

The Battle for Moral Purity



For Men and Women

Resources
Bible Studies
Bibliography

Websites

R Alcorn http://www.epm.org/resources_sexual_purity.html

S Arterburn <http://www.everymansbattle.com/>

Ron Berrus <http://www.ronberrus.abwe.org>

J Harris <http://www.joshharris.com/whatsnew/notevenahint.htm>

J Piper http://www.therebelution.com/resources/sexual_purity_just.htm

Television Parents Television Council: www.parentstv.org

Movies www.screenit.com www.pluggedinonline.com

www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies

Internet Filters

www.bsafehome.com www.internetsafety.com/safe-eyes/

<http://www.afo.net/> www.covenanteyes.com/

Protect Your Kids Online www.securitysoft.com/chatroom_dangers.html

For Women

Pure Intimacy: www.pureintimacy.org

Pure Freedom: www.purefreedom.org

Modesty Tests www.purefreedom.org/blog/archives/000015.html

For Men with Pornography Addiction or Temptation

Pure Life Ministries: www.purelifeministries.org

Proven Men ministries: www.1wayout.org or www.ProvenMen.org

Setting Captives Free: www.settingcaptivesfree.org

Be Broken Ministries: www.bebroken.com

Stone Gate Resources: www.stonegateresources.org

Faithful and True Ministries: www.faithfulandtrueministries.com

BraveHearts: www.bravehearts.net

For Wives Whose Husband's Use Pornography

Esther Ministries: www.estherministries.org

New Life Partners: www.newlifepartners.org

Fires of Darkness: www.firesofdarkness.com

Homosexuality

www.exodus-international.org www.desertstream.org

www.lifeguardministries.org www.livehope.org

www.loveinaction.org www.wheregraceabounds.org

www.settingcaptivesfree.org www.sbministries.org

ABWE missionaries involved in habitual use of pornography, or committing acts of adultery, fornication or homosexuality will be dismissed. We will work with missionaries and sending pastors to seek help for them and their families affected by such failures. We will not abandon those who fall, but we cannot tolerate moral failure within the mission family.

Part 5 RESOURCES

Bibliography

Pursuing God, Purity, and Overcoming Addictions

1. **Not Even a Hint** ó J Harris
2. **Every Man's Battle** ó S Arterburn
3. **The Heart of the Problem** - Henry Brandt
4. **Instruments in the Hands of the Redeemer** - Paul Tripp
5. **Pursuit of Holiness** ó Jerry Bridges
6. **Pursuit of Godliness** ó Jerry Bridges
7. **Trusting God** ó Jerry Bridges
8. **Discipline of Grace; Transforming Grace** - Jerry Bridges
9. **Respectable Sins** – Jerry Bridges
10. **Humility** ó C.J. Mahaney
11. **The Enemy Within: Straight Talk About the Power and Defeat of Sin** by Kris Lundgaard
12. **How People Change** - Tim Lane and Paul Tripp
13. **When People are Big and God is Small** - Ed Welch
14. **The Peacemaker**, Ken Sande
15. **Keeping in Step with the Spirit** by J.I.Packer
16. **The Christian Life** by Sinclair Ferguson
17. **Shepherding your Child's Heart** by Tedd Tripp;
18. **Age of Opportunity** by Paul Tripp (Heart-oriented child rearing.)
19. **War of Words** by Paul Tripp
20. **Love to Eat, Hate to Eat**, Elyse Fitzpatrick (Eating disorders)
21. **Changing Hearts, Changing Lives** CD or video series
22. **Step by Step** by Jim Petty (Discovering God's will)
23. **Love Walked Among Us**, Paul Miller (Loving others)
24. **When God Weeps**, Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes (Excellent book on suffering and hard questions)
25. **Relationships: A Mess Worth Making**, Tim Lane and Paul Tripp
26. **Depression: A Stubborn Darkness**, Edward Welch
27. **Sacred Marriage**, Gary Thomas (The byline reads, "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy. ")
28. **When Life and Beliefs Collide** - Carolyn Custis James
29. **Women helping Women: A Biblical Guide to Major Issues Women Face** by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Carol Cornish
30. **Biblical Womanhood in the Home** by Nancy Leigh DeMoss
31. **Lord, Heal My Hurts** by Kay Arthur Multnomah Books
32. **Love and Respect** by Emerson Eggerichs
33. **First Steps in the Spiritual Disciplines** by Ron Berrus
34. **Experiencing God** by Henry T. Blackaby, Claude V. King
35. **Navigators 2:7 Series** by NavPress

Part 1 MEN AND MORAL PURITY

Biblical Principles for Overcoming Lust by Ron Berrus

Recognize God's Design Genesis 2

God is One who designed sex. He designed it in human beings not only as a means of procreation but also as a demonstration of the deep oneness, trust and love He intends between husband and wife.

Recognize God's Desire Deuteronomy 6:24

God desires that our sexual desires be fully satisfied within the safety, beauty and purity of monogamous marriage. God's commands are like guardrails on steep mountain cliff sides. They are not intended to prevent thrilling experiences. (Careening off a thousand foot cliff would certainly be thrilling!) His commands are intended to prevent lethal lapses of moral judgment. God's design is that every drive and desire of man be met within the boundaries of His loving directives; whether those drives be for food, drink, sleep, significance or sex.

Recognize Satan's Deception John 10:10; Proverbs 7:21-27

Satan's purpose is to get a man to be satisfied with the cheap and hollow counterfeit of sexual experience without the full inner commitment and self sacrifice that marriage demands. Satan deceives us into thinking of sex as an *act for my pleasure* rather than a *demonstration of my loving concern and desire for my wife*. Every temptation to sexual expression outside of marriage is a call to settle for far less than God intended. It is empty, self centered, cheap and destructive.

Train Yourself to Respond Rightly to Temptation

Avoid the Second Look Job 31:1 Prov. 4:20-27

While we cannot prevent seeing every immodestly dressed woman, indecent magazine cover, or seductive billboard, we can and must take responsibility for our immediate responses. The first look is temptation when it is an unlooked for surprise; but the second look is always sin. Jesus warned us in Matthew 5:28 that looking on a woman with lustful thoughts is adultery in the heart. The sin of the second look is allowing your mind to go where your body must not! Guard your heart! Emotional adultery precedes the physical act.

Turn Every Temptation into an Immediate Intercession

We can train ourselves to look away in prayer. The moment ungodliness enters the eye gate or the mind gate, carry it into the presence of God saying "Lord, cleanse my mind and make me pure. I want to be holy in your sight. Jesus, you died to make me pure. Make me a clean vessel today." This is merely a sample prayer. There is no magic in the words; it must be

the expression of the heart. I have discovered that turning every temptation into immediate intercession, taking every temptation into God's throne room, reduces the frequency and intensity of sexual temptation.

Quote Scripture

Daily scripture memory is a powerful spiritual discipline. It focuses the mind on truth and fosters an awareness of God's presence. As a new believer, I discovered that quoting scripture aloud in the midst of a battle with temptation enabled me to conquer it. Such scriptures as 1 Cor 10:13, 1 Peter 1:16, and 2 Cor 6:19-20 were powerful weapons in overcoming habitual sin, and are as powerful today as then.

Get and Stay Accountable

When sin becomes habitual, deception becomes a lifestyle. If you struggle with pornography, masturbation or other habitual sins, you learn the destructive skill of compartmentalizing and self-deception. Habitual sin cannot be overcome without exposure. It is shame that causes us to hide the truth of our sin. Hiding the sin only allows its enslaving power to continue to control. (John 8:34; Eph 5:11-15) When sin is confessed to others as well as God, their prayers are joined with ours and spiritual advice and other practical help can be given. (James 5:16-20) Accountability is only as effective as the willingness, honesty and commitment of the participants. Accountability is like the lock on your door; it keeps honest people honest, but it doesn't prevent a determined thief!

Remove Opportunity

Romans 13:14 exhorts us to "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its desires." That is, remove all opportunities for temptation and sin to occur wherever possible. Consistently updated security software on your computer is worth the money. I have installed every level of protection I am aware of on my computers and have never had an obscene image appear. I delete any and all emails I am not sure of without opening them. Do not watch TV if you're alone. (We actually got rid of the TV more than 20 years ago.) Be relentless in removing all forms of ungodliness whenever and wherever you can, especially in your own home.

See Temptation as a War, Not a Battle

Sexual temptations rise and fall depending on many factors. Such things as age, stage of life, marital satisfaction, stress, discouragement, unresolved conflict and anger, exercise, and opportunity all have an effect on the level of temptation we experience. Satan uses multiple factors to attack us on multiple fronts. One isolated temptation is rare indeed. We usually are confronted with multiple temptations at the same time. Abiding in Christ and responding to all temptations in humility before Christ and obedience to the Word of God is a constant necessity.

Related Scriptures

Proverbs 5-7 Warnings on process and results of sexual sin

5:14 External worship activities do not prevent internal lust

5:9-13 Regret and remorse will not reverse consequences

5:15-20 The pure joy of marital fidelity

5:21-23 You cannot hide from God.

6:20-35 Passionate pursuit of God's word will preserve you from sin

7:1-27 What you don't know can kill you!

James 1:13-16 Sin begins with desire and results in death every time

James 1:17-25 Don't deceive yourself thinking that knowing is enough

1 Cor 7:2-9; Hebrews 13:4 God invented the sexual union.

Sex is good, holy, expected and commanded within marriage.

Romans 1:24-25 Promiscuity and Homosexuality. Sexual sin leads to a downward spiral into more and more debased and vulgar sexual expressions. Sex outside of marriage never satisfies and only requires greater and more perverse passions to excite the corrupted mind and heart.

1 Cor 7:1; 1 Peter 2:11 We are warned that sin begins in the mind (spirit).

To allow sinful thoughts to go unchecked will lead to physical action.

Matt 5:27-29; Proverbs 6:25 Though hyperbole, the seriousness of sin and its consequences are not exaggerated. Sin demands drastic prevention.

1 Cor 6:18 Run from immorality. David took the second look. It led to adultery, murder, family conflict and endless heartache.

Phil 4:8; Job 31:1 Pure thought-life is foundational to pure character.

Job made a covenant with his eyes to not gaze at young women. He understood the sin of the second look. So should we.

Heb 12:14-16; Eph 4:25-5:6 Anger and moral failure are connected. When relationships are not right at home, it leads to greater temptations to sexual sin. Bitterness, anger, and critical, judgmental thoughts are the roots of much sexual temptation and sin. You can't be right with God and wrong with spouse, family members or team mates. And when you're not right with God, you're open game for the temptations of the flesh.

Eph 5:3-7 Immoral language, immodest humor and sexual sins are connected. What is in the heart comes out of the mouth.

Gal 5:19-20; Col. 3:5 Every man is tempted. We must recognize all the various lusts of the old nature and guard against them all.

Study #6 Joseph: Overcoming Sexual Temptation.

Genesis 39:1-23 Describe the circumstances of his temptation.

What was Joseph's age range?

How is Joseph described? 39:4-6

Was the temptation his fault?

Was it serious and severe or only a minor and passing temptation?

Was his initial response to the woman proper or improper?

What things did Joseph do to avoid future temptation?

How could his circumstances have contributed to temptation?

What rationalizations could he have given if he was looking for excuses?

How could his past have contributed to his temptations?

What truths and perspectives guarded him from falling into sexual sin?

He ruled himself by righteous standards 39:8-10

He realized his blessings - set in authority over everything. He didn't

allow self-pity to blind him to his blessings! He was faithful. Matt 25:23

He responded to trusted relationships - being trusted is an awesome privilege.

He wasn't about to betray the trust of his master or His God.

Who would you betray if you fell into sexual sin?

He recognized Divine accountability - God was there! God cared! God saw!

God knew! Ecc. 12:13-14; Romans 2:1-12 Sin is against God and always serious!

If God wasn't enough to keep him from sin, nothing else could!

He refused opportunity - even being around her. He was not careless or casual.

He wasn't looking forward to their next meeting or conversation. 39:11-12

He avoided the time and the places when it was most likely to happen.

He ran when he couldn't avoid - He didn't stay, sympathize, or try to reason with her.

He already tried that and it didn't work. He knew the time to shut up and run!

IN THE PIT, PRISON OR PALACE, Joseph never lost sight of God. Joseph lost his position but not his perspective; his freedom but not his faithfulness; his comfort but not his character.

How did Joseph's long term thinking affect his immediate decisions regarding sex, family, forgiveness, power, wealth, and suffering?

Joseph was God-Grounded He was firmly rooted in the knowledge of God
God's holiness ó all sin is against God and is serious: Joseph was pure
God's sovereignty ó God was in charge: Joseph was humble
God's goodness ó God has a good purpose at work: Joseph was optimistic
God's purpose ó God's plan is mysterious but certain: Joseph was confident
God's presence ó no matter where, God was with Joseph: Joseph was content

*Contrast Joseph's 20 God statements with the lies of Satan and the world.
Come up with lies or rationalization that would be the opposite of each of
the God statements of Joseph.*

The Exorbitant Price of Sexual Sin by Randy Alcorn

In 1850 Nathaniel Hawthorne published *The Scarlet Letter*, a powerful novel centered around the adulterous relationship of Hester Prynne and the highly respected minister, Reverend Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale. The fallen pastor, remorseful but not ready to face the consequences, asks the question, "What can a ruined soul, like mine, effect towards the redemption of other souls?-or a polluted soul, towards their purification?" He describes the misery of standing in his pulpit and seeing the admiration of his people, and having to "then look inward, and discern the black reality of what they idolize." Finally he says, "I have laughed, in bitterness and agony of heart, at the contrast between what I seem and what I am! And Satan laughs at it!" Ruined, polluted, black reality, bitterness, agony. And perhaps, worst of all, Satan's laugh. These are just some of the consequences of sexual immorality in the life of one known as a follower of God.

I met with a man who had been a leader in a Christian organization until he committed immorality. I asked him, "What could have been done to prevent this?" He paused only for a moment, then said with haunting pain and precision, "If only I had really known, really thought through and weighed what it would cost me and my family and my Lord, I honestly believe I would never have done it."

Some years ago my friend Alan Hlavka and I both developed lists of all the specific consequences we could think of that would result from our immorality as pastors. The lists were devastating, and to us they spoke more powerfully than any sermon or article on the subject.

Periodically, especially when traveling or when in a time of temptation or weakness, we read through this list. In a personal and tangible way it brings home God's inviolate law of choice and consequence. It cuts through the fog of rationalization and fills our hearts with the healthy, motivating fear of God. We find that when we begin to think unclearly, reviewing this list yanks us back to the reality of the law of the harvest and the need both to fear God and the consequences of sin.

An edited version of our combined lists follows. I've included the actual names of my wife and daughters to emphasize the personal nature of this exercise. Where it involves my own lists of specific people's names, I've simply stated "list names" so the reader can insert the appropriate ones in his own life. Some of these consequences would be unique to me, just as some of yours would be unique to you. I recommend that you use this as the basis for your own list, then include those other consequences that would be uniquely yours. The idea, of course, is not to focus on sin, but on the consequences of sin, thereby encouraging us to refocus on the Lord and take steps of wisdom and purity that can keep us from falling.

(While God can forgive and bring beauty out of ashes, that's a message to those who have already sinned...not to those who are contemplating sin! On the "front side" of sin we must not give assurances of forgiveness and restoration. We must put the focus where Scripture does-on the love of God and the fear of God, both of which should act in concert to motivate us to holy obedience.)

Personalized List of Anticipated Consequences of Immorality

ÉGrieving my Lord; displeasing the One whose opinion most matters.

ÉDragging into the mud Christ's sacred reputation.

ÉLoss of reward and commendation from God.

ÉHaving to one day look Jesus in the face at the judgment seat and give an account of why I did it.

ÉForcing God to discipline me in various ways.

ÉFollowing in the footsteps of men I know of whose immorality forfeited their ministry and caused me to shudder.

List of these names

ÉSuffering of innocent people around me who would get hit by my shrapnel (a la Achan).

ÉUntold hurt to Nanci, my best friend and loyal wife.

ÉLoss of Nanci's respect and trust.

ÉHurt to and loss of credibility with my beloved daughters, Karina and Angela. ("Why listen to a man who betrayed Mom and us?")

ÉIf my blindness should continue or my family be unable to forgive, I could lose my wife and my children forever.

ÉShame to my family. ("Why isn't Daddy a pastor anymore?"; the cruel comments of others who would invariably find out.)

ÉShame to my church family.

ÉShame and hurt to my fellow pastors and elders. List of names:

ÉShame and hurt to my friends, and especially those I've led to Christ and disciplined. List of names:

ÉGuilt awfully hard to shake-even though God would forgive me, would I forgive myself?

ÉPlaguing memories and flashbacks that could taint future intimacy with my wife.

ÉDisqualifying myself after having preached to others.

ÉSurrender of the things I am called to and love to do-teach and preach and write and minister to others. Forfeiting forever certain opportunities to serve God. Years of training and experience in ministry wasted for a long period of time, maybe permanently.

ÉBeing haunted by my sin as I look in the eyes of others, and having it all dredged up again wherever I go and whatever I do.

ÉUndermining the hard work and prayers of others by saying to our community "this is a hypocrite-who can take seriously anything he and his church have said and done?"

ÉLaughter, rejoicing and blasphemous smugness by those who

Study #5 Proverbs 7 Voices, Choices, Consequences

This chapter is unique in that it gives a real-life narrative of a man's fall into sexual sin.

Outline these verses using a descriptive sentence for each section

Compare what is recorded in this chapter to what we learned in Proverbs chapters 5 and 6. How are they illustrated in chapter 7?

What is the point of verse 9? How does this apply to us today?

What is the point of verses 19 and 20? How does this apply?

What is the point of verse 26? How does this apply?

Compare this to James 1:12-16. Can you use James's description of the progress and consequence of sin to outline the narrative of Proverbs 7?

How does James 1:17-27 relate to overcoming sexual temptation?

Proverbs 7:21-27 is ominous. Paraphrase it. Both James 1 and Proverbs 7 are written in absolute terms. Why is it important that we consider the absolute nature of the consequences of sexual sin?

When we are tempted, we focus on the short term consequence of immediate pleasure. Why does the Devil seek to get us to focus only on the present? (See Matthew 4:1-11 Immediate versus long-term focus
What are the long term consequences of obeying God?

Write out a one sentence warning that summarizes the chapter.

Discuss how this warning is relevant for each of you right now.

Select one or more verses to memorize as a group, and work on it for five minutes together.

Pray for each other based on what you've learned from this chapter.

Study #4 Proverbs 6:16-35 Two voices, Two choices

Outline these verses using a descriptive sentence for each section

Select key descriptive words or phrases in each section and discuss the meaning and emphasis of each and why they are important to the point that is being made.

List the various contrasts in the chapter and the lesson that is being driven home by those contrasts.

Write out a one sentence warning that summarizes the chapter.

How are these verses similar and/or different from chapter 5?

Select one or more verses to memorize as a group, and work on it for five minutes together.

Pray for each other based on what you've learned from this chapter.

disrespect God and the church (2 Samuel 12:14).

↳ Bringing great pleasure to Satan, the Enemy of God.

↳ Heaping judgment and endless problems on the person I would have committed adultery with.

↳ Possible diseases: gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, and AIDS (pain, constant reminder to me and my wife, possible infection of Nanci, or in the case of AIDS, even causing her death, as well as mine.)

↳ Possible pregnancy, with its personal and financial implications, including a lifelong reminder of sin to me and my family.

↳ Loss of self-respect, discrediting my own name, and invoking shame and lifelong embarrassment upon myself.

These are only some of the consequences. If only we would rehearse in advance the ugly and overwhelming consequences of immorality, we would be far more prone to avoid it. May we live each day in the love and fear of God.

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Strategies to Keep From Falling by Randy Alcorn Practical steps to maintain your purity and your ministry

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LEADERSHIP Journal Summer 1996

"Something terrible has happened." The tense voice was my friend's, calling from across the country. "Yesterday our pastor left his wife and ran off with another woman."

I was sad, but not shocked or even surprised. Fifteen years ago I would have been shocked. Ten years ago I would have been surprised. But I've heard the same story too many times now ever to be surprised again.

I recently spoke on sexual purity at a Bible college. During that week, many students came for counseling, including three I'll call Rachel, Barb, and Pam. Rachel got right to the point: "My parents sent me to one of our pastors for counseling, and I ended up sleeping with him."

Later the same day, Barb, a church leader's daughter, told me through tears, "My dad has had sex with me for years, and now he's starting on my sisters." The next evening I met with Pam. Her story? "I came to Bible college to get away from an affair with my pastor."

For every well-known Christian television personality or author whose impropriety is widely publicized, there are any number of lesser-known pastors, Bible teachers, and para-church workers who quietly resign or are fired for sexual immorality. Most of us can name several. The myth that ministers are morally invulnerable dies slowly, however, even in the face of overwhelming evidence. But there never has been a mystical antibody that

makes us immune to sexual sin. Even those of us who haven't fallen know how fierce is the struggle with temptation.

Furthermore, ministry brings with it serious built-in hazards, moral land mines that can destroy us, our families, and our churches. Among them: our position of influence and that strange blend of ego-feeding flattery and debilitating criticism, which can fill us with either pride or despair. As a result, our perspective can be warped, our resistance to temptation diminished. In addition, our endless tasks and the consequent disorienting fatigue can make us oblivious to what's really happening to us. I recall with embarrassment my naiveté as a young pastor. Every time I heard the stories of Christian leaders falling into sexual sin, I thought, It could never happen to me. What level of pride is required to believe that sexual sin could overtake Samson, David ("a man after God's own heart"), Solomon, and a host of modern Christian leaders, but not me? Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 10 deserves a prominent place on our dashboards, desks, or Day-Timers: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall." Fortunately, I wised up. The person who believes he or she will never be burglarized leaves doors and windows open and cash on top of the dresser. Likewise, the one who thinks the danger isn't real invariably takes risks that wind up proving costly. I now live with the frightening but powerfully motivating knowledge that I could commit sexual immorality. I started taking precautions to keep it from happening to me.

Monitoring my spiritual pulse

Often those who fall into sexual sin can point back to lapses in their practices of meditation, worship, prayer, and the healthy self-examination such disciplines foster. All of us know this, but in the busyness of giving out, we can easily neglect the replenishing of our spiritual reservoirs. Daily disciplines are important, of course, but I've found that for me they're not enough. God gave Israel not merely one hour a day but one day a week, several weeks a year, and even one year every seven to break the pattern of life long enough to worship and reflect and take stock. I periodically take overnight retreats by myself or with my wife. In times of greater need I've been away a week, usually in a cabin on the Oregon coast. This is not a vacation but a time in which the lack of immediate demands gives clarity to the still, small voice of God so easily drowned in the busyness of my daily life.

Guarding my marriage

I find I must regularly evaluate my relationship with my wife. In particular, I watch for the red flags of discontentment, poor communication, and poor sexual relationship. We try to spend regular, uninterrupted time together to renew our spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical closeness. Many Christian leaders move so freely and deeply in the world of great spiritual truths and activities that unless they take pains to communicate daily, their spouses get left out. This development of two separate worlds

Study #3 Proverbs 5 Wake-Up Call

Use a descriptive phrase or sentence for each of the four sections

5:1-6

5:7-14

5:15-20

5:21-23

List the consequences of moral failure described in the chapter

List the consequences of moral fidelity described in the chapter

Discuss the meaning and emphasis of each phrase below and why they are important to the point that is being made.

V3-4 ðhoneyí oilí poisonö (wormwood)

Vs 4 ðin the endö

Vs 6 ðyou do not knowö

Vs 15, 17 ðyour ownö ðyour ownö ðonly your ownö

Vs 21 ðeyes of the Lordö ðHe pondersö

Vs 22-23 ðtrappedí caughtí dieö

List the various contrasts in the chapter and the lesson that is being driven home by those contrasts.

Write out a one sentence warning that summarizes the chapter.

Discuss how this warning is relevant for each of you right now.

Select one or more verses to memorize as a group, and work on it for five minutes together.

Pray for each other based on what you've learned from this chapter.

Study #2 Mark 7:20-23 Internal Impurity

Read Mark 7:20-23 slowly, out loud, in unison. Add additional examples to the ones given under each kind of sin described by Jesus.

*And He (Jesus) said, "What comes **out** of a man, **that** defiles a man. For from **within, out of the heart** of men, proceed*

evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications...lewdness

Lust ó pornography, lustful thought life, immoral media

murders

Hatred, malice, desire to get even
Bitter spirit, refusal to forgive,
Anger, blaming others

thefts, covetousness

Greed ó wanting stuff I don't need; spending money I don't have; justifying my ðright to more stuff; discontent; selfishness

wickedness, deceit

Hypocrisy ó double life, double standards (ask your wife)
Imbalance ó all work, all play, all church, all home

an evil eye

Critical spirit, complaining, fault finding, desire for other's failure

blasphemy

A bitter spirit towards God, anger at God, inner hardness of heart,

pride

A refusal to admit my own faults, sins and failures, self justifying, self righteousness, looking down on others, externalism, judging others

foolishness

Laziness ó wasting time, lack of servant-hood at home;
being a boss instead of a leader; rash decisions

*"All these evil things come from **within** and defile a man."*

From the above list, what are three that Satan attacks you in most often?

Why do you think this is a weak area for you?

How could you resist the Devil when you are tempted in this area?

leads to two separate lives and is often the first step toward an adulterous affair with "someone who understands me and my world." Communication is key because every adultery begins with a deception, and most deceptions begin with seemingly innocent secrets, things "my spouse doesn't need to know." At work, I surround myself with reminders of my spouse and children--pictures, drawings, and mementos. When traveling, I make contact with my wife as often as possible. If I'm struggling with temptation, I try to be honest and ask for prayer. Fierce loyalty to our spouses is also a key; I try to speak highly of my wife in public and never to downgrade her to others. And I'm careful not to discuss my marriage problems with anyone of the opposite sex. Further, my wife and I avail ourselves of many of the good books, tapes, and seminars geared to improving marriage. When my wife and I went on a Marriage Encounter weekend, we were surprised to discover some differences in perspective that, if left unaddressed, could have caused problems down the road.

Taking precautions

One pastor found his thoughts were continually drawn to a coworker, more so than to his wife. After months of rationalizing, he finally admitted to himself that he was looking for reasons to spend time with her. Then his rule of thumb became: I will meet with her only when necessary, only as long as necessary, only at the office, and with others present as much as possible. In time, his relationship with her returned to its original, healthy, coworker status.

The questions with which I check myself:

Do I look forward in a special way to appointments with this person? Would I rather see her than my wife? Do I seek to meet with her away from my office in a more casual environment? Do I prefer that my coworkers not know I'm meeting with her again?

An affirmative answer to any of these questions is, for me, a warning light.

Dealing with the subtle signs of sexual attraction

There's a mystique about spiritual ministry that some people find attractive. Their attitude toward the pastor can border on infatuation. It's flattering for a male pastor, who perhaps is nursing fresh wounds from the last board meeting, to receive attention from an attractive woman who obviously admires him and hangs on his every word. (The deacons jumped on his every word.) Often the woman's husband is spiritually dead or weak. Finding him unworthy of her respect, she transfers her affection to this wonderfully spiritual man, her pastor. This is usually unconscious and therefore all the more dangerous. She may send notes of appreciation or small gifts; he may reciprocate. Expressions of affection may inch beyond the healthy brother-sister variety. The hands are held tightly in prayer; the arm lingers a bit longer on the shoulder; the embraces become frequent. All this seems harmless enough, but a subtle, powerful process of soul merger can occur. If

things are not good on the home front, the pastor will, consciously or unconsciously, compare this woman to his wife, who may be noticeably unappreciative and uninfatuated with him. This comparison is deadly and, unless it's stopped, can lead into covert romantic affection, which often leads to adultery. *A relationship can be sexual long before it becomes erotic.* Just because I'm not touching a woman, or just because I'm not envisioning specific erotic encounters, does not mean I'm not becoming sexually involved with her. The erotic is usually not the beginning but the culmination of sexual attraction. Most pastors who end up in bed with a woman do it not just to gratify a sexual urge, but because they believe they've begun to really love her.

I once casually asked a woman about her obvious interest in a married man with whom she worked. "We're just friends," she responded with a defensiveness that indicated they weren't. "It's purely platonic, nothing sexual at all." In a matter of months, however, the two friends found themselves sneaking off to be with each other, and finally their "friendship" developed into an affair that destroyed both of their marriages. Lust isn't just unbridled passion. Even when it's "bridled" it may lead us down a path that our conscience could not have condoned had we experienced it in a more obvious, wanton way. Thus, our enemies are not only lascivious thoughts of sex but "innocuous" feelings of infatuation as well.

Backing off early

When meeting a woman for our third counseling appointment, I became aware that she was interested in me personally. What was more frightening was that I realized I had subconsciously sensed this before but had enjoyed her attraction too much to address the problem. Though I wasn't yet emotionally involved or giving her inappropriate attention, I wasn't yet deflecting hers toward me, either, and was thereby inviting it. I felt tempted to dismiss the matter as unimportant, "knowing" I would never get involved with her. Fortunately, when God prompted me, I knew I was no longer the right person to meet with her. I made other counseling arrangements for her.

Clearing cloudy thoughts

Often we justify our flirtations with logical, even spiritual rationalizations. One pastor didn't tell his wife about his frequent meetings with a particular woman on the grounds he shouldn't violate confidentiality, even to his wife. Besides, he sensed his wife would be jealous (without good reason, of course), so why upset her? Under the cloak of professionalism and sensitivity to his wife, he proceeded to meet with this woman secretly. The result was predictable. Another pastor had been struggling with lustful thoughts toward a college girl in his church. Rather than dealing with his struggles alone with the Lord, with a mature brother, or with his wife, he took the girl out to lunch to talk with her. Citing the biblical mandate to confess our sins and make things right with the person we've wronged, he told her, "I've been having lustful thoughts about you, and I felt I needed to

Part 4 BIBLE STUDIES ON MORAL PURITY

Study #1 Luke 18:9-14 I am only a man

Which man in this story in Luke 18:9-14 had an accurate understanding of his own condition as a man, and as a man before God?

How does this confirm Genesis 8:21?

How does this confirm Jeremiah 17:9-10?

What is the underlying reason we compare ourselves with others?

When was the last time you did something similar to the Pharisee?

What is the reality about your own sinful nature? (Romans 7:18-25)

How has being born again changed you regarding sexual temptation? (2 Cor 5:17)

How has being born again not changed you regarding sexual temptation? (Romans 7:18)

Does the following confession accurately describe you?

I am a man.

I am only a man.

I am a man just like every man.

I am a sinful man.

I am a weak man.

I am a needy man.

I need to be changed.

I cannot change myself.

I need You, God, to change me.

I need Your help and the help of my brothers, too.

(Don't complain, blame others, make excuses, and look for sympathy; look at God and yourself and get real.)

When do you struggle most with sexual temptation?

What forms of temptation do you have to fight the most?

How do you actively fight against sexual temptation? Be specific, because how you handle temptation may be just the thing your brother needs to hear.

son to sit in on the interview, to observe and be trained. I've also had younger brothers sit in (probably just to see their big brother squirm).

I even had one young man come to me and say, "Mr. Rainey, I'm not interested in asking any of your daughters out on a date, but I was wondering, would you be willing to take me through the interview?" I did. He wanted to go through it so he would know what I said. It reminded me that young men today yearn for older men to enter their worlds, talk straight with them about how to treat a young lady, and call them to a high standard.

Guys, I can't tell you how strongly I feel about this. The statistics don't lie. Despite more than a decade of "Just Say No" and countless sermons on "Love, Sex, and Dating," the sexual conduct of Christian youth growing up in Christian youth groups, worshiping to Christian music, and sitting in Christian Bible studies, is virtually no different than the sexual conduct of any other teenager.

These young men who like what they see in our daughters enough to want to spend time alone with them need us to hold them accountable and call them to restrain their sexual passions. They need older men, dads, to challenge them to protect our daughters and do what it takes to guard their moral purity.

Let's do it.

confess them to you." Embarrassed but flattered, the girl began to entertain her own thoughts toward him, and finally they became sexually involved. All this came from what the pastor told himself was a spiritual and obedient decision to meet with the girl. To misuse Scripture in this way and violate wisdom and common sense shows how cloudy and undependable our thinking can become.

Holding myself accountable

Perhaps nowhere is more said and less done than in the area of accountability. From talking with Christian leaders, I've come to understand that the more prominent they become, the more they need accountability and the less they get it. As a church grows, often the pastors come to know many people but on a shallower level, and those around them think, "Who am I to ask him if this is a wise choice he's making?" Many pastors in small churches also feel isolated, and even those in large churches with multiple staff members are usually Lone Rangers (without a Tonto) when it comes to facing their moral struggles. For several years now we have committed the first two hours of our weekly all-day staff meeting to discussing personal "sufferings and rejoicings" (1 Cor. 12:26), telling each other the state of our spiritual lives, and seeking and offering prayer and advice. We make sure no one is left out. We ask "How are you doing?" and if the answers are vague or something seems wrong, we probe deeper.

At first, this felt risky. It involved entrusting our reputations to others and opening ourselves to their honest investigation. But what actually results is usually positive encouragement. The risks, we found, are small compared to the rewards. Unlike many pastors, we don't feel alone in the ministry. We know each other's imperfections, and we have nothing to prove to each other. Pastors without other staff can find a lay person or two or a nearby pastor who will love them as they are and regularly ask the questions of accountability. What questions are those? Usually the questions we least want to answer. And Howard Hendricks suggests that after all the hard questions are asked, the final question should be, "In your answers to any of the previous questions, did you lie?" This kind of accountability can produce amazing results. Once I was undergoing a time of strong sexual temptation, and finally I called a friend with whom I was having breakfast the next day. I said, "Please pray for me, and ask me tomorrow morning what I did." He agreed, and the moment I put down the phone the temptation was gone. Why? I'd like to say it was because I'm so spiritual, but the truth is there was no way I was going to face my friend the next morning and have to tell him I had sinned.

Guarding my mind

A battering ram may hit a fortress gate a thousand times, and no one time seems to have an effect, yet finally the gate caves in. Likewise, immorality is the cumulative product of small mental indulgences and minuscule compromises, the immediate consequences of which were, at the time,

indiscernible. Our thoughts are the fabric with which we weave our character and destiny. No, we can't avoid all sexual stimuli, but in Martin Luther's terms, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair."

I like to put it another way: "If you're on a diet, don't go into a doughnut shop." For me this means such practical things as staying away from the magazine racks, video stores, advertisements, programs, images, people, and places that tempt me to lust. One man who travels extensively told me about a practice that has helped to guard his mind from immorality. "Whenever I check into my hotel," he said, "where I normally stay for three or four days, I ask them at the front desk to please remove the television from my room. Invariably they look at me like I'm crazy, and then they say, 'But sir, if you don't want to watch it, you don't have to turn it on.' Since I'm a paying customer, however, I politely insist, and I've never once been refused. "The point is, I know that in my weak and lonely moments late in the evening, I'll be tempted to watch the immoral movies that are only one push of a button away. In the past I've succumbed to that temptation over and over, but not anymore. Having the television removed in my stronger moments has been my way of saying, 'I'm serious about this, Lord,' and it's been the key to victory in my battle against impurity."

Regularly rehearsing sin's consequences

I met with a man who had been a leader in a Christian organization until he fell into immorality. I asked him, "What could have been done to prevent this?" He paused for only a moment, then said with haunting pain and precision, "If only I had really known, really thought through, what it would cost me and my family and my Lord, I honestly believe I never would have done it." In the wake of several Christian leaders' falling into immorality, a co-pastor and I developed a list of specific consequences that would result from our immorality. The list (see article, "The Real and Untold Cost") was devastating, and to us it spoke more powerfully than any sermon on the subject. Periodically, especially when traveling or in a time of weakness, we read through the list. In a tangible and personal way, it brings home God's inviolate law of choice and consequence, cutting through the fog of rationalization and filling our hearts with the healthy, motivating fear of God.

Winning the battle

In J.R.R. Tolkien's book, *The Hobbit*, there was no one seemingly more invincible than Smaug, the mighty dragon. But then that unlikely hero, Bilbo Baggins, found one small weak spot in Smaug's underbelly. That information, in the hands of a skilled marksman, was all it took to seal the doom of the presumptuous dragon. Unaware of his weakness and underestimating his opponents, Smaug failed to protect himself. An arrow pierced his heart, and the dragon was felled. An exciting story with a happy ending. But when it's a Christian leader felled, the ending is not so happy. It's tragic. The Evil One knows only too well the weak spots of the most mighty Christian warriors,

dealing uprightly with my daughter?ø And I want you to know what I mean when I ask you that question. Are we communicating, Kevin?ö

öYes, sir.ö His eyes were fully dilated at this point.

I continued. öKevin, more than likely Ashley is going to be somebody's wife someday. And I don't want you touching her body. Would you want someone touching your wife's body?ö

öNo, sir.ö

öThat's what I thought. So you and I, we know what we're talking about when I ask you to be accountable for protecting the emotional and moral purity of my daughter, right?ö He nodded enough to let me know my vocabulary was in his dictionary.

öAnd, Kevin, I want you also to take this challenge: If God ever gives you the privilege of being a husband and a dad, especially if He gives you girls, I want you to take your role so seriously with them that you'd talk to your daughtersø dates the way I've talked with you today. Will you promise me that?ö

öYes, sir.ö

At that point both Kevin and I were relieved that the conversation was over. I grinned and patted him on the back. I told him I was proud of him for coming to talk to me and allowing me to interact with him around such important issues.

As he was putting his helmet on, he answered one last question by assuring me he'd take Ashley out in a car!

Young Men Need to Be Challenged

That was it. Took maybe twenty minutes.

And I've done a version of this same thing dozens of times now as I've interviewed young men who wanted to date my four daughters.

I've learned a lot as I've gone through this. I've learned that there are some very specific things I need to know about each young man, and I try to tailor each of these little talks to the particular situation and the young man I'm dealing with.

In the process, I've met some fine maturing men and seen some interesting things happen along the way. In one case, another dad who came with his

“God made men and women different”

“Kevin, I said, hoping I’d also remember the rest of the words I wanted to say, “God did a wonderful thing when he made women.”

The color fell from his face. This was going to be worse than he had thought. I wondered if at any moment he might hop on that motorcycle and bolt!

I continued. “And, Kevin, God made men and women different. You’ve probably noticed some of those differences.” Kevin was getting paler by the minute, but he had the presence of mind to nod.

“Actually, God made us different so that men and women would be attracted to one another. Now, Kevin, I paused for dramatic effect, “you have probably noticed that God made Ashley quite attractive. She’s a really cute girl. In fact, you’ve probably noticed that she has a cute figure.”

This was less of a statement and more of a question. If Kevin said no, he and I would both know he was lying. If he said yes, however, he was admitting to the obvious: that he had the audacity to notice my daughter’s figure!

After a brief pause, I spared him the agony and continued.

“I mean, you’re a young man and Ashley is a young lady, and God made men and women to be attracted to one another. It’s good.” Kevin seemed to be relieved at my pronouncement. I went on.

“And, Kevin, I just want you to know that I am a man and I understand this attraction. I was once a teenage boy, and I know what teenage boys think about. I’ve even read some research on this, and the studies show that teenage boys think about sex every seven seconds.” At this point Kevin’s eyes darted, wondering where I was going next.

“And, Kevin, you and I both know those teenage boys were lying about the other six seconds.” At this point Kevin’s eyes began to dilate! There was no dodging this one.

“Yes, sir,” he said, with a nervous little laugh.

“Are we communicating?”

“Kevin, I don’t know how to put this any plainer: I want you to keep your lips and hands off my daughter. And I’m going to help you with that. Because whether I see you at the door after your first date with Ashley or after your fiftieth date you can expect me to ask you, “Kevin, are you

not to mention the rest of us. He isn’t one to waste his arrows, bouncing them harmlessly off the strongest plates of our spiritual armor. His aim is deadly, and it is at our points of greatest vulnerability that he will most certainly attack. We are in battle--a battle far more fierce and strategic than any Alexander, Hannibal, or Napoleon ever fought. We must realize that no one prepares for a battle of which he is unaware, and no one wins a battle for which he doesn’t prepare. As we hear of Christian leaders succumbing to immorality, we must not say merely, “There, but for the grace of God, I might have gone,” but rather, “There, but for the grace of God--and but for my alertness and diligence in the spiritual battle--I may yet go.”

A N T H E M *Strategies for Fighting Lust* By John Piper

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I have in mind men and women. For men it’s obvious. The need for warfare against the bombardment of visual temptation to fixate on sexual images is urgent. For women it is less obvious, but just as great if we broaden the scope of temptation to food or figure or relational fantasies. When I say “lust” I mean the realm of thought, imagination, and desire that leads to sexual misconduct. So here is one set of strategies in the war against wrong desires. I put it in the form of an acronym, **A N T H E M**.

A – AVOID as much as is possible and reasonable the sights and situations that arouse unfitting desire. I say “possible and reasonable” because some exposure to temptation is inevitable. And I say “unfitting desire” because not all desires for sex, food, and family are bad. We know when they are unfitting and unhelpful and on their way to becoming enslaving. We know our weaknesses and what triggers them. “Avoiding” is a Biblical strategy. “Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness” (2 Timothy 2:22). “Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:14).

N – Say NO to every lustful thought within five seconds. And say it with the authority of Jesus Christ. “In the name of Jesus, NO!” You don’t have much more than five seconds. Give it more unopposed time than that, and it will lodge itself with such force as to be almost immovable. Say it out loud if you dare. Be tough and warlike. As John Owen said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” Strike fast and strike hard. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

T – TURN the mind forcefully toward Christ as a superior satisfaction. Saying “no” will not suffice. You must move from defense to offense. Fight fire with fire. Attack the promises of sin with the promises of Christ. The Bible calls lusts “deceitful desires” (Ephesians 4:22). They lie. They promise

more than they can deliver. The Bible calls them "passions of your former ignorance" (1 Peter 1:14). Only fools yield. "All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter" (Proverbs 7:22). Deceit is defeated by truth. Ignorance is defeated by knowledge. It must be glorious truth and beautiful knowledge. This is why I wrote Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ. We must stock our minds with the superior promises and pleasures of Jesus. Then we must turn to them immediately after saying, "NO!"

H – HOLD the promise and the pleasure of Christ firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out. "Fix your eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). Here is where many fail. They give in too soon. They say, "I tried to push it out, and it didn't work." I ask, "How long did you try?" How hard did you exert your mind? The mind is a muscle. You can flex it with vehemence. Take the kingdom violently (Matthew 11:12). Be brutal. Hold the promise of Christ before your eyes. Hold it. Hold it! Don't let it go! Keep holding it! How long? As long as it takes. Fight! For Christ's sake, fight till you win! If an electric garage door were about to crush your child you would hold it up with all our might and holler for help, and hold it and hold it and hold it and hold it.

E – ENJOY a superior satisfaction. Cultivate the capacities for pleasure in Christ. One reason lust reigns in so many is that Christ has so little appeal. We default to deceit because we have little delight in Christ. Don't say, "That's just not me." What steps have you taken to waken affection for Jesus? Have you fought for joy? Don't be fatalistic. You were created to treasure Christ with all your heart ó more than you treasure sex or sugar. If you have little taste for Jesus, competing pleasures will triumph. Plead with God for the satisfaction you don't have: "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Psalm 90:14). Then look, look, look at the most magnificent Person in the universe until you see him the way he is.

M – MOVE into a useful activity away from idleness and other vulnerable behaviors. Lust grows fast in the garden of leisure. Find a good work to do, and do it with all your might. "Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord" (Romans 12:11). "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Abound in work. Get up and do something. Sweep a room. Hammer a nail. Write a letter. Fix a faucet. And do it for Jesus' sake. You were made to manage and create. Christ died to make you "zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). Displace deceitful lusts with a passion for good deeds.

Fighting at your side, Pastor John

Guarding Our Daughters' Moral Purity Dennis Rainey
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A nervous father interviews his daughter's date.

I was seated at my desk, barely able to concentrate. I shifted papers, opened drawers, glanced out the window. Shifted papers, opened drawers, glanced out the window. Shifted papers í I felt like I was expecting an important phone call and was just trying to do something, anything, productive while waiting. But it wasn't working.

Neither was I.

Finally, my executive assistant informed me that the young man I'd been expecting was waiting for me in the lobby.

Deep breath, Dennis. You're the adult here. You can do this. I was about to interview the first of many young men who wanted a date with one of my daughters.

I stood to my feet and walked across the room, still amazed at how nervous I was as I stepped into the lobby to meet Kevinô the only person in the building more anxious and ill at ease than I.

öAfternoon, Kevin, glad you could make it.ö

öHello, Mr. Rainey.ö

öHow about we get something from the Coke machine. I hear you're a Dr. Pepper man.ö

öYes, sir.ö

Riding a very thin wave of forced, uncomfortable chitchat, I deposited enough quarters to dislodge a cold can for him and a Diet Coke for me. Then, not wanting to be the Ultimate Intimidator, I suggested we go outside and chat in the parking lot. That's where he showed me his motorcycleô which wasn't exactly how I wanted Ashley to go out on her first date!

I popped the tab on my soft drink and looked squarely into the same eyes that enjoyed looking at my sixteen-year-old daughter. We began with the basics. I asked him about school, his mom and dad and family, interestsô just a general get-to-know-you type of conversation.

The Purity Symbol by Ron Berrus

We got the idea of a Purity Ring initially from a broadcast by James Dobson and Focus on the Family. The concept is powerful and a great teaching opportunity. Adjust it according to your own setting and circumstances.

When they turned 15 I took my son(s) to the local jeweler and he selected a jewel and a setting, and had a necklace made to be given to his wife on their wedding night as a symbol of his virginity.

When the jeweler completed the necklace, I set an evening aside for his mother and me to take him out for dinner or desert to talk with him about how proud and thankful we were for him. It was an evening of affirmation that concluded with presenting him with the necklace to be set aside for his wife-to-be on their wedding night.

Though we have continually prayed for our son's wife-to-be since he was a little child, we prayed specifically for him that evening concerning his own moral purity and that of his wife-to-be. We made it a special time of celebration and anticipation of what God had for him in the years ahead. We talked about how special it is to be married, totally committed to God and to each other, and the joy and contentment that comes from living together faithfully before God. We also took the opportunity to warn of the terrible consequences of being unfaithful; consequences they would already be aware of in extended family and acquaintances. We were careful not to be self righteous or harsh in our warning. Rather, we explained the awful consequences of following the godless, self centered and fruitless pursuit for happiness apart from God and His will. (Proverbs chapter 7 says it all.)

We did the same for our daughter, but instead of a necklace, she chose to have a ring made and to wear it. Whatever the symbol, it needs to be of significant worth. It was, without doubt, the most expensive piece of jewelry they owned. The financial sacrifice is important, as it represents something of far greater worth than mere money.

Again, it is not the end-all in these matters. But it is a significant aspect of instruction in the seriousness and value of moral purity. Our children know what we value through what we spend our time and money on and what we talk about. When our walk and our talk together demonstrate an unashamed holiness, love and joy, we will be laying a foundation for the same things in the lives of the next generation. May God help us to assist our children to stand strong in a day of epidemic immoral self-destruction.

Men Helping Men Walk With God by Randy Alcorn

(Used by permission. Unedited reprinting in any form is allowed by author) *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."* (Prov. 27:17) *"Carry each others' burdens . . . and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."* (Gal. 6:2) *"Be very careful, then, how you live . . ."* (Eph. 5:15) *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Heb. 11:24-25)

As brothers, we have the right and the responsibility to ask each other hard and to-the-point questions. Our goal must be not just to help each other *feel* good, but to help each other *be* good. These are suggestions to begin.

Questions to Ask Initially--And Come Back To Periodically

1. What are the biggest barriers to your relationship with God?
2. What are the biggest barriers to your relationship with your wife?
3. What are the most serious temptations you face at home?
At work? Elsewhere?
4. If Satan were to wage an all-out attack on your life, what area(s) would he focus on? (What are your greatest points of vulnerability? For example, sexual impurity, financial irresponsibility, dishonesty, greed, pride, etc.)
5. How can your brothers help you and pray for you?

Questions to Ask Each Other Regularly

If there's more than two or three men, not all of the following can be asked of each man each week. Even when asked, the answer may be brief. The point is not to always answer each question but to regularly bring up each area and thereby give opportunity for sharing. Don't let more than a few weeks go by without discussing any of these areas. (You may wish to add questions of your own.)

1. What have you learned or memorized this week from God's Word?
(Share a specific passage.)
2. What happened this week that put you to the test? How did you respond?
3. How are you doing in your relationship with God? (Be specific--time in the Word, prayer, sense of dependence on the Lord, etc.)
4. How are you doing in your relationship with your wife? (Be specific--communication, spiritual sharing, conflict resolution, etc.)
5. How are you doing in your relationships with your children, parents others?
6. How are you doing in your relationships at work or school?
7. How are you doing with your thought life? This week did you consistently keep your thoughts and actions pure before God? (If the answer is "yes", ask "Are you lying?")

8. What kind of a ministry did you have this week? Whom did you share Christ with, either directly or indirectly? Or, how did you use your gifts and resources to help the needy?
9. How can the others pray specifically for you this week?
10. Anything else you'd like to share? (questions or issues you're dealing with?)

Be sure to allow time for each others' input, for expressing your praise to God for the things He's doing, and for prayer. This need not always be long, since you'll be praying for each other during the week (right?). If you're in a restaurant, you can pray right at your table, or go elsewhere. Once in a while you might want to spend a whole morning in prayer or sharing in a more private environment.

You can determine whether you'd like someone to get you started each week, or you can try leaving it open so whoever wishes can take the initiative. Some weeks certain ones will need to share more than others. But be sure that each guy has ample opportunity to share each week, or at least over the long run. We must all consciously discipline ourselves to stick with our purpose--we're not here just to chit-chat but to help each other live for Christ. If someone is unusually quiet or tending to miss your meetings, be sure to take the initiative and encourage him to share--it may be his time of greatest need. (When we don't feel like sharing or answering the questions it's often when we most need to.) We must reach out to each other even when --or especially when--we sense someone drawing back.

JOHN WESLEY'S RULES FOR GROUPS

Accountability groups are not a new concept. John Wesley and the early Methodists used them over 200 years ago. Members of the small group were expected to agree to six common disciplines. These are the commitments as recorded in *The Works of John Wesley*:

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, not missing without some extraordinary reason.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting.
5. To end each meeting with prayer suited to the need of each one present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins and temptations.

Part 3 PARENTS AND MORAL PURITY

The Purity Covenant by Ron Berrus

The idea of a purity covenant is not new. The concept is personal, powerful, extremely serious and not to be entered into without careful thought.

When our sons reached the age of 12, I set an evening appointment with them to talk about the importance of pursuing and maintaining sexual purity. *This was not "THE TALK"*. (THE TALKS about sexuality occurred earlier, occasioned by observing animal copulation. We lived in an agricultural area and our kids all worked on a local farm. There were a number of occasions when the topic would arise and we discussed it each time in age appropriate ways, without shame or embarrassment, as part of God's design.)

The talk I am referring to now centered on sexual purity and the beauty and design of God for sex in marriage. I shared with each son individually that I had been completely faithful to his mother and our marriage vows. I assured him I intended to remain totally committed to her until my dying day. I wanted him to hear it from my own mouth. It is vitally important that my son (and daughter) know how much I love and value my wife and how completely I am committed to her and to our God. I had the privilege of explaining to my sons that their mother and I were virgins when we married and that there is nothing more wonderful than preserving and presenting yourself to your wife alone on the day of your marriage covenant. (If you were not a virgin at marriage, the value and glory of purity can still be extolled. It is not necessary or wise to divulge past failure in this area.)

I then asked my son to consider entering into a covenant with me, their dad, to maintain his sexual purity and to present himself pure before God and his wife on their wedding day. I told him I was willing to make a covenant with him personally to remain faithful to their Mom to my dying day. But I also warned him that he should only make this covenant if he was willing and eager to do so, since it would be wrong to do so out of guilt or fear or simply to please me. They each assured me they were eager to enter into this covenant with me. Kneeling down, I prayed first, renewing my vow of faithfulness and he prayed his own now of faithfulness afterwards. Then I concluded our time in prayer interceding for us both and committing us to God and His grace to walk in purity and truth in the days ahead.

While this is *not* a cure-all for the temptations and struggles young men will face, it *is* a powerful reminder of the seriousness of the commitment we have both made before God. It also provides an opportunity to remind our sons and daughters of our continued pursuit of holiness as well tell them we've been true to our covenant.

3) *Marriage is not the final solution to your problems; God is!*

Marriage is a gracious, good gift from God. As Proverbs 31:10-12 exclaims, “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.” Amen! But at the same time, if God is not at the center of your life and your mate’s life, marriage creates more problems than it solves. Without the Lord at the center, marriage just brings together two self-centered people seeking self-fulfillment from one another. It doesn’t work. Put God at the center of your life. Pray that He will bring you a mate with the same commitment. Then joyfully serve Him together. Our focus should be on the Lord and His kingdom. If He graciously gives you the blessings of a Christian home, enjoy it thankfully. But don’t put your hopes for happiness in a family. Hope in the Lord! Whether you’re single or married, your purpose should never be to seek self-fulfillment and personal happiness. Rather, your purpose should be to pursue a course that leads to the greatest devotion to Christ and His cause in these days that remain before His coming.

Discussion Questions

1. Do Christians put too much emphasis on marriage as a key to fulfillment and happiness?
2. How can we avoid allowing a good thing (marriage) to take the place of the best thing (devotion to Christ)?
3. In what ways is the American dating system anti-Christian? Should Christians use it cautiously or scrap it totally?
4. How important should physical attraction be?

Part 2 WOMEN AND MORAL PURITY

Women and Moral Purity by Ron Berrus

Guarding the Gates

God created women in His image with unique relational abilities, desires, and capacities. These were designed to complete man and bring fullness to human relationships and experience. The fall of Adam and Eve resulted in man and woman competing, blame shifting and battling for control.

Men experience sexual temptation primarily through the *eye gate*. The multi-billion dollar pornography industry and the prevalence of pornography addiction among men, even professing believers, is irrefutable evidence of the fact.

Though women may be initially attracted to good looking men, (eye gate), they face temptations to moral failure more commonly through *the heart gate*.

It is estimated that as many as 25% of American women have been molested as children, (statistics from other countries are even higher.) Many women carry scars from harsh, abusive or absent fathers. Their desires for acceptance and intimacy often make them easy prey for additional abuse from men who only seek to use them.

The desire for intimacy, acceptance, love and security is good. But the absence of these becomes an entry point for much sexual temptation.

The Problem of Disappointment

** “A woman’s battle does not usually begin with a lustful or a wandering eye, as it does for a man. While women are visually stimulated as well, their battle is typically more subtle and begins in much deeper territory. For women, the battle often begins in a heart full of disappointment. A woman’s disappointment in men, circumstances, God, life, money, kids, and the future can cause her heart to wander.”*

The Problem of Bitterness

Women who experience harsh words, demeaning criticism, personal comparisons or neglect are wounded in spirit. This creates emotional distance and, unless resolved, can lead quickly to bitterness. Bitterness is a settled state of resentment coupled with heart distance that shuts the offender out. It has been my observation as a counselor, that men often struggle with lust and women often struggle with bitterness. (Not that men are exempt!)

The Problem of Fantasy

Bitterness is a root for all kinds of sin, as Hebrews chapter 12 reminds us. Bitterness easily leads to allowing the mind to fantasize over imaginary relationships. If only I was married to _____ and lead the heart to defend its own bitterness and grow hard in the process. These attacks leading to discontent and fantasy often enter through the ear and eye gate through popular media such as soap operas and romance novels (even Christian ones) adding fuel to the fires of discontent. Godlessness (living life as if there were no God, no accountability, no judgment to come and no standard beyond our perceived needs and desires) is the norm of the day. We must recognize that we are not immune to the subtle, and not so subtle, influences that bombard our senses daily. As temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 6:19-20) we must evaluate what we invite to enter our minds and memories.

Men and women alike must heed the exhortation to listen to God's voice of warning immediately, lest our hearts grow hard and we fall into sexual sin. The progression discussed in Hebrews 12:14-17 begins with hurt and offense and ends with fornication. The connection is clear. When relationships at home are not right, the temptation to sexual sin is greatly increased.

The Priority of Purity

Mental purity: while the "thought-life sins" mentioned in Matthew 5:28 and Job 31:1 focus on men, the principle applies to both sexes. The battle for purity begins in the mind. If we allow impure thoughts spawned by disappointment, unforgiveness, or idle fantasies, remain unrepented of they will result in greater rebellion and evil pursuits. Garbage in = garbage out applies not only to computer programming but to life. The information we put into our minds programs us to think, feel and act according to underlying values and worldviews. Pop culture is materialist and hedonistic and those who drink from their polluted wells inevitably become diseased in their values and pursuits. Philippians 4:8, 2 Timothy 2:22 and Psalm 19:12-14 contain healing truths to memorize and meditate on.

Emotional Purity: immoral affairs for women almost always begin with gradual emotional distancing from her spouse and transference of affections to another. This can be totally unintentional at the outset, denied during the process but devastating in the outcome. Mental and emotional adultery almost always precedes physical adultery. Proverbs 4:23 applies powerfully here.

Relational Purity: the scriptures are filled with warnings about the need to exercise caution when building relationships. (Proverbs 13:20; 22:24-25; 2 Thess 3:6) Most people are not intentional about their relationships, but simply spend time with whoever happens to be available, whoever happens

b) *Never consider marriage to an unbeliever.* Burn it into your thinking: It is never God's will for a Christian to become unequally yoked with a non-Christian in marriage (7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

c) *Guard your moral purity.*

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee immorality." Your body belongs to God, whose Spirit dwells in you. Therefore, you are to glorify God in your body (6:19-20). If you're going to guard your moral purity in our sex-saturated society, you've got to plan for it. If you visit the Grand Canyon and don't want to fall over the edge, don't go near the cliff. If you want to guard your moral purity, plan not to get yourself into tempting situations. As Christians, you should be concerned about getting to know the person in the context of moral purity. Your purpose should be to build up your sister in Christ and to get to know her, not to indulge your lust. Plan for purity!

d) *Study and develop godly character qualities.*

If you're going to shop for a new car, you'd probably do some research. And yet many Christian singles never give any thought to what qualities they should be looking for in a godly mate! I've seen girls end up married to abusive men because their role models were movie stars or athletes, not men of God. If a man doesn't show you respect, gentleness, self-sacrificing love, and other godly traits, don't marry him. You're not going to transform him! Men, burn Proverbs 31:30 into your thinking: "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." Know what you're looking for (based upon Scripture) and pray fervently to that end!

e) *Be wise, but not super-spiritual.*

By this I mean, God expects you to pray and wait on Him, but He also expects you to *use appropriate means* for finding a mate. Sometimes we get super-spiritual, thinking that God is going to rain down manna from heaven, when He expects us to plow our field and sow some seeds! There's nothing wrong with putting yourself in situations where you may meet a godly mate. That can include involvement with campus ministry groups, attending conferences for Christian singles, getting a job at a seminary or other Christian organization, etc. Also, even though godly character should take precedence, there's nothing unspiritual about being *physically attracted* to someone. Read the Song of Solomon and you will discover that the couple isn't extolling the finer points of each other's personalities! In its proper place, there's nothing wrong with physical attraction. Also, don't be so super-spiritual that you overlook *liking* the person. You're looking for a companion, and a lot of companionship involves enjoying the person's personality. You should have some common interests and be able to enjoy just being together without having to do things. You should be able to accept the person as he or she is, without major remodeling. Also, seek the counsel of those who know you well, especially your parents. Any strong opposition from parents should be weighed very carefully.

In the article, "Singled Out by God for Good," Paige Benton writes: "I am not single because I am too spiritually unstable to possibly deserve a husband, not because I am too spiritually mature to possibly need one. I am single because God is so abundantly good to me, because this is his best for me. It is a cosmic impossibility that anything could be better for me right now than being single. The psalmists confirm that I should not want, I shall not want, because no good thing will God withhold from me" (Benton, *Regeneration Quarterly* 3 (1997), 21).

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR SINGLES by Pastor Steven J. Cole
Flagstaff Christian Fellowship 2/26/95 1995 Copyright 1995, Steven J. Cole, All Rights Reserved. Edited and used by Permission. Entire article found at <http://www.fcfonline.org/content/1/sermons/022695M.pdf>

I'd like to offer some practical advice to those who are single, based on Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 7. Singles should pursue a course that leads to the greatest devotion to Christ and His cause. Since the singles among us have had to listen to me talk about the family, I thought we owed them a message that addresses many of their more direct concerns. I want to develop three thoughts:

1. If you can remain single and be devoted to the Lord in purity, do it.

While marriage is God's normal design for most people, He has gifted some to remain single so that they can serve Him without the encumbrances that necessarily go along with marriage.

(a) *Singles have more freedom in difficult times (7:26).*

(b) *Singles have more freedom to devote themselves fully to God*

How can I know if I have the gift of being celibate?

(a) *Can you control sexual desires? (7:9).*

(b) *Are you constantly lonely in spite of close relationships with the Lord and with other believers (Gen. 2:18).*

(c) *To what ministry has God called you?*

If you do marry, it should not be for the purpose of self-centered fulfillment and personal happiness. While marriage and children are good gifts of God that bring great joy, you should marry because you can better serve Christ in line with your spiritual gifts as a married person. (Matt. 6:33; 16:25).

2. If you're not gifted for celibacy, pray and look for a godly mate.

a) *Focus on personal growth in godliness.* You can use your time as a single to sit around feeling depressed and lonely. You can waste a lot of time in a frantic search for a companion, where you fill all your spare time with being around people. Or, you can use it to seek the Lord in His Word and in prayer, and serve the Lord. If you want a godly mate, you've got to become the kind of person the kind of person you want to marry would want to marry, namely, a godly person!

to come into their circle of acquaintances. Relationships, are viewed by these as incidental or accidental. However, every relationship produces change in both individuals and there is always a "primary influencer." It is expected that believers will powerfully influence unbelievers, bringing them to Christ through the power of the gospel and a holy life. (Matthew 5:14-16; I Peter 2:9 and 3:15) However, when a believer is weak or wayward, she will become the "influenced, rather than the "influencer" and the results will be tragic. Spending frequent, significant time with godly, wise and mature believers is God's plan to help us grow strong in Christ likeness. Their life model, perspective and counsel provide incredible, godly influence in assisting us in walking in holiness, peace and joy. (2 Tim 3:10-17)

The Need for Intimacy with our Spouse

God intends for husbands and wives to become each others best friends. True intimacy is the deepest level of honesty, commitment and trust two image-bearers of God can achieve. This kind of closeness must be learned, cultivated, and protected over years of companionship. Paul urged older women to teach younger women how to develop this kind of loving intimacy with their husbands in Titus 2:4-5. If you are a younger woman, seek out godly older women who exemplify this who can help to advise and counsel you in this area of life. If you are a woman with years of experience in godly family living, seek out the friendship of younger women who could use your loving interest and friendship. There is a desperate need for these kinds of practical, spiritual, and caring relationships in the body of Christ.

The Need for Intimacy with God

Intimacy with God, maintaining heart purity, through daily time spent in God's presence is critical for every believer. Developing and deepening the disciplines of the Word and prayer allow God's truth to flow into the heart and mind and transform internal attitudes as well as external actions. The deepest needs for intimacy can only be met by God Himself. This is not to diminish the importance of holy, human relationships. But it is crucial to understand that no human relationship can meet the deepest needs of the human heart. Only the Spirit of God can bring complete wholeness and healing. And the Holy Spirit does this work in us through the scriptures. While we may know this as a theological truth, we must learn it as an experiential reality by daily practice in the presence of God. Meditation and memorization of scripture along with journaling and in-depth bible study and prayer allows the truth of God to displace the lies of Satan and the lusts of the flesh.

(Suggested resources for the disciplines in the bibliography #5-9, 33-35)

* Page X, Forward: Every Woman's Battle by Shannon Ethridge

An Exercise in the Word for Women by Valorie Berrus

Proverbs Chapter 31 and Chapter 7

Look at the description of the woman in Proverbs 31. Though many talents and abilities are mentioned, make a list of those things that reveal her inner character and heart. You may also want to look at the book of Ruth as a narrative example of a Proverbs 31 woman. (She is called "virtuous" by Boaz and Ruth follows Proverbs in the Hebrew canon, not by accident.) What do we learn about her perspectives, her values, her morals, her conduct, her speech?

Next, look at the description of the woman in Proverbs 7. What things characterize this woman? What do we learn about her perspectives, her values, her morals, her conduct, her speech?

A similar contrast is set up in the personification of wisdom and folly in Proverbs chapter 9. Both wisdom and folly make the same invitation, but the consequences are as different as life and death!

Which of the character qualities of godliness do you sense the most need of at this time in your life?

Make a personal bible study of this topic and share your insights with other women. It is in the sharing of truths discovered that we learn them more deeply.

A Biblical Perspective on Singleness by Pastor Josh Berrus josh@opendoorlife.com

Let's face it, there can be risks and dangers in singleness. I appreciate John Piper's warning against "adulthood" – a common trend to extend adolescence through the 20s and purposely delay marriage due to selfishness, pursuing pleasure, irresponsibility, and refusing to grow up. Some say that Christian men who are still single by the age of 30 are often guilty of indecisiveness, commitment phobia, and perfectionism. There is potential for singles to become selfish, stubborn, and set in their ways over time. Singles may hide behind secret sins such as wasting time, pornography, or eating disorders which would be exposed in the intimacy of marriage. Marriage possesses a wonderful potential to sanctify believers by revealing sin and promoting spiritual growth.

On the other side of the coin, there are many godly singles who have pursued ministry, missions, and Biblical education through their 20s and 30s, and as they pursue holiness and serve the Lord, this can be good. Remember Psalm 84, "Nothing good does He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

While some singles may need moral support and encouragement to pursue marriage, local churches often pressure singles toward marriage, treating them as victims and viewing them as immature, judging their singleness as sin. This has been a painful part of my experience as a single in ministry. An individual should not be judged negatively for their single status. People should remain content in the Lord whatever their status. Being single or married is ultimately a matter of the will of God. The Lord meets us where we are. He uses all of us and our experiences for his glory. While singles may experience greater temptation towards self-sufficiency, lack of commitment, indecisiveness, perfectionism, etc., the reality is that every person is a sinner. Married people also struggle with sin. I have seen individuals pursue marriage with wrong motives . . . desperation, on rebound, finding their significance in a partner, etc. Motives are messy things.

I recommend the book, *They Were Single Too: Eight Biblical Role Models*, by David M. Hoffeditz. In chapter 1, he considers the apostle Paul and the "gift" of singleness in 1 Cor 7: "Often people neglect to see both [singleness and marriage] as gifts, and in so doing, regard singleness as a social oddity. Finally, note that Paul does not pit the two marital states against each other, but stresses the significance of each gift. Both are given by God. I am comforted to know that God is the one distributing marriage or singleness. The God who called me before He created this world, the One who knows the number of hairs on my head, and who gave His Son for me is the benefactor of these gifts. It is the Lord who has appointed—not Aunt Lilly, not my mother, not my so-called friends, not that well-meaning church member" (Hoffeditz, *They Were Single Too*, 9).