

BREAKING THE STRONGHOLDS OF LUST

better pleasure

WORKBOOK

Ezekiel



YOU GIVE THEM DRINK
FROM THE RIVER OF YOUR PLEASURES

PSALM 36.8

A Publication of:
Running Light Ministries
3850 N Commerce Drive, Tucson, AZ 85705

Contact Info:
Office: (520) 292-9661
Emails: Beau@runninglight.org
Peter@runninglight.org

Websites:
BetterPleasure.org
RunningLight.org

The book of Ezekiel is amazing when it comes to studying issues we have with lust! I hope this short book will open up your eyes to the relevancy of the Bible in our present culture. The name Ezekiel means, "God will strengthen." It is our prayer at Running Light Ministries that you will indeed find great admonishment, encouragement and comfort from this book, and it will help you move towards the better pleasure.

Complete in Him,
Beau

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Lesson 1

Ezekiel 5:11 "As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I will cut you off completely. I will show you no pity at all because you have defiled my Temple with your vile images and detestable sins."

A brief background is that God is judging Jerusalem. It has become a place of idolatry instead of worshiping God. The temple, which was to be the chief center of Hebrew worship of the true and living God had turned into a place of lackadaisical worship, and complacency. Now this is how it relates to us:

We are called the temple of the Lord in *1st Corinthians 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"*

How does the 1st Corinthians passage and the Ezekiel passage relate?

When reading the book of Ezekiel we get a glimpse into the priests of Israel physically mistreating the temple as a common thing instead of as a Holy place.

Can you relate to this by how you have treated your own body in sexual ways?

What parts of your body have you mistreated, and explain the effects it has had on you?

1st Corinthians 6:16 "And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: 'I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

Where again does the passage above tell us God dwells?

Is there a seriousness that you are developing as to why it is vital that we continue to fight lustful sinful inclinations from understanding that you are the temple of God?

What can you do better in striving to walk in a pure way as the temple of the Holy Spirit of God?

Lesson 2

Ezekiel 6:9 "Then when they are exiled among the nations, they will remember me. They will recognize how hurt I am by their unfaithful hearts and lustful eyes that long for their idols. Then at last they will hate themselves for all their detestable sins."

Can you relate to this lustful eyeing of your idols?

We have an eye problem in our world today. There is so much to look at all the time that many of us never get out to see the stars at night or the blue sky during the day.

Walker-Smith says we've gone from being exposed to about 500 ads a day back in the 1970's to as many as 5,000 a day today. "It seems like the goal of most marketers and advertisers nowadays is to cover every blank space with some kind of brand logo or a promotion or an advertisement,". [Walker-Smith - Sep 17, 2006]

We can all agree that we live in an over saturated culture, and it will not get any easier. But we have to make decisions as to what we put in front of us. There are millions of pornography pages on the internet that are accessible on any device that has access to the world wide web. How can we better fight the battle with images in our culture? Is there a way to cut some of the potential images from getting to your eyes?

What has been your experience with your eyes?

It can be that you need to not watch so much TV, or put filters on your devices so you can't get to certain material. There are many things that you can do, but you need to be proactive and think through these things. Maybe start to read more instead of watching so much media!

Sexual images stimulate us as humans. So the more you see sexual images the more you will find yourself somewhat in a mode of stimulation. But there is even more to think through for those that are married!

Married people tend to have sex more. And seeing your beloved naked can be quite stimulating. This can produce in us a sinful lust if we are not mindful.

You might be asking a question: How do you not lust after your wife?

The answer is that it is not sin to have a strong desire to look at your spouse. But when that strong desire moves us to want to see others without clothes on, then it is a sin.

Job 31:1 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman."

Job was married (Job 2:9). Job is making it clear that it is a work of iniquity to lust upon another woman.

The challenge for us in this Babylon culture is to not long for those images that we do see, like the things that come in the mail that can be candy to the eyes or the banner ads on social media. There are endless amounts of images in our world, so we need to be mindful and vigilant.

Obscenity is not protected by the First Amendment and thus can be regulated by the state. However, the state must conform to the three-part test of Miller vs. California: 1973

1. Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest;
2. Whether the work depicts or describes, in an offensive way, sexual conduct or excretory functions, specifically defined by applicable state law; and
3. Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

According to this law, the pornography that is so freely available should be considered regulated as obscenity, but sadly it is not. This unregulated amount of pornography puts everyone in the world open to seeing many images that in the past would never have been able to be seen in such mass volume. So when the Bible says, "Be vigilant," in 1st Peter 5:8, we need to really be vigilant!

Lastly, it can really feel like a longing to look at lustful images. I hate that, and I'm sure you can relate! We can be going just fine and then a longing can overcome us. Being vigilant means learning to take our thoughts captive, learning to cut off avenues of lustful things and learning to discipline our lives around the body of Christ.

Seek the Glory of God in your confessions
Seek to learn the Word of God
Seek accountability relationships
Seek to cut off areas that stumble
Seek to have a repentant heart
Seek to remember grace!

The most beautiful truth about Jesus is that He is what we need. He is our Savior! God placed all of our judgment on Jesus. And forever we are thankful!

Lesson 3

Ezekiel 8:12 "Then the Lord said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the leaders of Israel are doing with their idols in dark rooms? They are saying, 'The Lord doesn't see us; he has deserted our land!'"

Let me first get to the point of the passage we are looking at. It most certainly is relatable for us who have viewed pornography. Have you ever thought that the Lord did not see?

This was the great sin of the leaders of Israel, they acted as if God was not present. There are many that go to church all the time, yet they do not even think that watching porn is a problem. Many live in sexual sin, fornication, homosexuality, multiple wives or husbands and justify it by using the Bible! Do you see what the really big sin is in this situation?

Calling something right when it is not right!

Isaiah 5:20 "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

Romans 1:32 "They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too."

Do you believe that watching porn or flirting with people that are not your spouse is ok?

Do you think that self gratification is ok?

To tell it like it is from God's perspective is to properly confess sin. Confession actually means to say it like it really is! The way God sees it! Israel was delusional in thinking God somehow was not concerned with their mixing idolatry with the worship of the true and living God. They were wrong.

Is there anything you need to confess to God at this moment in light of this lesson?

Understanding this lesson does not mean that you will not struggle or fall into self gratification or watching lustful material. But what it will do is prevent you from thinking that God does not see us or know what we do in hidden places. Understanding and being clear that God is called *The God Who Sees* is what this lesson is about.

Hagar was the maid servant to Abraham's wife, Sarah. After Sarah became very jealous of Hagar who had a child by Abraham, she was kicked out of her home and left out in the wilderness. It was a cruel act by Sarah. But the Lord spoke to Hagar in such a time of extreme trial and sorrow.

Genesis 16:13-14 She [Hagar] gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi [the "well of the Living One who sees me"]. — (NIV)

God sees us. He knows when we are watching porn or other lustful acts. In light of that what do you think the best thing to do is when you are in the act of selfish gratification?

We at R.L.M. believe that you should always talk to God, even when you are indulging in your sin. I know that is hard for you to hear, but bringing God into every part of our lives will be the medicine we need to see lust for what it really is, and the power to help drive it from us. How can we ever win if we do not bring God into our actions, good or bad? When talking to God in such action we must remember always that he loves us, and that is why he desires to be in our life. We can tell it like it is with God, to hide it from him is to walk like Israel did during the time of the prophets.

Lesson 4

Ezekiel 11:12 "...and you will know that I am the Lord. For you have refused to obey my decrees and regulations; instead, you have copied the standards of the nations around you."

Ezekiel 11:19 "And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart,..."

We will look at the 11:12 passage first!

Have you ever thought about your life and what makes your actions different from others? It can be quite convicting to think through this. As we learned from our last lesson, we all sin, but the world can tell us that sin is not really sin and in doing so, we can live just like the rest of the world does, without any conviction.

Colossians 1:21 "And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled you."

Do you remember being an enemy of God in your mind? Describe it?

I remember always justifying my positions, no matter how bad they were. Instead of just saying that it was wrong, I would push those thoughts deep in me as to not hear them, and in doing so I could continue in my life of rebellion, in utter ignorance of the sin in me.

Ephesians 4:22 "That you put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

What does the old man do?

What are we told to do with it?

What kind of lust typifies the old man?

Putting off the old man is, in a sense, putting off the ways of the world which walks in the lust of the flesh, eyes and pride (1st John 3:16). This is walking in a different way from the people who do not know God. This is a process of surrendering to Jesus, asking Him to live His life through us! But don't get this wrong: we are not to adopt the same things that the world tells us are ok to do. Here is an example of what we read concerning porn usage:

Studies have shown no increase in rape or other sexual deviance due to porn viewing. There is also no apparent connection between excessive porn viewing and sex addiction. In fact, it might be good for you if used properly: a 2008 Danish study found that moderate porn watching gave viewers some benefits. [Nov 17, 2015]

Can you see what I mean from the above passage about the persuasiveness of the culture on the issue of pornography?

To go along with the world is a lost cause, as it is always changing. This is the thought of John in *1st John 2:17* ***"The world is passing away and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."***

Now let me mention the importance of verse 19 in this lesson!

Ezekiel 11:19 "And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart,..."

One of the greatest gifts we have is this promise of a new heart! Boy do we need one daily! But this is what the Creator says that He has for us to help in our time of need. A heart that is new is one that is concerned about God, and is responsive to God.

*"Can aught beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine,
To form the heart anew.
To chase the shades of death away
And bid the sinner live!
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give."*

Charles Spurgeon once preached, *"naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God."* And this is so true. Confession, repentance, moving away from sin is not what humans do. We are dead and cold towards God. We need to be made new!

(Check out this sermon by C. H. Spurgeon)

<http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/0456.htm>

If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, it is a miracle that your heart is for Him! The religious people of his day mostly couldn't stand Him. But sinners flocked to Jesus (Luke 15). Just being religious does not necessarily mean that you will like Jesus. He tends to divide people (Luke 12:52-53). He came to bring a sword which would cut families and friends in half due to any allegiance with Him. A sinner that repents means rejoicing in Heaven, yet trials on earth (2nd Timothy 3:12). This is what the new heart is all about. It is saying yes to who Jesus is by believing Him. This can only happen through a miracle of the Holy Spirit that has opened the eyes of the blind.

1st John 5:1a "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God"

If you know Jesus, you have a divine power that will change you! Your belief in Jesus is proof that you have been given a heart of flesh instead of stone!

Do you see your belief in Jesus as a miracle?

Share your testimony if you would with someone.

Lesson 5

Ezekiel 13:17-23 “Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive? ^[19] And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?”

^[20] Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I am against your magic charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds. ^[21] I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

^[22] Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. ^[23] Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord.””

Ezekiel is not letting the women prophets off in his book! He has seen the role they have played in hurting the people of God, and they will be judged for it!

First, let me tell you as a fellow friend who struggles so much at times with a lustful heart that there is a comfort in this passage to me. I hope for you too! The comfort is that God knows our enemy well, and will recompense them for what they do to us and our families!

Psalm 7:9 “Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end...”

Have you ever felt this way?

Look at the Ezekiel 13 passage again and answer the following questions:

What does verse 18 tell us the women do to the people’s souls?

HUNT SOULS! Have you ever felt like that is what this lustful culture is doing to you? Have you ever felt like no matter which way you turn there are more and more sinful images before you, hunting you down?

1st Peter 5:8 “The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

In Ezekiel 13:18 we see the women sewing charms on their sleeves and making veils which seem to be a reference to the attraction and importance of their mission before the people. Whatever they were used for, it was used in a way to bring people into a bondage to their message.

We too are loaded down with many messages in our culture on the goodness of sexual variety and fluidity. If you were to look at our media driven culture you would have to contend that we feel sex is about making us happy and feeling good, yet so many today are sad, depressed, and filled with anxiety. There is no peace to be found in our sexually liberated world or drug/alcohol infested world.

There is also an amazing stress in our culture to look good by working out, eating healthy and showing financial success. This kind of culture is very difficult to avoid, and we must work on our minds and hearts being in heaven (Colossians 3:1-2) to prevent us from being too focused on the here and now.

“...it is impossible to take the slightest step with sense and judgment unless one determines it by the consideration of that point which must be our final destination.” [Blaise Pascal, The Wager]

Can you relate to the lies that have been told to you during your life in Ezekiel 13:22?

Have you been made sad by those lies?

How has the porn/sex industry strengthened the hands of the wicked?

What is the great hope of Ezekiel 13:23?

The end of the Bible is ultimately concerning God's judgment on a rejecting, Christ hating world. Though God offers grace and mercy, the world does not take the free gift and instead is filled with a pride of such mass proportions that it renders them unable to see their folly. They stand condemned by their actions and words towards a loving God and would rather die than face the pure holiness of the Father and the Son. Those that see the truth come into the light. We do not need to hide from God anymore, our sins are forgiven!

Revelation 6:15-17 "...Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the commanders, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and free man, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ^[16]And they said to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. [17]For the great day of Their wrath has come, and who is able to withstand it?'..."

The world does not want Christ and so it hides from Him by pushing Him out. This attitude will work for a time, but there will come a day when it will no longer be the world pushing God out, but the Father and His Son will be abruptly interrupting them! Believers are not of this World!

Lesson 6

Ezekiel 14:3 & 20:7

Ezekiel 14:3 "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?"

Describe in your own words what it means to set up an idol in your heart?

How have you put before yourself that which causes you to stumble?

How does this passage of scripture relate?

Romans 13:14 "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

I can only imagine that in the ancient times when stone or wood idols were built, they became a major part of how people managed their stress, anxiety and wishes in life. They would bring their concerns to their idols instead of to the living God.

Can you relate to using sex or sensuality as a way to deal with life's difficulties?

I can certainly relate to this. I have heard for many years that masturbation with pornography was fine and good for you. Over the years this teaching has been stuck in my brain making it very difficult to consistently think otherwise. This idea comes from a philosophy on life that has its roots in idolatry. It is a philosophy on life that ignores God's words and ways. Valuing an idea above God is idolatry.

In what ways can we make no provision for the flesh and remove idols from our hearts?

Ezekiel 20:7 “Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

What does the above passage tell us to do with the idols of our culture?

Why is this so difficult for us? How much casting away should we do? What is before your eyes?

When we do cast off that which is before us, it is because we are valuing God’s Word’s above our cultures. We always think that we need all the technology that we set before us. But really, how much do you need? What is a necessity, and what are weights and burdens to you?

Hebrews 12:1-2 “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Notice from the above passage that there is a distinction between weights and sin! There are things that simply weigh us down daily leading to stress, anxiety and depression. And then there is sin. To struggle is not sin, but to give in to ill behavior is.

What are you willing to lay aside that is a weight to your walk in Christ?

What are the sins that need to be thrown off?

Do an inventory of sins and how they affect you. Then find scriptures that relate. Have a mentor help you out. I'll start it out for you.

- Pride - Pride in me desires for me to be seen as a winner instead of a weak man. This keeps me in a state of being fake. This limits my confession and keeps me in a state of secrecy.

John 12:43 "For they loved human praise more than the praise of God."

Proverbs 16:18 "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Doing this kind of inventory is normal and a part of everyday life as a Christian. Attempt to get in the habit of doing it!

Lesson 7

Ezekiel 16:17, 16:28, 16:31

Ezekiel 16:17 “You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them.”

This is a very graphic depiction of the depravity of Israel. In this chapter Jerusalem is spoken of as a needy child, then a teen who develops into a beautiful majestic woman ready for marriage. God enters into a covenant (marriage) with her only to watch her commit the worst kinds of adultery.

Now re-read the passage again. What does gold and silver represent?

1. God's provision
2. God's blessing & favor
3. God's beauty bestowed on His bride

Think of what you have used, things that God has given you, that are to be a blessing but have used them to self indulge? Can you write those down by naming the items specifically?

God is so graceful. He gives us the means to even labor (Deuteronomy 8:18). God has given us so many blessings, like a phone or computer, and money to provide for us and help others. Yet what we are realizing hopefully by now is that we have used these things to fall into idolatry.

As you can read from the book of James below, pride and lustful arrogance are behind our lives. But the remedy is humility. We need to come to God in humility and asking for forgiveness, and restoration of those things we have used to feed our lust, power, greed, fear, discontentment, etc...

Pride Promotes Strife

James 4:1-6 “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

Humility Cures Worldliness

James 4:7-9 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Study this passage in the book of James more: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/james-4/>

Was anything really wrong with the gold or jewelry that Israel had?

What was the problem with them, and with us too?

Another very interesting thing on this passage is that it seems to be discussing what we know today as sex toys. "Making an idol and playing the harlot with them." Sorry to be so graphic, but it is vital that we understand the Bible and how it relates to our culture. The passage tells us that they have taken their riches and have made images with them and actually played the harlot with those images.

This might seem odd, but this could be the only clear passage in the Bible that discusses the issue of sex toys! Have you ever thought that maybe sex toys are wrong in a culture that says they are great?

While doing an outreach in Denver one year, I noticed on their satellite stations there, not one but two dedicated stations that air the selling of sex toys (\$15 billion per year worldwide). China is a main exporter of them to the rest of the world! Does it make you sad that mankind is willing to use our abilities and creative ways to make these products for profit? It does for me. At what cost is this to our society on intimate personal levels?

Can you see the narcissism that is in Ezekiel 16:17 and James 4?

How does this relate to you personally?

Now is a good time to ask you something...Do you work out?

The ability to stay in shape is a gift from the Lord. But how do you use it? Answer these questions.

What do you like about attending a public gym?

Do you look at other people that are in the gym with lust?

Do you see your body as a tool to look good in the eyes of others?

Can you see that maybe you have become self absorbed with your looks and body?

How do you think this plays a part in your struggle with lustful inclinations?

Again, we are discussing using things that are good, for the wrong purposes. What do you think the proper motive for working out or athletic training is?

Read over Psalm 115:1 & 1st Corinthians 10:31 and write them out here:

Ezekiel 16:28 “You also played the harlot with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; indeed you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied.”

Now we will discuss the number one problem with indulging in lustful inclinations.

How has pornography or your adultery satisfied you? Or if it has not, why?

Read the following and comment:

*“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace?
This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself”
[This is from page 75 of Blaise Pascal’s Pensees (New York; Penguin Books, 1966).]*

What are people really looking for when they view sexual lust?

God is the most pleasurable of all beings! Did you know that?

Psalm 16:11 “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

And who is at the right hand of God?

Mark 16:19 “When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand.”

Jesus can meet all our needs. Do you believe that?

Are you content in Christ?

Lastly, let's look at Ezekiel 16:31.

“When you built your mounds at every street corner and made your lofty shrines in every public square, you were unlike a prostitute, because you scorned payment.”

Jerusalem's inhabitants stooped down to the lowest levels of depravity. They not only acted like a harlot by leaving God for other gods (which are no gods at all), but they did it for free! They actually paid others to be with them! It is a no doubt radical analogy that God gives us, but it is so true of how we allow our idols to rule our lives! We grow to love our idols more than anything. It's heartbreaking to think about this isn't it. Do you want to cry out to God right now? Go for it!

Lord forgive us, cleanse us, grant us repentance leading to a new life!

Noticed that they erected shrines at the head of every road and every street!

How does this relate to you?

Have you ever felt that you have cultivated lustful behavior so much in your life that every place you go you find it difficult to keep your mind and heart pure before the Lord?

This is how this happens:

You go to school or work and this becomes a place of lustfully eyeing others. You consistently do this over years and years, so that you associate school or work with lustful looking. Then you go to the gym only to have cultivated the same thing there! This can continue to where most places you visit there is a battle of sorts going on within you. Like when you get on your phone, or computer. We can develop such a bad pattern of living that it becomes difficult to not indulge. This is why many cannot get on their phones without thinking of porn. They have used it consistently for that purpose. We know because we too are like you!

Be aware that **we can** (by grace) change these patterns with the help of others. This is where accountability becomes such a help for us! Get your mentor (sponsor) to help you break these patterns. Start with just working on a day, then two, three, etc... Remember grace! God is for you!

Philippians 2:12-13 "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good pleasure."

Battling temptation is a daily, weekly, monthly & yearly part of the Christian life. Start contending earnestly for the faith and you will start seeing more victories. Yes, there are moments of stumbling. But remember to get up. That's what we Christians do...we get up!

Proverbs 24:16 "The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again. But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked."

Psalm 37:23-24 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand."

Lesson 8

Compare these two passages and write out what is similar in them.

Ezekiel 18:30-31 & 20:7-8

[30] “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,” declares the Lord God. “Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. [31] Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?”

[7] “Then said I unto them, ‘Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.’ [8] But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.”

Did you write out all the similarities of the two passages?

Answer the following and think through your situation. Show your Christian accountability partner your answers!

1. What does it look like to turn away?

2. What is your stumbling block?

3. How do you make yourself a new heart and new spirit?

4. What are the idols of the United States of America?

Hopefully you can see clearly what you can do to help yourself. You know by now that it will take much work on your part. Notice in the below passage on repentance, there seems to be a real action on our part right! How many things are produced by repentance?

2nd Corinthians 7:10-11 "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness (sincere and intense conviction). This godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness (enthusiasm to do or to have something) to clear yourselves, what indignation (a righteous wrath against something), what fear (reverence to God), what longing (vehement desire), what zeal (godly, religious passion), what punishment (vengeance towards what causes us to stumble)! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

The Christian life is us working out our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that is working in us! Both happen at the same time. Here is C.S. Lewis and his comments on Philippians 2:12-13:

The Bible really seems to clinch the matter when it puts the two things together into one amazing sentence. The first half is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"—which looks as if everything depended on us and our good actions: but the second half goes on, "For it is God who worketh in you"—which looks as if God did everything and we nothing. I am afraid that is the sort of thing we come up against in Christianity. I am puzzled, but I am not surprised. You see, we are now trying to understand, and to separate into water-tight compartments, what exactly God does and what man does when God and man are working together. And, of course, we begin by thinking it is like two men working together, so that you could say, "He did this bit and I did that." But this way of thinking breaks down. God is not like that. He is inside you as well as outside: even if we could understand who did what, I do not think human language could properly express it. In the attempt to express it different Churches say different things. But you will find that even those who insist most strongly on the importance of good actions tell you you need Faith; and even those who insist most strongly on Faith tell you to do good actions."¹

[1 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), pp. 148–149.]

Lesson 9

Ezekiel 24:25 "Then the LORD said to me, "Son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold--their joy and glory, their heart's desire, their dearest treasure--I will also take away their sons and daughters."

Read over the passage a couple times and answer the following questions.

What is a stronghold?

Read the following excerpt from www.gotquestions.org on

2nd Corinthians 10:3-4 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.."

What are these "strongholds" or "fortifications" we face? In the very next verse, Paul interprets the metaphor: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The "arguments" are the philosophies, reasonings, and schemes of the world. The "pretensions" have to do with anything proud, man-centered, and self-confident.

What are your strongholds?

What does God call their joy and glory?

How are these things strongholds?

What does God call their heart's desire and dearest treasure?

If you read Ezekiel 24:21 God tells us that their hope was in God's sanctuary and not really in knowing God. We can be like that can't we? It is easy to attend a Church and have confidence that God is with us, but in reality, we are not that into pleasing God, we are simply into having a good reputation in the community. Oh, this is a grievous sin that convicts me greatly!

You can see a similar passage in the book of *Jeremiah 7:3-5*

"...Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place.' Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor,..."

Strongholds can look like many different things can't they! Who would have thought that the temple of God, the actual place of worship, would be a place of idolatry instead of a place to know heart of God!

This lesson though is really all about our joy! What is your joy? Is it knowing Jesus and getting to know Him? What is your dearest treasure? Your heart's desire?

Read over this devotion by Oswald Chambers and comment below:

"My Joy...Your Joy"

By Oswald Chambers

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

What was the joy that Jesus had? Joy should not be confused with happiness. In fact, it is an insult to Jesus Christ to use the word happiness in connection with Him. The joy of Jesus was His absolute self-surrender and self-sacrifice to His Father— the joy of doing that which the Father sent Him to do— "...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross..." ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). "I delight to do Your will, O my God..." ([Psalm 40:8](#)). Jesus prayed that our joy might continue fulfilling itself until it becomes the same joy as His. Have I allowed Jesus Christ to introduce His joy to me?

Living a full and overflowing life does not rest in bodily health, in circumstances, nor even in seeing God's work succeed, but in the perfect understanding of God, and in the same fellowship and oneness with Him that Jesus Himself enjoyed. But the first thing that will hinder this joy is the subtle irritability caused by giving too much thought to our circumstances. Jesus said, "...the cares of this world,...choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" ([Mark 4:19](#)). And before we even realize what has happened, we are caught up in our cares. All that God has done for us is merely the threshold— He wants us to come to the place where we will be His witnesses and proclaim who Jesus is.

Have the right relationship with God, finding your joy there, and out of you "will flow rivers of living water" ([John 7:38](#)). Be a fountain through which Jesus can pour His "living water." Stop being hypocritical and proud, aware only of yourself, and live "your life...hidden with Christ in God" ([Colossians 3:3](#)). A person who has the right relationship with God lives a life as natural as breathing wherever he goes. The lives that have been the greatest blessing to you are the lives of those people who themselves were unaware of having been a blessing.

Comment on where joy is found from this devotion:

Do a careful inventory of your past religious life. What were the motivations behind your attendance and religious activities?

Another application from the Ezekiel passage is horrible to think of, but we must. There are scary ramifications for continuing to set up idols in our lives and they involve our offspring! Did you notice the passage in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 24:25 "Then the LORD said to me, "Son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold--their joy and glory, their heart's desire, their dearest treasure--I will also take away their sons and daughters."

When we worship idols, even ones that look religious, our offspring are affected! This is such a sad truth. I cannot live in idolatry and it not impact my family. It does! All of us have found that our lack of faith not only has affected our lives but those around us too! I have witnessed many, many Church going families that look good on the outside, but inside there family has such a lack of love, faith, grace and truth. Insead, these are substituted by fear, discontentment, insecurities and controlling that is devastating on their family, their sons and daughters.

Sexual sin can also become a sanctuary that we love more than anything. Are we learning to devalue this idolatry by leaning on the Savior of our souls who can fill us. Again, contemplate this with your mentor.

How has sexual sin become a sanctuary to you? Describe please.

What have been the affects on your wife?

What have been the affects on your offspring?

Lesson 10

Read the following Chapter with your accountability partner, mentor, pastor etc...

There are so many lessons to glean from this chapter, that it could be its own small book! But after going through the first 9 lessons, you should be able to see many similar topics included in this amazing chapter of the Bible. This is one of the most vivid pictures of depravity displayed in religious literature that I am aware of.

Here are **7** thoughts I would like you to watch for.

1. The progression of sexual sin

2. Watching images and its affects on us

3. Falling further into depravity beyond what you ever thought possible

4. How sexual idolatry treats us back

5. How do the eyes play a part in the progression of sin

6. What is the heart of God in this chapter

7. Is God able to make us pure

After reading through it, go through these 7 thoughts with your partner. You will have much to discuss, contemplate, and pray for. Thank you for letting us take you on this journey in Ezekiel with you!

Ezekiel 23 [New International Version]

Two Adulterous Sisters

The word of the Lord came to me: ^[2] “Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. ^[3] They became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and their virgin bosoms caressed. ^[4] The older was named Oholah, and her sister was Oholibah. They were mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

^[5] Oholah engaged in prostitution while she was still mine; and she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians—warriors ^[6] clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, and mounted horsemen. ^[7] She gave herself as a prostitute to all the elite of the Assyrians and defiled herself with all the idols of everyone she lusted after. ^[8] She did not give up the prostitution she began in Egypt, when during her youth men slept with her, caressed her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her.

^[9] Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. ^[10] They stripped her naked, took away her sons and daughters and killed her with the sword. She became a byword among women, and punishment was inflicted on her.

^[11] Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet in her lust and prostitution she was more depraved than her sister. ^[12] She too lusted after the Assyrians—governors and commanders, warriors in full dress, mounted horsemen, all handsome young men. ^[13] I saw that she too defiled herself; both of them went the same way.

^[14] But she carried her prostitution still further. She saw men portrayed on a wall, figures of Chaldeans^[a] portrayed in red, ^[15] with belts around their waists and flowing turbans on their heads; all of them looked like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of Chaldea.^[b] ^[16] As soon as she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. ^[17] Then the Babylonians came to her, to the bed of love, and in their lust they defiled her. After she had been defiled by them, she turned away from them in disgust. ^[18] When she carried on her prostitution openly and exposed her naked body, I turned away from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister. ^[19] Yet she became more and more promiscuous as she recalled the days of her youth, when she was a prostitute in Egypt. ^[20] There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses. ^[21] So you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when in Egypt your bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled.^[c]

^[22] Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will stir up your lovers against you, those you turned away from in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side—^[23] the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, the men of Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, all of them governors and commanders, chariot officers and men of high rank, all mounted on horses. ^[24] They will come against you with weapons,^[d] chariots and wagons and with a throng of people; they will take up positions

against you on every side with large and small shields and with helmets. I will turn you over to them for punishment, and they will punish you according to their standards. ^[25] I will direct my jealous anger against you, and they will deal with you in fury. They will cut off your noses and your ears, and those of you who are left will fall by the sword. They will take away your sons and daughters, and those of you who are left will be consumed by fire. ^[26] They will also strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry. ^[27] So I will put a stop to the lewdness and prostitution you began in Egypt. You will not look on these things with longing or remember Egypt anymore.

^[28] For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to deliver you into the hands of those you hate, to those you turned away from in disgust. ^[29] They will deal with you in hatred and take away everything you have worked for. They will leave you stark naked, and the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your lewdness and promiscuity ^[30] have brought this on you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. ^[31] You have gone the way of your sister; so I will put her cup into your hand.”

^[32] This is what the Sovereign Lord says:

“You will drink your sister’s cup,
a cup large and deep;
it will bring scorn and derision,
for it holds so much.

^[33] You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,
the cup of ruin and desolation,
the cup of your sister Samaria.

^[34] You will drink it and drain it dry
and chew on its pieces—
and you will tear your breasts.

I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

^[35] Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “Since you have forgotten me and turned your back on me, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution.”

^[36] The Lord said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then confront them with their detestable practices, ^[37] for they have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols; they even sacrificed their children, whom they bore to me, as food for them. ^[38] They have also done this to me: At that same time they defiled my sanctuary and desecrated my Sabbaths. ^[39] On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house.

^[40] They even sent messengers for men who came from far away, and when they arrived you bathed yourself for them, applied eye makeup and put on your jewelry. ^[41] You sat on an elegant couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed the incense and olive oil that belonged to me.

^[42] The noise of a carefree crowd was around her; drunkards were brought from the desert along with men from the rabble, and they put bracelets on the wrists of the woman and her sister and beautiful crowns on their heads. ^[43] Then I said about the one worn out by adultery, ‘Now let them use her as a prostitute, for that is all she is.’ ^[44] And they slept with her. As men sleep with a prostitute, so they slept with those lewd women, Oholah and Oholibah. ^[45] But righteous judges will sentence them to the punishment of women who commit adultery and shed blood, because they are adulterous and blood is on their hands.”

^[46] This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “Bring a mob against them and give them over to terror and plunder. ^[47] The mob will stone them and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and daughters and burn down their houses.

^[48] So I will put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not imitate you. ^[49] You will suffer the penalty for your lewdness and bear the consequences of your sins of idolatry. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.”

Footnotes:

- a. [Ezekiel 23:14](#) Or Babylonians
- b. [Ezekiel 23:15](#) Or Babylonia; also in verse 16
- c. [Ezekiel 23:21](#) Syriac (see also verse 3); Hebrew caressed because of your young breasts
- d. [Ezekiel 23:24](#) The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

[New International Version](#) (NIV)

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