



Changing Lives, Minds, and
Communities through Jesus Christ

Sex Matters

adapted from the book *Sex Matters: Men Winning the Battle*

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Chapter 1 Understanding the Battle with Sex

Sex matters. It matters to everyone regardless of race, gender, economic status, or religious beliefs. It has taken center stage as a form of entertainment, news, and scandal. From the Oval Office to corporate board rooms to prison cells, sex always seems to find a way in. In our sex-saturated society, it is easy to see why some people believe it is the most important issue of life.

Sammy slumped in the chair in my office. He didn't waste any time: "My big sin is sex. It is my god. It is an escape. I am a prisoner of sex. I am hooked on sex just as if I were shooting stuff in my veins."

Sammy is not alone. Many people are fighting a daily war against crippling sexual impulses and desires. But you don't win this fight using only external do's and don'ts. God wins it for you by giving you integrity and helping you develop wise external controls (avoiding triggers that lead to temptation). Triggers could be anything from a TV sitcom that trivializes sex to a porn magazine to rap lyrics to listening in on another guy's sex stories. Winning the battle against sexual addiction, immorality, and temptations while learning to express your sexuality in the way God intended is an inside job. God wants to change your heart and soul. He wants to set you free from the bondage of sexual immorality.

To understand the battle, you have to know the battleground—in our culture as well as

in the spiritual realm. Consider the "pickle principle." To make pickles, cucumbers are soaked in a brine solution of vinegar, spices, and water. The brine chemically changes the nature of the crisp cucumber into a pickle. The cucumber soaks up its environment and is forever changed. A lot of us are like pickles.

Our sex-saturated culture is the brine we soak in—some of us more than others. Our hearts and souls soak up the brine, which changes our thoughts, emotions, and the very health of our bodies. We live in a sexualized quagmire of pickled people whose actions may range from a second lustful glance to a sex crime. And a lot of Christians don't realize just how much that cultural brine has changed their attitudes, beliefs, and practices—destroying their faith and witness for Christ. Advertising on TV has a tremendous impact on us. TV tells us "if you drink this beer, if you drive this car, if you wear this cologne, etc., you will have all the beautiful women you want." Sex sells in this sex-saturated culture.

Sitcoms like "Friends" and "Sex in the City" show sex to be as casual as having a cup of coffee. In the movies, nudity and casual sex are added to spice up the show and to hook those who are watching. Many people are not aware how these images influence their lives.

Perhaps the most dominating secular worldview impacting our society is the belief that sex is the ultimate pleasure. Sexual orgasm is a powerful experience, but is it the greatest of all pleasures? When sex is degraded to a purely physical experience, it loses the intense joy of a lasting commitment, enduring companionship, the joy of family life, and the wonderful mystery of spiritual union. Exalting orgasm as the greatest of all pleasures actu-

ally has the opposite effect—degrading families, relationships, and the physical act itself.

God wants to get you and me out of the brine because we can never win the battle as long as we are soaking in this cultural slime. While we can never escape the culture we live in, we can intentionally choose to avoid the obvious immoral influences and choose to associate with men who have a heart for God. I should know. As a divorced man, I engaged in a promiscuous sexual lifestyle, wounding myself and others for years until God's grace, and healing mercy, rested on me.

God wants to have an intimate relationship with us. He wants to create in you and me the nature and character of Christ. The Scriptures say that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). This is the way the battle is won. We can never fully escape the culture around us. In fact, we are to be salt and light within that culture. Yet, even Christians secure in Christ's salvation can ruin their witness and joy because they lose the inner spiritual battle and jump into the brine of the culture. Maybe you have not experienced the "bad" side of sexual sin, maybe you don't feel bad ... for now. Just wait. You may be enjoying the thrill for now, but sin always has consequences. Sexual sin will take you places you don't want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.

The Wounds of Sexual Immorality

Sex was designed to be a joyful experience of human connection, but too often it can be a painful, horrible atrocity. Sexual immorality stains your soul at a much deeper level than any other sin. Consider the following:

- **Sexual immorality attacks and contaminates the roots of your self-identity.**

When you base your worth and value on another person's response to you, the real foundation of your self-worth is undermined. When you involve yourself in sexual activities outside of God's design, you become vulnerable to another person's evaluation of you in the most intimate of ways.

• **Sexual immorality is inside the body.**

The body is the container for the soul. A person is a living soul with skin on. Sexual involvement always touches the soul.

• **Sex sins expose and exploit your deepest emotional and spiritual vulnerabilities.**

There are soul ties that bind two partners together in unseen ways. Broken sexual ties rip deep, painful wounds in your soul.

• **Sex sins have a unique ability to create a deep sense of shame and guilt.**

Feelings of shame, guilt, and regret bear witness to deep, internal pain. Because sex involves the whole person, your heart and soul are injured, as well as your body.

• **Sex sins weaken the deepest human covenant relationship of marriage.**

Sex outside of marriage, whether adultery or premarital sex, betrays the marriage covenant. Sex sins poison the trust and confidence between you and your spouse. It often takes years to repair a single episode of unfaithfulness and more often leads to divorce. And divorce is common to most children who get in trouble with drugs, sex, and criminal activity.

• **Sex sins strike at the most sacred charge God gave humanity—the ability to create living souls.**

Our culture wants to ignore the fact that sex often results in human life, even to the point of killing a child developing in the mother's womb. Only men and women and God are endowed with the ability to produce another living soul. Angels, demons, and Satan himself cannot participate in this miraculous activity.

The Heart of the Problem

The world's view of sex stands in direct opposition to God's original and joy-filled plan.

World's View of Sex

- For personal pleasure
- Focuses on the body
- People become objects to be used for pleasure
- Attitude is one of taking/using
- Consequences are destructive: Partners feel used, guilty, lose self-esteem

God's Truth About Sex

- For intimacy in marriage; results in a selfless pleasure and new souls (children)
- Focuses on the whole person
- People are valued and experience intimacy with their husband or wife
- Attitude is one of giving/receiving
- Consequences enrich and heal both partners, who feel loved, secure, affirmed, and have enhanced self-esteem

The real problem with the world's view of sex is that it separates sex from the human heart and soul. The world would have you believe sex is recreational, like playing tennis or basketball, and therefore doesn't involve a soul-to-soul connection.

Jesus plainly taught that sexual immorality comes from the heart. When God changes a person's heart, He makes it possible to love from the heart, including sexual love within the healthy boundaries of marriage. Relationships are vital to understanding God's view of life. The world's view of sex disconnects and destroys individuals, relationships, and families. God connects individuals in loving, committed relationships and creates healthy marriages and families.

We seldom see the ugly side of sexual sins portrayed in the popular culture. People casually engage in sex or promote sex as if abortions, broken hearts, burning souls, and fatal diseases didn't exist. We don't see the pain, the huge medical bills, the broken marriages, the infertility, and a host of other problems that occur when sex gets out of bounds.

It's no wonder sex sins feel so bad. Or maybe you don't feel bad ... for now. Just wait. Sin always gets its price. And sex sins slash at your heart and soul as no other sin can. There is hope for those who want to be free! Understanding God's purpose and living within His boundaries sexually is possible even for those who have fallen.

In the following chapters I'll discuss God's purpose for our sexuality, strategies for healing, and how to have a passion for purity.

Chapter 2 Sexual by Design

When you look at the sexual insanity in our society, you have to wonder why something so wonderful causes so much pain for so many people.

Sexual passions are similar to fire. Fire under control makes a fantastic force. Fire cooks our meals, heats our homes, and sends shuttles to the moon. But when it gets out of the campfire or stove, fire destroys forests, torches homes, and disintegrates shuttles and lives.

Sexual passions, when expressed according to God's design, are wonderful and emotionally fulfilling; they unify husbands and wives like no other activity. When these same passions are expressed outside of God's design, they destroy families, wound people, and create a society filled with fatherless children.

Sex is God's idea. He designed all the body parts to work as they do. He created all the hormones, and He decided how they would all work together. For example, bodies release the hormone oxytocin during sex. It is released in women during the birth of a baby and in men whenever they ejaculate. Scientists have figured out that oxytocin is linked to bonding between mother and child, as well as between men and the person or images they have at the moment of climax—but they don't know how or why.

By God's design sex is not simply about human bodies. It is about human souls interacting with each other. A human being is "a soul with skin on." A living body always has a soul. What happens to the body affects the soul in that body. Every person is a living soul that will spend eternity with God or apart from God. What happens to that soul has eternal consequences.

Some people try to reduce human sexuality to the level of animals—nothing more than evolutionary instincts in action. But human sexuality is fundamentally different from sex among animals. Humans have a choice about when and where and with whom they engage in sexual activities. We are not ruled by instincts. Humans usually prefer to have sexual

activities in private. Humans are the only species that can have face-to-face sex, which emphasizes the relational aspect of human sexuality. Animals are driven to sex for one reason—to keep the species alive—but people have sex often when procreation is not the only purpose. We also always have a prior contract or permission—verbal, written, or financial—before engaging in sexual activities. Without permission, sex becomes a crime we call molestation, assault, abuse, or rape.

Human sexual experience is designed by God to be a whole person experience. This involvement of body, soul, and spirit makes it powerful, beautiful, and mysterious. Within God's purposes, sex is about more than continuing the species. It is about loving relationships that unite two people to create a marriage and a family.

Divine Purposes in Our Sexuality

One of Satan's lies permeating our culture suggests that God finds sex dirty at best, and that Christians want to rob individuals of their rights to all sexual pleasure. But the Bible flatly contradicts this picture. God created our sexuality as a beautiful picture representing **five distinct purposes for sex**:

1. Unity:

The Bible gets to the topic of sex by the second chapter of its first book—Genesis—where God presents Eve to Adam. The Scriptures teach that God designed sex to be a relational experience resulting in unity between a man and a woman in marriage. The male and female become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) through sexual intercourse. This “oneness” is a picture symbolizing our unity with God.

2. Procreation:

God commanded His creation to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28; 9:1). Man has no other natural way of fulfilling this command except through sexual intercourse (the recent science of in vitro fertilization is neither preferred nor cost-effective to achieve the same ends).

3. Love and Pleasure:

God gave humans the gift of sex to enhance and enrich the marriage relationship. As the marriage relationship becomes more intimate, the experience of sexual pleasure becomes more intense.

In the act of sex, a couple experiences a unique and intense self-awareness and degree of unity and intimacy that is generated by the verbal, emotional, physical, and spiritual interaction between them. Each individual senses that he or she, as a whole person, is pleasurable to his or her partner. Both sense it is not just “part” of their body that gives pleasure. Their total person is loved, appreciated, and enjoyed, not just the experience of sensual pleasure in their bodies. As they connect with their bodies, they become aware of their souls touching in sweet mystery, total love, unconditional acceptance, and delight. This pictures the way God loves and treats us through His grace.

4. Enhancement:

Men feel more masculine in a healthy sexual relationship in marriage. Women also experience a heightened sense of their femininity in a healthy sexual relationship in marriage. Both partners have their self-image affirmed and built up in loving intimacy. The emotional power of unconditional love and acceptance, lived out in a long-term, committed relationship, can never be overstated.

5. Prevention of Immorality:

Paul says (1 Corinthians 7:1-5) that husbands and wives should fulfill their duty sexually to their mate and thereby assist their partner in maintaining sexual purity and avoiding temptation. Sexual activity is to be for the benefit of the partner and the marital relationship, not some selfish demand that one partner insists as his or her right.

Understanding God's Design

There are certain factors in God's design that we need to understand to lovingly and wisely express and control our sexuality.

The human sex drive is normal, natural, and hormonal. By God's design, the sex drive is a mixture of hormones, emotions, and expression of the will. God designed the body to respond sexually to physical/emotional closeness. The hormones that trigger sexual responses make up a complex response mechanism and govern the biological and physiological responses.

Men and women can experience a sexual response to affection and touch. Remember that God created our bodies in such a way that they would react sexually. The body reacts sexually

to stimulation for a variety of hormonal and emotional reasons. Therefore, feeling these responses is not wrong or sinful. It is how you think about and pursue those feelings that result in life-giving warmth or an out-of-control forest fire.

When your body is stimulated by a hug from your mate, it will react to that stimulation. In fact, your body can react with sexual impulses when you receive warm affection and tenderness from anyone because your body, in and of itself, does not know the difference between one person's touch and another's. The body does not make any discrimination of this nature—only the mind does.

God gave the responsibility for discrimination and choice to the head and not the body. All discrimination is in your head. Your body is controlled by the choices you make with your will. This may be difficult to understand, but it is very important if you are to gain and maintain control of your sexuality.

Here is a reality about the human body that few people stop to consider: Just because your body reacts with sexual impulses to some stimuli (pictures on TV, the brush of a hand) does not mean that you have to choose to be sexual with that stimuli. This may well be why there are so many people struggling with the thinking behind sexual perversions: *“If my body responds sexually to someone or something, then why not enjoy myself?”*

Your major (most important) sex organ sits on your shoulders! God in His wisdom placed your will and discrimination in your brain; between your ears and not between your legs. Just because you notice someone who is sexually appealing, just because you have sexual impulses, or just because you are “turned on” sexually does not mean you have to act out sexually.

Animals don't get to choose. Animal sex is purely seasonal, glandular, compulsive, and instinctual. God designed human sexuality to be under the control of the human will. We humans have the possibility of making sex wonderfully relational if we choose for it to be so.

In summary, you were given a brain so that you can control the responses you choose! Sexual self-control is God's ideal, and it is possible for all of us. In the next article, we will discuss self-control and why we feel at times as though we have no self-control.

Chapter 3

Self-Control v. Sexual Urges

In today's highly sex-saturated culture, two concepts that you'll never see together, except perhaps as a joke, are "self-control" and "sex." Even suggesting that people exercise self-control over their natural, God-designed urges is to invite scorn and to be dismissed like someone who believes the earth is flat. We have arrived at that place where "losing control," "going all the way," and "getting some" are badges of honor to boast about. But as we've discussed in the last two chapters, rarely do we see the tragic consequences of this popular attitude. Fire is great in your fireplace, not when it's burning your flesh.

Self-control over sexual passion is possible. Your sex drive is not like a wild animal you cannot tame. You can choose to use it as designed or abuse it and, in the process, yourself and your partners.

Self-control begins not just with a reason, but also with a desire. Why should you want to maintain self-control over your sexual passions? People generally restrain their behavior in any area of life to accomplish a greater goal. An athlete pursuing a championship forsakes many of life's pleasures so his body will work at peak performance. The *desire* to go for the championship enables the athlete to restrain himself from less worthy activities or pleasures.

God has given each person sexual passion and desire. These desires are felt as strong impulses creating a need or hunger for expression. This normal sex drive is easy to train if a person has the right reasons. If someone is trapped in a burning building, his sexual passions lose their power. While escaping, one doesn't stop to check the porn collection. Survival is a more urgent need than any sexual urge; in fact, those urges fall away in view of the smoke and flames. When there is a *big reason* for restraining sexual urges and impulses, self-control is not difficult. If you lack a compelling reason or goal, or if your reason gets polluted over time, self-control is difficult. Like an athlete without

a dream for a championship, self-discipline and training lose the power to restrain the desire for lesser pleasures in life.

Why Is It So Hard to Do the Right Thing?

There are several issues that cause people difficulty in exercising self-control over their sexual urges.

The first issue is a loss of purpose. With no bigger picture in mind, we all tend to live off an immediate gratification principle. Sex is no different except that living an unrestrained sex life reaps a harvest of broken relationships, destroyed lives, sexual diseases, lost families, and fatherless children. The loss of a life purpose here gives way to major pain.

The second issue deals with emotional pain. Everyone has some emotional pain caused by life experiences. This pain results from many sources outside ourselves, such as parents who divorce, physical or sexual abuse by an older relative, serious accidents like a car wreck, unemployment, or losing a baby to disease. Many people choose not to face these pains. They run from them or medicate with distractions such as alcohol, drugs, sex, TV, sports, food, and video games. Whatever a person uses to run from his pain can become an addiction. The greater the pain, the more likely a person will run from it and develop addictions. These emotional needs, hungers, and pains amplify normal sexual impulses and make the person feel out of control. Sex becomes a drug, a temporary relief that numbs the misery of unhealed emotional wounds.

A third issue that makes sexual self-control difficult is when men view sex as a means to feel like a "real" man. Competence and respect make up the core of a man's confidence in himself. Men who feel insecure might try sex to boost their sense of masculinity. We've all heard in locker rooms and elsewhere that the guy who gets the most women is the "main man." Why? It falsely proves manliness via expressing power and control over another person. It also carries a sense of "cool," and to resist "shacking up" is to resist being cool or to invite being called gay, which, even in our politically correct culture, is still a put-down in almost any context.

All of these emotional issues, when connected with normal sexual passions, make sexual

urges feel stronger. It is not that sexual urges are too powerful to control, but that emotional reasons have become the primary driver, with sex being used to meet or cope with emotional needs.

How to Win Control

So how do you exercise sexual self-control? First, you need a BIG reason. The only purpose big and powerful enough to free you from lust and sexual addictions is God's promise of a huge reward—His truth, love, peace, and purpose for your life. A life that has been touched by Jesus has a big reason and an ability to maintain self-control that is greater than what most people would believe possible.

Keeping that big reason as your life purpose and goal can be difficult when the emotional pain and/or the need to feel like a "real" man causes you to lose your focus. But God did not leave us without His help to accomplish self-control. First, God has provided a means to heal the emotional pains and hurts so that you don't have to medicate or numb the pain. When you take the hurts to God, He provides His love, mercy, and grace to help you understand and heal. The two tools that God's Spirit uses for this healing are the Word of God (the Bible), and the loving compassion of His people. In this manner, God provides healing for even the deepest hurts and pains. The apostle Peter wrote, "Cast all your cares on Him, because He cares for you."

God also provides a sense of worth and self-identity for His men by giving them His righteousness and confidence. When you come to God as your Father in heaven, you find that He is waiting to welcome you with open arms. The story of the son who left home, found in Luke 15, tells of a boy who ran to the world and engaged in worldly pursuits and sexual passions, but when he came to his senses he returned home and found his father waiting with open arms. When we know that we have a Father in heaven, who is different from most of our fathers here on earth, we find that there is a masculine love that affirms our masculinity and delivers us from our need to be the "main man."

God does not leave us powerless in the face of sexual temptations. He gives us His indwelling Spirit, His Word, and His healing mercy so that we can then choose His big powerful reason as our goal and purpose.

When your normal sex drive is combined with powerful emotional needs or issues, sex feels too powerful to control. But when God's purposes become your BIG reason, then self-control is possible. Sex is bad medicine to medicate or numb your emotional pain. The momentary thrill always gives way to a flood of pain. God gave you your sexual urges as a means of enhancing the loving connection between a husband and wife and creating new life, the next generation of souls. When you commit to that big reason, you will find that God has resources that will enable you to have self-control when you think there is no way.

Chapter 4

Winning the Heart Battle Against Sex

David went through a hard divorce. His 20-year marriage was limited sexually. So when he became single again, he had one intent: to find out what the sexual freedom of single life was all about. He had many sexual partners and searched for pleasure in pornography and other sexual activities. He gave himself over totally to a sensual lifestyle.

He quickly found a woman who liked sex as much as he did, and they married. Unfortunately, sex was the *only* thing he and his new wife had in common. When his business began to fail and his money ran out, his new wife left him.

Again he began the hunt for sexual pleasure, finding plenty of willing partners. But he began to realize sex alone was not making him happy. With that understanding he slowly returned to the God of his youth. In time, David recommitted his life to Jesus and tried to live a life of purity. He found it very difficult to do.

He found a small group of men at church who had struggled with the same sexual issues. They shared with David that he would have to accept that he could not win his battle over sexual immorality on his own. He did not

have the ability or self-control to bring his thought life and behaviors under control. David held nothing back from this group of fellow strugglers, and he found out that he was not alone. They explained that the source of sexual immorality is on the inside.

This was a new concept for David. He had thought that if he just limited certain behaviors and concentrated on self-control, he would find freedom. His new buddies took him into the Scriptures and showed him where Jesus said that sexual immorality is from the heart (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-23). He understood, but didn't know how to change. His friends explained that Christianity is the only faith that involves changing a person's heart and soul from the inside and not from external rules or behaviors.

David learned that when he accepted Christ into his life, God put a new heart in him (Ezekiel 36:25-27) and enabled him to live by new purposes and ideals. With Christ living inside of him, he now had the ability to resist temptation, not by force of will, but by God's grace.

David continued to meet regularly with the guys. He noticed that his desire to please God was growing stronger than his sexual temptations. But he still struggled and battled. Sometimes he felt overwhelmed with temptations. What was not working for him?

His group helped him understand that people often use sexual "acting out" as a way to try to fix other issues in their lives. Often sexual behaviors are attempts to make us feel better about ourselves—to make us feel more like a man or less alone. People use sex for emotional reasons that have nothing to do with sex. For example, a guy who is angry may not understand that his seducing someone could be acting out his anger on that person. Some guys who feel out of control might use sex to gain control over others. People use sex to medicate loneliness, boredom, or even fear.

David began to understand that he had used sex for a lot of wrong reasons. He asked God to show him the real motivations behind his sexual urges. David found a freedom he had never known before from his sexual temptation. Today he is living a new life filled with joy.

A Strategy for Healing

David's story is true and could be told over and over again by lots of men. God does heal hearts and souls and sets us free from these internal battles. The steps are simple to follow when your heart's desire is to seek God's best for your life.

Step 1: Admit you have a battle with sex.

It seems basic, but nobody fixes problems he doesn't see.

Step 2: Talk about your battle with someone. Sexual addictions thrive in isolation and secrecy. Get it in the open with a small group of fellow Christians who can encourage you and hold you accountable. Be sure you pray for each other.

Step 3: Accept that your battle with sex is a war in the heart. God is the only source for healing your heart wounds. You also have an enemy who is out to destroy you. Satan is the author of temptation, and he uses your normal sexual urges to seduce and destroy you.

Step 4: Love Jesus. The best strategy to defeat sexual temptation is to love Jesus so much that the lure of sexual lust loses its power over you. How? It's not rocket science. Anyone can do it. Simply, you must spend time reading and studying the Bible, and learning how truly awesome it is to be loved by the Creator of the universe.

Step 5: Ask God to show you what emotional needs are behind your sexual issues. Are you lonely? Angry? In your small group explore how you can find healing for these issues through God's power and wisdom (Psalm 139:23-24).

Step 6: Ask God to help you see all individuals, both men and women, as living souls. Sex affects other people, deeply. When you care about other people as God does, you cease to see people as objects for your personal pleasure. No one likes to be used; everyone needs grace and love.

This battle is not won overnight. It is an ongoing war that God equips us to fight and win one day at a time. His love, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and power assure us of the victory as we walk with Jesus. In the next chapter we will discuss how to have a "Passion for Purity."

Chapter 5

A Passion for Purity

Purity is not a popular term in today's sex-saturated culture. It is rarely, if ever, mentioned or taken seriously. Yet a life of purity leads to better physical, emotional, and spiritual health. It promotes healthy relationships. The average American does not think much about sexual purity. Purity is more theoretical and humorous, like the popular comedy that mocks a 40-year-old virgin.

Let's start with a simple definition for sexual purity: walking clean sexually before God. How? Walk in His light, allowing it to shine into your heart and soul so that you are transparent before God. Your internal motivations, as well as your behaviors, should be open to His scrutiny. But purity is not about perfection.

A look at water purification might help put some handles on the concept of purity. Purified water has had anything "un-pure" (impurities) removed from it. It is not just visible pollutants that are removed, but also contaminants like germs and bacteria that cannot be seen. Purification is the process of removing anything that would make the water harmful to someone who drinks it. Water can usually be purified by boiling or adding some chemicals.

After purification, water then needs to be *kept* pure by the way it is stored and used. If you mix purified water with unpurified water, all of the water becomes polluted. Just a few drops of polluted water can pollute a whole bottle, requiring purification all over again.

Spiritual purification requires the removal of anything that is sinful, anything that falls short of God's character and standard. If you have put your faith in what Jesus did at the Cross, you are purified by the blood of Jesus and now you can choose to walk in purity (1 Peter 1:22). God removed your sins at the Cross. He removed guilt from your conscience and set you free from everything that polluted your life. He desires to daily remove from your life anything that hinders you from being more like Jesus. If you want your life to be pleasing to God and if you want to be used

by Him, then your life will be characterized by a passion for purity.

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His son, purifies us from every sin" (1 John 1:7).

The term *walk* is used in a figurative manner to mean your daily way of life or your ordinary daily behavior. When you walk in the light, you are walking in wisdom and obedience, consciously aware of the presence of God each step of your day. You walk with the God who loves you, wants you free, and can keep you free!

Maintaining a Passion for Purity

How do you maintain a passion for purity? Here are some helpful steps.

Step 1: Begin each day with a personal time with God. Begin each day with a fresh commitment to stay in the light and to walk in purity. One of the best ways to do this is to begin each morning with a personal time to focus on God's presence, to remind yourself that you always live in the presence of God. He will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5) Even if you have been unfaithful, He remains faithful and will not disown you (2 Timothy 2:13).

Step 2: Ask God to reveal to you the emotional issues or wounds that drive your sexual urges (Psalm 139:23-24). You may already know some of these issues in your life. Perhaps, as you have read these articles, you have identified additional issues. Continue to pray and ask God to show you the relational wounds that you have and the lies that you have believed which keep you from walking in purity. Ask God to reveal His truth to defeat these lies. You will likely need one or two trusted friends to help you see what God wants to heal. Remember that the heart is deceitfully wicked and that the person it deceives is you. Your Christian brothers are valuable allies, and their encouragement is essential (Hebrews 10:25).

Step 3: Get rid of anything that hinders your focusing on Jesus and walking in purity. Pornography distracts you from walking in purity. The Scriptures teach that we must resist Satan in all of his lies (1 Peter 5:8, James 4:7) and take all of our thoughts cap-

tive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). You can break free from whatever hinders your purity by choosing to give it up and by renouncing these activities in the name of Jesus.

Step 4: Practice personal discipline in other areas of your life. When you practice self-discipline in any area of your life, it makes it easier to practice discipline in other areas. Many who struggle with undisciplined sex lives lack discipline in other areas as well.

Step 5: Get off the roof! Avoid situations that are tempting. King David was walking on his roof when he saw Bathsheba bathing below. Instead of leaving, he stayed and fell into immorality. Many of us have experienced something similar in our own lives. You faced a temptation, but instead of getting up and walking away, you began to play with the idea in your mind and ended up succumbing to the temptation. So get off the roof! The Scriptures tell men to run from lust (2 Timothy 2:22) and pursue those things that produce godliness and purity.

Having a passion for purity is really about trusting Jesus and what He promises for you more than you trust the promises of sexual sin and immorality. Only Jesus can give us freedom from our sin and the joy of walking in sexual purity. A passion for purity has a good payday in this life and in the life to come.

These chapters were adapted from the book Sex Matters: Men Winning the Battle by Waylon O. Ward. Mr. Ward is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and a counselor.

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