

BREAKING THE STRONGHOLDS OF LUST

better pleasure

WORKBOOK



YOU GIVE THEM DRINK
FROM THE RIVER OF YOUR PLEASURES

PSALM 36.8

This book is a collection of new writings as well as writings that we have made available to our accountability groups in Tucson, Arizona. Each writing was originally in separate pamphlets. But with the help of our publisher we are able to make it available in one complete compilation. We are grateful to do so!

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This workbook opens with seven key studies. This is the foundation of the other lessons in the workbook. We have provided a link to the videos that coincides with the individual studies. Enter that link into your web browser to watch Peter and I share briefly about the topic.

Because I am male, the workbook is written from my gender perspective. Yet, most of the material can be utilized by any gender or sex identification.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at beau@runninglight.org.

Lastly, Peter and I podcast weekly on many topics. You can find us in the iTunes store at Running Light!

Complete in Him,
Beau

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Introduction

“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith!”
[Hebrews 12:1-2]

This is a workbook for those that are in sexual bondage. The workbook could be used for any area, but we have specified its use for those wanting to break free from habitual pornography use, self-gratification and the like.

It is not this workbook that does anything. It is Christ who can set us free. We only look to help define what that means and how it looks according to the Word of God, The Bible.

What does it mean to be set free?

Sometimes in wanting to break free from habitual sin we might hear this passage of scripture

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” [John 8:36]

and think, “Why hasn’t God set me free?” Usually what follows is condemnation and continued guilt and shame. Can I just say this plainly; it is hard to break free from a sinful habit when you are filled with constant condemnation. This is the devil’s trap. “If Satan can make you doubt (God) then he makes a breach in your wall” (Spurgeon)

Well in the context of chapter 8 of John, Jesus is contending with the Jewish religious leaders of his day, the Pharisees (means separated ones). The contention is that Jesus is a lone ranger and has no one who can vouch for his ministry. The religious leaders thought that because they were Jews of Abraham (their spiritual father) they were free from condemnation. Jesus goes on to correct them by saying that is it only through Him, the Son of God, that they can be set free, for the Son has the power from the Father to set them free. “If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed!” Jesus would be the agent of the Father to set us free from the penalty of sin.

“Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin...therefore if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.” [John 8:34-36]

Jesus’ death on the cross would be the offering for our sins.

“...when you make His soul an offering for sin.” [Isaiah 53:10]

Jesus was a perfect offering for our sin. The Father sent the Son into the world to pay the price for our sins. This is good news indeed!

Does this mean we never sin? No! And this is the problem when most people in recovery circles use this passage. The context is saying that Jesus would be the agent that would set us free from the penalty of sin, not that we wouldn't ever sin. * (see appendix A)

So to conclude, Jesus has set all believers free from the penalty of breaking God's Holy Law. We all miss the mark of perfection. We all need Jesus. None of us are above the need for Jesus. And that means whether in recovery or not, his offering is for us.

Concepts to Get Right!

First - Seeking Christ and Not Freedom!

This might shock you, **but the goal we have at *Running Light Ministries* is not primarily freedom from lust! First and foremost on our hearts is that we taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).**

Read Isaiah 30:1-22, write your name in the blank that originally said “*the rebellious children*”.

^[1]“Woe to _____,” says the LORD, “Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin; ^[2]Who walk to go down to Egypt, And have not asked My advice, To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

^[3]Therefore the strength of Pharaoh Shall be your shame, And trust in the shadow of Egypt Shall be your humiliation. ^[4]For his princes were at Zoan, And his ambassadors came to Hanes. ^[5]They were all ashamed of a people who could not benefit them, Or be help or benefit, But a shame and also a reproach.” ^[6]The burden against the beasts of the South. Through a land of trouble and anguish, From which came the lioness and lion, The viper and fiery flying serpent, They will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys, And their treasures on the humps of camels, To a people who shall not profit; ^[7]For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose.

Therefore I have called her Rahab-Hem-Shebeth. ^[8]Now go, write it before them on a tablet, And note it on a scroll, That it may be for time to come, Forever and ever: ^[9]That this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the LORD; ^[10]Who say to the seers, “Do not see,” And to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. ^[11]Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us.”

^[12]Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: “Because you despise this word, And trust in oppression and perversity, And rely on them, ^[13]Therefore this iniquity shall be to you Like a breach ready to fall, A bulge in a high wall, Whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant. ^[14]And He shall break it like the breaking of the potter’s vessel, Which is broken in pieces; He shall not spare. So there shall not be found among its fragments A shard to take fire from the hearth, Or to take water from the cistern.”

^[15]For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” But you would not, ^[16]And you said, “No, for we will flee on horses”—Therefore you shall flee! And, “We will ride on swift horses”— Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! ^[17]One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill.

^[18]Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him. ^[19]For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you. ^[20]And though the Lord gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see

your teachers. [21]Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left. [22]You will also defile the covering of your images of silver, And the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; You will say to them, "Get away!"

1) What is the result of hearing God's Word in verse 22?

As we hear the Word of God our faith increases.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." [Romans 10:17]

We no longer will see our idols as we used to. And at some point, we will throw them out! It might take time, but continue to read the Word and seek a closer relationship with the person, Jesus, the Christ. Jesus is called the Word made flesh in John 1:14. In Jesus is all the fullness of God (Colossians 2:9). So when we are studying the Word of God, we are learning about Jesus, and in turn we are learning about God. The natural result of growing in grace and knowledge of God is a new pair of eyes to look at the world through. This is awesome! The pull of sexual sin can be radical, and the question arises, what can overcome it? Love can, God's love. God's love as revealed in the person and work of Jesus. Investing in a relationship with Christ will create in us a departure of old relationships to past idols. This means great hope for us who are coming to Jesus!

Can't I be free through other ways besides Jesus?

Yes you can, and many, many, many people do. There are countless rehabilitation centers for sexual addiction (we use the term idolatry instead of addiction) all across our country. Many are not faith based, and help people establish new patterns for living.

So why are they any different from the Jesus methodology?

Read the excerpt below from a sermon by Pastor John Piper called, "Set Free By the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus."

"I have said many times in years gone by that the only sin we can defeat is a forgiven sin. Let me say it more carefully this morning, the only sin that you can defeat in daily life and replace with righteousness is a sin forgiven for Christ's sake. I say it carefully because I know there are natural ways to overcome bad habits that aren't based on Christ at all. But when those changes occur in life without forgiveness from Christ, the result is not God's righteousness, but self-righteousness, which, in God's eyes, is no righteousness. So I say it again and carefully; the only sin that you can defeat in daily life and replace with righteousness is a sin forgiven for Christ's sake."

2) From the above excerpt, what is produced when you become free of a habit without Christ?

- Self-righteousness
- Christ's righteousness

So you can see that what it produces is another sin! This is why our goal is not freedom from lustful habits, but instead it is growing in Christ. We desire Christ to be glorified in our freedom and not us. And this idea of God's glorification brings us to Day one.

*Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and irons—
Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High,
Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses.
He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And broke their chains in pieces.
Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to
the children of men! For He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two.*

[Psalm 107:10-16]

Pray for a heart for each of the day concepts.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.”

[Matthew 7:7]

Day 1

Motivation – A Better Pleasure!

Day 1. What is your motivation for being free?

Video: Go to *Lesson 1* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

We are glad that you have decided to take this Bible study to help you on your way to living a life free from habitual pornography use.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

[Galatians 5:17]

The question you and I need to answer is, why do we want to get out of the use of sinful behavior? For us we see that our hearts are wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) and filled with idolatry, even if that idol looks like my job, my wife, my kids or even myself! It's good to get out a piece of paper and write down why you want to break free. Look at it, and then compare it with what the Bible tells us is the proper heart we should bring to the table. We want to work with God, not against God during this crucial time in our life. Surrendered to God's will is where we want to be in our lives from this time forward. Though we have torn down our families, jobs and ministries there is only ONE that can fix our hearts. Porn is not the problem, ultimately, it's a heart problem...a worship problem.

1) We all serve somebody. Who have you been serving?

What I have found is that if you seek to pray and ask God to give you a heart for Him, then the doorway is wide open to the needed healing in our lives!

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.

[Matthew 7:7]

if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us...we know that we have the petition that we have asked of Him.

[1 John 5:14-15]

Read these passages: Psalm 115:1, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17, 23 & 1 Peter 4:11

2) What is the common theme in these passages? Can you find others similar to them?

3) What has been the motivation for you?

4) What fears do you have that need to be let go of? Fear of losing your job, wife, kids, ministry?

FYI - Fear is a powerful motivator! It can work in our favor or against us. I have a good fear of electricity and hope you do too. If we do not we will face some serious pain! God has created us to be sexual beings, but not having a proper fear of using our sexuality to honor God leads us to ultimate pain, if not in the here and now, then in eternity.

The Word tells us that proper fear is to be towards God. Actually the Bible tells us this is the beginning of wisdom in Proverbs 1:7. But if we don't have that fear in God, we will face the consequences of misusing our sexuality.

If you are like us, you have that misplaced fear. Questions like: What if they find out? What will happen to me if they know? Will I get fired or divorced? How will my friends and family look at me now?

And there are so many more questions that go through our minds! Yet fear misplaced, will ultimately work against us and bring us back under our sexual compulsions. For we have learned to cope with life through self-gratification and a lustful life! It has been our comfort, our refuge and fortress, the place to ease tension, stress and discomfort.

Bring that misplaced fear to the Lord.
Thus says the Lord:

*Cursed is the man who trusts in man
And makes flesh his strength,
Whose heart departs from the Lord.*

[Jeremiah 17:5]

But today you can...

Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

[1 Peter 5:7]

Pray for the proper biblical motivation every day.

Concepts:

5) What does glorifying God mean?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) God's presence | 1 Samuel 4:21 |
| 2) Value | Genesis 45:13 |
| 3) Obey | 1 Samuel 6:5 |
| 4) To Be in Awe or Splendor | 1 Chronicles 16:10 |
| 5) To Reflect God | Psalms 4:2 |

Day 2

Partaking of God – A Better Pleasure!

Day 2. Replacing lustful inclinations with the Word of God!

Video: Go to *Lesson 2* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

We need to learn to find pleasure in God! What a challenge this can be for us that have lost our first love!

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

[Revelation 2:4]

Remember what it was like when you first came to Jesus! What hope, what peace and what joy! King David learned that the payoff for his lustful desires was the removal of the joy of God.

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation”

[Psalm 51:12]

King David lost the joy of the Lord due to his lust.

This is the big issue of our heart isn't it? What will win over our hearts as most pleasurable! Porn or God? One will bring us into bondage, the other will free us. This is the ultimate place of our battle. For many of us lustful desires started out as pleasurable but then when wanting to stop, we couldn't, and found the payoff was depression, shame, guilt, anger, grief, anxiety, which has led us to do so much hurt and pain with others.

At RLM we find it so cool that God says, *“Come drink from the river of my pleasures,”* in [Psalm 36:8]! That's right, let's look at the entire passage for a minute.

*“They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.”*

[Psalm 36:8]

God is more pleasurable than porn!

- 1) Have you ever thought of God as a God of pleasure? Yes No
- 2) Do you believe He can satisfy our sexual needs instead of relying on doing things our own selfish way? Yes No

Most of us were not taught that God is able to satisfy us when it comes to our sexual desires, so we have kept sex a secular event in our life. “I'll allow God everywhere else in my life but not in the bedroom” (as if pornography can help us more than God in that area)!

As we seek God for our source of joy and, dare I say, pleasure, then we will no longer be going to a source that will bring us into bondage and emotional turmoil.

Read these passages: John 4, Jeremiah 2:13, Psalm 34:8, Isaiah 55:1-2

3) What do these passages emphasize?

Practical steps: Get in the Word daily, and talk to someone about what you are reading and learning. It helps so much to share truth with another; encouraging one another. Always pray and ask for God to help you see Him as pleasurable.

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today..."

[Hebrews 3:13]

*The Lord your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing."*

[Zephaniah 3:17]

I can't begin to tell you how important it is for you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Growing intellectually is vital in your fight against lustful inclinations! Think of it this way. When you get to know an awesome person really well, your joy in that person increases all the more! The more that joy increases the less you think of others. Joy becomes the shield to defend against the lust for others and also catapults you to further heights in the relationship! You don't want to lust for others because your joy in a particular person is worth fighting for! This is what Jesus is for us. He is the joy of our hearts and moves us to continue working on all areas of our lives.

Remember King David's cry for God to restore the joy of His salvation.

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation"

[Psalm 51:12]

4) Are you in the Word daily?

5) In what ways are you redeeming today's technology to help grow in your understanding of God?

6) Are you reading, studying things that are creating an awe of God in your heart and mind?

7) What diminishes that awe of God for you?

As you study the Bible there are no doubt going to be many questions that you will have. It's normal. Find the answers that will help you in your confidence in Christ. There are many resources to help you. Get with a mentor and ask them what sources they utilize to help them grow in their walk with God, and put them to use in your own life!

Day 3

Confession - A Better Pleasure!

Day 3. Confession

Video: Go to *Lesson 3* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

Tell it like it is! That's what confession is all about. You all knew this was coming, and so we want to spend some time on it. It can be scary for sure, but now that we have set our hearts on; (a) the Glory of God and (b) believing that drawing closer to Christ will bring us a joy and pleasure, we are ready to pray about confessing to others.

*When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.
I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

[Psalm 32:3-5]

1) What can be the physical toll described by David in hiding sin?

2) Finish the sentence:

Forgiveness comes through _____ your sin to the Lord.

Concept:

Iniquity	to bend from the straight path
Transgress	to purposely break God's laws
Sin	to miss the mark of God's holiness

Let me just say a few words as to why this is so difficult for us.

Most of us did not have good examples of confession in our lives. Think about this; how many fathers have confessed to a son or daughter? How many confessions have you heard from those you looked up to? How many leaders, bosses, pastors have you heard serious confessions from? Not many I would think. Discipleship works, and I am not surprised we have a culture that sees confession as a weakness instead of a strength. Any act that leads us to a genuine, loving honesty is a move towards God and our betterment. We are moving now into the light! So this is a positive, not a negative! Be encouraged to confess.

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

[John 3:20-21]

3) When in the truth – we do what?

Confession is a move of God in our lives. We need to get it through our heads that it is good!

If we don't see confession as a move towards God and His joy, we will not do it correctly. Instead we will confess with a "have to" attitude and not a "get to" one. Pray and ask God to help you see this as a positive. Will you do that?

Also, we are prideful creatures, and confession shows the crack in our armor. Do you want to be seen as strong or weak?

Most of us have lived our entire lives with great fear someone will see that we really do not have it all together. We need humility.

Read these passages: 1 John 1:9, Romans 10:9, Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16, Psalm 51 & 32,

1) What do you learn from these passages?

2) What does walking in the light mean (1John 1:6-7)?

3) Does walking in the light mean perfection?

4) How does confession play a role in salvation (Romans 10:9)?

5) Describe how you think confession to God brings blessings?

6) Why is confessing with a person necessary and beneficial (James 5:16)?

Read through King David's confession in Psalm 51 & 32. Discuss these with a mentor.

Day 4

Understanding Grace - A Better Pleasure!

Day 4. Grace

Video: Go to *Lesson 4* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

Have you ever searched out the depth of God's love for you, and then blown it? It's a horrible feeling. You become sick and tired of being sick and tired. Then the thought comes to us, "Can God really love a person like me?"

Let's look at that question real quick!

1) Read the event of Lot in Genesis 19 especially at verses 30-38. What do you think of Lot?

2) What do you think of the series of events described?

This is porn isn't it! For us who have looked at porn; we have seen the incest genre of pornography which is a very popular genre of the so called adult entertainment. There is no love in these verses and many of us can relate to its depravity. For many of us drinking and sexual bondage go hand in hand.

3) Can you relate to Lot?

Read the history of Lot again. Yet check this out!

"and God...delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (of Sodom & Gomorrah)" [2 Peter 2:7]

In the New Testament Peter calls Lot a righteous man. Does he act like a righteous man in our Genesis passage?

4) In your own words, what made Lot a righteous man?

Grace!!! That's the answer to why Lot could be seen as a righteous man. The faith that we have in God is what has given us this right stance before a Holy God. Grace is undeserved. There is much to say on this subject, but for now the important idea is that the blood of Christ is more powerful than your sin! We must believe that! In order to help us believe this truth we look to those characters in the Bible that were considered "saved," yet had sexual issues themselves.

Here is a list of people for you to look up:

Abraham - Had intimacy with the maid in Genesis 16:2-4

Jacob (Israel) - Had two wives and two maids in Genesis 29-30

Rueben - This son of Jacob had intimacy with his dad's maid in Genesis 35:22

Judah - This son of Jacob had intimacy with a prostitute (was really his daughter-in-law) in Genesis 38:15

Tamar - Judah's daughter-in-law dressed up as a prostitute to have intimacy with her father-in-law in Genesis 38:15

Rahab - Helped deliver the spies of Israel from their enemy. She was a harlot in Joshua 2:1

King David - The most loved King had many wives and killed a friend for his wife, Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11

Samson - This man struggled with lust of the eyes in a massive way, see Judges 14-16

Gideon - This judge of Israel had seventy sons (not counting daughters) by many wives in Judges 8:30

King Solomon - This king suffered greatly from his unbridled lust. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines in 1 Kings 11:3. Solomon wrote three books in the Old Testament! One we call a book of Wisdom!

5) When you study these circumstances, what do you conclude about their righteousness?

We need to believe that God can overcome the power of desires that go astray in our lives if we are to move forward spiritually. Condemnation will stunt any growth that we desire for our lives. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus and his love for us. We have a new identity in Jesus now. And our God loves us!

Read these passages: Romans 8:31-39, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 2:13, Hebrews 12:1-2, Romans 8:1, 2 Timothy 2:13, Philipians 1:6

6) Study the above passages, and review them with a mentor. What are the themes of the passages?

Are you blown away by the grace of God?

*The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying:
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."*

[Jeremiah 31:3]

"Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you..."

[Isaiah 30:18]

Day 5

Removing - A Better Pleasure!

Day 5. Remove!

Video: Go to *Lesson 5* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

Time to get serious!

The next few videos will take some work on your part. But by now you have settled your heart on doing all for the glory of God and have started drinking from Jesus (The Word) on a daily basis, and have confessed to those you have hurt (this is an ongoing work) and remembering the amazing grace and love of God for you. Now onto some serious action on your part.

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” [James 2:25]

So let's get started!

- 1) List the devices at your house you have used to watch pornography or act against your beliefs? This list should be extensive! I'll make one for you as an example... Cable, Roku, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Computer, iPad, cell phone, Playstation, X-Box, Satellite, Massage parlors, adult stores, clubs, etc...

Some may be thinking, "is there pornography on Netflix?" Anything that causes us to self-gratify, fantasize, etc... should be looked at as a location that needs to be avoided. Let me say this too at this time; this will not always be the case! As we seek God daily, there will come a time where we have surrendered our hearts to God and we no longer are using sex and pornography to deal with life's problems. We will see things differently, praise God! We seldom will be interested in lustful self-gratification of any kind. If we see something or someone sensual who is not our beloved, we recoil as from a hot flame. But this is where we are going, it isn't necessarily where we are right now and the first step in building this purity in Christ is through obedience to His commandment in Matthew 5:29-30 by amputating the things that cause us to fall.

Over time we will learn to hate what has caused our downfall.

*You will also defile the covering of your images of silver,
And the ornament of your molded images of gold.
You will throw them away as an unclean thing;
You will say to them, “Get away!”*

[Isaiah 30:22]

On another note, spiritual amputation is for everyone! Yep, it's not just for us that struggle with sexual sin, but everyone needs to be actively looking for areas that God shows us that need to be cut off. It's a move towards our betterment! We no longer are bound to a habitual behavior, and as we find our satisfaction in God, He gets the glory! So as with confession, spiritual amputation is a good move. Some around you might not see it, but that's okay, be patient as we have spent years making skeptics of all of our loved ones by our secret lustful behavior.

*“And let us not grow weary while doing good,
for in due season we shall reap
if we do not lose heart.”*

[Galatians 6:9]

Amputating sin takes a commitment of a lifetime!

As we continue to move forward, you will find other avenues that need to be amputated in your life. So continue doing so, asking the Lord for the grace of a diligent heart and mind. Honesty is key!

Read these passages: Mark 9:47, Ezekiel 20:7, 2 Chronicles 15:8, Acts 19:19

- 2) In reading Mark 9:47 what strikes you about the examples of a hand or eye causing us to sin?

- 3) In Israel's history they too struggled with not removing things from before their eyes. Why is it so hard to cut off areas we have created for stumbling?

- 4) Did you notice that putting things in front of us to view and flirt with is seen as the sin in Ezekiel 20 and 2 Chronicles 15:8? What kind of sin is it called?

- 5) What did the people in Acts 19:19 do with their idols?

Work with your mentor to rid your life of areas that have caused you to stumble.

Day 6

Repentance - A Better Pleasure!

Day 6. What does it mean to Repent?

Video: Go to *Lesson 6* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

Repentance!

Let's first start by dispelling a myth in the Christian world.

Myth numero uno - Repentance means that you do not sin again in this area, ever!

In the prayer that Jesus told us to pray he said...

*“And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.”*

[Matthew 6:12]

The simple fact is we are to pray daily for forgiveness of our sins, and also that we forgive those who sin against us (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, etc...)

If repentance meant that you never sinned again in an area of your life, then none of us are any good at repenting, because we all struggle in pride, envy, jealousy, resentment, fear, anxiety, lust and many other sins. Also, we would never have to confess the same sin twice! But this is not the case. We are fragile and prone to stumble. Lustful desires consume all humans...daily! The manifestations of lust are exhaustive: food, sex, money, reputation, clothes, beauty, fitness, video games, houses, cars, boats, travel, etc... All these things aren't bad in themselves, but when we replace the joy and pleasure of Christ with them, they become areas of danger and are damaging to us and the ones we love. We become out of balance, going beyond good reason and the love of our fellow humans.

*“For a righteous man may fall seven times
And rise again,
But the wicked shall fall by calamity.”*

[Proverbs 24:16]

- 1) Do righteous people fall?

- 2) How many times do the righteous fall?

- 3) What does the number 7 symbolize in the Bible?

With that myth out of the way, let's grow!

Repentance involves three works:

1. Acknowledgment of sin
2. Confession of sin
3. Moving away from sin

And this work is to be done each time we have a heart of repentance given to us by God through divine revelation, like in prayer, or by another brother or sister who maybe points out an area of sin in our life that needs to be corrected.

Read over 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

4) What was the kind of sorrow that these people had?

5) What does that kind of sorrow produce?

6) What does the sorrow of the world produce?

7) What do you think distinguishes godly sorrow from worldly sorrow?

Godly sorrow has with it a life giving change in our life. Sorrow pointed in the right direction is good and life changing. This godly sorrow is rooted in our sin against God. Worldly sorrow is a sorrow for things of the world (which is fading). It's noble, but it won't bring us the life that we need now! Though we have messed up many things from our behavior, directing our hearts to the Lord is what is needed.

8) Can you write out examples of worldly sorrow?

Read these passages:

Lamentations 3:40, Acts 3:19, Isaiah 44:22, Jeremiah 36:3, Ezekiel 33:11

With your mentor, go over the above passages and discuss them.

Day 7

Accountability - A Better Pleasure

Day 7. Get Accountable, it's a grace!

Video: Go to *Lesson 7* at www.betterpleasure.net/videos/

How many of us in the Church have accountability with someone else? Let me clear up some ideas on this topic in the hopes to get you going with a really fun blessing from God!

Accountability keeps us out of the dark! Accountability continues what confession began. It is a bringing of others into this fight with us, through transparency in our struggles, so that they can pray for us and encourage us toward God. For some this is an entirely new concept for you. You might have had friends praying for you and encouraging you before, but not at this level of openness in specific areas of sin. That's what you are to start praying for. God bring me the grace of accountability.

When you study the Bible you will see that we are accountable to God first.

“Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” [Psalm 51:4]

King David obviously sinned against others. He killed a man by coveting his wife! Yet King David acknowledges that he was first accountable to God.

If you observe the relationships in the Bible, you will see how people joined with others to help one another grow in Christ!

Paul – Timothy
Moses – Joshua
David – Jonathan

These are just a few, but do your own study and see how many more you can find! The second accountability that we need is with those that understand your failures and have fought battles themselves against the flesh with some victory!

*“As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.”* [Proverbs 27:17]

1) What do you think qualifies a person to be a good accountability partner?

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” [Galatians 6:1-2]

2) From the above passage, what makes a good partner?

Find a person that has been there before and ask them to help you! Do they meet the requirements of a good accountability partner?

Accountability is for everyone in the Christian life! We now are starting to walk the Christian life! Where before we went to Church (maybe) and studied the Bible (maybe). But now, by grace, we are putting feet to our faith and walking in the community of believers, using others to help us move into a serenity we have not had in a long time. This is what the body of Christ is there for!

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” [1 Peter 4:10]

Answer these questions:

- 3) From a Christian worldview, who are we ultimately accountable to and why?

- 4) In fighting lust have you ever wanted to throw off Christianity because of this accountability that is required? Discuss your thoughts with a mentor.

- 5) How does your view of God change in how you relate to your accountability to such a God?

- 6) How do you think God receives glory in our accountability?

- 7) What will prevent you from being accountable?

A Study on Love and Lust

“Hell and Destruction are never full; so are the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

[Proverbs 27:20]

The above verse is so true, not just for men, but for all mankind! Today we want to discuss in specific the difference between love and lust. For many of us, we have not had many good examples of love, especially when it comes to intimate relationships; and specifically sex. Unfortunately this lack of love is at the root of many of our problems in life. But with God there is hope!

Question 1:

Before we go any further, write down your own definition of love. Put into words how you would describe love...

What is Love?

This is Webster's Dictionary's definition of "love": 1) a deep and tender feeling of fondness and devotion; 2) a strong liking; 3) a sweetheart; 4) in tennis, a score of zero.

Knowing the ever-changing world we live in, none of those definitions sound like something to base a life on. What happens when those "tender feelings of fondness" or "strong likings" change? By the definitions above, love is subject to change at any time. So is there a more concrete definition of love? Yes!

“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”

[1 John 4:16]

The Bible gives this definition of love. That definition is not based on changing feelings or a changing world. That definition is based on an unchanging God who is the author and creator of love. He is the definition love, therefore we will look to Him and His Words to us in order to learn more about love.

The Look of Love...

Read these verses about love and answer the question below.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." [1 Corinthians 13:4-8]

Question 2:

From the verses above, quickly list all the things that the Bible says love is:

From the list above, we get a clear picture of the way God created love to look among us. Love looks unselfish, pure, hopeful, persevering. Love is not only about happy feelings and just finding someone to marry or have sex with. It is a way of life. Probably you have experienced some clear pictures of that kind of love written about in 1 Corinthians. Think of all the places and ways you've felt and seen glimpses of that kind of "love". Maybe your parents have given you a good picture of it. Or maybe you've experienced portions of it from your friends, from your brother or sister, from a girlfriend; or maybe even from a coach, teacher or pastor.

All those experiences and feelings are a very real part of love. Please be careful not to assume you already know what love is because you've been in an intimate relationship. You must understand that God's love is defined much differently than the cultural kind of "love".

Actually in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament and the Greek language of the New Testament there are multiple words used for love. This is different from our English that simply uses the word love for all kinds of situations; we love ice cream and we love God!?

In Hebrew we see:

- Dowd = to boil over (Used in the Old Testament)
- Ahab = to desire (Used in the Old Testament)
- Rayah = friendly love (Used in the Old Testament)
- Hashaq = God's love for his people (Used in the Old Testament)

In Greek

- Eros, or sexual passion. Named after the Greek god of fertility (Cupid to the Romans), it represented the idea of sexual passion and desire. ...It is not used in the Bible
- Phileo, or deep friendship. ...(Used in the New Testament)
- Agape, or love for everyone. ...(We will talk about this one more later) (Used in the New Testament)

- Storge (friendship love) ...(Not used in the Bible)

Eros or Dowd is not necessarily bad! Yet all by themselves they can move one to a tragic life of selfish desire. Passionate sensuality must be cultivated by Agape! This is the Christian way. And not just Eros or Dowd, but all of the definitions of Love are meant to be controlled by an overseeing, super natural love, and that love is Agape. Author C.S. Lewis gives us a great analogy of this in his chapter on Charity in "The Four Loves".

Now before we talk more about this super love, Agape, let's talk about its enemy!

The Enemy of Love

Because God is love (Agape) and Satan hates God, He tries to tempt us with imitations of love. He seeks to get us to settle for his incomplete, selfish version of "love". We call it lust. The enemy of love is lust. They are opposites. At the core of God's love is unselfishness, serving, sacrificing. But lust has, at its core, selfishness, pride and illusion. Lust is Satan's perverted, twisted, never-satisfying substitute for God's love.

Lust is a selfish and unbridled sexual urge that always ends in guilt, pain and destruction. Lust and infatuation can go hand in hand. Infatuation is incomplete love. Infatuation is largely based on physical attraction and the image and perceptions we have of the other person, not who the person really is, created by God. Let's look at how love and lust compare.

Let's look over some scriptures that speak about lust.

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." [1 Peter 1:13-14]

a) According to verse 16, Why shouldn't we walk in lust?

God is holy. This is the number one way that the Biblical writers describe God. Holiness is what makes God distinct from everyone. The word holy means to be separated. God is separated from sin and sinners. God is whole or complete, lacking nothing and not in any need of anything.

God "is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" [Acts 17:25]

"Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." [Revelation 15:4]

"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -the Holy One of God." [Mark 1:24]

Yet God has made a way for us to be holy, and that is through the holiness of His Son Jesus.

“For He (The Father) made Him (The Son) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
[2 Corinthians 5:21]

For those who have received Christ as Lord and Savior have been given the Holy Spirit (Jesus' Spirit) to live in us. This means that we have a choice today to live in the Love of God or not. God is Love. His Son shows us Love. The Spirit of God transforms us to Love. And now we have this Spirit living in us!

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”
[Galatians 4:6]

“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”
[Ephesians 4:22-24]

Question 3:

What is deceitful about lust?

Let's look at some other scriptures about lust!

“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”
[1 Peter 2:11]

a) What does lust do in us from the above passage?

Another passage from the letter of Peter says...

“that we should no longer live the rest of our time in the body for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”
[1 Peter 4:2]

As a Christian our desire is *no longer to serve our bodily appetites*, but now our bodies are to serve God! (see 1 Corinthians 6:20, 2 Corinthians 5:15)

b) So how do we overcome lust?

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” [1 John 4:7-8]

The Word here in Greek is “AGAPE.”

This kind of love is from God and can only be received from Him. The God who is Love, can give us this love through the Power of the Holy Spirit as you ask for it!

Pray:

Father, fill me full of your love for people, and help me to not fall into lustful, old patterns, but renew my heart and mind in your love. In Jesus name!

Something to think about:

Eros, was the Greek word that was used to describe what we call love making today or making love. In English we use love for everything, but in Greek, there were specific words to help people understand what was meant. All the words we have mentioned above should be governed by Agape. So a Christian practices all kinds of love as described by the Greeks, but the overall principle that guides them is Agape.

Question 4:

Read those above verses from I Corinthians 13 again. For each trait of love below, think of an opposite trait that describes lust:

If love is patient, then lust is hurried and impatient

If love is kind, then lust is rude or uncaring

If love is humble, then lust is _____

If love is selfless, then lust is _____

If love trusts (is trustworthy), then lust is _____

If love is slow to anger, then lust is _____

If love forgives, then lust _____

If love protects, then lust _____

If love perseveres in the face of difficulties, then lust _____

If love continues until the end, then lust _____

If love gives freedom, then lust _____

If love encourages purity, then lust _____

Only true, complete love anchored in the Person of Jesus Christ (who is love) can fulfill you and show you how to love...

Lust will only hurt you and those you care for.

a) What have been the consequences of lust for you?

To love is a decision. It is a choice to pursue the best in the other person and to help them be a success in God's eyes. Yes, there can definitely be romantic feelings in that kind of "decisive" love. But true love is not based only on romantic feelings that come and go. It is a decision no matter the feelings. It is a choice. Included in the choice to love someone is the choice to be pure and help them be pure as well. You cannot separate love from purity. You will know that the one saying "I love you" truly loves you if they want to see you successful in God's eyes, and are willing to sacrifice their own pleasure for purity in the both of you.

Pastor John Piper defines love as:

Love is the overflow of joy in God, that meets the needs of others.

Think through this!

To end our study today, I want to share how the Holy Spirit plays the role in helping us love people correctly.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" [Galatians 4:6]

Question 5:

Who lives in us?

What an amazing truth. The Christian life is one where we are asking Jesus to live His life through us!

It is our job to surrender or crucify our lives in order for Christ to live and love in, and through us.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave His life for me." [Galatians 2:10]

a) Lastly, what is the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

"The fruit of the Holy Spirit is Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." [Galatians 5:22]

Think about this and answer below:

b) Is there ever a time that you think God would not want you to walk in the Love of the Holy Spirit and Why?

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Is showing porn to my wife Love or Lust? Why?

- 2) Why do you think our culture talks about the constant and continual need to spice up their sex life? (Magazines at the checkout stand!) What does this reveal about people's sex lives?

- 3) How can understanding the Biblical definitions of love guide your intimate life?

- 4) Can you see how living in the Power of God's love can be a great benefit to your beloved?

- 5) Does this love naturally reside in human beings? (See Romans 3:12)

- 6) How do we receive this Holy Spirit of Love? (See Luke 11:11-13)

- 7) List ways that Lust manifests itself in your life?

Now take this list you just made and ask the Lord to crucify these lustful behaviors and ask that His Spirit work in you to become the new man (woman) made in the image of Christ, and no longer the old man according to the ways of this world. (This is something we do continually, daily)

A Resolve About Removing

“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. ”

[Matthew 5:29]

Notice that to lose what causes you to stumble is a profit! Do you think of losing as a profit?

Look over these scriptures:

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

[Mark 8:35]

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

[Philippians 3:8]

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

[Philippians 1:21]

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

[John 12:24]

It's an amazing concept in the New Testament that losing can be a source of great gain. I remember having to make a choice of a career or getting married. The two at the time would not work together as marriage meant time away from the studying needed for my career. And I chose to die to the career and get married. It was certainly radical, yet I have never regretted the decision to lay something aside for the sake of a relationship with my wife.

This is what I think of when I read over the passages above, but you may think of other life situations that are relevant.

I have asked myself this question many times: Have you thought of fighting against your lust as a good thing? Or have you found in your heart that you are kind of bummed that you have to get rid of it?

To be honest, I find my heart at times without much resolve to cut off the avenues of sin.

1) Can you relate to the feelings of not having the resolve to cut it off?

2) How can thinking about the gain help us to find the resolve we need? (I'll answer first)

When I think of the godly benefits of getting rid of the sin that tends to trip me up, towards my wife, kids, church, or culture, I tend to start seeing sinful lust as bad, and even begin to hate it.

I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

[Psalm 119:104]

It's amazing how that works. I think of God's mercy towards me, the joy of knowing God and being known by Him, and remember that there are hindrances in this world that are tactically fighting against me, so I must be alert.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

[1 Peter 5:8]

This helps me get the resolve I need. Also getting with brothers will help get you to the place of getting the resolve you desire.

As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

[Proverbs 27:17]

It's awesome to have fellowship with those who are in the battle with you. Together we help encourage one another to gain the resolve needed.

So though I will lose the friend that pornography and self-gratification have become, I will gain peace of mind, body, and spirit. And really these things are lost when participating in pornography (any indulgence) of any kind.

- **Mind:** We become mentally drained and twisted, when lusting to the point that...
- **Body:** Our bodies become affected by lack of sleep, no longer able to sexually perform with our loved one, we become stuck on the need for the physical orgasm as the primary goal.
- **Spirit:** We become depressed in the deepest part of our spirit, knowing we are going against our vows in marriage or because we are watching people, who we do not know, do things they are going to regret. And above all, our security in Christ is lost. (King David in the Bible knew that well)

There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

[Psalm 38:3-4]

Lustful inclinations are not our friend, and we must realize that and come to a resolve about it. Having a resolve does not mean that you will not sin in a particular area again. But what it does mean is that we call it for what it is, and understand it as an enemy of loving.

It is also difficult to have resolve due to our culture.

Have you given much thought to the culture you were raised around or are in now?

3) What are the messages you get from the culture?

4) Read this quote from a psychologist and respond to it's message:

“Here's some often ignored empirical science about porn – as societies have increased their access to porn, rates of sex crimes, including exhibitionism, rape and child abuse, have gone down. (See the work of Milton Diamond) Across the world, and in America, as men have increased ability to view internet erotica, sex crimes go down. Believe it or not – porn is good for society. This is correlational data, but it is extremely robust, repeated research. But, it is not a message that many people want to hear. Individuals may not like porn, but our society loves it and benefits from it.” - Dr. David Ley

5) How does the above quote miss the big picture of what Jesus said in Matthew 5 about if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out?

6) Does the quote make you doubt your resolve to battle lust?

The truth is, if porn is “good” for society, it still does not make it OK in God's eyes. We must understand that there are different worldviews people have. Just because the Behavioral Science community tells us something is good, does not mean we have to agree. Smoking cigarettes at one time was considered relatively safe.

To conclude, we must gain a resolve to lose the areas that cause our downfall. And not just that, but to see the loss as a great gain. We pray this lesson will help you in finding that resolve to the Glory of God.

Meticulous Amputation

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,...

[Hebrews 12:1]

Have you ever tried to run with weights on? It's tough after a time. You might start off okay, but after a length of time, you will grow tired and affected by the weight. Sexual sin is like that. We can manage for a time, but after a time, we lose patience, and anxiety or depression set in.

In this lesson we want to discuss just the weights that hinder you from the peace that you want. We define a weight as something that lends itself to a sinful act. We titled the lesson "Meticulous Amputation" because you must give thoughtful inspection to your behavior. If we do, we are bound to find patterns in our life that, if eliminated, could help tremendously in winning the battle against sinful lusts.

1) Have you thought through what leads up to your fall? (Describe it)

2) How are they weights in your life?

I will share some of my own personal weights. One is what I read. I find that I can easily get persuaded that the lustful behavior in pornography is okay because "science" or "therapists" tell us that it is good to self-gratify, as it helps us release stress. Reading becomes a stress to my soul and I have to be careful to get my ideas of life from the scriptures or else I will get my ideas of life from my culture or the current scientific community.

I remind myself repeatedly that when I was a kid the earth was 3.5 billion years old, where today we are told it is 13 billion years old. In just 30 years the earth has increased in age by 10 billion years! So maybe trusting in the scientific community on the pro's and con's of pornography is shaky ground at best.

Let me give you an understanding of being meticulous by doing a bit of an inventory on our patterns of behavior:

3) When do you fall into pornography, adultery, lustful behavior? List the times?

4) What do you tend to watch? (Soft core, hard core, no core)

5) What device do you watch it on? (Computer, TV, phone, tablet, etc)

6) What companies do you use? (Netflix, Amazon, Roku player, Google TV, Playstation, X-box, Comcast, Dish Network, etc)

7) Describe your lustful behavior before and after you were married.

8) Do you see any patterns to your behavior?

As Christians we always want to be moving forward, so dwelling on the past is not prescribed when wanting to heal.

But there is a point to us looking into the past. C.S. Lewis puts it like this:

“In arithmetic you need to remember where you were wrong and go back to the area of error.”

That is so true right? We all did math problems where we think we got it right only to be stunned to hear from our teacher that the answer was wrong. What happened? More than likely we missed putting the decimal in the correct spot which messed up the entire equation. It's like life. We need to go back to where we got it wrong and get back on the right path. For most of us, we are finally understanding that our entire life has been in a lust culture and we simply kept assuming that it was good. But now our eyes are wide open. And we desire to move away from a lust culture and into a love one. Love is better than lust!

Now another area we want to think through is, what tools have you used to indulge in lustful patterns? Tools? What are you talking about? Read the following scripture:

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.

[Ezekiel 16:17]

Think through what is being talked about here. Pretty radical isn't it? There is nothing new under the sun. We tend to think our culture of sex shops and internet sex stores are new, but they are not. Israel was rebellious by taking gold and silver, which in themselves is not bad, and using them for bad purposes.

Fast Fact: Sex toys are a 15 billion dollar industry!

But let's think practically about our lustful lifestyle and answer these questions:

9) Do you self-gratify to something? What is it?

10) Do you use something to self-gratify? What is it?

When you see your answers, you might know better what to cut off.

Did any of you answer “lotions” for question #10? Then you might need to stay away from lotions that trigger you to self-gratify.

I have learned that sometimes if I don't have lotion, I will not self-gratify, but if it's visible, I will. So like Israel with gold and silver, I have used lotion to indulge in my lustful rebellion. That's me. We are all different, so you need to look at your situation with sobriety. This is being meticulous!

Insight Into a Lust Driven Individual

One of the greatest examples of the intensity of lustful cravings is found in Genesis 38. It really is an amazing Chapter socked between the events of Joseph's life. Judah, being an elder brother of Joseph was a part of selling his brother to a foreign country, an act that no doubt weighed on his sick heart. When a heart is guilty, we will do whatever it takes to cover it up.

In chapter 38 Judah get's involved in the world of the Canaanites. By the way, the Canaanites had a different set of morals. They did things differently, no doubt. There are so many voices today discussing sex, sexuality, sensuality, and why it is good to indulge, as long as you indulge in a certain, considerate way.

Freud (God is just an illusion), Kinsey (legitimizing immorality) were prototypes of what would later come in today's Psychology. All their work has one substantial idea; there is no God, or God of the Bible. As Freud pointed out, "At bottom God is nothing more than an exalted father."

Judah, no doubt, was influenced as we all are.

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

[1 Corinthians 15:33]

Judah sees a fine looking Canaanite women and marries her. It is amazing to realize that the eyes once again are getting man into trouble.

Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are human eyes.

[Proverbs 27:20]

This will be a theme in the chapter, as it is with many of our lives.

As we move on in the chapter, Judah now sees a prostitute who happens to be his daughter-in-law.

"When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot; because she had covered her face."

[Genesis 38:15]

The lust is so intense in him, that he prays or begs for an opportunity to sleep with her! Judah was a young teen at the time. 16yrs of age approximately, according to the Bible scholar Matthew Henry. Judah, like so many teens after him, cannot deny the lust that haunts him. Judah "turns" to her.

Now comes the giving of our possessions for our lustful desires. Judah in exchange for the sex, gives her a ram as a promise and to show that he is true to his word, his prize possession of a signet ring and bracelets were given too.

C.S. Lewis wrote that "*a man with an obsession has very little sales resistance*". When lust comes calling, will we give up all that we have for it? This is the incredible insanity of it all. The heart affects the eyes, which in turn affect the heart.

What have we given up to get our own sexual gratification? For some it has been the most cherished relationship we have ever had, our spouse's. Oh, how this sin cuts at our heart and must be cast down to the ground as a filthy idol that cannot help us in the slightest.

I would like you to read from Matthew Henry's commentary at this point.

"2. It added to the scandal that the hire of a harlot (than which nothing is more infamous) was demanded, offered, and accepted-a kid from the flock, a goodly price at which her chastity and honor were valued! Nay, had the consideration been thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, it had not been a valuable consideration. The favour of God, the purity of the soul, the peace of conscience, and the hope of heaven, are too precious to be exposed to sale at any such rates; the Topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them: what are those profited that lose their souls to gain the world? 3. It turned to the reproach of Judah that he left his jewels in pawn for a kid. Note, Fleshly lusts are not only brutish, but sottish, and ruining to men's secular interests. It is plain that whoredom, as well as wine, and new wine, takes away the heart first, else it would never take away the signet and the bracelets."

Doesn't the indulgence in pornography or other sexual sin take away the security we have in Christ? Oh, the inner emptiness of the soul when lust has taken over a person of God. It is awful, the utter feeling of surrender to indulgence. Though the world tells you it is fine, go for it, there are no consequences. It is not true. It is a boldface lie from the pit. They know it and you know it. For what happens when a famous one does indulge? Why the news of such scandal if it is okay to do? The world is loaded with contradictions. Let's realize they do not have the answers. Fight against it! Don't give up!

We get an insight into Judah's heart after the deed was done in verse 23.

"Let her take them, lest we be shamed..."

[Genesis 38:23]

This is what the fulfilling of lust will give us. Shame! It's that awful feeling from the inner person who knows he has done wrong. This is what the unbeliever needs to sear or cut off to continue on the path.

Do you feel awful when you indulge? Good! Your conscience is alive!

Judah was afraid of what others would say about his actions. He desired an anonymity to his behavior like the internet gives us, but he had none. Can you relate to this? What have you done to cover your actions? What were you afraid of?

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

[Proverbs 29:25]

The harlot goes public and Judah faces up to what he did. This is why it is best to confess with someone what you have done, namely God. But Judah does acknowledge in the end his foolishness, (vs. 26). And from that time he did not have relations with her again.

There is a lesson learned from young Judah. We too need to learn from our mistakes, and learn to think differently. There is incredible insecurity in sinful actions. I know it! "But whoever trust in the Lord is kept safe." There is nothing that selfish lustful inclinations will do to help or keep us protected. But from this event we see that it will take our possessions and even our reputation which, when gone, is very hard to get back.

The beautiful grace of God is also available to us as it was to Judah. Jesus is called the

Lion of the tribe of Judah

[Revelation 5:5]

This is no small title for the Son of God. Jesus is from the seed of King David, who was from his father Jesse, of the Tribe of Judah. And if we keep going back through his grandfathers, we will see that this harlot that Judah went into had a baby named Perez. This is the Perez mentioned in the following passage of Ruth.

Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

[Ruth 4:18-22]

And here in the book of Matthew chapter 1.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king...

[Matthew 1:1-6]

God's grace always abounds! I believe that. Do you?

1) How does the passage below relate to this chapter?

"Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more,"

[Romans 5:20]

2) What do you learn from Judah and this encounter that he has?

3) What influences in our lives lead us into immorality?

4) What does the non-believing world tell us about sexual sin?

5) How does the heart of mankind affect the eyes and, in turn, the eyes of mankind affect the heart?

6) How has shame played a role in your life?

7) What is the remedy for our shame?

Listen to the following message by Pastor John Piper on Justification:

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/jesus-is-precious-because-he-removes-our-guilt>

Understanding Why We View Pornography

There are no easy answers when it comes to the “why” we view. You have no doubt heard countless talks or read books telling us that it is because we were abused, or exposed at an early age to sexual content.

Other myths the world taught me on pornography addiction is that you will want more hard core material to get the high that you had at the first. Can I just be really straight up with you? Everyone is different, and you can't find any consistent pattern in why we view or with what kind of pornography we have chosen to view. There just isn't a simple “A + B = C” equation. We really are all different.

Sometimes the most frustrating thing in the culture is the reaction we get if people find out we have been involved in pornography or other lustful behavior. People assume that if you have watched pornography then you will at some point become a pedophile. These stereotypes hurt not heal. Try your best to move away from people who will not be a healing source for you as you grow.

A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

[Proverbs 17:17]

I have seen, heard and read testimonies of those who never were exposed to porn, to one day in the 40's being exposed to a little bit by accident, quickly progress to getting into prostitution. Others have been involved in watching pornography their entire lives and have never had a prostitute or desired to have an affair of any kind. Still there is the typical Southern California kid who grows up around a lustful culture who self-gratifies to sensual pictures or videos now and again. This kind never gets into watching the “crazy” kinds of porn, he simply continues with a steady consistent flow over his life.

You might fit into one pattern with one area but not in another. That's normal. I found out that I was the kind of guy who always enjoyed sensuality, yet never really wanted or enjoyed the crazy stuff. My pornography was always the same. It never changed from the time I was a teenager to today. My temptations have always been the same. I have never wanted to get into some interesting fetish or young girl pornography. Though I was exposed to pornography at a very young age, I never wanted to rape a girl or watch rape porn. Why? I don't know. Some people go certain directions and others do not.

What is important is that we all evaluate where we have been, what we have been exposed to, how it made us feel, why we have continued to pursue it. There are many questions that will take you time to answer as you begin your journey towards a new way of living. I still ask questions myself, so as you move forward be aware that it is a progression.

I remember giving my life to Christ at 17 years of age. My eyes were opened to the precious work of Christ on my behalf. Oh, what a joy to know your sins are forgiven! Being given a new heart and a renewed mind, the old sinful patterns did not fit me anymore. I did not feel comfortable in them. But that did not mean that every area of sinful inclinations was gone. I found as I continued to grow in Christ, the contention between my flesh and spirit grew more and more. Can you relate?

Blaise Pascal once wrote, *“Man's greatness is great in that he knows himself to be wretched.”*

Isn't that statement so true? And the more we grow in Christ, the more we will find the need to crucify more of our flesh. And the ability to see this is grace!

So why do we view what we view? It's a big question.

Get with a person who is mature in the walk with the Lord to talk about these issues. It is important. You might think that it's weird to share what you are into with another, but it is a good, important part of confessing our sins.

There are no doubt various ranges of lust. Adultery and looking at a woman in a lustful way are both sin, yet the degree of damage done by one is greater than the other in life. This is true with pornography or lustful inclinations. Some porn is common, other kinds are not. Some pornography is so debased that it brings up other issues that are in our hearts (i.e. violence, children, rape, BDSM...). The scary thing about the internet in particular is that finding this debased kind of material is not hard. Actually you could get rid of all the real person pornography in the world, and there still would be plenty of debased porn! Yep, it's true. I'm referring to much of the animated pornography.

Whatever has been your behavior of choice, we first need to confess it to God and then to another. For some of you, you have been involved with some of this debased pornography and are so ashamed of it. The last thing you want to do is tell someone or have your wife/husband find out what you have been into. Please start off with talking to God. Verbally share with God in prayer what you have seen or like. Ask Him to change your heart for His Glory. Then pray that the Lord will give you a person to share with. Don't rush this. Take time and pray, seeking the Lord. Confessing to a person who is not used to the act of confessing themselves will more than likely put you in a real unhealthy predicament, for you, and them. Confess to someone who understands the blessing and joy in confession and does it themselves. That will be the person to talk to.

Better Pleasure

This lesson is about seeing God as better pleasure.

1) What do you think of when you hear the word “pleasure”?

For those of us who have been entrenched in sexual sin, we tend to think sexual thoughts when the word “pleasure” comes to mind. That's not entirely bad, but usually with us, we are thinking outside of what God intended for our sexuality.

Look at the following passage of scripture:

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

[Psalm 36:8]

2) Is God against pleasure?

3) What is God communicating in this verse?

The analogy I see in this passage is God inviting us into His home, and within that home He has everything that makes for our joy. God has a river of pleasure!

It's interesting that certain religions make heaven out to be like a porn movie of sorts to show how pleasurable it will be up there. How sad. God says that He is pleasurable and will give us pleasure.

4) What is the pleasure that God desires to give us?

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

[Psalm 34:8]

5) Who is the one we are to find as good?

Delight yourself also in the LORD,...

[Psalm 37:4]

6) Who are we to delight in?

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

[Habakkuk 3:18]

7) Who is our joy in?

I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD.”

[Jeremiah 31:14]

8) Who will fill us with goodness?

When we think of God satisfying us with His goodness, we should not exclusively think of things less than God, like His creation. God would then be glorifying something or someone that is not Him. And while it is true God made these things for us to enjoy, the eternal satisfaction that we seek is to know God, not the things He has made. Yet when God gives us His goodness He is giving us an understanding of His value or worth.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[2 Corinthians 4:6]

9) What have we been given in this passage?

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

[John 17:3]

10) Eternal life is what?

So heaven is not a receiving of men or women to have sex with as some religious groups teach, but it is a receiving of God. He is our delight and the best pleasure.

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You...My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,...

[Psalm 63:3&5]

God's love is going to be better than any salty steak we have ever eaten!

11) Do you see God as Better Pleasure?

This is important because all sin is a lack of seeing the betterment of God. We choose the lesser pleasure when we choose sin.

Think through the quote below, get with a mentor and discuss this lesson.

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased."

– C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*

Rethinking Sex

1) When you think of sex what comes to your mind?

2) How about God?

3) Does thinking about God in the context of sex seem odd to you?

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
[1 Corinthians 10:31]

4) Have you ever thought of sex to the glory of God?

5) What do you think that would look like?

Sex is a normal part of our lives. And there is nothing weird about it. The Bible is one giant allegory of God's love relationship with His people. There is the courting of God with His people, the purchasing of a bride, the preparing of the wedding night, and the great wedding feast!

Have you ever noticed the Bible's repeated references to God's relationship with His people in intimate ways?

Read these verses.

When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD.
[Ezekiel 16:8]

¹⁴Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. ¹⁵I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. ¹⁶And it shall be, in that day," Says the LORD, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,'... ¹⁹I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; ²⁰I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.

[Hosea 2:14-16 & 19-20]

The famous preacher Charles H. Spurgeon taught that the Song of Solomon was an allegory of Christ and the Church!

Sex was created to be a way we can understand the closeness God has with His people. So it is not odd to think of God when you think of sex! Rethinking sex is important. This is why.

6) If you don't think of God and His love when you think of sex, then what do you think of?

Growing up I never thought of God when I thought of sex. I thought of my own pleasure or desires. I would see a girl and lust, undress her in my mind, and how she could satisfy my sexual cravings. It wasn't until I started reading the Bible that I began to rethink this. What was the result of lusting like this? How did it make me view women? Or men?

God is love, so if I do not look at God when I look to sexual things, then I look to the culture's standards, which are ever changing! What was not allowed when I was young is now normal behavior. But where will it stop? There was a time when having intimacy with under age teens was considered normal in the world, then it was not normal due to the harm done to young people, yet pornography in the world (especially Japan) consistently shows pornography with young looking people. And some of the most popular genres of pornography are incest and young girl films, though it is illegal to actually practice this behavior in most of the world. All this tells us that their view on sex is ever changing, not only in the porn world, but in the psychological world as well.

7) What does your view of sex say about you? How do you suppose thinking of God when it comes to sex would change your actions?

Thinking of God gives:

Purpose – God created it, so there is a right and a wrong to it!

Meaning – Sex is an acted out sermon of God's love and intimacy with His people.

Direction – To evaluate our hearts during sexual encounters with God's kind of love.

What was it like when I didn't think of God?

Purpose – Sex was not a part of a special creation so no universal right or wrong in sex.

Meaning – Sex could be for any reason; procreation, pleasure, and everything in-between.

Direction – A narcissistic culture or psychology defines for us what is good sex or bad.

It's interesting, but even when we don't believe in God, there is something in us that knows there is a wrong and a right to sex. I often wonder if we will one day see a majority of people not caring if they are cheated on. It could be that behavioral science will share its benefits which in turn will influence generations to change from what has become known as traditional relationships. When God's plan for sex is no longer looked to, then men, its psychologists and its governments dictate.

8) What does our culture, psychology and government tell us about sex?

Write out your answers and share them with a mentor.

A Study Through 1 Peter

Peter wrote to those persecuted that were in the area known as Turkey today. Obedience in trials is the theme that is threaded throughout this short book. Here are some of the great gems that can help us as we work through our own trials with lust.

¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

[1 Peter 1:13-14]

1) Describe what Peter means by former lusts.

2) What does it mean, "as in your ignorance..."?

Ignorance means a moral blindness in the scriptures.

having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

[Ephesians 4:18]

3) Do you remember a time when you were unaware of your sins?

Many of us grew up not aware that how we viewed women/men or treated them was wrong. It simply was what our culture did. But when our eyes were opened to the work of Christ for us, there came a change of mind as to our sexuality. Now, our sexuality was to be transformed into what God intended, not just what we desired. We were no longer ours, but we were another's.

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

[1 Corinthians 6:20]

4) Are you seeing yourself as God's?

5) Do you thank God that your eyes are open and there is a battle between the old life and the new?

Though battling the old life is tough, it is a grace, a gift!

Read this excerpt from Blaise Pascal taken from “The Christian Life”.

“The cruelest war which God can bring to men in this life is to leave them without that war which he came to bring.”

And read this quote from Charles H. Spurgeon:

“I think your experience will bear out what I say – that it is all very well to live on spoon victuals and on mills when you have no trials and troubles. But if it ever comes to a pinch between your should and sin – if you are in the deep waters of conscious sinfulness and Satan is accusing you – nothing will do for your souls to meet the adversary with but the doctrines of Sovereign Grace.”

Read this verse:

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

[1 Peter 2:1]

6) Describe your “war of the soul”.

Read the next verse:

having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

[1 Peter 2:2]

7) From the verse above, What is the reason it is important to continue to wage the war against lustful inclinations?

Being used by God in the lives of others is so beautiful! Notice that the avoidance of lustful actions is to benefit others. This is love. Lustful inclinations hurt and cause others to misunderstand God. When we fight against lustful desires we are telling others around us that it is worth it to fight this fight! Also that God is concerned about this area of our lives. It gives others the right understanding of God.

8) Are you concerned about how God is viewed by your life?

We live in a day where many call murder by various other names to diminish its significance. Over time we can get the idea that it is okay to murder, or wrong to tell others not to murder. But due to the strong pro-life movement, we are always reminded of the real destruction of abortion in taking a life. In like manner, as we continue to fight against lustful inclinations others around us might become convicted of their own actions and begin to seek God.

9) It is a war Peter says. Can you relate to this war? Describe it and share it with your mentor.

Look at our last verse:

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

[1 Peter 4:1-2]

Peter uses Jesus as our great example of putting to death the sin of lust. Of course, Jesus is our perfect example. But there is a pattern here that Peter is wanting us to receive and implement to help us. Jesus suffered, and we are to prepare to suffer as well. This is not an easy task! Before I knew it was wrong to live in lustful patterns all the time, there was no pain in doing it. But at the moment I tried to resist, pain came. For us who have battled the inclinations to satisfy our lustful desires we have had some serious dark nights of the soul – anxiety set in, discomfort and distresses resumed. This is not fun, but needed.

10) Can you relate? Describe.

Tip: When this anxiety is in our lives, the best thing to do is cut off the avenue. You will get some relief! If the opportunity is there, the battle will resume.

11) Are you ready to go through the suffering that is needed to win the battle?

My Prayer: Oh Lord, help us to endure the pain that is needed to win the battle over lustful desires that go astray!

Read the following from the book of Romans:

⁵For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

[Romans 6:5-14]

12) Ponder this passage of scripture and see its parallels with the 1 Peter 4 passage. Write out those similarities and review them with your mentor.

Mistreating Women - A Men's Issue

- 1) In what ways have you disrespected women in your life?

- 2) What does much of the pornography available say about men?

- 3) What does much of the pornography available say about women?

- 4) Are these personifications of men and women accurate in the real world?

- 5) How is lust a form of disrespect towards women? (Describe the process of lusting)

When we lust after a woman/man, we undress her/him and do what we want to do with her/him. We think of them as a thing to be used rather than a person with a context (a daughter/son, a mom/dad, a wife/husband etc...)

Please comment on the quote below:

“In a society in which so many men are watching so much pornography, this is why we can't bear to see it for what it is: Pornography forces men to face up to what we have become. The result is that no one wants to talk about what is in the mirror. Although few admit it, lots of people are afraid of pornography.” Robert Jenkins (Getting Off)

- 6) Are you upset that your heart is or has been inclined to think of women in these degrading ways?

In the Bible we read many accounts of men who succumbed to their lust. King David, Solomon, Samson, Gideon, Abraham, Lot, Judah, Amnon, and more all experienced lust in various ways like you or I!

7) In what ways are you like many of the men in the Bible narratives?

8) Can you relate to the following comment?:

“In intimate moments with a partner during sex, are we engaged in a way that treats our partner like a human being, someone with hopes and dreams and desires of her own? Or are we engaged in a way that treats her like an object, like something—not someone—whose role in the world at that moment is to produce sexual pleasure for Us?” pg 109; Robert Jenkins (Getting Off)

9) How does the Biblical concept of, **"It is better to give than to receive,"** play a part in your sexual life?

10) Abortion is usually thought of as a woman's issue, but how is abortion a man's issue?

Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.” [Ephesians 5:25-29]

11) When God made man, what was he to be for the woman?

12) How does unbridled lust prevent us from doing this?

13) When viewing pornography over and over, what does it say about our views of women?

- 14) Have you ever thought of the ladies that are acting in pornography as people and not a commodity?
- 15) What is at stake if we continue to disrespect people in our life?
- 16) Is it ever okay to hit a woman?
- 17) What does violence against women show about a man?
- 18) How is some pornography similar to domestic violence? (Example: Male control, woman submission, degrading speech to the woman, non gentle men etc...)
- 19) We are not saying that watching pornography will make you act out to hit a woman. But what we are saying is this; what does it say about our hearts if we are finding sexual pleasure in treating a woman harshly?

After going through this lesson, we suggest you get with a mentor to go over your answers and discuss them.

Principles of Godly Sex In Marriage

Sexual relationships are powerful. The act of sex can either be the most exhilarating or the the most hurtful. In light of this, some of the sternest punishments in the court system are given in response to sex offenders. In marriage, this holds true as well. If abuses happen in bed, there will be problems in the relationship in general. Sex makes us vulnerable doesn't it? And there is no greater place where resentment, hatred and selfishness can occur simultaneously than in our intimate life.

As Christians we should remember that God is the creator of sex so we can look to the Bible for answers of what it should be like. If we don't, we are bound to have a distorted view. For many of us that distorted education has been through the lens of pornography.

In this writing, the title includes, "In Marriage," because marriage is called the covenant that God loves.

"...For Judah has profaned The Lord's holy institution which he loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god."

[Malachi 2:11]

Only in a Biblical marriage do we have the greatest opportunity for God's love to thrive. A Biblical marriage is created by God, to be set apart from other relationships, to include the special intimacy of sex, and to be until death do us part.

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

[Matthew 19:4-6]

So let's get back to the Bible in all things. And God says His ways are better!

God's ways "...are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace!"

[Proverbs 3:18]

Sex, Unto the Lord?

"So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"

[1 Corinthians 10:31]

This is a great verse to start at! Notice Paul the Apostle says, "*whatever you do.*" From here on out, we are going to define that "whatever" to include sex. You might be asking, "How do you have sex to the glory of God?" Well let's look at that a bit. How do we glorify God in anything that we do? Isn't it when we have our body and mind given to Him first and foremost? Isn't it when we value God above our own desires, wants and wishes?

Romans says:

"I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service, and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

[Romans 12:1-2]

When we have intimacy with our spouse we are to remember that our bodies are not ultimately our own, but they are the Lord's, and we are to pray and give him our entire being – mind and body.

"You were bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

[1 Corinthians 6:20]

In the writing that follows we will be looking into what we desire to see God do through us as we pursue this truth! And may our God do just that through the work of His Holy Spirit!

Loving Intimacy

For God to be glorified He must be the reason we do what we do. He is the treasure to go after in all things. He is also our example of things done the right way. When we look at God and how he interacts with the world, he does not lust the world, he loves it! This is the goal of what we want to be reflected in our sexual life – love, not lust.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..."

[John 3:16]

Notice it does not say that God lusts the world, but that He loves the world. God loves. To reflect God; we are told to walk in love for He is love.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and anyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

[1 John 4:7]

We see that God is asking us to walk in love. This love is a godly love which is different from an earthly love. Look at the passage below and see in what way we are to walk in.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth."

[1 Corinthians 13:4-6]

Now think of this passage when it comes to our sexual lives. Read it over again while thinking of your intimacy. Does this passage fit with your actions in your marital bed?

Sex should not be a constant hurry up type of thing at all! Love is patient, and sex should be too. This alone has been the catalyst for many of our problems; we have thought only about ourselves in the sexual context. There are so many things to discover in our sexual activity with our beloved, and we should desire to cultivate our love for one another by giving time to

the other. I know that my spouse loves me because she spends time seeking what I enjoy. My joy means something to her. Joyful patience becomes the way we communicate our love to one another.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

[Galatians 5:22]

Think through this list as well, then evaluate to see if you shine these in your sexual life. Remember God’s ways are paths of pleasantness and of peace. To move away from this is to go the way of lust.

For me, I read and think of 1 Corinthians 13 often. Especially the one phrase that says, “...love does not seek its own.” That truth helps me to understand there is a better way than the selfish inclinations we can easily have in sex.

Love also does “no harm” to the other. This should help us in sex too, as sometimes someone might get his ideas of “good sex” from pornography and ask his beloved to do something that they are uncomfortable with. When we find pleasure from another’s pain in sex we are not thinking of the other or of glorifying God.

Sex has many beautiful expressions. They should be exciting for both people. I know some of this might sound weird to you, but prayerfully work on it: Godly love, not lust!

The Grace of Sexual Giving

When you are acting in love during sex, then you are finding your joy in giving to the other. Sex becomes about you feeling joy in pleasing your spouse, not from your own self gratification. This might be another strange concept to many of us who have been so warped by our own desires in sex. Godly sex is not just giving pleasure to your love, but with joy giving preference to the other.

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than himself.”

[Philippians 2:3]

“It is better to give than receive.”

[Acts 20:35]

Husbands are told to *“give honor to the wife” in [1 Peter 3:7]*. Give! That is the way we reflect our Creator in the marriage bed! We need to no longer make sex about us, because that is what has caused so much heartache in the lives of many. Giving is the better way, as the scriptures say, so let’s start putting that into practice!

Work on thinking of your beloved when you are going to have sex and what they enjoy about it, and find your pleasure in that! Like anything, godly sex takes practice in disciplining our minds and bodies. Be patient with one another as you both are learning to establish your sex upon the Word of God.

Remember that God is a giver! He gives us Himself (the Holy Spirit) to dwell in us and to make our lives a picture of His grace!

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever...”

[John 14:16]

“... be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...that you may know the love of Christ...and be filled with all the fullness of God.”

[Ephesians 3:16-19]

Considering that God has given us so much, it is now time for us to glorify God in reflecting Him in our marriages through the grace of giving in our sexual lives.

Creating A Holy Culture

Sex should be special and wonderfully unique! In the Bible, when something was intended to be used in a special and unique way it was to be called “uncommon” or holy. Sex should in no way be a common activity that I have with others, but it is to be unique to me and my beloved.

“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”

[Song of Solomon 6:3]

Sex does not have to be mundane or boring! When something is special we do not call it boring at all do we? But when we see a spectacular sunset or a high mountain with snow on it we find it special and are blown away by it! This is how we should look at sex. It is spectacular, something different from the regular, like looking at the surf where I lived in Hawaii! Insane!

Our minds need to begin thinking this new way. Sex needs to be seen as something special and must be based on the foundations of love, care, honesty, and patience. If these foundations of my relationship are not laid down properly or if it gets cracked, then the house will topple at some point. If you sweep the legs, they’ll fall!

We even need to consider the details. For example, the act of masturbation can be one of extreme selfishness, not selflessness. If a man/woman self-gratifies (masturbates) alone then his body is no longer set apart to be special for the one he loves, but instead he has begun to walk the road of selfishness. In this situation, the orgasm becomes common and not something special to be shared with the beloved. Therefore, self-gratification can be a major enemy of creating a special place for your loved one.

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. And the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer and come together again so that Satan doesn’t tempt you because of your lack of self control.”

[1 Corinthians 7:3]

Another enemy to a loving marriage bed is bringing pornography into sex (meaning watching porn while being intimate). This too becomes a place of selfish expression and self-gratification. How sad it is to be thinking of the person on the screen while having sex with your beloved! Would we want our loved one to think of another while being with us? This kind of behavior cheapens sex to a selfish need rather than be a special place where you both

experience new and wonderful pleasures. Sex is so incredible, but using pornography to “get off” only makes orgasms a common thing and then they become the goal in sex. But this is not the goal of sex alone! Though we are taught this in our culture, the orgasm is not the goal! For animals it is, but we have been made in the image of God! Our goal, again, is love.

“Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”

[Colossians 3:10]

Who do you hang out with? What kind of friends are around you and your beloved? Be on guard! Too many couples hang out with others that do not understand nor share in how special sex is. It saddens me to say, but many of our so called friends can be a danger to our marriage if we are not on our guard.

Never share your sexual intimacy between other people in specific terms. That is between you and your beloved. It is a special act between the two of you alone.

Sex is also special because in that vulnerable place of nakedness there is a relationship that can either become super incredibly strong or totally depraved and sick. So there is to be a reverence that comes with it. We do not just admire the grand canyon, but we also should reverence it! Why? Because we could die if we don't! The canyon is more than a mile deep!

Every year I watch the X Games on TV. I grew up surfing and lived in Hawaii for a time. I love seeing surfers ride big waves or skateboarders on the half pipe. Yet if I don't reverence the ocean or the half pipe, I will likely drown or break my body!

Sex is to be honored and revered! It is to be holy.

Troubleshooting sex!

There are always difficulties in learning to do something in a new way, especially sex! Have grace with yourself and your spouse. A note to men – as you begin to think in a different way...sometimes your parts won't want to work! Don't fret! It takes time to retrain your mind and body. If your member fails to perform because you no longer are lusting after a porn image to get you going for sex, then simply work on pleasuring your beloved a different way).

Nothing is wrong with praying before, after and even during sexual behavior! Pray out loud together or silently on your own and be willing to move together into this new place of love in intimacy. We want to bring Christ into our bedrooms and no longer give this area over to the world. It's sacred and not secular.

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

[1 Thessalonians 5:18]

Do everything you can to not become fully dependent on TV or other entertainment to get you going for sex. This again will not help you in the long run, but will lead you to need more and more dependency on lustful stimulation. The God of creation declares that love is the better way. We need a paradigm shift from lust, to love! Selfish lust will lead to death, love leads to life.

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both you and your descendants may live.”

[Deuteronomy 30:19]

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”

[Romans 8:6]

In the same way I would not recommend dressing up for sex as it is often linked to the fantasy-driven pornography industry. Too many of us will associate our beloved with what we have seen on the screen. Again, if we continue to bring these things into our sex life then selfish lust will be the foundation, and not love. If you think you can continue to do this and still not fantasize about pornography, or sensual content that you have seen before, then you are a person I need to meet! Bottom line – why use what the world uses to spark arousal, when God says there is a greater arousal in the foundation of godly love. And this is the paradigm shift needed; arousal through love as opposed to selfish lust.

“How long will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Tremble and do not sin when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”

[Psalm 4:2]

Common Hindrances to Intimacy:

Criticism

Never criticize your beloved! Not only does this apply during sex, but even outside of the sexual life. Remember that intimacy includes not only the act of sex, but also what leads up to the sexual relationship! If we use cutting words to describe the way one looks outside of sex then that hurt will be brought into the bedroom as well. Instead replace negativity with a positive vibe. Part of making the marriage bed a safe and enjoyable place is to build one another up with compliments that are genuine and reassuring.

“Encourage one another daily as it is called today.”

[Hebrews 3:13]

De-Emphasizing Sex

It's sad when I hear couples talk about sex like something young people do, but adults grow out of as their marriage progresses. If your spouse desires intimacy and you are constantly downgrading it, that is going to cause hurt. Both people in a relationship should be able to see the value sex plays in the Word of God and have that be the example of its importance in their lives. Whether you're newlyweds or in your golden years, intimacy should be a part of our relationship within our marriage. Over the years sex will look different but the loving, compassionate heart should be ever growing and thriving.

“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”

[Genesis 17:17]

“...[Love] believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

[1 Corinthians 13: 7]

Lack of Sensitivity

Have you ever seen a movie where right after a marital fight the couple has intimacy? This might work well for a Hollywood movie, but this is not a good strategy in real life. It is never good to be insensitive towards a spouse one minute, and then demand sex the next. Is that God's way? No way! If you are in contention in the relationship, then be sensitive to where the other is at emotionally. That is not the time to engage in the marital bed until there is peace. You should never use words like, "I need it now," or, "you need to submit to having sex with me." Those words are brutally insensitive. Remember that love is patient.

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

[James 3:17]

Non-Sexual Intimacy

If you are only intimate with your beloved when having sexual relations, this is never good. You want the marital bed to be a place where your entire trust in the other is given. This can be nearly impossible to do if you are never touching or hugging outside of sex. Some couples we work with have said they don't like each other very much due to the lack of non-sexual intimacy. And what's worse is they bring that attitude into the sexual union. This kind of behavior can have a devastating long term impact on a couple, resulting in the lack of desire for sex with their spouse at all. Non-sexual intimacy is the building block for great godly sex, which will manifest in greater trust and peace in bed. Make time to make out without sex. Flirt with each other, hug for a long time, kiss every day or multiple times a day – these are those crucial non-sexual intimacy blocks that will make your marital bed rock!

"And his banner over me was love...his left hand is under my head and his right hand embraces me."

[Song of Solomon 2:4,6]

"Let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely."

[Song of Solomon 2:14]

Hygiene and Health

When you love your spouse you desire to please them. When I think of my wife, I get so stoked. I see her as a gift, a precious gift to me. And as such, I want to do things that will bless her. This is why I work out! Working out and staying in shape improves my sexual intimacy, as my wife receives all of it's benefits, aesthetically too! Just as it would be ridiculous to just watch porn instead of having intimacy with my spouse, it would be insane to eat donuts and Cheez-Its every day, letting my body get filled with toxins, and consequently becoming lethargic. Love seeks the joy of the other, wanting the best for them. Get in shape. Start a workout program to bless your beloved! Start eating right so that you are giving them the best you possible!

I grew up around the ocean, and I grew to love surfing. There is nothing like it! I never used to wash up much, and I didn't know what deodorant was until I was 22! I remember a good friend one time letting me know that I needed to start wearing something to help me not stink! I was totally embarrassed, but it certainly worked. I started to think about how I smelled and presented myself. In a marriage it is sad when a couple stops caring how they look for one another. It is good to want to please your spouse by smelling good or wearing cloths she likes on you. It means they matter to you!

Entertainment

Today we have iPads, cell phones, TVs with hundreds of stations, and much more, which can all hinder our intimacy. Even things like games or sports on your devices can get in the way of enjoying an incredible time with your beloved. Put down the distractions and learn to gaze upon your beloved! There is nothing like a beautiful intimate marital bed, so be on guard with how much and when you are watching TV or on the devices. Relationships are better than electronics!

“Because Your lovingkindness is better than life.”

[Psalm 63:3]

Final thoughts

To conclude, sex should never be boring to us. That would be a ridiculous statement for those who are to be image-bearers of God! We will get old, and sex will become different as we do, but never mundane. God’s relationship with us is never considered boring, but new every morning! (Lamentations 3:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17). God has told us to *“drink of the river of His pleasure”* in [Psalm 36:8]. Infinite joy is the path of those in Christ, for what awaits us in our eternal home (1 Corinthians 2:9, Psalm 16:11, Ephesians 3:14-20). The intimacy we are to experience in our sexual lives is a preview of a greater relationship that we will share with God in His Kingdom – Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22-32).

To help you continue to grow your knowledge of Jesus and His love for the Church, we put this together for you. This is the greatest guide on how to treat one another in the sexual relationship! To remove Christ from the marital bed gives way to selfish lust and the result will be harm. So read, study, and pray, seeking the power of the Spirit to change your heart daily in the discipline of godly sex. You and your beloved will be blessed by your commitment to this!

A Fast From Intimacy?

Introduction

This is a response to the idea of a 90 day sex fast that can be prescribed by a counselor during marriage counseling. We at *Running Light Ministries* have included our comments in addition to the article on this subject by the formally known ministry; *Setting Captives Free*. We hope this will be a thorough look at the scriptures to help us in the crucial area of sexual restoration for couples.

Hebrews says:

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

[Hebrews 13:4]

In order for the marriage bed to be undefiled there needs to be agape love that resounds within it. Agape love is self-sacrificing love which puts the joy and good of another before your own. And even further said, agape love, is our joy being rooted in the godly benefit of the other (see 2 Corinthians 8:1-8 as an example of this love).

What we often find with the men we work with, is that instead of the marriage bed being a place of agape love, it instead becomes a place for lust (adultery) to thrive! This adultery takes place in their minds, as they have seen hundreds upon hundreds of sexual images and videos in our culture.

Referencing 1 Corinthians 7, Paul would in no way ask that a man demand his wife to have sex with him because he is tempted to commit fornication (porn or adultery), when he is using her to fulfill his lust for porn or adultery!

- Remember that in Paul’s mind as a Jew, if there was adultery there was a death or divorce according to the Old Testament. (Leviticus 20:10, Dueteronomy 24:1)
- If you had committed adultery, you would be be put to death and your wife would be free to remarry.
- This Biblical understanding should help you understand your wife’s pain if she has decided to stay living with you in marriage. Remember that she is not obligated to stay (Matthew 19:9). In addition, a healing is needed in the heart (Matthew 19:8).
- Love must be the guiding factor for 1 Corinthians 7 to work. Loving our neighbor as ourselves is the guiding principle of the Christian.

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does...”

[1 Corinthians 7:3-4]

Do unto others as you would have done to you

[Luke 6:31]

...husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself

[Ephesians 5:28]

The marriage bed was meant to be a place of great honor and purity. A man can have such a distorted view of the marriage bed that there needs to be a time of re-training, a sex fast it has often been called; A longer time apart might be necessary at this point.

This all stems from a man not being able to possess his own vessel properly:

...each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

[1 Thessalonians 4:4]

The fruit of the Spirit is love...self control.

[Galatians 5:22-23]

We should know how to possess our own bodies and not act out in lust like those that do not know God. This means that our sex life should not be lustful like the Gentiles (unbelievers), who do not know God. There should be a difference in our sex and that difference is agape love. The following are questions for you to consider.

Do you:

- Care what your wife thinks about sex?
- Encourage her and build her up?
- Get mad when she does not want to have sex?
- Pray with her about your intimate life together?
- Imagine pornography or other fantasies while having sex?
- Show your wife that God is the center of your sex life through teaching her about sex from a Biblical worldview?
- Have her best interest in mind during sex?
- Give your wife rule over your body, or are you self-gratifying?

These are some things you should prayerfully seek God in as you decide, together, whether a time apart sexually is the best thing for your marriage.

90-day Sex Fast?

If Bible verses are used to support this recommendation, the ones cited are found in 1 Corinthians.

Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command.

[1 Corinthians 7:5-6]

It is important to understand the context of this passage. Paul is responding to a letter that he has received from the Corinthians on the issues of "is it good for a man not to touch a woman."

In history many believers have felt it was more honorable to not have sexual relations, even within marriage. Here Paul clears it up! Sex within marriage is not evil but good, and is expected to protect each other from the sexual temptations of Satan, and our lack of self-control.

The couple who abstains from sexual intimacy should do so only to fast and pray, and this should only be by mutual consent, and only as a temporary measure. Obviously, we are not referring to those who must separate for reasons such as job function, illness or disability (hospitalization), deployment in the military, incarceration, etc. Rather, we are referring to those who separate by choice.

The command here is "do not deprive each other;" the exception clause is "except by mutual agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to fasting and prayer." When helping those in bondage to impurity to find freedom, we would do well to not teach the "exception" as a rule, or even as a good idea.

Paul is issuing a warning about separating physically, stating that temptations may come into the marriage when couples do so; and, he states that the only way to separate is by mutual consent for the purpose of fasting and praying. Then he adds that the couple must get back together to prevent the work of the devil in the marriage. In other words, sexual intimacy in marriage fends off the temptations of the evil one, and must only be broken by mutual consent for the purpose of seeking the Lord through giving up all food and praying to the Lord. The overall view of Paul here is not that a 90-day sex fast would be a good idea, but that a married couple should make sexual intimacy a priority in their marriage, as a preventative to the work of the devil. This is the intent of the passage.

Placed in a diagram, the passage would look like this:

1. Do not deprive each other (do not separate physically) except
 1. by mutual consent
 2. for a time
 3. for fasting and praying only

2. Come together again (restore sexual intimacy)
 1. so that Satan will not tempt you
 2. because of your lack of self-control

It is also important to take 1 Corinthians 7:5 in context with the four verses which precede it.

¹Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. ²But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. ⁵Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

[1 Corinthians 7:1-5]

In the above passage, Paul makes it clear that sex in marriage is the God-ordained means of thwarting temptation and avoiding immorality. Because sex is a help in these areas, it is important that the married couple does not deprive each other but should instead maintain regular, ongoing, consistent sexual intimacy in the marriage. The only legitimate reason given in Scripture for separating is "for fasting and prayer." Therefore, if abstaining from sexual

intimacy in marriage, the couple must also abstain from food (fasting) and seek the Lord earnestly (praying). Obviously, this cannot be done for a very long period of time, and certainly not for 90 days.

It is also helpful to examine the previous chapter, where we see the Scriptures say to "*flee sexual immorality*" [1 Corinthians 6:18]. The message is "You are no longer free to give in to the lusts of your flesh, or to have sex with whomever you want. Instead, glorify God with your bodies!" How does a married man flee sexual immorality? How does he glorify God? He glorifies God by fleeing immorality (1 Corinthians 6) and by running to his wife, instead (1 Corinthians 7). Marital intimacy is given to the couple as a protection against the temptations of the devil and, when Christian counselors recommend a "90-day sex fast", they could be unwittingly removing the God-given protection from the marriage that Paul states is so very important.

Another passage of importance on this topic is in Proverbs.

¹⁵Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? ¹⁷Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. ¹⁸May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹A loving doe, a graceful deer--may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. ²⁰Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?

[Proverbs 5:15-20]

We note from verse 19 that a wife's breasts are to fill her husband with delight "*at all times,*" and the husband is to be intoxicated with her love "*always.*" This is good and godly sexual intimacy in marriage, where a man has turned from all forms of impurity (pornography, homosexuality, adultery, etc.) and is learning to delight in his wife's body at all times and to be intoxicated with her love always.

My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts.

[Song of Songs 1:13]

I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.

[Song of Songs 7:10-12]

Christian counselors may mistakenly focus on the exception clause of 1 Corinthians 7, "*except by agreement for a limited time*" but, in so doing, they divorce this exception clause from the requirement which follows, "*come together lest you be tempted.*"

On the other hand, we do not want to discount the benefits that may come from a time apart, sexually, that is devoted to prayer and fasting, when mutually agreed upon by the couple. Isaiah 58 states many benefits of fasting. In addition, the gospels of Matthew and Mark both tell the story of a demon-possessed child which the disciples were unable to heal. After Jesus cast out the demon and healed the child, the disciples asked Him, "*Why couldn't we cast out that demon?*" Jesus responded, "*However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting*" (Matthew 17:21).

Prayer and fasting may be a powerful weapon against the evil one and, when a couple wields this weapon together, it may bring unity to their marriage in amazing ways. Prayer and fasting unites the couple in suffering, since going without food isn't easy. Prayer and fasting also demonstrates a serious willingness to be free from sexual impurity. If a man is willing to give up

his food for the sake of being pure in heart and mind, it may be a great encouragement to those who have been sinned against. Praying and fasting together unites a couple in their love of Christ and in their pursuit of Him and His power.

So, if a married couple agrees to enter into a time of sexual abstinence for the purpose of prayer and fasting, they should do it quietly and devote what would have been mealtimes to prayer for healing from sexual impurity and the defilement of it. If they will do this wholeheartedly, they will likely find what they are seeking and, in the process, their hearts can be united together, spiritually. This will likely result in a desire to express their oneness, and they will end their fast and come together intimately, with great joy. This *"coming together again"* is important, lest one be unduly tempted to turn to past sinful ways to quench the God-given desires of the heart for intimacy.

Summary:

There is nothing scriptural about stating there should be "three months of abstinence" or "a hundred days of abstinence" as the benchmark to be attained when abstaining from sex within marriage. Quite the contrary, there are warnings about staying apart too long. It is presumptive and audacious for anyone to attempt to box God in by stating that a man or woman must fast for "x" number of days in order to be free. Jesus doesn't give a time period for prayer and fasting, nor should anyone else. God may heal a person in a moment with one touch or one word or He may delay healing for His own glory. If He chooses to use brief abstinence, prayer, and fasting as a means of grace in one person's life, it does not mean we should attempt to make it the rule for all. God is sovereign, and does as He pleases (Psalm 135:6).

God's Purpose and Design for Sex

God designed sex to show the world what His love was like. Right off the bat, that might make most of you squirm a bit. Sex is about God's love...yes, it is. We have such a crazy distorted view of sex that many of us can't even begin to wrap our mind around the concept of sex being a picture of God's love, but this is because of our lust filter. The literal two becoming one, (what happens in the act of sex), is a picture of God's love for His own bride (His People), and the mutual love back to God from the Church.

Sex was designed to be a holy act. And I don't mean stale or boring. It's meant to be incredible. And when it is truly understood, sex is just that - incredible. The issue of Godly Sex will take you through the basics of why God made sex and how wrong our typical view of it really is. Hopefully this will challenge and encourage you to think radically about something our world has made so common.

God made it, so let's see what God's purpose and design is for sex. This pamphlet is designed to help people understand the Biblical purpose of intimacy or sex. I believe it is for anyone that has been duped into the ways of the world on this subject.

Why Write About This?

The simple answer is to glorify God! All areas of our lives are to be given over to Christ, for His Glory and Name. Sex is no different. The husband and wife relationship (marriage) was designed by God. So it has purpose by it's creator. But God's reasons for creating it is to shine Him! Sex is to shine God! It is very interesting, but when we humans experience something radical, we often say, "Oh God!" We often cry out to God when we experience something as radical as sex, and why wouldn't we. We are told we are created in His image and the entire creation shows His glory.

The Fall

Before we move forward, let's go back. The Bible teaches us that sin entered the world through one man (Adam), so we all have become tainted by this sin and are sinners ourselves. It is our earthly nature to sin. Sex too has become distorted within us. What our 'natural' desires and thoughts are about sex are not what God's intentions are. Simply put, we don't know how to have God glorifying sex in the world. We have resorted to a common, unholy view of the sacredness of sex. Can you relate to this? What is your default view of sex?

Where Do We Get Our Ideas On Sex?

I am not sure about you, but I haven't heard many ministers share about godly sexual behavior in a consistent way. It's hard to get Christian to talk about what constitutes good sex, let alone talk about its distortions. It's not a topic that comes up often, though the Word of God is littered with sexual situations through its entirety. So if we don't get it from the Word where are we getting our sex ed from? I got my ideas about sex from school, entertainment (Heavy Metal Video's), and pornography. Being raised in a secular environment led me to think I was no different than a monkey, so why not act like one.

Why Is It So Important?

I believe this is so vital to understand because sex is the most intimate a person can be with another. In society, the worst kind of offenders of the law are sexual offenders. Why? It's because sex is where a person is most vulnerable to harm, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Let's face it, when you misuse sex there is heavy damage done. So let's get it right! I believe many marriages have problems simply from how the couple has engaged in their marriage bed. If you mistreat your spouse in a sexual context, then there are no doubt trust issues about your character that will surface in other ways.

Jesus And The Church

Sex is to point to a oneness between Christ and His beloved. This will be shown from a study in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. This section of study will show that "one flesh" means sexual unity. This will also launch us into great sections of insight into John 17:2, Deuteronomy 6:4 and 2 Timothy 2:13.

that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.

[John 17:21]

Hear Oh Israel, the Lord they God is one.

[Deuteronomy 6:4]

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself

[2 Timothy 2:13]

If we start chronologically, Deuteronomy is the great statement of Israel about their God. He is One! It is interesting that the same Hebrew word is used when it says in Genesis 2 for Adam and Eve to become one sexually, which was to be a part of the image of God! God made them, male and female...and said the two shall become one! Wow.

Now we jump to John 17 where Jesus is praying an amazing prayer to the Father. He says that he and the Father are one, and he desires that this beloved on the earth be one together and also one with the Father and the Son! You get the idea here of what the Old Testament also bears out very clearly. When the word one is being used in these contexts, it does not mean one singular, but one of a complex unity. One together does not mean only one, but one of a group. This is what we mean when we say complex unity. Adam and Eve become one, though they are two. Jesus and His Father are one, though they are two. This is an amazing discovery and mystery.

2 Timothy 2 is a great passage that talks about the faithfulness of the Son in the lives of his, even faithless, bride. Why? Because to deny us, is to deny him in this way; He is in us, we are united with him (Romans 6). There is no separating us (Romans 8). The work of the Holy Spirit is to indwell the believer thus uniting us with God. Just as a man gives his seed away to a woman and they thus have children, so God has implanted his seed in us by the work of the Spirit. Now that's insane and radical. There is design in sex!

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

[1 John 3:9]

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

[1 Peter 1:23]

Compare these with this passage:

And Onen knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

[Genesis 38:9]

All these passages speak of the unity we have with God.

But the greatest the most radical passage is:

“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, He says, shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

[1 Corinthians 6:16-17]

Think through this passage. What is Paul's reason for not having intercourse with a prostitute? Isn't it that it will distort the picture of our oneness with Christ in Spirit? So why would God have sex be designed to be a picture of His work in us? Let me put it this way; I can't see God's oneness with me, so God gave me marriage and sex to help understand that oneness. Sex is a witness of God's work through the Son, in giving us His Spirit, to live in us, transforming us into the image of the Son! Radical and mind blowing!

God did not just make sex for the physical purpose of having offspring, but also could it be that there is a spiritual truth that God is wanting us to understand through the physical intimacy in marriage? I believe so! Just like everything God asks us to do physically, there are spiritual implications or truths that these actions should be pointing us to.

The Big Question!

What is your motivation in sex?

Think of these passages:

Not to us, but to your name be the glory

[Psalm 115:1]

Whether you eat or drink do to the glory of God

[1 Corinthians 10:31]

These two passages tell me something. They speak to me of my motivation for all things in life. Even the most mundane things in life like eating and drinking, I'm to do for the Glory of God! Well how about sex? How about that being an "unto the Lord" activity! I think yes, it is to be done to His glory!

For some reason we have separated the secular and the sacred when it comes to our intimate lives. There should be no separation in anything that we do. We are a "Holy" people (1 Peter 2:9) and this holiness should be brought into all areas of life. Sex is a big part of life and so it is reasonable that this area should be a sacred act as well.

Bringing Sex Up To God's Standards

Having sex be a sacred act immediately takes what was once seen as "secular" to now sacred, (something special), something "holy" for me and my beloved only. *"What God has brought together let not man separate."* Jesus said these words in speaking about the "one" flesh relationship between a husband and wife. A secular or worldly view of sex, taken from porn or health class lowered the purpose of sex as intended by the creator and allows for all sorts of damaging consequences that cause separation and not togetherness in marriage. How sad it is when couples allow secular standards or views of sex to come into their bedroom. Many watch porn together or get their ideas about sex from such worldly sources. But the world does not have the insight into what makes sex awesome, the Church does! This knowledge comes from the Bible. Amazing sex is not just the act of having sex, for anyone can have insanely pleasurable sex. But the idea God is conveying is that sex is amazing, because God is amazing. If you grow in your understanding of God, your view of sex will blossom as well, and so will the actual time in the marriage bed. For it is not just about getting off anymore, but a education of the richness of Jesus!

Love

Christian Love is to be the governing principle in the marriage bed. This love should guide the man and the women in engaging in intimate action. I get a definition of love from the love of Christ for us. He found his own joy of the Father in the joy of His beloved, The Church! I was His joy! *"For the joy that was set before him, He endured the cross."* I was His joy! *"We are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh."* What that means is that a good done to his beloved is a good done to Him. We are bone of his bone! Wow, that's a different kind of love then selfish love that says, let me have it my way. This kind of Love when in action is concerned about our loved one, our beloved, and that alone is our gain, our joy! This kind of Love is concerned for the well being of the other, so whatever it is that could cause a separation or a breach of trust, then is to be avoided for the sake of the joy of the beloved and my own joy which is rooted in the beloved's benefit. This love governs our sex life.

God's Design

God is intimate within Himself, and He desires us to know Him intimately. How can that happen as He is so far greater than us? The physical act of sex with a wife points me to and helps me understand this incredible intimacy. When I degrade that relationship by going into someone other than my wife, then it no longer is a shadow or picture of the work of Christ being intimate with his church alone. Jesus would never go into another! He died for us! He is One with his bride, the Church. How can an invisible God get me to understand the kind of intimacy that we have with His Son? It is in marriage and in the marriage bed! The literal physical act of sex shows me the incredible oneness that Christ has with me through His Spirit that is now in me (Romans 8:9-11)! This does not mean that Jesus has some sort of spiritual sex with me. Let us be clear; the act of sex points me to, helps me understand, a spiritual truth about Christ's closeness with His people.

The Mystery of the Godhead

Have you ever tried to articulate God before? It's quite hard. The Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Spirit... well, of course He's God too! How does God reveal himself to people of the earth? How would we know that it was him?

The passage we already established was [Deuteronomy 6:4], "*Behold, the Lord thy God is ONE.*" We discussed briefly how the word can be used as one, singular, or one of many, like in Adam and Eve becoming ONE. One of a group! In the New Covenant we saw that Jesus prayed in [John 17], "*make them One as we are ONE.*" Though the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, they share a oneness, and that oneness is God. God becoming flesh means that now, we can become one with God, as God the son, Jesus, has something we have, flesh, bones and blood! Jesus is a brother to us, as He has become like us, sharing or having in common what we have! But Jesus has a commonality with the Father that we don't have! Deity! They both along with the Spirit, make up the ONE God, One name, One God.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

[Matthew 28:19]

1. Jesus and man share oneness of a body of flesh and bones.
2. Jesus and the Father share a oneness as God.
3. The Spirit of God or Christ indwells us, transforming us into the image of the Son

How can I understand this oneness through sex? When I am with my wife, though I am me and she is she, we are ONE literally. Or flesh is actually connected! Kind of crazy when you think about this. Though we are one, we are each separate individuals with different roles, thoughts and actions, but during intimacy there is a really special oneness that takes place between the couple, like nothing else on earth.

God is like nothing on earth. Though he gives us these gifts of intimacy to know Him greater, nothing on earth can show us all of what the Godhead is like. That's what makes God great; He's unique!

Battling Lust!

Dealing with past thoughts and images.

Reaping and Sowing

If there is one question that I hear often in a group setting it's, "But I have all these thoughts and images that I can't get out of my mind!" Usually I can hear a bit of frustration and justification in the person's voice upon telling me about their situation.

For us who have viewed countless videos and images of pornography this is a huge problem that will come up as we have now come into the light and confessed our sin and are now in Accountability.

But first don't be surprised by this! And we cannot allow this kind of attitude to justify continual habitual sin! It is normal to go through what you're experiencing. Most of us do!

So why can't we get rid of the images now!!!

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."

[Galatians 6:7]

Simply put, we are reaping what we sowed. As the word tells us this is to be expected. *"Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared?"* It's like eating food that is contaminated, we eat and eat and then later we feel absolutely awful. Yet the brain is like a computer, the best of computers at that, and will hold onto things heard and seen for years upon years. There are some statistics that say teenagers have over 250 sexual images before their eyes in a day! That is a ton of downloaded information on our hard drives, that simply won't be easily discarded. Taking the computer analogy a bit further, if we put in the computer's TRASH all the images that we have stored on our hard drive, there still is a image left behind that is readable on the hard drive for the really tech nerd to read. Nothing is really deleted.

You can see how this applies to our own mind can't you? As we have amputated the sin in our lives we, no longer have the new info coming in. The old images are still available though. So now it's time to start the exciting process of re-writing!

Renewing of the Mind

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

[Romans 12:2]

The best way to deal with the repetitive thoughts is to renew your mind in Christ. Again, using the computer analogy, the best way to get rid of all the images on your computer is to rewrite (or reformat) your hard drive with other files, so the old ones are no longer available. This is what renewing our mind is all about. We need to re-think what pleasure is and associate Christ with lasting pleasure and not porn pleasure that will never satisfy, but leave us dry, empty and

dissatisfied. God can satisfy!

My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.

[Psalm 63]

You will never be able to overcome the images in your mind if you are not filling your mind with the joy and delight of God. When I think of God there is a smile that comes to my face, a joy! And why? Here are some of my favorite passages:

Delight yourself also in the Lord...

[Psalm 37:4]

Taste and see that He is good

[Psalm 34:8]

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever

[Psalm 73:26]

You open your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing

[Psalm 145:16]

When memorizing these scriptures and many more my heart is so stoked to think that this God loves me! He is delightful. He tastes good. God is what I need on my plate (He's my portion). He fills my heart with a love I cannot explain. Seek to renew your mind daily. Get in the Word, study it, meditate on it.

Continued Amputation

The grace of cutting off sin is not a one time shot in our fight against lust of the flesh and the eyes. To further remove the thoughts and images from our minds we need to not only be filling our mind with the choice steak, that is His Word, but also a continual fighting of the enemy.

Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are human eyes.

[Proverbs 27:20]

King David not only struck the Philistine Goliath in the head with a sling and a stone, but then we are told, "*Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it.*" [1 Samuel 17:51]

Do you get what David did? After killing him or knocking him down he was not satisfied, but ran towards his enemy and finished him off.

This helps me understand this battle. You and I will need to do more than cutting off our computers or Cable. There will be, and always will be, more to take out! I will need to finish the enemy off and not be satisfied with the one time punch. This is no easy task, as you are aware of.

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

[Hebrews 12:11]

The family I married into are from inner city Los Angeles. Watts and Compton to be exact. My wife's father was a boxer and my wife's mother's father was his trainer! One thing I have learned from hearing their boxing stories over the years is that you cannot just get in the ring and throw one blow and expect to get out alive! You need to; jab, move, jab, jab, move, move, throughout the entire fight. The rounds are long and we get tired, but as we become more "disciplined" in renewing our mind, there is the incredible outcome of winning this fight!

Don't Get Discouraged!

"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."

[Galatians 6:9]

If there is one way I have seen the enemy of our souls take a person out of the ring, it's by discouragement. It's that time in the battle where you are simply put; bummed out! You're tired of fighting, your weary, you think, "it is never going to change! These thoughts will be with me forever!"

But you're looking at things all wrong! But you're not far from being on the right track. You want to "do good!" You no longer want to stay in the muck of sexual immorality bondage. You're in accountability, and confession to the Lord is on your tongue! Oh, this is a great work God is doing and this fight should encourage you. You're in the ring!

Those that get in the boxing ring are those that are ready for the fight. A good trainer would never allow his boxer to get in the ring with an opponent that he was not able to stand his ground against. Now when we get in that ring, we look across it and see a huge foe. He is 200 lbs more than us and has 12% body fat on him with bulging muscles! But Christ in us is able to overcome this large enemy. Jesus is in a way moving us, punching for us and putting us out of harm's way through our Confession, Accountability, Amputation, Repentance & Drinking from Him. With Him training us, working in us, it coincides with the boxer who takes the trainer's knowledge of the game into the ring. So we do as well, we will be safe and victorious.

May the evil plans of my enemies be turned against them. Do as you promised and put an end to them.

[Psalm 54:5]

This world's system of lust is the enemy.

Discouragement doubts the good work that God began in me. I would never throw off my Christ! He saved me, He gave me eyes to see Him, to have fellowship with Him, to understand His Word, to love and adore His cross on my account! If you too can say this than why get discouraged when fighting the enemy and continuing in doing good? There is such positive, life changing things happening in your life! Be excited about that. It might take some time, but I know this...It might be the 12th round of the fight, but then you will see the enemy fall.

The days of discouragement are behind us thanks be to Jesus!

Keep battling! It's what we now do!

"Therefore we must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus!"

[2 Timothy 2:3]

Remember Grace!

When it comes to fighting the flesh, the World and the Devil, we need to remember Grace. A focused mind on grace will keep us pointed in the proper direction. If you get your eyes off the Grace of Christ then you and I are sure to fall into a pit once again. This happens so frequently in us that have struggled deeply with the lust of the mind. There is this little voice in our heads that tells us we must be lost to think like that! “Oh, if you were really saved then you would be over this by now!” What a lie! Setting our eyes fixed on the Grace of Jesus brings me always to a heart of gratitude, of thanksgiving for my salvation, my Christ who gave his life for me. Remembering grace helps us to see the preciousness of Jesus. We are justified by grace!

Do you remember the story told by Jesus of the Prodigal Son? Do you recall what the prodigal did when he came to himself realizing that the Father has such a better life for him? He started to recite what he would say to the Father, and so we tend to do the same when we find ourselves knee deep in lustful thoughts. *“Father I have sinned against you and before heaven, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”* We fail to remember the deep love that the Father has graced us with, so we tend to approach God like a schoolteacher when we just got caught doing something we shouldn't have instead of like a son or daughter of our Lord.

What was the Father's reaction to the son coming up the road? As you know, the Father was waiting for the son with eagerness. The Father couldn't wait for his lost son to return. Oh, the goodness of God! He longs for the times you and I simply come back to him. We are family! Remembering Grace is always remembering that our salvation was not earned, it is a work of the Spirit of God in us. And just as Grace saved us, we will be cleaned up from this filth of thinking by Grace too.

The more I have dwelt on the Grace of God, reading books about this amazing Grace, my heart is moved more and more away from the counterfeit “gifts” the world offers. Nothing satisfies anymore than this Grace. I believe we will spend all of eternity being amazed by this Grace given to us in Christ!

Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! He saves perverts! Thank you Jesus!

“It is God's grace that teaches us to abstain from worldly lust”

[Titus 2:11-12]

I Ain't No Bonobo

Exposing the illogicalness of today's sex education.

Do you know what the Bonobo monkey is known for?

It's crazy sex habits! Youtube it!

Have you ever thought that maybe those that teach you about sex think that you are no different than a Bonobo? That having sex is simply an instinctual desire – as food is to the stomach, sex is to the crotch!

Is there really a need for a god in today's enlightened world? Atheist Aldous Huxley said, "*We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.*" So in removing God, are all things permissible?

I grew up in Southern California where we were taught that was exactly the way it was. We came from monkeys, and like them, sex is what we do! And that's what we did!

I never thought it was wrong and certainly never thought there would be consequences to such an education.

We live in a day where sexual stimulation is everywhere. Better sex, bigger boobs, bigger junk in the trunk. We are fascinated with the pursuit of personal pleasure. Self-gratification is what my generation is all about. Sex is about my body, my desire, what I want to experience. No-one can tell me how to use my body, its mine...me, mine, I...

What happens when we live for selfish purposes? How many marriages fail today? How many relationships fail today?

It is true that the more sexual partners you have the greater the risk is of not only disease, but future relationship disease! What I mean is the more sexual encounters I had, the more I sought my own self-gratification in those encounters, which in turn lead to an inability to be in a long-term relationship. The reason?

Lust!

When viewers of porn are imitating it, Porn mogul, Al Goldstein said people are imitating "the worst possible kind of sex".

The paradigm that I am picturing is the one of lust as opposed to Love. As long as I sought self-gratification in my relationships failure was just ahead. Lust cannot last, because it is unable to satisfy the human heart. That's its nature.

I struggle with porn. I used to struggle a ton! The porn industry is interesting; it seeks to cash in on customer dissatisfaction! Yep, when we view porn, we go from one image to another, to another and so on. It sucks! You can never get satisfied. Lust is unable to satisfy. And those that walk down this road are not having sex with the people they are in the sack with; they're simply self-gratifying with your body as the tool instead of their own hand!

Those in the Porn industry understand this themselves. When reading *"The Hardest Man in Showbiz,"* by the porn star Ron Jeremy, you get the idea that he is sad because he has forfeited something that he longs for due to his self-lifestyle. That something is Love. He has wanted to be in a relationship with only one person throughout his life. But because lust becomes an uncontrollable behavior with no room for selfless acts, he has been bound to the thing which he knows causes him to not have what he so wants. That does not sound good.

I actually understand that. So many of us want to have a killer life with someone, but unfortunately we will never have that because of what we do in the here and now. The more sex you have, the more you will compare your future husband or wife with them. Sex is no longer special at all, but we have made it common. And when you get to meet the person you think you want to spend the rest of your life with, he will have had 15 partners already and you too! That sucks! You'll be so used to a life of self-gratification that understanding the best part of sex, which is being selfless and giving, will not be in the cards.

"The orgasm has become today's secular sacrament." - Dinesh D'Souza

You might think you're different than the billions of people that have lived before, that crappy for-self sex will not have its consequences in your life. But please don't believe the illusion of *"The Matrix"*. I hope to unplug you!

The Jewish Scriptures are filled with guys and girls that have tried and tried to be the most sexually selfish people ever. King Solomon, of all people, was a sex maniac and his life was jacked! King David as well, and his family went to pot! Abraham had sex with the maid, Judah slept with his deceased son's wife thinking she was a prostitute because he was horny. Lot drank too much and had sex with his daughters! Come to think of it, I think all porn is a parody to the Bible, in a way. As the nation of Israel goes astray from God, so we do to!

Through the paradigm of scripture I understand now that God is real. And He created me and made sex as a way to know Him, and His love for you and me. I love it that the Bible paints the picture that many of the so called "saints" who have trusted God failed miserably, constantly looking at sex through the wrong lens.

And that includes me too!

When I read the Bible I was 17. I started in Genesis, and being raised an agnostic I was blown away by the idea that God made this union called sex and it was already talked about in the second chapter of the Bible!!! The greatest impact on my intellect was the idea that maybe sex is to be special. Maybe I am not a Bonobo after all. Maybe one man and one woman for life was really the Better Pleasure. Maybe I had been wrong.

Today I have been married over 20 years! I have learned many killer sex lessons in my life. But the greatest is that in my marriage. Sexual arousal today is not from selfish lusting, but from Love. The arousal I'm talking about is that which comes from giving joy to my beloved. She is mine! I am hers! My body is hers, and her body is mine. Arousal is not from lusting her, but from giving of myself to her (Love). That is much different from the idea of, "How can I have better sex?"

Better sex happens when you exalt sex to what it was meant to be, something sacred, special and beautiful, where Love lives and not lust.

The old way of thinking about sex does not work. You are not a Bonobo and that is why it will not work with you either.

One day you and I will be old, and on that day your self-gratification, self-lusting, self-sexuality will not matter. We will only desire at that time to see Love. Love's roots can only go deep in the soil when you see it as special, sacred and beautiful. For love is not common... lust is.

You were created not to be common, but to be special. I learned that...finally.

Try reading the Bible and learn from its view on sex. It changed my life. And it would be awesome one day to see you in a killer marriage of 20 years, where it is special and not the 'norm!' Be uncommon. Pursue Love not lust.

Life In Grace

This writing is designed to help people understand the work and power of the grace of God in a person's life that is in bondage to sexual immorality (i.e. pornography or the like).

Why Write this about this? The reason I write this short chapter is very personal. As a minister, I misunderstood the work of Grace for many years in my own life by total ignorance of its daily power to move me away from lust. I was partially correct in thinking of Grace as what we call 'positional' grace or 'judicial grace,' which is what so many of us think of when we hear the word; Grace. But there was also this daily power of grace that was to be sought. I saw this scripturally worked out in the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:10) which moved him towards a better pleasure in Christ that I was strongly lacking. The following is a list of what this grace looked like upon my own rethinking of this gift, that begins at conversion, yet continues through to a holy life. I hope you too will have a mind change of sorts and find that greater enjoyment of the grace of God!

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[2 Peter 3:18]

Proper motivation

It all starts with this? If this is not right, then we will not go far in finding freedom! So many of us desire freedom because of our kids or a spouse, only to see failure over and over. May I suggest a better motivation for us: God's Glory! When reading the Bible you get the idea that God is most concerned about His Name. When God has indignation against the freed Hebrews from Egypt and tells Moses that it is time for their annihilation, Moses pleads with God so that His Name not be tarnished in the world. This is the best motivation, because there is nothing higher nor more worthy to be honored than God. Look through the following passages:

Psalm 115:1, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Peter 4:11 & Colossians 3:17

What do you see? Now pray for that kind of heart!

Drinking from Jesus

Porn will not satisfy us. Viewing one video will lead to another, then another. I had a student in Europe talk to me about how he would place his kids in one room with the TV on and he would go in another to self-gratify to porn. This happened all the time with him. There is a better way!

In the gospel of John we see a woman who has the same problem as the man mentioned above. One man after another was her issue. Jesus says to her, *"If you only knew who I was, you would ask and I would give you Living Water!"* Then Jesus goes on to tell her that when having this Living Water she would be overflowing with it! Sounds pretty good! We need simply to start drinking from this Jesus well instead of the wells that will not satisfy and have not yet! Ask the Lord to give you a heart for this Living Water.

Look up Jeremiah 2:13, Psalm 36:8 & John 4

Confession

Walk in the Light, as God is Light. This experience of coming out of darkness is a wonderful burden lifting action of Grace! Fungus thrives in the darkness and so does sin, especially the sin of viewing pornography. Let's face it, adult stores have no windows. You must understand that pornography is a 97 billion dollar industry worldwide! Many struggle with this sin, you are not alone. A move to confess your sin to a friend, spouse or counselor/pastor will be a great gain for you. Ask God to give you a heart to confess to His Glory. When our heart is for God's glory then we won't mind what our confession does to how others view us, but our concern will be correct now because it will be on God. Those that confess often are happiest. They desire more of God and are tired of putting on a pretense before people. Let's face it, it's kind of tiring being fake before people when we really have some things we need to get off our chest. Ask the Lord to give you this amazing and powerful work of His grace!

Look up Joshua 7:19, Proverbs 28:13, 1st John 1:9 & James 5:16

Amputation

Cut it off! When a part of your body is so bad off that the doctors say they need to amputate, then you know that it is life or death! It's that serious. This is how it is with the grace of amputation. This is God's power in our life to look at a area of sin and see its destructive nature to us and others and throw it out! It looks like many things for the person amputating sexual immorality. It can be a giving up of credit cards, or canceling cable or satellite TV. For others, it's throwing out the computer or putting an internet filtration program like "*Covenant Eyes*" on it so you can't get into areas of the World Wide Web. It can even look like not traveling in a certain direction or seeing a particular person anymore. But whatever this is in your life, amputation is our betterment to the Glory of God.

Bottom line:

Amputation shows that God is better to have than the idol that we are amputating! It is a choosing one over the other, the infinite over the finite, the eternal over the corrupt. This is a move towards life.

See Mark 9:43, Hebrews 12:1 & Ezekiel 20:7

Accountability

The power of Grace is seen in the body of Christ, the Church. It is there that we have brothers and sisters who love Christ and desire to help us grow in Him. God has built up the church in such a way as to give us strength in our fight against sinful desires. Accountability it is! Those that are seeking God's grace in this area will not shy away from finding leaders who understand the power of sin and also the more powerful ability of God to defeat it. Battling this sin is real and the biggest battle you might ever face in your life! God has supplied us with many on our team to help bring the enemy down! The more people that know about what you are struggling with, the more they will be able to properly keep you accountable. This helps us not to continue in hypocrisy, but instead continuing in the light or honesty. Accountability is a move towards our betterment to the Glory of God. It might show our weakness, but we are happy that it also reveals our need for His strength!

See Ecclesiastes 4:9, John 13:34, Ephesians 4:11-13, Galatians 2:11 & Galatians 6:1-2

Repentance

We need a change, and to go in a different direction. This is what the word repentance is all about! How do we know that we are truly repentant of a behavior? Many spouses wonder if their marriage partner is repentant of his/her sin of sexual immorality, and for good reason! If you see a seeking of the graces mentioned in this pamphlet then you are seeing godly repentance. Like all of God's graces, they are gifts! Repentance is no different, it is to be sought out by those that find themselves unable to muster up the right kind of heart needed for such an endeavor. King David knew this and cried out for God to change his heart. And as with all the graces of God too, repentance is a continued work in our lives until we go be with the Lord. A person who has a repentant heart will do whatever radical steps it takes to show others that there is a move towards God, though some of them (like the ones I've mentioned) might seem over the top! There is a seriousness with repentance. No longer can we joke about things that have caused our destruction. Now we are sorrowful about them. And above all, our sorrow is because we have distorted God to our loved ones. These emotions are accompanied when the grace of repentance is in someone's life.

Check out this Psalm:

*Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.*

[Psalm 51:1-4]

Conclusion

God's work in us is for a lifetime! There will never be a time where we will not sin, but there can be a time where we are no longer in continual bondage in a particular sin, like participating in constant porn viewing or the like. I have seen the work of Christ in my own life, moving through me in these graces for my betterment and His glory! We can seek this work of the Spirit daily in our lives through a honest assessment of our sins and then asking Him for the grace to move us in these Christ glorifying ways. From the beginning of salvation to the end, it is a work of Him. I pray you seek Him for it. These are the ways out of sexual sin.

He opens His arms and satisfies!

[Psalm 145:16]

Answering Homosexuality & Alternative Sex

In today's society the topic of homosexuality comes up often and has a lot of controversy both inside and outside of the Church. Most of the controversy inside the church however has to do with people not really understanding what the Bible actually says about homosexuality and why. So we hope that going through this chapter will help you understand what the Bible teaches.

The first thing we would like to say before we get into this, is that the Bible is really clear that all have sinned and fallen short of God's call for right sexuality. We are all in desperate need of the grace of God, whether we are heterosexual or homosexual. That being said though, the reason why there is so much confusion in our modern society has nothing to do with the Bible being silent on this issue or ambiguous. In fact, throughout Church history (and even Jewish history) there was a very solid consensus on this issue with almost no argument. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, the only positive relationships described are heterosexual, the Bible always assumes male and female relationships in all of its commands of marriage, (Examples Ephesians 5:22-32, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and Colossians 3:18-19). Beyond that there are explicit statements made about this in Leviticus 18:22, and in all the sexual sins mentioned in Leviticus 18, God makes it clear in verse 24 that these are not just moral standards for the Israelites only, like the kosher laws, but it is for all mankind; (Paul also has specific mentions in Romans 1:24-27 and in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

So if the Bible really is clear, why is there so much confusion today in the Church? The confusion today actually has nothing to do with new Biblical understanding, but it has everything to do with people, rightfully, overturning false arguments of why we shouldn't practice this particular lifestyle.

The first argument is that God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. So that means that a homosexual couple could never fulfill God's design for marriage in procreation, so they shouldn't be married. With modern innovations, this argument is no longer seemingly valid. Through surrogacy, artificial insemination, and adoption, a homosexual couple can have children and create a loving environment for them.

The second one that I have heard is that homosexuality is a choice that people make, most often after something sexually traumatic has happened to them at a young age. This is a false statement, while there are a number of homosexuals who have been abused, there are also many who weren't, and have had same sex attraction their entire lives; plus there are also quite a few heterosexual people who were sexually abused as well.

The next one is a bit more emotional. Essentially what people say is that a homosexual couple can never have a long term, stable, and caring relationship. This again is simply untrue. A homosexual couple can be just as caring and affectionate as a heterosexual couple, by worldly standards. And because of this fact, I have heard, very understandable and heart wrenching pleas from men and women who only have same sex attractions and have no desire for the opposite sex, so by accepting the Biblical teaching, they would deny themselves the possibility of ever having a loving romantic relationship.

So if all of this is true, why would God not allow for homosexual couples in His Word? Is this really an outdated commandment and we should just get with the times? In order to understand this, we have to understand the reason why God created us in the first place. It says in the Bible that we were made in the image and likeness of God. This certainly doesn't

mean that we are little gods or that God necessarily looks like us. The easiest way to understand this is to think of images that we make in our own “image and likeness”, things like paintings or statues. Now, if I make a statue in my image and likeness, that doesn’t make that statue human, even though I am a human, it just means that the purpose of that statute is to reflect my attributes and bring “glory,” to me. Now think about it, God made us in His image and likeness, meaning that our ultimate purpose in life is to reflect His attributes and bring Him glory. To deny that purpose however, would be to bring pain and misery upon ourselves because we would be denying our very reason for existence. You see, that is why the Biblical authors are always calling us to bring glory to God in all that we do.

“whether we eat or drink, do all to the glory of God,”

[1 Corinthians 10:31]

It isn’t because God is insecure and needs us to glorify Him, it is because when we are glorifying God we are entering into the fullness of joy that is in fulfilling our ultimate purpose and reason for existence. That means that every commandment that God has given us, isn’t to be mean or withholding, but it is an expression of His love for us, trying to bring us into the fullness of joy with Him.

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

[John 15:10]

And so, when God created marriage and sex, His intent was to create a union that would reflect Him and bring us intense joy in glorifying Him. And what kind of union is God trying to reflect in marriage? A unity within a diversity. Think about it, God is one being, yet He exists in three separate and distinct persons, the Father, is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, and the Father and the Son are not the Holy Spirit. All three are distinct, diverse, and unique, yet they are one. In marriage, God has joined two different beings, a woman and a man, and made them one. It would have certainly been easy for God to just make another man in the garden and vice versa, but instead, in a move to bring glory to Himself, and joy to His people, He created Eve out of Adam. Distinct, diverse, and unique, yet ultimately one with her husband in more ways than one. And don’t take my word for it, when the apostle Paul was addressing the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11, he is specifically addressing them on the topic of gender confusion, the men were dressing as women and the women as men. And here is the reasoning for why they shouldn’t do this;

“Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

[1 Corinthians 11:3]

You see, before Paul moves into the specifics of their attire, he gives his reasoning first, the Corinthians were not glorifying the nature of God in how their specific gender roles reflect and glorify the submission of the Son to the Father, yet both are God! If we are not interested in bringing Glory to God, then it would follow that we could do whatever we want with our bodies. But the scriptures tell us plainly;

“You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

[1 Corinthians 6:20]

So what about those who don't have heterosexual attraction, does this mean that they will have to subject themselves to a lifetime of loneliness? No, it does not. As great as marriage is, it is merely a picture of the greater and more beautiful relationships that we have with Christ. Remember, that our greatest joy comes through bringing glory to God.

*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.*

[Psalm 115:1]

Some of us will glorify God in marriage while others, both heterosexual and homosexual alike, will be called to glorify God in your singleness. Paul is a great example of this, and gives a great encouragement in 1 Corinthians 7:7-9 about the beauty of singleness for Christ. For some, singleness is just a season that will eventually end, and for those with same sex attraction this could mean that God will give you a new attraction, and there are many examples of this. But for some, this won't happen, and you will continue to bring glory to your creator and show His value in denying yourself in singleness.

One Purpose

By Pastor Scott Richards

“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

[Mark 10:9]

The most important Scriptural aspect of the one flesh marital relationship is not physical or psychological but spiritual. It is a joining that is accomplished by God as a way to reveal His glory and character to man. In Ephesians 5, Paul described the sacrificial love and loving submission of a man and wife as having incredibly profound spiritual implications.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”
[Ephesians 5:31-32]

One of the most important truths we must grasp about our sexuality, as expressed in marriage, is that its primary purpose isn't to provide intimacy or personal fulfillment, but to bring glory to God.

Our Problem With Sexuality

Although we see God designing and dedicating marriage in Genesis chapter two, one of the first tangible effects of the fall in Genesis three is the distortion of this relationship. Openness had been replaced by fear. A supportive relationship had been supplanted by finger pointing and blaming. And most devastatingly, the focus on the glory of God had been replaced by rebellion. This de-evolution of man is powerfully expressed in the first chapter of the book of Romans.

“Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image...Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting..”

[Romans 1:21-28]

Man’s rebellion against God’s one-man-one-woman-committed-for-life definition of marriage as the safe place for the practice of our sexuality is manifested in three main ways:

- Adultery – a sexually intimate relationship outside of marriage
- Fornication – a sexually intimate relationship prior to marriage
- Homosexual Practice – a sexually intimate relationship with a person of the same sex incompatible with God’s one man/one woman definition of marriage

Each of these actions has one thing in common – all are a rejection and reinvention of God’s standard for the practice of our sexuality. The glory of God is no longer seen in relationship. As such, acting out on heterosexual lust is just as destructive as acting out of homosexual lust. The Bible tells us that such rebellion against God’s design for marriage will have far reaching consequences.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”

(I Thessalonians 4:3-8)

Appendix A

But what about?

“Whoever abides in Him does not sin”

[1 John 3:6]

When we take a look at the complete letter of 1 John we see that John is writing concerning those who deny Jesus as the Christ and has come in the flesh. (1 John 2:22, 4:2)

This is the spirit of Antichrist (1 John 4:3), and deception on the part of those who deny the incarnation. (1 John 2:26)

Many Gnostics believed that living any way in the body was okay.

There were contending views of Jesus in John’s day, with one of them being Gnosticism. Ethical behavior among the Gnostics were on two ends of the spectrum. Some tried to separate themselves from all earthly evil in order to avoid contamination, other Gnostics were libertarians. The spiritual knowledge meant having the freedom to participate in all sorts of indulgences. Since they had received divine knowledge and were enlightened, it didn’t matter how they lived in the body.

You can see John refuting this idea of evil living that was going on in his day.

“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous...whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”

[1 John 3:7&10]

Have you practiced at anything before? Being a guitar player, I can relate to the idea of practicing scales and arpeggios. You work at it over and over until you perfect it, or at least get better! The Bible tells us to keep working at being holy too!

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

[2 Corinthians 7:1]

This is the point of John! If you deny the Son, then you deny the Father (1 John 2:23), and therefore you are in sin. If you live a life of practicing sin, then you show you are not a believer in the Son and His work (1 John 8).

A person who believes in the Son, has been given a new nature. One that desires to please the Father and work on failures and sin. This makes sense with the entire counsel of God. Each of the New Testament books are predominantly written to believers who are struggling in one area of life or the other. The writers continually point them back to the work of Christ and our response to it.

So when John says:

“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God,”

[1 John 3:9]

It is to be contrasted with the kind of sin that leads to destruction. In John that sin is the denying of the Son.

Whoever has been born of God does not (deny the son through living an unholy lifestyle). The amplified Bible puts this verse in this way:

No one who is born of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, because God's seed [His principle of life, the essence of His righteous character] remains [permanently] in him [who is born again—who is reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose]; and he [who is born again] cannot habitually [live a life characterized by] sin, because he is born of God and longs to please Him.

Bottom line. Those who are born again are always working to move away from areas of sin. We struggle in the sense that we continually fight the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. We can't just sit in it and be fine! Are you convicted by your sin? Do you get bummed when you stumble? If you are and do, then it is a great sign that you are born again. The new nature cannot continue to live with the old, and therein lies the battle.

In light of this truth, we can now see very clearly that John is not saying that believers do not ever sin. For three times in the book of 1 John we see John mentioning believers that sin.

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." [1 John 2:1]

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9]

"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death." [1 John 5:16]

Rest assured; God is in us as we battle desires that go astray!