his glory forever and ever.

Here are some of the analogies:

Christ left His heavenly Father

- Husband leaves his father

Christ secured a bride (with His life)

- Husband secures a bride (with dowry)

The church (His people) belongs to Christ

- The wife belongs to her husband

There is utmost devotion expressed between the husband and wife in the context of a lifelong relation-

ship. This picture is radiantly built into the human race on the wedding day. The bridegroom is happy as the new husband is triumphant. The bride is happy being his wife.

The bridegroom should not want to be the bride. The bride should not want to be the bridegroom. They both have different roles that cause the relationship to blend together in joy and enrichment as long as both of them should live. So what is the secret message from God that is revealed here?

The Relevance of Marriage

Increasing numbers believe that sexual purity in and out of marriage is a relic of the past. However, those who live sexually pure lives have the most fulfilled lives. We need to very openly deal with this topic because we are fighting strong sexual lusts in a very sensual world.

Unless we are convinced of purity's greatness and perfect design, we will fall back into the dingy and despairing hole of selfish lust. We need to see how we have been tricked so that we are not again deceived. We need to stop being willing to substitute the grossly inferior for the grand and glorious.

Rotten

We have spoken earlier about two approaches to understanding the world. One believes that there is no design to what exists; the other believes in God's



good and perfect design. We want to show you how the view without design for marriage absolutely stinks in comparison to what God has arranged. The difference is not like being forced to eat an apple which you do not like because it is the only thing available. Not at all.

The image is like having two apples in front of you. You have a choice of an absolutely rotten apple, brown and slimy, or of having a delicious and wonderfully fresh tasting apple. Rottenness or freshness. Death or life.



Perfect

The secrets of marriage are foundational to the design of our lives. These truths stem from the very nature of God and are instilled into the fabric of the universe. They are so precious to God that He has built them into marriage itself so that the world would have access to them. God uses marriage to evenly distribute these truths into our lives.

Each child is brought into the world by a Dad and Mom and hopefully brought up by loving parents. We object to those who confuse this model such as homosexuals adopting children, clones and even test-tube babies. Remember, we are here describing the deep and beautiful purpose of marriage.

If you are single or divorced, it is important that you understand these three truths too. They have to do with the way you view your life. Impure sex habits can be overcome by embracing God's good and holy purpose for marriage. Don't skip over them. The clearer the vision, the easier you can run the race. These truths are simply amazing. They are life changing.

Three Life Principles for Fulfillment³

Running a race is hard work. The preparation, the cost, and the run all tax our bodies. Why are we going to run this race for sexual purity? Because it matters.



We are going to work on self-control all of our lives because it makes a big difference. Anything short of this takes cheap fun and transforms it into an ugly and desperate defeat

The three life changing truths that God made available to us are:

- 1) Unconditional love
- 2) Inner fulfillment
- 3) Forever secure

³ These teachings are more systematically expanded in '[Building A Great Marriage](#)'.

1) Unconditional love

God has designed us to replicate His love by focusing on meeting the needs of others. When we refuse to serve ourselves and choose to meet other people's needs, a great and noble good occurs inducing wonderful ramifications. This truth is intensified in the marriage context and modeled through a husband's constant love for his wife.

The choice is before us. Are we going to love our spouses or lust after others?

2) Inner fulfillment

God has designed us that when we respond to His great love initiative, we flourish in His strong and secure environment. His love unleashes a great joy and spontaneity of new life to cause greater blessings to flow out from our lives.

This truth is intensified in the marriage context and modeled through a wife's respectful response to her husband.

The question is whether we are going to be filled or go empty?

3) Forever secure

God has designed a special binding relationship that protects and secures this beautifully integrated relationship forever. "And they lived happily ever after" is true. This truth is symbolized and taught through a loyal and lifelong marriage.

The question here is whether we are going to live in love and security or go along in life lonely.

The Two Choices

“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.”

The only two responses to God’s love initiative, is to either imitate by loving, or to reject and so choose to lust. Love is the opposite of lust.

Love represents giving; lust speaks of getting. Love is not concerned with one’s own benefits; lust searches for the best deal. We would like a third choice but there is none. Whenever we leave the designs of God, only a mess results.

Think with me for a moment. Is it not true that whenever you satisfy your self-focused desires, you feel empty and disgusted with yourself? Lust brags about getting, but in the end, it gets nothing but unhappiness. This is because of the guilt involved.

The presence of guilt

Guilt arises when you grab something that is not yours. All sexual play or thoughts outside the circle of marriage promise great delight but always turn out painfully empty. This is because the husband does not wholly devote himself to his wife.

Only his wife belongs to him (in a good sense). This is why Jesus spoke of sexual thoughts directed to others as adultery. When this occurs, man has given up

his noble focus on whole-hearted devotion towards his wife.

Guilt also arises when you get something in a way that is not considerate or kind. Giving implies doing those things which are good, gentle, kind, helpful, etc. For example, imagine a husband asking his wife to play act another woman! Does that show any kind of respect for her?! Even within the confines of marriage, thought, activity and desire can be lust oriented and must be quickly eliminated.

The presence of love

Love reigns in the beautiful marriage. Sexual desires and expressions fit beautifully into this context of giving love. The basis of this love is the expected and constant treatment that a man needs to have for his wife.

This kind treatment is not based on feeling, looks or bargaining chips. You probably are familiar with the normal, “You love me, and I will love you.” This attitude makes love conditional. Genuine love at its core is unconditional – giving without anything expected in return.

Love is based on the commitment of the husband to keep treating his wife nicely no matter how she responds, even if self sacrifice is needed. We learned this through Christ. We also learn it from beautiful marriages.

“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves

himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church" (Ephesians 5:28-29).

The choice of love

Husbands are told to love because love is so necessary. Love is the motivating power to wonderfully treat others despite how that person responds to your love.

In many cases it would seem that our wives do not at all deserve kind acts. This is possibly true. But this is the age of grace not judgment. We are called to imitate Christ and refuse to stand in judgment of others including our wives. Judgment is not our responsibility but God's.

We plead for grace and live out mercy and kindness. Our business and duty is to treat people as they ought to be cared for because they are made in the image of God.

The place of love

In marriage there are many, many opportunities of expressing this love. Sometimes it has to do with free time. At other times it has to do with patience for sexual intimacies.

Opportunities to love abound. Love always requires us to be sensitive to the needs of our wives.

The test of love

The marriage becomes an excellent testing ground that reveals the sincerity and depth of love. Day after day, night after night we as husbands are given op-

portunities to love our wives. The intensity of the marriage context increases the degree of love or the degree of hate. If we turn back from our responsibility to love, then we will lessen our attention to our wives and transfer it to other women.

Watching sensual movies at home with your wife is an example. If we really love our wife, then we cannot tolerate our eyes to trace close body movements of other women.

The source of love

We don't naturally possess this kind of love. Self-love interferes with other-love. Imitations of love can and should be developed from surrounding conditions such as good parental examples.

Without Christ, we cannot love unconditionally. When a person becomes a Christian, God's love is implanted in their lives. As God's child the husband is able to draw upon the strength and example of God to help him love his wife as Christ loved the church. This divine love is so essential to Christian living that God says if we do not have love, then we are not of Him.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and

everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

"If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we

have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also” (1 John 4:20,21).

Forgiveness & love

Love means we forgive. We, of course, cannot grant our wives God’s forgiveness. Only God can do that. When a person does wrong to another, he becomes a moral debtor. He has held back what good and right action was owed.

As long as the debt stands between them, the relationship will incur all sorts of mistrust. But if we forgive, then we are releasing the moral debt that person owes us. We can continue on in growing trust in our relationships. We must choose not to take revenge but instead to treat the other with kindness.

- ◆ We forgive as Christ forgave.
- ◆ We accept as Christ accepted.
- ◆ We hope as Christ hoped.

Patience and love

Love typically requires that we put aside our own preferences for the sake of another. How true this is in marriage. In the end the issue is the same. We pay close attention to what she or he likes.

This means we wait patiently. It might mean we don’t even get the attention that we would like. We should gently communicate our needs to the one we love, but we cannot make demands. Our primary reason for being here is to love. If I can please my best friend,

then I am happy indeed. Lust stains the very path it creates because it is focused on self.

Selfishness has no room for sensitivity except to serve oneself! When our minds are working to satisfying our lusts, we are figuring a way to get more! We are not thinking about how to give more. We can be patient to get more.

Love, however, is patient. Love means that sometimes we are not loved back. Sometimes we have to wait a long time. In the Old Testament Law, it is commanded that there be no sexual intercourse during the wife's period or for a time after the birth of a baby.

Are you going to let your mind and body wander at this time? Or will you use self-control to show your loyal devotion to your wife? Love exercises self-control because it is God's call on our lives. In Christ we find all the deepest and most necessary needs for our lives by caring nicely for others.

Summary

Are you lust or love driven?

When we live by our lusts, we are physically driven. If we are deprived of what we want, then we are easily upset and driven to search other means for fulfillment. This means we will often use other partners including fantasy ones. When we are love driven, the opposite is true.

Our spouse might be tired, pregnant, mean, sick or just plain distracted. We still seek to fulfill her special

needs. We pray, help, encourage, buy flowers, etc.. Our goal is not to get sex but to care for the special needs of the moment. When love reigns in a marriage, sexual needs fit in the overall scheme of things. Those needs never stand out by themselves.

In the last section of this series, practical steps will be given to those who seem driven by sexual desires. But remember, you cannot love as long as you let your lusts drive you. You must take over the driving and by God's grace begin to retrain yourself to care for your spouse.

CAUTION

A warning

Many marriages are not doing well. Mistrust has built up. When steps of love are first taken, the wife will more than likely be skeptical of your motives - probably with good reason.

Don't be defensive and especially don't be offended. Just continue to quietly love. Love unconditionally. Love forever. Love is going to be what rules your mind and thoughts. But you can be sure, as a Christian, God will always be willing to help you. Sacrifice might be needed.

Be willing to give and even to die in your love for your spouse. This devotion is the life of a marriage.

Problems of Fulfillment

What about the guy? How is he going to get fulfilled? The question in long form is, “What if a husband devotedly loves his wife, and she simply doesn’t fulfill his needs?”

There are at least three different questions behind this question.

1) Am I expected to fulfill another if I am not fulfilled by them?

There is fear that the man will face a totally barren life if all he does is love and is not loved back. Perhaps in his worse moments he would even go further in his thinking,

“God would not create such a terribly miserable situation, and if He by any chance does, I’m not going to be part of it.”

When a person asks this question, he more than likely has a problem of belief, commitment and selfishness.

- **Belief:** He doesn’t believe God’s ways are ultimately best despite his trying circumstances.
- **Commitment:** Because of his doubt, he holds back on his commitment.
- **Selfishness:** Because he cannot be sure of God’s love and help, he uses his ‘love’ as a means of getting love back (this of course is not love at all!)

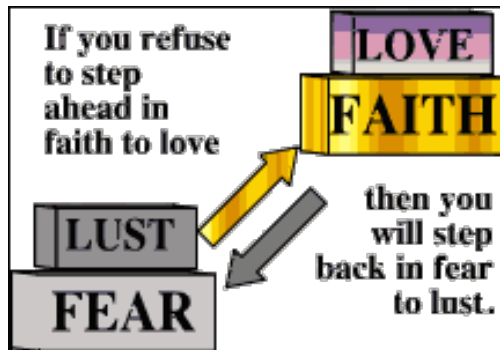
As long as we demand fulfillment,
we will never receive it!

2) Can I love if I am not being loved?

Fear from the world of psychology is instilled in those who suffer modern education. This view espouses that if our basic needs are not being met, then we cannot love another. This kind of 'mental' reservations hold men back from loving. They become easy excuses.

Although the studies seem to make sense, they go quite contrary to God's rule. The reason is this.

Men are designed to give. Husbands are made to give of themselves in love. If you do not step ahead in faith to love, then you will step back in fear to lust.



The command in the Bible for husbands to love their wives needs to overrule any of his fears. If we fear God more than other things, then we will obey God even if we have doubts and unknowns about our particular circumstances.

3) Can my love hold out?

There is another fear which is more earnest. Can a husband hold out in persistent love, even if he does not get any encouragement back from his wife. This person wants to have this kind of love but not sure he has all that he needs.

This question is good in the sense it reminds us that our wife is not the source of this love. She might make our experience of loving her more exciting and enthralling, but once she becomes the source of love, then know for sure it is short-lived.

People will always disappoint us. Perhaps the real question is whether we can be sure of a sufficient supply of wisdom, strength and love from God to meet the needs of the kinds of people we are expected to love.

Source of Love

There are two sources of gaining this persistent love:

1) God and 2) God.

God both designs and empowers us to love. We will focus only on the God's design of love here. More will be said at a later time on both how God's love is instilled in us and how regular disciplines help us continually draw on these two sources.

Source of Love:

God's design - we are wired that way.

#3 Cross the line: Deciding to Win

The first source of love comes through the knowledge of how God has designed us. Many of the doubts we have today are because we no longer are convinced that we are designed to love.

There is always a sense of satisfaction that occurs when one is being used for what he was made for. This satisfaction is the opposite of the emptiness that comes when man lives contrary to what he was designed for. God's satisfaction gives a sense of reward, encouragement, dignity and renewed strength. It is fulfillment itself.

When I fix my gutters, I need to climb a 30+ foot ladder. Every time I come down I hope it is my last time to go up that ladder. How do I get up there without fear paralyzing me?

I see other men climbing tall ladders. I look at the instructions on the ladder which assure me that the ladder can hold my weight. I also remember that I was up on that ladder before, and it held me up fine.

If I didn't have confidence in the ladder, I would leave it in its storage place. But confidence in its design enables me to do things that I would otherwise not do.

When it comes to the ability to love a grouchy, upset and possibly frigid wife, we need to go back to our calling and design. This is what we are supposed to do. God designed us to have enduring love. How does it work?



Love is the opposite of lust. Lust is only satisfied up to getting what it wanted and then becomes unfulfilled. Guys brag, but did you ever hear them bragging about how bad they felt afterwards?! Nope.

Love is the opposite. Love is fulfilling even if it does not get any nice response. Why? Because love is a spiritual principle built into the world and our lives. A person gets a sense of fulfillment merely by giving of himself. The drive for love is giving.

Giving then provides more inner fuel for more love. We don't have all the love that our lives will need at once. As more love comes, we are able to again give of ourselves. The husband needs to give. Turned away. Love again. Turned back again. Keep loving. Love endures.

When does it end? When the situation is difficult, we look for an end to it. We hope for a 'pop' change that all of sudden makes it easier. Sometimes they come, but they are not solutions. Solutions lie in our consistency and the grace of God. There seem to be two possibilities.

Possibility #1 Breakthrough

Ephesians 5 indicates that a husband's consistent love can melt down the distrust of his wife.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, hav-

#3 Cross the line: Deciding to Win

ing no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27, NASB).

God uses the husbands’ love to slowly improve the wives because of their perpetual love. A husband’s love is to be so constant that it wears down the dam of distrust. She slowly begins to understand what she never could before: genuine love.

Wives brought up with criticism have a difficult time believing someone truly loves them. In crises times, the wife can gain a glimpse of that real love through the persistent love of her husband. Her shell of distrust begins to soften. She begins to slowly understand how someone can truly love her for love sake and not from what they get from her.

At that point she will begin to become increasingly receptive. Her new trust has finally awoken. She can begin to respond to his love. More will be said of this shortly.

Possibility #2 Endurance

The second possibility is more difficult to accept. Some husbands will be asked to love their wives without seeing much change. It is much like a soldier who goes out to war.

If he continues to seek protection for his life over his buddies and cannot see the ultimate goal of the war of more importance than his life, then he makes a poor soldier. However, if he is willing to give his life for the sake of a greater good, then he makes a brave

soldier. His reward will be found in the life after this one.

Some might think this is too much for God to ask. We are a sissy generation of men. Bravery and courage are obscured by the darkness of selfish pleasure. We have no greater goals that call us beyond our immediate sensual pleasures.

God's own Son, Christ Jesus, however was asked to love an obstinate people. This love saw no rewards here during His life. God caused a greater good to come from His sacrificial love. We cannot see the whole picture from this side and must not insist on seeing it.

Some of us like Hosea will be asked to love although facing most trying circumstances. This is the ultimate sacrificial love. Christ did it because it was the right thing to do. He was called to do it. Did God's people deserve it ? Not at all. Husbands were designed to give themselves in love.

Love always requires sacrifice of self. Sometimes this sacrifice is without present reward. Every husband should love his wife with a life-long love.

The other means for fulfillment complement this view. That will be discussed later on in Inner Fulfillment.

Questions of love

Before we go on to the summary and application, we need to answer a few questions that are often used to

distract us from the commitment God asks of us. We might think that we need no commitment because we are not married. Wrong.

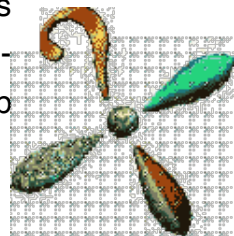
The commitment to sexual purity as a single means we acknowledge we are God's agent of love in the world and must live a sexually pure life if you are going to be able to love others. Your love for others prepares you generally for your love for a possible future wife.

Doesn't the wife need to love?

After hearing all this about the husband's responsibility to love, the guy might begin to get a bit insecure and speak out the question on his mind, "What about the wife's turn for love?"

First of all, we need to remember that even if she doesn't love in return, our commitment to love never changes. Of course, we all desire our wives to love us. This makes it ever so much easier. I sometimes wonder though, whether the Lord often uses the wife we choose to chastise us.

In other words, He uses difficult wives for difficult husbands. When sharpening a tool, the rougher parts of the job require a rougher instrument; the final touching up requires a much more delicate tool.



But secondly, let me go on and say there is a life truth from this teaching for all of us, men and women, single and married, that we do not want to miss. God es-

establishes marriage so that all of us can familiarize ourselves with God's kind of love. We understand from Jesus' teaching that we all ought to devotedly love one another. The truth that everyone is called to love is true, but why?

What is this life truth then?

In order to capture the joy of life, there are essential life truths that must be observed and adopted. In this case, the essential nature of God is love. God in His love, loved us. **God first loved us.** This is where love started.

This is how love entered such a horribly sick world. God was committed. God overcame the obstacle of our judgment by pure love and grace. God sent Christ Jesus to be judged instead of His people. We as His people, not only have observed this love but have had this seed of love born in our lives. In response we are simply overtaken by this constant, joyful spirit of giving.

God in a general sense is like the husband taking the initiative in loving this undeserved bride. And so He calls all of us, young or old, male or female, husband or wife to respond to His love by loving others as He has loved us.

Are we very responsive and trusting of His love? No. Not at all. We learn so slowly. How many times does God have to specially provide help, guidance, strength, protection for us to be convinced of His love?

Are we not forgetful, stubborn and unbelieving?! But His love is based on principle and not what we deserve. His giving has set love in motion on earth. The divine love of God through Christ is the sublime example of love that greatly touches the hearts of those enabled to understand.

Every husband is called to replicate this sacrificial love to his wife. Ephesians 5:33 says, “Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself...”

The command is given to the husband
so that even if he does not feel like loving,
he still does.

Questions for reflection

- 1) Have you taken steps to live by the principle of love?
- 2) Have you felt cheated by following the path of lusts? Why?
- 3) Have you experienced the enrichment of God’s love? How so?
- 4) Have you experienced God’s love? Give an example.
- 5) How has God’s love changed your life?

- 6) If a husband, what kind of trying times have you faced?
- 7) What kind of heart commitment have you made to your wife?
- 8) Have you kept that commitment? If not, where have you failed? Add these to your confession sheet.

How does this relate to those who are not married?

What if you are not married? You still need to love others, especially fellow Christians. Living is the land of practice. Marriage requires a greater love because it is intense and an ongoing love. When we choose to live by love instead of lusts, it certainly make us think twice who we would marry!

Since love is a ruling agent for all Christians, it is love that needs to shape a man's thoughts toward women. We cannot think of them in terms of how they delight our eyes. No. no. This is not good.

That woman is reserved for some other man. God has not given that woman to us. Love respects that. We stand back and simply pray for her future husband.

Other principles will be given later, but the key is to focus on loving one another. For example, a simple test is to see if we would be ashamed if others knew our true thoughts of another person. When ruled by love, one only thinks what is good and lovely.

Love Overcomes Lust

How does this relate to overcoming our lusts?

In the end, the choice is between love and lust, or more clearly, God and self. Marriage has helped flesh out what kind of love we need to fight this war with lusts. If we love, we will not lust.

We will not like our lusts. We will be repulsed by their hideousness plots. However, if we neglect to choose love and live empowered from the source of love – God, we will default to lusts.

The lusts might not seem to be as bad as they previously were. We might think good of ourselves because of this improvement. However improved it might seem, think not much of it, unless you have started loving. A little less porno is not good enough! We do not look for improvements but eradication. Improvements can lull you into dangerous waters.

Choosing to love is a choice by God and for God. We absolutely cannot love as God has designed us without Him being our source. He has designed for us to function this way. A choice to love is a choice to call upon God in His great and abundant mercies to seize our hearts with a selfless passion like His.

Can there be a greater decision
than to make our greatest joy to imitate
God's love in this desperate world?

When we love, let it be known there is no room for lusts. Absolutely none.

But equally truthful. If we lust only a little, then there is no love.

Summary

If we are going to run the race, then let us run to win. We need a picture of what it means when we cross that line. The Lord will come up to us and say, "Good and faithful son. Well done!"

We will be able to flash back through our lives to the times when we threw away our idols of pleasure and burnt them in a sacrifice of self. We pledged ourselves to live according to His design for our lives no matter what the cost.

Any real and holy love for our wives must begin before we get married in anticipation to give one's whole self to her. One's secret thoughts become a place of relishing the wife of your youth. Teenage years must be used to master self-control. She must know that she is special.

The more vibrant pre-marriage purity, the easier the 'distrust meltdown' will come about. This assurance will follow through a lifelong quest to devotedly please and care for her. Even if a person does not marry, his sexual purity is a choice to love God and others instead of himself. He makes the calculated decision to spread forth God's amazing and powerful love through this world.

I choose to love. Do you?

A husband's pledge

God has made me to love you my wife, truly and unselfishly. He has designed me so that every part of me can fully devote itself to you. I want your wedding dreams of that one man who would always and only love you indeed come true.

I am that faithful man for you. At the very end of my earthly life, the Lord will know that I have been pure in my desire to wholly love you both before and during marriage. In faith I want to test the very foundational principles God has implanted in this universe when He made it.

My mission will be to love you my wife as Christ has loved the church. God has called me to brightly shine the torch of His love in your life. Whether in poverty or wealth, young or old, in health or sickness, I am determined to love you. Whether you, my dear, will be able to accept my love doesn't matter. I will constantly love you. I want my love for you to reflect Christ's love for His people. True love brings birth to great hopes.

Is there anything greater to live for?
Is there any more nobler war to fight?
Any better race to win? No.

I was so designed to run, and by God's grace and love,
I will run the race of sexual purity for God and you.
My all for you, my love.



A prayer of the husband

I declare a holy war against my lusts. I have chosen the sure weapon of God's enduring love. I have

been designed to love. Away with the infernal selfish pleasure that betrays my loyalty to my God and wife! Away with each thought that would lead me into its condemned and greedy claws! Your time is gone.

I choose to love with a pure love. I choose to live with a holy focus on my wife. I want with my love to penetrate the dark doors of death and confusion. With my constant and dedicated commitment to my wife I want to strip away all the fears that have been laid on her poor soul.

God fill me with your Spirit. Cleanse my soul of sin for your calling is high and lofty. Grant that I may live fully devoted to my specially chosen woman. I have only one wife. I want only one wife. By your divine grace and example, I will give her and her only my constant care.

And now, Lord I ask that you would protect what is so great and beautiful. Lift up what is glorious so that hope, joy and love can again touch our miserable hearts. Let me join this race to run for your glory and nothing else. Lead me Lord with your precious example into a constant and flowing river of giving acts toward my wife. Purity. Loyalty. Responsibility. By the grace and blood of Christ, God's only Son. Amen.

2) Inner Fulfillment

Are we going to go filled or empty? That is a big choice. Keeping the choices in front of our eyes helps keep us focused.

Three life truths, each aspect displayed by marriage, must be embraced to find fulfillment and meaning in life. The first is unconditional love. When we choose

to love, we cannot lust. The second principle is inner fulfillment.

When we receive the love of God, then we are filled. There is no room for that emptiness that craves for things. In short, love so amply pours out in our hearts that it does not leave any room for that cheap empty feeling. When we are full, we do not want. We are satisfied.

This second response builds upon the first truth principle of enduring love. Without the first, there would not be the second. The husband initiates and cultivates the relationship with an unconditional love into the relationship. The wife's situation helps clearly picture what happens when this love is properly responded to.

Unfair? Really?

Some believe this call of the wife to submit and respect her husband to be totally unreasonable. We can understand why some react this way as they have suffered miserably from their husbands.

It is true, when lusts have ruled over love and selfishness has stepped on the needs of others, abuse has occurred and will occur again. The true picture of marriage has been blurred.

But to demand riddance of a wife's responsibility to submit to her husband would only bring on more abuse. This is the only path into a good and beautiful marriage. God's solution are always better.

Cost of walking away

Anytime we step away from our God-given roles, we face barrenness, both in our souls and bodies. Why? Because if our innate needs are not properly fulfilled, then we will resort to other things to attempt satisfy those needs. We will always need to be filled with something, it just depends what we will be filled with.

What a difference between having a water bottle filled with water rather than air on a hot day! Only the love of God can fulfill our lives. Cheap thrills and relationships never fulfill. This is what establishes true abuse in our society. Our society today seems to recognize the forceful aggressor but finds no room for the responsive blessed and encouraged wife.

We will always need to be filled with something, it just depends what we will be filled with.

The Choice of Fulfillment

Fulfillment in relationship

When we think of love, we often forget about the two sides involved, that is, the relationship. There is both the lover and the loved. The husband initiates love into the relationship. The wife responds to this unconditional love. In this way, like the flame with further oxygen, love energetically grows.

This is the way God designed it from the beginning. This does not mean the wife does not need to love. We have discussed this before. We are speaking about the special opportunity wives have in responding to their husband's love.

Fulfillment in his love

It is ironic. There is perhaps no greater hope among women than for her husband to lavishly love only her. The hope is for love – his unconditional love. But our society confuses this by conveying to women that the only way to show herself valuable is to make money with a man-sized job. In truth, she is valuable as a wife.

People were surprised when I told them that one of my daughters planned for her life. She wanted to find a great husband and raise a large family. The wife does not need to earn her value. She is valued by the very fact a man, her husband, has without qualification bound himself to care for her.

Fulfillment by a growing trust

The special life truth shown here is seen in the growing trust of the wife in her husband's love. The wife's fears are put aside, one by one, as her trust in her husband increases. Her ability to respond to him is dependent upon her trust in him. Trust enables special growth to occur within that relationship.

Why is this mentioned here? The husband needs to realize that his wife might seem cold and unrespon-

sive, and even using that treatment to justify his affair. Men, however, need to catch the vision that it is their faithful love that draws a woman's full beauty out. We get what we put in.

Fulfillment and fear

Love cannot be perfected as long as fear is present. Each difficult situation between the husband and wife becomes an arena for the wife to see whether she can really trust him.

Because of our imperfect love, we see that it might take a while to convince our wives that we really do love them without reserve. Of course, if she sees that you are interested in other women, then she has no real trust in your care for her.



She is cautious. She holds back. Her trust steps backwards rather than growing. The elderly church leader John says this about love and fear.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love” (1 John 4:18).

Fulfillment by God's love

Perhaps it would be good to see this situation from God's perspective. God created the world and

mankind to display His love. Mankind was asked to trust and respond to Him.

The purpose of this love was for the world to bloom in response to His good love. However, the human race as a whole failed miserably. After our forefather listened to the serpent through his wife, the seed of distrust was passed down. God targeted His love toward man but man rejected His love.

Man no longer was fulfilled by the broken relationship with God. Mankind looked elsewhere to be filled. Evident by the hollowed out lives we see today, without Christ man still is empty, despite the promises of the world.

Problems of Fulfillment

Fulfillment and selfishness

Once God's love touches our lives, we imitate His love. "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The only response to God's love is to love. We are forced to question what a person genuinely knows about God's love if he is not motivated to love God and others.

Fulfillment and submission

Submission is considered an oppressive word today. It is true that the wife is asked to submit to her husband. But this is to help the wife not to hurt her. Her wayward desires would lead her away from that intimate relationship with her husband.

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18).

When this respect is asked from the wife, God’s intention is to put the marriage in the best footing possible. In other words, even if the wife does not trust in her husband, she needs to go by his judgment.

The command helps her do the best thing possible even when she does not feel like it. By thus responding, she creates a void for the husband’s love to fill. And so the man will be encouraged to take up his care for his wife and home. In contrast to what many are saying, the submission enhances the relationship between the husband and wife. God designed it this way.

Fulfillment and Rebellion

The reason that many reject the wife’s need to submit to her husband is to protect both herself and her children. This does not deny that abuse has happened. We are too familiar with this. However, our solutions will lead us off course if we don’t face the real reason women reject God’s command.

God says the reason for a wife’s insubmissive heart is her inner rebellion against God’s calling in her life.

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food,
and that it was a delight to the eyes,
and that the tree was desirable to make [one] wise,
she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to
her husband with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6).

The woman was tempted at her vulnerable point. She was designed to respond to her husband's leadership. Instead she disobeyed her husband's directives. She got caught up with what seemed to become more important and delightful. Later on God simply acknowledges that this desire to lead will continually be challenged with the husband's dominance.

“To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Yet your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you”” (Genesis 3:16).

This aggressive desire of a wife to rule over her husband thwarts her design. This is not to deny any gifts or abilities that she has. The Lord has designed her gifts best to function in complement to her husband's leadership. The problem is essentially this.

As long as the wife follows the teachings of feminism and refuses to submit, then her marriage and family situation will deteriorate. She will receive less love and support from her husband.

God's design for her is protected through His commandment of submission to her husband. Obedience produces the best situation possible – not the worse as alleged! Fulfillment comes from submissiveness not from aggressive leadership in the home.

Fulfillment and vulnerability

We have probably all seen a family destroyed by a husband's foolish behavior whether it be alcoholism, drugs, quest for fame or plain immorality. We agree

that the husband's love is not perfect on earth. But this does not mean the wife is excused from submission. In these cases, the wife will need to put increased trust in God to care for her and her family's needs.

“In the same way, you wives,
be submissive to your own husbands
so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,
as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior” (1 Peter 3:1-2).

By trusting God and being a faithful wife, she responds to God's great love and mercy. This hope in God becomes a powerful tool to bring forth extra grace and love from God. The same principle is used for those who are being mistreated by others because of the right things they are doing. They are to keep doing right and trust God. (Read the rest of 1 Peter chapter 3).

Sources of Fulfillment

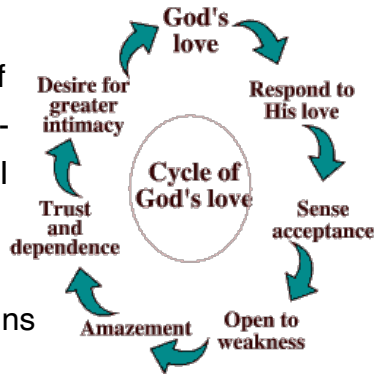
Our ability to love comes from being loved and accepted. There is a great deep security that is brought about when we are perpetually and unconditionally loved.

This unconditional acceptance leads to openness and correction in our lives. Fears and doubts can be put aside. As we do this, we are amazed even further on His great love for us. We do not need to impress God

to gain His favor. Trust is built up. We want to experientially know God more. This seeking of God then brings us to know God and His love more.

The Pattern

This is the pattern of Christ's love and His people. God loved me when I did not love Him. He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross to take away my sins that I might be close to Him.



God's love has been shown. There is the real love of God that floods our souls even when loved by no one else. His love fills and radiates our soul. His love already satisfies my deepest longings. We are able to understand and teach it because this is what happens in a growing marriage.

“Husbands, love your wives,
just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;
that He might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory,
having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing;
but that she should be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

The Whole Design

The husband's love models itself after the Lord's love; the wife's response models itself after the church's pure response to the Lord.

God's love kept on track in spite of the stubborn response of His people. God sent His only Son, Christ Jesus, to earth to win a people for Himself so that God could pour forth His love upon them. Ephesians 1 records this plan of love. We just mention one sentence.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ...” (Ephesians 1:7).

Christ died as part of God's great love plan. In this plan, God is still looking for His people, the church, to respond to His love. If we as His people would trust God, we would be unbelievably blessed.

God is just waiting for us to respond in obedience, and His powerful love will move into our lives empowering us to live as Christ did. We should note God's love was not inspired by our goodness or what we could do for Him. Not at all. That would be a conditional love. When people depend upon their good works to be accepted by God, then they are 'working' for acceptance. They do not understand God's love.

The opposite is true. God was moved by what good could happen to us if His love flowed in us weak creatures! These people work good works in response to God's great love for them.

Some might have never thought marriage could reach such a wonderful state, but this is the path that marriage provides. Notice it is a growing relationship even when a relationship has grown and matured. When we are filled, we are no longer empty. When we love, we no longer lust.

In the security of His love, we can indeed grow. We understand that many of us have hardened our hearts to God. This is the time to soften our hearts to God so that we can understand more of His love.

Questions of fulfillment

What if the wife is not loved by her husband?

If a wife does not receive this perfect love from her husband, she is still responsible to respect and submit to him. How is she able to do this? She is able to give forth this steady flow of love to her husband through the way God meets her deepest needs.

When God satisfies the deepest part of our lives, then our most deep and basic needs are cared for. Although difficult, we will still have the strength to love the unlovely. We can trust Him for divine love and humility to fill our hearts.

Some wives might wonder about abuse. “How did these women like Sarah do it?”

We might be tempted to say things like, “Maybe Abraham wasn’t as bad as my husband!” Maybe we

should first clarify that Abraham was the one who protected his own skin by telling the king that she was only his sister and handed her over to the king!

Abraham was the one who took another woman to have a child. Sarah faced confusing times when her husband Abraham made some moral compromises in life.

We should first ask, “Do you know of any wives who take control over the home from their husband and have good marriages and families?” From what we see in life and read in God’s Word, good marriages cannot come from breaking these life truths that we have been discussing. Our only alternative is to understand God’s ways and implement them with His help.

There is no doubt that those who suffer under difficult situations need extra grace to endure. Many marriages are in extremely bad shape. We would expect God to change His commands when the husband becomes uncaring. But God hasn’t. But why?

The reason God does not change His policies when the husband asks difficult things from his wife is because God wants to enter these desperate situations and restore them. Under the great pressure of criticism and self-indulgence, the financial stability of the house might be lost. God might permit this because there is something more important that has not yet been learned. God wants to preserve and restore marriages.

Crying out to God for help in our great weakness is one of the greatest themes across the pages of the holy scriptures. How many times does the scripture speak of help coming to those who cry out to Him for help? Numerous.

Page after page records such situations. We might say God specializes in helping people through crises. God created oppression for the Israelites when they went to Egypt. God wanted them under tremendous difficulties so that they could see His great saving hand. There are many reasons for the unhappy marriages today. But God specializes in restoring them. He restores our marriages and lives by bringing us back to His great design. Practically, as a pastor, this is what I have seen in the church.

Perhaps by seeing how God works with His people in desperate situations will help wives understand how He will help them in very difficult circumstances. We need to examine two parallel statements.

#1 An oppressed wife

God's love or power is not diminished when a wife is being emotionally or otherwise hurt by a senseless husband. Right now there are many hurting wives. His love for them is the same and ready to hear the prayer of the Christian wife.

#2 God's oppressed people

God's love or power is not diminished when God allows His own people, His bride, at different times to suffer from oppression. Right now I know of two Chris-

tian villages in one country that were invaded and taken possession by a greater number of people from a different religion. They lost everything including many lives. They are in a very desperate situation.

We assume God would not allow such things to occur but He does for a time. Justice will come in time. But even during these oppressive times, God steps in and brings extra grace. We are not trying to say God does the evil itself. God is not that cruel husband. However, He does allow it to happen and works through its difficulties. God notices very carefully all His people who suffer and will take proper action and revenge. God is greater than evil by incorporating it into His glorious eternal plan.

“And when He broke the fifth seal,
I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer,
until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also” (Revelation 6:9-11).

Here are some actual examples of suffering from the Bible.

God allowed His own Son to suffer. He never did any wrong. Read the ends of the four Gospels. God al-

lowed the early church, Jewish and non-Jewish believers to suffer.

“And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered....” (Acts 8:12)

“Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.” (2 Thessalonians 1:4).

Summary

Vulnerability and abuse are not times to give up on God’s love. God’s love never stops even in the midst of persecution. God works through the crisis to display His great power. He enables His people to bear up under great pain and love when being hated. This is the greatness of those who respond to His love in difficult circumstances. We are filled when we trust Him.

God’s love is so awesome that it becomes sufficient for our every circumstance. We might be perplexed and sometimes bruised, but the Lord is very carefully watching over us. When we submit to His love in these situations, God does great things and His testimony goes forward. This is the response of sacrificial love. I have seen such remarkable wives who clung unto God and faithfully loved their husbands into the kingdom to become men of God.

These statements should never be seen to excuse a man's irresponsible treatment of his wife or the world's oppression of a weak people. But just as a husband's love must endure a mean wife, so a wife must endure her foolish husband.

A wife cannot say she will be responsive at certain times and hardened at other times. No. God's love is always to be embraced, even if it means terrible circumstances such as financial losses (though we hate to see it happen).

Fulfillment overcomes loneliness

How does understanding the teaching of inner fulfillment help us overcome our lusts? When we are responsive to God's love, our whole orientation toward life changes.

When lusts are on our mind, is it not true that fulfilling our own desires is the only thing that we are really interested in? We might buy something for someone or take them out to eat, but deep in our minds we want the physical exchange, the gratification. The opposite is true with God's love.

If we can be consumed with God's love, we will not want the cheap sex thrills at the expense of others. Instead, being deeply satisfied in our hearts, we will focus on enthusiastically passing on the love of God to others.

When we are filled with God's love, there is no room or desire for the lusts. Fullness chases away the emptiness.

The picture that comes to my mind is the ocean with its rising tide filling the once dry cove. As the water rises, it begins to fill all the empty spaces. There was rock and sand, but now as the water fills it, the water is swirly all around filling every little cavity.

Then the life, the crabs, the fish begin to fill the place that not long ago was barren and dry. God's love is now seeking to fill our empty lives. The waves of God's love must push out the emptiness of self pursuit to fill our lives with the much more glorious waves of pleasing and delighting others.

There are many commands in the scriptures that tell us to do or not to do certain things. Jesus said they were all founded upon the commandments to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. The commands tell us what is always best. But it is the love of God that lets our heart know why these actions are the best.

Questions

- 1) Have you been able to perceive the love of God?
- 2) Can you respond to His love?
- 3) Are you empty or filled? What convinces you of your answer?

- 4) Do you want to pursue your self-driven activities or are you ready to be love-driven?

Action Plan

Right now, God is asking us to trust Him for strength to put aside our lusts. Respond to His love gesture by agreeing with Him. Acknowledge how you have turned away from His loving plan and desire Him and His love now. We have been like that insubmissive wife, rebelling from God's constant love.

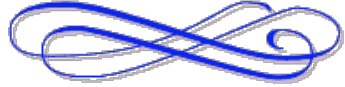
Tell Him that you want forgiveness through Jesus Christ for your sins, restoration, and a fresh new start never having an end. Tell Him He knows the best plan for your life and that you will trust Him to lead you to fulfill this plan.

Prayer

Dear Lord, it is time I change. Every self-pursuit is so empty and void. I have not paid attention to you and your purposes. I have been too intent insisting on getting what I think I need. Here you have this great design for my life, and I have hardened myself to it.

I no longer want to be part of the problem but with your love flowing through me to be part of the solution. Lord, through Jesus Christ, please forgive me for my selfish ways and restore me to You. Let me have no greater passion than to respond fully and warmly to You and your plans. Help me. My faith is little. There will be times I will not understand your ways, but I do desire them. Now may Your waves of love overflow and refresh my heart that Your love in me may splash over into the lives of those around me. In Christ Jesus I pray, Amen.

3) *Forever Secure* **Forever secure**



Our choice here is to go along in security or experience loneliness through our battles.

Three life truths displayed by marriage must be embraced to find our real meaning in life. It is through these truths that the bondage of lust is truly broken.

The first life truth:

When we choose to love, we cannot lust.

The second life truth:

When we receive the love of God, we are filled and no longer empty.

The third life truth:

When we are secure in God's love, we are in an intimate relationship and need not be lonely.

The greatest things are great only if one can hold onto them. Marriage was meant to last. We see this in the two statements in Genesis and again repeated several times in the New Testament.

“For this cause a man ... shall cleave to His wife”

“And the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5).

There is an element of permanency about marriage. The two were welded into one. This was not just speaking of sex, but the perfect blend of their two lives into one. The genders, roles and the soul unite and fit together creating what becomes one. This permanent nature of marriage is the reason the Lord speaks strongly against divorce. Divorce rips flesh

apart. Divorce always hurts. Divorce confuses the permanent picture of God's kingdom and the security it stands for.

This does not mean a marriage will continue into eternity. Jesus says it will not. Marriage was designed to last as long as both lived on earth. Marriage was designed to communicate the most beautiful picture of continuity and relationship one could find on earth. Marriage in its temporariness is but an analogy of a greater and eternally lasting relationship between God and His people.

This is why we have a choice between:

◆ ***Security: an intimate relationship cemented together for eternity.***

Enduring relationships are founded upon devotion.

◆ ***Loneliness: shallow relationships created in expectant separation.***

Lack of commitment stems from lack of intimacy.

Let's continue on and see the difference between the two lives.

Choosing security

Modernity celebrates change. It thrives on what is new and exciting. They hold out promises which announce that many new relationships are better than one long drawn out one.

Life is often so presented because they do not have quality of relationship which make them not even want to think about the permanency. This generation is afraid of commitments because they have seen the pain stemming from many marriages. They cannot endure it for a brief while and couldn't imagine staying in one for their whole lives. There is a better way, however.

Instead of giving up on their lifelong partner, they should seek out God's design for their marriage. Following that, they will have a relationship that they do want to keep as long as they both shall live. What is the advantage? Let's compare them.

A broken life produces sad loneliness.

Those ensnared in lusts know the meaning and implications of brokenness. Life is a series of broken relationships.

- Alienation
- Depressing loneliness
- Shame
- Guilt and self-hatred

Friendships are superficial; they are not meant to last. When people use others for their own purposes, it is not genuine friendship but selfishness.

Shallowness and superficiality describe these lives for it was not meant to continue. They have no real joy or love that should continue. The serving of self is not fit to endure. This does not mean divorce. God wants us

to go back to His model. Only dead bones remain in secularism's showcase.

Unfortunately modern lives are broken into so many pieces that they have no idea on how to put a marriage back together. They have lost vision and hope of reconciliation. What bitterness! It is horrible.

Love forever produces joyful security.

Love, joy and friendship are meant to last forever. They were made to endure. Deep relationships fulfill the need of belonging and identity.

- Satisfaction
- Deep fulfillment
- Permanency

When discovering a fulfilling relationship, one needs not keep looking for new relationships. They are content where they are. They are happy spending more time developing deeper relationships yet. This is why I take my wife on a date each week even after thirty years of marriage.

Mutual acceptance and the seeking to care for another within marriage help initiate other friendships. These other friendships will not be on the same level as a marriage, but they are built on the same principles found in God's love.

Summary

God has designed a special and binding relationship with His people that protects and secures them forever. “And they lived happily ever after” is true.

This truth is symbolized, taught and broadcasted through a loyal and lifelong marriage. Once God has entered a relationship with man and bound Himself to it, their own relationship will go on forever and ever. The relationship with God will be the prime one that leads and shapes all others. The pleasure, the joy and love found in meeting with God will influence every other friendship one might have.

“They shall see His face, and His name [shall be] on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be [any] night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:4-5).

Overcoming loneliness

Some people think love is weak. These people believe that freedom is more powerful than commitment and taking more strategic than giving. They truly have not yet met up with love.

- Love is stronger than all things including hate and violence. Love like heat softens the hardest rocks.
- Love like light illuminates the darkest caves.

- Love like water fills the deepest holes.

Nothing can withstand love's intensity and purpose.

“Put me like a seal over your heart,
Like a seal on your arm.
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
The very flame of the LORD.
Many waters cannot quench love, Nor will rivers
overflow it;
If a man were to give all the riches of his house for
love,
It would be utterly despised” (Song of Solomon 8:6-7).

The light of God's glory in Christ is covering the earth. God's love shall win the battle; it has won on the cross. The love of God like light flowing from the cross is sweeping across the earth overcoming the darkness. The darkness is losing its intensity; the dawn is coming. When the sun fully rises over the earth, there will be no more room for the dark deeds of our soul. We now need to live in light of the eternal glory of God or suffer forever.

Marriage, when rightly understood, stands not for confinement but rather for liberty. Marriage stands for that enduring lifelong relationship. Relationships are meant to grow. Depth, sharing, openness, love, joy, etc. are all shared in increasingly deep and meaningful levels.

Loneliness with all of its non-belongingness, alienation, depression and sadness is taking its toll on our modern society. People experience with drugs, sex

play, car fascination, entertainment and suicide just to escape this alienation. Nothing helps. Suicide and death just lead to an alienation without end. Real hope starts with finding relationship with the Lord.

Our Commitment

I refuse to listen to the broken advice of the modern world any longer. I choose the security of the Lord. I choose to fit into His plan rather than insisting on the meaningless and painful association with those I do not belong. I have decided that my body members including my eyes, will not pursue cheap relationships.

I will make my prime relationship to be with the Lord God Himself through Christ. He will be my first love. He will be the One I seek. And I will invite Him now to put my life back together. I seek Him to be my life's deep security. I need not again wander off seeking what I think I need. The Lord is my Rock, my security, forever. Let me be wed to the Lord forever.

As for my spouse, I commit myself, in the sight of God, to restore my marriage and endure all things for the sake of displaying His love. I pledge devotion and commitment. I want to swim deep in the waters of commitment and, by God's grace model the beauty, I have been shown.

Life is a stream of tests. It will be hard. I will be tempted. But I live myself for God and the life to which You personally called and prepared me for.

Our Prayer

Dear Father, forgive me for the ways I have superficially run my life. I have totally messed things up. Just look at the barrenness of my life with all of its sad loneliness. I now resign my own will and place

it at your feet. I need You and You alone. I want Your love for ever and ever. My life can well be described as broken.

But You are the Healer. Please pick me up and hold me tight. Hold me and never let me go. Hold me so that I might never seek another's hold of my life. Your plan is the only plan for my life.

If it means I am to be single, I only ask that Your mighty love inflame me. If it means I am to wed and so show to others what your love is like in relationship, then let me be a faithful and loyal partner dedicated to loving my spouse. But never let the temporary things of earth allure me away from your eternal arms. Your presence is life, hope and love. You are my new desire. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Final Summary

Let us close off this section with a wrap up. We have entered into a deep discussion of marriage to reveal the beautiful nature of God's love.



Only with God's love can we overcome the problem of lust. God does not use superficial answers for our life problems.

If you had to summarize everything in this marriage section, how would you summarize it? There are two underlying principles.

- ◆ **#1 Healing** and help only comes from a deep relationship with the Lord.

Every problem leads us back to Him and His ways. Knowledge helps us, but it doesn't save us. Relation-

ship with Christ saves us. Knowing Him, leads us into the restoration of all our relationships.

Only He can save. Christ is a living Savior and seeks a deeper relationship with us. Let us not be afraid of bringing our problems to Him. Don't think that once you have overcome your lusts that you do not need to trust Him any longer. Wrong. In the last major section we will cover numerous strategies to keep our relationship strong with our living Lord. Christ is risen!

- ◆ #2 When we pursue the Lord and what He says is good, then we can overcome any problem.
- When we are love-driven, then we cannot pursue lusts.
- When we are fulfilled with His love, then we cannot be empty.
- When we know are secure in His eternal love, then we will not be lonely.

If our greatest joy is not to know and love the Lord, then we will always wander back to our most loved ways. If you sense this is your problem, return to the beginning chapters where we focus on one's heart. Your chief joy in life will always steer you in its own direction. Only God can help us gain a new heart.

- ◆ What is God's plan for our lives? What is our final destination?

"... So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.
Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, They will

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

raise up the former devastations, And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:3-4).

1) God has the intention of calling us “oaks of righteousness.” The very ones that were called afflicted, broken and cast aside as prisoners will stand up strong as the mighty oaks. God designs for our healing to be thorough so that we can represent His good ways on earth.

2) Healing will be for His glory. People see us as frail and broken, but when God works in us, we stand as a modern miracle before the world. It is only right that God is honored for the very things He does.

3) God has plans to use us to help others. We want relief and control, but God knows we were made to serve others. Lust must turn to love. God has plans to use our lives in the restoration of others. God in His mysterious love outfits us so that we who were once so broken can be used in caring for those we have hurt.

#3 Cross the Line: Running the Race



Enough with the preparations!

Enough with the preparations! Let's go! We want to get running. After all we can only learn so many things without actual experience.

I talked to a tennis pro recently, and he shared with me how they have changed their training techniques. They used to separate the training from the practice: theory and then practice.



They discovered, however, that many more people will take up tennis if practice is part of the training from day one. People are practical. They want to see immediate help.

They are much more willing to learn knowledge as they see it help them accomplish what they want.

We have dealt with some issues in the previous sections that should have brought special insight into why sexual lusts can get out of hand.

Several in depth discussions on crucial Biblical perspectives should have begun to answer our questions on why we should run this race to overcome sexual sins. We now need to get very practical on being able to stay in the race.

The race is here. We are on the track. Our feet are moving. We will provide practical advice for finishing the race well.

The big questions

Many last minute questions pop up just before the big start or along the way. They can be distracting if they are not properly dismissed by good answers. Many questions have already been brought up but others might keep you confused. Here are several of them.

- What happens when we fall into sin?
- Why do I fall?
- Any special techniques to keep from falling?
- How does confession fit into things?
- What if I don't think I can make it?
- What happens if I think I am on the wrong track?

- How do I clean up my failures?

Each of these need to be answered, otherwise, we might just give up the race. We admit that they might not seem important to you now if you are not dealing with such issues, but if you are, then they are supremely helpful. Feel free to quickly go through the parts that are not to applicable to your life at this point.

When we hit different obstacles, we want to handle them quickly and properly. Please follow all the directions. Remember there is no magic here. There are no instant potions that will take away our wayward sexual desires. However, by following the suggested guidelines, there are many things that you can change and properly focus on.

These changes must become good habits.

This is our race. We need discipline.

A long term focus with a vision of being a different person keeps us going beyond the trouble points. We need God to do this. He changes our hearts and will give us the grace we need to gain moral purity no matter how oppressive our situation is. God is not just changing habits but people.

Our Three Coaches' Timeless Advice

- Faith provides the power to run despite all the obstacles.

- Hope is the confidence that this pathway leads to victory.
- Love is the glorious way of God motivates us to care for others.



Can I do it by myself?

There are some who strive on their own to escape sexual lusts. Without God, a person can stop many sexual sins by sheer will power (assuming they are inclined to do so). But this does not take that person where he really wants to end up.

One person who steps back from an outright affair might feel better because he is not so extreme, but this is not where God wants to bring the person or marriage. He has not reached the glory of being sexually pure. This is why we use the motif of a race. Our goal is supremely important. We need to know what we are running for.

Who, for example, would think he is solving a weed problem only by snipping off the tops of the weeds? Cutting out the excess only gives a person more time before tragic results occur. The weeds will surely grow up stronger than before.

Our root problems are not solved when
we
only cut away the surface problems.

Others get so fed up with the lust scene that they leave it altogether. They reject pleasure and societal responsibilities. They instead choose to become some monk isolated in the mountains of India or elsewhere. These eastern religions, however, do not solve the problems by avoiding them. Their premises are wrong. The body is not evil but our hearts.

However dramatic this change might be, it does not solve the root problems we have earlier discussed. We must by God's grace change our heart and then modify our environment to lessen temptation. Isolation is not our final goal. Living by God's beautiful design in balance is our goal. We need to faithfully carry out our responsibilities to our spouses.

What is God's plan for us?

God wants to fulfill His purpose in our lives as sexual beings. (Remember this is only one aspect of our [overall lives](#).) This is His wonderful design. He made us male and female. Without Jesus Christ, our battle with lusts is only on the outward. We cannot change our hearts on our own.

Improvements can be made. Reform can be encouraging. However, only the Lord can change our hearts. If God does not fill that deep intimacy that we crave, then we will use our bodies to try to make up for it.

When I was overseas, there was a type of chocolate for sale, but it was not like the genuine chocolate bar. The wrapper was the same deep brown, but the candy was almost plastic tasting. Sex is for more than the

momentary feeling. Sexual intimacy is the means the Lord has given to fulfill and develop our marital relationship.

The focus is on enriching and caring for one another. This is the reason lust in marriage cannot ultimately fulfill a person. God knows better and therefore leaves our hearts empty until we search His own design.

How does Jesus Christ help?

Jesus Christ is the means God has revealed His genuine care for us. “There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man” (John 1:9).

By understanding God’s love for us, we can grasp the purpose God has made men. One would think we would just grab onto this love. But we don’t. We instead go for cheap substitutes.

This love does not come naturally. Lusts come naturally to our fallen nature. We need the [love of God to be born in our hearts](#) just as a person is born into the world. We gain the power of love by receiving God’s love through Jesus Christ. One might think of love as a positive virus. Once we have the love of God in our lives, our total beings and persons are affected.

“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

If we do not have His love in our hearts, we have no option but to poorly care for ourselves. We need Him to fill that great need in our lives. Think about the implications of living without God’s love. Without Christ

ruling our lives, our self-oriented desires rules us. We are caught and enslaved by the flirts. We subconsciously focus on pleasing ourselves even though we know it is wrong. Our needs come first.

How does lust affect one's marriage?

Living by lusts slowly destroys the beauty of your marriage because we focus on your own needs rather than our partner's needs. This is counter to God's good design.

Here is one practical way selfishness destroys the greatness of marriage. This will help us to start thinking how extensively this problem has troubled our marriages. Women take more time 'warming' up for enjoyable sexual relations than men, in both physical and emotional ways.

Often the man does not have patience for this. If he seeks his own pleasure, then he does not focus on her needs but his own. The less he is patient, the greater a hole he has ripped in God's love process. Over time she becomes less and less responsive and unsatisfied.

She senses she is not really loved but used. When she is less satisfied, then he becomes less satisfied. The natural beauty of sexual intimacies begins to decay. The couple at this point usually gives up on the relationship and focus on the pleasure aspect as they 'try something new.'

The solution is found in asking God's love to fill our own hearts. The choice is between lust or to love.

There is no middle ground. There is a world of difference between the two.

The solution is found in the heart of the

True Lover:

– from God, to us, and then to our lover.

What if I really do not want to give up my lusts?

Not many people can get honest enough to ask the question, “What if I really do not want to give up my lusts?” It is hard to be real. Understanding our lives is a most challenging task.

The desires to sin, to lust after women (or men), to look at pornography, etc. are rather common. But even within this spectrum, there is much room for confusion. Some of us have these desires but also have conflicting desires.

These desires are strong.

For some of you, these desires are a great passion in your life. Because they play such a great part of your life, it seems like they might be your greatest desire—you are obsessed. Sometimes you might be very comfortable with this life, but at other times you are a bit scared.

This willingness to exploit others to fulfill your own lusts is the natural you. The Bible calls it the flesh or old nature; it is self-motivated. This is opposite to

God's nature of love where one is focused on meeting the needs of others.

Being able to recognize this self-oriented nature in our lives is an important step of life. I applaud you if you can see this nature in yourself. It is not rare! We are all born with it. But we don't equally see it!

But aren't these desires natural?

One of the confusing thoughts that have crossed our land is the 'natural is beautiful' philosophy. They confidently proclaim that if it natural, then it is beautiful. Their thoughts go like this, "If these desires are part of us when born then what could be wrong with them?"

The problem is that they have accepted the philosophy without first examining the truth of it. Their assumption that natural is beautiful just cannot be backed up by facts and figures. If we are only speaking of the restrained forms of lusts like affairs, then why are the unrestrained forms unacceptable such as rape, child molestation, etc? Lusts are lusts.

All these greedy desires are wrong because they satisfy one's own self without first focusing on the needs of others and thus violate the rights of others.

Two Approaches to Life

Depending on what viewpoint of life we have, our conclusions will be radically different.

1) Natural philosophy

Natural philosophy states anything natural is good. They believe these inherent desires and ways of man are part of this natural nature and important to promote because they bring out the best.

They have conclusions like:

- All natural things are good
- Any lusts are good

2) God from the scriptures

God has a different viewpoint and states that man has fallen. The best is not represented by what is natural. What is inherent might be the exact opposite of what is good and beautiful.

- God's designs are good and beautiful
- Prioritizing the needs of others over ourselves is important

Let's keep these viewpoints in mind as we continue to explore other questions.

Is nudity wrong?

We can agree that lusts are natural, that is, they are an inherent part of us when born. But that does not mean that they are natural, that is, the normal and good way of life.

Man was clothed with glory before sin, but this glorious covering of light was stripped away after they sinned. They sought covering. Nakedness was not normal.

What was normal? Normal was when they had the true covering of God. A substitute of leaves, skins, or what we use today - fabric in clothes was developed. Nudity exposes ourselves and others to undue temptation. The scriptures regularly call us to dress modestly and not to attract other eyes to our bodies. We belong to our spouse, not to others. Singles should focus on keeping themselves for their upcoming spouses.

Natural should be defined as the state when everything is conformed to the will and purpose of God. Practically, that means when I purposely observe a person dressed in such a way to entertain my sensual curiosity, those thoughts and feelings are impure or unnatural. We should not dress in front of others nor should families sit stripped in a hot tub together.

Why don't we lust more?

A sign that lustful desires are not part of our natural gifting is that society commonly establishes laws and standards to protect themselves from their free expression. For example, in most places there exist nudity, sodomy, marriage, divorce and incest laws. When society is strong, the culture and society protect the best interests of the people.

Parents generally want their children to have good marriages and families – this is natural. Legal laws develop from moral laws which are embedded in the conscience of man. Man knows certain behaviors are wrong and therefore make them illegal. The conscious

is not perfect and therefore laws are needed because every wrong behavior causes bad consequences.

These laws and things like parental expectations, peer pressure, etc. restrain the evil expressions of our sexual lusts. If our lustful desires were not at all restrained by law, opportunity, peer pressure, money, insecurity or time, then we would see a great increase in these activities.

Since the world culture is no longer penalizing many acts of sodomy, divorce, fornication, adultery, pornography, etc., we now see an explosion of sexual sins being committed. The sex slave trade is growing. Our society is falling apart due to the consequences to the evil behavior's toll on our society's infrastructure. Crime rates, abandoned for children, STD, AIDS, etc. Health companies are now beginning to stop operations in certain 'unprofitable' areas.

What happens if you continue to follow your lustful desires?

If you find that you do not want to change, you are facing four horrible ends:

- You will suffer through this life with your cheap inferior 'love.' Nothing will provide lasting pleasure and security. How many real friends will you have?
- You will suffer the consequences of broken relationships, financial costs, health problems, etc.
- You will miss out on knowing and living out the tremendous love of God in this life and the next.

- You will end up under God's judgment forever and ever. This lake of fire is prepared for those who do not repent. We can sense His displeasure now on earth, but His full judgment has not yet come.

If you have these desires but want to overcome them, continue on. To win the race one must want to win. They might not be the best runner but they must want to win. This is why we discuss these critical issues. If down deep we do not have satisfactory answers, we are both unclear as to what we want and caught off guard by these lingering doubts.

Why do I still lust?

Why do I as a Christian still have strong lustful desires at times?

When God's people do not understand the teachings in the Word of God, they are immediately set to a disadvantage. This is one area of life that puzzles many Christians but shouldn't.

Lust doesn't mean rejection.

God has said that sinful desires will continue to be part of our fleshly nature. This will not disappear until we leave this earth. As Christians, our binding commitment to that old nature has ceased. We can let it be revived, but, in fact, we need to simply reject it. In Romans 6-8 the struggle of sin between the godly

apostle and his sin nature is watched. Paul's conclusion to this wrestling match is quite insightful,

"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:24-25, NASB).

Our sinful nature is like a corpse that we carry around. We just need to continue to remember not to let it make itself king and dominate our minds (read further on in Romans 8).

God has not rejected us simply because we have lustful desires. We wish we could separate ourselves from these fleshly desires. After how many years, I still need to fight them. But until we physically die and are separated from our bodies, the old nature is begging to rule through Satan's temptations lurking in our mind.

Has God totally rejected you?

There are verses throughout the scriptures of the dangers of backsliding and leaving the Lord. Often, we have thought that there is no hope for those who has done evil after he has become a Christian.

There is no doubt that a Christian can sin. King David, however, serves as an example from the Old Testament on how God will treat those people who humble themselves after they have sinned. His example is used in the New Testament as a model for us (Romans 4:6).

The unpardonable sin describes those hardened people so spiritually blind that they have totally lost their faith. They cannot return nor do they want to. This applies to only very few people. If you want to turn back, then you certainly are not in this category.

The positive way to look at this issue is that as long as you are concerned about the affects of sin on your relationship with God, then you have hope to repent and turn back to Him, no matter how despicable acts your past acts have been including child molestation, divorce, adultery, rape, etc..

Why do I sometimes have really strong lusts that come to my mind?

At times Satan and his forces come along and insert filthy thoughts in the minds of God's people. These thoughts are not even from our flesh but satanic. The evil one tries to sway us to give into our fleshly desires. Here are some ways to see if they are from God or from the evil one:

- Out of the blue (not connected with what one was doing, and
- Blatantly evil
- They keep you from doing what is right
- They strip hope from you

The evil one wants to shake your confidence so that you will shift your focus. Instead ask the Lord to protect you with the blood of Christ and recommit yourself to God and His ways alone. This should always

work if you are a Christian. If they seem to come often, check and see if you have stepped out from some authority over your life and so make yourself more vulnerable.

Am I caught in sexual sins forever?

God's grace is a present grace. This means that as long as you have today and are sensitive to Him, you can turn to Him and cry out for help. You will be surprised how quickly the Lord can help you.

The problem is that sometimes we can fool ourselves. We can say we don't want to do something but still do it. Think for a moment on what problems continue to be problems because of certain decisions you make. Are there people you shouldn't spend time with? Are there places you shouldn't go to?

Follow through with those decisions, and you will see an improvement on your relationship with God. But if you do not carry out the necessary changes, then perhaps you are not really interested in living a pure life. Below is a sample chart that you can map out what is happening to your life because of certain decisions.

On the right side note how you are encouraged to make new decisions. Click for the full page version of the [Power Decision Chart](#).

Old Decis	Consequ	New Dec	Hope
Go to ___ lo	Form wron tionships	Join a group at c	Make new frie

Enough With the Preparations

Old Decis	Consequ	New Dec	Hope
Drive to show	Pick up girls	Sell fancy	Find friends n ing to be impre

If you really want to be controlled by love rather than lusts, then why haven't you followed through on doing what is right? Recognize your wrong and cry out to God for a hatred of these things. You might have friendships to break up with and many tempting situations, but you must choose.

Your choice in the end will affirm whether you really are a Christian. The consequences of these sins hint at worse things to come in the future. They both warn and encourage us to make the best decisions.

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God;

and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?” (1 Peter 4:17-18).

“And again, more severely, for if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses sides without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Hebrews 10:26-28).

Personal Testimony

If we are sincere about knowing God's love, then we must be willing to put away our sins. I remember once when I had this kind of conflict. I desired God's will but kept falling due to giving into my fleshly desires. A great battle tore at my soul. But I was God's.

My chief delight of pleasing God kept me fighting for moral purity. I could not put down my war axe until I had won the battle. I met Him many times in confession. Again and again I repented. I did not let go. Nor did I minimize my sin. I increasingly sought out His ways. I found Christ's blood so important. Each of us can be an overcomer even though we have faced defeat over and over.

God's love is powerful. As light overcomes darkness, so love overcomes lusts. If we do not share in God's nature of love as described above, then we do not have His transforming love. We were made to love. So when we do love, our whole beings are fully animated and satisfied by that love.

What about being single?

Do singles need to run? Can they run?

Do singles need to run the race for purity?

Many singles think they are in a whole different world before they are married. Think of the typical bachelor

Enough With the Preparations

party. Does it not speak of the expected freedoms during one's bachelor life?

Many singles find a subtle permission from their parents to indulge in their youthful lusts. The parents often have done the same in their youth, and figure they turned out 'good people!' They have a difficult time seeing how their early compromises have polluted their lives.

They have adjusted to a poor marriage (by watching his/her parents) and have no vision of a good marriage. They do not know anything better. They think it is good to 'love' it up a bit before they end up having a poor binding marriage. "Just don't get into any trouble," it is said. So the father might inadvertently encourage his young man to indulge in pornography and watch certain movies. They seem to think it is training them for manhood.

For many single people, they do not think that purity makes any big difference in their lives. Even worse, some wrongly believe impurity helps them improve their marriage, perhaps by being able to pick a better wife!

So our question has evolved into two other questions. Is purity of thought in singleness expected from the Lord? And second, is purity of life as a single really better?

Does the Lord expect singles to be pure in heart?

Although this question might seem trivial to some while obvious to others, we need to clarify what the Lord really wants. He is our Maker and Designer. He knows what is best for us.

Any instruction booklet accompanying some gadget tells the owner what he should and should not do. So what does our God, our instructor, say about single-ness? One of the best passages in the scriptures defining the needed focus of young people seriously upon God's and His will.

“Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but [rather] in speech, conduct, love, faith [and] purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:11-12).

Youth are not exempted from a pursuit of purity or holiness. One of the big tricks from the evil one is to convince people that it doesn't matter what one does before marriage, just so you don't hurt anyone (tries to make one feel good about him or herself).

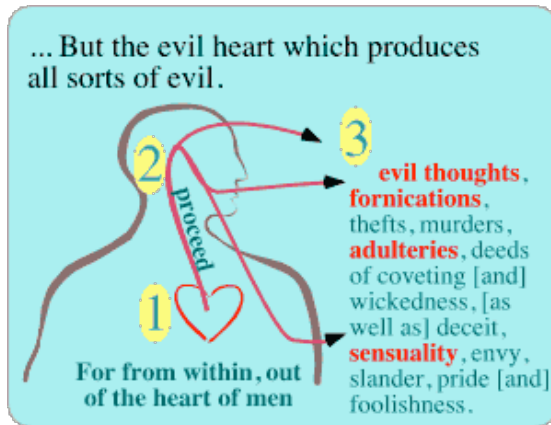
Frankly, any kind of impurity causes pain to others even if it is with the consent of others. This is why certain things are forbidden in the scriptures. They go contrary to the principle of loving God and loving our fellow man.

Let's just look at one passage which incorporates a general perspective we have been driving at in these last pages.

Food going in

Note Jesus' twofold observation in the following passage.

"... Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? ... " (Mark 7:18-19).



The diagram on the right describes how food descends the harmless digestive tract. However, evil proceeds from our inner heart – the source of our will and expression. With respect to our discussion on sexual sins, we see three layers of evil in our hearts:

- Our hearts are the source of evil;
- Our heart is able to replicate its evil, and
- We see our evil heart manifesting itself in lustful thoughts, words and actions through our minds and behavior.

That which defiles

"And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil

thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting [and] wickedness, [as well as] deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride [and] foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” (Mark 7:20-23)

Summary

Sexual sins are not rooted in marriage or by a society’s rules, but issue from our own old hearts seek expression in this world through what we think, say and do. Single and married people both can have sexual sins.

The difference is that married people have an extra vow of fidelity that they are breaking and that the consequences are worse. Sexual lusts, whether in the form of thoughts, words or deeds, are evil no matter what stage in life we are at.

A young teen or retired steel worker have their sexual lusts springing out of their own hearts. The question is whether we are going to repent from them and have God’s Spirit change our hearts or just perpetuate this sin. I remember one place I worked at had ‘girlie’ posters all over the work cabin. I stayed out of there as much as possible.

A single person should not be deluded about the possibility or need to remain totally sexually pure. He (she) gains, his future wife gains, his future children gain, his soul gains, and the whole society profits in a person’s willingness to remain sexually pure.

If we have fallen, and most of us have by time this is read, now is the time to repent and go through the steps of confession outlined in a later part. Let's not lose a moment in capturing each moment for our great Lord.

How does sexual purity improve the quality of a single person's life?

Here are 5 reasons sexual purity is the best for the single.

There are many more reasons!

1. Protection from diseases

Sexual purity protects a person from STD (sexually transmitted diseases).

Venereal diseases are caught primarily through sexual contact. We see AIDS and a few other diseases contracted by blood, birth and shared needles, but overall their spread is because of impurity.

The spread of these diseases is rampant across the globe infecting literally millions every year. Many of these diseases are deadly. There is no cure. All of these diseases cause pain and are easily spread. Later in life, many cannot have children when they want because of these diseases.

These diseases are tricky. In some cases the damage is not readily seen until later development. Purity absolutely protects the single person from these dis-

eases except from some freak circumstance. God shows His displeasure through these diseases. The wise person fears God and so protects his body (not by some shot!).

2. Freedom from frustration

Sexual purity protects a single from great sexual frustration. Let me explain.

We normally think that the person who restrains himself faces more sexual frustration than the one who seeks an outlet for his sexual desires. The opposite is the case. Purity means not only no physical contact but no frustrating lusts.

When a man looks lustfully at a woman, glands are stimulated which in turn increase the level of testosterone. We assume that those who lust and those who do not lust have the same inclination to delve into sexual things. But the facts are the opposite.

If our minds are clear from lustful thoughts, then we are less frustrated. It makes sense that the person who is not thinking about such things is not so desirous and therefore not frustrated. When a person is sexually pure, he can better focus on what God has given him to do in life.

3. Prepares for good marriage

Sexual purity for a single is wonderful training for the foundation of a beautiful marriage.

Many singles think sexual temptation disappears once they are married. They think that an unlimited supply of opportunity rids one of temptation. There is a good satisfaction of sexual needs by the mutual fulfilling of one spouse's sexual needs. However, this contentment will not last long if a man is given to his lusts.

Health problems, pregnancy, bitterness, disappointments, etc. are just a few examples of outside pressures that cause men and women go looking elsewhere. Training in self-control is crucial for these times of marital difficulties.

Only the well-trained and principled man will keep his eye only on his wife. Only the devoted husband decides to love his wife even when she doesn't deserve it.

A wife knows when her man only has her on his heart. This creates a deep satisfaction within the wife and runs over into further delight for her husband. This discipline of restraint and focus begins when young and single.

4. Helps other remain pure

Sexual purity increases the moral climate of society and friends.

The impact of a dedicated man or woman to keep sexually pure before marriage greatly encourages others to do the same. If we allow the promiscuous to speak and boast, the crowd quietly drifts toward along towards immorality and a host of associated problems.

However, when a single person can clearly speak about the advantages of sexual purity, the selfishness of the promiscuous is suddenly seen as undesirable. Just think what you would want for your daughter or son.

Would you want for them loose values and broken families or strong and vibrant marriages? In a sense, you quietly call your generation to be a great group of people when you make that decision to be sexually pure for God's glory, for the sake of others and for your own best.

5. Secures hope for eternal life

Sexual purity protects one's hope for eternal life.

While sexual purity in and of itself does not at all qualify one for salvation and eternal life, we would be plain reckless with the scriptures if we thought we could be assured of eternal life if we lived unrepentant while committing sexual sins, whether in public or private, whether in the fantasies of one's mind or in the openness of group dating.

The scriptures clearly address this. If we choose sexually immorality, then we choose the fires of judgment.

“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them” (Ephesians 5:5-7).

Summary

Single people face many challenges to abstinence. They need to be clear about the many advantages of living sexually pure lives. They can only gain. Their future spouses gain. Their future children gain. They save their own souls from perdition.

The whole society profits from a person's willingness to remain sexually pure. If we have fallen, now is the time to repent and go through the steps of confession outlined in the next pages. Let's not lose a moment in capturing each thought and action for the glory of our great Lord!

Let's choose to be free from sexual lusts now, whether married or single! For more, see [Battling Sexual Immoralities in a Relativistic World](#).

A single running by God's love

We need God's love to animate us rather than our desires.

We can try all sorts of gimmicks: physical restraints, chemical interactions, or even finding a good wife, but our hearts' well water still retains the same polluted water. Change the source of our water from lust to love. I would like to share how you do this right now. Just before I do, however, I realize that many of you might think you already know God. Some of you do. But how do you know?

Do you really know God?

The clearest way to discern if you really belong to God is whether you have God's true love in your soul. You might have fallen to serve your lusts for a time. This can confuse things. But ask yourself these questions:

“Do you love others as you love yourself?”

“Is the caring for others your life focus?”

“What are you living for?”

If you know of this love and have come to know of God's love through Christ, then I would encourage you to read on but as a recommitment of your life to God and Christ. For others, this might be a whole new experience - meeting God and gaining His love! Continue reading.

How does Jesus give us this love?

Jesus takes away the heavy burden of our past sin and frees us with a love like His. Could there be anything more grand?

In order to restore our relationship with God, Jesus needed to take our sins away which was the reason God was angry with us. We could never earn this because our sin already made us guilty. However, if we accept God's wonderful love for us through Christ, then forgiveness comes about and a new heart to love as He loves. This does not mean we cannot be tempted, but it does mean we care and love others.

Why do you need Jesus' love?

A young single person needs God's love to fill him or else he will look for cheap substitutes. A guy finds it in having a girlfriend and tantalizing his sexual desires. A girl finds it in a relationship. She often finds the only way to make the guy to stick to her is to offer him her body.

When the desires of a youth begin to rule him, then he ends up making many unwise decisions with life-long ramifications. Babies are born out of wedlock. Babies are killed through abortion. Women are left alone caring for a baby. And even if the guy and girl get together, their relationship has the worst foundation one could ask for.

The woman knows the man does not really love her. So she will live in insecurity, or in the end seek others for more attention.

Are you more conservative?

You might insist you are not so wild as the person described above. That is quite possible. There are others, for example, who because of religious or parental restraints cannot get 'too involved' in others, so they live out their lust in a fantasy world. They have pretend partners.

Through images and flicks, they are controlled. And yet they know it is phony. They hate themselves. When they get married, they become quickly unsatisfied with their wives for they have polluted their souls. They have trained their bodies like Paslov's dogs to

salivate over pictures. How are they going to build deep and intimate relationships with their wives when they are living on a cheap selfish level?

From Lust to Love

When we have been operating by lusts, God's love turns everything around in the most beautiful and wonderful way imaginable. It is like the Big Reverse.

Where once you were only happy when people focused on you, now it is opposite. You are happiest when you can help care for others. It is not just a fad that passes or a religious gimmick. God's love begins to flow through you and continues on and on.

How do I get that love?

There are two steps to have God's love of Christ born in our hearts. They are repentance and belief. Actually, we cannot force the process on our lives, but we can foster it. Just like a friendship, we cannot force someone to be our friend. We can only be a friend. The same is true with God. We will see something happening deep in our souls.

Repentance is a deep grief and awareness that we have really gone off the wrong road. Along with this is a healthy fear of judgment for the wrong that we have done. I personally saw myself falling down a chasm toward hell. I was so aware of my own sins, I knew I deserved to be judged.

Enough With the Preparations

I knew I was wrong and hopeless on my own. [Re-morse](#) is only being sorry for the consequence of sin. Once out, one will do it again if presented with the opportunity. Insight into God's displeasure with our sin and our growing repulsiveness toward such things is the beginning of repentance. Because of our new understanding of the wickedness of our souls, we seek for help and are willing to change. This leads to belief that things can be different because of Christ.

Belief in Christ is the second step to God's love. Belief is the actual trusting of Christ to save one from both the guilt of one's sins but also to restore one to a real relationship with God the Father. He desires to cleanse and instill that new love. We are not just speaking of intellectual persuasion. Nor are we speaking of a mystical faith.

Science is not contradictory to this faith even though many false things have been said to suggest this. We are speaking of a real life experience where God lives in us. Jesus Christ lives in His people through the Holy Spirit.

When you see that repentance over your life against God, then cry out to God to save you. Ask Him to cleanse you by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross. Ask Him to fill you with His love forever.

Express your willingness to be totally run by the power of His truth and love. Sometimes we do not at first have full faith. But keep crying out to God until you are convinced of four things:

- 1) God has forgiven your sins through Jesus Christ's death on the cross (His life for yours),
- 2) You are God's new adopted child forever,
- 3) You want to live wholeheartedly for Him, and
- 4) He has given you a new heart of love.

Picking up the mess

- We have made many mistakes.
- Now where do we start picking up the pieces?
- Is there any hope for these broken relationships?

Finding forgiveness

When we think about our lives, 'picking up the pieces' might seem very appropriate, but God prefers different terms like healing, restoration and saving. Relationships are not things that can just be reassembled as if nothing ever happened.

Offenses and hurts have been made. There are costs, and the payment heavy. Many times man tries to straighten out everything on his own. He forgets this is impossible because every time we offend man, we also offend God.

God, however, not only is an offended person but the volunteer mediator. He is offended because as His creatures we have not lived by His rules and have further messed things up.

As a mediator the Lord plays the central role during restoration. Interestingly, He also provides the means for the restoration of relationships. Things will never be the way they were, but by God's grace He can bring some good from it.

You might not be able to marry your divorced wife. You might never again be able to be close to your children because of past wrongs. But God has a special way of working in and through brokenness.

This is God's specialty. We can see this in the scriptures as well as in the lives of His people who have found this restoration. So let us look beyond just collecting the broken pieces and look to genuine relationships.

We have dealt with forgiveness before but only on a general level. The process of reconciliation itself can be difficult.



Sometimes we need a little motivation to keep running!

- We are humbled.
- We need to face our wrongs.
- Others find out how evil we are.

Positively, however, forgiveness leads to freedom and restoration. There are many levels of forgiveness and

like a big family, they are all related. We will deal with three aspects of forgiveness.

- 1) Gaining God's forgiveness
- 2) Confession: steps to restoration
- 3) Forgiving a person and self

We usually aren't able to see the slow degradation that takes place in our lives when we do not properly confess our sins. Our life's progress slows down. Our relationships worsen until our whole life comes crumbling down.

Every person that we have not properly forgiven is like a little pebble in our running shoe. They almost insure defeat in the long race. We usually handle such problems by simply hoping that it will go away.

Maybe a calloused skin will quickly develop so that we will not feel it anymore! But this is a temporary solution at best. What we should do is humble ourselves on the side of the road when all the other runners are zipping by and get that pebble out.

An Argument

A little argument started up on their anniversary. They had wonderful plans for a beautiful date to celebrate. But one stupid argument killed their desire to be with each other. They went. They spent time together. They even spent a bit on their evening out together.

However, an unforgiving spirit led to bitterness and an unwillingness to want to be close to each other. Any

real pleasure in sexual intimacies vanished in light of their sour hearts.

“What does forgiveness have to do with sexual purity?”

The question is well posed. We are social creatures, but more than this we are moral creatures. God made us to relate to Him and others. When we respond poorly to others, less than in a proper way, we have disturbed the peace between ourselves including God.

We might think that because our sexual lives are on the private side of things that they have nothing to do with the way we relate to others. But the opposite is true. Sexual matters have everything to do with relationships. Sexual intercourse is the deepest way to relate to another person. Pain at this level hurts a lot.

We often think that time heals these squabbles. But time does not really heal. Time is like scars that bind together torn parts on our skins or organs such as our lungs. Those scars do not act as living tissue but are there merely to keep things bound together. Scars are hard and ugly. If the scars increase, they eventually get to a point where the organ cannot properly function.

Gaining God's forgiveness

Side One: Establishing a relationship

The first aspect having to do with our relationship with God has already been somewhat discussed. When we hear of God forgiving our sin, this is describing how a person becomes a Christian or how his relationship with God is restored.

By Christ's death on the cross, Jesus took away the believers' penalty of sin that God held against them. When we repent from our sins and believe in Jesus, we become God's children and are accepted as His family members forever. Our faith brings us into His family.

Our faith is like our membership card. All of our sins that kept us from Him are thoroughly dealt with. There will even be many sins that we don't know of that are well cared for. The worse sins in the world are taken away. **Psalm 103: 12-13** says,

"As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
Just as a father has compassion on [his] children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear
Him."

Any little sin would be enough to suffer under God's wrath forever. However, through Christ we have complete peace with God. God's claims have been completely Romans (cf. 1 John 2:1-2).

Enough With the Preparations

“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

This is the love of God. God has taken all the necessary steps to secure forgiveness for us. We sometimes think that God had to forgive us or that forgiveness was natural. Quite the contrary, grace is extraordinary. Grace is God’s extra effort to make peace with us rebellious creatures.

We wanted nothing to do with Him. We had our own religion beliefs, political parties, educational systems and even our own systems of moralities. In spite of this, God brought life to us. This is His love.

Now let’s focus on the second side of our reconciliation with God. The first is the establishing of a relationship. This is quite different from renewing of the relationship.

Side Two: Renewing a relationship

We sometimes confuse a relationship with a good relationship. We might have a number of family relationships – aunts, brothers, father, children, etc., but this does not mean we have a good relationship with them. The same is true with God. Christians have a relationship with God, but we need to work at keeping it functioning well.

Reconciliation with God has two aspects and unless we clearly understand them, we will be very confused.



If we do not properly care for our relationship with God, then we are going to face many difficulties in life, some of them painful. When we do not take our relationship with God seriously, then we are living as if there is none.

Legally, there is. But practically there isn't. If we haven't talked to our father for three years because of the way we ended our last conversation, we cannot boast much of the relationship.

This is why a Christian can sin and yet still be a Christian. He could drift into the clutches of pornography. However, we need to be honest with ourselves. If a person's heart is really set on evil things and not repentant, he ought not think he is one of God's children at all.

Only with the absence of faith is there the absence of love for God's way. God's children can fall back into sin. However, if they do, they will always hate their sin and want to come back to God. Many just don't know how to come back. This is what we want to now address.

Jonah was rebelling against God. He was not against some certain sexual standards, but it was disobedience just the same. He was running away from God.

Enough With the Preparations



The whole story can be found in the fascinating Bible book of Jonah. But God was quick. He followed Jonah

onto his runaway boat.

Similarly, He catches His errant children just as a faithful father will discipline His children. And it can really hurt.

“It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?” (Hebrews 12:7-9).

God caught Jonah running away on a boat going in the opposite direction from where He should have been going. He caused such a storm to arise that finally Jonah confessed that the whole boat was going to be destroyed, if he himself wasn't thrown overboard.

Jonah knew he was guilty and was reluctantly thrown overboard. A great big fish swallowed Jonah up until he humbled himself, was willing to do what God wanted and prayed to God for forgiveness and help.

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, “I called out of my

distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice” (Jonah 2:1-2).

We must renew our relationship with the Lord now. The longer we put it off, the more difficult it is for us and others. We need to humble ourselves on our knees and cry out for mercy and forgiveness. He is there to hear our voice no matter how evil our acts have been or now are. Remember that even in the midst of the consequence for sin, God is there. You can talk intimately with.

The way we carry out our relationship with God bears a lot on how we maintain our relationships with others. Once a relationship has been initiated, then it can be destroyed if we are not careful.

The Importance of Confession

In one sense, we do not need to go beyond the simple fact that the Lord has told us to confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:9) and to one another (James 5:16). The Lord has said it, therefore we will do it. But because we are trying to understand the good designs of the Lord, let us try to answer the question,

“Why is it that God calls us to confess our sins to Him and to other that we have offended?”

Some of us might think that God just wants to make us feel bad. Quite the contrary. God can make us feel bad without the confession part! He could just leave

us alone with His wrath and anger.

Confession, however, is designed to bring healing and restore relationships. The spite, haughtiness, anger, revenge, malice all bring about poor relationships. By putting them aside, we bring healing.



“But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth” (Colossians 3:8).



**Without confession,
brokenness remains.**

Instead we deliberately strengthen the bonds of our relationships when we purposely love, comfort, acceptance, peace and joy.

“And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:12-14).

God’s greater purpose is to bond us together so we can work as a team. If confession is not properly carried out, then what could be mended stays shattered

bringing disappointment and loneliness to all. This will interfere with running the race.

God's beautiful designs are shown through His commandments. Confession leads to healthy and beautiful relationships.



**With confession,
healing and unity come.**

*“And beyond all these
things put on love,
which is the perfect bond of unity.”*

Confession of sins

Take our sins seriously.

Confessing our sins thoroughly shows that we are humbled and repentant.

Only when we feel the full weight of our sin, do we search for a through forgiveness for all of our sins. If we only wanted to confess one or two more troublesome sins that we feel guilty about, then we treat our sin lightly. God had His Son die for the ‘little’ and ‘big’ sins.

He did not overlook our sins as many think but instead placed the penalty of all His people's sins upon Christ Jesus. The penalty for our sins was death and so He died hanging on the ignominious cross.

Enough With the Preparations

The reason we want to be thorough in seeking cleansing and freedom from our sin is to maximize the effectiveness of the work of Jesus on the cross.

There are two prideful responses to our sins. Either we treat our sins too lightly or too heavily.

When we treat them lightly, we do not confess our sins. We ignore them as most people. When we treat them too heavily, then we act as if our sins cannot be forgiven at all. We stay under their guilt and burden.

The prideful response to a heavy load of sin is to seek our way of healing which is normally through:

- penance
- doing extra works
- sulking in remorse

We instead are called by God to repent from and grieve over the wrong. Confession to Christ would then allow us to work through our healing process by

1) fixing our eyes on God's real solution rather than our faulty attempt through self-works, and

2) restoration rather than perpetuating our grief and focusing on our feelings.

We have sinned. We have done wrong. But the good news is that we are forgiven through Christ. We need to live in that joyful and grateful spirit of forgiveness and so treat others.

The Lord wants His people to have joy in
Him after confession.

“Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation”
(Psalm 51:12).

Results of confession

Confession brings two significant results. Both are to be remembered and not neglected: forgiveness and cleansing (restoration).

“If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John
1:9).

Remember the confession sheet that we filled out at the beginning of this series? We want to come back to that now. When we became a Christian, someone should take us through our past and guide us on cleansing our conscience. Many unfortunately haven't experienced this. The good thing is that one can do it by Himself in the presence of God.

So what is the proper way to confess our sins?

We need to be thorough and thankful. By being thorough, we confront our sins in detail along with full apologies and restitution. We deal with it and let Him deal with us however He chooses.

After this, we can move on. The Lord is not pleased if we only deal with some of our past sins. The list might

be 100 to 200 long and contain some of the most gross sins, but when they are openly dealt with, they are forever dealt with.

We can enjoy a full and free relationship with God and others. Many Chris-

tians have lived in the shadows of their past sins and therefore live in a meager understanding of Christ's powerful grace and love.

Confession leads to thankfulness because of the cleansing and restoration. Many have not grown up in a family who exercises proper restoration. The pains of bitter remarks still sting their souls after many years.

This is not the way it should be or is with our Heavenly Father. When a God's child does wrong, his Heavenly Father surely corrects him and leads him to the steps to straighten out the problem.

Though God the sinner is restored with God. Restoration with man, including apology, restoration and possible restitution with the offended persons also need to be made.

Part of our confessional prayer should include what is called 'taking back ground.' This is based on the premise that God wants to completely restore our relationship. As long as we sin, His blessing is held



back so that we are not encouraged to continue in our evil ways. But when we repent and confess, then we are able to step back into His full joy and blessing. The ground that we have lost during the battle can be taken back by Christ.

Now let's review what sins need to be confessed and worked through. Please take out whatever you have written or e-mailed to yourself before. On the next pages, we will find a description of each heading that will be on the form.

Cleansing the conscience

Steps involved in confession

Here are some steps involved in making a full confession.

Sinful act/attitude

We need to state clearly what wrong we have done. Jesus taught that even when a man thinks upon a woman with lust, it is adultery. Indulging in our minds are considered sin as much as in bed. The consequences are different but the judgment is the same. If multiple sins have occurred with a person, we might print out a sheet just for that one person or situation.

Results

When we acknowledge the painful results from our waywardness, it helps to see the pain from the other person's perspective. We can better identify with

those that have suffered from our lives and speak forth a more sincere apology.

Persons Involved

God is always involved. Every caress, every word, every desire shows up on His radar screen. When we do contrary to what He wants, then we as His children need to come back humbly asking for forgiveness. We do not mean that we are saved again. No. Once His child, always His child. We mean instead that we want to be back on talking terms. This is restoration.

Apologies

Apologies are necessary where possible. We are not just trying to straighten out our relationship with God but also with individuals. The apology needs to go as broad as the offense is known. For example, if a person lusted in his heart, it would be very inappropriate to apologize to that woman.

However, if a person's adulterous affair affected a large group in the church, then a public apology is necessary. Apology is not just saying, "I'm sorry." After our confession of wrong, we need to ask them, "Will you please forgive me?"

Restitution given

We need to pay back more than we have stolen or damaged. Even if there was full consent to sexual sins, damage to a person's inner being and relationships occurred. A monetary gift can't fully pay back the pain suffered. We should acknowledge that we

can't pay that back. But when we can pay back something, we should. We should be liberal in our giving even if we must suffer. Remember we deserve death for falling short of God's demand. Ask God if there is anything you can do to bring healing.

Confessional prayer

In this confessional prayer we tell God all about what we have done in each of these steps. In a sense it brings a good closure to each problematic area. Write down the date you confessed it. Confession brings forgiveness as well as cleansing and full restoration. An example of a prayer is included on the page following the form. If ever the Accuser would accuse you of these sins, you merely need to proclaim the blood of Christ has set you free from that sin.

On the next page, fill out the form starting with the areas that the Spirit of God brings to your mind. You need to be thorough so print out as many sheets that you need. Feel free to [download the pdf file](#) and print it out or simply copy the text into your word processor or e-mail.

We need to be thorough in our confession. Start with the most troubling ones. Fill out as many sheets as necessary until your are completely done going through all the unconfessed sin in your life. 'Small' sins count. If you do this right, you will only need to do this once in your life. This is the only way to get this evil past out of our lives. Otherwise, we hide it for the evil one to exploit at future times.

Enough With the Preparations

You might want to burn all the sheets afterwards to remind yourself that all the past has been dealt with by the blood of Christ. Others might like a list of them in case they are taunted by the evil one saying it isn't forgiven. They can then pull out the sheets and verify that it has all been rightly dealt with.

Sinful ac- tude	Resul	Apologiz Person involv	Restitu	Con- fessed Date ✓
1				<input type="checkbox"/>
2				<input type="checkbox"/>
3				<input type="checkbox"/>

Forgiving a person and self

What happens if I don't forgive?

We do not need to look far to find a bitter person. Unfortunately, bitter people seem to stand out wherever they are, much like a sore thumb.

Bitterness develops from not forgiving another person. How?

We start with the seed of an unforgiving heart. Here are three kinds of such seeds.

Often the problem is just a misunderstanding. We refuse to give any benefit of the other person's intention. We assume they deliberately did a wrong against us.



More often, there is some wrong, but it is exaggerated with our suspicion. Then sometimes, there are just



those plain hard wrongs done against people.

It doesn't take many days on earth to experience a wrong against yourself. If you forgive, then no seeds of an unforgiving spirit are planted

in your heart. If you respond with unforgiveness, then you have a seed in your heart that slowly develops into a root of bitterness. God has not made our systems to



manage this bitterness. The scriptures say,

“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no **root of bitterness** springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

Roots develop from the seed and supply a network for nourishment and security for that seed. Unforgiveness always develops bitter roots in our hearts. These roots of bitterness then attempt to spread to our whole life. Bitterness will greatly impact your ability to run. You will, for example, not want to reach sexual purity to spite your mate.

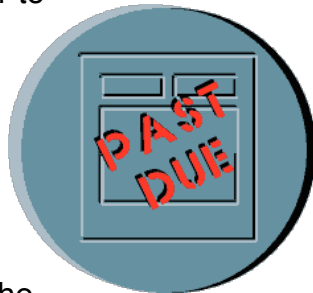
What is forgiveness anyway?

Forgiveness is releasing someone from the moral debt they owe you. Since we often do not think in such terms, let us use a financial illustration.

I recently was at a store and discovered I ran out of cash. I asked my friend, Ed, if he could pay for me and then I would pay him back when I got home. I owed Ed \$38. I had an obligation to repay him as we agreed. I was in debt to him. There are two ways to legally get rid of this debt.

I could pay him back his \$38. when I returned home. The other option was for him to release me from that debt.

How does this work with moral debts? When a person has offended us, they have made a moral debt to us and God. They have acted less than they should have behaved. We do not have power to deal with their debt to God. God has worked that problem through Christ as we have earlier discussed.



Both ways would legally and morally be effective. I chose the former. If I chose the later, I would feel somewhat indebted to him for his generosity. Besides he didn't offer!

But what can we do to someone who morally owes us? In most cases, we cannot perfectly initiate a restitution. There is no way they can pay us back. We wish the world was so easy. But when people are hurt, a child molested, violence is done, financial restitution does not relieve the debt. It is a beginning

which shows seriousness of understanding their wrong. What can do?

We can simply forgive them. We recognize that we could hold it against them. They do owe you. However, God does not like it when we do not forgive.

Many people use an unforgiving spirit to bring a sense of judgment on that person. God however, says that revenge is His prerogative "Revenge is mine," thus says the Lord. Forgiveness is a decision on our part to simply release another person from the guilt imposed on them for offending us.

What are the 7 steps to forgive?

1. Identify your offenses needing forgiveness.

We are great at identifying the faults of others but poor in discovering our own. We need to discover how we have offended God and hurt others. David said in Psalm 51:3, "For I know my transgressions."

More than often we have some fault of spirit (attitude) or lack of concern for others. We need to ask God to help us identify these problems. God in Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

Like David in Psalm 139:23-24, we need to plead for Him to search our own actions and attitudes.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.”

- ◆ Key point > Discover your faults from your life. Trust God to handle those who have hurt us.

2. Acknowledge the hurt and pain. Be specific.

There are at least **three areas of pain**. Each is difficult to honestly recognize. We have such a difficult time opening up ourselves to see what pain we have suffered as well as empathizing with others in the pain that we or others might have inflicted.

God is grieved. As imperfect creatures you, I, and others have offended Him. We have despised His rules so we could choose to do what we desired. Sin is transgressing God’s law even if we are ignorant of it. “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). His laws are best for us, but we think our way is best.

We have hurt the other person. As mentioned above it is difficult to think of our own wrong doings. But it is equally difficult to **think of their pain**. We are more intent on getting revenge than trying to understand what deep hurts are inside those who have hurt us. These deep emotional scars have contributed to their aggressive behavior that pained you and probably others.

We are hurt. Someone has deeply hurt us. We often pride ourselves in being able to handle things, but our

wounds reveal our inability to handle the situation on our own. Someone's words have hurt us. Written words, whether in emails, Facebook or letters, have upset us. Add these things to the many other wrong things that have been done. If we are not forbearing and forgiving, we will soon get bitter and angry.

Key point > You need to address each offended party and tell them the grievance you have done and how it emotionally hurt them. This includes an honest conversation with yourself on how you were offended by what you thought someone did.

3. Pass the burden of revenge on to God.

We can trust God to fully take care of justice. We can ask Him to implement His justice like the Psalmist did. This might speed up the judgment, but in the end God will surely carry out full justice on every wrong carried out on earth whether we ask Him or not.

This is God's nature and duty. He is fully equipped and motivated to bring judgment. This is an important issue. Read on carefully. At the end we will find a completely different approach that will free us from this need to bring harm to those who have done wrong to us or our loved ones.

A common reason people want to hold on to their unforgiving spirit is to bring proper revenge. "If I don't do it, no one else will!" In all cases where a real wrong has been done (and there are innumerable such cases), revenge is due. Their desire for revenge is not

wrong. This is the sense of justice that God has instilled in man.

However, they are carrying justice out in the wrong way.

- 1) God will take complete revenge. When we think of the consequences of eternal fire, could we want more than this? Really?
- 2) We know next to nothing about carrying out proper revenge. Do we really know all that has happened? Only God knows the details and has the power to bring about justice. Our 'revenge' would bring about more injustice!
- 3) Those who carry out revenge directly disobey the scriptures. They interfere with God's rule when they try to carry out revenge. God claims only He should take revenge. "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath [of God,] for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).
- 4) Carrying out revenge keeps us from focusing on other scripture that God did tell us to obey. We are to forgive those who have offended us after the model of Jesus Christ.

"Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (Colossians 2:13).

"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do

Enough With the Preparations

not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14-15).

- 5) When we nurture our hate wounds, we cannot carry out God’s commission of love. Jesus in Matthew 5:43-44 said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.’”

We are called to love not only those who without prior motive have hurt us or our loved ones, such as a drunk driver. But we also are to love those who purposely hate us. These are our enemies.

- 6) People insult God when they say they cannot forgive. They are essentially saying that God’s judgment is insufficient. If the person is a Christian, then Christ indeed has paid for their sin. If they are not Christ’s, then God said judgment is His call. 1 Peter 4:17-18 says,

“For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what [will be] the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?”

Jesus Christ set the course for a whole new approach to handling offenses. We are not saying that this pattern was not set in the Old Testament. It was. However, Jesus Christ’s life and work on the cross made it

so much clearer for all of us. He offers us a way of living that goes far beyond anyone could have dreamed.

Two points to keep in mind here:

(1) God went to great means to forgive man of their sin. His only Son Jesus Christ died for the guilty. We are called to live in a similar spirit of mercy. Do not pass judgment but bear patiently with the guilty.

(2) God wants us to go further than to just forbear the guilty. We could pass judgment just as God could have. But He wants us to take the opportunity to pass grace and kindness on to those who have grieved and offended us. Again, Christ was and is the perfect example of this.

This door of mercy and grace will be open only a little while longer. God is holding the door of grace open so that more guilty people like us can experience God's rich grace and mercy. 2 Peter 3:9-10a says,

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,”

We need to adopt God's patience which holds back judgment to pass on His grace and love. One of the most strategic times to do this is when we have been offended. People that have hurt us expect us to act like the rest of the world. But we are to forgive. We are to love. We are to be like Christ. There are so

many areas of lust that these principles must be worked out.

4. Making apology. Seeking forgiveness.

Because forgiveness is the releasing a person from one's personal judgment, forgiveness is a decision to free someone. Do not confuse this with God's judgment. We cannot change that. We can only lead them to Christ to find freedom from that most severe judgment. Forgiveness is an official release of payment from one party or group to us.

First, we must remember this asking for forgiveness is not a feeling thing, "It would be good to forgive them." Or a wish, "I wish I could forgive him." This is not forgiveness. Nor is it the same to state that Christ has forgiven this brother that has offended you. God asks, even demands, that we forgive the offending party in the spirit of love.

After we have identified the sin, acknowledged the pain, affirm God's responsibility to carry out justice, we come to the party and either ask for forgiveness or seek forgiveness. Often both parties have done wrong and so both sides take part in the asking and seeking of forgiveness.

Seeking forgiveness has 4 essential parts:

- 1) Tell the person what you are seeking forgiveness for. You should be as specific as possible. You should include poor attitudes as well as actions.

2) After having thought through what they have emotionally suffered, you should state that you understand that you have caused them this kind of grief. This fosters emotional healing

3) You should specifically ask for forgiveness for what you have just stated. You should wait until the person forgives you.

* If they say, "I forgive you." Thank them!

* If they say, "It doesn't matter." Tell them it does matter a whole lot. You can again repeat how you have caused pain in their life. Ask them again to forgive you.

* If they say, "I can't forgive you" or "I don't want to forgive you." Remember that this is rare.

- Check your spirit. Are you being prideful of something.
- Have you confessed all that you had done wrong?
- Ask them if there is anything you had done wrong that you neglected to mention.
- Lastly, if they are plain stubborn, mention again how you are sorry and that if at any time they can forgive you to let you know because it is important to you and your relationship with them.

4) In the meantime, seek every opportunity to do good to that person. We are to love our neighbors and en-

emies. They might not believe your sincerity and need some time to forgive.

An example of an apology

“There is no way I can pay back the loneliness and isolation I have caused you over these last two years. It was through my words that others thought evil of you and distanced themselves from you. I know I don’t deserve your forgiveness for doing such and such. However, I would very much appreciate your forgiveness. Would you please forgive me?”

5. Ask God to comfort you.

God’s Word brings both comfort, direction, reproof and encouragement at times when we are combatting our pride. It is humbling to apologize but powerful. We can often decide to do something but then not do it. The Holy Spirit delights in bringing God’s Word to your heart for your many needs.

You can do two things.

- Prayerfully read a couple chapters of scriptures from the Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you with His Word and help you where you need help.
- You can also just prayerfully meditate seeking the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind scriptures that you have stored in your heart. See if He would prod you with a scripture. This works with some people more than others. Perhaps it is because we have not sufficiently stored God’s Word in our hearts!

6. Make restitution when possible.

When we have done wrong, we need to not only apologize but also financially restore those things that we have broken and destroyed. We agree many things we have done or said cannot be restored.

Sexual sins are hard to pay money to restore. More is involved. Evil words cannot be easily restored. They have done their damage. In these cases and others, we can.

- Seek the Lord's heart. Ask Him for help to understand the other's pain.
- We apologize and ask forgiveness.
- We can tell people that we desire to remove the pain that we have brought to their lives, but are unable. Emotional pain has no payback. However, through these tender thoughts and words, they at least know you have hurt them. This helps both of you.
- Restitution. Be sure to freely give money to restore what can be restored. (E.g. stolen radio). The scriptural pattern is to pay back more than we stole. Zacchaeus pledged to pay back four times what he defrauded from others (Luke 19:8). This might not always be necessary, but Jesus was happy about his arrangement. This liberal restitution sure had the ability to fight against the god of greed that formerly occupied his soul.
- Seek and follow the Lord for anything else you could do for them. eg. If you forced an abortion,

you cannot bring the baby back. However, you can give sacrificially to an organization that helps those who want to help moms keep their babies.

7. Show thankfulness to God and others.

Such changes mentioned above clearly show God is working in our hearts. It doesn't come natural! Thank God. Thank Him for forgiveness. Treasure Him and His care for you. Remember that the clearest way we can express our thanks to Him for forgiveness is for us to freely forgive others.

What if you can't forgive?

You have probably heard some people say that they can never forgive. Maybe you have said it too! For whatever reason they say this, the result is the same. Unforgiveness gets so wedged into their heart that the root of bitterness infects the different areas of their life.

A bitter person is the very opposite to a gracious person. Or to approach it a bit differently, bitterness is the opposite of Jesus. In summary, if someone has offended you including yourself, then you have it within your power to forgive. Bitterness holds back love and brings on more evil through lusts.

What does it mean not to be able to forgive?

This common phrase 'not being able to forgive' means that we do not want to forgive rather than the implied 'we cannot forgive.'

The bulk of the problem is having the offended person humbly acknowledge the simple fact of their unforgiving heart. It is a will problem. And though it seems like a radical statement, we must affirm that the problem, in a real sense, is not them but us. After all, God worked with the humble sinners rather than with the stubborn and prideful ones.

What happens when you do not forgive others?

There are several consequences. None of them are pleasant. Each brings the worse out of a situation.

- An unforgiving spirit poisons one's own heart with bitterness. We have already addressed that.
- 'Can't forgive oneself' implies a resistance to change and therefore makes reconciliation impossible.
- Without reconciliation, sour relationships will persist until death.
- More than often, hatred infects one's descendants and they live bitter lives. Perhaps we should think of our will as a hate list.

Enough With the Preparations

- Great emotional pain and misery is associated with those who live bitter lives. This is partly due to no good friends. They cannot tolerate the bitter comments.
- Diseases follows this path of bitterness. Our bodies cannot handle this unforgiving heart.
- A scary future. God will not forgive those who do not forgive others.
- Although they claim to be right, they in fact cause further wrong to be done because of their unforgiving heart. They can never bring proper revenge.
- All the joys in life meant to be theirs is dashed in some ashes of bitterness.

If we do not forgive, we wish hate on others, but it stays in our heart. We wish for other lives to be ruined but it is ours that is ruined. Our own precious children and grandchildren must suffer from the source of the original wrong. This is no life for anyone and will wreck physical harm upon one's body.

What about forgiving ourselves?

Some have said that they cannot forgive others, but what about those who say, "I could never forgive myself?" They sound so right. After all, what if they took a girl's virginity away with no real love or care for her at all?

If they meant that they do not deserve forgiveness, they are right. It is true with all of us. But more than often they mean, "My sin is so bad that even God

can't forgive me." This is a temptation from the evil one to wrongly deal with one's wrong. They again put themselves in a position that sets a nail into their coffin. This hardened mind to consider God's truth on the matter has often caused eternal heartbreak.

The best way to deal with deep wounds is to find God's forgiveness, make due apologies and restitution to the best we are able and commit ourselves to living rightly. We have done wrong. We undoubtedly deserve the worst. But if our Savior died in our stead to help us, shall we dam ourselves to a judgment that no longer exists?

The apostle Paul called himself the worst of sinners. His solution was to seek God for extra grace to help more people. If Jesus did not condemn Paul to a life of shame but as an honored apostle, then we should follow this pattern of grace. Paul used his own wicked past to testify how God can forgive others. David killed a husband just to enjoy another man's wife without him discovering it! Can it get any worse?

These offenses should never have happened. But just as Christ came to save and not to judge, so we need to operate from love and grace rather than by judgment. By forgiving a person, we are not saying they are good or that no harm came. Not at all. We are merely stating that we are not personally going to hold it against them. We relieve them of that debt.

What about asking others to forgive ourselves?

Jesus has not only told us to forgive but to take the initiative when others offend us. We do this with a gentle spirit. The reason we do it is love. We treasure that relationship and value that other person. We want to clear up things right away.

For example, “Those words you said yesterday about me being a bit fat really hurt. I pretended they didn’t, but I don’t want this to deteriorate our relationship. Upon confrontation, they should interrupt and apologize especially if they are a friend. You should forgive them. Do not say it doesn’t matter! It did.

Section Summary

Many issues were discussed above largely in the question and answer format. Any one of these questions can be used by the evil one to get the believer off guard and then knock him or her over.

For example, many couples are totally frustrated with their marriage because one or the two of them have not forgiven as outlined above. This creates a situation where lusts can easily displace their commitment to love. The temptation to hold back one’s love is tempting him or her to give up the race for sexual purity.

How much better it would be for the couple to together pray, apologize and recommit themselves to each other. This response protects them from the evil one’s specially designed attacks.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

How wonderful that because of Jesus' work on the cross, we do not need to put up with horrible relationships. Instead of living out our frustration and bitterness through our lusts, we can conquer them through love. This is so much better.

Even when you are the only spouse wanting to love. No one can stop you. You can choose to love instead of lust and find God's extraordinary grace to carry out His love into that relationship.

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

Many coaches use video to actually record the past and replay it so that he and the runner can learn what strength and weaknesses he has. It is likely that what he has done is also something he will repeat.

As Paul said, we do not want to be disqualified for the test. Our hearts must set out to cross that line. If so, it would help us get a better look at our past record.

In order to help us in our race, we have provided an extended exercise. You need to complete it, but for extra insight we will comment on it as we go through.

Have I understood my failures and victories?

Those who excel must detect and eliminate the problems that hold them back, whether they be big or small! Anyone who wants to join a team, needs to be tested, trained and placed accordingly.

Tests embarrass us by revealing our weaknesses. However, if we can humbly acknowledge our weaknesses, then we can be trained to overcome them. Would you take a stress test to find out if you had a weak heart? If you did, you might be able to strengthen it with some prescribed exercises. The apostle considers this kind of spiritual test important for our spiritual lives.

“Test yourselves [to see] if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Some interpret their results with great discouragement. They don't see any hope for themselves. This is how some of our lives look. Hopeless. We can't run half way, let alone the complete distance.

For these, we have written on how to find God and His power to help them uprightly. This makes such a difference.

Our focus here, however, is not on major problems but weak spots. They can be overcome with good training. If we neglect to overcome them, then they will continue to burden us down resulting in a very poor showing.

Where do we take the test?

These tests are difficult to take. The more objective, the better. But frankly, there is no one who understands our heart but God. If we are genuinely interested in knowing our flaws, as we humble ourselves before God, then the good Lord will help us in this task. He is very concerned that we do well in the race.

As we begin, memorize Philippians 1:6.

“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work** in you **will perfect it** until the day of Christ Jesus.”

What an encouraging verse! If God starts working in our lives (He probably has or otherwise you would not read this), then He guarantees continue working. The

Lord is our best coach who is always present (Matthew 28:20).

Personal Life Charts

Developing our personal life charts can be very helpful in analyzing past patterns. They can also be very humbling! There are two kinds of patterns that we need to pay attention to.

- 1) Long term patterns
- 2) Short term patterns

The long term patterns are similar ups and downs over the years. We get into ruts and swings of life. They are often repeatable. Long term patterns reveal habits and thinking. Wives write to me about their husbands' affairs through life. This is a long term pattern.

The short term patterns are acute crises, depending on how they are handled. After analyzing your life long patterns, then focus on a few crises to see if these are at all related to one's longterm progress. For example, a man might tend to go into a bout of pornography after a fight with his wife.

Usually the victories proceed the up curve, and the defeats go before the low periods. Each of us have failures and victories. The failures could be worse, the victories better. Our job here is to review them, as coaches work with their runners, to make sure that we gleaned all we can from them.

Perhaps the most critical decisions are those that we make just before we have won or lost. They become embedded in us, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. These experiences have become our trainers of sort. We have learned some things, but we can learn much more.

• **Training - Have I understood my failures and victories?**

With all the right verbal instructions, we might do okay. Persistent training, however, is critical. Just by showing up doesn't make us the one who will be able to cross the line.

Inspiration is not everything! Our past training, failures included, become places for us to learn a lot about our lives.

- What races have I run?
- How did I do?
- Where did it become challenging?
- What races did I fail in? Why?
- What made a difference? How could you overcome?

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalms 139:23-24).

If we do not better understand our past, then we will continue to be ignorant of our weaknesses, and they will be the reasons in the future we will be disqualified.

What can I learn from my victories?

The Good

Some decisions, such as avoiding certain movies or web sites, have come from a big conflict with one's wife. You felt guilty but was defensive. Instead of humbly acknowledging your faithlessness in your marriage, half excuses were made. After the blow-up, you made a few decisions, though you reluctantly made them.

They were probably good and important decisions, but make sure you accept them as your own decisions rather than just ones imposed upon you. It is critical you spend time working through those decisions and make them your own. When you accept them as best, then Satan will not be able to steal them away from you so quickly, the next time you are upset with your wife.

God spoke to you through that time despite your sin. You learned. Hopefully, you have solidly been able to work through the biblical reasons you should and should not do them.

Laying out the biblical basis for our decisions is one key point of this book. The principles are put in front of

us, and we, in act of worship. acknowledge the Almighty One has spoken. In act of humility, we begin to understand that what He says is more important than how we feel. We inch forward by faith in what God our Designer has planned and said.

Making Good Decisions

This decision has become a guidepost for your life. It serves as a breakthrough in your husband-wife relationship. Because of it, you deepened your commitment to her and to God's standards by consciously distancing yourself from pornography.

Your decision might have been better. You might have totally stayed clear from pornography, but you have allowed yourself little glances here and there. Because of this, your wife senses that all is not well. She is insecure. You fake it pretty easily, though.

Compared to what you have done before, you think that you are doing well. It is easy to think that you are much better than the average husband. This pride will lead to your fall.

When one does not fully comply, then we are in sin. Doing better is inadequate. Just as Jesus said, delving into your thoughts about some woman, makes you an adulterer. Because of this thinking, any progress will quickly disappear. Let our decisions control all of our behavior rather than some of it.

Part of our analysis must examine how we are thinking. We have shown an example above, but there are many other cases, some more similar, some not.

What can I learn from my failures?

The Bad

The same situation could have been much worse. The husband could have, in a defensive spirit, never admit his fault but blame it all on her. In combination with his anger, he could have stepped much more deeply in a pit of despair and despondency, which would have led to even more secrecy and pornography. He might have accepted Satan's temptation, that he would never be able to love his wife, and allow this premise guide his level of commitment.

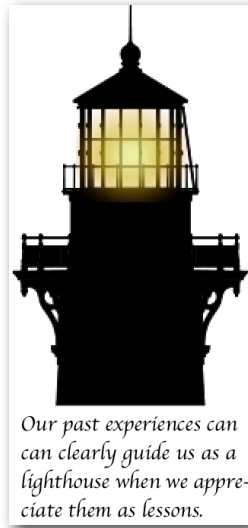
It could have been worse though. He could have slammed her head into the wall, cursed her and went down to a local club to get drunk and find a woman. No, he didn't do this. He did stay home. He put aside some of self-pity seeing that she had some needs too.

In every case, we need to observe how things went and evaluate why that good or bad thing was done. Let's go on and think a bit about what lessons, good and bad, we have learned from our past lives.

Charting Your Past

OBJECT

To better understand how past experiences and decisions have significantly influenced our thinking through evaluating how we have dealt with and understood sexual matters.



DIRECTIONS

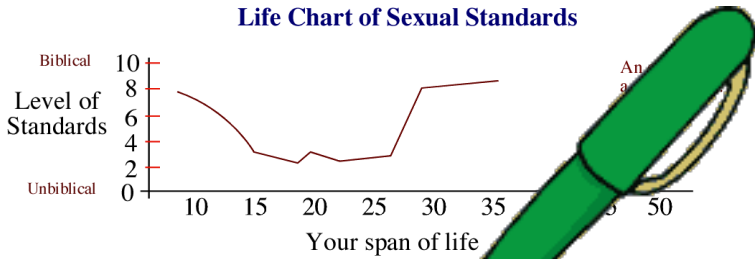
- Print these pages out. (Make copies of Part #2 and fill in). [Download the pdf](#), Lessons from the Past.⁴
- Fill in the following chart. Make your own chart. The more time you spend on it, the better.
- Use copies of the next page to describe 3 events as described below.
- Evaluate your past by using the summary on the last page.

Please note that copying the needed texts into an email to yourself is a good alternative to printing. You can also save the web page to your own computer or simply print it out.

⁴ [http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/dl/rr/Lessons From - Past.pdf](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/dl/rr/Lessons_From_Past.pdf)

Part #1

Draw a line showing your level of commitment to God's sexual standards throughout your life. (10 high, 0 low). There is a blank chart in the download.



After you have completed the line graph, think through at least three specific significant events or experiences that significantly influenced your sexual standards.

Put a small circle on the chart at each significant point of time and give it a 2-3 word title below and on the chart. Try to think of at least one good and one bad experience. You will describe these experiences in part 2 on the following page.

1)

2)

3)

4)

Part # 2 Three Significant Events

Describe your experiences from Part 1 on this page by Significant Event. The questions are the same for each event. You can print more sheets for additional events that need to be described. Be sure to fill out the summary (part 3) at the end. Do keep a copy for further reflection. The more unique situations, the better you can understand your situation.

Significant Event # _____

- In two or three words summarize what happened.
- When and where did it occur?
- Who were the people involved?
- Write out what happened in a summary paragraph form.
- What was good about what happened or its end result?
- How could it have been better?
- What was bad about what happened or its end results?
- How could it have been worse?

- Summarize what good or bad lesson stands out the most from this event.

Part #3 Evaluation and Summary

The profit from this exercise comes from applying the lessons to our lives. We need to remember that each event becomes testing ground for our deep down convictions. They reveal weaknesses just as a balloon does. A balloon pops at its weakest point when being blown up. These significant events in our lives speak volumes in the way we relate to others, make decisions and live according to God's standards.

Go over these 'Significant Sheets' sheets and especially review the bottom questions. These sheets are designed for personal reflection but if you have someone, especially your spouse, to review the chart, you will gain much more.

Reviewing success => Give thanks

We look at our successes to encourage us along the way and see God's greater design in our lives even through our failures. We need to thank God for keeping us from getting in even worse circumstances than we are now. List three good changes related to these matters that you have experienced and give thanks to God. By God's grace you will continue to make the right decisions. They are your training to do well.

1)

2)

3)

Prayer

Dear Father, You have spared me from what would have been terrible circumstances. I see how you have been able to work through my foolish decisions to bring some good into my life. Thank You so much for (see the list above). In the name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen..

Reviewing failures => Prayer requests

We look at our failures because they alert us to flaws in our character. This is what we need to work on! If we faithfully ask God to work on those areas, then God will make us strong in our weak areas. List three areas that by God's grace you will improve upon.

1)

2)

3)

Prayer

Lord, I have greatly failed in these three areas in my past. Will you please forgive me and cleanse me from my sin? Please start by tearing out any remaining sinful affections left in my heart. I want to love you with my whole heart, mind and body. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

Testing our convictions

The race tests the strength of our convictions. We will endure only what we in the end really identify with. The depth of our convictions can be examined by how they were formed, but a good conviction is only as good as we hold onto it. This is why it is good to examine the circumstances that shaped or birthed that conviction.

Sexual purity is a value that transcends all life situations. Attach your heart to the values and the convictions will go deeper. "In no matter what circumstances I face here on earth, I desire to please you, Lord, with each part of my life including my sexual being."

*A conviction is a belief that does not
change
with circumstances and trials of life.*

The danger of loneliness

Sometimes what we think as convictions are not true convictions at all. I think of the many people who try to escape life's loneliness. They are trying to avoid something they presently don't like. Maybe by associating with a certain group or individual, they do not have that loneliness.

To some degree that person might adopt the lifestyle of those around them - say they are church members. They might not have adopted their convictions but

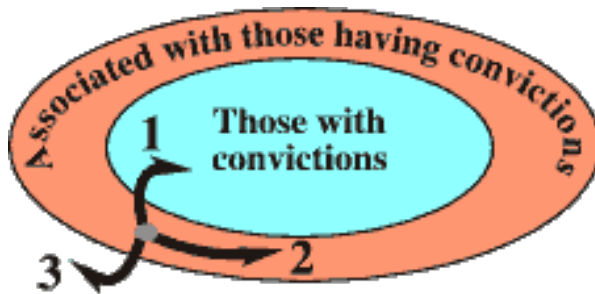
only their behavior in order to gain companionship and acceptance. This is not wrong but inadequate.

In this case, we will see one of three things happen:

(1) Real convictions are born and the behavior becomes natural and desired.

(2) No conviction is demanded from those around them. They enjoy the company so they stay there.

(3) Their problem (of loneliness) is satisfied, and so they go elsewhere.



Problems can lead us to those who do not have the problem. They provide support. But if we do not adopt their convictions, then the trouble will likely return. The problem might be formed in varying circumstances, but it is the same problem only with a new face.

This situation of loneliness plays a significant role in people's lives. God made mankind with a social aspect of his being.

Many sexual problems are activated when seeking to satisfy this longing. It might be a woman who needs to give herself to gain a man's attention. It might be a man who runs from woman to woman, finding an im-

mediate fulfilling of his loneliness, but leaves him scouting about for patching his heart.

How do you as a spouse handle coldness from him or her? It is not easy to rightly respond with the Lord's grace. Bitterness easily springs up spawning a perilous pair: loneliness and rejection.

Events - do I know the real reasons I am running?

Carefully examine what key events got you involved in this race for sexual purity. The world does not run it. Perhaps it is moral defeats, a challenge to be a godly leader or simply a scare when you were almost caught.

These events are what propelled you to run for moral purity, but they usually insufficient to bring you across the line. So think through a bit more clearly how to adopt those goals that will help you succeed at this good and wonderful goal of sexual purity.

- What are the key events that prompted you to run?
- Are trying to avoid anything by running?
- Any particular person? What about them attracted you?
- Any particular goal? What do you want from the race?

Strengthening our Convictions

This is a most important question. We need to look into our own lives and think a bit about our convictions. We should also be aware that some of our convictions might not be good. Others might be good but not firmly enough developed.

They can be shaken. I knew of one man who was running and had a stroke. His system could not bear the pressure on his system. I also know others who have taught many about having sexual pure convictions but later committed adultery. What devastation occurred.

We have mentioned that the truest and most genuine convictions come from those who know Jesus Christ. This is the true source of convictions for God brings His heart into ours. But anyone is blessed when they live sexually pure lives because this is God's design mankind.

Gaining power

Strong convictions come from knowing God. Those that have come to know God, have gained a new spiritual nature run by the Holy Spirit. He desires the things of God. He is able to understand the desires of his new nature by reading the Word of God. But our early Christian lives also have a great impact on how we understand and live out our Christian lives.

Power but no conviction

When a person ignores what they have read in the scriptures because of those around them, then this pattern causes great harm. Christians at times do not take God's Word seriously and will suffer every time because of it.

These believers will be confused why so many things are going wrong and easily gain wrong understandings of God and their new life in Christ. They will be tested and fall. Their convictions are not solidly built on God's Word.

Power but no faith

A further development of this person happens when 'small' sins are tolerated. For example, we hear it is normal for teens to be interested in sexual matters. So many parents will consider it normal for them to get into pornography.

If these young people have not learned how to battle these lusts, then they will train their minds into devastating lusts. This was my particular trouble that God saved me out of. They have the strength, but it avoids them like a bird. They cannot reach what they indeed possess in Christ.

They will have spurts to become pure (because of the desire of the Holy Spirit) but fail because they have no faith based on God's Word. Once they accept that is natural for men to lust, then they will regularly stumble. (Lusts are only natural for sinful men. Godly men desire godly things and caring for those around them.)

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

When facing such a problem, seek God to lead you to someone who can help. They can provide support, but if we do not fix our convictions on God's Word and make them our own, then we have no long term way of handling these problems.

Let's go on then and see what it is that brings a person to gain those convictions.

True success is based on ...

Our real success is going to come through.

1) Identifying whether we are genuine Christians.

If we are genuine believers, then we will love purity and hate sin.

2) Check your convictions based on God's Word.

When going through testing times, running the race of sexual purity, note what you are thinking. Ask yourselves these questions. Isolate the principles the best you can.

- ◆ If you were to face great health problems, relationship difficulties, the loss of loved ones, all your financial resources, etc., what are the principles that you would still live and even die for?

Write these out on paper or send an email to yourself right now with that standard. Refine them later as you have time. Note any doubts in your heart about any areas that you write or avoid writing about.

3) Compare your convictions on sexual purity with this statement.

Below is a statement. As you read it, say it from your heart.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

I desire by God's grace to be faithful to the call of sexual purity in my life, whether married or not. I will not look with lust upon another. If married, I purpose my heart to be totally content in the delight of my wife. I might be tempted by women, despair in the loss of my job, bewildered with the loss of all wealth and security, perplexed by the turn of affairs in my life, but I will remain faithful to God and, if married, to my wife.

If at any time I fall from this standard, I will quickly humble my heart, acknowledge my fall, confess my sins, plead for forgiveness, reaffirm my passion for God's standard, correct any bad habit, straighten any broken relationship and let those I am accountable to know about my circumstance and specific steps of renewal I am or have taken.

Ask yourselves these two questions as you reflect upon it. Read it again if necessary.

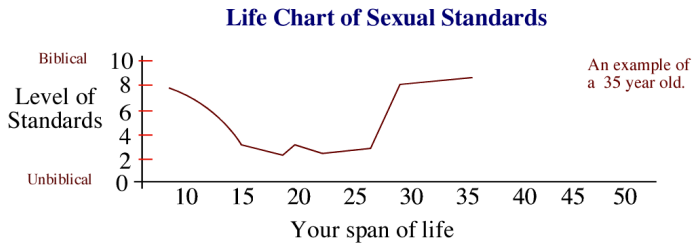
- Can you say this statement with your heart's full willingness?
- What areas are you hesitant about?

4) Evaluate the development of your convictions on sexual purity.

Review your commitment to the biblical standards for sexual purity throughout your life. Our questions are shaped around the ups and downs on the given graph. You should work with your own graph that you earlier have formed.

Ask questions like the following but make them relate to your own graph.

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns



- 1) What did your parents teach and live?
- 2) What influences caused you to fall in your pre-teen age?
- 3) What did you feel about yourself when you were at your lows?
- 4) What happened when you were 25 years old? Who influenced you? Why did that have such an impact on you?
- 5) How did the early (pre-10) and late (post 25) standard compare? Why?
- 6) Are your present convictions based on the God's view? How do you know?
- 7) In what areas would you say your standards are less than ten? What is keeping you back?

Identify our present convictions

There are two aspects we need to clarify.

What are your present convictions? Where do they stem from? If they are from the church teachings in general, that is good, but not good enough. Write down the actual scriptural passages that you know

shape your guidelines, both in behavior and attitude. Many have been mentioned through this book. Remember we do not only need general guidelines but attitudes such as Joseph who ran from his boss' wife.

Why are you short of ten? What is keeping you back?

This is critical. Any weak area is a broken wall where the enemy can come in and ruin at his will. There is some false thinking which keeps you from thinking and valuing what God said is true.

The enemy might not have taken advantage of your weakness, but this is part of his design. He waits for those times you are going to step ahead in your spiritual life to drag you and your family down.

Does the area of weakness reveal a lack of confidence in God's good standard? Or does it reveal that you really want or deserve certain pleasure from lusts?

Taking the last step toward fully adopting God's standards are not easy. This does not mean we will not grow in this area. God will reveal weaknesses even after we have worked through these things. The enemy only needs a small break in the wall to get in. He will greatly resist closing the last hole for then he becomes shut out in your normal life activities.

Here are some ways the enemy (Satan) tries to hold you back. He can control events around you to some degree, like having a scantily dressed girl walk by just

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

when you were looking up, but mostly he plants suggestions in your mind. This is what he did with Eve and Jesus.

- He will try to convince you that you deserve the pleasure. “You have been working so hard lately. You deserve”
- He will send a timely temptation by. “Don’t you like her thighs?”
- He will convince you that it doesn’t really matter. “Others in the church have the same problem. They get along. It doesn’t really matter. Why not...?”
- As the accuser, he will mock you by making you feel condemned from your past and get you to feel that there is no use fighting the desires. “You will never be able to please God. Remember that affair. What about last night when you were masturbating after that girl. You are guilty and ought to just give up the fight. You’ll never make it.”
- He will distract you with some success or problem. “Your wife certainly doesn’t deserve you. Wouldn’t that sister in the church be much better?”

Summary

The evil one uses every trick in the book to challenge your persistence for living a sexually pure life. If he can undermine your confidence, then you waver. This is the time he comes with all his temptations.

This is called spiritual warfare. You need the General Christ Jesus to protect and lead you. You need to pray this through making your conviction quite clear and upon what scriptures you live out your life. It is worth it! Here is a prayer you can pray by yourself:

Prayer

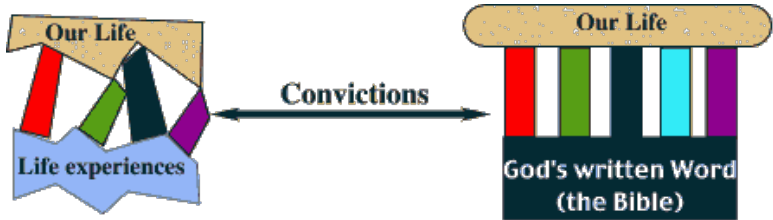
Dear Lord and Savior, I have no Rock but You. I have no confidence in myself. I cannot successfully live a sexually pure life without You. I have failed. But as You know, I have also hidden all my sins, including my sexual sins, under the Almighty blood of Jesus Christ which takes away all my sin. I desire in my heart not to be run by my lusts but by your love.

I need the Spirit of God to lead me on. I desperately need you to be my Savior day by day. There are _____ areas I have compromised on. They are _____ and _____. I have not told others. I have even hidden them from my own life. I now confess them. I have not kept your standard. But now by Your wonderful grace in Christ Jesus, I intend to live fully devoted to pleasing You by keeping a ten on my sexual standards.

I will be facing the enemy's army as I do this, but I know what pleases You. I want to please You. I am pleasing You. Tear down all the compromises in my life and build up the broken wall. I am pledging myself to be a faithful man of God. I desire for you to be my Strength, hope and all. By the blood of Christ protect me from the enemy's arrows. Speak daily to me through your Word. Uphold me by Your mighty Word. Let me be holy for You are holy. In the Name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen

In summary, we need to see that no matter who or what has influenced us in the past, that we have

transferred our true convictions to the Word of God. The Word of God is our standard. Jesus trusted fully in God's Word, and in His wisdom and His Word we commit ourselves.



There is a limit and quality to our life experiences. As we build our lives on God's Word, we can fully support the convictions that provide the best life possible. Here are three different examples on how all our experiences need to be firmed up on biblical truth to be strong biblical convictions.

#1 Tradition

Tradition dictates that what I thought from my early years was best, that is, it is good to try to be as faithful as I can be to my wife.

Hebrews 13:4

"Let marriage [be held] in honor among all, and let the [marriage] bed [be] undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

Conviction

Tradition is inadequate. It allows for compromise. God wants me to be completely faithful to my spouse. I refuse to entertain any affair whether it be in thought or deed.

#2 Experience

From experience I know indulging in pornography is wrong. I should not participate in it.

Job 31:1

“I Have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?”

Conviction

Like Job, I have reserved my eyes to delight only in my wife. This means that I do not delight in thinking about other women as well as taking full joy in my own wife, God’s gift to me.

#3 Spiritual

Spiritual senses teach me that deep in my spirit that I should love my wife.

Colossians 3:19

“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.”

Conviction

As a husband, it is my duty to love my wife, in all the ups and downs of life. I purpose to sacrificially love her, as Christ loved the church.

A Little Closer to God

Notice how we have seen that our convictions can be based on things that are not really God’s Word. We have highlighted three areas such as tradition, experience and spiritual influences. Looking back at one’s

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

history via the chart helps enable us to get a broader perspective of the influences in our lives.

Other influences might be an individual such as a friend, church's teaching, church culture, books, magazines or television preacher. We will probably be able to narrow our views down to a few sources.

Remember, although a conviction was developed through tradition such as our parents, it does not mean that these convictions are wrong or right. We need to examine each area under question and make sure that what we do is because it is scripturally grounded. Only in this way can we reach the standard God calls us to and finish the race.

Although going through our beliefs in this way might seem to be rather scary, we should actually expect to meet God in a fresh new way. We are taking a big step forward closer to Him as we put greater value on what He says.

When we do this, He steps closer to us. When we begin to do things not because we have 'always' done them, but because He has said to do them, then we are developing a much closer relationship with God. We are talking to Him. We are telling Him that what He says is important to our lives. Besides this fact, we have the great confidence in our soul that we are doing what God wants.

We are pleasing Him. We are living righteous lives. (A lot of people have a hang up on saying they are living righteously. What we and the scriptures mean is not

that we are totally pure. We mean instead that we are conscious of no sin in our lives. We are obedient to what God has revealed to us. This is in no way connected to self-righteous for we acknowledge we are sinful creatures living by the mercy of God and the blood of Jesus Christ who has forgiven us of our sin.) Take a month to review different areas in your life.

There are many specific teachings which we could examine in regards to our topic of sexual purity. We have tried to cover many of these areas as we think about 'crossing the line.'

Each of the four major categories generally focus us on the deepest issues for which we need to strengthen our convictions. If we have doubts, then we should evaluate the particular teachings much more specifically asking, "What do I believe?" and "What do I doubt about this?" "Why?".

#1 A Special Design: Sexuality

God designed human beings as sexual beings. He created both male and female as two distinct but complementary sexes. Foundational to a stable life is understanding, accepting and affirming our own gender.

- There are only two sexes.
- Our sexual natures are part of our persons.
- God has called us through our sexual natures
- One sex is not better than the other.

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

- The two sexes are complementary rather than competitive.
- Rejection of our sexual nature is rejection of God's design and best for our lives.

#2 A Blended Design: Marriage

God designed us for heterosexual marriage. Single-ness will be discussed elsewhere. God has defined marriage as a special covenant relationship between one male and one female. When we try to redefine marriage and its purpose, then our lives along with the whole society are broken down.

- Marriage involves only one male and one female.
- Marrying more than one wife goes counter to God's good design.
- Living with a partner without marriage vows defiles both partners and grieves God greatly.
- Homosexuality goes counter to God's design.
- Masturbation goes counter to God's design.

#3 An Exclusive Design: Whole-hearted

God has designed marriage for whole-hearted relationships. Marriage is like ownership. A spouse literally belongs to each other. Straying eyes and hearts strikes against the foundation of marriage and love.

- Marriage requires the strict faithfulness of both partners.

- Fidelity means no sexual contact with another person.
- Fidelity also means desiring no other partner than one's own spouse.
- Lusting after others is adultery.
- Lust has no place in or out of marriage.
- All forms of pornography greatly grieves God and brings great harm to the marriage and children.

#4 A Permanent Design: Enduring

Marriage is for life. The marriage vows hold “until death do we part.” God has not given us alternative choices for the crises of life. There are no escape hatches because the life-long commitment is the very thing needed to force us to work through our difficulties with each other.

- Marriage is for as long as both shall live.
- Divorce is not acceptable.
- There are two exceptions to not getting a divorce.
- Remarriage is adultery (In most cases Jesus did not state any exceptions. Only in Matthew did he mention one which seems to refer to impurity found during the engagement period - such as Mary).⁵

⁵ *Building a Great Marriage* discusses this more completely.

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

- God gives grace for couples to work out their problems.

Summary

in order to make sure that we run a good race, we need to make sure our convictions are well founded. Just think of the runner who started off so well only to find down the road when the hills started coming that he just gave up on running or perhaps even worse he got off the course and ran elsewhere.

Whenever we do not clearly evaluate and base our convictions squarely on the scriptures, the potential of not finishing the race increases. We do not understand how strong political, religious and worldly forces are fighting God's revealed design for our lives. They deny God's ways in order to carry out their own lusts.

When we identify our convictions and discover the biblical sources, then we are personalizing our faith. We are saying God is important because of what He says rather than what other people have said.

However, for this process to work, we must be willing to be thorough. We need to find the verses and make sure their interpretation rightly works within the teaching of all the scriptures. We cannot underestimate the power and influence of our convictions.

For the last part of getting ready, we have but one more item. We need to personalize our convictions into readily usable statements.

Rescheduling Life's Priorities

Decisions: Have I thought through on how holding to these values reshapes the way I carry out my life?

Have we made winning the race of sexual purity a priority of our lives? There are many other things to distract us from running. We could play computer games or excel in our business or just hang around. But we must have, a passion to win. Sometimes it is guilt; at other times shame. We cannot win that way.

We must model our lives after real runners. Those running marathons must change their lifestyles so that they can accomplish this great goal of finishing the race. We will talk about these decisions because they are life-impacting decisions.

We need to know how they impact our lives as well as understand that they are ongoing. What I decide must continue to be changed. It is simply not good enough to say to ourselves, "If I stop following sexual sins for just one month, I will be alright." Just as foolish is, "If I conquer sexual sins for 5 years it will be enough." We need to run a pure race right to the end of our days.

Changes in our thinking and habits must be adopted if we are going to do this. Here are some challenging questions to think about your own determination.

- Do I consider that sexual purity is one of the top priorities of my life?

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

- Am I willing to give up things other people consider as rights in life so I can win? (e.g. Watching television, or watching certain kinds of movies?)
- Am I willing to make sacrifices?
- Am I willing to persevere through testing times because of those priorities?
- What is most important in life? These will become the key testing points in the race ahead?

Is sexual purity a priority in my life?

This should be a secondary priority in our lives. Sexual purity comes from first loving God and trusting His good judgments. We have to trust Him His ways are best until we can later in life see it for ourselves.

Gaining and holding to a sexually pure life has everything to do with our two commitments to God and our spouse. Because I want to be friends with God, then I must observe His commandments of living a sexually pure life. Because I want to please my wife, I will by God's grace keep from sexually impure things.

Convictions brings priorities

If we see our lives developing other priorities that conflict with another, then we should know that our convictions are under attack.

Decisions: Life Changes Require Life Commitments

Have I made the commitments in the prior pages?

Whenever someone makes a commitment to run in a race, he has to sort through his other commitments. Until he thinks them through, he might not realize the cost of making such a commitment. For the runner, training occupies a lot of time, effort and cost. The race is but a day, but the training goes on and on.

Your race to gain sexual purity will force you to reschedule your life priorities. There are things which you have 'always' done which you will no longer have time for. Have you made serious effort to shape your life to win, or are you the flippant person who agreed with a friend in a whim that you would run? If you are to win, then you must reschedule your daily schedule.

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

This passage gives us a number of insights into the race.

- First, we are part of a great number of people, many of which have already gone on before us. Although

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

you might be the only one without girly pictures lining your desk drawers, a great throng of winners are lined by the road encouraging you to go on.

- Second, we are exhorted to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us. Some things must be laid aside. What have you put aside? Does anything else need to be put aside? This process of putting aside often means adjustments to our appointment calendar.

- Third, we are to follow Jesus. We are not in the race alone. He fought it. We are fighting it too. He won it; He can help us along if we stay focused on Him. This focus on Christ becomes an important part of our new schedule. We spend time with Him in His Word.

- Fourth, we are to remember that the winning of the race came at a cost. Although we will not need to suffer what Christ suffered, we will need to give up the pride of our life and lusts of our flesh. The greatest way to fight temptation is not from completely wiping out sensual scenes and sounds (virtually impossible) but by the surrender of our selves to God's perfect will. (Be bold to your allegiance to Christ and not to the lusts.)

“Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12).

So let's see how we can reschedule our priorities so that we can make a good run for it.

Rescheduling Life Priorities

PURPOSE: I have purposed in my heart to make the necessary changes in my lifestyle to insure moral purity in my life. Since what I see affects what I think, I will pay special attention to what I am exposed to in daily life. I will communicate this commitment to others so that they can understand me and my purpose, and as God wills, support me.

Places to go

I commit myself to go to places that God is pleased with. I will not go to questionable places, or ones which I will be embarrassed to tell my parents, spouse and friends in church. I will go to places where modestly dressed people are, where there are no filthy jokes, where there are not subtle sexual suggestions and places where the lyrics are non-suggestive.

Places to avoid

I will purposely avoid those places that cause my conscious to wonder whether I should be there. If you are reluctant to tell others where you have been, then it is good indication that you should not go there.

- I will stay away from:
 - * Bars
 - * Social Clubs
 - * X and R rated movies

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

- * Sunbathing places, pools and beaches
- * Lounges and dance halls
- * Television
- * Video rental places

Guarding what is watched, read or heard

Many sights and sounds incite sexual stimulation and lusts in my heart. Therefore, I will no longer watch, read or hear those things which stir up these covetous desires within me. If need be, I will not surf the web. I will steer clear from any ads enticing me to date someone my age. (I also write to web masters to provide a way not to be bombarded with such ads, pictures, etc.).

Furthermore, I will share and impose these restrictions on those around me where I live. For example, a father must rule over what his family can or cannot watch. By doing this he ensures that what they watch will not tempt him, and they will help keep him accountable. Otherwise, he is also responsible for what they watch.

I will as quick as possible throw or do away with (not sell or trade) those videos, DVDs, URLs, magazines, etc. which are now in my possession.

Note: We cannot totally remove ourselves from the world. How do we deal with the different difficult situations that occur when we take steps to prioritize God's sexual morals in our own lives. God will use this to impact the world around us.

Properly handling temptation

- What do you do when people make approaches/flirt with you at work?
- What do you do when the public places you visit have sexually alluring materials at hand such as movies, magazines, television?
- What do you do when at work you face sexually alluring materials?

I used to work at a place where they hung up sexually enticing center-folds on the walls of the clubhouse.

In this case one might be led to do several things after praying and fasting about this situation. Here are two possibilities. I would not recommend doing nothing. Your purity is at stake.

- You might be led to explain how the posters distract you and degrade the working environment. When a guy's mind is on these pictures, he cannot concentrate on much else! Recommend that these pictures are taken down. The same would be true for sexually implicit radio shows. If the boss doesn't care, you might be led to pray more or give notice to leave. But in any case, consider it a situation the Lord does not want you to live under.
- Another approach might be to witness to the people there why those posters are wrong. This is the approach I have personally taken. Sometimes they were not public but only at a person's work site. I would start by saying how those pic-

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

tures really hurt your marriage. This usually leads to a good conversation! Remember it is important to care for the people around you.

In the end, one has to guard over what he sees and hears. When this purity becomes a standard in your life, then you might have to leave a certain job. God will watch over you. Joseph in the Old Testament is a great example of this. To protect himself from another person's advance, he took off. He was falsely accused and thrown into prison. But later God enabled him to get out. We do not always know of the full ramifications of our decisions. This is one reason we first pray and fast.

We will note that Jesus at times did talk with people of questionable character, but it was always in the context of their changing. It seems obvious that God will sometimes use us to talk of God's freeing love and grace. It is best if we go with another brother. Pray together, share how things went and close with prayer.

Running After Jesus

The passage from Hebrews mentioned that we run after Jesus Christ. We can ask ourselves what does this mean?

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus,**

the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

There are different meanings to what it means to fix our eyes on Jesus. In reference to racing, it means to keep our eyes on the goal.

We will not fix our eyes on those things that incite us to impurity but to being like Jesus. We are to remember how He ran the race.

We study the master just as coaches have their runners watch training videos. They study the throw, the positions, the team work, the mistakes and even the clinching move that won the game.

We might think of Jesus here and how He won the race. We will win the race only to the degree we learn with Him. Fortunately, we have many good materials that help us understand how He did it, including this passage. We see three things that he did.

• For the joy set before Him He endured the cross

Jesus understood that there would be a cost to doing what God wants. But once it was set next to the joy that came with obedience, the choice was obvious.

Do you choose:

- Love or lust
- Fulfillment or emptiness
- Security or loneliness?

• **Despised the shame**

Jesus needed to recognize the shame or stigma for going counter to the world. Religious leaders chided Him. His family thought He was crazy.

But He deliberately rejected this shame. He saw it was the shame, that is, pressure to conform to its standards, coming from the world. Jesus' chief concern was not to conform to what people thought but to do what God wanted. He needed a larger perspective to do this, a perspective of what God wanted.

• **Sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**

Jesus finished the job and was gloriously rewarded. The 'joy set before Him' was realized when he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. We need to know that there is an end to suffering. Great reward follows short times of suffering.

In each of these cases, what is needed is the same thing. We need to deepen our commitment to God's glorious Word which brings a respect and broadening of God's perspective. Jesus memorized God's Word, and it greatly helped in guiding Him in the difficult decisions He took.

Our focus here is not on how to study God's Word but how to make it a life priority, our spiritual discipline. Reading, studying, memorizing and meditating of God's Word all are important aspects to this study. Reduce time being entertained and find lots of time

can usually be found to take God's Word into our hearts.

If we committed to one hour of Bible in our lives each day, this would greatly strengthen us. We could divide it up to 15 minutes reading of Psalms and Proverbs in the morning, 15 minutes of memorizing and reviewing the verse(s) that meant so much to you. 15 minutes of reading and meditating on some other passage. 15 minutes doing a bit in depth study on some particular thought (cross referencing, etc.). Part of this could be done in the evening when you otherwise would be watching some unhelpful show.

There are no rules here except the more you seek, the more you will find. Effort is always rewarded. Set a schedule and keep to it. Review it once a month but don't change it because of your feelings. If you take away some bad habits, make sure you replace them with good habits. For example, you could make one evening a time to visit another family/person each week.

What is more important in life?

These will become the key testing points in the race.

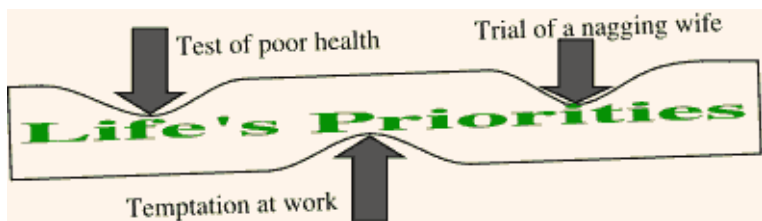
How we end the race depends on our commitment to win the race. But this general ambition is worked out in many small steps of having the right priorities and keeping to them. The race is not seen so much in

Exercise: Learn From Past Patterns

crossing the line but in the daily disciplines that we have set up.

The tension that develops in life is often dependent upon one's commitment to his priorities. If we are only somewhat committed to those priorities, then at some point, our commitment will wane, and we will end up falling from those priorities.

When we break our sense of priorities, our lives will



be shaken by a new set of priorities. This is where failure comes in – when we neglect what we ought. This is the importance of convictions and a regular renewal of these convictions from God's Word.

Our priorities will be tested. Our goal is to make our commitment so true that our lives can fight off the many attempts to destroy our good priorities.

Final Summary

The first sections focused on getting ready for the race, but now the preparations are past; we are running. This is where our feet touch the road. All that we learned will be tested while we overcome the obstacles blocking us from pursuing sexual purity. Here is a short summary.

1) Getting Started



Things you need to know to get you running right, the beginning of the race.

Getting off to a great start! The first steps can seem so overwhelming.

2) Keep Running

Things you need to know to keep you running, the middle of the race.



The power to run

- Do I have what it takes to win this race?
- How do I keep going? I feel like I am falling back to where I was before!
- What is it that enables a person to overcome sexual sins?
- What if I am not sure about running?

3) Finishing well

Things you need to know to run to the end, the finishing of the race.



Picking up the mess

- We have made many mistakes.
- Now where do we start picking up the pieces?
- Is there any hope for these broken relationships?

Uncovering patterns

- Why have others given up?
- How can I endure to the end?
- How have my past failures and victories influenced the way I will run this race?

Working through doubts

- Doubts reveal our weaknesses.
- Doubt and sin are the two legs to our problems.

- What decisions have I made that will ensure victory?
- Do I know the true reason I am running?

If you are serious, you have a great chance of winning the fight with sexual sins. Those who have given up will not win. You must stand up and keep running. Many counselors will depress you by talking about moderating your desires.

They mean that you do not have a chance to overcome but only want to reduce excessive problems that upset the family. We are glad for some of their advice but not this. This poisons the very canal we need to drink from. We win because of our faith. I John 5:4 says,

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.”

God demands purity. When we seriously pursue this, then our relationships change, our perspective of self changes, and we gain a testimony of God’s good and powerful grace in our lives. What we could not do, God did!

Encouraging words

If we merely seek to overcome our lusts to avoid some bad consequence, we are no doubt fooling ourselves. Lusts quickly ensnare their victims in patterns that are hard to break free from. We need to look beyond our immediate need and see this as an opportunity to get a better picture of our whole life.

Go run the race and win the crown

Like the Apostle Paul, we are living to win the race.



Although many of us have not thought about God's purpose for our lives in any given area, it is important that we seek to understand His purposes, appreciate His design, and adopt His design and purposes for our lives. We have not given any simple answers because the problem is not simple.

This doesn't mean the escape is so hard. Many do not take the time to thoroughly deal with the problems and therefore do not see the results they are looking for.

A bigger problem lies in holding onto your goals longterm. We have answered many questions that for some become obstacles. Persist even when the going gets tough. This race, however, is yours to run. You need to get your gear on and make this lifelong course yours.

You might feel like you are the only one running this race for sexual purity. You are not. I am running it too. Many others are too, but you and I have a hard time finding them. God will, however, be our close companion. We might have those who ridicule us. This

even might be our spouse, but God is there cheering us onward.

You can by God's grace not only run this race but cross that finish line and find God's great reward, despite the scoffing of the world.

My testimony

My family was anything but ideal when growing up! Divorces were common. Change of fathers seemed normal. A psychologist, when he spoke to me after having grown up, predicted a cloud over my life suggesting that I would end up in a similar situation.

He was right saying so, that is, if there was no God. The statistics for children brought up in homes like mine are scary. What made a difference was the new picture God gave of me, my wife and family.

The biggest breakthrough happened when God brought me on a deep journey with Him through a personal Bible study of Song of Solomon. I had no idea of the many problems my soul wrestled with. He slowly but surely untwisted my distorted perspectives. (I have devoted a chapter of *Building a Great Marriage* on what these truths were.)

Today with more than thirty years of marriage and eight children later, I am so excited about marriage and the family that I am teaching and writing about it. My wife and I are learning more things every year. The more committed my wife and I are to knowing and practicing the design for marriage in the Bible, the sweeter our relationship grows.

The greatest help for me was simply to wholeheartedly focus on loving my wife. I am too excited about this opportunity to reveal God's love right in my marriage and family.

Our hope for you?

Embrace God's design. It is best. It is wonderful. Keep struggling to reach purity. We are not just saying 'no' to lust but 'yes' to God's love and design. If one goes halfway with the plan, he ends up still barren. This is the reason many unsuccessfully fight lusts.

The struggle gets easier after one has passed certain key points. Lifelong diligence, however, is needed. It is a dream worth maintaining and a life worth living. Staying faithful to our spouses brings glory to God for it portrays God's faithful love to the church and the world.

It is time for believers to reclaim holy living by discarding the evil one's attempt to destroying our relationships and embracing God's glorious plan!

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

Appendix 1: Recovering Lost Affections

How do you recover your lost affections for your loved one?

There are many things that can hurt a husband and wife relationship. Sometimes it is a loss of affection. This loss of affection can affect the demonstration of love along with its intimacy and cause great frustration in the marriage. Even good marriages face a lack of confession. If not rightly dealt with, the marriage will suffer a rough and stormy time.

Both husband and wives can do his or her part to improve things. First, let us remember that our heart affections are closely meshed with our feelings. Other physical and circumstantial situations affect these feelings. We should not gauge the validity of our relationship on our feelings.

Marriage is different from other relationships because it is built on covenant rather than preference. What is commonly heard today is, "I don't love him or her; I guess I need to get a divorce." Not at all. Love is a commitment to do that person good. When we persist in that commitment to care for the other, then affections come back.

Fantasy Partners and Adultery

Adultery, whether in the heart or otherwise, always steals affection from the marriage. A couple needs to

have an honest and kind discussion about whether one's heart has not been wholeheartedly set upon his or her spouse. This will hurt but the confession is necessary to move back to where God wants us.

Adultery is a real problem for both husbands and wives. The more the wife works outside the home, the more this becomes a possibility. But neighbors too can be a potential problem. Men have problems where they regularly meet women in private situations. Hosea saw the damage of his wife's disloyalty.

Adultery starts in the heart. If dreams or fantasy situations become part of one's mind, they need to be stopped. 'Heart disease' leads to 'heart attack.' Adultery leads to divorce. Deal with the source problem.

Some people regularly practice 'spouse substitution' where they dream or imagine being with other partners. Others just swap wives. This is horrible because we are going against God's command to steer clear of adultery and our affections for our spouse become less and less.

This is not harmless but cancerous. If this does continue, the relationship will peter out both on the physical level as well as intimate sharing on the emotional level. People just wake up and wonder why they are married because their mutual devotion is gone.

We need an honest dialogue with a hope of restoring one's marriage to God's standards. God will help. Confession and repentance form part of the path to this renewal.

Marriage is not based on feelings but on covenant.

Scared of Sharing Feelings

What holds many couples from being honest is the fear that if anything is said about their disaffections for their partner that the marriage will fall apart. They are fearful of what their own feelings mean as well as the response of their partner. But darkness can inhabit in the darkness.

We need to bring the truth to light (Ephesians 5:7-11). “And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Ephesians 5:11).

Foundation of Marriage is NOT Feelings

We need to remember that the marriages are not based on feelings. This is critical in any discussions about feelings or the lack of feelings for each other. Because the couple is married, divorce is not an option. They are not talking about that. They focus on what needs to change in them to have a good marriage.

The wedding might be dependent upon feelings but not the marriage. The marriage must go on. But if the feelings are not honestly dealt with, then intimacy will suffer. Frustration grows. Difficulties and misunder-

standings increase. At this point people feel there is no hope for the marriage itself. Marriages can always be renewed if there is hope and willingness to put away adulterous affairs.

Issue of True Love

Others will feel untrue or hypocritical if they make love but do not feel love. We must remember, however, that love is not primarily a feeling. Love is a commitment of care. Love often needs to operate without warm feelings. The mother loves the child and changes the baby even in the middle of the night when she lacks good feelings or feelings at all.

Marriage is based on this loving commitment made on our wedding day. "Whether for good or bad, sickness or health, ... unto death due us part." True love is characterized by faithfulness more than feeling. The feelings make things so much more enriching, eventful and delightful, but they are not always there. If we can just start doing good things for our spouses, we begin to set ourselves back on track. Avoidance, rejection and irreverence are unacceptable.

Your spouse dropped something. You promptly picked it up for him/her. Your wife is cleaning up but looks tired. You offer to take over. These practical things make a huge difference. They do not call for feelings but decisions based on kindness.

Husband's Special Guidelines

A husband will likely find times when his wife is unresponsive and cold. Men need to understand that women's systems run differently than their own. More than likely, this will be but a temporary transition time. How temporary? Who knows? But men need to fight their fears, feelings, and frustrations.

Fears about the relationship should cause enough alarm that the husband will observe if her former affections are cast upon another person. Once this is eliminated, then one needs to simply remind her at appropriate times that their marriage is covenant based not feeling based. He will keep loving her but awaits her affections to return.

His own feelings can be hurt. He might hear words that sting. How would you deal with words like, "I don't love you anymore." What she means, more than likely, is "I don't have warm feelings for you anymore." It is okay to grieve, but we need to carefully monitor and control our thoughts. We might hear the voice, "Well, look what you get for being nice!" This is of the devil not the Spirit.

The devil will want you to give up on the marriage. Instead you biblically think, this is my high calling to love her even when it is difficult. This is when she needs most my faithfulness. No doubt other evil thoughts might also come to our minds. We must discern them and come back each time with confirmation of our total love and allegiance no matter what. In

fact, we should share of our persistent love, care and affection for our wives and delight in our love for our wives.

Frustrations

Frustrations are of two kinds. There is first of all the emotional frustration of “Why is she like this again!” It is possible this is something she regularly goes through during different cycles of life. Maybe a certain problem troubling her own family during a certain time of year, fluctuation of hormones or plain old exhaustion.

Love is patient. Love is enduring. We might be frustrated, but we can remind ourselves that this is our great opportunity to show her our true love that might not otherwise be easily seen. Yes, it is a testing of our faithfulness to the Lord.

It can also be a time of physical or sexual frustration. Men might express their desires, show special acts of kindness, but all seem to be wasted. This will be a time of testing our fidelity. Will we run off with fantasies, begin to think about how other women are better, desire another woman, get involved into pornography, etc.? We will be tempted, but be honest to God and seek Him for grace and to again awaken your wife’s feelings.

This is your true opportunity to carry out what the scriptures say, “Love your wife.” At this point, your warm feelings might have disappeared too! But that does not matter. It is temporary. What is more impor-

tant is that you love your wife like the Lord has loved you. Wait for her. Tenderly treat her as if she is not depriving you. Remember that the marriage is based on commitment before God. Don't veer from this.

A Reminder

It helps me to remember that we as a church are sometimes rather unaffectionate for the Lord or even inattentive. The church's response to the Lord is similar to a wife's love toward her husband. The same is true for the husband. He is like Christ in having the challenge to love the stubborn church.

As a husband, this is our opportunity to love the husband. Love as Christ loved the church. The church ought to be caught up in affection for her Lord but she oftentimes is worldly. There is no affection. The Lord never stops His love for His people. His love endures. There sadly are consequences to wrongly responding. The evil one is so clever to use this to expose us to further distorted thoughts where we even believe the Lord does not love us.

The bottom line, however, is that the husband's love must be passionately fervent. He needs to love as His Savior loves. He must realize that as Ephesians 5 teaches, it is within this context that certain wrinkles from the life of his wife can be removed. This process is not always easy.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

Appendix 2: Handling Pornographic Attacks



God has given us great victory over the battles of the flesh and the temptations of the world. This particular section is designed to help the Christian to be aware of and know how to properly deal with the subtle and powerful pornographic attacks that at times comes upon God's people.

As a man, I write to men. I have not sensed the battle to be the same among women. They are made differently and have other weaker points. Nor is this message addressed to those who are regularly dealing with pornographic thoughts. Parts of it can be helpful to them, but it is not designed for them.

"And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,

and in the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

This message is for those who have, for the most part, come clean from pornography and other sexual sins. Perhaps they were ensnared at one point in their lives; perhaps they were not, but now they share in common strong irregular porno attacks.

God has done great things in freeing me from pornography from my young days. I have battled with this devious enemy and by God’s grace and truth overcome. I believe if I had a mentor, the battle would have been overcome much sooner. In a real sense, we face this battle everyday. I do not deny the existence of the tension nor how quick it is to again be caught in its ugly claws. Every day is a battle. Every day a multitude of decisions have to be made so that I am not entwined in Satan’s devious plot.

A new soldier wears easily on the battlefield. The mature soldier has learned the tough battles of endurance. What might daze the untrained will usually have little or no effect on the seasoned soldier. The countless decisions that have to be made to remain pure are mostly undetected. The battles indeed are present but are won subconsciously. No real extra effort is needed. Faith to slay the mighty giant is present. Something happened last week, however, that surprised me.

The Big Surprise

Out of nowhere, came a slew of vile sensual thoughts enticing me to indulge. I was surprised at this because it has been quite a while since such attacks have come to me. But no doubt, these volleys are not reserved for me alone, and so I venture out to share God's grace in these situations.

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. (Galatians 6:9)

Before I continue, however, I want to make it plan that I have reserved no special opportunity for the evil one to attack. In other words, I have not looked at any pornography. I have not watched any television, video or DVD movie for a good while. I have been, by God's good and wonderful grace, been protected by a wall of good choices. The images that were projected on my mind did not come from scenes that related to recent sins. The wall of grace was still secure. And praise God it stayed secure through this whole intense battle.⁶

These images were horribly pornographic. The devil took normally dressed women and in a sudden flash perverted the thoughts right there in my mind. I will not be more explicit for all our sakes. Even words or thoughts expressed in a normal conversation were hijacked and abused to present horrible scenes in my

⁶ After further reflection, I think this attack might have something to do with the series of articles I recently wrote on "Understanding the Dark World."

mind. At times I was working as usual. At other times I was talking with my family about common good things. These images kept leaping into my mind many times through the day. The attack was heavy. I was very conscious of it.

I would like to share with you how God took me through this battle. Satan is real. He does tempt. I want you, my brother, to join with me in the fight to stay pure. We need to share our experience so to rally our faith and not be caught off guard. Why fight alone when other soldiers can fight with us?!

Shocked and surprised

I was surprised by the attack because it has been such a long time since I have had to battle such vile thoughts. I was shocked by the abhorrent images. It has been a long time since such filth has visited my mind. I realize now that God has been protecting me far more than I ever before realized.

It was just a few months ago that I shared with a group of a past experience. Satan on numerous occasions tried to induce me to adulterous thoughts by having images and feelings of nude women in bed beside me. I rushed up out of bed on each occasion once I observed their presence. My wife can testify to this. Satan can project feelings, words and images to the screens of our minds. I think rather graphically and so perhaps he uses different means to snag different individuals. In any case, let me start by sharing

how God led me to overcome this onslaught of attacks.

1) Examine oneself

I of course immediately examined myself. I went through my life and tested the gates of my life to see if they were secure. Had I inadvertently left a crack in the door open to the evil one? I discovered that none of my habits had changed. I was not able to detect one change that made a difference. I had by God's good grace typically been making all the needed decisions to have a pure and godly life.

I also examined my motivations. This was much more difficult. For example, did I linger one second longer than necessary looking at some web page because of some exposure of the flesh? I sensed I was okay but that I needed to be careful. My decision-making process had slowed down a micro-second (every moment is precious in this fight). In response I turned up the speed by which I made my decisions. This caused me to be unable to linger (if lingering was what I was doing).

On most days I will look at a news page on the web. It has an entertainment section. I go very quickly over that section so that I do not see any pictures that would even cause me to want to linger. In the end I was somewhat satisfied with the examination but in the good spirit of Psalm 139:23-24 prayed for my heart. It is very deceitful.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.

2) *The Battle*

As mentioned above, I needed to do battle against these thoughts. They were no longer unconscious. They were demanding my time and prayers. During my quiet times, for example, I would often find a promise or Word and apply it to my situation.

What would I do when the filthy images exposed themselves in my mind?

I instantly rejected them for their vile content. But since the image was prolonged by its repetition, I needed to keep rejecting it in a number of cases. I believe the devil and his accomplices brought these images to my mind.

In the end, my will was being tested. Did I really want to get rid of these images or did I not have some secret desire to indulge in them? Satan tested me; God proved my faith. In essence, I did not have to change my battle plan from before but only hold onto it. This was not the time to try something new. I only needed resolve. I needed commitment to being a pure man for my Lord and my wife. I deliberately chose this path rather than indulging in those wicked images.

Even as I write this, one specific image (horribly pornographic) keeps jumping back into my mind. Since it intrudes in my normal thinking process, I have

to deliberately choose not to focus on it. It is kind of difficult because it becomes for a short moment my mind's full viewing screen.

These thoughts are not my own. If I indulged in them, like a candy man offering me a free piece of candy, and took a 'good look,' then they would be mine. In that case I would choose to serve my own flesh rather than God's will. Instead I chose to focus on continuing what I was originally doing.

3) Diligently Pray

If I couldn't push the thought out of my mind by simply concentrating on my work, I would pray. The evil thought at times would be relentless in coming back to my mind just as a hound dog would bark up a storm having found his prey. I forget what I might have prayed, but let me give you an example of what I might pray.

Level 1 Prayer

"Dear Father, I come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have delivered me from all evil. Deliver me now. I reject these thoughts as vile and evil. I want no part in them. You have overcome the evil one. Now overcome him and demolish these thoughts. Set my mind free to serve you in my work, attitudes and thoughts. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen."

Level 2 Prayer

If I felt really oppressed, I would pray more intensely.

“Dear Father, your child is being attacked. He needs your help. Come and deliver me from this vile net being thrown over my heart. Come and help me. I want your ways and your ways alone. If I have in any way defiled myself, come please free me. Purge my sin. I want to be wholly dedicated to your purposes. I want to wholly love you and my wife, in Christ’s Name I pray, Amen.”

Level 3 Prayer

This third kind of prayer I only prayed once. It came about when I saw that this onslaught of vile images seemed to have no end.

“Dear Lord, I need your help. You are my Deliver. I now come in the great Name of Jesus Christ and reject the evil spirits that have been appointed to disturb me. I command the spirit of pornography to leave and disturb me no more. I command every wicked spirit to leave my presence and leave my mind alone. In Christ’s Name I pray, Amen.”

The former prayers (these are not exact) were brought before the Lord’s throne as regularly as I needed. I realized that there was a fight going on for my soul. I knew the Lord could deliver me as He has before. He did. I saw a significant change after the third kind of prayer and after asking my wife to pray for me about this matter.

4) Asking my wife for prayer

I was once talking to someone who counseled men who were involved in pornography. He told me that he tells the men not to tell their wives about what was happening. I know there is some risk in doing so. But

the risk not telling our spouse is much greater! In fact, I would consider ourselves as fools if we men do not realize that one method that Satan uses to bind us into a trap is false secrecy and smug success is to not to ask our wives to pray for us.

I did tell my wife and am glad I did. For one, I knew if anyone would pray for me on this matter, she would. She has a personal interest in my faithfulness. Could there be a better partner in this matter? I think not. Instantly I realized a lessening of intensity in the attack. In this case the third level prayer happened just prior to this.

I did delay 3-4 days into the attack before mentioning this attack to my wife. I will do it earlier next time. I suppose when I finally saw that this was an all out assault on my life, I better get help. If this did not help in a significant manner, I would have written and asked people on our prayer list to pray. If I ask someone to pray for my cold, I better not be slow in asking prayer for a potential 'marriage-threatening' situation.

Satan uses insincerity to trap us into his snare. Honesty breaks all those cords. What a relief to share with my wife about my special need.

5) Desire for Purity

I would like to close by mentioning my desire for purity. This heart's desire laid a strong base for this attack against these vile images. I want to be wholly in love with God. I want no part of me that is not consumed in a full desire for accomplishing his will.

I have come to see in the past decades that God's plan is incontestably good and beautiful. There is not greater peace and joy than to be fully content with my wife in His presence. This is a true blessing from Him. Everything else is ugly, horrible and crude. Why leave the sphere of love for empty selfishness? It just doesn't make any sense at all.

I have chosen only to love my wife, even when she might not appear to be very lovable. This is what I have committed to do before God. This is simply what I will do. Nothing shall keep me from this plan for my life (by God's enabling grace). It is so nice to be able to tell my wife that there is no other thought, image, person, or feeling for another woman. She fully satisfies me

Beyond this, I have found that the intensity of my love for my God and my wife are related. If I am not lust-shielded, then I have no purity before God either. There is no spirituality without true sexual commitment. As my love grows for God, so my love grows for my wife and vice-a-versa. I want this arrangement to continue to grow and be built up. Do I have anything else so precious or wonderful? Absolutely not.

Summary

The enemy can attack by putting lurid images in my mind, but that does not mean that I need to make them mind. Just as my eyes steer themselves around 'woman' billboards, so my mind steered away from

thinking about such images. I by God's almighty grace put my mind back on His work.

There are enemies to God's people who set their hearts and prayers on having pastors fall. We must not be easy prey. If we stand firm, the enemy will flee. Darkness cannot fellowship with light. Once we pledge ourselves anew to the principles of truth, the enemy runs.

I rejoice that the victory is the Lord's and that I constantly live in the mercies of His grace. If it wasn't for this, I would be swamped by the attacks of the evil one, fall and become another statistic. We give praise to such a faithful God who delivers those who trust in His saving grace. Glory be to God!

And do not lead us into temptation.

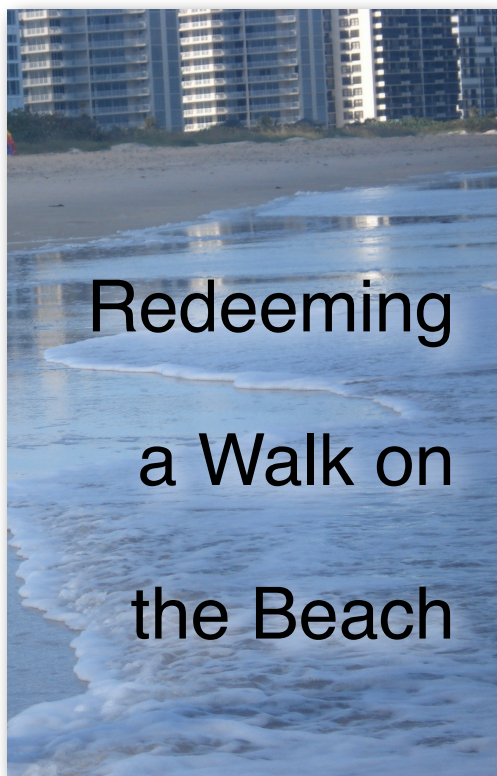
But deliver us from evil (from the evil one),

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

(Matthew 6:13)

Appendix 3: Redeeming a Walk on the Beach

Learning how to enjoy God's beauty
without falling into lust



Strolling on the Beach

Taking a walk on a beach should seem to be an easy and enjoyable adventure. This is not so when the weather is warm and women are scantily clothed. As sure as the waves crash into the shore, a man can be sure that he will meet up with temptation. My pursuit in this article is to enable men to transform such walks into glorious and God-honoring times.

Anyone concerned with purity knows what I mean. Whether one dons a clerical collar, is a regular beach comber or is closing in on seniority, temptation still presents itself. The evil one is doing his best to utilize these pleasant walks to bring men down into servitude to their fleshly desires. He is trying to destroy what otherwise would be a wonderful refreshing walk. I just love ocean walks that invigorate me and provide special times with God as I meditate on the great wonders of the ocean, shells and crashing waves.

Men know that they do not need to see women in bathing suits to be enticed to think wrongly about them. Although this article focuses on an ocean walk, if you as a man are having problems controlling your eyes when walking down the street or in a classroom, then this article will bring help.

Before this article can be greatly used, a man must first have learned to overcome regular temptation. This article will be dealing with handling extraordinary temptations. General principles to overcoming lusts

can be found elsewhere.⁷ We will assume you have learned these. The basic training of our thoughts and hearts are necessary before we can apply these in more engaging situations.

Before there is any consistent success, we like Job need to make a covenant with our eyes that we might not gaze at a woman. As a married man, I must keep my eyes and mind for the wife whom the Lord gave me. Our down deep wish must be to be pure for the Lord and our wife.

Protecting our Walk: General Observations

Our goal is to protect our walks and make them honoring and delightful times with the Lord. Before ensuing discussion on how to train oneself in overcoming temptation to obtain our goal, in what would be an otherwise treacherous walk, let us note some general observations.

- **Not all beaches are the same**

Some beaches are more than a man can handle. Even if one was able to overcome all temptation, there are so many stumbling blocks that there is no joy in the walk. All one's time is spent overcoming the calls to indulge in lust. There is little time left to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. I follow the common advice: Don't go to a crowded beach if possible. Stay

⁷ See *Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts*.

away from popular pools. Do not take cruises in warmer areas. Prepare to instantaneously leave (with your guests pre-warned).

Although one can train himself to overcome lust binges, we are not to expect to walk on hot coals without being singed. These are just common sense rules we set for ourselves and those under our charge (like our children). We might at times be thrust into such situations. We can call upon God for help in such situations (2 Corinthians 5:17). But we should gather the warning from Joseph's response to temptation when it got too hot. He fled.

- **Enjoying God's beauty**

Some men will respond back saying, "I am enjoying God's creation." By this, of course, they are referring to the sights of nicely shaped women. There is no doubt that we all enjoy a general pleasing sensation from beautiful form. We do not mean to say that these women were not specially gifted with beauty at their young age in their lives. God unabashedly made them sexy but not for all men to equally see, touch or be captivated by.

"Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth."
(Proverbs

A woman is made for her man. A man's eyes should only delight in the wife of his youth. A

man must reserve his thoughts for his wife or if single, his wife to be (The single then must refuse to indulge in sexual desires). Observation of an attractive woman is not sin nor the general pleasing sensation, but our thoughts can take that moment and pollute it.

- **Beware of Adultery**

Jesus said it this way, “But I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). There is a point when a man goes from looking at a woman’s form with general pleasure to where he wants to look more and to please himself with her.

Usually at this point he begins to think specific thoughts about specific parts of her body and perhaps specific follow-up action that he would like to see occur. That is the point of lust. This is the point where our covenant with our wife is broken. This is where we have committed adultery.

“Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant ” (Malachi 2:14).

Jesus clearly states this point of lust ushers a man into adultery. What was to be a casual walk on the beach all of a sudden has become the treacherous act of adultery. (We at this point will

not think what is going on inside the woman's mind who wears such few clothing for all to see. She unknowingly becomes a partner in more adulterous cases than she ever even thought).

What could be so glorious (our walk) can quickly become a devastating offense against God, the woman, our wives and ourselves. Unless we can appreciate the Lord's point of view, however, a man will swiftly become a victim of his lusts and the devil.

- **Commitment to One's Woman**

The most important training consists of clarifying one's love for his wife. He must be devoted to his wife. If a man is not yet married, he must be in the same way committed to the wife of his future. "I will wholly reserve my thoughts for the wife of my future." A man must be pure. He must be committed to reserving his sexual thoughts and fantasies only toward his wife. Any exceptions become the doorway where fornication and adultery enter.

We are not prepared here to go into how this commitment is gained. This is the basic resolve a man has gain in life. It has much to do with a new heart that God gives us when we are saved. We want to please Him. We want to rightly treat others (think righteous). It is true that some women will not mind being viewed as pornographic 3D objects.

Most would be outright scared if they could see how devilish a man's mind wonders. In the end, however, the way we think of or treat a woman does not depend upon what she thinks (which she could never really know) but on whether our thoughts please God and the marriage covenant which we are engaged in (or will be). God made men to righteously treat women. Lust is an open admission that a man has mistreated a woman in his mind. He has become self-serving rather than living out Christ's *agape* love.

- **Trust in God's ways**

Besides this commitment to purity, we must delight in what is good. There must be an inherent trust in God's ways. If we doubt either the inherent blessing of purity or the ability through His grace to be pure, then we have readied ourselves to fall into temptation. It is this confidence in God's better ways that will enable us to pick up from our failures and to obtain those good and pleasant walks.

Protecting Our Walk: Specific Advice

At this point we want to provide more specific ways to have God-honoring walks whether it be at the beach, in a park or near a pool.

- **Keep God's goal for you in mind**

Remember our goal is to enjoy a God-pleasing walk at the beach not merely steer away from temptation. It

is so easy for us to accept a lesser goal of avoiding temptation. Although we do want to overcome temptation, if we focus on it, then other troubles can crop up. For example, if we focus on how we overcame temptation, then it is easy to become prideful and set ourselves up for another kind of temptation. Although Galatians 6:1 refers to helping others, there is that same sin of pride that can occur in a person who has overcome sin. In our context that person is ourself. The admonition is for us. "Each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted."

Our goal to enjoy God and the world He has placed us in must be kept in focus. The goal to positively delight in who God is and what He has made become our final thoughts and delight.

1. Red zone

Keep a general look out for areas one might be tempted. This usually means noticing where women are immodestly dressed. This could be different for men acquainted with different situations. But if you see those women dressed in bikinis, whether they are digging in the sand, surfing or just walking on ahead of you, take note of the testing. Notice them from afar so that one is not suddenly trying to figure out a game plan how to handle this temptation on the fly. But frankly, we need to be ready for this too.

2. Plan of action

Sometimes our plan to avoid falling into temptation will be as simple as to walk on the part of the shore that would avoid viewing that woman. For instance, if

she is sunning in the soft sand, then I will walk in the water. If she is playing catch in the water then I will walk on the soft sand. This might not work if one faces temptation on both fronts.

If I cannot easily change my course, I change my viewing area. This happens as often as changing my path. I can walk by these beauties but because my view is out to sea watching a ship or surfer, then I can safely pass the temptation. I find it helpful to get through severe red zones by looking intently for shells (even if I don't really want to). I look down. I like greeting others but tenaciously avoid greetings with these women or even the men with them.

Why? Because it gives me an up close look. That would bring the temptation a step closer and make the battle so intense that I no longer enjoy my walk.

3. Be accountable

Do not wear sun glasses which enable you to look without being publicly accountable. Sun glasses allow you to look at women you would otherwise Arrange ahead of time with your buddy or wife that they should ask you invasive questions. "Were you able to maintain God-honoring thoughts on your walk?" By arrange, I mean that you should ask them to ask you this question ahead of time.

4. Guiding our thoughts

We must intently guard our thoughts. This is where the battle is won or lost. There are several aspects to

this. There is the simple observing of our thoughts. Then there is the controlling or steering of our thoughts. Lastly, though connected with the former, is the refocusing. Let me briefly go over these.

(a) Observing our thoughts

I must keep conscious of what I am thinking. It does me no good to find that my mind has been full of lustful thoughts in the last five minutes. If this is the case, I probably have gone beyond the point of no return. In these kind

of situations, we generally excuse, minimize or even justify our thoughts. Adultery has been committed!

That would not be a way to go back and see my wife. It would have been better if I never went (though the same thing can happen when I watch the television and its sensual commercials). I need to keep aware of my thoughts pretty much all the time. This is the reason it is good to spot the upcoming places of temptations.



(b) Steering our thoughts

I need to steer my thoughts. My thoughts will lead to proper actions, but before they do, I need to subject my mind to a cleansing of God's Word (Eph 5:25). What I know about marriage, temptation, God, my wife must all come together in a way which solidifies what I will think about when I see these sights. I find

that I must continually rehearse
that my wife is the one I delight in.
My thoughts might go like this.



That woman belongs to another. God has not given her to me. I am very pleased in my wife and happy God has given her to me. She might be older and a bit out of shape, but she has so pleased me over the years. I am so happy to be her husband. I will be faithful to her. Thank you Lord for giving her to me.

If I am not convinced about my delight in my wife, then I will easily lose the fight. The battlefield is not the place to make crucial decisions. If you are not able to delight in the wife of your youth, then plead God to get you to that necessary point. Only then will you be able to fight the enemy.

(c) Refocusing my thoughts

The last step is to refocus. By refocus I do not mean to think rightly about our wives. That is part (b). I do not want my thoughts to end thinking about the woman, her improper dress, the temptation, etc. which would all drive me from living in the glorious path of the Lord. Instead I turn back to what is good and lovely.

This might include how lovely my wife is (I do not necessarily mean she is beautiful in form but delightful despite her shortcomings). But it certainly includes a recognition on how glorious God is and the world around me. I thank the Lord for all the special jour-

neys He takes me on and experiences I have such as a time to walk on the beach.

Application to Web Browsing

Many of us face extra temptations walking by pools, swimming at beaches and enjoying other forms of recreation, but it will also happen in other parts of our lives. Wherever we encounter temptation to think sexually of a woman other than our wife, this situation becomes a challenge to our well-being. I would like to briefly apply these same principles to viewing web pages. I will not review the above principles but in light of them highlight some specific advice.

We should first remember that there are some places one does not visit on the web. If we cannot stay off sights filled with sensual figures and violent scenes (including movies), then we should avoid using a computer or movie theater altogether. This is not legalism. Jesus said it is better to pluck out the eye than to allow it to drag you to hell.

“And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell” (Matthew 5:29).

These weaker brothers should not make a rule for everyone else to follow such as not being able to watch a movie or use the computer. Learn to censor yourself. Perhaps, though, you are responsible for others.

As a parent, I also need to make some decisions as to what my children in my house must not see. I generally use my own standards. I cannot allow them to do what God has convicted me not to. I am even more careful and limit what they can do on a computer and even how much time they spend on a computer (30 minutes a day for games). They only can go to certain places on the web. Depending on maturity, I allow them to have an email and have access to the web.

Special insights

I want to go beyond this means of limiting viewing access by simply cutting it out. Sometimes this is necessary. There are areas that will be okay if we take certain precautions. This is what I would like to speak about here in the context of the principles mentioned above.

A few days ago I was trying to learn some advice on making web pages by viewing a training movie. The movie itself was fine. Certain ads, however, were very sensual. I certainly would not allow myself to view them. Since they pop up unexpectedly, I needed to make an immediate decision.

Sometimes I refuse to watch the video. In that case, I would just quit the page. If it takes a long time to quit the page (forcing me to watch the video 4 seconds too long) because it is still loading other parts, I quit the web browser. I do not play games with such things.

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts



By the way we should take available precautions such as using preferences on computers and programs to avoid sensual pictures and the like. *Google images*, for example, enable you to not view sensual pictures for the most part. I take advantage of these. They are so helpful to me and my family. By the way, if a program has an option to filter for children, I automatically click it.⁸ This means I shouldn't watch it either!

There are other web pages, though, that are somewhat manageable much like the one or two immodestly dressed women lined up on the beach. In this case there appeared a banner up above the main viewing

⁸ There is no doubt that all of these sensual images should be removed from the web and other viewing places. Why should we say that a child should not watch them when an adult could? The standards are contradictory. If they are not good for my young teen, then I should wise up to my own counsel. Think through why one would think that a child should not watch them and then think if you do not also need this kind of protection.

window with indecently dressed women. The offense seemed to be limited to one area so I quickly made a few decisions to censure what I saw.

The first thing I did was resize the window. This effectively cut off the right banner area. That worked for a while, but then the smart ad moved to the top of the screen. I could not resize this.

I then quickly made another web page. I made it about the same size of the offending banner and promptly covered up the uncovered women. This worked as long as I did not touch the original window for that would bring the whole window up front and the cover would go behind the offending banner. But since this was a movie, I could just watch the movie and not touch the window. I was protected.

If my attempts to quickly and effectively cover up those images are frustrated, then I just abort my attempts to read that article or watch the training video. I might be able to download and watch it safely from my own desktop but that is not always an option.

I never consider what I want to view or hear so important that I must cause my mind to view and desire those women that are not mine. This is God's will. This strong conviction helps me make quick and effective decisions. If you find yourself looking a bit too much or taking a bit too long making that other window, then quickly abort one's attempts to view that offending window.

Our purpose is to grow up in the Lord. If a site is too predictable in producing offending ads then simply avoid it altogether.

Summary

If a person is not careful about where he is walks, the joy of the walk might disappear. If a person is walking in a minefield, he is so focused on danger that he never can enjoy his walk. It takes time to train one's mind to rehearse the above thoughts in such regular way that he does not let a side point distract him from the truth and he falls.

On each of my two mile walks I would run into 4 to 7 such red zones. This gives me plenty of practice. It is also because of this I am so aware of how God in His loving grace protects me. But I need to be willing not to walk during 'peak' times and go back home if for some reason the beach was littered about with temptation.

Perhaps one day the thoughts will become so routine that I will not be so conscious of them. But I don't think so. The temptations are so visual and controlling. I have to fight the evil with the truth of God.

“Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice in the wife of your youth”
(Proverbs 5:18).

Appendix 4: More on the Author

Paul's training and experience adds a great diversity to his many books and writings. He has worked as an overseas church planter in Taiwan during the 1980s and pastored at a Chinese church (mostly in English) in America during the 1990s. God called him to establish *Biblical Foundations for Freedom* in 2000 and since then has been actively writing, holding international Christian leadership training seminars and serving in the local church.

Paul has been married for more than forty wonderful years. With eight children and five grandchildren, Paul and his wife Linda continually see God's blessings unfold in their lives.



Paul's wide range of materials on Christian life, biblical commentary, discipleship, godly living, call to ministry, marriage, parenting, anxiety and other topics

provide special insights that are blended into his many books and training materials.

Paul's great burden is to see the church revived and God's people prepared as a bride for Christ's return. For more on Paul and Linda and the BFF ministry, check online.

www.foundationsforfreedom.net

Biblical Foundations for Freedom

