

Christian Essentials Supplement
to **FREEDOM Study**

Your
WAR
with Lust

**Winning the modern battle against
demon-possessed destroyers
of your wife and life**

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Scripture quotations are from the *New Living Translation* (NLT, Tyndale, 2007) unless otherwise noted. Other translations include the **New International Version (NIV, Biblica, 2011)**; *New American Standard Bible* (NASB, Lockman Foundation, 1995); *English Standard Version* (ESV, Crossway, 2001); *New International Reader's Version* (NIrV, Biblica, 2014); *New Century Version* (NCV, Thomas Nelson, 2005); *New English Translation* (NET, Biblical Studies Press, 2006); *Today's English Version* (TEV, American Bible Society, 1992); *Amplified Bible* (AMP, Lockman Foundation, 2015).

References used include: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature (BAGD)*, F. W. Danker editor, 3rd edition, (University Of Chicago Press, 2001). *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, Colin Brown editor (Zondervan, 1986). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*, Bruce K. Waltke et. al. editor (Moody, 1980). *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Thomas Nelson, 1996). *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William Mounce (Zondervan, 2006).

Commentary sets used include: *New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)*, Joel B. Green editor (Eerdmans); *New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)*, Howard Marshall, Donald Hagner, editors (Eerdmans); *Word Biblical Commentary (WBC)*, (Thomas Nelson); *Tyndale New Testament Commentary (TNTC)*, Leon Morris, editor (Tyndale); *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, John MacArthur (Moody); *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, D. A. Carson, editor (Eerdmans); *Commentary on the Old Testament*, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Hendrickson, 2006).

The contents of this study are in accordance with the Statements of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals (USA) and the Evangelical Fellowship of India.

All testimonies used in the *Christians Essentials* occurred in real life but names have often been changed.

Christian Essentials supplement to *FREEDOM* Study
Your War with Lust

✓	Week 1: The Difficulty of Your War Against Lust	
	1: Your King's Declaration of War Against Lust	One of the most destructive sins is committed with your eyes. (Matthew 5:27-28)
	2: The Hardest Battle God's Sons Have Ever Fought	Denying the temptation of sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God the Father has ever given to His sons. (Proverbs 7:26)
✓	Week 2: The Difficulty of Your War Against Lust	
	3: The Threat of Willing Wicked Women on the World Wide Web	You are vulnerable on the inside and relentlessly attacked on the outside. (Proverbs 7:12)
	4: We Are at War, But Are We Warriors?	The greatest demonic war ever waged against the sons of God is happening right now. (Ephesians 6:12)
✓	Week 3: The Dangers of Your War Against Lust	
	5: Hurting Your Life I	Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain. (Proverbs 6:26)
	6: Hurting Your Life II	Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain. (Proverbs 6:26)
✓	Week 4: The Dangers of Your War Against Lust	
	7: Hurting Your Wife	Looking at pornography endangers your wife's trust, respect, and intimacy with you. (Hebrews 13:4)
	8: Hurting Your God	Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure. (Ephesians 4:30)
✓	Week 5: Winning Your War Against Lust	
	9: Gouge and Cut if Necessary	Your Father wants you to do whatever it takes to stop sexual sin in your life. (Matthew 5:29)
	10: Get Grace, Encouragement, & Protection	Your Father has steps you can take to defeat sinful lust in your life. (2 Timothy 2:22)
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	12: Get Scripture, Serving & Free	Go on the offense in your war with sinful lust. (Ephesians 6:17)
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Chapter 1

Your King's Declaration of War Against Lust*One of the most destructive sins is committed with your eyes*Matthew 5:27-28

Week 1

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) What is adultery?
 - 2) What is mental adultery?
 - 3) What is the effect of adultery for a married person?
 - 4) What is the difference between noticing an attractive person and lusting?
 - 5) What is the meaning of Jesus referring to sinning with your hand?
 - 6) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

The Sermon on the Mount is the first recorded public teaching we have from God the Son. When you read it, you get the sense that He has been watching things from Heaven for millennia, observing all kinds of sins and errors. And now He takes the opportunity to speak about them. We can be sure that the topics He chose for this Sermon had been foremost on His heart for a long time.

One of the topics Christ chose to address first in His ministry of teaching was sexual lust. Why? Because throughout human history He had witnessed how pervasive and destructive it had been. And that is why He wanted to teach about it.

Now, 2000 years later, Christ's concerns about the devastation being caused by sexual lust *among His people*, must be even much, much greater. Internet pornography is arguably the most powerful and destructive spiritual disease to ever threaten the well-being of the churches, leaders, marriages, children, and lives of God's people. And the world-wide onslaught of this demonic weapon against everything we hold most dear, makes Jesus' teaching on sexual lust all the more critical for us to understand and heed today. Jesus said:

“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

(Matt 5:27-28)

One of the most destructive sins is committed with just your eyes.

Sinnyng Against Your Marriage

The essence of this command is against sexual adultery (Gr. *moicheuseis*). Adultery simply means to have sexual relations with someone who is not your spouse. For reasons discussed in the next chapter, Jesus intentionally directed this command to men, and this study will reflect that.

There are no commands in Scripture against having sex. This is because God created humans with the body parts and desires to have sex. This is even one of the primary reasons He created two genders of humans. Therefore there are several Scriptures in both the OT and NT encouraging us to enjoy the God-given pleasure of sex. More than that, there is a whole book of the Bible essentially devoted to it called the Song of Solomon. Elsewhere God says:

Let your wife be a fountain of [sexual] blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth [because you can have sex with her]. . . . Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her [sexual] love. (Prov 5:18-19)

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other [of sex]. (1 Cor 7:3-5 NIV)

God made sex to be a healthy God-glorifying part of His Creation. But this is also why God created marriage. God designed sex for marriage, and for no other purpose or place. Because of how God created humans and sex, it is only within the committed protection of a “one flesh” relationship with the opposite gender that sex will be safe and satisfying.

The rampant sexual immorality that is portrayed in movies as somehow fulfilling is a lie. Sexually transmitted diseases, dying from AIDS, and the emptiness and degradation people ALWAYS feel when they have sex with people who have made no commitment to them, is all proof of God’s design. We do not break God’s commandments. Their truth cannot be diminished or destroyed in any way. Rather, breaking God’s commandments, especially in the area of sexual immorality, breaks us.

It is God’s plan and will that the vast majority of His people experience the pleasure of sex. But only by having sex with the ONE person you have already become one with in marriage. Jesus said:

A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two [people] but one [person], let no one split apart what God has joined together.” (Matt 19:5-6)

In marriage, two people become one person spiritually, emotionally, physically, and practically. “*God has joined [them] together*” spiritually because God now views the husband as the spiritual head of his wife. “*God has joined [them] together*” emotionally because the friendship, family, and forgiveness they experience together will give them a love like no other. “*God has joined [them] together*” physically through sexual intercourse, which He intended to be the most intimate experience two humans can have together. And “*God has joined [them] together*” practically because they will live, raise children, join a church, and serve God together.

Because marriage is a relationship that “*God has joined together*,” its bond is powerful. But there is something more powerful. It has the power to do precisely what Jesus said should not happen: “*let no one split apart what God has joined together.*” What could a mere human possibly do that would have the destructive power to break “*what God has joined together*”? Adultery.

Jesus explains this just a few verses later in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, “*A man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery*” (Matt 5:32). That is a very sad and sobering statement. If a spouse is sexually unfaithful, then the other spouse is free in God’s eyes to divorce them. ¹ Why? Because having sex with someone else has already spiritually destroyed the marriage in God’s eyes. What “*God has joined together*” has been “*split apart*” by the act of adultery. And if things are not mended, or if the betrayed spouse chooses to leave, the marriage will be broken emotionally, physically, and practically as well.

Even if the unconditional love of the betrayed spouse enables the healing of the marriage and keeps it from being destroyed, adultery will at least defile the marriage. The Bible says: “*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous*” (Heb 13:4 ESV). The writer is saying that the bed where you have sex with your wife is a sacred place to be kept pure. But when you commit adultery, it is like bringing another person into your sacred bed to have sex with them. And how much more disgusting if this happened literally. Either way, adultery defiles the sacred place of the marriage bed.

It is because marriage is such a wonderful and powerful creation of God, that adultery is such a wicked and even more powerful sin of humans. Jesus said: “*You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt 5:27-28). One of the most destructive sins is committed with just your eyes.

Sinners with your eyes

All of the above is why it is so sobering that Jesus DRASTICALLY EXPANDED THE DEFINITION OF ADULTERY. If the only danger of adultery was physically having sex with someone who is not our spouse, this would be a lot harder sin to commit. But Jesus said you can commit this wicked, marriage-wrecking sin with merely your EYES, not your sexual organs. Mental adultery, which Jesus makes equal to physical adultery, can happen just by seeing someone, not even touching or knowing them.

Mental adultery is simply allowing someone who is not your spouse to give you sexual thoughts and desires. This is what Jesus was describing when He said: “*You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit [physical] adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks [blepōn] at a woman with lust [epithymēsai] has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt 5:27). Obviously, lusting after “a woman” who is not your wife is a serious sin against your God, your wife, your children, and yourself. So let’s define it more carefully.

Can a man notice a pretty woman that is not his spouse? Can he even appreciate another woman’s beauty? Yes. There is nothing wrong with recognizing beauty in God’s creation, whether it is in a flower, sunset, or person. Accordingly, the Greek words used by Matthew suggest more than just noticing and appreciating an attractive woman.

First, the Greek word translated “looks” (*blepōn*) can mean simply to see something. But in the NT it often means: “to process information by giving thought, direct one’s attention to something, consider.”² This implies more than simply seeing a woman and rather immediately recognizing her beauty. It means looking for an attractive woman rather than looking at one. And most men know the difference.

Along these lines, Proverbs says regarding a woman who is not your wife: “*Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes*” (Prov 6:25 NIV). *Webster’s Dictionary* defines “*captivate*” as “to influence and dominate by some special charm or trait and with an irresistible appeal.” Particularly in the case of seeing a woman who is dressed provocatively, it has been said: “Look once, shame on her. Look twice, shame on you.” Recognition of beauty is natural and understandable, but captivation crosses a line.

We have been careful to define what kind of “looking” Jesus condemned because it leads to the second word Matthew uses: “*lust*.” The Greek (*epithymēsai*) means: “To have sexual interest in someone.”³ Like sex, lust is a God-given ability of humans and not sinful when experienced in marriage. Again, if there is no lust in a marriage there is something wrong. But like sex, lust becomes sinful outside of marriage.

This is another reason pornography has made this so much harder. It is relatively easy and common for a man to notice a woman in public and recognize her physical beauty without wanting to have sex with her. But

with pornography lust is automatic because the women are already naked. Imagine if women walked around in public with no clothes on. How hard would the struggle against lust be then? Unfortunately, we really don't have to imagine this. There is a multitude of naked women on the Internet. They can be beautiful, inviting, and exciting. But we will call them what they really are to you throughout this study: demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life.

Of course this label does not necessarily include drugged up sex slaves being used by pornographers and pimps. They may not know what they are doing or hate what they are doing. Unfortunately, the Devil can use even innocent women for his sinful purposes. But as discussed further in chapter 3 of this study, it is vital to unmask the spiritual reality behind the beauty of the naked women enticing you to sin with them. They are demon-used, if not demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life.

How would lust relate to a woman you personally know? Again, it is fine to recognize her beauty. But when appreciation turns into desire, it is lust. You can appreciate the beauty of your friend's car or wife. But when you desire to have them for yourself it is coveting and lust. Therefore, when a married man *desires* a woman who is not his wife, wanting to be close to her, he is committing mental and emotional adultery. He certainly has betrayed his wife, and abandoned what God intended in making him "one flesh" with his wife.

What about the process of engagement and getting married? Of course, it would be rather impossible for a single man not to experience lust towards the woman he will marry. Sexual attraction is one of the God-given means that lead to a commitment of marriage. Such feelings would not be the sin of mental adultery if an unmarried man and unmarried woman have agreed to be married. But those natural feelings are a good reason to keep engagements short so you are not tempted into sin. ⁴

Jesus said: "*anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matt 5:28). Simply put, you are not to lust after a woman you are not married to, or that you are not going to marry. Many Christian men fail to believe Jesus. It is especially difficult for men to imagine that looking at pornography is actually adultery. Men have a unique ability to compartmentalize their lives. Therefore, they can mentally, emotionally, and relationally separate what they do with a woman on a computer screen, from their relationship with their wife. The woman on the screen is an object to them, not a person. They think pornography is just like another video game, not a sin against your God, wife, and children with the power to dissolve your marriage.

But be assured husbands that your enjoyment of pornography feels like adultery to your wife. If you have problems thinking that enjoying the sight of another naked woman is not sinful, marriage-breaking, marriage-defiling adultery, your wife knows that Jesus was telling the truth. And you

are deceived. You need to ask yourself how bad would you feel about actually having physical sex with a woman other than your wife? That would be horrible, right? You should feel the same about lusting after a woman on a screen who is not your wife.

And let us repeat. Jesus said your wife has the right to divorce you because of your mental adultery with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. Do you doubt this? Did Jesus say such lust was adultery (cf. Matt 5:27-28)? And did Jesus say, just a few verses later, that a man could divorce his wife if she was sexually unfaithful (cf. Matt 5:32)? Do you then still doubt that Jesus gives your wife permission to divorce you for your own sexual unfaithfulness?

Finally, disobeying Jesus' commandment regarding lust breaks a number of other commandments.

Lusting after "*a woman*" who is not your wife breaks the First Commandment: "*You shall have no other gods before me*" (Exod 20:3).

Lusting after "*a woman*" who is not your wife breaks the Second Commandment: "*You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God*" (Exod 20:4-5).

Lusting after "*a woman*" who is not your wife breaks the Seventh Commandment: "*You shall not commit adultery*" (Exod 20:14).

Lusting after "*a woman*" who is not your wife might break the Tenth Commandment: "*You shall not covet your neighbor's wife*" (Exod 20:17).

Lusting after "*a woman*" who is not your wife breaks the Greatest Commandment to: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart [desires] and with all your soul and with all your mind [thoughts]*" (Matt 22:37).

Lusting after "*a woman*" who is not your wife breaks the Second Greatest Commandment: "*Love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt 22:39). Why is this? Because many of those women who are prostitutes or are displaying themselves on the Internet are drugged-up sex slaves whose lives are being destroyed just to give men a few moments of pleasure. Using them like that is lust, not love. Christian men should be working to *rescue* these women, not use them for the very reasons their pimps and captors hold them captive.

Along these lines, one author writes:

What kind of a woman would allow herself be used and abused by men? The answer is: a deeply wounded one. I don't know of any healthy young women who would say she wants to grow up to be a porn star. It's not uncommon for women in pornography to come from families plagued by abuse, addiction, rejection, abandonment, and neglect. Many porn stars themselves are runaways, alcoholics, and/or drug addicts (Dines, 2010). These women are desperate and pornographers prey on them. . .

One clear piece of evidence that the pornography industry harms the women in it is their life expectancy. In one study, the deaths of 129 porn stars over a 20-year period were analyzed. It was found that the overwhelming majority died premature deaths due to drugs, suicide, murder, alcohol abuse, accidental death, and disease. The average life expectancy of a porn star is only 37 years (Jennings, 2013).⁵

Jesus said: “*You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt 5:27-28). One of the most destructive sins is committed with just your eyes.

Sinning with your hand

And Jesus was not done. He went on immediately to say:

So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. (Matt 5:27-30)

Sinning with your eyes is a serious thing. So serious that Jesus actually said you should take your thumb, press it into your eye socket, and pull your eye out of your skull. It is doubtful that He intended for us to obey Him literally. If we did every man in the world would be blind. Nevertheless, do not miss the drastic measures your Lord expects you to take in order to avoid this sin. This will be discussed further in a later chapter.

But before ending this chapter, we will answer one final question. What was Jesus referring to when He warned of sinning with your hand? The clear answer is masturbation. The context of this whole section of his teaching is immoral sexual activity. He has spoken about sinning with the eyes. But Jesus knows that sinning with the eyes usually leads to sinning with the hand and masturbation. That is in fact why people view pornography. Not just to experience sexual arousal, but sexual release.

Because masturbation is so easy, it is so common. One author writes:

Because men get their intimacy from the acts just prior to and during intercourse, masturbation brings a real sense of intimacy and acceptance. This intimacy salves the hurt and rejection. This intimacy is attained easily and without risk, far more easily than at some bar or whorehouse. In fact, it’s attained more easily than with a wife, who might say no when you need intimacy most. That’s why men choose to masturbate so often.⁶

Unfortunately, many Christians even wonder if masturbation is a sin. But Jesus said so right here. And it is a sin just as serious as any sexual sin, calling for the same drastic measures in order to avoid it.

What, you don't think Jesus has been watching humanity masturbate all those years too? Which is why when He came to Earth and gave His first recorded public sermon, one of His topics was masturbation. Imagine that. And He did this because having sex with yourself is one of the most addictive, demeaning, and destructive sins you can do.

Remember, every one of God's commandments are designed to protect us from hurting ourselves and others. His commandment against masturbation is no exception. Unfortunately, popular media has suggested there are benefits to masturbation. But modern science dispels this. One researcher on the topic writes:

[One sex researcher] asserted that masturbation is healthy "for lessening the likelihood of developing prostate cancer, improving mood, developing sexual interests, and perhaps even ridding oneself of tired sperm." However, these unreferenced claims contrast sharply with the best available empirical evidence.

It is difficult to reconcile the view that masturbation improves mood with the findings in both sexes that greater masturbation frequency is associated with more depressive symptoms, less happiness, and several other indicators of poorer physical and mental health, which include anxious attachment, immature psychological defense mechanisms, greater blood pressure reactivity to stress, and dissatisfaction with one's mental health and life in general.

It is equally difficult to see how masturbation develops sexual interests, when greater masturbation frequency is so often associated with impaired sexual function in men and women. Greater masturbation frequency is also associated with more dissatisfaction with relationships and less love for partners.

In contrast, PVI [penile-vaginal intercourse] is very consistently related to better health, better sexual function, and better intimate relationship quality.

Moreover, although less risk of prostate cancer was associated with greater number of ejaculations (without specification of the sexual behavior), it is PVI frequency that is specifically associated with reduced risk, whereas masturbation frequency is more often related to increased risk. In this regard, it is interesting to note that masturbation is also associated with other problems of the prostate (higher prostate specific antigen levels and swollen or tender prostate). . .

The only sexual behavior consistently related to better psychological and physical health is PVI. In contrast, masturbation is frequently associated with indices of poorer health. ⁷

Jesus has something better for you than having sex with women on a screen and/or having sex with yourself. He wants to give you a relationship with Him that fulfills your deepest needs, and a marriage in which you can enjoy His gift of sex, rather than being oppressed and hurt by it.

Jesus said: “*You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt 5:27-28). One of the most destructive sins is committed with just your eyes.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Memorize Matthew 5:27-28 in the translation above or another.

¹ Not surprisingly, there has been a good deal of debate over Jesus’ permission for divorce in the case of a spouse being unfaithful. This was evidently important to Christ as He is recorded saying it twice (cf. Matt 5:32; 19:9). Does God allow divorce for unfaithfulness? If so, what defines it?

First, the Greek word translated “*unfaithful*” is *porneia* which means any kind of “sexual immorality or illicit sex” (*BAGD*). After a lengthy discussion in his commentary, D. A. Carson concludes:

Porneia covers the entire range of sexual immorality and should not be restricted unless the context requires it. . . It seems best, then, to permit both *porneia* and the except clause to retain their normal force. Jesus is then saying that divorce and remarriage always involve evil; but as Moses permitted it because of the hardness of human hearts, so also does he—but now on the sole grounds of *porneia* (sexual sin of any sort). (“Matthew,” *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, [Zondervan, 2010], 468, 472).

And this would certainly include the use of pornography, especially when Jesus Himself defined being sexually stimulated by pornography as committing adultery.

² *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature (BAGD)*, F. W. Danker editor, 3rd edition, (University Of Chicago Press, 2001).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For more on a biblical process of getting married see Pastor Kurt’s study, *Getting Married God’s Way*.

⁵ Peter Kleponis, *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography*, Emmaus Road Publishing, Kindle Edition, Loc. 505-521.

⁶ Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *Every Man’s Battle: Every Man’s Guide to Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time* (Crown Kindle Edition, 2000), pp. 114-115.

⁷ Dr. Rui Miguel Costa, “Masturbation is Related to Psychopathology and Prostate Dysfunction,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2012), 41:539-540 online at: <https://www.reuniting.info/download/pdf/Costa.Masturbation.PDF>.

For numerous references to medical studies supporting the claims in this excerpt see the article itself.

Chapter 2

The Hardest Battle God's Sons Have Ever Fought

Denying sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God has ever given

Proverbs 7:26

Week 1

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) What are some ways men are created that makes sinful lust an especially powerful temptation for them?
 - 2) We claim that denying the temptation of sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God the Father has ever given to His sons. What do you think?
 - 3) We claim sex is not a need for a man. Do you agree or disagree?
 - 4) We claim the battle that men fight against lust today is more dangerous than the physical battles fought in the OT. What do you think?
 - 5) How do we define real success for the Christian man in this world? What do you think?
 - 6) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

King Solomon knew a lot about sex. “*He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines*” (1 Kings 11:3 NASB). That is 1000 women available to have sex with you! But as we will see in the next chapter, he greatly regretted his sexual immorality. And it was because of the bondage, pain, and emptiness he experienced, that he warned his sons.

Solomon devoted his first seven Proverbs to his sons. You might expect he would cover a large variety of subjects including working hard, getting an education, and serving God. But over half of everything he addressed to his sons in those seven Proverbs was devoted to one thing. Really, one warning: Do not commit sexual sin. He pleaded with his sons, regarding “*an immoral woman*” (Prov 7:8):

She has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims. (Prov 7:26)

Denying the temptation of sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God the Father has ever given to His sons.

In the previous chapter, we looked at the Lord's challenging command: "I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:28). Likewise, the Apostle Paul communicated God's standard for men when he wrote that "a church leader . . . must be faithful to his wife" (1 Tim 3:2). Literally in Greek Paul was saying that a godly man is a "one woman man." A man who devotes himself sexually to one woman.

Solomon's warning above reminds us of how difficult it is for men to obey God's commands regarding sinful lust. About 3000 years ago, Solomon described how successful men had been in his day against demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life: "*She has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims.*" Solomon used the word "many" twice in this verse, emphasizing it in the original Hebrew.

Since 3000 years ago some things have not changed, like the God-given sexual drive and needs of men. However, other things have changed dramatically, like the availability of demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life on the Internet. www means world wide web to the world. But for the Christian man www means willing, wicked women, because that is the greatest threat the Internet has brought into their lives. www on the Internet have made the difficulty of avoiding the dangers of "an immoral woman" increase exponentially. If Solomon thought "*many men have been her victim*" 3000 years ago, what would he say today?

The list of men who have been "victims" of sexual immorality include kings, presidents, and far, far too many Pastors. These men were all greatly ashamed of their sin and deeply regretted it. "*She has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims*" (Prov 7:26). Denying the temptation of sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God the Father has ever given to His sons.

The pull of pleasure

Why are demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life such a powerful temptation? Elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials* we wrote:

Enjoyment is the God-given need of experiencing pleasure. Some may think this is a sinful desire. But God created you with the need for enjoyment. Your need for it is demonstrated by how many things you seek to experience pleasure. And how much you do to avoid its opposites of pain, boredom, and depression. ¹

Likewise, we have illustrated the potential sinful power of pleasure in the life of David:

King David was at the highest point of his life. "*The king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies*" (2 Sam 7:1). "*David reigned over all Israel,*

doing what was just and right for all his people . . . and David's sons were priests" (2 Sam 8:15, 18).

He was so blessed by the goodness of God for him that "King David went into the temple and sat before the LORD and prayed, 'Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?'" (2 Sam 7:18). God had given David almost Heaven on Earth.

But then everything changed because: "One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of his palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful" (2 Sam 11:2). He desired this woman so much that this godly and very blessed man sinned with her and murdered her husband to cover it up (cf. 2 Sam 11). Why? To experience pleasure.

This is the same reason for the very first sin in the world. And Eve really did have Heaven on Earth. A perfect place, a perfect husband, and a perfect life in an intimate and blessed relationship with God. But then everything changed because of something she saw too. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (Gen 3:6). In a Garden offering her immense pleasures, even from food, Eve violated the only command God had given her. Why? To get one more pleasure.

The greatest human king and the first human sin illustrate the immense power of our God-given need for pleasure. And the deceptive and disastrous effects of trying to experience it apart from God. Your Dad wants to provide your need for pleasure in truly satisfying ways, instead of frustrating and sinful ways. ²

At the heart of our struggle with sexual immorality is the desire for sexual pleasure. The Bible admits, and we must all admit, that sexual immorality is among those, "*fleeting pleasures of sin*" (Heb 11:25). It is indeed always "*fleeting*." But it offers one of the most intense pleasures available on Earth.

This is why pornography has been called one of the most powerful drugs in the world, and producers of it are among the foremost drug dealers in the world. "Modern science allows us to understand that the underlying nature of an addiction to pornography is chemically nearly identical to a heroin addiction." ³

And this desire is significantly stronger in men than women, which is why the temptation for sexual immorality is especially great for men. Denying the temptation of sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God the Father has ever given to His sons. "*She has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims*" (Prov 7:26).

Sinful lust is primarily a struggle and sin for men

Jesus said, “*But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” Jesus’ language makes it clear that He intentionally directed this command toward heterosexual men. Why? Because God made men with a significantly higher sex drive, and greater vulnerability for lust, than women.

A recent study of college students found that young men thought of sex about 20 times *per day*. In fact, they thought of sex more often than food.⁴ Granted, the results were probably distorted because they were young men, living among a lot of young women, and having very few responsibilities. Still, this gives us some idea of how much young men struggle in this area.

Women have been found to think a lot more about food than sex. So if a woman wants some idea of a man’s sex drive, they can ask themselves how often they think of eating. And of course, women can sin in the area of eating in order to meet emotional needs in their life. Men will view pornography for the same reason. It’s just that eating “comfort food” is not as disgusting and destructive as viewing pornography.

God gave men a hormonal process that women do not have. As semen collects in their testicles, it sends signals to their brain saying it is time to have sex. When the testicles are full, men’s minds are significantly more sensitive to sexual stimulation. “For most men, this buildup to heightened sexual desire takes only about seventy-two hours.”⁵

In fact, God has provided a biological way for men to release semen if they are not doing so through sex. One book explains:

What are you going to do with the sexual pressure you sometimes feel? First of all, you have to take by faith that once you get your eyes and mind under control, the sexual pressure will drop off dramatically. You bring most of the sexual pressure onto yourself through visual sensual stimulation and mental fantasy.

Even so, there remains the male seventy-two-hour cycle of sperm production. Without the impurity of the eyes, the pressure generated by lust is gone, but there’s still a natural physical pressure for release, though much weaker. “What am I going to do about that?” you might ask. “How will I get release?” God has supplied the way of release, something with which you’re familiar. Clinically it’s called “nocturnal emissions” [also known as] . . . a “wet dream.”

The good news for singles is that nocturnal emissions can work for you in your quest for purity. (They also can work for married guys who aren’t as sexually active as they would like to be.) You may wonder how such dreams will work toward purity. After all, some of these dreams are pretty hot and heavy! But those hot and heavy aspects arise from what you’re putting into your mind each day. The same pure eyes and mind that keep you from actively seeking release

during the day will limit the impurity that your mind can use in dreams at night. Even these dreams will be dramatically purer in scope and content. ⁶

A man's natural sex drive is so powerful, that it can only be eliminated by two extraordinary means. Castration or a supernatural gift from God. Jesus speaks of both options (cf. Matt 19:10-12). The Apostle Paul described the second (cf. 1 Cor 7:5-6). Otherwise, if a man does not have a desire for sex with a woman, there is something wrong with him. Some are tempted to think that a man's desire for sex with a woman is perverted, but actually its absence is a perversion of God's Creation.

Sex is a huge part of a man's life. It is at the core of his sense of masculinity and normally his favorite source of pleasure. Remember, most of them think about it more than food. It is not just bad men who have higher sex drives. Good and godly men do too. It is how God made men.

Unfortunately, like everything else in this world, God's design and intentions have been perverted. Beautiful, scantily clad women are used to sell products to men because it works. Recent statistics on the use of pornography demonstrate that Jesus' warning about lust was rightly directed to men. According to one study, men are 6 times more likely to view pornography on the Internet than women. ⁷ Another study indicates that 10 times as many men are addicted to porn, compared to women. ⁸ Is sinful lust predominantly a male problem? Absolutely.

Sinful lust is a sin with the eyes

God generally gave men a much higher sex drive than women. This would make the challenge of sexual purity in this world hard enough. But there is something else unique about men that makes this struggle even more difficult. They are stimulated by what they see. This is why Job said about 4000 years ago, "*I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman*" (Job 31:1). Likewise, Solomon warned: "*Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.*" (Prov 6:25 NIV). Jesus also pointed at a man's eyes when He said, "*anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matt 5:28), but through his eyes.

Women are generally more stimulated by touch and even conversation. But a man's most sensitive sex organ is his eyes. Men are simply stunned at even a glimpse of a naked woman, let alone one who is willing to fully display herself. Seeing skin in the right places on a woman's body melts their senses. The nakedness of a woman shocks them into submission. The sight of a woman's body parts intoxicates them like a drug. And because sexual experience is so much about the eyes for a man, seeing pornography feels like having sex with a woman.

Which is why the skin, nakedness, and body parts you are being stunned, melted, and intoxicated by had better be your wife's. Your Father wants you to commit your eyes to His daughter. With her these things are holy, loving, and fulfilling. A blessed source of the pleasure God wants to give you in life. But apart from your wife, these same automatic, natural, often overwhelming responses and sensations are dirty, selfish, and cruel because they can never be satisfied outside of marriage.

Therefore, not only does a man have a significantly higher sex drive than a woman, but a man does not need to know or touch a woman to be tempted to lust. He just has to see her. Which makes the multimedia, Internet world we live in a very dangerous place for the Christian man.

Denying the temptation of sinful lust in this modern world is arguably the most difficult command God the Father has ever given to His sons. *"She has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims"* (Prov 7:26).

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Matthew 5:27-28 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 7:26 in the translation above or another.

¹ FOUNDATIONS, chapter 2.11.

² FAITH, chapter 3.22.

³ *Porn and Your Brain* at www.covenanteyes.com.

⁴ "How Often to Men and Women Think about Sex," *Psychology Today* at www.psychologytoday.com

⁵ Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *Every Man's Battle: Every Man's Guide to Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time* (Crown Kindle Edition, 2000), p. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷ "Porn Addiction in America," (Dec 30, 2013) online at <http://christianpost.com>.

⁸ "How Often to Men and Women Think about Sex."

Chapter 3

The Threat of Willing Wicked Women on the World Wide Web

*You are vulnerable on the inside and
relentlessly attacked on the outside*

Proverbs 7:12

Week 2

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) What makes the war against lust so difficult in the modern world?
 - 2) What about men makes this war so difficult?
 - 3) Why isn’t marriage a solution for lust?
 - 4) What was most meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

We saw in the last chapter that Solomon was very concerned about the threat sexual immorality had for his sons. In those days, sexual immorality would have basically been limited to “*a prostitute [who] will bring you to poverty . . . [and] sleeping with another man’s wife [that] will cost you your life*” (Prov 6:26). In Solomon’s day the threat of sexual sin did not include the multitude of willing, wicked women on the world wide web (www). If Solomon thought the threat of demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life were great in his day, what would he say today? Perhaps the same thing he told his sons:

***“Now in the street, now in the squares,
at every corner she lurks”*** (Prov 7:12 NIV)

You are vulnerable on the inside and relentlessly attacked on the outside.

The attack on the outside

It has been important to recognize and understand a man’s sex drive. Unfortunately, something God created to bless us is one of our greatest weaknesses to sin. This has been the same throughout human history.

But what has changed in an unimaginable way is the number and intensity of the attacks on a Christian man’s weakness for willing, wicked, naked women. Sources of sexual temptation have gotten a whole lot more prevalent and powerful since Jesus warned us about this. One wonders what He was even talking about when he warned of seeing enough nakedness of a woman to create lust.

In ancient culture, it was relatively very difficult to see a naked woman who was not your wife. That's how it was for thousands of years. For example, in Genesis we read that Judah noticed a woman outside a village and, *"thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. So he stopped and propositioned her. 'Let me have sex with you'"* (Gen 38:15-16). Notice that even prostitutes in the ancient world were veiled. They did not show you anything until you paid. And Judah had to pay a whole "goat" (v. 17) to see anything.

Likewise, it was only by accident that David saw an innocent naked woman bathing on a rooftop. For millennia it was actually quite difficult to see a naked woman who was not your spouse.

But not today. Most men carry around in their back pocket a multitude of willing, wicked naked women eager to show them everything for free. This is why we refer to "smart phones" as "smut phones." They're not very "smart" if they are being used for "smut."

And let us remember what those willing and naked women on the Internet really are: demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. We will discuss later how they destroy your wife and life. But do you understand those women are demonic?

Remember, in your struggle against willing wicked women on the Internet, you *"are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places"* (Eph 6:12). Those women on the screen are not just women. They have devoted themselves to depravity and serve demons. And those demons are wanting to use them to get to you.

Of course they look enticing. *"Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"* (2 Cor 11:14). But believe it brother, there are demons behind those exciting and enticing women. With pornography you must see through their physical skin and see demons. If you saw the spiritual reality of pornography you would see what God sees: demonically controlled people having sex. In other words, pornography is demons having sex with demons. And that is gross and repulsive.

And yet, these demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life are available anytime and anywhere. Speaking of prostitutes in his day, Solomon described them as *"now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks"* (Prov 7:12 NIV). What would he think about the world you live in today?

In the United States alone, an estimated 30,000 people view pornography on the Internet every second. Every day in America there are 68 million searches on the Internet for pornography. ¹ There are an estimated 4.2 million pornographic websites and 25% of Google search engine requests are for pornography. ²

The Huffington Post reported in 2013 that pornographic websites get more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined, and 30% of all data transferred across the Internet is pornography. ³ At a Christian men's Promise Keeper's event 53% of attendees claimed to have viewed pornography in the last week. ⁴

And our youth? The average age of a child's first exposure to pornography is 11 years old. 80% of 15-17 year olds have had multiple exposures to hardcore porn. The largest single population of Internet pornography users is 12-17 year olds. Two thirds of college men go online weekly to search for pornography. ⁵ "*Now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks*" (Prov 7:12 NIV). You are vulnerable on the inside and relentlessly attacked on the outside.

The vulnerability on the inside

Why does Internet pornography have such a powerful pull on men? Dr. Peter Kleponis further explains the God-given sexual makeup of males and their resulting vulnerability to pornography:

Due to hormonal levels in the womb and at puberty, men's brains are very different than women's brains. Men are physically wired to be visually stimulated. When a man encounters an erotic image, he automatically looks . . .

The thalamus in the man's brain is responsible for picking out erotic images. Thus, if a man is viewing a hundred different images and one of them is erotic, the thalamus is going to single it out and the man will immediately pay attention to the erotic image.

Once this happens, a chemical reaction occurs in the brain. The ventral tegmental area (VTA) of the brain releases dopamine in great quantities, which mixes with testosterone and creates a very powerful drug cocktail. The man will experience great excitement, and even a high, causing the brain to love this and want more. . .

On the subconscious level, the mind realizes how good this makes the man feel and how it eases deep emotional pain, and decides to return to pornography over and over again to keep emotional pain at bay. This is the emotional side of the addiction. . .

A message is then sent down the spinal cord to the genitals for sexual arousal, an erection. With all this excitement and stimulation going on, a tension develops that is only relieved with an orgasm, so the man masturbates. With an orgasm, opiate chemicals, endorphins, are released into the brain, providing a sense of euphoria. This correlates with the euphoric states seen in heroin and cocaine use. After the orgasm the man experiences a great feeling of relaxation. . This is a very powerful drug that is highly addictive! ⁶

It is the human brain's attraction to novelty and newness that makes being "*a one woman man*" (1 Tim 3:2) especially difficult:

Scientists have learned that masturbating to a novel porn star increases ejaculate volume. Also, the time it takes to ejaculate decreases significantly. In short, sexual novelty (many porn users report constantly seeking novel erotica) translates into expenditure of more semen and faster ejaculation. Research also shows greater reward circuit activity in the brain when exposed to a novel sexual partner, increasing the risk of developing an addiction. ⁷

The struggle to be "*a one woman man*" (1 Tim 3:2) is made even harder because husbands often feel like they are imposing on their wife when they ask for sex. And there is always the risk of feeling rejected when they are turned down. Even harder is being married to a wife who does not enjoy sex and is rather cold about this area of her marriage.

Contrast this to women in movies, TV, and the Internet. They all seem so eager to have sex, even pursuing men for sex. The women men see in the media will never turn you down. They are always waiting, willing, and eager to give a man sexual pleasure. And they always seem to be really enjoying sex, having fun, and willing to show them anything and do anything to please a man.

Do you understand the world we live in? Pornography has been proven to have some of the addictive characteristics of cocaine. Imagine then if cocaine were as common and available as table salt. And everybody was shaking a little on their food, and getting a little buzz. Sexual immorality is as ingrained in our society as table salt. But it is an addictive, destructive sin against God and our families.

Satan has been tempting men with sinful lust since the beginning of time. He has had his weapons. Prostitution has been described as the most ancient business in the world. But prostitutes, *Playboy* magazine, "peep shows" at adult book shops, and pay-per-view TV were all mere pea shooters compared to the nuclear weapon he has now with lap tops and "smut" phones (They are not "smart" phones if you use them to sin).

A willing, wicked naked woman is the most powerful, dangerous, and destructive weapon on Earth for the sons of God. Even a nuclear bomb can only kill you. But a willing, wicked naked woman can destroy you, taking everything you hold dear in life including your wife, children, and reputation, leaving you wishing you were dead. They truly are demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life.

What percentage of men even had the opportunity to see a willing, wicked naked woman for the first 6000 years of humanity? Fewer than you might think. What percentage of men have that opportunity now? Because of the spread of the Internet, images of willing, wicked naked women have been broadcast to even the most remote places in the world.

All of this is why we suggested in the previous chapter that the sinful temptation for lust in a Christian man's life, in this modern world, is the most powerful temptation any Christians, anywhere, at any time, have ever had to resist. For a man to obey Jesus' command in the Internet Age, may be the hardest act of holiness ever expected of humanity. It is in this present Age that God calls upon His sons to be "*a one woman man*" (1 Tim 3:2) even though a multitude of women offer them sexual pleasure.

But God is expecting you to be more than just a male. Your Father in Heaven is expecting you to be a man. To grow up and be like Him. Along these lines, one author writes:

Our maleness is a major root of sexual sin. So what do we do? We must choose to be more than male. We must choose manhood. . . He's asking us to rise above our natural tendencies to impure eyes, fanciful minds, and wandering hearts. His standard of purity doesn't come naturally to us. He calls us to rise up, by the power of His indwelling presence, and get the job done. ⁸

Or as the Apostle Paul put it: "*Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love*" (1 Cor 16:13-14). ⁹ Be a man instead of just a male. Because, "*now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks*" (Prov 7:12 NIV). **You are vulnerable on the inside and relentlessly attacked on the outside.**

Marriage is not the solution

The Apostle Paul wrote:

Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. . .

So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust. (1 Cor 7:1-2, 8-9)

Because of Paul's advice, many unmarried men look forward to marriage as a solution for their problem with sinful lust. And all married men would agree it helps in varying degrees depending on the health of their marriage and their sexual relationship with their wife.

But every married man would also chuckle at the thought that marriage eliminates temptations to sexual lust. In marriage you soon understand how much sacrifice and self-control you need to love your wife. There are many times she will not be available to you sexually because she is tired, upset, or sick. Or does not feel emotionally connected to you. And while children are a wonderful result of sex, the time and energy needed to care for them can definitely be an obstacle to sex.

Along these lines, one author writes:

That marriage doesn't eliminate sexual impurity comes as no surprise to married men, although it does for teens and young singles. Ron, a youth pastor in Minnesota, said that when he challenges young men to be sexually pure, their response is, "That's easy for you to say, Pastor. You're married! You can have sex anytime you want!"

Young singles believe that marriage creates a state of sexual nirvana. If only it were so. . . Your purity must not depend upon your mate's health or desire. God holds you responsible, and if you don't gain control before your wedding day, you can expect it to crop up after the honeymoon.¹⁰

If you do not learn and practice the difference between love and lust as a single man, your marriage will be painful. If you have a significant problem with pornography before marriage, you are almost guaranteed to have a problem after marriage.

And a sad fact remains for some marriages: There are Christian wives who are providing frequent sex to their husbands, and their husbands are still struggling or addicted to pornography. Which again demonstrates the power and danger of demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. "*Now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks*" (Prov 7:12 NIV). **You are vulnerable on the inside and relentlessly attacked on the outside.**

Some balance on the issue of men's struggle

It has been important to understand the severity of the challenge that men have to maintain sexual purity and obey Christ's command to not lust with their eyes in this modern media age. But let us clarify some things before moving on.

First, we do not intend to say that Christian women do not struggle with sexual lust. Unfortunately they are struggling with pornography in increasing numbers. And we are sure that much of what is said in these chapters will be helpful to them as well.

But one important point is this: Women have no idea what this struggle against lust is like for a man. There is no experience like it in females. It is doubtful that there is any temptation in the life of a woman that is as pervasive, powerful, sinful, and destructive as lust is for men. And it is therefore very difficult for women to have compassion and mercy on men in this area.

For example, authors Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker interviewed some women after they had read their book, *Every Man's Battle*. Here are some of the responses:

Deena, when asked for her reaction to this book's premise, replied, "This stuff is crazy. Women don't have that problem!" Fawn decided

men and women are so different in their sexual wiring that it defies understanding. “I was surprised to learn,” she said, “that Christian men have this problem even after they’re married. I found the intensity of the problem to be shocking.”

Cathy said, “I did not know the depth that men would go and the risk they would take to satisfy their desires. I was unaware of how intense these temptations are and how much defense a man must muster to avoid stepping over God’s boundaries.” . . .

Brenda . . . summarized the typical female response: “I don’t want to sound mean, but because women don’t generally experience this problem, it seems to us that some men are uncontrolled perverts who don’t think about anything but sex. It even affects my trust in men, knowing that pastors and deacons could have this problem.

I don’t like it that men lustfully take advantage of women in their thoughts, although I realize that women can be largely to blame because of what they wear. It’s at least some comfort to know that many men have this problem. Since most men are affected, we really can’t call you guys perverts.” ¹¹

Both God’s sons and their wives need to be aware of the intensity of the battle for sexual purity in our time. But none of this is intended to excuse a man’s sin with lust in any way. God still expects His sons to “*Flee sexual immorality*” (1 Cor 6:18). And He commands the Church: “*Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . . because these are improper for God’s holy people*” (Eph 5:3). And regardless of how difficult the Devil has made these commands, “*God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure*” (1 Cor 10:13).

In addition, we do not believe that sex is an absolute need in a man’s life. God never asks us to deny real needs in our life. And as discussed elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials* God intends to be the source for fulfilling all of our deepest H.A.P.P.I.E.R. needs including pleasure. ¹² Therefore, single men and even married men are expected to deny themselves the pleasure of sex on a regular basis. Along these lines, Dr. Kleoponis writes:

Sex is not a need. It’s an appetite. A need is something that is required for life, such as food and water. A person would soon die without them. While the human race needs sex to procreate and continue our species, an individual person does not need sex to live. . . Many men are defiling God’s holy plan for sex because our culture has convinced them that sex is a need they are entitled to meet. ¹³

Which is all the more dangerous in our world because, “*Now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks*” (Prov 7:12 NIV). You are vulnerable on the inside and relentlessly attacked on the outside.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Proverbs 7:26 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 7:12 in the translation above or another.

¹ “Porn Addiction in America,” (Dec 30, 2013) online at <http://christianpost.com>.

² Kleponis, Loc. 242-247.

³ Ibid., Loc. 260-261.

⁴ Ibid., Loc. 253.

⁵ Ibid., Loc. 346-347.

⁶ Ibid., Loc. 613-687.

⁷ “Ejaculation: How Often for Good Health?” online at: <https://www.reuniting.info/ejaculation-how-often-for-good-health>.

⁸ Arterburn and Stoeker, p. 70.

⁹ It is unfortunate that some modern translations (e.g. NLT, NIV) have removed the literal translation of the original Greek text of 1 Corinthians 16:13 (“*act like men*”) and translated it as “*be courageous*.” On the contrary, the Apostle was specifically calling on the men in the Corinthian church and he was calling them to more than courage, but everything that makes a godly man.

¹⁰ Arterburn and Stoeker, p. 40.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 33-34.

¹² For more discussion on God fulfilling our H.A.P.P.I.E.R. needs including our God-given need for pleasure, see chapter 2.? and 3.?

¹³ Kleponis, Loc. 1006-1017. Unfortunately, the NLT version of 1 Corinthians 7:3 reads, “*The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs.*” This suggests sex is a need for a married couple. However, the Greek (*opheilēn apodidotō*) literally means “to fulfill an obligation” (*BAGD*), not meet a need. And even in this passage, Paul suggests denying sex in a marriage for a time, which again, he would not do if it was a God-given need.

Chapter 4

We Are at War, But Are We Warriors?*The greatest war ever waged is happening right now*

Ephesians 6:12

Week 2

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) In what ways is your battles different and more difficult and dangerous than the battles fought by David and his Mighty Men?
 - 2) How do we define real success in this chapter? What do you think?
 - 3) Why has God allowed such a great temptation for you in this world?
 - 4) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

War as a way of life

War was a way of life for David. And he started young. When he killed Goliath, King Saul called him “*a youth*” (1 Sam 17:33 NASB). Sometime later, as a young man, “*Saul made him a commander over the men of war*” (1 Sam 18:5) and he “*led Israel on their military campaigns*” (2 Sam 5:2). He was still a young man when a popular song was sung that said, “*Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands!*” (1 Sam 18:7). And this was God’s will for David. To be a warrior, killing the enemies of God.

We cannot even imagine the danger, difficulty, intensity, and frequency of David’s physical battles against wicked men. Most of us have not even held a real sword, let alone spent years fighting and killing other men with one. It’s no wonder that David praised God for training him to fight and kill men. In a Psalm dedicated to thanking God for delivering him in a particularly intense battle, he said of God, “*He trains my hands for battle; he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow*” (18:34).

That was important because a significant portion of David’s life was spent physically fighting other warriors to cut, stab, shoot, and kill them or else be killed himself. Here is one example:

Once again the Philistines were at war with Israel. And when David and his men were in the thick of battle, David became weak and exhausted. Ishbi-benob was a descendant of the giants; his bronze spearhead weighed more than seven pounds, and he was armed with a new sword. He had cornered David and was about to kill him. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David’s rescue and killed the Philistine. (2 Sam 21:15-17)

War was a way of life for most of God's sons in Israel. And they were courageous, strong, and valiant men. Those called "*mighty men*" (2 Sam 23:8) in that culture were warriors. And all of this fighting and warfare against the enemies of God was an honored and vital way for a man to serve, please, and glorify the Lord. And the same is still true for you today.

How can this be? If you have not been in the military during war time you may think you do not know war. Not like David and his Mighty Men knew battle. But you do know war. According to God's plan it is no longer a physical battle of flesh and blood against wicked men. The war you serve, please, and glorify God in now, is a spiritual battle of naked flesh and lust against wicked women. The Bible warns us:

“We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against . . . wicked spirits in the spiritual realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

The greatest demonic war ever waged against the sons of God is happening right now.

Do you know you are in a war?

God's sons have always been at war in this world. But there was a time they knew it, embraced it, trained for it, and succeeded in it. Not today. Many of God's sons are not warriors. They are wimps. "*We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against . . . wicked spirits in the spiritual realms*" (Eph 6:12). The greatest demonic war ever waged against the sons of God is happening right now. And many are so unprepared for it. They don't even know they are in a war.

Are you tempted to think your war is less dangerous and difficult than the battles the Mighty Men of Israel fought? God does not think so. First of all, your battles are more dangerous. Do you doubt this? Think about it. The worst thing that could happen to a Mighty Man of Israel is that a wicked man would kill him and he would die serving the Lord. But from God's view, the stakes are higher in your spiritual battle against wicked women. They can cause you to sin against the Lord. And you can be certain that God thinks sinning against Him is worse than dying for Him.

Not only is your war more dangerous, it is more difficult. At least it was for David. He fought and killed his "*ten thousands*." He fought and killed a "*champion from Gath*" who "*was over nine feet tall*" and "*wore a bronze helmet, and his bronze coat of mail [that] weighed 125 pounds*" and "*carried a bronze javelin . . . tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed 15 pounds*" (1 Sam 17:4-7).

David easily conquered a giant warrior covered in armor named Goliath with just a sling and stone. But David was conquered by a naked woman named Bathsheba with just a glance of her bathing from the distance of a roof top. When it came to fighting for God, Goliath was no match for David. But David was no match for Bathsheba.

And don't forget what the power of sinful lust for Bathsheba caused "*a man after God's own heart*" (1 Sam 13:14) to do: Force a married woman to have sex with him, betray his loyal wives, and have Bathsheba's husband, one of his best and most loyal warriors, murdered to cover his sin. THAT is the power of lust!

In David's experience, even an innocent naked woman was more dangerous than a wicked armed warrior. So how much more dangerous are the multitude of willing, wicked naked women you can see at any time, night or day, who are actually very eager to show you more than just a bath from a rooftop? What David saw by accident while walking on his roof one evening, you can easily see while watching TV in your living room with your family every night. What you can see on your TV with your family every night, was enough to make David commit adultery, kill a good man, and experience the favor of God being diminished for the rest of his life.

Again, we cannot even imagine the danger, difficulty, intensity, and frequency of David's physical battles against dying from the sword of armed wicked men. But David and his Mighty Men could not even imagine the danger, difficulty, intensity, and frequency of your war against sinning with just the sight of willing wicked naked women. For centuries the Devil sought to destroy God's people through using wicked armed men to kill His sons. Now the Devil seeks to destroy God's people through using wicked naked women to tempt His sons.

We are in a greater war than David and his Mighty Men, but in many ways we are weaker men. We have not grown up in a life of war, nor been trained as warriors. God's OT people often experienced enemies in battle who wanted to kill them. Most of us do not think we even have any enemies. We do not even know we are in a war.

In the Israelite culture of war, many fathers had successfully fought wicked men on the battlefield. And they certainly spent a great deal of time and effort training their sons to be warriors against wicked men because they knew they lived in a time of war. But many of our fathers have been completely defeated by naked wicked women and have no guidance for their sons, nor did they spend any time training them to win this war. Worse than that, some fathers in our culture simply wink and nod at their sons when they sin with naked wicked women through pornography, and even applaud it as a step towards manhood.

Indeed, we are weaker men, in a greater, more difficult and dangerous war, than our ancient Israelite brothers ever fought in their wars. And let us add this. Everything we have said in the previous chapters about the difficulty of this war is especially hard for young single men. They can have the same sex drive as a married man. But have no righteous way to satisfy that drive. The truth and steps in this study are especially important for them. And if you can be involved in helping a young single man in this war, do so.

“We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against . . . wicked spirits in the spiritual realms” (Eph 6:12). The greatest demonic war ever waged against the sons of God is happening right now.

Real failure

What are some of the most important goals you have for your life? How would you define a successful life? What do you think is the hardest thing to do in this life to please God?

Many men would answer these questions by saying things like providing well for our families, loving our wives, training our children, and serving the Lord in ministry. But none of these are the most difficult thing your Father is asking of His son. Not committing the sin of lust in the world you live in is the most difficult task your Father has given you. And if you are not successful in this task, and your failure is exposed, all the things you do for your family and church will be tarnished if not destroyed.

Samson was a man specially set apart by God to deliver His people from their enemies. He was *“a Nazarite from birth”* (Judg 13:5), meaning he was dedicated to God. As their only child, His parents dedicated their lives to doing everything possible to train him to love God. *“The Lord blessed him as he grew up”* (13:24). God gave him supernatural strength. *“He ripped [a] lion’s jaws apart with his bare hands”* (14:6), and killed 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (cf. 15:15). In the city of Gaza, he *“took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron”* (16:3).

You might say, “Wow! What a mighty, glorious, powerful man of God! Actually, he turned out to be a pathetic, embarrassing, desperate, and sad excuse for a man. Why? His weakness for wicked women.

One day when Samson was in Timnah, one of the Philistine women caught his eye. When he returned home, he told his father and mother, “A young Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye. I want to marry her. Get her for me.”

His father and mother objected. “Isn’t there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?” they asked. “Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?” But Samson told his father, “Get her for me! She looks good to me.” (Judg 14:1-3)

For all the blessings in Samson’s life, he was a weak willed man and had no character. Eventually he did not even marry this woman. He abandoned her because of a dispute he had with her during their wedding festivities. *“So his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson’s best man at the wedding”* (14:20).

But his trouble with women was just beginning. “*One day Samson went to the Philistine town of Gaza and spent the night with a prostitute. . . Some time later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah*” (16:1, 4). And we know how that turned out. Delilah tried to trick Samson three times to give his enemies power over him. But he kept coming back to her.

And we think, what an idiot! But you do something just as foolish when you keep returning to the demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life on the Internet. Do you have a multitude of Delilah’s in your life?

Why would you and Samson return to such women? Because the power of lust makes men stupid. And what did Samson’s lust and stupidity cost him? Eventually, because of Delilah’s trickery, “*The Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison*” (16:21).

For all of Samson’s extraordinary promise, godly parents, gifts from God, and amazing exploits, he ended up a miserable failure all because he could not control his lust. And he is only one of a very, very, long line of God’s sons who have suffered the same defeat. Demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life, like Delilah, are the Devil’s greatest weapon on Earth. And defeating them is the greatest accomplishment any man can accomplish on this Earth.

Real success

Lusting after wicked naked women is the most tempting sin for God’s sons in this modern world. Therefore, every time you overcome this temptation, you can be sure of a great eternal reward for your virtue. At the Greatest Awards Ceremony when we all stand before Christ to receive our rewards, there will be praise, glory, and honor for many things. But one of the things that Christ will praise and reward the most, is when one of God’s sons did what David, Solomon, Samson, and a multitude of other men, did not do: Denying yourself the pleasure of willing, wicked naked women.

It’s because this intense temptation is offered to you everywhere, at any time, that it is perhaps the greatest demonstration of your love for God. If pornography is the greatest temptation of the Devil in the history of the world, then it is the greatest test of God for His sons to love Him in the history of the world. And it is a tremendous, unique, MANLY, God-glorifying thing whenever you pass that test. David’s mighty men fought valiantly and successfully for their king. Let us do the same for our king.

Which brings us to a final question. Why has God allowed all of this? Why did He make men the way they are and allow the world and the world wide web to be what they are? Why allow such a difficult test of holiness for God’s sons? The answer to this question is the same for why God does everything: Glory. God wants to be glorified. And He is willing to take the risk of you failing, in order to give you the opportunity to glorify Him.

We have written elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials*:

Why doesn't everyone glorify your Dad as they were created to do? Because your Dad has an enemy called the Devil. And he has been working since his rebellion against your Dad to steal the glory, worship, and praise of God for himself. This Cosmic War for glory between God and the Devil is the underlining theme of all of Scripture, and the background of all human history. Why is there good and evil? Because there is a war for glory between God and the Devil. And the worship, devotion, and obedience of humans is the primary source of the glory that either God or the Devil receives. "*In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined*" (Prov 14:28).

The Devil is in no way your Dad's equal. But the battle for glory between them is very real. Because their desires for glory and worship and devotion are very real. And the pain and trouble that occur in the lives of humans like Job who are in the middle of this War is very real as well.

The Cosmic War for Glory is why Satan dared God about Job. And it is why God accepted the dare. There is an ancient and ongoing war between them for glory. And the worship and obedience of humans is at the center of that war. Job's choices had the potential to glorify the Devil or his Dad. If he would have cursed God because of his painful circumstances, His lack of faith and unconditional love for God would have glorified the Devil and given Satan something to boast about. But because Job chose to love God even when God allowed everything to be taken from him, Job's love for God revealed the greatness of God to the Devil, Angels, and demons who witnessed it.

On the other hand, humans glorify Satan, and give him honor when they obey and worship him. This is why the Apostle Paul warned even Christians: "*the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons*" (1 Cor 10:20 NIV). When people depend on, pursue, and love the things of this World to meet their needs, it is as if they have entered the temple of Satan and are offering sacrifices of worship to the Devil and glorifying him. . .

Job worshipped God above all else and glorified God as much as any human ever has. And he embarrassed the Devil. "*Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*" (1 Cor 10:31) because your ultimate purpose in life is to reveal the greatness of God and embarrass the Devil. . .

Unfortunately, when most Christians think about glorifying God, they only think of the public kind of glory that comes from other humans seeing your greatness for which you give God the credit. But there is another kind of glory that is even more important and constantly available. It is privately glorifying God. This is the kind of glory your Dad gets because of what only He, the Devil, and Angels and demons see you do.

Private glory is the kind Job gave to God in his suffering. Before the Devil's dare, Job publicly glorified God as "*the greatest man among all the*

people of the East” (1:3). Everyone knew his great wealth and power came from the God he worshipped. But then he lost everything. Did Job then cease to glorify God? Not at all!

Of course to the humans around him, including his friends, Job was an embarrassment. In fact, publicly, the destruction of Job’s life made his God look very bad. But God did not care about that because there is a glory that is more important to Him than what humans see. It’s the devotion and faith that only He, the Devil, and Angels and demons see in our lives. It is when we privately glorify God by loving Him even in the midst of great suffering.

This is why the Paul wrote: “*We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings*” (1 Cor 4:9 NIV). The Apostle understood that like Job, his whole life was on display before heavenly beings. The word translated “*spectacle*” comes from the Greek word *theatron*. NT scholar Albert Barnes explained:

The theater, or amphitheater of the ancients was composed of an arena in which the combatants fought, and which was surrounded by circular seats rising above one another to a great height, and capable of containing many thousands of spectators.

Paul represents himself as on this arena or stage, contending with foes. Around him and above him are an immense host of human beings and angels, looking on at the conflict, and awaiting the outcome. He is not alone or unobserved. He is made public; and the universe gazes on the struggle. . . The expression means that he was public in his trials, and that this was exhibited to the universe.

On that stage where Paul lived his life, he privately glorified God and embarrassed the Devil by the sacrifices he made for Christ and people. . .

It is because of the value that God places on your private devotion to Him, that Jesus said, “*Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you*” (Matt 6:4 NIV). You can glorify God publicly by living like Him in front of people. But it is more important and available to glorify Him in private because of what He, the Devil, and Angels and demons see you do for God. ¹

“We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against . . . wicked spirits in the spiritual realms” (Eph 6:12). The greatest demonic war ever waged against the sons of God is happening right now. And great glory for you and God can come from winning this battle.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Proverbs 7:12 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Ephesians 6:12 in the translation above or another.

¹ Excerpt from FAITH, chapter 3.23.

Chapter 5

Hurting Your Life

*Sinful lust promises you pleasure,
but will cost you so much more pain*

Proverbs 6:26

Week 3

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) Why is it important for you to understand you are being hunted?
 - 2) How did sexual sin damage the lives of David and his son Solomon? How does this relate to what kind of family heritage you want to build?
 - 3) What was most meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

In the first chapter of the *FREEDOM* study in the *Christian Essentials* study you read briefly about Ted Haggard. He grew a church from 22 to 14,000 members and became the President of the National Association of Evangelicals in America. Because he was considered a primary leader of God’s people in America, he had regular phone calls with the President of the United States.

But he lost his battle with sinful lust. After many years of viewing pornography, it simply did not satisfy him anymore. He felt he needed a bigger fix. So he began trying drugs while having homosexual sex. The drug of pornography made one of the most fruitful and respected Christian men of our generation degrade himself in unspeakable ways. And it destroyed his reputation, influence, and ministry. And God only knows how it affected his relationship with his wife and children.

Ted Haggard’s life reminds us that we are in a very real battle with a very real enemy who can really destroy a great deal of our life. Jesus warned and promised:

**For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread,
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.**

(Proverbs 6:26 NASB ¹)

Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.

The Devil is hunting you through pornography

Solomon was trying to impress on his sons the danger of sinful sex. He warned that a demon-possessed destroyer in the guise of a willing naked woman “*hunts*” for your “*precious life*,” or rather destroys everything precious in your life.

Solomon warned that sinful sex will reduce the value of your life “*to a loaf of bread.*” Actually, “loaf” of bread is probably not a good translation as the Hebrew word means: “a small round piece of bread, such as is still baked in Italy and in the East, here an expression for the smallest piece.”² Solomon’s point was this: sexual immorality reduces the value of a man’s life to practically nothing.

Obviously Solomon was talking about a literal prostitute. But remember, “*We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against . . . evil spirits in the heavenly places*” (Eph 6:12). The Devil is hunting your life through any willing, wicked naked woman that you will sin with. Even Solomon seemed to spiritualize the threat when he described the immoral woman as “*now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks*” (Prov 7:12 NIV). And “*she hunts for the precious life*” (6:26).

Please, please do not forget that word “*hunts.*” Imagine being hunted by someone very powerful who hates you and wants to hurt you and those you love. **THIS IS THE REALITY OF YOUR LIFE ON EARTH!** When you think about your world do you generally think you are safe? The following is also an excerpt from the first chapter of the *FREEDOM* study:

It is essential in the Christian life to fully understand God’s intense, constant, and powerful LOVE for you. It is also essential to fully understand the Devil’s intense, constant, and powerful HATRED for you. You do not live in a world with only a good God. But, “*The world around us is under the control of the evil one*” (1 John 5:19). . .

Do you understand that Christian? There is a very powerful, invisible, angry, and cruel being who personally hates you. . . As much as God LOVES you, the Devil HATES you. . .

Maybe you have never experienced someone really hating you. Maybe you are a nice person who gets along with everyone. Perhaps you have never had an enemy, with a lot of power to do you harm. **WELL YOU DO NOW**, and you had better live like it.

Imagine someone declaring war on you and your loved ones, and you either do not know it, or do not care. Your defenses would be down and you would be very vulnerable. That is how most Christians live. They think the Earth is a playground, but it is a battlefield. And they live in constant spiritual defeat, and often confused about why. The reason is that you have a powerful enemy who wants to destroy your life.

It is because you are in the middle of a war that Jesus told you to pray every day: “*Don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one*” (Matt 6:13).³

And you still want to play with the prostitutes on the Internet? Don't you believe God's warnings? Whatever pleasure she offers you, trust your Father, Creator, and Lord that the cost and pain of having cybersex with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life will be far, far greater.

In this and the following chapters we will detail some of those costs. Are we trying to scare you? Absolutely! Should you be scared of what willing, wicked naked women on the Internet can do to you? Absolutely! If you are not scared, you are stupid. Solomon described such a stupid young man when he wrote:

At the window of my house I looked down through the lattice. I saw among the simple [petî: "foolish, naïve"], I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. He was going down the street near her corner [an immoral woman], walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. (Prov 7:6-9 NIV)

And what happened to him?

All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life. (vs. 7:22-23)

Why did this happen to this young man? Because he was *petî*, "simple." In ancient Hebrew that means stupid. Why was he stupid? Because he was not afraid of a willing wicked woman. Instead of running from sexual immorality as God commands (cf. 1 Cor 6:18), he was carelessly, maybe curiously walking toward it. He was either unaware or didn't care that, "A prostitute is a dangerous trap; a promiscuous woman is as dangerous as falling into a narrow well. She hides and waits like a robber, eager to make more men unfaithful" (Prov 23:27-28). If you are like him, "your great enemy, the devil [who] prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8), will make you pay dearly for your ignorance, disobedience and stupidity.

Committing adultery with willing, wicked naked women on the Internet cannot separate you from God's love. Nothing can (cf. Rom 8:38-39). You will always be a son or daughter of God the Father. These are things you can never lose Christian.

But you can lose virtually everything else. If you continue in your disobedience to Him, and your sexual immorality, He will allow it to cost you in order to try to stop you. Having sex with willing, wicked naked women on the Internet can cause you to lose your wife, children, reputation, love life, and ministry. 33% of those addicted to Internet pornography lost their jobs. ⁴

The Apostle Paul warned Christians, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction” (Gal 6:7-8 NIV).⁵ The Greek word behind “destruction” can be translated “ruin” or “corruption.” Pornography is certainly sowing to please your flesh and God is warning you about its consequences. We will do the same here.

“For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life” (Prov 6:26). **Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.**

A father and son ruined by sexual sin

Your God and Father loves you. He always will. But if you spit in His face by having cybersex with willing, wicked, naked, demonic women, then He warns you, it will damage your life. He illustrates this through the life of David and his son Solomon. Who has been more blessed and loved by God than they? Who had more power and opportunity to glorify God on this Earth and do good? Who loved God more than they did? But the Devil severely damaged their lives through the weapon of sinful lust.

As you read through the initial chapters of 2 Samuel it describes victory after victory and blessing after blessing in David’s life. God speaks to David through the Prophet Nathan, telling him how much He loves and favors David. David responded to God, “*Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?*” (2 Sam 7:18). God empowered David to defeat all the enemy armies around Him. “*In fact, the Lord made David victorious wherever he went*” (8:14). David was also blessed in his family. “*David’s sons served as priestly leaders*” (8:18).

And then all Hell broke loose because David let Hell into his heart and home. God wants you to notice that in 2 Samuel chapters 1-10 nothing but blessings, divine favor, and victories are described in David’s life. Then chapter 11 describes David’s sinful lust with Bathsheba. And from thereon David’s life, the one God loved and still loved, is full of pain, calamity, and hardship. In chapter 12 David finally confesses his sin and through the Prophet Nathan God tells him:

“I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more.

Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own.

“This is what the Lord says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your

wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel. . .

The Lord has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin. Nevertheless, because you have shown utter contempt for the word of the Lord by doing this, your child will die" (2 Sam 12:7-14).

Do you see what the same God thinks of your sexual sin? Do you understand how much it hurts Him? We are being so ungrateful when we choose those wicked naked women in direct disobedience to what He has commanded us. It's as if we do not care what He thinks. Do you see that even though He loves and forgives you like David, that He may choose to allow painful, public, and destructive consequences for both you and those you love?

In chapters 12-13 and 15 of 2 Samuel, what happens to David? The son he has with Bathsheba dies. David's son Amnon rapes his granddaughter Tamar. David's son Absalom kills David's son Amnon because he raped Absalom's sister Tamar. David's son Absalom rebels against him, takes control of the kingdom, threatens to kill David and his followers, and causes David to flee from his palace and Jerusalem.

During this time we read: "*David walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. His head was covered and his feet were bare as a sign of mourning. And the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they climbed the hill*" (2 Sam 15:30). And everyone, including his wives and children with him, knew all of this was happening because of David's sin with Bathsheba.

But the pain was not over. "*All the men of Israel deserted David and followed Sheba son of Birci*" (2 Sam 20:2) until this rebellion could be stopped with civil war. Eventually, David's murder of Uriah was punished with the murder of two more of David's sons, Absalom (2 Sam 18:14) and Adonijah, the latter being executed by David's son Solomon because he wanted to have sex with one of David's former wives (cf. 1 Kings 2:12-25). And sexual lust and immorality would become the hallmark of Solomon's life and the heritage of David's family.

God had chosen David's family to have a very great and God-glorifying heritage. But because of one impulsive act of sinful lust, and the murder that followed, the heritage of David's family was murder and sexual immorality. A very great family of God was ruined. Not by the greatest pagan armies and kings in the world. But by lusting after naked women.

If you have ever committed adultery with your eyes by viewing pornography, you have done something just as stupid, ungrateful, and sinful as what David did with Bathsheba. David was never killed by a wicked warrior, but his life was destroyed by a naked woman.

And lust would destroy Solomon's life as well. That's why he warned his sons about sinful lust and described the consequences of not heeding him: *At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors.* (Prov 5:11-13)

Likewise, he wrote: *"The man who commits [even mental] adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys himself"* (Prov 6:32). And another king wrote: *"Do not waste your strength on [wicked] women, on those who ruin kings"* (Prov 31:3). At the least, the time and energy spent on wicked naked women is wasted and could have been spent on serving God and others. But these warnings include more than that. God is warning you that the Devil will make sure that the cost of sinful lust will be much greater than its pleasure.

Of course, Solomon spoke from experience. Scripture records:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives [who were] princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. (1 Kings 11:1-3 NASB)

Solomon had sex with 1000 of the most beautiful women he could find. And don't think these women were reluctant in bed. They would have been willing to do anything to be among Solomon's favorites. Imagine 1000 of the most beautiful women competing for who can give you the most pleasure. Most men would think that would be paradise on Earth.

But again, breaking God's commands will break you. Not only was Solomon breaking OT commands, but a NT command: *"Run from sexual sin!"* (1 Cor 6:18). God's reason for these commands is the same for all of His commands: to protect us from pain and help us be happy.

Therefore, what was the result of Solomon's disobedience? What was it like to have sex with 1000 of the most beautiful women on Earth, all eager to please him?

First, he was in sexual bondage, addicted to these women. *"Solomon held fast to these in love"* but it wasn't love, it was lust. He could not let go of them. And God's warning became true because these women did turn Solomon's devotion away from the Lord, and he began doing detestable practices and worshipped idols (cf. 1 Kings 11:4-8).

The literal Hebrew of verse 3 above says, *"His wives bent his heart."* And as a consequence, *"The Lord was very angry with Solomon [and] . . . said to him, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my*

decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away . . . from your son” (vs. 9, 11-12). A classic example of the sins of the father affecting their children.

What was Solomon’s own view of having sex with 1000 beautiful women? He wrote in Ecclesiastes:

I acquired a harem as well—the delights of a man’s heart. . . I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. . . Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done . . . everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (Eccl 2:8-11)

If having physical and real sex with 1000 of the most beautiful women in the world was not satisfying for Solomon, why do you think cybersex with a multitude of women on a screen will be more satisfying for you? Solomon would laugh at you. He would tell you, “I’ve tried something a lot more real and exciting than anything you will ever be able to do with a computer or “smut” phone. But I am not bragging. I have been a fool. I wish I could know the intimacy, commitment, friendship, fulfillment, and HONOR of being devoted to one lover for all my life.”

It’s true. Most men would love to have what Solomon had with 1000 women. But he would wish he had what you can have with one woman. Because that is God’s design for the least pain and emptiness, and most love and happiness.

“For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life” (Prov 6:26). **Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.**

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Ephesians 6:12 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 6:26 in the translation above or another.

¹ The NIV for Proverbs 6:26 reads: “*For a prostitute can be had for a loaf of bread, but another man’s wife preys on your very life.*” This suggests the value of a “loaf of bread” is the price of “a prostitute” (e.g. ESV, CEV), rather than the metaphorical result of being with a prostitute, as communicated by the NASB, NLT, KJV, NET, NCV. The Hebrew word *baad* being translated here “may be taken either as ‘on account of’ (= by means of a) prostitute, or ‘for the price of a prostitute. Most expositors take the first reading” (NET notes).

And we believe for good reason. The NIV reading would seem to promote the idea that if one of Solomon’s sons wants to have sex, then he should purchase a prostitute because the price is much less compared to having sex with another man’s wife. On the contrary, in Proverbs 23:27-28 Solomon warns that a prostitute (*zōnāh* same Hebrew word) “*is a dangerous trap.*” Nowhere does Solomon suggest that a prostitute is somehow less costly than another man’s wife.

² *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, available online at <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/kdo.html>

³ Excerpt from the *Christians Essentials* study #4: *FREEDOM*, chapter 4.1.

⁴ “Porn Addiction in America” (Dec 30, 2013) online at <http://christianpost.com>.

⁵ In Galatians 6:7-8 the Apostle is probably primarily warning unbelievers of eternal destruction in Hell, contrasted with the “*eternal life*” reaped from the Spirit. However,

the destruction in an unbeliever's life would begin to occur before they were in Hell and Paul certainly included this in his warning. Likewise, Christians who indulge their sinful nature will surely experience the "*corruption*" (NASB, ESV) and "*ruin*" (NCV) that the Greek here is referring to.

Chapter 6

Hurting Your Life II

*Sinful lust promises you pleasure,
but will cost you so much more pain*

Proverbs 6:26

Week 3

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) How does sinful lust deny your identity?
 - 2) How does sinful lust degrade your body?
 - 3) How can pornography make you an addict?
 - 4) What was most meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

**For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread,
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.**
(Proverbs 6:26 NASB)

Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.

Looking at pornography denies your identity

Those who practice cybersex with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life unfortunately share many characteristics of the depraved humans described in the NT:

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God . . . As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere [naked] people . . .

As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. . .

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. (Rom 1:21-25; 2:1)

These false teachers are like unthinking animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed. . . They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain

among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals. They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. (2 Pet 2:12-14)

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity . . . It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. (Eph 4:17-19, 5:8, 10-12)

But God's people do them too.

You are a chosen son of Almighty God! You are an honored warrior of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has paid the penalty for every one of your sins, including every time you look at pornography. You have God living inside of you. You have the most important responsibility on Earth: representing God on Earth. And the Creator of the Universe has chosen and purchased you to live with Him forever in a perfect Paradise.

Why "*have [you] exchanged the glory of God for the shame of idols*" (Hosea 4:7)! When you look at pornography you lose your glory as a son of God. You forfeit your purpose as a servant of God. You treat the blood of Christ shed for your sins like dirt. And you become more like an animal in heat than a man made in the image of God.

"For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life" (Prov 6:26). Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.

Looking at pornography degrades your body

Some in the Corinthian church were having sex with prostitutes. What he said to them is true of any Christian who looks at pornography:

The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . .

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." . . .

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. (1 Cor 6:13-20)

Your body is a sacred temple of God. He lives inside of your body. Your body has been made a part of Christ, you have been united to Him. Your body will be renewed and be your eternal body. So should you unite and bond your body to a wicked, demonic, naked woman used by the Devil to defile you? Should you degrade something as holy as the temple of your body? The Apostle says, “Never!”

And notice that the Apostle says the “affects” of being sexually immoral are worse than the other sins he lists a few verses earlier such as being “thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or [who] are abusive, or cheat people” (1 Cor 6:10). Why is this sin more destructive than others? Because it does something to us. In uniting ourselves with a wicked woman it affects our minds and spirits in a powerful and lasting way. Sexual sin changes us. It defiles us in such a way that is hard to get rid of. Even though we are forgiven for it, we cannot forget it.

John Calvin commented on Paul’s warning:

Defilement does not attach itself to our body from other vices in the same way as it does from *fornication*. My hand, it is true, is defiled by theft or murder, my tongue by evil speaking, or perjury, and the whole body by drunkenness. But *fornication* leaves a stain impressed upon the body [and mind and spirit], such as is not impressed upon it from other sins. ¹

“For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life” (Prov 6:26). Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.

Looking at pornography will cost you your freedom

Most men think they can simply dabble with pornography and stop anytime they want. But they are ignorant of how addictive pornography can be. No one who ever became addicted to drugs thought they would. But drugs like cocaine have chemical elements that effect the human brain in uncontrollable ways. As a result, if you experiment with cocaine, addiction can happen very easily, is very difficult to avoid, and even more difficult to overcome. This is because a cocaine addiction is a chemical addiction.

Researchers are warning that addiction to pornography works very much like cocaine. It is not simply psychologically addictive, but like cocaine, it does something in your brain to make you emotionally dependent on it. Dr. Kleponis explains:

As with any other drug, a tolerance eventually develops. More of the drug is needed to get the same effect. . . The reason why a tolerance develops is very simple. The brain is enjoying the effects from large amounts of dopamine, but the rest of the body realizes that this is not normal. The brain should not be releasing so much dopamine, so the body decides to shut off the dopamine.

Because the brain loves the dopamine so much, the man must consume more extreme forms of pornography and in greater amounts to keep it coming. Thus, the tolerance is really the body's natural defense mechanism.

Along with tolerance, the man will also develop a dependence on pornography. At this point, it isn't about the good feelings he gets from viewing pornography. Now he needs it just to get through daily life. The brain has become so accustomed to operating at such a high level of chemical stimulation that it needs to maintain that level just to function.

If the man doesn't get his fix, he experiences withdrawal symptoms including depression, anxiety, insomnia, irritability, headaches, stomach aches, difficulty concentrating, etc. This accounts for the compulsion a man feels to use pornography regularly. He may desperately want to stop using pornography, but can't. ²

The sheer psychological power and chemical intensity of pornography create an extraordinary level of stimulation that your brain was never created to experience on a regular basis. Because of this, the brain of a man regularly using porn can change and shape itself to resemble neuropathways similar to those of an alcoholic or drug addict.

Christian author C. S. Lewis illustrated Satan's design in this when he wrote from the perspective of the demon Screwtape:

An ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure is the formula. It is more certain; and it's better style. To get the man's soul and give him nothing in return—that is what really gladdens our Father's [Satan's] heart. ³

Accordingly, Solomon warned his sons in the context of sexual sin: "*An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him. He will die for lack of self-control; he will be lost because of his great foolishness.*" (Prov 5:22-23). Pornography is an especially addictive sin. And if you get addicted, it will become a very destructive sin. And imagine for a moment what a pornography addiction would be like. Daily feeling the need to degrade yourself with those demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. Daily feeling intense guilt about such a demeaning and gross sin. Daily feeling intense fear that you will not be able to stop. And being afraid that you are going to be caught.

Looking at pornography will cost you your ministry

The Apostle Paul wrote to a young man who wanted to serve God in ministry:

If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work. Run from anything that stimulates

youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. (2 Tim 2:21-22)

If you have a desire to serve Christ in ministry, you cannot be a sexually immoral person who cannot control their lust. The Devil will make sure to use it against you and embarrass the Church and the ministry, as he did with Ted Haggard. God knows our lives and He only wants pure vessels working for Him because sinful people are not safe servants.

Looking at pornography will cost you your reputation

Listen carefully to the lie that a demon-possessed destroyer of your wife and life told a young man:

“Come, let’s drink our fill of love until morning. Let’s enjoy each other’s caresses, for my husband is not home. He’s away on a long trip. He has taken a wallet full of money with him and won’t return until later this month.” (Prov 7:18-20)

What was this wicked woman’s lie to this man in order to entice him to sin with her? You won’t be caught. No one will ever know. This is a favorite of the Devil. He wants you to believe that we can sin with willing, wicked, women on the Internet and never have to suffer the shame, embarrassment, and pain of having your wife, children, and friends know.

But the belief that no one will see is a lie. There are at least two persons who will see you sin with lust and at least one is highly motivated to expose you. Your enemy the Devil is not satisfied with merely enslaving you to the pleasure of his demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. He also wants to publicly embarrass and expose you because his ultimate goal is to destroy you. He wants your sin to be “secret” in order to get you hooked on lust. And then he wants to work so your sin becomes public and inflicts on you and others the most pain possible.

Do you understand that there is a supernatural and hateful being wanting everyone to know about your sin? And the only reason it hasn’t happened is that God has mercifully protected you. So far. Will you continue to trample on His grace and His willingness to deny the Devil his desire to expose and shame you? If you do, do not be surprised if even God your Father works to expose your sin in order to discipline you and help you stop. And that’s a scary thought. Both God and the Devil united to make sure your sin is no longer secret.

Solomon warned his sons that if they did not heed his warnings about sexual immorality, that they would end up crying:

“How I hated discipline! If only I had not ignored all the warnings! Oh, why didn’t I listen to my teachers? Why didn’t I pay attention to my instructors? I have come to the brink of utter ruin, and now I must face public disgrace.” (Prov 5:12-14)

Imagine your wife and children knowing that you have masturbated over pornography. We mean it. Take a moment to play that scene out in your mind. And then imagine trying to convince them you are still a man they can trust and respect. If they do not yet know, then know that their Father has been protecting them too.

Your sexual desires are like a fire. If you keep it in the fireplace of marriage it will not only be safe, but be a pleasure and blessing. But if you let that fire burn outside the fireplace of your marriage, it becomes dangerous and destructive. Stop playing with a fire that can burn your whole house down!

One counselor shares an example:

Rob walked into his supervisor's office for what he thought was a conversation about fixing a scheduling conflict with a major client. When his supervisor asked him to take a seat, he realized this conversation was going to be more serious.

"I need you to take a look at these," his boss said, clearing his throat as he pushed a half-inch stack of paper across the desk. He was caught totally off guard. Rob looked at the top page and immediately his face turned hot and his heart pounded like a bass drum in his chest. Slumping in the chair, he let out an expletive and sighed.

Staring back at him was over six months of Internet history exposing his porn use on the company computer. The proof before him was undeniable.

Next Rob's boss pushed a copy of the company's Internet usage agreement across the desk, which explicitly prohibited viewing pornographic material during company time and on company computers. The agreement, bearing Rob's signature, stipulated immediate termination for anyone violating the policy.

Numb, Rob walked out of his supervisor's office, emptied his desk, and joined the ranks of the unemployed—all because of porn. The sting of Rob's shame ran deep. First, he felt the shame of looking at porn—the embarrassment at being caught, the humiliation of being fired from his job, and mortification at the thought of having to tell his wife that he was fired . . . and why.⁴

You can avoid all this pain if you will obey God and: "*Flee from sexual immorality*" (1 Cor 6:18). "*For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life*" (Prov 6:26). *Sinful lust promises you pleasure, but will cost you so much more pain.*

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Proverbs 6:26 from memory.

¹ *Calvin's Commentaries*, online at www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cal.html.

² Kleoponis, Loc. 678-686.

³ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins, 1946), 106.

⁴ Reference unavailable.

Chapter 7

Hurting Your Wife

Looking at pornography endangers your wife's trust, respect, and intimacy with you

Hebrews 13:4

Week 4

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) How can your sinful lust affect your wife and family?
 - 2) Why would the Devil want your sin to be made public?
 - 3) How will sinful lust affect your real love life?
 - 4) What was most meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

Your wife married you with the promise that she would never have to compete with another woman for your affection. She believed that sex with you was an intimate, private, and holy experience shared only with you. If and when she discovers your mental adultery, she will know that you have loved another woman more than her.

And you cannot deny this. When you are looking at wicked naked women on the Internet, you are choosing to love them more than your wife. You have chosen women you don't even know, who care nothing about you, and who would never have or care for your children. You have chosen them over the woman God gave you. One book on this topic put it like this:

Your wife gave up her freedom for you. She relinquished her rights to seek happiness elsewhere. She exchanged this freedom for something she considered more valuable: your love and your word. Her dreams are tied up in you, dreams of sharing and communication and oneness. She's pledged to be yours sexually. Her sexuality is her most guarded possession, her secret garden. She trusted you would be worthy of this gift, but you have cavalierly viewed sensual garbage. ¹

It is because your Father wanted to save you and your spouse from all the hurt of mental adultery and cybersex that He said:

**Marriage is to be held in honor among all,
and the marriage bed is to be undefiled.** (Hebrews 13:4 NASB)

Looking at pornography endangers your wife's trust, respect, and intimacy with you.

Do not break your wife's heart

Remember, even if you don't think viewing pornography is adultery, Jesus and your wife know it is. Your Lord said: *"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt 5:27-28).

As described in a previous chapter, adultery, including mental adultery, is the only sin powerful enough to break what God has joined together in marriage. Mental adultery is having sex with another woman and violates the loyalty and commitment you made to your wife. You have betrayed her. And she will feel this deeply.

Women cannot understand the struggle men have in the area of sinful lust. But a husband cannot understand the struggle his wife will have when he is sexually unfaithful to her. Maybe this is a better question. Husband, how would you feel if your wife had sex with another man? Shocked, disgusted, rejected, alone, worthless. That is how your wife feels when she discovers you are viewing pornography.

"In a survey of women who experienced serious adverse consequences from their partner's cybersex involvement":

Wives commonly reported feeling hurt, betrayed, rejected, abandoned, lonely, isolated, humiliated, jealous, and angry. Wives often compared themselves unfavorably to online images. Wives overwhelmingly felt that cyber affairs were as emotionally painful as offline affairs. . .

In a survey of 63 wives of self-identified sex addicts, 70% met most of the criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. . .

In 2002, the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reported the following as the most salient factors present in divorce cases: 56% involved one party having "an obsessive interest in pornographic websites."²

This is why 40% of those addicted to porn lost their spouses.³

In one book, a wife described her experience when she discovered her husband was using porn as: "a trauma I barely lived through . . . I [was] choking down handfuls of sleeping pills day after day, because it hurt too much emotionally to stay awake." The authors go on to relate: "When we asked women if they could cherish their husbands if they found them stuck in sexual sin, their answers were shaky. . . Ellen said, "I would try. I would have such great sorrow and disappointment. . . It would be very difficult. Frances used the key word "respect." "It would be very difficult to respect and trust him."⁴

Another woman on a Christian blog site gave her "diary entry from 3 months after my husband's first official disclosure that my suspicions were true and he did, in fact, have a pornography addiction":

My broken heart weeps blood and tears from shattered vows, promises, and the thought of all that was lost. My soul aches for truth, justice, and righteousness. I need a real man and hero to stand against the evil, to protect me, to value our marriage and family like I do.

I look at myself in the mirror and wonder who I have become. I feel like an old toy that was discarded and then brought out again, but for how long? I'm scared. Some days the grace flows freely, but other days I feel so very alone. I am divided within myself, and I wonder how my own husband could betray me in such a perverse way.

I am in so much pain that I feel I might break in two. How can I face this and move forward? Supernatural power has carried me so far. How long until that is gone? I must seem so foolish to John. A naive little housewife who wasn't skinny enough or sexy enough, and who is now too stupid and weak to stand up for herself.

Why must I search for answers? Maybe there aren't any, and maybe there is no way to explain this horrible nightmare or find any redemption in it. Maybe God will bring me true peace someday. Today I am in turmoil, divided, and sad. ⁵

A Christian counselor describes the struggle of women she has counseled on this topic:

The wife's biggest pain is that porn's a fantasy, hidden away in his mind. It can't be stopped or monitored by another unless the porn addict chooses. A wife can't compete with a fantasy! She loses faith that their intimacy is real – it may just be a part of his fantasy about someone else he's viewed. If she withdraws, he may use that as an excuse for his sin. If she gives, she may feel used, not loved. It feels like a "no win"! ⁶

From the experience of his counseling ministry, Dr. Kleponis has written extensively on the effects of pornography in the family:

Janet's response to Tom's pornography use was similar to that of most wives. She was sickened by the very thought of her husband viewing pornography, because to her, he was not only using and condoning the sexual abuse of women, he also was committing adultery. . .

When a wife discovers her husband's pornography use, she often feels heartbroken. . . She feels deeply hurt because she originally believed she had her husband's complete heart, and now she sees that only part of his heart belonged to her while the rest belonged to the women in porn. . .

Betrayal. This is the most obvious emotional wound that wives experience. . . A woman cannot feel loved, honored, and cherished when her husband uses pornography, when he has taken something

as sacred as their intimate sexual life and shared it with hundreds of women online. . .

For Janet the betrayal was so deep for her that she felt she no longer knew Tom. Now, he was a stranger and she couldn't sleep in the same bed with him anymore. She no longer felt special in her marriage. To her, she was "just another bimbo that Tom has been with."

It took a while for Tom to realize how deeply his actions betrayed her. This was clear to him only when he fully understood how women and men define pornography differently, and how injurious it was to Janet.

Most women experience a strong rage when they discover their husbands' pornography use, a righteous anger. They have been betrayed, marital vows have been broken, and for some women this anger and betrayal are so strong that they want to end their marriages. Janet was tempted to do this. The effects of Tom's pornography use went to the core of her soul.

Loss of Trust. When a wife loses trust in her husband, it affects her ability to feel emotionally safe and secure in her marriage. She no longer feels that she can count on her husband. This can lead to many irrational behaviors, including checking Internet history, phone records, credit card bills, and so on. She may fear leaving him at home alone, allowing him to go on business trips, or even go to work.

All of this activity is done to try to regain some sense of safety and security for her, but it usually ends up wearing her out, and ultimately, she knows she cannot control every minute of his life.

For some wives, this loss of trust leads them to live estranged from their husbands to protect themselves emotionally. Repeated violations in some cases can permanently damage trust and lead to divorce.

Janet's loss of trust in Tom was particularly painful because he was the one person she thought she could always trust. She never questioned him. He was her rock. When she discovered his pornography use, it felt like her world was destroyed and she didn't know who she could count on. Janet began to experience bouts of depression and anxiety. Husbands must understand that sacred marital trust can be easily damaged and can take months or years to restore.

Pain and Sadness. Wives who have been affected by their husbands' pornography use often say there is a deep aching in their hearts. They gave each other their hearts in marriage, and it is their responsibility to protect each other's heart. Discovering her husband's pornography use, a wife is often stunned at how he could have been so thoughtless, inconsiderate, and disrespectful. She can't believe how the man she loved and trusted the most could do something so hurtful.

This pain is accompanied by a deep sadness. All at once the wonderful marriage she thought she had now seems like a farce. She now questions what is real in their marriage and what isn't, and whether the marriage can even be healed and if they will ever recover.

Janet felt this way. She thought Tom loved her. Now, she felt as if he threw her heart on the ground and stomped on it. She grieved over her marriage, or at least the marriage she thought she had. Many nights were spent lying awake and weeping. Seeing how hurt and sad Janet was deeply affected Tom. Had he known how much his pornography use would hurt her, he never would have entertained the thought of using it.

Unable to Compete. Discovering her husband's use of pornography can severely wound a woman's self-image. A wife, who looks like a real woman and not a porn star, and sees these very young and beautiful women that don't exist in real life, often asks, "How can I compete?" She knows there is no way that she could ever look like the women in porn!

This can leave her feeling sexually undesirable, and it is a no-win situation for most women. The women in porn are always young while real women age. . . Because pornography damages a man's ability to appreciate true beauty in women, it leaves wives feeling unloved and rejected by their husbands.

Feeling like this, Janet began exercising more to lose weight. She also dressed sexier and had more sex with Tom. In the end, however, she knew she was only fooling herself and that she would never look like a twenty-year-old porn star. She also knew that all the sex she was having with Tom felt empty. She realized what she was doing and became angry with herself for allowing porn to dictate the type of wife she should be. For a while after that she refused to have sex with Tom or even sleep with him.

Tom never imagined how deeply his actions would affect Janet emotionally. Remember, to him, the women in porn were just those images on a screen. But for Janet, they were real women with whom she needed to compete for Tom's love and attention.

Trauma: This intense emotional pain can include feelings of depression, anxiety, fear, and shame. A woman may have panic attacks or uncontrollable crying. She may wonder what she did wrong to cause her husband to turn to pornography. The shame and embarrassment may keep her from telling others about her situation. She might try to control every aspect of her husband's life to prevent being hurt. . .

Janet fits the description of someone who has been traumatized by her husband's behaviors. She came from a healthy loving home with no history of abuse or addiction. Her father was a strong, loving,

protective man. When she discovered Tom's addiction, it was a new experience and particularly painful.

Her attempts to feel safe focused on her environment. For a while she refused to have sex with Tom or even sleep with him. While much of this was due to the betrayal, anger, and sadness she experienced, it was also to help her feel safe. Not having Tom in their bedroom provided her with a safe refuge that she could escape to when she was feeling bad.

She also cycled through many painful emotions including depression, anger, sadness, and anxiety, and at times she would cry uncontrollably. This frightened her as it left her feeling totally out of control. She just wanted to feel safe and secure.

Pornography use also damages a man's ability to be a good leader, provider, and protector of his family. Instead of being a good role model for his kids, he is a hypocrite. Many fathers will preach to their kids on the dangers of pornography while they regularly use it behind closed doors. A wife may think, "If he believes it is okay to use pornography, will he allow our sons to view porn someday?" It contributes to her loss of trust in him as a father. . .

If a couple has daughters, it could be worse. A wife might think, "Is he looking at our daughters the way he looks at the women in porn?" While a son might not be too upset to learn that his father uses pornography, this can be devastating for a daughter. To think that the man she has always loved, trusted, and looked up to as her protector is using porn is repulsive to her. She loses all respect for her father.

Janet always felt that Tom was a good role model for their sons. He often spoke to them about respecting women and treating them properly. Tom's use of pornography destroyed this image. Janet had nightmares about their sons discovering Tom's stash of pornography and how he would explain it. While she knew he would never expose their kids to pornography, the trauma of Tom's addiction led her to fear leaving them alone with him. She had difficulty seeing him as a good leader, provider, and protector of their children.

The discovery of a man's pornography use can be very traumatizing for a wife. For years, she thought she knew her husband, and now she learns that he has a secret life. To her, he now seems like a total stranger. Her ability to trust him has been shattered. She loses all respect for him and no longer sees him as a good role model for their children. The healing of the marriage can take years. . .

The research is clear. Pornography use is tearing apart marriages and harming families. God has called men to be leaders, providers, and protectors of their marriages and families. By using pornography they give up their ability to fulfill those roles, because they become enslaved to a drug that only hurts the people they love the most. ⁷

Simply put, a husband and father's use of pornography is one of the most selfish things he can do to his wife and children. Pornography is never free. The cost of your intense pleasure from it, will be your wife's even more intense pain. Accordingly, Solomon warned his sons:

Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel. (Prov 5:7-9)

“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled” (Hebrews 13:4 NASB). Looking at pornography endangers your wife's trust, respect, and intimacy with you.

Looking at pornography will cost you sexual pleasure

God created you for sex, but not for pornography. Your long term sexual pleasure with your wife will be diminished significantly if not completely destroyed by your use of pornography. Simply put, pornography burns you out sexually. One expert writes:

Most people with sexual compulsions have problems with emotional intimacy. Brief physical encounters have taken over for the deeply satisfying, but sometimes hard work, of establishing intimate peer relationships. One well-known addictionologist, Greg Nakken, said it well: “Sexual addicts substitute intensity for intimacy. They substitute the intensity of a temporary, artificially induced high for the normal but longer-term effort needed to achieve true intimacy that includes knowing and being known by friends or spouses.”⁸

One study found:

Continued exposure to porn releases surge after surge of dopamine, giving the brain an unnatural high. The brain eventually fatigues, limiting the release of dopamine, leaving the viewer wanting more but unable to reach a level of satisfaction. This is called *desensitization*. Everyday pleasures begin to lose their luster—including sex—and the viewer expands their pornographic tastes and seeks out more novel or harder pornography to get the same arousal.⁹

Another expert in the field shares:

I have also seen in my clinical experience that pornography damages the sexual performance of the viewers. Pornography viewers tend to have problems with premature ejaculation and erectile dysfunction. Having spent so much time in unnatural sexual experiences with paper, celluloid and cyberspace, they seem to find it difficult to have sex with a real human being. Pornography is raising their expectation and demand for types and amounts of sexual experiences; at the same time it is reducing their ability to experience sex.¹⁰

Another expert warns:

With compulsive pornography use, a man's brain can become conditioned to only be stimulated by the constant parade of sexual images he encounters in pornography. Thus, when a man tries to be sexually intimate with one woman, his wife, he may find that he cannot achieve or maintain an erection. In order to be sexually aroused he needs the intense release of dopamine that comes from pornography, not the normal release that comes with a healthy sexual encounter with someone he loves and is committed to in marriage.

Psychology Today reports that when a man invests most of his sex life masturbating to online porn with "endless images of sexy, exciting, constantly changing partners," he is likely to find his one real-world partner less stimulating. There develops an "emotional disconnection that is manifesting physically as sexual dysfunction with real-world partners."¹¹

The very thing you seek in pornography (sexual pleasure), will be the very thing you lose.

Pornography drastically increases your sex drive to abnormal levels. And this puts an unnecessary burden on your wife and you are now using, even abusing her, rather than loving her.

Contrary to what a lot of morons think and teach, pornography does not teach you how to have good sex. Why? Because it does not teach you how to please your wife. Most of the women you are watching in pornography are faking any pleasure they seem to be having. Many of the gross things they do might give you pleasure to watch it, but it does not feel good for women, nor will it give pleasure to your wife. And pleasing your wife is the most pleasurable thing about sex. "*You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed [makarion: "happy"] to give than to receive'*" (Acts 20:35). And this is true of sex as well.

Pornography does not portray love-making but lust-making, and the latter will never satisfy either partner. It must be admitted that lust-making with willing wicked women may feel easier and more exciting than love-making with your wife. But it will never be more fulfilling. And you know this by experience. When you really make love with your wife you are more fulfilled by the experience. But when you make lust with wicked women on the Internet, it leaves you feeling guilty, yet thirsting for more. And your lust-making will ruin you for love-making.

"*Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled*" (Hebrews 13:4 NASB). Looking at pornography endangers your wife's trust, respect, and intimacy with you.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Proverbs 6:26 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Hebrews 13:4 in the translation above or another.

¹ Arterburn and Stoeker, 205.

² *Porn Statistics* at www.covenanteyes.com

³ “Porn Addiction in America.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 212, 232-234.

⁵ Testimony at <http://dynamicwomenfaith.com/blog/pornography-marriage-personal-account/>

⁶ “Help! I Just Discovered My Husband is Looking at Pornography!”, Sherry Allchin, <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2013/02/18/%E2%80%9Chelp-i-just-discovered-my-husband-is-looking-at-pornography%E2%80%9D/>

⁷ Kleponis, Loc. 302-320; 1594-1743.

⁸ Reference unavailable.

⁹ *Your Brain on Porn*, at www.covenanteyes.com, p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹ Kleponis, Loc. 1070-1071.

Chapter 8

Hurting Your God

Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure

Ephesians 4:30

Week 4

- For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) How does sinful lust hurt your Father in Heaven?
 - 2) How does sinful lust hurt the Holy Spirit in you?
 - 3) What was most meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

There is no such thing as a secret sin. This is what the wicked woman in Proverbs 7 wanted the stupid boy to believe. She told him: “*Come, let’s drink our fill of love until morning. Let’s enjoy each other’s caresses, for my husband is not home. He’s away on a long trip*” (Prov 7:18-19). The message: “no one will ever know.”

In the same way, the demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life on the Internet want to convince you that no one will know of your sin with them. But Someone does know. And He is God. The Scriptures tell us:

Do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live.
(Ephesians 4:30)

Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure.

Looking at naked, disgusting, demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life will hurt your Father in Heaven

We have written elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials*:

The constant presence of God in your life should also strengthen you against temptation because there is no such thing as a “secret sin.” It is amazing how we can deceive ourselves into thinking we can do something “when no one is looking” or “no one will know.” This presumed secrecy about sin gives it so much power! But what if you never forgot that God is always watching you?! Not to condemn you but because He loves you. . .

“I am watching them closely, and I see every sin. They cannot hope to hide from me. . . Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?” declares the Lord” (Jer 16:17; 23:24).

Men, Jesus Christ is right beside you when you are on the Internet. Would He like what you are looking at? . . . Again, never forget that

God is always watching you. Not to condemn you, but to strengthen you and comfort you because He loves you. ¹

So what happens when your Father sees you committing sin with a wicked woman on the Internet? First, you hurt Him. You hurt the One who loves you, and has done more for you, than anyone in the world. We know that our sin affects our Father. *“The LORD saw that the human beings on the earth were very wicked and that everything they thought about was evil. He was sorry he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain”* (Gen 6:5-6 NCV). Your pleasure with pornography causes pain for the most powerful person in the Universe because He has adopted you as His son.

Have you read the OT Prophets? God expressed a great deal of deep hurt when His people chose to love idols more than Him. It is because God loves you that He feels hurt by your idolatrous sexual sin. The God of the Universe has humbled Himself to be hurt by you. And He would tell you the same things He told the Israelites:

You have committed adultery on every high mountain. There you have worshiped idols and have been unfaithful to me. . . You have left me and climbed into bed with these detestable gods. You have committed yourselves to them. You love to look at their naked bodies.
(Isa 57:7-8)

This is what God would say to you about your spiritual prostitution and idolatry with willing, wicked naked women on the Internet. He is hurt by your sin, not only because of what it does to you, but because of what it does to His daughter, your wife.

It is because of His love for you, and His disgust over what He sees you doing with willing, wicked women on the Internet, that your Father warns He will punish you. Paul warned Christians:

It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God . . . The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before.
(1 Thess 4:3-6 NIV)

God’s forgiveness of your sins does not mean He will not discipline and punish you for your sins. And the Apostle Paul warned of this particularly in the case of sexual sin. There are many promises in the Bible that God wants you to believe. And one of them is this: *“God’s will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. . . The Lord will punish all those who commit such [sexual] sins, as we told you and warned you before”* (1 Thess 4:3, 6). Is the pleasure you experience from porn worth the pain you will experience from your Lord?

As illustrated in chapter 5 of this study, King David would respond with a resounding, “No!” The punishments God gave him and his family far outweighed whatever temporary pleasure he got that night with Bathsheba. God disciplined David for his sexual sin and He will discipline you as well. And harder than you might think. Elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials* we have written regarding divine discipline:

Rather than punishing you for your sin, your Dad is usually protecting you from the potential effects of your sin. Many times in your life, your sin should have hurt you and others much more than it did. This is because God was protecting you. It is also because your Dad knows that treating your sin with grace is usually more productive than punishment. God’s love and patience motivates you to love Him more than fearing Him. . .

When God does discipline us, He uses various ways. First, the painful conviction you experience after sinning is a powerful motivator to not sin. Secondly, your Dad may simply choose not to protect you from the usually painful consequences of your sin. Therefore, the burden of your conscience about your sin, and the naturally painful consequences of your sin, are usually very effective as God’s normal methods of discipline.

Like a good human father, more strict discipline is used by your Dad as a last option. This can occur when a Christian becomes addicted to a very destructive sin like illegal drug abuse or sexual immorality (cf. Rev 2:20-22). Very painful consequences may be the only thing that will help such a person stop their behavior. In such cases, a Christian will be thankful for God’s discipline because of how much they hate their sin and the destruction it is causing in their life, and for people they love. But even in the very rare times when your Dad painfully punishes His children, He does it with compassion and sadness, never anger. ²

“Do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live” (Eph 4:30). Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure.

Looking at naked, disgusting, demon-possessed destroyers of your life and wife hurts the Holy Spirit in you

Not only do you cause emotional pain for God the Father but God the Holy Spirit. He lives inside of you and is forced to be with you, even when you do the most degrading and vile things like look at pornography. How do you think He feels about that?

This is why Scripture says: “Do not bring sorrow [*lypeite*] to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30). The Greek word used here for how the Holy Spirit feels when you are

having cybersex with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life means “to cause severe mental or emotional distress.”³

Of course, God the Holy Spirit is willing to experience pain in order to seal you as belonging to God and preserve you from losing your salvation. But the Holy One suffers intensely when you are lusting after willing, wicked naked women on your computer screen. You can suppress and ignore His pain while you are doing it, but you sure feel it afterwards.

“*Do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live*” (Eph 4:30). Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure.

Looking at naked, disgusting, demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life makes you a worshipper and imitator of demons and pleases and glorifies the Devil

In Corinth, some of the Christians were merely offering food to idols at religious festivals. Sound harmless? Not at all. The Apostle warned, “*I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don’t want you [Christians] to participate with demons*” (2 Cor 10:20). When a Christian offered a sacrifice of just some food to a statue, Paul said they were worshipping demons.

What would he say about offering yourself to some willing, wicked, naked, demonic woman on a screen? You are worshipping demons and acting like a demon. And that is why demons are hunting you through the Internet. To make you worship and love Satan through worshipping and loving the women who serve him.

In chapter 3 of this study we wrote:

Remember, in your struggle against willing wicked women on the Internet, you “*are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places*” (Eph 6:12). Those women on the screen are not just women. They have devoted themselves to depravity and serve demons. And those demons are wanting to use them to get to you.

Of course they look enticing. “*Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*” (2 Cor 11:14). But believe it brother, there are demons behind those exciting and enticing women. With pornography you must see through their physical skin and see demons. If you saw the spiritual reality of pornography you would see what God sees: demonically controlled people having sex. In other words, pornography is demons having sex with demons. And that is gross and repulsive.

What God said to His OT people about idolatry is true of His people who partake in pornography:

They mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs. They worshiped their idols, which led to their downfall. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. . . They defiled themselves by their evil deeds, and their love of idols was adultery in the Lord's sight. (Ps 106:34-37, 39)

When you worship the demons of pornography, you are in danger of sacrificing your sons and daughters as well, because of the harm and hurt you will bring to their lives. And your “love” for those demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life is “*adultery in the Lord's sight.*”

“*Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live*” (Eph 4:30). Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure.

Looking at naked, disgusting, demon-possessed destroyers of your life and wife denies you the right to say you love God more than those women

Cybersex means you love those willing, wicked, naked, demonic women more than you love God. It means in that moment, you love Satan more than your Savior. For that moment, you are accepting from Satan something you desire more than pleasing your God. That's just the truth as even God sees it when you choose them over Him. And isn't it a horrible thing to have to admit that you love the pleasure of sin more than the One who died for those very same sins? The Bible is even stronger. It says you HATE God when you love sin:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world [and the pleasures it offers] is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely? (James 4:4-5)

When David admitted his sexual immorality he said, “*I have sinned against the Lord*” (2 Sam 12:13). He sinned against Bathsheba. He killed her husband Uriah. But David understood that first and foremost he had sinned against His God.

The greatest claim a man can make is: “I love God more than anyone or anything.” If you are committing sexual immorality you have to admit that there are some things that you love, serve, and worship more than God. Your Father is asking you to love Him more than the temporary, harmful, slave-making, devil-worshipping pleasure of pornography. Will you do it? Job said to his friends: “Till I die, I will not deny my integrity” (Job 27:5). And God said to Satan: “*He has maintained his integrity, even though you urged me to harm him without cause*” (Job 2:3). Will you determine for God to be able to say the same about you for the rest of your life? Because if you do not have integrity, if you cannot say you love God, nothing else in your life matters. Think about it. Nothing else matters.

“Do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live” (Eph 4:30). Looking at pornography will give God pain and the Devil pleasure.

- Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- Recite Matthew 5:27-28 and Proverbs 7:26 from memory.
- Memorize Proverbs 6:26 in the translation above or another.

¹ Excerpt from *FAITH* chapter 3.12.

² Excerpt from *FAITH*, chapter 3.7.

³ *BAGD*.

Chapter 9

Gouge & Cut if Necessary*Are you willing to do whatever it takes?*

Matthew 5:29

Week 5

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) What are some radical statements Jesus made about being holy in sexual sin? Do you agree or disagree these should be understood literally?
 - 2) What do we claim God is specifically asking of you in the area of sexual purity? What would you add to this?
 - 3) What does Joseph’s example teach us about the potential cost of sexual purity?
 - 4) How would you categorize your level of victory over sinful lust?
 - 5) What are the limitations on spiritual freedom in this area?
 - 6) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter? Why?

Origen was by far the most influential Bible scholar in third century Christianity. Even the Roman Emperor’s mother requested Origen to visit her to teach her Christian doctrine. The man’s commitment to Christ was steadfast and courageous even at a time of great persecution. And he stopped at nothing to be holy. One of his biographers was the early Church historian Eusebius. Of Origen the historian writes:

At this time while Origen was conducting catechetical instruction at Alexandria, a deed was done by him which evidenced an immature and youthful mind, but at the same time gave the highest proof of faith and continence. For he took the words, “*There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake*” (Matthew 19:12) in too literal and extreme a sense. And in order to fulfill the Savior’s word, and at the same time to take away from the unbelievers all opportunity for scandal— for, although young, he met for the study of divine things with women as well as men— he carried out in action the word of the Savior.¹

Origen castrated himself. That’s pretty extreme. But it was practiced among Christian men in the early Church. So much so that in the early fourth century, the Council of Nicea had to outlaw it.²

Unfortunately, both ancient and modern Bible scholars have tried to explain away what Jesus said as well. What did He say? Jesus had just told the disciples that the only reason a man could divorce his wife was

unfaithfulness. “*Jesus’ disciples then said to him, ‘If this is the case, it is better not to marry!’*” (Matt 19:10). Jesus responded, “*Not everyone can accept this statement [to not be married]. Only those whom God helps*” (v. 11). Jesus went on to explain one way that men might be able to deny the natural desire to be married: castration. That’s right. Jesus said a viable alternative to having a sex drive and being married was to have your testicles removed, either by nature, others, or yourself. Despite all the efforts in both the ancient and modern Church to explain away what Jesus said, this is what He said:

For there are eunuchs [eunouchoi: “a castrated male person”³] who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it. (Matt 19:12 NASB)

And indeed it is difficult to find any teacher today who will accept what Jesus said. The NLT goes so far as to translate those “*who made themselves eunuchs*” as those who “choose not to marry.” That is not what Jesus said. But virtually every Bible scholar today denies the plain sense of what Jesus said. D. A. Carson writes that Matthew 19:12 “is not a commendation of self-castration but of renunciation of marriage,”⁴ allegorizing the statement as the NLT does. But the other two examples of castration in the passage were literal, and so was the third. Accordingly, Calvin was more honest and said: “He says that there are other *eunuchs*, who have castrated themselves, that they may be more at liberty to serve God.”⁵

Why all the denial and attempted dilution of what Jesus said? Because it seems too drastic to us. Could Jesus really be condoning the practice of castration in order to better serve God? He certainly does not in any way condemn it as so many of His followers have. Sometimes Jesus’ teaching is too hard for humans to handle. Which is why He said, “*He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.*” He knew most would not.

Do not misunderstand us. In this chapter entitled “Gouge and Cut if Necessary” we are not going to recommend castration. Are you relieved? But what we do want to impress upon you is this: you must be willing to do whatever it takes to rid yourself of sexual sin.

This is what Jesus was saying when He taught about sinful lust in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, “*anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt 5:28). And then He said:

**If your right eye makes you stumble,
tear it out and throw it from you.** (Matthew 5:29 NASB)

**Your Father wants you to do whatever it takes
to stop sexual sin in your life.**

Do whatever it takes

And again, modern teachers immediately want to deny that Jesus meant what He said. Of course Jesus was only speaking metaphorically right? No. The fact that Jesus meant this literally is confirmed when He says why someone should gouge out their eye or cut off their hand: “*For [gar: “because”] it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell*” (v. 29 NASB). Would we all agree that it would literally be better to lose your eye or hand “*than for your whole body to be thrown into hell*”? And if we agree with that, then we can certainly agree that Jesus was in fact speaking literally.

Of course the threat of Hell does not apply to the Christian. But why do so many Christians automatically think Jesus isn’t really saying what He is saying or that it applies to them? Because they believe that having an eye or hand is more important than not sinning against Almighty God. Are you sure God would agree? Does God think that having an eye, a hand, or testicles is more valuable than holiness? Are you sure Jesus would be displeased if you lost an eye to be holy, instead of sin against Him with the same eye? We do not think so.

What is Jesus saying then? That whatever else you try in order to keep sinful lust out of your life had better work. Because if it doesn’t then you need to know that God thinks your holiness is more important than your body parts. Indeed, literally gouging out your eye, cutting off your hand, or castrating yourself are the last resort. And Jesus knew that lesser steps would probably solve the problem for most. But let us not dishonor Christ and ignore how serious He is about holiness by conveniently categorizing the above statements into some metaphorical mush just because we think Jesus is being too extreme about the seriousness of sin. Jesus is saying if other measures to stop sinful lust in your life do not work, it would be better for you to lose some body parts.

Do you doubt His wisdom? Ask someone who has been addicted to pornography and as a result has lost their job, reputation, wife, children, and any self-respect. They will tell you that losing an eye, hand, or testicles, would have been less painful and costly. And in hindsight, they wish they would have cut these things off if it would have saved them from what lust cost them.

So if you struggle with sinful lust you had better find a way to overcome it. We can offer suggestions here, but if they don’t help you Your Father wants you to do whatever it takes to stop sexual sin in your life. “*If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you*” (Matt 5:29).

What is God specifically asking of you?

God is specifically and simply asking you this: To deny yourself the sexual pleasure that comes from willing wicked women and only experience this with your wife. He is not saying you cannot experience sexual pleasure. He in fact encourages you to do so (cf. Prov 5:18-19; 1 Cor 7:3-5). And wants to provide for you to experience something even more satisfying than cybersex. But at the core of obeying His commands in this area is this decision: to never again experience the pleasure, the rush, the high, that willing wicked women can give you.

Yep, there is a cost here. Based on the use of pornography in our world, that means giving up a considerable amount of pleasure. But that is one of the difficult costs of belonging to God on a wicked planet. Moses knew this world was not his home and living here was difficult. But *“He chose to suffer with God’s people instead of enjoying sin for a short time”* (Heb 11:25 NCV). Will you give up the pleasure that demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life can give you, in order to please God? Will pleasing God be more important to you than temporarily pleasing yourself?

What are you willing to do to be holy in the area of sexual pleasure? Do you love God as much a Joseph did?

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, and Potiphar’s wife soon began to look at him lustfully. “Come and sleep with me,” she demanded.

But Joseph refused. “Look,” he told her, “my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God.”

She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, “Come on, sleep with me!” Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house. . .

Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife’s story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king’s prisoners were held, and there he remained. (Gen 39:6-12, 19-20)

Do you see how serious Joseph was about being holy for God? Most of us don’t even have an undoubtedly beautiful woman begging us daily for sex and physically grabbing us. *“She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day”* (v. 10). Many Christian men are willing to give in to women merely on a screen. What ultimately motivated Joseph? He told the willing, wicked woman, *“How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great*

sin against God" (v. 9). Joseph knew God was watching him and would be hurt by his sin. And that must be our ultimate motivation. No other will be strong enough.

We can "put the fear of God in you" by warning you of all the real dangers and destruction of pornography. And God wants you to be afraid of these things too. But love is always stronger than fear. Your love for God is the greatest power you have over lust for wicked women. The motivation to love God, and prove your love for Him, by sacrificing sinful sexual pleasure is the real battle line of your war with lust.

And there is always a cost to real love. What did Joseph's holiness and love for God cost him? He went from being the master of an Egyptian prince's house to being a prisoner in an Egyptian jail. What are you willing to have your holiness cost you? Joseph lost every comfort in life. All God is asking of you is to give up some pleasure once in a while by abstaining from pornography. He is asking a lot less from you than He required of Joseph.

The Devil has launched a massive attack on the holiness of God's sons. Many are being defeated. But we are not to take the Devil's attacks laying down. We are not to cower and give up. Our motto is never "resistance is futile." On the contrary, our motto is what Winston Churchill said in 1941 when Hitler's power had reached a climax:

Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

Many men in Scripture failed in the area of sexual purity. Many more men in the Church today are sinning against God in this area. Will you be different? Will you give in to the enemy like so many do? Or will you be like "*Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite*"?:

As one of David's three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. (2 Sam 23:9-10 NIV)

When everyone else retreats and gives up their fight against wicked women on the Internet, will you keep fighting the Devil? How hard are you willing to fight for your love for God?

Depending on how much sinful lust controls you, you will need varying levels of effort and commitment to be free. One experienced counselor warns:

Some men fail at recovery simply because they are not committed to their program. They may be in recovery only to appease their wives or to look good to their family. While they may struggle with some

denial, pride, and shame, ultimately they simply don't want to do the work required for recovery. . . They are generally not ready for recovery and soon drop out. To be successful in recovery one must want it more than anything and be willing to do whatever it takes to recover. ⁶

Some want to take an easy short cut to holiness and just keep asking God to change their heart. But God is probably not going to take away your natural desire for sex. Instead, you have to make a decision. Will you love pleasing Him more than the pleasure of your sin? You can have consistent freedom from sinful lust. But you must do whatever it takes. *"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you"* (Matt 5:29). *Your Father wants you to do whatever it takes to stop sexual sin in your life.*

Where are you at and where are you going?

In the *FREEDOM* study of the *Christian Essentials* we discussed the various stages of Christian experience. These included: Defeated, Coping, Growing, Free, and Fruitful. ⁷ What are you experiencing in the area of sinful lust?

Spiritual Defeat in this area could be labeled as an addiction to pornography. One author defines this as follows:

Men with a pornography addiction need stronger forms of support and accountability. These men seek out pornography daily, a few times a week, or go on long binges every few weeks. The amount of time a man spends viewing pornography has steadily increased and the type of pornography has become more extreme. ⁸

Essentially, if you are looking at pornography from daily to once a week, we would suggest you are spiritually Defeated (even addicted) in this area of your life. It is controlling you rather than you controlling it. The first goal for you is to help you get to the Coping stage.

A Coping Christian has more control over sin than a Defeated one. Their struggle against sin is a rather constant and difficult struggle with periodic defeats. But in general, through "will power," determination, and taking the necessary steps, they are able to have some consistent control over an otherwise sinful habit. Obviously this is better than being Defeated. But as we describe at length elsewhere, there is something better. It is spiritual Freedom.

Spiritual Freedom is the absence of even temptation toward a particular sin. It is an automatic and effortless power over a sin because you are being controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. And the Spirit's power is a result of being *"transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Rom 12:2).

While a man may not be able to be free from his natural desires for sex, he can be free from the feelings of selfishness, loneliness, and boredom that lead to sinful lust. Therefore, in the following chapters we will share steps

of how to move from spiritual Defeat to Coping and even to a considerable amount of Freedom in the area of sinful lust.

But you must do whatever it takes. *“If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you”* (Matt 5:29). Your Father wants you to do whatever it takes to stop sexual sin in your life.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Ephesians 4:30 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Matthew 5:29 in the translation above or another.

¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, online at www.ccel.org, Book 6, section 8.

² For early Church history regarding castration in response to Jesus' statement in Matthew 19:12 see “The Practice and Prohibition of Self-Castration in Early Christianity,” Daniel F. Caner, online at <http://extra.centenary.edu/dotto/rel332/Caner%20article.pdf>

³ BAGD.

⁴ D. A. Carson, *Matthew* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 2010), 474.

⁵ *Calvin's Commentaries*, online at <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cal/matthew-19.html>

⁶ Kleponis, Loc. 3612.

⁷ For a discussion of the “Stages of Christian Experience” see chapters in *Christian Essentials* study #4: *FREEDOM*.

⁸ Kleponis, Loc. 3232.

Chapter 10

Get Grace, Encouragement, & Protection*Your Father has steps you can take to defeat sinful lust in your life*

2 Timothy 2:22

Week 5

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) Why is it important to admit your struggles with sinful lust to God? Why might this be difficult? What can help you do this?
 - 2) Why is it helpful to admit your struggles with sinful lust to an Encourager?
 - 3) Why should you have Internet filtering and reporting software on any device in your home and life that has access to the Internet?
 - 4) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter?

Ron was struggling mightily with pornography. He was so ashamed because He was a Christian, and had a wonderful wife who loved him. But he could not shake the pull that pornography had on him. Finally, he got desperate enough that he talked to his Pastor. The practical steps Ron was given significantly decreased his struggle. They required effort, but the result was worth it! And the subsequent counseling really got to the root of his temptations and changed his whole life. He sure was glad he asked for help. But he had to make the choice to do what the Apostle Paul told another young man:

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 NIV)

Your Father has steps you can take to defeat sinful lust in your life.

The primary text for this chapter tells us three things you need to do to overcome lust in your life. You need to run away from something, run toward something else, and run with someone else.¹

First, your Father is commanding you to run from “*the evil desires of youth*” which certainly includes sinful lust. Notice there is that word again in the context of sexual sin: “Flee.”

Secondly, He wants you to run toward, “*righteousness, faith, love and peace.*” “*Righteousness*” and “*love*” are powers of the Holy Spirit. They are obtained as you renew your mind, experience your emotional needs being fulfilled by Christ, and living in freeing truth instead of controlling lies.

Only by renewing your mind and through God's Spirit can you transform your sinful lust into holy love. A solid "*faith*" in the promises of God to meet your emotional needs will also come from renewing your mind. And "*peace*" of conscience will be the result of gaining victory over sexual sin.

Third, Paul told young Timothy to run with some people. To "*Flee . . . evil . . . and pursue righteousness . . . along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" There is a reason the Apostle said this. He knew we usually cannot grow spiritually by ourselves. Particularly in the area of sinful lust, we will be helped immensely by other men.

All of the following ten steps to freedom over sinful lust are an example of running from sexual temptation, running toward righteousness, and running with others. These ten steps are:

- 1) Get God's grace through Scripture.
- 2) Get encouragement through a friend.
- 3) Get protection for your eyes and starve your sin with Internet filtering software.
- 4) Get smart about the cost of your pleasure from sinful lust.
- 5) Get scared about "danger zones" that lead to sinful lust.
- 6) Get sensitive to "triggers" that lead to sinful lust.
- 7) Get Scripture that will strengthen you in temptation.
- 8) Get serving to invest your time and energy in productive ways.
- 9) Get free from the "triggers" that lead to sinful lust.
- 10) Get right with your wife if needed.

These steps will help you, "*Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*" (2 Timothy 2:22 NIV). **Your Father has steps you can take to defeat sinful lust in your life.**

Step #1: Experience God's grace through Scripture

An experienced counselor suggests several obstacles to you getting help from both people and God:

There are many reasons why people who struggle with pornography fail to seek help or are unsuccessful in recovery. The most common of which are denial, pride, shame, fear, and lack of commitment. ²

The first step in overcoming all of these is experiencing God's grace. God's grace is not only His forgiveness for sin, but His power over sin. How do you begin to experience such grace? "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (1 Peter 5:5). Pride shows itself in both a denial of the seriousness of our sin, and the power of God's sacrifice for it.

First, you must be humble and stop denying the seriousness of your sin. There is a part of you that loves those naked, disgusting, demon-possessed destroyers of your life and wife. Grace begins with humility, and humility begins with admitting the seriousness of your sin with pornography or other means of sexual immorality.

For at least nine months to a year, David remained in denial of his sin with Bathsheba. His shame kept him from being honest with God and talking to Him about it. Or confessing it to anyone else. Then God sent a friend named Nathan to speak to him. As a result: “*David confessed to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won’t die for this sin (2 Sam 12:13).*” Don’t hesitate to be honest with God about what He already knows. Be humble.

One author writes:

You may find it strange to know that in all the years of my struggle with sexual sin, I never saw myself as a broken man. But brokenness was the very thing I couldn’t acknowledge and tried to avoid by relentlessly working harder and harder to conceal the cracks in my soul.³

But denial of our sin is not the most common problem for us. It is shame about our sin. If sinful lust is the greatest power of the Devil on Earth, then shame is his second greatest power. This is the Devil’s plan. To entice you to sin sexually, and then hold you in bondage to him through shame.

Feeling guilty is a good and helpful response of our conscience to our sin. The pain of guilt was designed by God to help us have power over sin. But shame is something else and of the Devil.

Guilt says, “I have done wrong.” But shame says, “I am wrong.” Shame is a feeling (which quickly becomes a belief), that you are defective, flawed, bad, or worthless. The heaviness and torment of shame are unbearable. And the verdict is always the same—that at your core you are inferior, inadequate, or unacceptable.

Shame makes us believe we are a sinner, separated from our Father. Sin cannot change the identity we have as completely and forever forgiven sons of God. But shame results from being tricked by the Devil to believe we have lost that identity. And losing the love of God makes us feel worthless and alone.

Most men who are significantly struggling with pornography feel distant from God. But you must fight through this because you need to be connected to God to be victorious against the Devil. The only reason you feel separated from God is because you are believing lies. You must believe what the Apostle Paul believed:

I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or

in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:38-39)

Therefore, your first step to overcoming the pride, fear, and shame and experiencing the power of God’s grace in your sinful lust, is not talking to people, but to your Dad in Heaven. Remember, your sin is first and foremost against Him. And He already knows you are struggling. But He wants you to be open with Him about it. If you cannot talk to your Father in Heaven about your struggle with lust, you will not be able to make any progress toward freedom. You need His help for this.

You must grab on to God’s grace. You must believe what God’s word says instead of what you feel. God word says:

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. (Rom 8:1)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb 4:15-16)

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. . . He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. (Ps 103:8, 10-14)

It is especially important that you understand your real identity and desires are not sinful. God never sees you as a sinner because He has given you a new heart that hates sin. He knows that is the real you. Your sin, even the sin of lust, is just a disease you have in the old programming of your mind. Which is why you can “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom 12:2).⁴

Dr. Kleoponis shares the following regarding grace with our sin:

Being successful in recovery means being gentle and patient with one’s self, especially early in the process. Recovery takes time. There will be falls along the way. Because of the many pornographic images trapped in an addicted person’s head, it’s easy to fall into viewing pornography, fantasizing, or masturbation.

However, a fall is not a backslide. With a fall, a man lets his guard down temporarily and falls into acting out. He quickly gets back up, analyzes what led to the fall and utilizes the necessary safeguards to

prevent it from happening again. In this situation the fall becomes a learning experience to help him improve his recovery program and ensure greater success in the future. . .

A successful man in recovery lets go of the shame that kept him trapped in his addiction. He clearly understands how shame perpetuates unhealthy core beliefs. Shame is not from God. It is a tool Satan uses to enslave people in addiction.

The man in recovery also understands the difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is the emotion that tells us when we have sinned and must make amends, which is good. Shame is the emotion that makes us believe we are terrible people because of our sins. It makes us want to hide from others, which leads to more isolation and shame and right back into the addiction. Obviously this is bad. The man in recovery values guilt and avoids shame. He knows that when he falls, he must confess it to accountability partners. With their love and support, he can quickly get back on the road to recovery. ⁵

Admitting your struggle to your Dad in Heaven will help you with Step #2: Admitting your struggle to an Encourager. *“Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 NIV). Your Father has steps you can take to defeat sinful lust in your life.*

Putting it into practice

- It may be helpful to pray through some Psalms and imitate David in being open with God. For example, David wrote Psalm 51 after being confronted with his sin with Bathsheba. Other suggested Psalms are 32, 38, 42, and 103.
- It may be helpful to pray the Lord’s Prayer every day for some time (cf. Matt 6:9-13). It reminds us we have a great Father (v. 9), we will live in a perfect Kingdom (v. 10), that He is willing to meet all our needs (v. 11), that He will forgive us (v. 12), and that He can protect us from evil (v. 13). These are all things that someone struggling consistently with sinful lust needs to be reminded of daily and pray daily. That’s why Jesus intended this to be a daily prayer (cf. v. 11).
- If you are not convinced of what the Scriptures teach about your complete forgiveness in Christ and promises of your Father read and study through *Christian Essentials* studies #1-#3; *FORGIVENESS, FOUNDATIONS, and FAITH* available online at <http://www.newlifecr.com/christianessentials.php>.

Step #2: Experience Encouragement through a friend

The Bible says: “*Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness*” (Heb 3:13). How often do we need encouragement from others? God says, “*daily.*” Especially when we are struggling demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life.

The word “*encourage*” here is from the Greek word *parakaleite* meaning to “call someone to your side to be with you and give you strength, courage, and comfort.”⁶ You will be greatly helped in your spiritual warfare against sinful lust with the help of others.

Remember, the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to “*Flee . . . evil . . . and pursue righteousness . . . along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*” (2 Tim 2:22). He did not want Timothy doing it alone. It is the Devil who wants you to try to beat him alone.

“*Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* (2 Timothy 2:22 NIV). Your Father has steps you can take to defeat sinful lust in your life.

Putting it into practice

- Find some men you trust to share your struggle with. We would suggest you do this with more than one man. This is why Barnabas Groups at New Life are such a great thing. If you are in one, you already have “a band brothers” who are earning your trust and fighting the same war against lust. Choose one to especially be your “battle brother” who you can call when you are being tempted. It is at this time that you can be reminded of Scripture to help you and to pray together.
- The “Openness” time in the P.O.W.E.R. agenda of your Barnabas Group is your opportunity to share your struggle and be prayed for. However, for reasons we share elsewhere, we do not think the typical way Christians approach “accountability” is biblical.⁷ The practice of always asking something like “how did you sin this week?” is nowhere supported in Scripture, and encourages fear, shame, and dishonesty. The Bible teaches we need encouragement, not accountability. And one of the differences is between being forced to regularly share your sin, or being free to share it when you choose to. And it is this kind of freedom and grace that we strive for in our Barnabas Groups.

Step #3: Protect your eyes and starve your sin with Internet filtering software

Imagine there were men in your neighborhood who consistently broke into houses and sexually abused wives and daughters. Would you lock your

doors or just leave them open at night? Would you be diligent and determined to guard your home? Then why don't you have filtering and reporting software on your computer devices for pornography?

Maybe you already have this. But if you don't you are being just as foolish, heartless, and selfish as a man who would not guard his home against intruders. The Devil is scheming to get into your home and heart through the Internet. And you must take advantage of the software available to limit this.

We have discussed a great deal how the introduction of Internet pornography has greatly increased the intensity and difficulty of a modern man's battle for holiness. For thousands of years it was not easy for a man to see naked, demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. Protective software can take your modern battle back to ancient times. It eliminates the constant temptation to just "take a peek" on your "smut" phone or laptop. If you are in a war (and you are), why live without walls?

It may be virtually impossible to completely eliminate the use of the Internet in our lives. Some men are required to use it for work. But even if Jesus had a smart phone, it would not be a "smut" phone. He would not carry around naked, demon-possessed women in his back pocket that can be seen with just the touch of a button. He would protect Himself and others who might use His phone. And so should you. Protective software returns your cell phone to a smart phone instead of being a "smut" phone.

Remember that part of the power that naked, demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life have on the Internet is secrecy. But having reporting software on your computer devices removes this power. As one author puts it: "By choosing to remove the secrecy, we pull our lives into the light." Which is a wonderful thing because the Devil has power in the dark.

The Apostle Peter wrote: "*Dear friends, I warn you as 'temporary residents and foreigners' to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls*" (1 Pet 2:11). And we know what that war in our "souls" feels like. You see something you should not see and it bounces around in your head not wanting to leave. How much better to not let the "*worldly desire*" into "*your very souls*" in the first place to "*wage war against*" it? Your eyes are the gate to your soul. Protect them! This is what Job did. He said: "*I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman*" (Job 31:1).

As another author put it, "As with any addiction, recovery begins with detoxing the brain."⁸ When you eliminate the sources of your sinful sexual stimulation, your struggles are drastically decreased and your victory is greatly increased. Another author wrote:

When you starve your eyes and eliminate "junk sex" from your life, you'll deeply crave "real food"— your wife. . . In fact I've talked with many single men who, by consistently keeping their eyes and minds

pure of sensual things, haven't had sex or masturbated for years. The pressure "dries up," they say.⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, we believe Jesus was serious when He said, "*If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you*" (Matt 5:29). That is how serious your Lord wants you to be in your war with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. If you are not even willing to invest the time and money to research, purchase, and properly install protective software, you have not even begun to be serious.

Putting it into practice

- Get protective software on every device in your home and life that accesses the Internet. There are a variety of options. You can begin your research here:

<http://www.toptenreviews.com/software/security/best-internet-filter-software/>

If you do not have protective software on your computer devices and smart phone, purchase and install this today!

- If you have teenagers in your home, make sure all of their Internet devices have protective software installed also.
- Who should be the Administrator of your protective software and receive your Internet activity reports? At least one of the Encouragers you have shared your struggle with. Perhaps a brother in your Barnabas Group.
- What if your work computer does not protect you from pornography at the work place? Ask your employer to provide it. Most already have because of the huge amount of time many employees are wasting on pornography at the workplace. And it is especially offensive to women.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Matthew 5:29 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize 2 Timothy 2:22 in the translation above or another.

¹ See Luke Gilkerson, "Coming Clean," p.6; online at www.covenanteyes.com.

² Kleponis, Loc. 3587.

³ John Michael Cusick, *Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle* (Thomas Nelson, 2012), Kindle Edition.

⁴ For more on your sinless identity as taught in Romans 6-7 see ch. 2.16 in *Christian Essentials* study #2: FOUNDATIONS.

⁵ Kleponis, Loc. 4760-4774.

⁶ BAGD, see definitions #1 and #4.

⁷ For a critique of the typical practice of "accountability" in Christianity see chapter 3.20, "Modern Mistakes in Ministry" in the *Christian Essentials* study FREEDOM available online at

<http://www.newlifecr.com/christianessentials.php>

⁸ Kleponis, Loc. 3097.

⁹ Arterburn and Stoeker, Loc. 999.

Chapter 11

Get Smart, Scared, & Sensitive*Be wise about the cost and causes of your sinful lust*

Proverbs 7:7

Week 6

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) Why is it important to count the cost of the pleasure of pornography?
 - 2) What are “danger zones” that commonly lead men to sinful lust?
 - 3) What are emotional “triggers” that commonly lead men to sinful lust?
 - 4) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter?

One day King Solomon was looking out of the window of his palace at the people below. He watched a young man be seduced by “*an immoral*” and “*promiscuous woman*” (Prov 7:5). Solomon described the young man in this way:

I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. (Proverbs 7:7 NIV)

Be wise about the cost and causes of your sinful lust.

What was this young man “*naïve*” about? In what way did he lack “*common sense*?” First of all, he was ignorant or didn’t care what “*an immoral woman*” would cost him.

Step #4: Get smart about the cost of your pleasure from sinful lust

Solomon told his son the rest of the story:

So she seduced him with her pretty speech and enticed him with her flattery. He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter. He was like a stag caught in a trap, awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life. (Prov 7:21-23)

Solomon’s repeated warning of death for sexual immorality probably refers to what the husband of an adulteress will do (cf. Prov 2:18; 5:5; 6:26, 30-35; 9:18). But throughout *Your War with Lust* we have detailed the horrific cost of sinning with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. We have admitted that pornography obviously produces some intense, although temporary pleasure. But what is that pleasure costing you?

You must have a clear and strong conviction in your mind that it is absolutely stupid and foolish to risk so much for so little. To help you do this we have summarized the costs of sinful lust described in this study in the 32 statements below:

- 1) If you are married, Jesus said you are committing adultery (Matt 5:27; discussed in chapter 1 of *Your War with Lust*).
- 2) You are destroying the “one flesh” union of your marriage, breaking your marriage vows, and defiling your marriage bed (Matt 19:5-6; Heb 13:4; ch. 1).
- 3) Because you have violated your marriage covenant, God gives your wife the right to leave you if she chooses to (Matt 5:32; ch. 1).
- 4) Lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life breaks the First Commandment: “*You shall have no other gods before me*” (Exod 20:3; ch. 1).
- 5) Lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life breaks the Second Commandment against idolatry (Exod 20:4-5; ch. 1).
- 6) Lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life breaks the Seventh Commandment: “*You shall not commit adultery*” (Exod 20:14; ch. 1).
- 7) Lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life might break the Tenth Commandment: “*You shall not covet your neighbor's wife*” (Exod 20:17; ch. 1).
- 8) Lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life breaks the Greatest Commandment to: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart [desires] and with all your soul and with all your mind [thoughts]*” (Matt 22:37; ch. 1).
- 9) Lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life breaks the Second Greatest Commandment: “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matt 22:39).
- 10) Masturbation breaks Jesus’ commandment not to sin with your hand in the contest of sexual sin (Matt 5:30; ch. 1).
- 11) Masturbation damages your body and your marriage (ch. 1).
- 12) You lose a tremendous opportunity to love God (ch. 4).
- 13) You lose a tremendous opportunity to please and glorify God and disappoint and embarrass the Devil (ch. 4)
- 14) You lose a tremendous opportunity for eternal rewards (ch. 4).
- 15) “Having sex with willing, wicked naked women on the Internet can cause you to lose your wife, children, reputation, love life, and ministry. 33% of those addicted to Internet pornography lost their jobs” (ch. 5).

- 16) You deny your God-given identity as a son or daughter of Almighty God (ch. 6).
- 17) Looking at pornography degrades your body (1 Cor 6:13-20; ch. 6).
- 18) “Why is this sin more destructive than others? Because it does something to us. In uniting ourselves with a wicked woman it affects our minds and spirits in a powerful and lasting way. Sexual sin changes us. It defiles us in such a way that is hard to get rid of. Even though we are forgiven for it, we cannot forget it” (1 Cor 6:13-20; ch. 6).
- 19) Looking at pornography will cost you your ministry (2 Tim 2:21-22; ch. 6).
- 20) “Researchers are warning that addiction to pornography works very much like cocaine. It is not simply psychologically addictive, but like cocaine, it does something in your brain to make you emotionally dependent on it” (ch. 6).
- 21) The Devil “wants your sin to be ‘secret’ in order to get you hooked on lust. And then he wants to work so your sin becomes public and inflicts on you and others the most pain possible” (ch. 7).
- 22) “Pornography is never free. The cost of your intense pleasure from it, will be your wife’s even more intense pain” (ch. 7).
- 23) “Your long term sexual pleasure with your wife will be diminished significantly if not completely destroyed by your use of pornography. Simply put, pornography burns you out sexually. . . The very thing you seek in pornography (sexual pleasure), will be the very thing you lose. . . Your lust-making will ruin you for love-making” (ch. 7).
- 24) “Pornography drastically increases your sex drive to abnormal levels. And this puts an unnecessary burden on your wife and you are now using, even abusing her, rather than loving her” (ch. 7).
- 25) “Instead of being a good role model for his kids, he is a hypocrite. Many fathers will preach to their kids on the dangers of pornography while they regularly use it behind closed doors. . . This can be devastating for a daughter. To think that the man she has always loved, trusted, and looked up to as her protector is using porn is repulsive to her. She loses all respect for her father” (ch. 7).
- 26) “Your pleasure with pornography causes pain for the most powerful person in the Universe because He has adopted you as His son. . . The God of the Universe has humbled Himself to be hurt by you.” (ch. 8; cf. Gen 6:5-6; Isa 57:7-8).
- 27) “There are many promises in the Bible that God wants you to believe. And one of them is this: *“The Lord will punish all those who commit such [sexual] sins, as we told you and warned you before”* (1 Thess 4:6). Is the pleasure you experience from porn worth the pain you will experience from your Lord?” (ch. 8).

- 28) When you are having sinful sex with demon-possessed women on the Internet, you force the Holy Spirit in you to be subjected to that and it causes him “severe mental or emotional distress” (cf. Eph 4:30; ch. 8).
- 29) When you are having sinful sex with demon-possessed women on the Internet, you are worshipping demons and acting like a demon (cf. 2 Cor 10:20; ch. 8).
- 30) “Looking at naked, disgusting, demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life denies you the right to say you love God more than those women. It means in that moment, you love Satan more than your Savior. . . And isn’t it a horrible thing to have to admit that you love the pleasure of sin more than the One who died for those very same sins? The Bible is even stronger. It says you HATE God when you love sin (James 4:4-5; ch. 8).
- 31) The pleasure of porn will cost you the pain of shame in your relationship with God (ch. 9).
- 32) The pleasure of porn will cost you the pain of shame in your relationships with people (ch. 9).

Get smart about the cost of your pleasure from pornography. IT IS NOT WORTH IT!!! Solomon said, “*I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense*” (Proverbs 7:7). Do not be like him. Instead, Be wise about the cost and causes of your sinful lust.

Putting it into practice

- Think about the 3 costs of your sinful lust that scare you the most. Write these down in Appendix C: “Your Plan & Progress in Your War with Lust.”

Step #5: Get scared about “danger zones” that lead to sinful lust

Solomon told his son:

At the window of my house I looked down through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. (Prov 7:6-9 NIV)

Do you notice this guy is not scared at all of finding a willing, wicked woman to sin with? And that is why he puts himself in what we will call “danger zones.” A “danger zone” is a specific time, place, or situation where you are more likely to be tempted with sinful lust.

There are several things this foolish young man does to make himself more vulnerable to sexual sin. First, he was alone. Solomon says he saw “a youth” (v. 7). Being alone for extended periods of time, whether at night, an afternoon, or especially extended travel, can certainly make you more susceptible to sexual temptation.

Secondly, this young man was near the “house” of the “immoral” and “promiscuous woman” (v. 5), “at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in” (v. 9). There is something about the night that gives power to sin. The Scriptures warn: “For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night. . . Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk” (1 Thess 5:5, 7; cf. Rom 13:12-13). Being alone at night can be an especially tempting “danger zone” for Internet pornography.

Finally, this young man did not know or did not care about “danger zones” for sexual sin. “He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house” (v. 8). God says, “Flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor 6:18 NIV). This guy was walking toward it, and had no concern about the “danger zones” that lead to sinful lust.

Other “danger zones” include:

- Certain TV series that you know show nudity or sexual scenes.
- Being alone with an unprotected computer or smart phone.
- Spending a lot of time with an attractive woman who is not your wife.
- Being alone after an exhausting day or week at work.
- Being alone in a hotel room.
- Being alone after a fight with your wife.

Everyone has their own unique “danger zones” that lead to sinful lust. If you can identify them in your life you may be able to eliminate many of them and significantly reduce your struggle with sinful lust. But even if you cannot eliminate all of them, you can be aware of them and be especially on guard when you are in them.

Eliminating or avoiding your “danger zones” may require some painful “cutting and gouging.” For example, if you travel a lot for your job and cannot control your lust during these times, it is time to get another job.

Be scared about your “danger zones” that lead you to sinful lust. Solomon said, “I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense” (Proverbs 7:7). Do not be like him. Instead, Be wise about the cost and causes of your sinful lust.

Putting it into practice

- Think about your “danger zones” that lead you to sinful lust. Write these down in Appendix C. Also, develop a plan to avoid or completely eliminate these “danger zones.”
- “Down time” when you are looking for ways to relax and rest are especially dangerous times for sinful lust. Determine and plan healthy, safe, and effective ways to recharge your emotional, spiritual, and physical batteries. Write these ideas down in Appendix C.

- Agree with a “battle brother” that you will call him and when you are being strongly tempted in a “danger zone” so you can be reminded of Scriptures and to pray together.

Step #6: Get sensitive to “triggers” that lead to sinful lust

The Apostle Paul encouraged Christians to be “*familiar with his evil schemes*” “*so that Satan will not outsmart us*” (2 Cor 2:11). What is the Devil’s strategy to get one of God’s sons lusting after demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life? Emotional triggers.

In other words, men are usually feeling emotions of their sinful nature before they are tempted toward sinful lust. A helpful acronym for these emotional “triggers” is feeling B.L.A.S.T.ed. This refers to feeling Bored, Lonely, Angry, Stressed, and Tired. ¹

We see several of these in David’s life before his sin with Bathsheba:

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. (2 Sam 11:1-3)

First, we would suggest David was bored. At this point in David’s life he had been in many wars. We are not told why he did not go to war at the time he was supposed to, but maybe he was simply tired of war. Even the victories did not give him the thrill it used to.

Secondly, David seems alone. Where was one of his wives? If he wasn’t sleeping alone, he was certainly alone when he “*walked around on the roof of the palace [and] . . . saw a woman bathing.*” Isn’t it amazing that a man with four wives could feel lonely?

Thirdly, was stress the reason David seemed to not be sleeping well? And maybe just being tired was why he did not lead his army to war.

Any man reading this recognizes how feeling B.L.A.S.T.ed can make you more vulnerable to looking at pornography. And this includes anger. Perhaps especially being angry at your wife because you feel she has neglected or rejected you in her sexual relationship with you.

We would add one more: curiosity. This seems to be true of the foolish youth Solomon described: “*He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house*” (Prov 7:8 NIV). Maybe this youth was new to the pleasures that can be experienced with sinful sex. Maybe he was just curious about what he would find if he went, “*near her corner*” and “*in the direction of her house.*” The same kind of curiosity can get you to sinful places on the Internet.

Compulsive acts of lust and seeking sexual pleasure are usually attempts to relieve some inner ache from an unmet emotional need. These are described elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials* as the Seven H.A.P.P.I.E.R. Needs of Humans and include: Hope, Approval, Protection, Power, Importance, Enjoyment, and Relationship. You can see a brief description of these in Appendix E of this study.²

When we are not experiencing these God-given emotional needs we experience pain in the form of feeling angry, lonely, rejected, and bored. And some quick sexual pleasure can be a very tempting relief. But as we reminded you above, the side effects of relieving your emotional pain with pornography will destroy your wife and life.

Some women can understand what we are saying here when we recognize how some use food. Previously in this study we wrote:

And of course, women can sin in the area of eating in order to meet emotional needs in their life. Men will view pornography for the same reason. It's just that eating "comfort food" is not as disgusting and destructive as viewing pornography.

Likewise, some women have a difficult time controlling their eating because they are using it to medicate emotional pain in their lives. And while the consequences may not be as great as a man's habit with pornography, their unnecessary weight gain can have negative consequences for their health and their marriage.

One author writes:

Overeating is not about food—something else compels the food addict to eat an entire one-pound bag of M&M's in one sitting. Compulsive shopping is about so much more than needing more stuff to put in our garages or closets. So, too, our sexual lusts and preoccupations with porn point to more than naked bodies or illicit sex.

Almost a century ago, G. K. Chesterton wrote that the man who knocks on the brothel door is knocking for God. Sin always promises something, and porn constantly promises to meet our deepest longings as men and women—without a cost.³

What is the solution to these "triggers"? Learning how to get your H.A.P.P.I.E.R. needs met by God. He would say the following about all of your emotional needs:

"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink— even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk— it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food." (Isa 55:1-2)

God wants to fulfill the emotional needs He gave you with His satisfying love, instead of your sinful lust.

In the following chapter we will discuss how Scripture can give us at least temporary relief from the emotional “triggers” that lead us to sinful lust. We will also discuss the potential to be consistently free from these “triggers” through P.O.W.E.R. Counseling. But it is first important to identify these emotional triggers that lead you to sinful lust.

Solomon said, “*I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense*” (Proverbs 7:7). Do not be like him. Instead, **Be wise about the cost and causes of your sinful lust.**

Putting it into practice

- Think about what you are feeling before you are tempted to look at pornography. Uses B.L.A.S.T.ed to help you start. Write down the descriptions of these emotional “triggers” in Appendix C.
 - Agree with a “battle brother” that you will call him and when you are being strongly tempted an emotional “trigger” so you can be reminded of Scriptures and pray together.
 - Dr. Kleoponis writes: “One way to effectively deal with being BLASTed, or to avoid it altogether, is to daily work on proper self-care. This means making sure one gets plenty of sleep, eats a healthy diet, exercises regularly, maintains healthy relationships, sets healthy boundaries, limits stress, and so on. All of this adds up to living a healthy lifestyle, which can eliminate the need to self-medicate with anything.”⁴
- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
 - ▶ Recite 1 Timothy 2:22 from memory.
 - ▶ Memorize Proverbs 7:7 in the translation above or another.

¹ Cf. Kleoponis, Loc. 851ff.

² For more discussion on the Seven H.A.P.P.I.E.R. Needs and God’s purpose for them see the *Christians Essentials* study #2: *FOUNDATIONS*, chapters 2.18-2.22.

³ Cusick.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Loc. 4783-4784.

Chapter 12

Get Scripture, Serving, & Free*Go on the offense in your war with lust*

Ephesians 6:17

Week 6

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) What is the ultimate cause of sinful lust?
 - 2) Why is it important to memorize and use “Sword Scriptures”?
 - 3) What are the benefits of actively serving others?
 - 4) What is the limit of spiritual freedom in the area of sinful lust?
 - 5) What can you become free of through mind renewal?
 - 6) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter?

Earlier in this study we described the warfare that David and his Mighty Men experienced. Because war was their life, their sword was their life. The same is true for you. You are in a war, a war for your heart, mind, purity, and life. You need a sword as well. Your Father has given you one, and He commands you:

Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
(Ephesians 6:17)

Go on the offense in your war with lust.

Step #7: Get Scripture that will strengthen you in temptation

What causes feelings of sinful lust? What is the power behind the desire to look at demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life on the Internet? One thing: believing lies. In that moment of sinful desires you are believing lies about what will make you happy. Lies about what will make you feel significant or alive. You are believing a lie about how to fulfill your need for pleasure, because pornography also comes with a lot of pain.

As we have shared throughout the *Christian Essentials*, the only weapon the Devil has against you is a lie. If you don't believe him you can easily resist him. Therefore, what is your greatest weapon against sinful temptations? The truth. Which is why the Apostle Paul said in the context of spiritual warfare: “*Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph 6:17). Elsewhere the Bible promises:

Because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. (2 Peter 1:4)

It is wise to memorize 3-4 "Sword Scriptures" to address specific temptations and struggles you have. Below are some examples:

Motivation to please God:

(Matthew 22:37-38) "Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."

(Job 31:1-4) "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman. For what has God above chosen for us? . . . Isn't it calamity for the wicked and misfortune for those who do evil? Doesn't he see everything I do and every step I take?"

(Ephesians 4:30) "Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live."

(Gal 6:7-8 NIV) "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction."

(Jer 16:17; 23:24) "I am watching them closely, and I see every sin. They cannot hope to hide from me. . . Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the Lord."

Danger of sinful lust:

(1 Peter 5:8-9) "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith."

(Prov 6:26) "For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life."

Protecting your wife and children

(Prov 5:7-9) "Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel."

(Hebrews 13:4 NASB) "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled."

You are in a war. God has given you a sword. Start using it. *"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Eph 6:17). *Go on the offense in your war with lust.*

Putting it into practice

- Choose 3-4 “Sword Scriptures” and begin memorizing them now. Record the Scriptures you choose in Appendix C.
- Also think about the emotional “triggers” discussed in the previous chapter and that you wrote down in Appendix C. Find “Sword Scriptures” for these also.

Step #8: Get serving to invest your time and energy in productive ways

Do you remember the first mistake David made that led him to sin with Bathsheba? *“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army”* (2 Sam 11:1). David was not busy serving God and people.

Elsewhere in the *Christian Essentials* we make the biblical case that pleasure is a God-given need. We have also argued that the most pleasurable experience available on Earth is serving and blessing others, and especially using the spiritual gifts God gave you to help others.¹ And if your life is busy doing this, you simply will not have as much time to sin. It is when you are doing nothing productive and helpful for others that sinful lust becomes a greater temptation. But if you will exercise faith and love and serve others, you will experience the love, joy, and peace that God intended for you.

You are in a war. The Bible says, *“Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Eph 6:17). Serving others and putting *“the word of God”* into practice is another powerful way to go on the offense in your war with lust.

Putting it into practice

- Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If not, start with reading the chapters on this topic in studies #3 and #5 in the *Christian Essentials*. And begin to find ways to use your gift(s).
- If you have a family, ask your wife and children how you can serve them more. If you are single and have room mates, ask them the same. Just find a way to serve more so you will be lusting less!
- Pleasure is a God-given need in your life. And you will discover that serving and blessing others with your spiritual gifts is the most fulfilling way to experience pleasure. But the Scripture speak of, *“God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment”* (1 Tim 6:17). Where in your life do you say, *“This is living!”*? If you don’t have something in your life that regularly inspires sinless adventure, passion, and pleasure than beware. Because you will seek a sinful counterfeit.

Step #9: Get free from the “triggers” that lead to sinful lust

In the *Christian Essentials* study #4 *FREEDOM* we share about the biblical promise and a proven plan to be free from the lies of your sinful nature and experience the power of the Holy Spirit more consistently in your life. God promises/commands us to “*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom 12:2 NIV).

The testimonies included in the *FREEDOM* study demonstrate the supernatural, effortless, and lasting spiritual power that God intended for us to experience. Why else does God live in us!? Accordingly, we believe this kind of power and freedom is possible for virtually every temptation and sin on Earth.

But there are unique limits for spiritual freedom in the area of lust for men. But no amount of godly mind renewal will lead to a man not being stimulated by the sight of a naked woman. God is the one who made us that way. Eliminating that would be a perversion or require castration or a supernatural gift. The transforming effect of mind renewal is powerful, but sinful lust will always be a battle for most men.

For example, if you renew your mind about someone who has sinned against you and truly forgive them, you can have complete, effortless, automatic freedom from bitterness toward them. You can be around that person and not even be tempted to be mad and experience love and compassion for them. But no matter how much a man renews his mind regarding lust, it is doubtful he will ever be able to look at an attractive naked woman and not be sexually stimulated.

The Scriptures reflect this unique limitation on spiritual freedom in the area of sinful lust for men. When the Corinthian Christians were concerned about how to gain freedom over lust, the Apostle did not tell them “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom 12:2). Instead, he told them to get married so they could pursue sexual desires in a holy way (cf. 1 Cor 7:1-2, 8-9)

Likewise, in Ephesians 6 the Apostle explained how to resist the Devil and fight sin:

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. . . resist the enemy in the time of evil. . . Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. (Eph 6:10-11, 13-14).

And the rest of the passage describes how to resist, stand firm against, and fight “*against all strategies of the devil*.” But what does Paul say to do when tempted with sinful lust? “*FLEE from sexual immorality*” (1 Cor 6:18). In fact, the Greek here is in the present imperative sense and more accurately means: “*Keep on running from sexual immorality*.”

In Ephesians, Paul instructs us not to run but to fight “*against all strategies of the devil.*” But when it comes to sexual temptations, he tells us to “*flee.*” This is because spiritual Freedom in this area is limited even for a Spirit-controlled man. Therefore, even if you are experiencing relative freedom in the area of sinful lust, including abstaining from pornography, remember Paul’s warning: “*If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall*” (1 Cor 10:12).

All of this is why a majority of the steps suggested in this study are what we would call “coping” steps. Things to battle the constant temptation to lust because it is not God’s will for most men to be free of it.

However, we should not ignore or diminish the powerful freedom that can be experienced with the emotional “triggers” that lead us to lust. We are simply saying above that no amount of mind renewal will keep a man from being stimulated by the sight of an attractive naked woman. But virtually everything else, including feelings of anger, boredom, and low self esteem can be significantly removed in your life when you are “*transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom 12:2).

The need, requirements, and process to do this are thoroughly explained in the *Christian Essentials FREEDOM* study. But other counselors have noted the connection between unresolved emotional wounds in our past and current struggles with lust. One Christian counselor reports:

Behind the sexual addiction we discovered a longing for intimacy, not a reservoir of lust. His marriage provided as much genuine intimacy as he could tolerate, but in fantasy he sought ways of experiencing intimacy that did not make the demands on him of a real relationship.

More important, however, we discovered a high degree of resentment and a strong sense of entitlement. As we explored this, he became aware of a feeling that he deserved something better than he was experiencing. It was this that ultimately led us to his core sin tendency—pride.

At root, Stuart was deeply bitter that no one recognized how special he was. As we explored this feeling, he was able to trace it back to childhood. He had felt overlooked in his large family of six siblings. He had been the responsible one who took care of everyone else, but no one seemed to appreciate him for this. ²

Likewise, Dr. Kleponis explains why some men have a much greater struggle with sinful lust than others:

Many men in America have viewed pornography, gotten bored with it, and ultimately rejected it. But as we discussed in earlier chapters, those who keep going back to it are self-medicating deep emotional wounds to ease their pain. They become emotionally addicted to it and this allows the physical side of the addiction to set in. ³

Dr. Kleponis goes on to explain the importance of mind renewal and the resolution of a man's past experiences in his battle with lust:

Tom always believed he used pornography for entertainment and to relieve stress. He never thought he was self-medicating emotional pain. . . Those struggling with pornography addiction often use pornography as a coping strategy to deal with deep emotional pain they don't even realize is there. All they know is that pornography makes them feel really good and that they must go back to it over and over again.

The fact that they cannot feel good without pornography is an indication that there is a deep wound for which they are using pornography to anesthetize. . . In his research with one thousand sex addicts, Dr. Pat Carnes (1991) found that 97% were emotionally abused, 74% were physically abused, and 81% were sexually abused. . . Severe depression was reported twice as frequently among internet pornography users compared to non-users. . .

The emotional wounds listed above don't necessarily themselves lead men to use pornography. Instead, they often feed five core beliefs that can lead men to use and become addicted to pornography. "I am unworthy of being loved." "If people really knew me, they would reject me." "I cannot trust anyone, including God, to meet my needs." "I must find something that I can control that will meet my needs." "Pornography/Sex is my greatest need and source of comfort". . .

It's not the triggers per se that lead a man to use pornography. The triggers activate the pain from deep emotional wounds that feed the five core beliefs, and this can lead a man to use pornography to ease his pain. Most of the time, he is unaware of this process because it takes place in his subconscious. He simply has a strong urge to use pornography.

Thus, for example, the boredom, stress, and fatigue a man experiences in his job might activate his emotional pain of being abused as a child by his parents. This reinforces his core beliefs. The emotional pain and core beliefs are what actually compel him to use pornography. Consistent use of pornography to keep this pain at bay can lead him to become emotionally dependent on it. ⁴

To "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Rom 12:2) and resolve the pain and imprinting of your past can be the most difficult thing you ever do in your Christian life. But God commands you to do it. And the spiritual power and freedom you will experience, even over sinful lust, will be well worth it.

You are in a war. God tells you, "*Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Eph 6:17). To "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Rom 12:2) is the most effective way to obey this command and go on the offense in your war with lust.

Putting it into practice

- If you are currently in P.O.W.E.R. counseling, continue your journey to freedom.
- If you have not experienced P.O.W.E.R. counseling, speak to Pastor Kurt.

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Proverbs 7:7 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Ephesians 6:17 in the translation above or another.
- ▶ Go to Appendix C and begin to complete “Your Plan & Progress in Your War with Lust.”

¹ For more on how God wants to meet our need for pleasure in serving see the *Christians Essentials* study #3: *FAITH*, chapter 3.22 “Your Dad’s Pleasure.”

² David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (InterVarsity, 2009), Kindle Edition, p. 66.

³ Peter Kleponis, *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography*, Emmaus Road Publishing, Kindle Edition, (Loc. 3306-3308).

⁴ *Ibid.*, Loc. 630-633, 706-707, 767-868.

Chapter 13

Get Right with Your Wife*Do everything you can to restore your marriage*

Matthew 5:23-24

Week 7

- ▶ For a God Time use the “P.O.W.E.R. Plan” in Appendix A.
- ▶ After reading this chapter, answer the following questions:
 - 1) What are two circumstances that we believe make it necessary for you to be completely honest with your wife about your sexual sin?
 - 2) Why might you not involve your wife in your battle against lust?
 - 3) What will be some of the most difficult steps suggested below to restore your marriage if necessary?
 - 4) What gives you hope that you can restore your marriage if needed?
 - 5) What was especially meaningful to you in this chapter?

We wrote in chapter 7 of this study that “in a survey of women who experienced serious adverse consequences from their partner’s cybersex involvement”:

[Wives] commonly reported feeling hurt, betrayed, rejected, abandoned, lonely, isolated, humiliated, jealous, and angry. Wives often compared themselves unfavorably to online images. Wives overwhelmingly felt that cyber affairs were as emotionally painful as offline affairs. . .

In a survey of 63 wives of self-identified sex addicts, 70% met most of the criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. . .

If your wife has discovered your mental adultery with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life on the Internet, then you have a very, very serious problem. God warned you of the consequences, and they have now affected your marriage. In a brief chapter we will not be able to communicate everything that could be helpful to you. But we can suggest some steps to take. In one word, your goal is reconciliation. Jesus said:

“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar.

**Go and be reconciled to that person.
Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”**

(Matthew 5:23-24)

Do everything you can to restore your marriage.

Do you see how important it is to God that you **do everything you can to restore your marriage?** It significantly affects your relationship with Him. Whatever sacrifice or service you want to give to God, do not do it until you **do everything you can to restore your marriage.**

How much should I tell my wife?

An important question at this point is how much should your wife be involved in your battle against sinful lust? This is not an easy question.

First, if your wife already knows about your struggle with sinful lust, then you should involve her in some parts of your journey to freedom, as we will discuss below.

Secondly, if your wife ever asks you about your struggle with lust **do not** lie to her and be completely honest.

Thirdly, if you have been struggling with an addiction to pornography (viewing it at least once a week), and this has been the case for a few to several years of your marriage, then you also need to tell your wife. We realize this could cost you your marriage. But if you have been viewing pornography at least once a week for several years while married to your wife, then you really don't have a marriage anyway do you? Not only because Jesus said you have committed adultery and adultery breaks the marriage covenant (see chapter 1), but because you really have very little relationship with this woman. And she deserves to know why. The first step to even the possibility of being reconciled to her is to confess your sin and tell her everything.

Finally, what if your sin with pornography or other sins of lust have only been periodic and your wife has no knowledge of your struggle? Most Christian married men have committed the sin of lust at some point in their marriage. Should we tell our wives every time it happens? We would caution you to be careful about this.

You are free to disagree with this. You know your wife better than anyone, and your own conscience must be followed on this matter. But consider the costs versus the benefits of your wife knowing about your periodic struggle with lust and pornography. In chapter 7 we described the typical and understandable affect such a disclosure has on a wife. They are devastated. And it will be a long and hard struggle for her to regain her trust and respect for you.

There is a great cost in your wife's life if she knows your struggle with sinful lust and it simply may not be the most loving thing to burden her with this. "*Love . . . always protects*" (1 Cor 13:7 NIV). Of course, you need to start protecting your wife right now by never lusting after another woman again. But you might consider protecting her from the knowledge of your struggle as well while you are taking steps to overcome it.

And there may be no benefits at all to her knowing. As we explained in chapters 2 and 3, it is very difficult for women to understand a man's

struggle in this area. And if they cannot understand it, they will not be able to accept it, or help very much with it. Yes you need encouragement in this area, but other men can help you much more than your wife. And helping you will not hurt them like it will hurt your wife.

Therefore, in some cases we would encourage you to think about keeping your struggle with lust between you and your God and a male friend. But if you do, you had better be serious about stopping this sin. **Do everything you can to restore your marriage.** And this may mean that you do not share things with your wife that will unnecessarily damage your marriage.

We would suggest all of the above would also apply to a man who is considering engagement to a woman. So if you are not married, but want to be, win your war with lust now so you do not have to share it as a present struggle when a prospective mate is getting to know you.

Steps to reconciliation and restoration of your marriage

What if your wife knows about your mental adultery? Then you know **“that someone has something against you”** (Matt 5:23) and you must **do everything you can to restore your marriage.** The following are suggested steps to doing that.

- 1) Talk to your Pastor. You and your wife will need his guidance and support for the difficult journey you are about to embark on.
- 2) Tell your wife everything. Full disclosure will be the most painful part of the reconciliation process. But it is the first step. Do not be defensive or impatient. Honestly answer every question your wife has. Consider having your Pastor present to support both of you. This might help your wife to believe how serious you are about changing, and help her know that others are helping you. Dr. Kleoponis shares:
There must be full disclosure of all her husband’s sexual activity outside the marriage, and although this is painful, it is freeing. The wife finally knows everything and the husband is no longer carrying any secrets. Through total openness and transparency, trust can be restored in the marriage. ¹
- 3) Allow your wife a meeting to express her feelings about your sin. If she would prefer, again, your Pastor can be a part of that meeting. Of course she will need the freedom to do this anytime in the future as well. Dr. Kleoponis writes:

The healing process starts by allowing the wife to freely express how deeply she has been hurt by pornography use. Her husband needs to truly understand her pain. . .

Janet related how things began to change in their marriage during her husband’s use of pornography. Tom became more distant, often

worked late, and spent many hours alone at night in his home office. Because of “work,” he missed many school events, kids’ baseball and soccer games, and even some family gatherings. Janet shared how she felt ignored by him, how the deep, intimate conversations they used to have seemed to disappear, how their sex life dried up, and how she began to feel unattractive to him.

After discovering Tom’s pornography use, she expressed how deeply hurt and betrayed she felt, because this was cheating to her, these were extramarital affairs! She felt old and unattractive because Tom was masturbating to young and beautiful women. She felt her whole world come crashing down.

She awoke to the fact that the man she had loved and trusted for so many years had a dark secret life she knew nothing about. Without warning, in a moment, he became a complete stranger. She didn’t feel safe with him. She feared for their children. She was traumatized.

Although this was difficult for Tom to hear, he needed to understand how deeply his actions had affected Janet. ²

- 4) Set up weekly couples counseling with your Pastor. He can best help you walk through the painful and difficult steps to reconciliation.
- 5) Determine if your wife needs a “battle sister” to support her through this difficult time. If so, help her get one. Perhaps a Pastor’s wife or the wife of your “battle brother.” Give your wife permission to share with this person whatever they want to.
- 6) Ask your wife to read this study, *Your War with Lust.*” Dr. Kleponis writes:

As a wife begins to understand that her husband’s use of pornography was a weak attempt to ease the pain of deep emotional wounds, she can come to realize that it had nothing to do with her, her beauty, or her desirability as a woman. At this point, many wives develop great compassion for their husbands and want to help them in their recovery. ³

This study can help your wife to begin to understand these things.

- 7) Provide the reports that your wife desires. If she wants the accountability reports for your protective software then provide them. Have your “battle buddy” report to her how he thinks you are doing. Tell your wife what you are discovering and resolving in your counseling. This has several benefits as Dr. Kleponis explains:

Knowing that Tom had a good support group also helped Janet let go of her need to control Tom’s recovery. If he missed a meeting, she knew one of his accountability partners would be calling him and keeping him accountable to his program. . .

In individual therapy Tom worked on healing his wounds by forgiving his mother and grandfather. Knowing about Tom's history and family woundedness helped Janet immensely. When she realized how deeply wounded Tom and his whole family were, she was able to have more compassion toward him, and this helped her in healing their relationship. ⁴

- 8) An example of love is to agree with your wife on an extended period of abstinence from your sexual relationship. And let your wife determine if and when she is ready to resume her sexual relationship with you. Dr. Kleponis shares the following example:

Another way they were able to purify their lives was by agreeing to a ninety-day period of sexual abstinence. Anyone recovering from an addiction must go through a detox period. Because the brain of a person addicted to sex has grown accustomed to operating at such a high level of chemical stimulation, it needs time to return to operating at a normal level. To do this, an addicted person often has to abstain from any kind of sexual activity for an extended period of time. This includes use of pornography, masturbation, and sex with another person.

The ninety-day period of abstinence was difficult for Tom; however, he had Janet, his accountability partners, his support group, and his therapist there to help him through it. In the end it did help Tom purify his heart, mind, and brain of the pornography.

The ninety-day period of abstinence was easier for Janet and very helpful to her. The thought of being sexually intimate with her husband who betrayed her was not something she was eager to do. It reminded her of his broken marital vows, and she needed time to heal and forgive.

Janet slept in another bedroom and used this time to better understand Tom's addiction, forgive him, and work on her own healing. Those ninety days were like a spiritual retreat to Janet. She would go to her room at night and spend an hour in prayer for their personal healing and the healing of their marriage. This strengthened her love and compassion for Tom. At the end of the ninety days, Janet was more committed to working with Tom on their individual and marital healing. ⁵

- 9) **Do everything you can to restore your marriage.** This means doing everything you can to demonstrate love to your wife. Be very patient with her. She may be in a process of grief, anger, fear, sadness, and depression for several months. You might consider reading and applying such books as *The Five Love Languages* and *The Love Dare*.
- 10) Recommit your marriage vows to one another. This is God's will. He says, "*I hate divorce*" (Malachi 2:16). He wants to give both you and

your wife the grace to overcome your sin and restore your marriage. This is what would glorify God the most and disappoint the Devil the most.

Nevertheless, as explained in chapter 1 regarding Matthew 5:27-28, 32, God gives your wife the freedom to leave you without sin on her part. Which makes it all the more important for you to give her reasons not to and **Do everything you can to restore your marriage.**

Still, there is no guarantee this will happen. And if it does, it might require several months of healing. Don't forget the seriousness of the mental adultery you have committed against your marriage. You have broken your marriage and it will require work, love, and time to heal it. This is why Jesus told you not to commit adultery with demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life.

But if you can reach a point with your wife to recommit your marriage vows, this is a good sign that you have overcome the damage of your sexual sin. Such a rededication would not need to be a very public affair. Perhaps it could occur with the Pastor and friends who have helped you.

Some additional thoughts and testimony for a restored marriage

Dr. Kleponis shares the following:

Tom and Janet also had to deal with marital issues that led to Tom's pornography use. Like most wives, Janet had to understand that she was not responsible for his addiction; however, she also needed to recognize that there were problems in their marriage that led him to use pornography to self-medicate.

Tom's main problem was loneliness. He was happy early in their marriage, but as they started having children and Janet began focusing all her attention on the children, he felt rejected and lonely. Pornography was his escape. In Tom's words, "The women in porn are always there for you. They give you their sole attention."

That Janet wasn't present to Tom was difficult for her to hear. She always thought she was a good wife who made him a key part of her life. While she was still very angry with him, she took what he said to heart and they made a commitment to spend at least thirty minutes alone each night to devote to each other. They also decided to go on regular dates. . .

As Tom and Janet experienced forgiveness and healing in their lives, they were able to start working on a vision for their marriage. They each wrote down what they believed a great marriage entailed, and then they combined their definitions into one they could share. They wanted their marriage to be Christ-centered where there was total trust and openness. They wanted to be able to talk to each other without fear. They wanted romance in their marriage, and wanted to be best friends who were always there for each other. . .

I compare this [process of rebuilding a marriage] to rebuilding a house. Sometimes a bad storm can damage a poorly built house down to its foundation, and in order to rebuild that house it must first be torn down. One must then sort through the rubble and pull out the good things that have not been damaged. These, along with new materials, are used to build a new house that is stronger, healthier, and able to withstand the storms of life. . .

While I provided an overview of Tom and Janet's healing process, please realize that this took many months. Tom needed time to overcome his compulsive sexual behavior and Janet needed time to recover from her trauma, anger, sadness, and betrayal. She had to grieve the loss of the marriage she thought she had, embrace the marriage she did have, and work on creating the marriage she wanted to have.

As they worked on their recovery, their love for each other grew. Tom was able to show his trustworthiness through his devotion to his recovery program, and by being totally open and honest with Janet, she in turn was able to forgive Tom and grow in trust. They reached a deeper level of intimacy than they had ever known as they worked on creating their new healthy marriage.

Their love for the Lord also grew as they came to see how God could heal the most broken people and marriages and give them a new life together.

Tom and Janet eventually began reaching out to other couples in recovery to help them see that healing and restoration of a broken marriage is possible. They wanted to show their gratitude to God and to all the people who helped them, by "paying it forward." . . .

The healing process takes time and hard work, but I encourage couples not to be afraid of it. Remember that God has not forgotten you. He has a wonderful plan for your marriage, one of healing and restoration. You will have to work on healing individual and marital wounds, but it is worth all the effort.

I like to compare the restoration of marriages to the restoration of Jerusalem in the Book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament. The work was slow, but the Israelites worked steadily. They did not let enemies thwart their progress. They persevered and eventually restored Jerusalem to an even greater glory. God will do the same for your marriage if you have faith and persevere! . . .

For the wife of an addicted husband, don't lose hope. No one sets out to become addicted. It is usually the result of years of self-medicating deep emotional wounds. It has nothing to do with your beauty or desirability as a woman. Your husband doesn't want to replace you with the women in porn. Most of all, he never wanted to

hurt you, and more than anyone else, he needs your love and support as he works through the recovery process.

At the same time, you need to heal from the pain of betrayal you have experienced as a result of the addiction. I urge you to seek counseling and support for your healing. God has given you many caring people who understand your pain and want to help you heal. Things may seem bleak right now, but I assure you that God has a wonderful plan for your marriage. He wants to give you a healthy and happy marriage. This is what innumerable couples have experienced. With God all things are possible! ⁶

- ▶ Return to the beginning and answer the questions there.
- ▶ Recite Ephesians 6:17 from memory.
- ▶ Memorize Matthew 5:22-23 in the translation above or another.
- ▶ Continue to complete the steps suggested in “Your Plan & Progress in Your War with Lust” in Appendix C.

¹ Kleponis, Loc. 3631-3634.

² Ibid., 3729-3737.

³ Ibid., 3626-3629.

⁴ Ibid., 3695-3753

⁵ Ibid., Loc. 3673-3684.

⁶ Ibid., 3782-3788, 3808-3811, 3821-3824, 3908-3945, 4940-4946.

Appendix A

“P.O.W.E.R. Plan” for God Times**Praise** for your Dad’s character and blessings (≈2 minutes):

- Consider kneeling for this portion of your God Time.
- What are things about your Dad to worship Him or thank Him for?
- How has your Dad answered your prayers?

Openness to your Dad about any negative emotions (≈2 min.):

- Are there any bad feelings you are struggling with today such as worry, anger, apathy, discouragement? Talk to God about these. Or thank Him that the powers of the Spirit are controlling you today like love, joy, and peace.

Word from your Dad (≈7 min.):

- If you are struggling with bad feelings: Ask why you are feeling that way. Our feelings are always based on what we are believing. Bad feelings not of the Spirit are always based on believing lies. Try to understand the lie that is causing your anger, fear, or discouragement. Then “*take up the shield of faith*” which is believing the truth of God and use “*the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*” to confront the lie (Eph 6:16-17). If you believe the truth, “*the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32).
- If reading the *Christian Essentials* study: Answer the questions at the beginning of the chapter and follow the instructions at its end.
- If reading the Bible: *Pray* the Bible, thanking God for promises and blessing in the text and asking for help to obey commands. Make God Times a two-way conversation with God!

Entreaties and prayer for yourself and others (≈5 min.):

- What are 2-3 specific things you are asking God to do in your life right now?
- What family and friends can you pray Eph 3:14-19 for?
- What lost people in your life can you pray for?
- What is happening in your life today that you want God’s blessing for?

Resolutions to your Dad (≈3 min.):

- How can you be kind to someone today?
- What commitments do you need to be faithful with?
- What is something that could be better with more planning?

Appendix B

“P.O.W.E.R. Plan” for Barnabas Group

≈ 80 minutes

Praise for your Dad’s character and blessings (≈5 minutes):

- What do you want to thank your Dad for this week? How has your Dad answered your prayers?
- Take turns thanking Him for these things now.

Openness about any negative emotions (≈15 min.):

- Are there bad emotions you have been struggling with this week including anger, worry, discouragement, or lust?
- If so, what were you believing that made you feel that way?
- What would be truth from Jesus that would set you free from these feelings?

Word from your Dad (≈45 min.):

- Ask one another how consistent and encouraging your God Times have been this week.
- Take turns answering the questions at the beginning and end of the chapters assigned this week in the *Christians Essentials* study.
- What did you learn from any Projects you were assigned this week?
- Recite your verses for this week. A list can be found in Appendix C.

Entreaties and prayer for yourself and others (≈10 min.):

- What are 2-3 specific things you are asking, seeking, and knocking for God to do in your life right now?
- What family and friends can you pray Eph 3:14-19 for?
- Who do you know that needs Christ in their life and you can pray for?
- Take turns praying for each other.

Resolutions to your Dad (≈5 min.):

- Are there any actions you want to pursue because of your discussion?
- Is there anything you would like your group to hold you accountable to this week?
- How did you do with any commitments last week?

Appendix C

Your Plan & Progress in Your War with Lust*Plan & pursue your battle strategy*James 1:22

You have read, studied, and hopefully discussed a lot of truth in this study. But this will not help you if you do not put these things into practice. The Bible warns:

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. (James 1:22)
Plan & pursue your battle strategy.

In chapters 10-13 of this study, you were given 10 steps to defend and fight against the war being waged against you by demon-possessed destroyers of your wife and life. In this Appendix you will record your progress with each one of these steps. This checklist should be regularly discussed and reviewed with your "battle brother."

10 Steps Checklist

- I am experiencing God's grace and forgiveness in my battle against lust. While I am sorry and sad about my sin, I believe in my Father's compassion for me.**
- I have a friend who is willing to be my "battle brother" to encourage me in my battle against lust. We have agreed to call one another when we are being tempted in a "danger zone" or with an emotional "trigger" so we can remind one another of Scripture and pray together.**
- I have effectively installed protective software on all the Internet devices in my life and have made my "battle brother" the recipient of Internet activity reports.**
- I have considered and recorded below the 3 costs of sinful lust that scare me the most:**
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

☐ I have identified and planned for my “danger zones”

Danger zone 1 & plan:

Specific plan for how I will seek rest, relaxation, and recreation:

☐ I have identified and recorded below my emotional “triggers” or what makes me feel B.L.A.S.T.ed and leads me to sinful lust. Be as detailed as possible.

I have also recorded how I can reduce or eliminate some of these by reducing stress, better sleep, exercise, etc. I have committed to doing these things.

My “Triggers”

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

- I have chosen and begun to memorize Scriptures to remind me of the truths in this study and give me power over my emotional “triggers.”**

My 3-4 “Sword Scriptures”

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

“Sword Scriptures” for my emotional “triggers”

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

- I have identified my spiritual gift(s) and am pursuing a plan to use them more consistently in my home and church. And to find ways to experience pleasure without sin.**

My spiritual gift(s) are:

My plan to use them:

In addition to using my spiritual gift(s), I plan to regularly experience pleasure without sin in the following ways:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

- I am pursuing spiritual freedom through counseling.**

□ I am pursuing reconciliation with my wife if necessary.

- 1) Talk to your Pastor.
- 2) Tell your wife everything.
- 3) Allow your wife a meeting to express her feelings about your sin.
- 4) Set up weekly couples counseling with your Pastor.
- 5) Determine if your wife needs a “battle sister” to support her through this difficult time.
- 6) Ask your wife to read this study, *Your War with Lust*.”
- 7) Provide the reports that your wife desires.
- 8) An example of love is to agree with your wife on an extended period of abstinence from your sexual relationship.
- 9) Do everything you can to demonstrate love to your wife. You might consider reading and applying such books as *The Five Love Languages* and *The Love Dare*.
- 10) Recommit your marriage vows to one another.

Appendix D

Memory Verses for *Your War with Lust* Study

All verses are in *New Living Translation* (NLT) unless otherwise noted.

Reference	Verse
Matt 5:27-28	<i>You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.</i>
Prov 7:26	<i>She has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims.</i>
Prov 7:12	<i>Now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks. NIV</i>
Eph 6:12	<i>We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against . . . wicked spirits in the spiritual realms.</i>
Prov 6:26	<i>For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life. NASB</i>
Heb 13:4	<i>Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled. NASB</i>
Eph 4:30	<i>Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.</i>
Matt 5:29	<i>If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you. NASB</i>
2 Tim 2:22	<i>Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. NIV</i>
Prov 7:7	<i>I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. NIV</i>
Eph 6:17	<i>Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.</i>
Matt 5:23-24	<i>So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the</i>

	<p><i>altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.</i></p>
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Appendix E

The Seven H.A.P.P.I.E.R. Needs of Humans

7 Human Needs	Surface feelings if unmet	Deep feelings when unmet	God's Promises to satisfy them	
Hope Being confident of having a deep desire fulfilled	Angry	Hopeless Want to die	1 Pet 1:13 Ps 16:11 John 14:1-3 Rev 21:1-5	
Approval Being accepted in a favorable way		Rejected Condemned Shame	1 John 1:7 1 John 4:10 Rom 5:1-2; 8:1, 38-39	
Protection Being secure from harm		Unsafe Vulnerable	Matt 6:13 1 Cor 10:13 Rom 8:28 Ps 139:5	
Power Being free and able to do what you want to do		Depressed	Trapped Inadequate Enslaved	1 Jn 5:14-15 Gal 5:22-23 1 Cor 7:36 2 Cor 5:9
Importance Being valuable and to have your life matter		Worried	Worthless Insignificant	Eph 1:4-6 1 Cor 7:23 1 Cor 4:9 Jn 15:15-16
Enjoyment Experiencing pleasure		Worried	Pain Boredom Depression	John 10:10 1 Tim 6:17 Acts 20:35 1 Pet 4:10-11
Relationship Being with another person		Worried	Lonely Separated	Heb 13:5 Matt 28:20 Ps 139:1-3 John 14:20

Appendix F

Additional Resources for Your War with Lust

Peter Kleponis, *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography*, Emmaus Road Publishing, Kindle Edition.

Based on the number of references to this resource in *Your War with Lust*, it is obvious we think this is a very good book on the topic. The author is a Christian counselor who has had extensive experience with this issue. This immediately puts him in a superior position to give guidance than many authors of books on this topic. Some might be turned off by the Catholicism in a few places in the book, but there is good information here. The author also has a website at <http://integrityrestored.com/>

Tom Challies, blog “10 Articles on Pornography,” at <https://www.challies.com/resources/10-articles-on-pornography>.

Challies’ “gospel” approach to everything is always refreshing. While he does not give in-depth help on how to overcome lust, he has some encouraging things to say. While we would agree with his review of *Everyman’s Battle*, we would disagree with his review of *Finally Free*.

Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *Every Man’s Battle: Every Man’s Guide to Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time* (Crown Kindle Edition, 2000).

This has been by far the most popular Christian book on the topic for several years. On one hand, anything Christian on this topic is generally worth reading. However, this book is very outdated as it does not even address the Internet. Nor is there any mention of the need to have your identity in Christ or renew your mind. Finally, the authors seem to place too much responsibility on the wife.

Michael John Cusick, *Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle*, Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition. 2012.

This book does a good job of describing some of the inner needs that lead to sinful lust. But its solution is disappointing. Essentially the advice given is to: 1) Identify lies, 2) Renounce them out loud so the devil hears you, 3) Do this persistently until it works. He also has a prayer to recite. It is doubtful that these steps would significantly help a person renew the subconscious parts of their mind that are causing

their lust. One final minor critique is that the author uses so many metaphors that his points can actually become less clear.

Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace*, (Zondervan, 2013).

A great title with much promise. But unfortunately the author's essential prescription is the same "confess and repent" approach so popular and yet so ineffective. We quote substantially from this book in the FREEDOM study of the Christian Essentials to demonstrate how this approach misses the real biblical approach: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2).