Walking In

The Light
A discovery guide
to help men
experience sexual wholeness
Acknowledgements

The inspiration for this discovery guide came from the very thorough work done by Craig Lockwood in his book, Falling Forward. It has helped numerous men who are struggling with sexual obsession, gender identity issues, and addiction to pornography. Many of the topics addressed in Falling Forward are critical to learning to live free from sexual sin.

Lockwood's book is quite voluminous, however, and it became clear that a dramatically modified representation would be especially helpful in the context of campus and military ministry. So this discovery guide is primarily a synopsis of selected sections of Lockwood's book that can be completed by students in a group Bible study format within a one semester time period.

Although the big ideas of this discovery guide are from Falling Forward, they have been reworded, reorganized, and combined with ideas from other sources that informed our thinking in this subject area, namely Gerald May, Larry Crabb, and Dan Allender.

This discovery guide is a resource for those engaged in ministry to others. It is not to be sold for profit. We are not receiving any compensation for our work in editing this material. Our purpose for making this available is to meet an expressed need by campus/military ministers for something that can help them address the wave of sexual struggle that is engulfing our culture today.

Sexual Health and Wholeness (SHAW) Initiative of The Navigators
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Although this discovery guide can be done in a one-on-one setting to help individuals’ growth in the area of sexual purity, it is most effective when used with a small group of people of the same sex (i.e. 2 to 8 men).

**Introductory Meeting**

Experience has proven that it is best to start by inviting people to a single session, called an introductory discussion. At that first discussion, lay out the parameters of the group and discuss both your expectations and theirs.

**An Example of What Should be Covered in an Introductory Discussion**

Decide what you would like to call the group, such as “Walking in the Light,” or something else that identifies the group. When naming the group, think of a simple idea that would help remind everyone of the purpose of the group.

The goals and objectives of the group will be:
- To provide a safe place for men to gather together and acknowledge their struggle in the area of sexual purity
- To serve as a Christ-centered environment for community and support
- To call (challenge) each other to walk the path toward freedom
- To encourage and stimulate our hearts to intimately engage with God and others
- To lead us to the Cross of Christ to be restored to lives of redeemed purpose, passion, and power
- To perceive God revealing to us that knowing, loving, and relating to Him fulfills our deepest longings, but EVERY other attempt for ultimate fulfillment will leave us disappointed or even devastated

**Guidelines for the Group:**

1. We will take confidentiality very seriously. Because of the intimate nature of the group, what is said in the group needs to stay in the group. Each of us will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. You are encouraged to talk freely and share in great depth with others in the group. Sharing what was said during the group with others outside of the group is a violation of confidentiality and privacy (this includes even your spouse).

2. The underlying goal is to provide a place where a person can be fully known and fully accepted.

3. A commitment to come every week will also be expected from each participant. The ideal length of the meeting is two hours. A 15- to 20-minute time of worship at the
beginning of each meeting may be helpful to bring members into the presence of God.

4. At some point during one of your meetings, we would like each person to share his sexual history. Honesty and full disclosure by each person are vitally important. The facilitator of the group may want to be the first to do this. Your vulnerability is extremely important, as you will be setting the pace for others. If you, as the facilitator, are not willing to be vulnerable about your own sexual history and struggles in the area of purity (both in the past and present), it is highly unlikely that the group will develop the transparency, vulnerability, and safety that such a group needs to have for it to be successful.

5. Make it your personal goal to step outside of your comfort zone at least once per group meeting. Take risks in asking others for feedback and asking other questions to gain understanding and draw one another out—but do it with grace and in love. If you sense God prompting you to pray for someone or ask for prayer for yourself, we encourage you to take the initiative. We are called to minister to one another. Depending on the nature of your struggle, getting together with others outside of the group can be very encouraging.

6. Completing the reading and homework assignments is extremely important. They will play a vital role in what God does in your personal life, as well as what you discuss and share with one another in the group meetings. You will need to make a conscious commitment to take the time to do the assignments and attend the group in order for you to be able to both contribute and receive all that God has for you. Involvement in this group cannot be put on the back burner.

7. Committing the Bible to memory renews our minds, transforms our thinking, and gives us weapons to fight temptation. Each chapter has recommended Scripture on which to memorize and meditate. This is a crucial part of the work to be done each week.

8. It will be helpful for each member of the group to install Covenant Eyes on their computer and to exchange reports with at least one other member of the group. This will help group members to not feel like they are alone when they are using their computers. (Go to www.covenanteyes.com for details. For a discount, use the promotion code ‘PurityFirstSteps’ or some other Nav Promotion code.)

As the group connects more deeply with one another, it will be a good idea to encourage group members to exchange email addresses and cell phone numbers. This can foster communication with one another, especially when struggling with temptation. Members can either call or text one another to ask for prayer because they are dealing with temptation.
Agreement to Honor Confidentiality

I, ________________________________________________________, as a group member of this *Walking in the Light* group, understand that I am bound by honor to respect the privacy and confidentiality of others in the group. I personally commit that I will not share any identifying information concerning others’ issues or struggles with anyone outside the group, including my spouse.

The only exception to this would be in the case where I discovered that a member of the group was engaging in severe and increasingly dangerous moral behavior that was placing his life, career, marriage, and/or family in danger. In this case, I would encourage this person to get professional help and report his struggle to someone in authority over him. If he refused to seek help and report his struggle, I might be forced to bring this to the attention of someone in authority over him (his pastor, elder, spiritual leader, legal authorities, and/or someone from The Navigators People Resources Team).

Signed: _______________________________________________

Date: _______________________________________________
Purifying Our Passion by Learning to Trust God and Love People

Introduction

Sex is awesome! God designed it for our good, but like most things, we’ve found a way to pervert it from the original design. As a matter of fact, one thing that makes sexual sin so difficult to overcome is that while we are built for intimacy, we are also fearful of genuine intimate relationships. A key to overcoming the battle against sexual temptation is the ability to connect meaningfully with others. This is huge! It’s a powerful experience to be open and honest and then receive love and acceptance.

This guide will highlight the truth that not being loved (or having been loved poorly) reinforces our innate tendency to doubt the goodness of God. We must unlearn the skills that we so automatically employ to protect our hearts and deaden our passion. That process has many facets, which will be developed throughout the guide:

- Acknowledging that we are weak—we need God and others
- Recognizing that painful feelings can help turn us toward God
- Relying on God and others to communicate love and value to us

Since genuine love in relationships is at the heart of purity, it is essential that this material be discussed in the context of a small group (or at least a one-to-one relationship). Freedom from sexual sin is found in genuine loving relationships, not in books or seminars.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

As group members confess their sins to one another, barriers with God and others will be torn down, rebuilding each individual’s ability to connect in meaningful relationships. This group setting enables participants to break out of darkness and isolation, moving toward connection and the building of trust.

This small-group setting must be one in which confidentiality is assured. It should, therefore, be a closed group (i.e., once the group is formed, no new members may be admitted nor visitors allowed to sit in, except by special arrangement and with the advance consent of all group members). As a rule, new groups can be formed to accommodate those eager for similar help.

It is our desire that our gracious God will use men's (and women's) interaction over this material to usher many into the freedom that is our heritage in Christ. May God guide you as you connect passionately with Him and with others!
Deep within the heart of every human being is a passionate hunger or thirst for love.

What a man desires is unfailing love. (Proverbs 19:22)

In the final analysis, only God Himself can quench that thirst for a love that will never fail us. And He invites us—indeed, He pleads with us—to come to Him to satisfy that hunger and thirst:

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. (Isaiah 55:1)

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)

Tragically, however, we are as stubborn as we are thirsty. We try to quench that thirst with something other than the love of God. In Jeremiah, God laments,

My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (Jeremiah 2:13)

He pleads with us to look to Him to satisfy that heart-hunger and soul-thirst:

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. (Isaiah 55:2-3)

All of us are guilty of seeking out substitutes for that living water. It is only found in intimacy with God. We have, in effect, turned to other gods. We look to people and to things to provide us what is found only in connecting with our Creator. Those “broken cisterns” cannot supply the living water we crave. In the case of sexual sin, that false god is a mood-altering experience, a physical and emotional “high.”

G.K. Chesterton highlighted the way that illicit sexual behaviors are a displaced desire for God
when he observed, “Every man who ever knocked on the door of a brothel was seeking God.”

Such idolatry saps our desire for God and never deeply satisfies our thirst. Such temporary “fixes” do not satisfy for long. They may cover up the pain of emptiness momentarily, but they eventually consume the person in a destructive cycle.

**God's design is that sexuality must be our servant, not our master.**

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

God intends that we love Him and others as we love ourselves. God is not content with us simply stopping certain behaviors. He desires that we grow in whole and trusting relationships with Him and others. God's intention is that we use our sexuality to serve our relationships, rather than relationships serving our sexuality.

**Developmental influences**

The ways that we relate to others are shaped by a combination of factors: our innate temperament, our experiences, and the ways in which others have loved us or failed to love us.

It is almost impossible to overestimate the impact of our parents’ influence on the way we perceive God, as well as ourselves. Parents are the “lenses” through which children “see” the world. Long before we reach adulthood, we have already internalized a view of God, others, and ourselves that either enables or hinders us as we move into intimate relationships. No parent is perfect and has, therefore, not loved perfectly.

We can experience love only in so far as we are able to trust God and others. Painful experiences in intimate relationships undermine that trust. Sexual preoccupation, as a rule, results from the inability to meaningfully connect with others. We often prefer to settle for a false intimacy—physical intimacy without emotional intimacy.

Only as we recognize the things that have undermined our trust and deal with them, can we enter into the freedom of healthy relationships with the Lord and with others. We will look at how to do this later in the study.
Chapter 1 Discussion Questions:

1. Can you relate to this concept of “hunger” and “thirst”? If so, how?

2. What about your sexual habits is exciting and seems to be life-giving?

3. In what ways has your approach to sex become a false god? Are you aware of any harmful consequences at this point?

4. Read Romans 1:18-27. This passage shows that sexual sin is the result of turning away from God and looking to other people to give us a sense of life. In what ways have you seen this played out in your own life or in those around you?

5. Jesus talks about love and obedience in John 15:9-13. What seems to be His primary concern?

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here?
   a. How can you remind yourself this week that when you are tempted to seek out sexually immoral behavior, that you are really thirsting for God?
   b. In his book, *How to Say “No!” to a Stubborn Habit*, Erwin Lutzer encourages the reader to focus on praising God when tempted. Think through a time or place when you normally feel tempted and begin singing praise songs, or just outright praising God, and see what happens.

2. Memorize and meditate on one of the following verses:

   Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. (Isaiah 55:1-3)

   My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (Jeremiah 2:13)

   Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)
In creating Adam and Eve in His own image, God intended their relationship to be a metaphor of two other relationships:

1. He intended their relationship, first of all, to be related to one another in a oneness that reflects the unity that characterizes the relationships among the three Persons of the Trinity—separate, distinct Persons united in a bond of perfect trust and love.

   Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

2. He also intended their love and oneness to reflect God's relationship with His people and Christ's relationship with the church.

   “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:30-32)

Before their fall into sin, Adam and Eve reveled in an intimacy that was untainted by fear of rejection. Imagine what it was like to be “naked and...[feel] no shame” (Genesis 2:25).

Their physical nakedness mirrored the condition of their hearts and minds, which were likewise unveiled one to another. Secure in the love of God and in each other's love, they had no need to hide. They trusted God and one another without reservation. They enjoyed genuine intimacy!

Physical intimacy is only one part of genuine intimacy. Genuine intimacy is a matter of knowing and being known; of seeing and being seen; of being accepted and loved for who we really are. It is a matter of letting down our guard to let others see what’s going on inside our hearts.
The Bible makes it clear that:

1. Physical intimacy is reserved exclusively for marriage partners.

   Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (Hebrews 13:4)

2. Most, but not all, of us are called to marriage.

   It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. (1 Corinthians 7:1-2)

God made all of us—single or married—for loving communion with Him and with others. This communion involves deep relationships of mutual respect and love.

Such intimacy can only be achieved by baring our hearts (at times and in places that are appropriate). Of course, this involves some risk-taking, but genuine intimacy also requires an environment where you feel safe enough to let others know what’s going on inside you.

Genuine intimacy can only grow in relationships in which people reflect God's grace and compassion in dealing with fears, flaws, and failures. A place where friends:

1. Listen, affirm, and pray.

   Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

2. Deal humbly and gently with one another, yet genuinely seek to restore.

   Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

To move toward genuine intimacy is to risk the pain of being misunderstood or even rejected. This element of risk can be terrifying. Those whose backgrounds are characterized more by rejection and shame than by love and affirmation fear being rejected by a friend who finds them unacceptable. Risking non-sexualized intimacy with the opposite sex can be especially frightening. For many of us it is easier to withdraw, to opt for the false intimacy of fantasy or physical intimacy with no heart connection.

False intimacy substitutes sex for love. The intense feelings of sexual arousal combined with imaginary or real physical closeness is one way to temporarily satisfy our deep longing for genuine intimacy. It allows for a momentary “connection” on a superficial level while avoiding the possibility of rejection. The “centerfold,” or the prostitute, is (in a man's imagination, or even in reality) at his disposal (for a few minutes, at least) without his having to risk rejection.

Having lost the ability to trust is a major barrier to genuine intimacy. That ability to trust must be restored if genuine intimacy is to be achieved. Those whose background makes them fearful when it comes to sharing their feelings and fears find themselves “in a bind.” They long deeply...
for love while, at the same time, fearing the vulnerability that makes it possible to experience genuine intimacy.

There is no risk-free way out of this “bind.” Healing takes place only as the fear of rejection is overcome in real relationships. Vulnerably entering into relationships involves clinging to the truth that we are unconditionally loved and deeply valued by our Heavenly Father and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Since no man or woman is perfectly safe, there is always some risk associated with being vulnerable. It is the assurance that the Lord Himself can be relied upon to accept and affirm us unconditionally that prompts us to risk being known in relationships with less-than-perfect people.

Each of us must look to God as our source of acceptance, affirmation, and love. Only then can we boldly reach out by faith to love and be loved by others—daring to be genuinely and vulnerably honest, with both men and women.

We will never satisfy our thirst for real connection through sexual immorality. The following verses point out a few facets of this truth:

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:13, emphasis added)

[Moses] chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. (Hebrews 11:25, emphasis added)

A first step to freedom from sexual sin is to realize that only God can meet the deepest longings of our heart and soul; sin deceives us into believing that it can satisfy. Then by bold faith in God's assurance that we are His dearly loved children, possessing value and worth, we must step out by faith to allow others to know us. Only then will we experience the genuine intimacy for which we were created.
Chapter 2 Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways have you experienced a sense of belonging (i.e., feeling loved, accepted, wanted, and included)?

2. In what ways have you been disappointed or hurt in relationships (as a child or as an adult)? How do these experiences affect the way you relate to others?

3. In your friendships, how would you assess your ability to trust others with what’s inside your heart?

4. In what ways do you think you may be substituting sexual immorality for genuine love?

5. What does it look like to look to God as our source of love, affirmation, and acceptance?

6. Write a statement that expresses how you feel accepted by God? Or if you don’t feel accepted, what lies are you preaching to yourself and how can you bring the truth into them?

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here? Sharing is a two-way street. You need to be vulnerable, and it helps the other person to be vulnerable if you are able to draw him/her out. One great way to cultivate (non-sexual) intimacy skills is to develop the art of asking questions. Consider these points (adapted from “Developing Deeper Friendships Through the Art of Asking Questions” by John David Hicks © Faith Encounter, Inc. 1997):
   a. When talking with a person, see the worth and value of the person, who is made in the image of God. This is conveyed initially by remembering his/her name.
   b. Think before you speak, by considering the person’s interest.
   c. Your eyes and your enthusiasm will attract and hold attention, even when you differ in opinion.
   d. Listen intently, being aware that in every encounter there are emotions involved, maybe even some sense of threat from you. Notice what is said and what is implied. Your openness and acceptance will reduce threat.
   e. Good questions meet a person's need for attention and establish rapport as you learn something new about the person. Good questions also give you the right to be heard.
   f. Begin with questions for information that are easily answered. Avoid questions requiring only a yes or no answer. Instead of asking, "Do you like your job?" you
can ask, "What do you like or dislike about your job?" Most people want you to inquire about their interests, background, and achievements.

**g.** Once the conversation is underway, you can go a little deeper. Some examples of how to do this could be: "Can you tell me more about that?" or "I'm curious to hear what you think." or "Go on, I'm listening."

**h.** Eye contact, nods, and smiles also convey your interest. To show the person that you are following them, it is helpful to occasionally repeat what you hear. For example, you could say, "Let me see if I'm hearing you correctly. Are you saying...?" or "So what you are saying is.... Is that right?" Feedback demonstrates your interest.

2. Memorize and meditate on one of the following verses:

The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. (Proverbs 20:5)

The pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. (Proverbs 27:9)

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (Hebrews 13:4)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. (Hebrews 11:25)

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)
Sexual preoccupation is an attempt to deaden pain and increase pleasure, which instead adds to the pain one experiences and spreads it to those one is around. If you aren’t at this point yet, please realize that this can easily become your reality if left unchecked. If this does describe you, know that you are not alone—this is consuming more people every day!

It is like a physic malignancy, sucking out life energy into specific obsessions and compulsions, leaving less and less energy for other people and pursuits. Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991)

Just as an obsession is a persistent repetitive thought, a compulsion is a persistent repetitive behavior. Earle & Crow, *Lonely All the Time* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989)

Mental sexual preoccupation often builds in intensity as it continues unchecked over time. At first, obsessive sexual thoughts are simple intrusions into daily living, written off as minor, victimless sins. Eventually, these can become entrenched habits and can progress to the extent where one sees daily realities as irritants that get in the way of one’s sexual fantasy. These obsessive thought patterns increase isolation and can even cost productivity at work. Times devoted to others and to productive pursuits are sacrificed. More and more free time is needed to indulge the cravings and compulsions. The biblical values of faith, hope and love which are central to experiencing fulfillment in life are ignored.

These habits were fostered as an attempt to quench the deeply felt thirst for intimacy with God.
and others. They are like a painkiller that works at first but to which one develops immunity. Thus, stronger more frequent doses are needed to cover the pain.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Anyone who sins sexually, consciously and with pre-meditation disobeys God. This sin leads to feelings of guilt, shame, and despair. These feelings lead one to feel less connected to God and others and, hence, more thirsty than ever. Faced with this reality, a person can either choose repentance and submission to God or a hardening of the heart. This hardening is subtle but steadily progressive till his heart becomes seared. This is much like repeatedly burning your hand until the nerves are so damaged that they can no longer feel. He thus loses “all sensitivity to others.” What does that look like? Because the person is cut off from the tenderness of his own heart, he is out of touch with the sensitivities of the other person he encounters. Lust rather than love becomes the governing force. “He loses what is unique to him as a human being created in the image of God—the ability to willfully and reasonably love.” (1) Lust has caused him to lose the ability to choose to love because he has become accustomed to using others for his own pleasure, even if only in thoughts. The more hardened and distant one feels; the more essential the painkiller becomes. One typically slips into more frequent and extreme behavior in an attempt to increase the “dosage.”

Sexual compulsion both leads to and feeds on emotional distance. A person cannot be a slave to his sexual desire without neglecting his relationships with God and the people close to him. He loses the courage to pursue relationship and those closest to him are affected by his withdrawal and feel the emotional distance developing. Wives especially can suffer from the weakening of the relational bond with her husband.

Anyone in relationship with this person can be hurt by his selfish detachment as he pursues his sexual “high.” As relationships weaken and break around him, he perceives that intimate relationships are painful and he loses hope that true intimacy is a real possibility.

His painkiller has increased his pain and spread pain to those close to him.
Chapter 3 Discussion Questions:

1. Can you relate to this idea of obsessions and compulsions? If so, how would you describe yours? Have they escalated over time?

2. How have you suffered the loss of faith, hope and love as a result of your thoughts and actions? Describe what you have experienced.

3. Has anyone close to you suffered from your actions or neglect? What has that been like?

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here?
   a. Identify the times during your day when you are most likely to engage in obsessive or compulsive patterns.
   b. What can you do to fill those times with thoughts that increase your faith, hope and love? Compare the level of satisfaction you feel in these activities verses indulging in your compulsive patterns.
   c. Some ideas may include:
      i. Praising God
      ii. Listening to worship music
      iii. Meditating on a portion of God’s Word

2. Memorize and meditate on one of the following verses:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
Although the particulars of each person's sexual struggle may differ, there tends to be a circular process and generalized pattern that all people follow. We will call this the “addictive cycle.” The addictive cycle includes sexual pressure, acting out, the sex act, and despair.

**Stage One: Sexual Pressure**

The cycle begins when the person's thoughts become focused on his behavior of choice. The individual's mental energy is directed towards reaching a mood altering high without actually acting-out sexually. He thinks about sex to produce a trance-like state of arousal designed to blot out the current pain of reality and most external demands for his attention. Thinking about sex can continue for minutes or hours before a transition to the next stage of the cycle occurs.

During this preoccupation phase, the person experiences a heightening of energy due to the release of adrenaline in his body, as well as euphoric emotions associated with thoughts of giving in to the sexual activity. As all aspects of his being become focused on sex, he experiences a powerful force that the Bible calls temptation.

> When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. (James 1:13-14)

**Stage Two: Acting Out**

People use rituals to enhance their mental preoccupation, excitement, and euphoria. Rituals are regularly followed patterns of preparing for sexual activity. Once the person has begun his ritual, the chances of stopping the cycle diminish greatly. He is giving in to the pull of the compulsion. For the sake of simplicity, we have called this phase of the cycle “acting out.” Even though the person may not reach orgasm or make a sexual contact, he was hoping and willing to, if only the circumstances had been right.
Examples:
- Watching sexually explicit movies
- Cruising certain streets in town
- Showing up at a local bar at cocktail hour
- Frequenting public bathrooms in order to find erotic graffiti
- Surfing the Internet
- Staying up late to watch TV alone

Stage Three: The Sex Act

The compulsive act, which normally ends in orgasm, is the starkest reminder to the person that he has been reduced to slavery and that his will is paralyzed. The sex act is the breaking point in the sexual pressure that began the cycle. The release of physical pressure also brings an end to the denial and sanity-bending rationalizations that allowed the person to get as far as he did. The “sex act” is the point at which sin becomes undeniable. It is hard evidence that the Scriptures have been violated and the person is truly addicted.

Examples:
- For the voyeur, it is the actual sighting.
- For the homosexual, it is a sex act with a person of the same sex.
- For the fetishist, it is masturbating with his object of desire.
- For the pornographer, it is masturbating while viewing the chosen porn.

Stage Four: Despair

At this point in the cycle, the person can go one of two ways. He can either seek help or sink back into familiar patterns of denial that submerge his pain. He usually resolves to never act out again. The vow seems sincere at the time, yet without breaking the stranglehold of secrecy it is really an oath of self-sufficiency and a type of denial. At a superficial level the person hopes that this will be the last battle. Yet, somewhere within, he is resigned to the nauseating (and yet exciting) roller-coaster ride of the alternating euphoria and misery produced by the addiction.

Despair builds with each cycle. The person attempts to go at it alone and hides his secret life. He cannot withstand the isolation (though he doesn't admit this to himself) and eventually the need to medicate his guilt and remorse propels him into another cycle of seeking sexual gratification. Self-hatred increases with each relapse and increases the unmanageability of his life.

Triggers and the Addictive Cycle

We may find ourselves, at times, falling back into the addictive cycle without knowing how we got there. This can be avoided by discovering what has triggered our compulsive response. A trigger is an event that breaks through to the person's pain and sets into motion the sexual cycle. An obvious trigger is direct visual stimuli. But the acrostic HALTS identifies other situations that can potentially set men up for a fall. They are hungry, angry, lonely, tired and stressed. But at other times, triggers have nothing to do with environmental stresses. These triggers are outside of the person’s conscious awareness and break through his defenses to access residual unresolved pain. Some of this pain originated in early in life.
**Rejection** is a common trigger, especially in marriage or dating relationships. True intimacy involves risk and the possibility of conflict. For instance, at the time of a conflict the person may only be aware of feeling angry. But at a deeper level, the fight may be felt as an assault on his adequacy, which threatens to expose his deep fear of rejection. This accesses his painful belief system about his inferiority and worthlessness, which then ignites his addictive cycle.

**Stress** also acts as a trigger. A common stress pattern would involve feeling overwhelmed by an immense workload and slipping into a sexual fantasy as an escape. The cycle is then underway.

**Abandonment**, which is similar to rejection, can also be a trigger for sexual acting out.

The present-day environment may summon pain from earlier, similar experiences. This may trigger feelings of abandonment, a need to perform, and a sense of unacceptability, which surfaces the belief that life is unfair, and I deserve a break. This sets the person up to again give in to his compulsive pattern of medicating his pain.

According to the Scriptures, we are responsible for our choices and should avoid people, places, and things that we know may lure us into sin. If we knowingly put ourselves in a circumstance where we may be overwhelmed with temptation, we are responsible. An important transition point is reached when the person chooses, out of respect for himself, to avoid his triggers.

> A prudent man sees evil and hides himself; the naive proceed and pay the penalty. (Proverbs 27:12)

> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. (Romans 13:14)

It is important to state here that identifying triggers is not the same as being freed. It is only the first behavioral step in stopping the addictive cycle.

**Breaking the Cycle**

As we have just seen, the addictive cycle produces its own pain, namely the guilt, shame, and despair of repeated relapse. This pain actually increases the probability of again falling into sin. Underlying pain fuels compulsive sin. **The first step in the process of healing is to modify behavior, which interrupts the driving power of the addictive cycle.**

As a person gives himself over to a sinful action again and again, the mind weaves twisted thoughts to support and accommodate the duplicity of the behavior. **We usually think of thoughts leading to behavior, but our souls also function so that our behavior shapes our thinking.** Changing behavior makes way for thoughts and feelings to be changed.

Change does not come to us as we passively wait for it. Rather, a person must choose to fight and win by God's empowerment. Change begins with action. Changing behaviors eliminates the need for the distorted thinking formerly used to justify sin. As our actions change, our thinking will become more truthful and empower us to get to the deeper issues that fuel our compulsions.
Chapter 4 Discussion Questions:

1. Can you identify any triggers that are connected with your compulsive sin?  
   (Ex. Fatigue, loneliness, boredom, late night TV, being alone with the computer, argument with friend, recalling past sexual experiences, etc.)

2. What distorted thoughts might you use to act out, like rationalizations, entitlements, rewards, or excuses?  
   (Ex. I won't be found out, I am already forgiven, I am already down so one more time won't matter, I will never be loved so this is the best I can hope for, masturbating is not so bad and at least it keeps me from fornicating, if I don't give in I will never get anything done, etc.)

3. What have you tried to do so far to resist your compulsive cycle? How effective have these attempts been in setting you free from the cycle?

4. What do you believe about how responsible you are for your compulsive behavior?

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here?  
   a. Journal about three fairly recent compulsive cycles. Be specific in describing each of the four stages. Identify any patterns running through the cycles.

2. Memorize and meditate on one of the following verses:

   A prudent man sees evil and hides himself; the naive proceed and pay the penalty.  
   (Proverbs 27:12)

   When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. (James 1:13-14)

   Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:14)
Shame is a sense of “personal badness” that all people have to some extent or another. Shame is also reinforced by negative messages received over the course of one's life. It leads to the development of a protective style of relating that increases fear, hiddenness, and isolation.

**Spiritual Roots of Shame**

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman You put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:6-13)

We see the origin of man's shame in Genesis 3. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they covered themselves and hid from each other and God. God entered the Garden and asked Adam, “Where are you?” Adam's answer illustrates man's basic survival strategy: “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” Adam was afraid because of his nakedness—physically, emotionally, and spiritually before God and Eve—so he hid.

Today, fallen man still seeks after safety by hiding the truth of what he really is (sinful, fearful, and unable to trust). Shame calls for secrecy and darkness. One who experiences shame has an
adversarial relationship with oneself. He separates from himself to survive emotionally because he feels too bad and worthless to be acceptable. The self is thus disowned and pushed away into darkness. **Shame, in essence, is a sense of unacceptability that leads to hiding from God, others, and oneself. It ultimately leads to living in darkness.**

**Shame Leads to Contempt**

When hiding did not work to protect Adam from the gaze of God, he turned on himself. “...I was afraid because I was naked...” Adam expresses contempt for his felt weakness. All people hate feeling afraid and exposed. One way to deal with shame is to beat oneself up for one’s weaknesses. This is called **self-centered contempt**, or low self esteem. The goal is to avoid the rejection of others by beating them to the punch and rejecting ourselves first.

When self-contempt did not cause God to back off, Adam focused his contempt on God and Eve. “...The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” In trying to escape true feelings of guilt, remorse, and responsibility for his sin, Adam blames God and then his wife. **Others-centered contempt** is a way to deflect exposure by pointing out the other person's supposed weakness, and it creates enough separation to protect us from facing our own shame.

**Shame Distorts Truth**

By responding out of their shame, Adam and Eve refused to face the truth of their sinful disobedience and instead blamed God, the Devil, and each other. This distorted their understanding of their real need for forgiveness and restoration. Intimacy, truth, and goodness were now experienced as a threat rather than an invitation into the fullness and beauty of life with God and each other. Since that time, much of man's thinking has been distorted in order to conceal his flight from truthful relationships. We believe lies about ourselves and others in order to maintain a defensive detachment that feels safe. These lies take many forms, but they follow the pattern of contempt for self and others.

Examples of lies about self:
- I'm worthless.
- I'm stupid.
- I'm a failure.
- I'm not loveable as I am.
- I'm a bad, unworthy person.
- I'm ugly.
- My life will never amount to anything.
- Everything I touch turns to disaster.
- I'm not masculine.
- It's always my fault.
- God can't forgive me.
- If I have to depend on my social skills to get close to anyone, it won't happen.

Examples of lies about others:
- All women are evil and will play with my mind.
• All women will reject me.
• If I get close to women they will leave me.
• All women are needy and will suffocate me.
• Women are shaming and hurtful.
• Women are emotional monsters.
• When women find out who I really am, they won't like me.
• People are not dependable; I can't trust them to meet my needs.

These lies and many more are usually generalized towards all of life and lead to life-dominating issues like:
• Fear of rejection
• Fear of intimacy
• Fear of confrontation
• Compulsive, inappropriate intimacy outside of marriage
• Emotional isolation inside marriage
• Sexually connecting without commitment
• Sexually addictive behaviors and affairs
• Masturbation
• Fear of initiating sexually
• Sexualized anger
• Misogyny (generalized disinterest toward and hatred of women)
• Misandry (generalized hatred of men)
• Homosexual and lesbian tendencies

Overcoming Shame
Have you ever noticed that young children have the ability to live life with their hearts wide open? Their self-protection has not yet reached a level of sophistication that hides who they truly are. They are not trying to hide in the shadows and darkness. Maybe that is why Jesus said, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3) We must “unlearn” the things we have used much of our life to keep our true thinking and feelings hidden from others. This is a difficult process because we have become experts at avoiding uncomfortable situations.

The single most significant step in dealing with shame is letting the reality of our true identity in Christ sink into our hearts. Through the unchangeable work of Jesus on the cross, Christians are declared righteous and clean and are actually made sons and daughters of God! There is absolutely nothing that can diminish God’s love for us. The more we meditate on this truth and allow it to really grab us, the more it will increase our sense of value and acceptability before God and others.

If we are willing to deal with shame and its effect on our lives, we can expect that at first, we will likely experience increased levels of pain, anxiety, and isolation. The very things we are trying to avoid! Remember, one reason compulsive sin has gained its power is because of our unwillingness to face physical, emotional, and relational pain. Acknowledging and persevering through uncomfortable emotions is critical to growing spiritually and relationally.
Chapter 5 Discussion Questions:

1. Can you recall showing contempt toward yourself (putting yourself down or criticizing yourself when you did well)? How about contempt toward another? Explain.

2. What lies might you believe about yourself?

3. What lies might you believe about others?

4. What would it look like for adults to live with their hearts open to God and others? Is this something you would like to develop in yourself?

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here?
   a. List any lies you may believe about yourself. Use the examples from above for starters. Memorize some verses that speak directly against the specific lies, meditate upon them, and respond with those verses when you are tempted to believe the lie.
   b. Do the same for lies you may believe about other people.

2. Memorize and meditate on one of the following verses:

   Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

   Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction. (Job 36:21)

   Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

   As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:11)

   Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:33-39)
By now you have learned that acting out sexually is a form of control. It’s an attempt to self-medicate emotional and relational pain and resolve felt needs through one’s own strength. We don’t trust God to meet the deepest needs of our lives, so we find our own flawed solutions (“broken cisterns”). Turning to God means giving our lives over to him and choosing to focus our thoughts and energies on Him.

When Jesus spoke with his disciples, He appealed to their total being—mind, emotions and will. We see this in his famous call to discipleship in Luke 9:18-27. Jesus appealed to their minds with the question, “Who do you say I am?” (20). Then he challenges their will with the statement, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.” (23) And he ends the conversation with an appeal to their emotions by saying, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory…” (26)

Following Jesus unmistakably requires surrender and self-denial. When Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind…” (Matthew 22:37), he really meant it. He is not asking us to do anything more than what he did. Jesus emptied himself and did the will of the Father who sent him. He said, “I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:30).

From the beginning of human history, God, our Creator, gave us the ability to choose obedience or disobedience. In the garden, “the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’” (Genesis 2:16-17). God gave them the ability to choose and then held them responsible for the choices they made.

This open-handed approach of appealing to our wills and persuading our minds to make correct or “godly” choices appears all throughout the Scriptures.

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)

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:14-15)

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (Hebrews 11:24-25)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right had of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

While God lays out His clear standards for righteous and holy sexual behavior, He also gives us the free will to choose whether to obey or disobey. These are choices we make every moment of each day. Do I choose to follow Jesus, or do I choose to follow the desires and passions of my flesh? Do I choose to let my thoughts run wild, or do I choose to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5)

The ability to consistently make godly choices is a gift of grace from God. Grace is God's unconditional love for and empowerment of His children, even when in our stubbornness and weakness we disobey his will. We can’t obey God in our own strength. It is impossible. That’s Paul’s message to us in Colossians.

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! These are destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (Colossians 2:20-23)

Trying to subdue compulsive sin through self-restraint alone will only reinforce self-sufficient thinking. Instead, we need to acknowledge our weaknesses and give them to God. “Trusting that God’s strength will emerge out of our surrender is the bridge from the futility of self-effort to walking in the power of the resurrection life.”

1 Falling Forward, Craig Lockwood, Desert Stream Press 2000, Anaheim, CA page 51.
To use a nonsexual example, one who lies needs to accept that telling the truth, which is God’s way, is better. Lying gives the illusion of control in difficult situations. However, if he chooses to tell the truth, he is relinquishing control to God. Sin is trusting in your strength and ability versus God’s power. Admitting the truth can be scary and painful for someone who has always depended on lies for protection. Once he accepts that God’s way is better, he can begin to step out in faith and tell the truth, perhaps fearfully and only partially at first, but God rewards acts of faith, however small. As he learns to trust God in speaking truthfully, he will experience the personal and spiritual rewards of inner relief, honesty, holiness and courage. The need and desire to lie will lose its strength and new patterns of truthfulness will take its place.

Another example involves one college coed who had the pattern of relating to the men she liked in only two ways. She would swing between being the boss, taking responsibility for everything in the relationship, to becoming a compliant sex object. She realized both modes of relating were harmful, but she felt powerless to change and each failed relationship left her feeling more grotesque and hopeless. The first step in surrendering to God meant saying “no” to those behaviors. “But that is the only way I know to act. If I don’t act that way I’m afraid I’m nobody with nothing to offer. The thought of that leaves me feeling scared and totally empty.” Her friend replied, “Surrender means entering that emptiness and trusting that God is there and he will cause something of your true feminine soul to emerge. What you then offer in relationship will be true to who you really are and it will be good.”

Since sexual sin is rooted in a lack of trust, stepping out in faith to be vulnerable in relationships, old and new, is one way to begin trusting God and giving up control. There is a subtle but significant difference between effort to obey God, and effort only directed at resisting sin. The former implies yielding to God and the latter implies staying in control.

Nevertheless, surrender and self-control are two sides of the same coin. God has given us an unlimited amount of grace – power – to obey. “The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world” (Titus 2:11-12). However, it takes focused mental effort to change ingrained habits. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

Christian history is full of examples of men and women who have successfully disciplined their lives to sit at the feet of Jesus, learn from Him, and daily draw the necessary spiritual strength to withstand temptation and be spiritually transformed. They practiced spiritual disciplines, such as daily Bible reading and meditation, Scripture memory, daily prayer and confession of sin, private and communal worship, fasting, silence and solitude, and others. As they devoted themselves to these disciplines, it was not for the sake of discipline alone or for public show, but they set aside time to fellowship and commune with Jesus. They realized that authentic relationship with God was essential in order to live authentically and powerfully as a child of God in the world.
Chapter 6 Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways are you practicing any of the “disciplines” of the Christian life? How have these disciplines given you inner strength to follow and obey Jesus?

2. What “disciplines” do you want to add to your life that might help you in your quest for sexual and relational integrity?

3. How do you control (protect yourself) in relationship with God and/or others?

4. What are you afraid God will do or require of you if you relinquish control to Him?

Take Away

1. Select one of the disciplines you identified in question #2 above and make a simple plan for how you can begin. Share this with the group.

2. Pick out your favorite verse from this chapter and from the verses below. Commit it to memory and meditate on it all week long.

3. For a more in depth look at the role of the Bible in changing sinful patterns please see “The Battle—Going Deeper into God’s Word” in the appendix.

For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he watches all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is caught in the toils of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is lost. (Proverbs 5:21-23)

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For
just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification. (Romans 6:11-19)

Second Timothy 2:21 tells us that “if any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house.” Paul again encourages us to live holy lives in a letter to the believers in Corinth: “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have eternal life. (John 5:39)

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)
In walking the path toward God and away from our old habits, we will begin to experience an increased sense of freedom and relief. However, on the way to this relief, we may also experience overwhelming feelings of emptiness and sadness.

That is because there is real loss involved in giving up something we have held dear. It’s like losing an old friend. The sexual practice has become very comfortable—sort of nurturing ourselves. Losing a pleasurable sexual practice can lead to strong feelings of grief.

We may feel angry. There may be confusion with God for “making me like this.” Perhaps we will feel frustration with others who expect too much of us and maybe even disappointment with ourselves for not being able to “just say no.” Anger is a normal part of change.

We may also experience an increased sense of weakness and shame. Have you ever been just plain tired of the struggle and want it to go away? Sometimes we will be tempted to live in self-pity and refuse to accept responsibility for our actions. But beware. Holding on to self-pity is a detour back to old patterns.

Sometimes, people experience undefined body pains, loneliness, fear, anxiety, depression, and loss of motivation. But don’t lose heart! The process of grieving is normal and is essential to live in freedom.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider
them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (Philippians 3:7-9)

In the above passage, the apostle Paul recounts his very real experience of loss for the sake of his relationship with Jesus. Although he is not specifically referring to sexual struggle, this passage is relevant because he is talking about giving up the things that gave him a false sense of strength and well being and stood in the way of knowing Christ.

Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. (Jonah 2:8)

When we clutch to anything besides God, we miss out on drawing from the immeasurable resources of His grace. The corollary is also true: when we throw off worthless idols, we are now in a position to receive God’s grace for living!

Forsaking thoughts and behaviors that give us illegitimate pleasure and a false sense of security and intimacy may not be immediately rewarding. Yet we must let go of these if we are to gain Christ and ultimately open ourselves up to real and far more rewarding strength and intimacy.

The process of “considering everything a loss,” requires us to name specific actions we will give up and never go back to. But we must beware of trying to bargain our way around the finality of this decision. We may be tempted to entertain thoughts such as:

- It's only in my mind. I’m not really doing anything.
- I don’t struggle as much as other guys I know.
- Masturbation is not so bad. I'm not hurting anybody.
- If I resist the temptation I will never be able to focus and I will go crazy.
- I've been good. I'll just treat myself this once.
- I need to test myself and see if I can resist.
- Porn and masturbation actually protect me from acting out with another person.

However, if we are gut-honest with ourselves and with God, we know how destructive sinful thoughts and behaviors are to ourselves and people around us. As much as we are drawn into sin again and again, we hate what it does to us! It is time to act decisively.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. (Matthew 5:27-30)

Now, before you go and poke your eye out, realize that Jesus’ point is to act radically and take holiness seriously. If we don't see the destructiveness of our sin on God, others, and ourselves then we will keep returning to old patterns. A person will not change significantly if he cannot
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proclaim with a certain amount of conviction and passion, “I really want to go God's way,” rather than just, “I ought to go God's way.”

As we’ve said so far, when we take steps to “cut off sin,” and “throw off worthless idols,” we will experience a sense of loss. So, how does a person deal with this loss?

Two elements are involved. The first is to see how our selfishness affects the people around us. This may involve confessing to a spouse and to friends, and this requires humility to accept their reactions. When we own up to the truth that our sexual sin hurts friendships and has a deadening and distancing effect on relationships, something deep within our souls will react. There will be remorse and sadness, not for ourselves, but for those people we have been hurting.

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right. (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)

Secondly, gripped by the gravity and ugliness of our sin, we turn to the Lord expecting an angry look and harsh punishment, instead we experience grace. We will be embraced by Jesus in a way that says, “Yes, your sin is ugly; that is why I died. I love you just as you are. I'm proud to call you my brother and friend.”

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:8-10)

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. (Hebrews 2:11)

This is the profound love and connection we have been looking for—it is already fully provided in one’s relationship with Christ. His love and acceptance have nothing to do with our being lovable—He loves us at our worst.

How do these two elements—sorrow over sin and God’s gracious response—work together to transform a person’s heart? When I see how much damage my efforts to protect and satisfy myself have caused, I am confronted with the utter failure of my decision to live without completely trusting God and others. It also robs me of the illusion of being able to fix things on my own. God’s help and presence, at that point, become an absolute necessity.

That’s when the second element, the Lord’s grace, exposes the foolishness of my selfish preoccupation even more. I discover that the love and connection I’ve been working so hard to earn is already fully provided in my relationship with Him. I realize His love and acceptance
have nothing to do with my being lovable, for He loves me at my worst. God’s warm embrace melts my heart and disarms me of the contemptuous practice of calling “who I am” bad. I, now willingly desire to move toward Him and the people I love with a new openness and inner freedom that is the fruit of biblical repentance.

In 2 Corinthians 7:9, Paul states, “Your sorrow led you to repentance.” In Romans 2:4, he says that, “God’s kindness leads you toward repentance.” The elements of sorrow and kindness facilitate the process of facing loss, so I can experience the reality of Jesus’ words, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

Chapter 7 Discussion Questions:

1. Can you relate to the feeling of loss mentioned in this chapter?

2. What are some of the losses you are aware of?

3. Is there a relationship that has been or is being hurt (or even a future relationship that may one day be affected) by your sin? How does that impact you as you think about it?

4. Consider being warmly embraced by a loving God—even when you least deserve it:
   a. What is your internal response?
   b. What, if anything, prevents you from experiencing God in this way?

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here?
   a. Are there excuses that prevent you from radically dealing with your sin?
   b. Will you commit to stop whatever sexual sin you have been engaging in? This group is here to support you and of course God will be your strength. However, you need to be the one who decides—and the one who decides to never give up, even if you fail again. See Hebrews 12:4.

2. Pick out your favorite verse from this chapter and commit it to memory. Meditate on it all week long.

3. Note: For more thoughts on Grief and Loss, see Appendix 4.
When we experience pleasure from sin, particularly sexual sin, we can become drawn to that type of sin again and again. Sin itself is “addictive.”

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. (Titus 3:3)

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” (John 8:34)

A broken home, trauma, or childhood loss is NOT the only thing that leads to compulsive behavior. We don’t have to come from a dysfunctional family to become enslaved to sexual sin. We must always accept responsibility for our own actions.

However, it is important to understand how our family environments contribute to our view of ourselves and our world. It is in the family where we learn how to handle things like stress, difficult situations, communication, and intimacy. Unhealthy patterns of relationship in a family can sew the seeds of compulsive behavior. No family is perfect. Let’s look at a two classic extremes, knowing that most families probably fall somewhere in between.

The Rigid Family
This is one family environment that can contribute to the formation of sexual preoccupation. The rigid family is one where there are high demands for performance and achievement coupled with little or no encouragement and nurture. These passages warn about harsh discipline in the family:

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (Colossians 3:21)
A rigid family environment can be in a religious or nonreligious home. However, many times a rigid Christian family may also choose a church setting with high demands for “holiness” and caustic criticism of people who struggle. The resulting lack of acceptance and feelings of helplessness produce secrecy and hopelessness. This environment will also produce rebellion and add excitement about experiencing the forbidden fruit.

**The Chaotic Family**
This is the other extreme. Here the environment is unpredictable, blaming, and crisis-oriented. It requires the constant rush of adrenaline to survive. In this home the family does not have a set of values and beliefs that unite them. In addition, nothing ever gets resolved, so the child does not learn appropriate problem solving skills. The ultimate goal is to protect one's self and avoid responsibility for the crisis.

The following passages describe what God desires as a healthy family environment:

> But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (I Thessalonians 1:7-8)

> For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

In both the rigid family and the chaotic family, transparent and vulnerable sharing leads to punishment and shame. It is the norm not to talk about family events and heart issues. The child is left to guess about reality and usually concludes that he is responsible for the family dysfunction. He learns to hide and not trust his true self with all its genuine emotions and reactions. Thus, the inner world of the child is diminished and he is left to find something external to himself and his family to meet his emotional needs.

As mentioned earlier, most home environments fall somewhere between these two extremes, but the results in the life of the child can still be the same. Patrick Carnes describes the emotional state that results, “Note that anxiety and control are common aspects of these experiences. The uncertainty of mastering unknown, uncertain, or extreme environments and the inability to ensure acceptable outcomes are cornerstones of all addiction. The addiction supplies a temporary solution by allying anxiety and giving momentary purpose to the self, but ultimately it compounds life’s problems.”

**Traumatic Events**
Traumatic events can also play a role in the formation of compulsions. We will mention two types of events: abandonment events and sexual events. Abandonment events such as divorce, childhood loss of parents or siblings, abuse, neglect, and extremely harsh discipline are closely related to a deep-seated sense of rejection. As we have noted before, rejection is one of the triggers for compulsive sin.

Early sexual stimulation in the life of a child is also traumatic. Molestation and exposure to pornography awaken confusing feelings which tie sexuality to acceptance and closeness. These
feelings can then fuel inappropriate behavior later in life.

Many people pass through their first sexual experience in adolescence with an appropriate amount of guilt. However, they recover, and then sexual experimentation does not become the focus of their thoughts and desires. On the other hand, people who have intense sexual experiences earlier in childhood often begin a life of secrecy, self-doubt, and ritualized patterns of sexual acting-out as a way of coping with their shame and internal world of anxiety and pain. Most people with significant sexual struggle portray their childhood as a collection of shameful memories, rather than events from which wisdom was gained.

Although we present the above scenarios as common factors contributing to sexual preoccupation, it is necessary to clearly repeat that there is not always a direct correlation between a certain type of family life and sexual sin. Sexual desire is one of the most powerful, mood-altering chemical responses in the brain. Anyone, at any age, can develop a habit of using sex as a way of escaping unpleasant thoughts and feelings.

Regardless of the imperfections in our family upbringing, we can rest assured that God is a perfect parent and is committed to transform us into His healthy and whole sons and daughters.

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. (Hebrews 12:10)

For more insight on the role of fathers and mothers in our development, see Appendices 1 & 2.

Chapter 8 Discussion Questions:

1. Reflect on your childhood home environment.
   a. Describe any ways that it could have contributed to your sexual struggle.
   b. In what ways did it foster one or more of these environments:
      i. You weren’t supposed to talk about sex or awkward things
      ii. You couldn’t really trust others
      iii. You weren’t allowed to express feelings
   c. Describe the qualities of your family system that foster any of the following:
      i. Performance
      ii. Isolation of your true self
      iii. Secrecy
      iv. Excessive closeness
      v. Smothering
      vi. Abandonment.

2. List or describe any traumatic events (sexual or non-sexual) which you think may have contributed to your involvement with “sex as a drug.” These events may be:
a. Intense sexual events
b. Sexual events equated to love
c. Abandonment events from a parent or someone close, such as:
   i. Death
   ii. Desertion
   iii. Neglect
d. Abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, or sexual)

Take Away

1. Where do you go from here? As you think about the questions above, how do you react?
   a. Hard to really relate (Be Thankful)
   b. Kind of “hits home.” (Talk about it with your group or with your leader.)
   c. Way too painful to go there. (Seek out a pastor, professional counselor, or mature
      spiritual leader to begin the process of healing.)

2. What does the following passage say to you about family backgrounds, faith and love?
   What is Jesus’ role in learning to love deeply from the heart?

   “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you
   were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,
   but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen
   before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.
   Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so
   your faith and hope are in God.
   Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love
   for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again,
   not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of
   God.” (1 Peter 1:18-23)

3. Pick out your favorite verse from this chapter and commit it to memory. Meditate on it all
   week long.
Without a doubt our goal is absolute purity.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8)

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his body in a way that is holy and honorable. (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Ephesians 5:3)

However, what do we do when we fail?

The truth of the matter is that we have been completely forgiven by God—completely! So why doesn’t it feel that way sometimes? Even after confessing our sin to God, we can still be discouraged and feel like we are under condemnation. We have at least three sources of condemnation that bombard us with “un-truth.”

1. The Devil—did you know that the Bible calls Satan the “Accuser of the Brethren”? That’s his job! First he lies and tells us it’s “no big deal” to sin this one more time. Then he accuses us and makes us feel condemned.

2. The second “accuser” may be people around us. Sexual sin is reprehensible, but not any more than the “Respectable sins of the Saints,” as Jerry Bridges calls them. Sin is sin, and it’s all bad. Sexual sin can have deeper and more serious consequences, but God equally forgives and cleanses us from the guilt of the offence. Others may not offer that same outpouring of forgiveness.

3. The third culprit in our condemnation is one’s self. Do you find that you sometimes “beat yourself up” after you sin? Do you get mad at yourself for giving in again? Are you just plain sick and tired of this vicious cycle?
Where do we go then? What can we do about these feelings of condemnation? We need to go to the source of Truth and saturate ourselves in it. Paul says in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” You may have heard some of these passages before, but take time to memorize and really meditate on them, and allow God’s truth to wash over you.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1, emphasis added)

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. (1 John 1:8-2:1)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:1-19)

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8-13)

No matter how many times you trip them up, God-loyal people don't stay down long; Soon they're up on their feet, while the wicked end up flat on their faces. (Proverbs 24:16, MSG)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1:7-8)

46
You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:6-11, emphasis added)

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39, emphasis added)

We are told in 1 John 1:9 that confessing our sins leads to God forgiving our sins and cleansing us from unrighteousness. Forgiveness speaks to the guilt over what we’ve done. Cleansing, on the other hand, speaks to the shame of our “badness,” our unacceptability, our contempt for self. It can help free us from lies we believe about ourselves and from our low self-esteem. We have to choose to believe God over these lies. God, knowing we deal with both, has a solution both for our guilt and our shame.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. (Psalm 34:4)
Chapter 9 Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you in the chapter this week?

2. Which passages did you find the most helpful?

3. Do you have any questions about what the Bible has to say about forgiveness?

Take Away

1. Take some extended time with the Lord this week to ask Him, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). Is there anything that you have not confessed to the Lord? Is there anything you have not believed yet that God has forgiven? Will you choose to believe Him or the lie?

2. Pick out your favorite verse from this chapter and commit it to memory. Meditate on it all week long.

3. Are there things you feel you can’t confess to anyone?

NOTE:
After finishing your discussion of this chapter, it is suggested that as a group you look over the next chapter before leaving. The next chapter is the most in depth study section to this point and may need some explanation. Unlike previous chapters, the next chapter requires prior preparation. This can be done in an extended session with the group, or you can do preparation beforehand separately.
### The Role of The Devil

**What Do The Scriptures Say?**

Look over the following passages regarding Satan, his tactics, and God’s instructions on how to deal with him. Write your thoughts on each passage in the “Notes” column on the right.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>PASSAGES:</th>
<th>NOTES:</th>
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| (These passages are not in any particular order, except as they appear in the Bible) | What observations do you make?  
What questions do you have?  
What other passages come to mind? |

Matthew 26:41
Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

John 8:44
[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 10:10
The thief [devil] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
John 17:15
I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

1 Corinthians 10:13
No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5
The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Ephesians 4:26-27
“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Ephesians 6:10-18
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.
1 Thessalonians 3:5
For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.

James 4:7-8
Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

1 Peter 2:11
Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

1 Peter 5:8-10
Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Revelation 12:10-11
Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."
The Role of The Devil

*Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* (Ephesians 6:11-12)

Steve and John’s Stories

Steve: Pornography was so prevalent in the dorms that it became a normal part of Steve’s life during his freshman year in college. By summer break, he was acting out with greater and greater frequency and occasionally he would be sexually active with another person. After the summer, he met a classmate who was a Christian. He got into a Bible study, and just before Thanksgiving, became a follower of Christ. Pornography and masturbation now made him feel really guilty and full of shame. He was able to get free for several months, but when he was under stress toward the end of the school year, the habit came back. He tried to rationalize his struggle. “Everyone struggles with porn and purity,” he thought to himself, but nonetheless every time he gave in to acting out, he felt so full of self-hatred that he began to doubt that God could still love him.

John: John gave his life to Christ in his early twenties while in the US military. His life changed so radically that when John left the military, he went to college, got married, and went on staff with a Christian ministry. John had used pornography and been sexually active before he came to Christ. About 10 years into marriage, after three kids came along, he began to struggle with pornography on TV and the Internet. This was accompanied by masturbation on a regular basis. He thought that his conversion experience had set him free from all of this. (This is a common lie many Christian men believe.) He also struggled with pornographic images when he made love with his wife. He couldn’t get them out of his mind. He felt extremely disheartened and was losing hope that he could ever be free.

The battle to live in sexual purity and to keep our sexual struggles in the light is especially difficult because it involves intense spiritual warfare. As an example of how the demonic is linked to sexual temptation, consider God’s command to Israel to go in and conquer the promised land of Canaan. In many cases, God told Israel to wipe out the entire population of cities because of their sexually idolatrous ways. Two gods of Canaan, Baal-Peor and Ashtorah, were highly erotic in nature—sex and fertility gods—and sexual acts often accompanied their worship. In essence they worshipped the male and female sexual organs. Unclean sexual spirits held participants in this kind of worship captive; the Psalmist notes that there was demonic involvement in this worship of Baal-Peor in Psalm 106.

All sexual acts outside the boundaries of holy matrimony subjugate the worship of Jesus, made possible in Spirit and truth, to the adulation of carnal pleasure and falls into the category of fleshly wisdom that Scripture calls “earthly, natural, demonic” (James 3:15). Acting out in these ways gives Satan legal permission to enslave and afflict those who surrender the members of their bodies to the lusts of the flesh.

Soul Ties

The prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases has taught us that if two people have a sexual relationship, it is as though each is having sex with every partner the other person ever slept
with. The same holds true in the spiritual realm. In sex, the two become one and the spiritual or even demonic influence to which each partner has opened him or herself up can be passed on like a spiritually transmitted disease. This type of bondage is often referred to as a “soul tie.”

A soul tie is a spiritual connection between two people. Beneficial soul ties exist, such as the deep unity possible in marriage where “the two become one flesh,” but other soul ties can be used for the devil’s advantage. Soul ties formed during sex or strong emotional entanglements outside of marriage can cause someone to become scattered, fragmented, and less than the person God created him to be. They hinder one’s ability to develop intimate relationships in the present. A man or woman may be tormented in different ways due to an ungodly soul tie.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever. (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)

One of the reasons that Steve and John continued to struggle even though they were walking with God was that they both had unbroken soul ties with women from emotional bonds and sexual activities in their past that continued to give the enemy a foothold.

Dealing with Sexual Images Stored in the Mind
When people give up the use of pornography, they are still left with a mind full of highly sexualized images. In John’s case, he joined a men’s group and eventually got free from Internet pornography and masturbation. However when he had sex with his wife, he still found himself focusing on pornographic images engraved in his mind. This created an emotional disconnect with his wife that caused him to feel that something was still lacking in their sexual relationship.

Sexual images from our past will pop into the mind, but this in itself is not sin. Sin is entertaining the image and choosing to dwell upon it for our own pleasure. Instead of sliding into a downward spiral of self-condemnation and discontent, we can take our guilt to God in prayer. Realize that the Devil is using these images as a hook of shame to rob us of the full joy God wants us to experience as sexual beings created in His image. We can reject the accusations of the enemy in the name, power, and authority of Jesus Christ. Paul gave us an example of this when a woman possessed by a demon followed him around.

This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her. (Acts 16:18)

The Good News is that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ, and this includes authority over the demonic activity prevalent in unbiblical sexual activity. Although we are no match for Satan and his demons, Jesus is! Once sexual sin has been fully recognized, confessed, renounced or repented of, and forgiveness received, we can take the authority that Jesus Christ has given us to command any demonic spirits to leave and never return.

Note: Appendix 3 is an excellent follow up on this chapter with practical steps for moving forward; it is intended to be used one-on-one between a person and his mentor.
Chapter 10 Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you from the Scripture passages you looked at?

2. What questions came to mind regarding Satan and his role in the battle for sexual purity?

3. What did you find helpful from this chapter? Was there anything in the chapter that was confusing?

Take Away

1. Pick out your favorite verse from this chapter and commit it to memory. Meditate on it all week long.

2. If you have struggled with sexual images that you cannot eliminate from your thoughts, please Appendix 3 and then share your struggle with someone who can walk through the process with you.

Going Deeper

Appendix 3 is an excellent step-by-step guide for Spiritual Warfare Healing Prayer to:
- Deal with un-confessed sin
- Break ungodly commitments and vows you’ve made
- Renounce and break soul ties
- Deal with sexual images
Summary

Transformation in the life of a believer is a process of learning to live as a child of God, beginning at conversion and continuing until physical death. People were created in the image of God to relate with Him and enjoy His companionship forever. We need to learn this truth because sin has severed our relationship with God and actively hinders its restoration. Our separation from God has left us fearful and distrustful of Him and others around us. God has provided the means of restoration through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. By believing in Him and living in open, intimate relationship with Him and with others, God miraculously transforms us into His likeness. However, in our sinfulness, we struggle to relate with Him. Failing, we seek to quench our thirst with false idols that seem to satisfy, but they only backfire as they ultimately separate us further from God and intensify the pain of our isolation.

In our isolation, we often substitute false intimacy for true intimacy and end up feeling even emptier. Adam and Eve were created to relate intimately with each other, as well as with God. This was God’s design for their sexuality. But fear of rejection causes us to not be real with others and we can end up holding them at a distance. Sometimes we create an illusion of control through compulsive sexual behavior. However, our pain and shame only intensify and affect others over time. Violating God’s design has sometimes severe negative consequences (just as living according to God’s design can have wonderful positive consequences).

To live within God’s design, the cycles of our compulsive sexual behavior need to be recognized and interrupted. We need to identify the circumstances that prompt our addictive cycle and plan ways to escape. Like the iceberg, much of our draw to sexual temptation is actually below the surface and we’re not even aware of it. A big step toward overcoming sexual compulsion is to face our emptiness without the self-medication of sexual pleasure. By bringing that emptiness before God, He can begin to satisfy our deepest longings.

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. (Isaiah 55:1-2)

As in every aspect of life, understanding and embracing God’s plan for sexuality will bring great reward. God satisfies us when we surrender ourselves to Him, abandoning our self-protective, destructive, and futile methods. When we confess our sin and inadequacy in overcoming sexual temptations, God steps in and begins to dispense His Living Water to quench the thirst of our soul. Instead of battling harder to ward off temptation, by faith we can begin to experience His presence and experience intimacy with Him and others according to our created design. This relationship with God requires devotion and discipline in seeking Him through reading Scripture, praying, and enjoying fellowship with believers who are honestly walking the same path. It also requires ongoing, vulnerable interaction with a few other friends in which we can open up like we have in this study, about many subjects and longings in addition to sexuality.

God has promised to honor faithful dependence on Him, and He knows what we need to progress in our life-long journey of growing into His mature children. Over the course of our lives, each temptation is an opportunity to live by faith; it is not another reason to experience condemnation and ultimately give into our sinful desires but to embrace His design for us. Living by faith can bring new understanding and a deeper intimacy with our Creator.

We entered into this study through the common, and sometimes shame-inducing, experience of sexual temptation, but we don’t want to end there. The following pages present the big picture of God’s GOOD design for human sexuality, and they hold in proper Biblical tension the balance of freedom and responsibility that we all have as sexual beings created in the image of God.

### The Big Picture

God wants us to live well. He designed our sexuality to be a blessing and a joy. Living well always involves understanding and living within boundaries for maximum health—sexual and otherwise. Responsible parents set boundaries for their children because kids can quickly fall into danger they are not ready to handle. Apart from outright danger, parents often know that awakening desires before their time can also be detrimental for healthy development.

Song of Solomon, a book on the process of a couple joining together as betrothed and then married, is full of sexual references. It provides a vivid picture of how God views sex and sexuality and offers a bit of a blueprint for how we should live out his good plan. Verse 4 in chapter 8 offers wisdom to us regarding desires: “Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires” (emphasis added).

Boundaries protect children. The same is true with adults, particularly in the area of our sexuality. Wise people set boundaries for themselves. Our heavenly Father has given us boundaries that help us “protect the sacredness of sex.” This reveals something about God’s heart—He knows that living out our sexuality outside His loving boundaries can have serious ramifications. In His love for us, God desires that we avoid what would be dangerous or detrimental.

What else might this reveal about God’s heart?
How do the people around you feel about living within sexual boundaries? By their actions, most young adults—believers and non-believers alike—seem to think that they know better than God what healthy boundaries are.

Following are just a few of the many passages about sex in the Bible. We’ve selected these because they express God’s best for us—the “grace boundaries” that come from God’s protectively jealous love for us. These boundaries are both a gift of His grace and a part of His design.

**Value of Boundaries**

First Corinthians 6:12-20 gives great insight into God’s purposes for our sexuality:

> “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them to a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (Emphasis added)

In 1 Timothy 5:1-2 we read about absolute purity as a way of life:

> Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

**Sexuality and Singleness**

The apostle Paul was likely single when he wrote to the Corinthians. Jesus and Daniel are among the famous biblical singles! Others, like Moses, married later in life. The Scriptures seem to indicate that their singleness helped prepare them for their positions of influence.

Unfortunately, a single person can deal with their sexuality in unhealthy ways. For example:

- Suppression: denying that needs and desires exist and operating as if they didn’t.
- Full expression: acting on one’s desires regardless of God’s boundaries.
Full expression, in particular, is the culturally suggested option. As a result, trusting God’s plan for sexuality in singleness is often not easy in our hyper-sexualized culture. Yet following that plan has many benefits, not the least of which is building trust between a man and a woman.

Without trust nothing lasting is built into a relationship. Allowing for a period of life devoted to courtship without sex is the best gift two people in love could claim for themselves. It is the heart of Romance. Paula Rinehart, *Sex and the Soul of a Woman* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004)

**God’s Design for Seasons without Sex**

There are options beyond suppression and full expression. Your physical and sexual energies can be translated through God’s power into fruitful outlets. Two practical tools that can help manage sexual surges are redirecting and reframing. *Redirecting* takes sexual energy and uses it to motivate other activities and accomplishments. *Reframing* sees into the deeper meaning of sexual desire, allowing such perspective to inspire greater wholeness.

*Redirecting* sexual desires into relational intimacy can make a big difference. What does this mean practically? When your sexual ache is strongest, your greatest need, as a follower of Christ, is to actively seek a meaningful connection with God and with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Realize that your deepest need isn't for a sexual buzz but rather for genuine intimacy. To meet your intimacy needs in healthy and godly ways may mean taking time out to experience personal worship time with God through prayer, listening to praise music, reading or studying Scripture, talking with a friend by phone, socializing with a church group, or spending the evening with a close friend over dinner engaging in meaningful, “below-the-surface” conversation.

Honest and intimate same-sex friendships with accountability (and sometimes even commiseration!) can help absorb sexual energy in healthy ways. You can redirect it into other activities as well. Strenuous physical activity increases adrenaline and can help you cope.

*Reframing* creatively renews your mind sexually, allowing you to seek new definitions and perspectives for old ideas. Reframe your sexual surges from simple hormonal horniness, focusing instead on your deeper desire for intimacy. With this reframing, enjoy the freedom of being single and engaging in authentic relationship with friends and family. Reframe the idea that sexual desire has to lead to erotic sexual behaviors to the fact that it *does not* have to lead to that. Erotic sexual fulfillment isn’t a “right” but a blessing that God gives—one that should be enjoyed only in a God-honoring manner and context. Reframing this issue is an opportunity to learn lessons about self-control.

**God’s Design for Sexuality**

One significant part of sexual morality that is not often explored by churched people is God’s intended purpose of sexuality. The church often tends to paint sexuality more as
a snare and battleground than as a beautifully designed aspect of God’s created plan. Without also painting the picture of the desirability of a God-centered sexuality, the church can lean toward all “stick” and no “carrot.” Teens and young adults often get told what not to do, but rarely explore the God-intended expression, value, and blessing of their sexuality. Very rarely would they ever hear of what some would call the “sacredness of sex.”

Let us, therefore, take time to further reflect on the design God has for sexuality.

In the Bible, sexuality, when properly bound, is described as a God-designed blessing. Standing against the meaning, value, and blessing of God-centered sexuality are its depiction by media, youth culture, secularism, the world, the flesh, and the demonic.

As we’ve looked at already, God’s design for sexuality speaks not just to its meaning, value, and blessing, but also to limitations, boundaries, and improper expressions. Yet, we live in a sexualized culture. Unfortunately, studies indicate that most young adults’ beliefs—both for believers and non-believers—are far closer to our culture’s view of sex than the Bible’s view.

**Metaphorical Significance of Sexuality**

If you are open to a mind-blowing perspective on sex, consider this. We live in a world full of parallels to heavenly/spiritual realities. This symbolism foreshadows much of the heavenly experience in eternity. Therefore, some of the meaning of sexuality can possibly be better understood as we explore this question: What does the created design of man and woman’s sexuality tell us about God and His nature?

Consider the following passages:

> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:24-25)

> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. (John 17:20-21)

Consider now a key concept: explore the following verses for links between our picture of sexuality and our picture of God’s relationship with us.

> Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14)

> I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2-3, emphasis added)
The thing that has me so upset is that I care about you so much—this is the passion of God burning inside me! I promised your hand in marriage to Christ, presented you as a pure virgin to her husband. And now I’m afraid that exactly as the Snake seduced Eve with his smooth patter, you are being lured away from the simple purity of your love for Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2-3, MSG)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Jealousy can be either a positive or negative word, although today we most commonly consider it negative. The protective jealousy of a husband whose wife is targeted, stalked, or threatened is a very positive thing. In the same way, God’s “jealousy for us” is very positive.

Nevertheless, as you see in Galatians 5:19-20, there can be negative or ungodly jealousy, too:

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions. (emphasis added)

Second Corinthians 11 talks of “godly jealousy,” while Galatians 5 talks of a jealousy that we are warned to avoid. They are two very different things.

**Sex Within Marriage**

The Bible speaks of sex within marriage very differently than sex as a single. John MacArthur captures it when he said, “Within marriage, sex is beautiful, fulfilling and creative. Outside of marriage, it is ugly, destructive and damning.”

One illustration describes it in terms of fire. A fire in a fireplace is a welcome, good thing. It provides warmth and atmosphere to a home. But a fire in the middle of the living room, on the carpet, will destroy the house. So it is with sex. Lived out within the right boundaries, it is a welcome and good thing. Outside those boundaries, it will destroy lives.

In Genesis 2:24, we learn a foundational truth for what God intends for a sexual relationship, when “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” This verse gives us a picture of “the fireplace.” A man and woman are united in marriage and they become one flesh. In this context, sex is a welcome and good thing in God’s eyes.

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your
fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. (Proverbs 5:15-18)

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The 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. 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. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (Hebrews 13:4)

The phrase “marriage bed kept pure” implies that true sex is reserved for the marriage bed, between a married couple only. Anything else would make the bed impure. At a minimum, “true sex” includes all intercourse behavior (oral, anal, vaginal) and mutual orgasms. However, true sex may include other erotic sexual behaviors as well, especially those including genital expression.

The Pathway of Sensitivity

In Ephesians 4:17-19, there are two key words for us as we seek to honor God with our sexuality.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (emphasis added)

Reflect on these two words—sensitivity and sensuality. They differ greatly and can inform your approach to sexual purity. Our world seems to have an agenda for helping people grow in “sensuality.” There are significant ramifications of that agenda for men and women as opposed to a “sensitivity” agenda. Sensuality would discourage modesty, while sensitivity would encourage it, for example. Sensuality is for my pleasure, benefit, and good. Sensitivity is for the pleasure, benefit, and good of another.

Meanwhile, in various Christian circles the pathway to purity has often been described as, “Don’t look at their beautiful body or you’ll be tempted to lust and fall into immorality,” or some variation of this theme. This approach, though needed sometimes, fails to bring grace and kindness into our relationships with other sexual beings. For example, if others refuse to look a beautiful person in the eye, that person might feel a sense of shame as in “something is wrong with me…others can’t even look at me…my beauty is too powerful…I’m seductive without trying to seduce…I’m flawed….” Many an attractive woman has a love/hate relationship with her beauty.
Ephesians 1:18 refers to “the eyes of your heart.” What do the eyes of your heart see when you notice a very beautiful person? A highly seductive person? A body? Or a whole person with joys and fears, interests and cares? While the approach of “not looking” may occasionally be helpful or even necessary, not looking is not the ultimate goal. We need to address the longings of our hearts. Then, choosing what you look at is no longer such a battle. What a person chooses to focus on is a reflection of what is in one’s heart.

Closing Thought

Imagine what might change (or is changing) as you embrace the reality of the God who jealously loves you and calls you into pure devotion to Him. It’s very likely that how you think about your identity will change, and perhaps your thinking has already started changing. For example, you may notice a difference in how comfortable you are with your sexual identity and in being with people of the opposite sex.

God invented sex. He designed us as sexual beings. Our sexuality, in a mysterious way, somehow reflects aspects of God’s nature. Unfortunately, God’s design has been corrupted. The boundaries He created for the appropriate and fulfilling experience of sex get ignored and violated, and we suffer consequences, not only in our own lives, but our relationships with others, including God Himself, also suffer. When we live outside the boundaries God created, sex masters us rather than serves us. Thankfully there is also the beautiful picture of a redeemed sexuality, which can enhance relationships rather than be a source of temptation and shame.
Chapter 11 Discussion Questions:

1. How would you describe God’s intention for our sexuality? What are its meaning and purpose?

2. What do/did you enjoy most about being single? Least?

3. What effect does suppressing or denying one’s sexual desires have? How about full expression without the right boundaries?

4. How would you describe “becoming one flesh”?

5. What do you think the Bible means when it says that a person’s body belongs to one’s spouse? Why is mutual possessiveness (or exclusiveness) of each other’s bodies important to marriage?

6. Are there changes in your thoughts and actions that you need to make as you embrace God’s design for sex and sexuality?

Take Away

1. In order to continue to move forward in purity, what support and practices would benefit you to have in place?

2. Apart from the fact that sex is designed by God to be appealing, what have you learned about your heart to explain why is sex so appealing to you? What illegitimate reasons make sex such a draw? What kinds of things can you do to get and keep your heart healthy so you’re not looking to sex to meet needs that it wasn’t designed to meet
The bond between mother and child is foundational for a child's sense of personality, morality, and emotional well-being. We want to touch on the importance of the mother-child relationship and the deep wounding that occurs when there is deprivation or dysfunction in that relationship. Difficulties in mother-infant bonding occur for many reasons, some of which have to do with the mother, and some have to do with circumstances. Many mothers love their children very much but have lives that are not conducive to creating attentive, nurturing homes for their little ones. The mother may be depressed and withdrawn, have several other kids, or a husband who abandoned her, resulting in a great deal of stress and anxiety. The financial difficulties of the family may force the mother to work outside the home during critical stages of development. Or young parents may simply be unaware of the importance of what is happening developmentally in the child during this early stage of life.

**Early Bonding**

The first year of life is a critical stage in the bonding of mother and child. It is then that the baby begins to take into his tiny world a sense that he is one who is loved and receive what Frank Lake calls a “sense of being.” “It is a core sense of warmth that enables the baby to peacefully exist, without feeling a need to earn his acceptability.”(1) A sense of being establishes a foundation of security and confidence upon which the child's personality develops. When acceptance has been internalized, the child has a sense of self. With that sense of self, he or she can enter into relationship with another person without experiencing overwhelming anxiety.

The dread that an infant experiences at mom's absence in early life makes him feel as though he is ceasing to exist. That dread that he feels when separated from mother powerfully impacts him, and is recorded as sensations in his little body. Because the child is pre-verbal and cannot think and rationalize as adults do, a lot of pain gets repressed.

Latter in life, the person may still feel this pain as anxiety, fear, or depression. It may even be the root of his fear of intimacy. The prospect of emotional vulnerability can raise a subconscious dread of annihilation.

**The Absent or Rejecting Mother**

As the child grows he sometimes does not get the nurture that he should from his mother. The result is a distressing sense of emptiness, loneliness and restlessness. A mother's rejection is often indirect and is experienced as a series of small breaks in trust. Young children often misinterpret their mother's action's, suspecting that they are somehow responsible for them.

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Examples of indirect actions that contribute to a sense of rejection are:

- A constantly angry mom.
- A depressed, unresponsive, low energy mom.
- A mood swinging, unpredictable mom.
- A mom who verbally bashes men in general and her husband in particular whom the child loves. If the child is male, he feels that he is also bad and unacceptable.

It is not uncommon for adult men to hold beliefs such as, "I can never succeed at making a woman happy." And "Women see me as an irritant. I have no value in their eyes." These men will simultaneously desire and avoid committed relationships with women, but not know exactly why.

**The Over-protective or Engulfing Mother**

During the first year of life, the infant does not know that he is separate from his mother. But between ages 1 and 3 the baby starts to realize that he is an individual and starts to test his separateness. A mother should let the child individuate from her. She can make the play area safe so he won't hurt himself, but will give him space to experience his separateness. She sets proper boundaries where they are needed, but she primarily serves as home base, so that the child can go off and explore alone. Mom is there to welcome him back. She doesn't clutch onto the child and inhibit his exploration or punish him when he returns. She facilitates separation and individuation.

A mother who is over attached to her baby will not let him separate. She will be over-protective and keep him inordinately close to her. Lack of separation between mother and child can reach a serious level when **she uses him to nurture herself with his love**.

Without realizing that his inner being is being invaded by a larger-than-life mother, the child's individuality is emotionally engulfed. He has no ability to separate as he grows physically and does not develop an understanding of boundaries. As an adult, he will often be passive in relating to women because he has a generalized sense of powerlessness and does not feel equal. He feels diminished in the presence of a strong woman and has no sense of control in the relationship.

In extreme cases, mothers can be emotionally incestuous with sons. Emotional incest can be as devastating as physical sexual abuse and is especially common for mothers who do not have a good relationship with their husbands. Sometimes a son will stay in the role of meeting his mother's love-needs for years. The so-called "Good Boy Syndrome." At other times a young man will become so sick of the clinging mom that, instead of gradually becoming separate, he rebels and ruptures the relationship. He jumps from being enmeshed to: "I hate you!" So he never separates in a healthy manner. When the residue of the mother-son relationship is not resolved, there is a tendency to write off the opposite-sex completely. Many homosexual men were "good boys."

**Revenge**

Illicit sexual acting-out carries an element of hatred and revenge towards the opposite sex. A man who has gratuitous sex with a woman subtly denies her worth. By using her as an object that
serves only his carnal, sensual needs, he disdains her emotional and spiritual value. Thus, he pays her back for his sense of worthlessness that he attributes to women. Consciously or unconsciously he acts out revenge for the pain that he has suffered in relationship with women.

In Genesis 2: 18 God states, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." A man's hatred of women keeps him safe from the vulnerability of his neediness. At a very deep level he senses and resents his need for the affirmation of women. The concepts of staying emotionally safe and enacting revenge are two sides of the same coin. A person exploring his motivation must look at how the two concepts are connected in his style of relating to women.

A man cannot help but transfer emotional elements of his relationship with his mother to other women. With the grace of Jesus and the understanding of other safe people, he must face the wounds incurred in early relationships with his mother and/or other women so that he can offer forgiveness, renounce hatred and move toward authentic intimacy in present-day relationships.
Appendix 1 Discussion questions:

1. "Being" is a core sense of security that enables a person to peacefully exist without having to earn acceptance. It is the ability to trust that one is loved and significant even if he is doing nothing to earn that significance. Describe your "sense of being." Where does your acceptance and significance come from?

2. How do you stay emotionally safe in relating to the opposite sex?

3. How do you enact revenge in relating to the opposite sex?

4. In The Road Less Traveled, M. Scott Peck defines love as, "The will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." He adds that love always requires "an act of work or courage." How does this idea of love impact the way you think about relating to the opposite sex.
A father has a unique role in establishing a child's sense of value and identity. He communicates value through his spiritual and emotional connection with his child. He expresses connection through attention, conversation, and play. He points out the uniqueness of the child's gifts, calling and personality, and he also, affirms him/her with his personal interest in their welfare. When this connection is missing the child's emotional and spiritual development may flounder.

Both the mother's and father's love are essential for a child to have a complete sense of being loved and valued. Without the sense of well-being from mother, and the sense of protection and strength from father, the erotic drive that emerges in adolescents may be misunderstood and misused. Rather than seeing sex as something that adds to the beauty of a committed monogamous relationship, a son may see "scoring" as proof that he is adequate, potent and manly. A daughter may use sex as a substitute for the missing love and affirmation of her father.

Fathers have a high degree of influence on the identity development and behavior of their children through teaching and life example. If a father models and teaches behaviors that are spiritually, emotionally and sexually appropriate, his children will more likely be comfortable in their sexual identity and behavior. Fathers also have a unique place in the family by symbolically representing God the Father. If a father misrepresents the truth about God, his authority and influence can have damaging effects on his children.

Distortions to the Image of God

There has been much written about the damage done by absent, cruel, shaming, addicted and/or unfaithful fathers. Almost every person can tell stories of times he was hurt or disappointed by his father's words, actions or absence. But let's focus now on how our fathers may have shaped our view of God. Sandra D Wilson in her book, Counseling Adult Children of Alcoholics, (Dallas, Word Publishing, 1989) identifies five distortions of God that come through fathers to their children.

1. The Cruel and Capricious God
   The family environment established by the father was one of fear due to emotional neglect, coupled with harsh treatment. Thus the concept of the fatherhood of God does not sound inviting or comforting to the grown child. Scripture reading and prayer will be accompanied with subtle fear and painful expectation of being punished by God for not meeting His standards. To this person closeness to God means pain.

2. The Demanding and Unforgiving God
   The demanding/unforgiving God is a few shades less frightening than the cruel and capricious God. One may earn His approval, but only through hard work and doing “Good Christian” deeds. Here the father was a demanding perfectionist but offered little nurture. This child may become a "Good Christian" adult with the wrong motivation.
3. The Selective and Unfair God
The selective and unfair God might love others, but not the one who holds this view of God. The child in this scenario carried his sense of "being different and not as good as others" over into his relationship with God. When a person holds this view of God, he gives mental assent to the scriptures that indicate he is a beloved child of God, but in his heart still believes that God discriminates by treating His other children better.

4. The Distant and Unavailable God
This view of God often results when dad was not in the home due to death or early abandonment. It can also result from his emotional absence or passivity. The person may believe that God loves him but does not expect God to interact with him in a personal way.

5. The Kind and Confused God
In this view, God the father is loving, but weak and ineffective in dealing with the problems of the world or the individual. Here the child has seen his father be confused, weak and ineffective in handling family chaos. The child then transfers his observations to a heavenly father who cannot intervene positively in the lives of his children.

6. The Sexually Perverse God
There is another view that is fairly common with victims of a father's physical or emotional incest. Here the person feels that God will somehow become sexual if his worship becomes too intimate. When he feels close to God, the person also feels sexual arousal. This experience is shameful, confusing, and leaves the person struggling with much ambivalence about himself and God.

Forgiving Our Fathers

We need to face the reality that our earthly fathers have failed us in many ways. We need to forgive them and let the love of god as Father, permeate our hearts. But forgiveness cannot be transacted with one general prayer. It is a process of identifying and releasing specific loss, hurt and disappointment. It also involves letting go of protective vows that we have made in response to those hurts.

For example, one man I know decided early in life that he would not trust or accept any encouragement from men. His father had ridiculed and embarrassed him on multiple occasions. As a result he viewed all men in authority as a threat and his emotional posture with men was friendly but guarded. Subconsciously he was controlled by the vow, "I will survive this relationship without being shamed." He refused to allow himself to want anything from another man and came across as competent and self-reliant.

It was only after he identified his hurt and the vow he made in response to the hurt that he was able to admit his hunger for affirmation from "strong" men in his life. As he repented of his self-protective vow his heart softened and he was able to enter into much deeper and more satisfying relationships with men and women.
Appendix 2 Discussion Questions:

1. List any of the symptoms of a wounding father relationship that you identified in this appendix.

2. Which distortions of God were you able to relate to? Describe them and connect them to your relationship with your earthly father.

3. How do you view masculinity and men? How do you measure up to your image of a “real man”?

4. Identify any vows you have made that impact your relationships with men and women. Connect them with wounding events from your past and take them to God in prayer. Choose to forgive your father and ask for forgiveness and freedom from your self-protective vow.

5. What is one action you can take this week to improve your relationship with a man in your life and with God?
Appendix Three: A Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory

_A companion to Chapter 10 intended to be used one-on-one with a mentor._

Going through this _Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory_ will help you determine where you are in your experience of sexual purity as it relates to spiritual warfare. An excellent way to do this is to spend an hour or two alone with God, listening to Him and seeking His help in dealing with the demonic element of your struggle with purity.

Once you’re alone with God, you can prepare yourself for a time of listening by praying through the guidelines listed below. Then listen to God over the following questions that focus on your past, present, and your past in your present.

1. **Still and quiet your soul** – *But I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.* (Psalm 131:2) This is not a test of how spiritual you are. Don’t try too hard. _Relax_ and trust the new heart Jesus gave you.

2. **Exercise authority over the enemy** – Pray something like, _In the name of Jesus Christ I prohibit any voice or influence of the world, the flesh, the devil, and even my own understanding from speaking or interfering with this time._ (James 4:7)

3. **Invoke His presence** – Acknowledge Him as the One who is truly present. Pray something like, _Come, Lord Jesus, in a special way, and manifest Your presence during this time of listening._ (Psalm 70:1)

4. **Invite God to search your heart** – Ask Him to search you and then talk to Him about what He reveals, and confess any sin. (Psalm 139:23-24)

5. **Ask God to communicate with you** – _Speak, Lord, for I am listening._ (1 Samuel 3:9-10)

6. **Wait in silence** – Quiet your heart with the words, _My soul, wait in silence for God alone. Be still and know that I am God._ (Psalm 62:1)

7. **Write down your impressions** – These may be words, phrases, visual images, or thoughts that come into your mind through the still small voice of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

**My Present**

1. _Father God, are there any areas of unconfessed sexual sin in my life that I have not brought to you and confessed as sin, renounced, and fully dealt with, including the resulting demonic attachments?_ (List those things that come to mind on a separate piece of paper).

**My Past**

2. _Lord Jesus, would You reveal to me any ungodly souls ties I have formed with other people throughout my entire life that may be hindering me from walking in purity and devotion to You?_ (This could also be a soul tie with a parent, sibling, or other enmeshed relations from the past. List any names that come to mind on a separate piece of paper).
My Past in the Present

3. Holy Spirit, are there any sexual or emotional images, sexual phrases or fetishes that I treasured in my heart in the past that still trouble me in my present-day life? (Don’t be in a hurry. List anything that comes to mind on a separate piece of paper).

Employing the Authority of Christ to Dethrone the Enemy

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 18:18-19

The Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory may have exposed areas where the enemy has gained access to you through sexual imagery and activity that you haven’t completely confessed or fully dealt with. When a person deals with spiritual strongholds and/or the demonic, it’s best to do so with at least one other person present. If you’re part of a Walking in the Light group, you may want to pray together through many of the following prayers in your next meeting.

The man who is struggling should pray through the prayers of renunciation for himself. This is important. If the person feels unsure of what to pray, he can pray after someone else leads in these prayers. Others present can agree with their prayer and pray God’s protection over them.

Unconfessed Sexual Sin

Sexual sin that is unconfessed or only partially dealt with can give the demonic a foothold in our lives and make our struggle seem next to hopeless. Ephesians 4:27 alludes to demonic footholds. Once God has revealed areas of sexual sin, it will be necessary to thoroughly deal with any foothold the enemy may have gained through it. Pray through the following steps in the name of the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth:

- Confess the area(s) of sexual sin specifically,
- Ask for forgiveness,
- Receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ,
- Renounce the sexual sin(s),
- Exercise the authority of Christ by commanding any demon that may have gained access to you to leave and never return, and
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to fill the vacated places.

After you’ve prayed through these steps, ask Jesus if He has something to communicate with you. Often He has a word that can take the healing even deeper. Men and women who struggle with sexual sin usually find new freedom in their sexuality when, after confession of sin, they specifically command Baal, Ashtoreth, and any other sexual demonic spirits to leave and never return.
Sample Renunciation Prayer:

_In the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth I confess and renounce these areas of sexual sin _________ . I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank you Jesus for shedding Your blood for the remission of sin. I receive Your forgiveness. Furthermore, in the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I command Baal, Ashtoreth, as well as any other demonic sexual spirits that may have gained access to me through this sin to now go to wherever Jesus would send you and never return. I further command that these demonic spirits not retaliate against me or any members of my family. Finally I ask You Holy Spirit to fill any vacated places._

Spoken Commitments

Take out your list of soul ties from your _Spiritual Warfare Listening Prayer Inventory_. In any of these relationships, did you make spoken commitments, vows, or simple statements such as, _I will love you forever; I will never love another._ You need to renounce these spoken covenants in order to break the soul tie. When you renounce something, you “take it back” in the authority of Jesus. Because you made the statement verbally, you also renounce it verbally in prayer, making the promise void and empty of power.

For example, Sharon dated several boys in high school and college, but none of these relationships went deep emotionally or sexually. That changed when she was in graduate school.

“I never knew it could be like this,” she told Phil the first time they had sex. “You’re the only one who’s ever made me feel this way.” When Phil finished his degree, he took a job in another state, but they talked often by phone and made plans for Sharon to visit him. After a couple of months, though, he told her he wanted to back off from their relationship and date others. Sharon was sure he would change his mind once they were together, but he told her not to come. “I’m sorry, but it’s over,” he said, and hung up.

While they were dating, Sharon had several times told Phil, “You’re the only man I’ll ever love.” Now, sick with anger and grief, she declared, “I’ll never be able to love anyone else.” This, then, is the spoken covenant Sharon needs to renounce to break her soul tie with Phil.

Get Rid of Any Gifts Exchanged

Gifts symbolize a relationship and can hold a soul tie in place. If you have a ring, personal gifts, cards, letters, pictures, jewelry, and other “relationship gifts” from a previous relationship, it’s time to get rid of them. Holding onto such gifts symbolizes that this relationship is still important to you, and can actually hold the soul tie in place even after it has been renounced.

Renounce and Break Soul Ties

Sexual contact in relationships (including petting) can create a soul tie that links your soul to another person and hinders you in the area of sexual and emotional wholeness. A man in his late twenties sought help after persistent struggles with Internet pornography. As part of the healing process, soul ties he had formed through premarital sex and abuse were renounced and broken as outlined in this chapter. This dealt a deathblow to pornography use in his life and brought stronger, deeper intimacy into his marriage.
Pray through the following steps in the name of the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth:

- Specifically confess the soul tie or covenant
- Ask for forgiveness
- Receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ
- Renounce the soul tie
- Exercise the authority of Christ by commanding any demon that gained access to you through the soul tie or covenant to leave and never return
- In the name of Jesus Christ:
  - Give back anything your soul may have received from the other person
  - Take back anything your soul may have given to them
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to fill the vacated places

Sample Soul Tie Breaking Prayer

In the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth I confess and renounce my soul tie with or promise I made to . I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank you Jesus for dying for my sins. I receive Your forgiveness. Furthermore, in the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ, I now break this soul tie giving back anything I took from as well as taking back anything he or she took from me. In Jesus’ name I command any and all demonic spirits that may have gained access to me through this sin to now go to wherever Jesus would send you and never return. I further command that these demonic spirits not retaliate against me or any members of my family. Finally I ask You Holy Spirit to fill any vacated places.

Dealing with Sexual Images

Sexual images we’ve viewed will often keep troubling us even though we’re no longer acting out. The first step in dealing with this foothold is to confess to the Lord Jesus the sin of having opened the door in this way, to repent of whatever was done, and to ask for His forgiveness and then receive it. It’s also good to restate our commitment to keep the door to our soul closed to inappropriate images.

The most effective way is to bring the images to the foot of the Cross and ask God to take them away. Often Jesus will give us a picture or sense of what He does with the images we offered to Him. Finally, we can ask God if He has something He wants to give in return for what we offered Him.

For example, George had been deep into pornography during his high school years. There were several magazines he had that he had looked at weekly for several years. Before graduation he came to Christ, later went to college, got married, and was doing well in his career. Oftentimes the images he had treasured in his high school years would pop into his mind either when he was making love to his wife, or when he was away on business trips. He had tried everything to get free. He became a part of a men’s group through a church in his city and prayed through the steps in this section and God gave him freedom from them for the first time at 39 years of age. When we gathered the images together, laid them at Jesus feet, and asked him to take them away,
he exclaimed, “I can’t believe they’re gone. Jesus zapped them into all eternity and they’re no
longer there!” When we asked what Jesus might want to give him in return, he had a picture of
himself kneeling before Jesus like a knight of old kneeling before the king. Jesus had a sword in
His hand and extended it to touch his head, shoulders and heart making the sign of a cross. It
took him a while to gain his composure, but as Jesus made the sign of the cross he pronounced
him to be “pure of heart.”

If you are present as a support for the person who’s been confessing, you can then pray, I ask
that the neural pathways with the images would be destroyed and new pure and holy pathways
would replace them. If both of you are comfortable with this idea, you can lay hands on the
person’s head or shoulder, or even anoint him with oil. Then ask him to pray in agreement with
your prayer.

The process of calling the elders to pray for healing as described in James 5:14-16 is also very
applicable here. If you do this in a men’s group setting, the men of the group can act as elders.
Appendix Four: Grief and Loss

This section may prove helpful for someone who has identified painful experiences in their past that don’t seem to be completely resolved. It can also help those struggling with a sense of loss as they seek to give up certain sinful sexual practices that have provided comfort in the past.

Grief and Loss: The Path to Freedom

Grief is a multi-faceted response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or something to which a bond was formed. Grief may be triggered by the death of a loved one. People can also experience grief if they have an illness for which there is no cure, or a chronic condition that affects their quality of life. The loss of anything valuable can cause grief. Including:

- Loss of financial stability
- A loved one’s serious illness
- Losing a job
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a cherished dream
- Loss of a friendship

Myths and Facts About Grief

Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.
Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

Myth: It’s important to “be strong” in the face of loss.
Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn’t mean you are weak. You don’t need to “protect” your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

Myth: If you don’t cry, it means you aren’t sorry about the loss.
Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it’s not the only one. Those who don’t cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others; they may simply have other ways of showing it.

Myth: Grief should last about a year.
Fact: There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person.

Source: Center for Grief and Healing

Some people, instead of processing grief, stuff the pain and try to move on and forget the loss. This can have dangerous consequences. Stuffing grief is like building a dam. Once the dam is in place, it becomes hard to process other losses, whatever their nature. The dam bottles up all pain, not just the single experience that a person wants to forget, and so a backlog of grief collects behind the dam. Eventually, the dam develops leaks due to the pressure of the backlog and strange behaviors ensue. Anger, bitterness, depression, coldness, loneliness, fear of intimacy, and compulsive behaviors are a few of the possible experiences that may “leak” out.
Not processing grief could also be analogous to not cleaning out a wound. Left un-cleaned, the wound cannot heal. It may scar over, but will remain painful and likely get infected, increasing the tenderness and sensitivity. Cleaning out the wound may be horrifically painful, but once done, it allows the wound to heal, thus avoiding serious complications. A period of intense pain can prevent years or even a lifetime of lingering pain and relational dysfunction. “Wounds that are not processed are passed on.” We must realize that God will be with us through the process.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. - Romans 8:18

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. – Psalm 23:4

Major losses in life often occur during childhood. Well-meaning parents may actually train a child to stuff the pain rather than process it, thinking that this is the better course. Or, a child may not find anyone willing to listen, and so is left to sort things out on his own, usually in an unhealthy fashion.

Going back to grieve old losses that were never adequately processed can often resolve anger, coldness, compulsive behaviors and other symptoms of unprocessed grief. It may be profitable to seek some help from a trusted mentor or counselor if you suspect that there is a dam of unprocessed grief in your life. Talking through the circumstances of a major loss – even if you think it has no bearing on the present – often leads to healing of wounds that you aren’t even aware of.

You may be thinking, “Isn’t there some way to get around facing the pain and embarrassment of grief and loss?” I believe the answer is no. There are two types of losses that must be grieved. We have already talked about the present loss of our sinful behavior and its medicating effects. But there are also past losses that are less obvious. These losses feel more abstract and involve the loss of essential human contact with important people in our past. Examples of this type of loss are:

• The loss of warmth and affection from an angry mother which leaves a sense of emptiness.
• The loss of wisdom and guidance from a father who was absent, harsh, or emotionally distant.
• The loss of personal uniqueness due to receiving constant criticism and rejection instead of affirmation.
• The loss of personal dignity as a result of having been used for someone else’s purposes.
• The loss of trust in intimate relationships because of repeated disappointments.

What happens when we do not process our losses? Simply put, we stay stuck. We don’t learn to live in present day reality. We remain blind to how we put our hope in self-focused strategies that can’t give life and we remain blind to how we are using others (in actuality and in fantasy) to compensate for our sense of emptiness.

Believe Jesus when he says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”
Appendix 4 Discussion Questions:

1. Can you relate to the experiences of loss over the course of your lifetime – loss of a loved one, end of a friendship, death of a pet, loss of something valuable, the end of a dream?

2. What are some of the losses you are aware of in your life? Who is someone you could tell about the details of your loss? Someone who would ask sensitive questions and help you process the loss further?
In a critical passage on how to deal with temptation, Jesus lays down an indispensable principle that we must understand if we are to have hope in our own battle with temptation. Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). Jesus made the written Word of God the solid foundation for our lives.

There are at least three main components or facets of God’s Word that enable us to live “blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which we shine like stars in the universe” (Philippians 2:15). God’s Word is a weapon, a cleansing agent, and the source of God’s promises. These three facets will be delved into below.

God's Word as a Weapon

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He modeled for us the first use of the Word of God. Three separate temptations are recorded. Read the account and note how Jesus responded each time the devil tempted Him.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will give his angels charge of you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold,
Sexual Purity – Walking In The Light

angels came and ministered to him. (Matthew 4:1-11)

Did you notice that Jesus used the phrase “it is written” three times? For every temptation, Jesus did not use His own thoughts or reasoning to refute Satan. He simply quoted Scriptures. If there ever was a plug for Scripture memory, this is it. When Jesus was under attack, He used a spiritual weapon to defend Himself and counter the attack.

The Word is referred to as a weapon in other places in Scripture, as well:

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

“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29)

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Our loving God provides all we need. He does not leave us defenseless in a spiritual war.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

The centrality and importance of the Word of God cannot be over-stated. Unless a person is committed to knowing God’s word, studying, memorizing, and applying it to his everyday life, he will not be victorious in the battle for holiness. It is our primary weapon, and Jesus modeled that for us. He expects us to use it when Satan targets us.

**God's Word as a Cleansing Agent**

The second great use of the Scriptures has to do with cleansing. When a person consumes pornography and/or participates in any form of sexual immorality, their souls are stained. Sexual sin is unlike any other sin that we commit.

Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Modern science teaches us that every sexual sin releases powerful bio-chemicals into our brains that leave a lasting imprint or “stain.” When asked about their first experience or exposure to porn, most people can remember very explicit details of that encounter. How can we wash our brains from images of past sexual sin? Where can we find a supernatural washing agent to rebuild our minds and flush out impure images?

A big part of the answer is the supernatural nature of God’s Word, as seen in the following two examples:

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. (John 15:3, Jesus
speaking)
Having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. (Ephesians 5:26), In reference to Christ working in His bride, the church

The presence of the Word of God cleanses, or washes, our brains. This is another reason to “hide” God’s word in our hearts, as the psalmist says he has done in Psalm 119 verse 11. Memorized Scripture acts not only as a weapon, but also as a cleansing agent.

**God's Word is the Source of His Promises**

A third foundational truth about the Word of God as it relates to sexual purity is found in Peter’s second letter:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Breaking this verse down phrase by phrase:

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness…” Many who are deeply involved in various forms of sexual sin are convinced that there is no hope. They believe that their compulsion or addiction is too strong for them. They do not believe that purity is possible. Yet, this first phrase says that God’s power is available and that God has given us all that we need to be godly. This is an amazing promise in itself. We live in a sex-saturated culture, yet God calls us to be pure. It seems impossible until we consider the resources that God freely gives to us.

“…through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” The goal of our pursuit is Jesus. As we progressively learn more and more about Him, gaining knowledge of Him, we grow. He calls us to His own glory and excellence. Jesus was absolutely pure and holy. He is calling us to be “like Him” in character. This is the meaning of being a “Christian.”

“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises…” It is through the promises of God that the whole quest for sanctification and purity is founded. When we “blow it” and fail, how do we know we are forgiven? It is based on a promise of God, such as 1 John 1:9, which states, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us of all unrighteousness.”

What do we do when we need more help or grace? We run to another promise:

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

What about when we feel too weak to fight? Another promise is there to strengthen us:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, RSV)
Or when we are tempted and think, “I am the only person who struggles in this,” again, the promise found in the first letter to the Corinthians corrects our thinking and motivates us to believe God.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

“…so that through these [promises] you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” This verse is itself a promise to us. It is founded on the trustworthy character and nature of God Himself. He tells us that we can escape the corruption of the world caused by passion/lust. He promises us that we can become partakers of His own divine nature.

In the great Ephesians 6 passage on the armor of God, the whole armor is anchored and secured by the “belt of truth.” We read in John 17:17 that God’s “word is truth.”

We need to take the time every day to soak our minds and souls in God’s word. We need to start off our days in some time of daily devotions or “Quiet Times,” in which we read, memorize, and meditate on some aspect of the Word. Throughout the day, when we are faced with making decisions on how to spend our free time, God’s word offers us guidance. When we are tempted, God’s word can warn us.

By [the commands of the Lord] is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 119:11)
Inductive Bible Study

This following section will take a turn into a more in-depth look at the Scriptures. Key passages that have to do with the battle between the flesh (our old nature) and the Spirit (joined with our new nature) have been selected. It is recommended that you tackle at least Galatians 5, although studying all of the passages will give you a more comprehensive understanding of the battle we are facing.

However, before we jump into the study, it may be helpful to go over a few terms and how to roll up your sleeves and dig into the Bible. Take a minute now to flip forward a few pages to the Bible study and look over the format in the table, then come back and read on.

Notice that in the Bible study we have listed a number of passages and then provided four columns for you to write notes. Each column is labeled; it is the terms of those labels that we want to define here.

1. Observation (the act of seeing)
Observation teaches you to see what the passage says. It is the basis for accurate interpretation and correct application. Observation answers the question, “What does the passage say?” As Oletta Wald explained in The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study, “The purpose of observation is to saturate yourself thoroughly with the content of a passage. Like a sponge, you should absorb everything that is before you” (Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1975). Robert Trina described it further: “Observation entails seeing impartially, intensely, fearlessly” (Methodical Bible Study, Zondervan, 2002).

Aids to Observation:
• Mark key words and phrases
• Look at the whole as well as the details
• Make many observations, but don’t get bogged down by recording every little detail
• Don’t just copy the text, indicate something about them
• Observe every passage as though you are seeing it for the first time
Six Important Questions
Thinking we already know what a passage means is the most common culprit leading to wrong interpretation and misapplication. Carefully observing who, what, when, where, why, and how are the best assurances leading to correct interpretation.

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? **To whom** is he speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject covered?
3. **WHEN** do/will the events occur or did/will something happen to someone in particular?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something being said or mentioned? Why would/will this happen?
6. **HOW** did or will it happen? How was/is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

Watch for Contrasts and Comparisons
A **contrast** is a comparison of things that are different or opposite, such as light/darkness, proud/humble, good/evil. The word “but” often indicates a contrast to something just stated. A **comparison** points out similarities and is most often indicated in the use of words or phrases, such as “like,” “as,” and “as it were.” These small words are great eye-openers in the process of observation as they set the words on either side of them into their proper context.

2. Interpretation (the process of understanding)
Interpretation answers the question, “What does the passage mean?”

**Context ALWAYS rules.** Never take Scripture out of its context to make it say what you want it to say. Look at context first from the perspective of the book, chapter, paragraph, and sentence being studied.

**Scripture never contradicts Scripture.** It’s amazing how the best interpreter of Scripture is other Scripture. One of the best study aids is a good Bible dictionary, which will show words and concepts as they’re presented throughout ALL of Scripture.

**Interpret Scripture literally.** Obviously the Bible uses symbols sometimes (such as dragons in Revelation), but these are by far the exceptions. The vast majority of Scripture are very literal. God is clear when in Scripture He uses allegory, parables, or other literary devices to communicate His Word.

**Look for the single meaning of the passage.** Let the passage speak for itself. Seek to understand what the author had in mind. Making something complicated is usually a sign of making the Scripture say something it wasn’t intended to mean.

This is the step of determining the author’s meaning as well as why the Holy Spirit included it in Scripture. Correct interpretation depends on determining what the author had in mind. Good interpretation requires getting into the author’s shoes. (Robert Trina, *Methodical Bible Study*, Zondervan, 2002)

**Interpretation Questions.**
Questions are the intermediate step between observation and interpretation.
Examples:
- What is meant by…?
• What is involved in…?
• How is_____ different from _____?
• How does this reply answer the question?

Interpretation Answers.
Proper interpretation hinges on the ability to answer the questions properly. Here are some things to remember when answering the above questions to interpret a verse or passage of Scripture:
• Rely on the Holy Spirit
• Use common sense
• Remember that “context is king”
• Keep author’s purpose and viewpoint in mind

3. Correlation (the process of connection)
As our final authority, we must let Scripture interpret Scripture. The bible is a unique book in that it is a collection of sixty-six different books written over the course of more than a millennium by forty different authors in three different languages. Yet it has a unity and consistency that is awe-inspiring. The correlation step in our process guards us against wrong interpretation as we test our conclusions with the unified message of the Scriptures. The psalmist wrote in Psalms 119:160 that “the sum of thy word is truth” (RSV).

To help you apply this principle, use both internal and external cross-references.

An internal cross-reference is located in the same book as the verse being studied; an external cross-reference comes from another portion of Scripture.

**Internal cross-references** show the relationship of a verse to the paragraph, chapter, and book in which it is found. This helps place the verse in its context. Whenever a verse uses a connective word such as “wherefore,” “therefore,” or “hence,” an internal cross-reference will show what it refers to.

**External cross-references** show how the verse being studied relates to verses in other books in the Bible. It is especially noteworthy to find other writers of Scripture who have said essentially the same thing.

Important types of external cross-references are parallel (saying the same thing), corresponding (dealing with similar matter), contrasting, and illustrative.

The best source of cross-references is your own memory and knowledge of the Bible. If you cannot find one on your own, use a concordance or the marginal notes in your Bible.

In the space next to the cross-reference add your linking thought—the thought that relates this cross-reference to the verse being studied. Use a short phrase or key words from the reference to help you retain its content.
4. Application (the process of conforming)

I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. (Psalm 119:59-60)

The benefit from Bible study is not derived from methods, techniques or diligent efforts to decipher the text. The benefit is from obeying the voice of the Lord. (The Navigators Bible Study Handbook)

Examples of areas to look for when making application can be found in the acrostic SPEAK:

- Sin to avoid
- Promise to claim
- Example to follow
- Action to take
- Knowledge of God

Now, before you begin, don’t forget to PRAY.

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. (Psalm 119:18)
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<tr>
<th>Galatians 5:13-26</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Application</th>
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<tr>
<td>13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.</td>
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**Romans 6:1-23**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?</td>
<td>By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?</td>
<td>Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?</td>
<td>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.</td>
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<td>If we have been united with him like this in death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.</td>
<td>For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.</td>
<td>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.</td>
<td>In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.</td>
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<td>Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.</td>
<td>For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.</td>
<td>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!</td>
<td>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!</td>
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<td>I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.</td>
<td>When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.</td>
<td>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!</td>
<td>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.</td>
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<td>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.</td>
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**Romans 7:4-25**

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| 4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were controlled by the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. 6 But now, by dying to that once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. 7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from the law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. 13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. 14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.
**Observation** | **Interpretation** | **Correlation** | **Application**
|---|---|---|---|
| Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
**Ephesians**

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

**Ephesians 4:22-24**

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.
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| James 1:13-15  
13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. | | | | |
| James 1:21-22  
21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. | | | | |
| James 4:1-10  
1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. | | | | |
| James 5:16  
16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. | | | | |
| James 5:19-20  
19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. | | | | |
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<td>1 Timothy 4:7-8</td>
<td>7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. 8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.</td>
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<td>1 Corinthians 9:24-27</td>
<td>24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.</td>
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<td>Titus 2:11-14</td>
<td>11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.</td>
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<td>1 Peter 1:13-16</td>
<td>13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 14 As obedient children, do not con-form to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”</td>
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<td>Titus 2:11</td>
<td>11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.</td>
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<td>Hebrews 12:1-2</td>
<td>1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.</td>
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<td>Proverbs 4:13-15</td>
<td>13 Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. 14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.</td>
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<td>Proverbs 16:17</td>
<td>17 The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their ways preserve their lives.</td>
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Chapter 12 Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you in your study this week?

2. Which passages did you find the most helpful?

3. Now that you’ve done some study on the topic, how would you describe “the flesh”?

4. According to the Scripture you studied, what do you think enables someone to not always “give in” to fleshly desires?

5. What questions do you have (or did you have as you studied)?

6. What specific application would you like to implement from this study?

Take Away

1. Pick out your favorite verse from this chapter and commit it to memory. Meditate on it all week long.

2. For an interesting and challenging study, read through the following two psalms: Psalm 19 (for beginners) and Psalm 119 (advanced). List from each psalm the benefits of God’s Word, what our attitude should be toward the Word, and what actions we are to take in regards to God’s word.
As the “Walking in the Light” Discovery Guide develops, we would like to make it as relevant, understandable and well, just plain helpful as possible. That’s where you come in. As you look over this discovery guide and especially as you go through it with a group, we would love to know your thoughts. Feel free to do anything from: “just zip a note” to give more lengthy thoughts and feelings about the study.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how did you feel about the discovery guide?

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<th>Hated it</th>
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2. What did you find really helpful?

3. What could use some work? Any suggestions?

4. What needs to be totally revamped or tossed?

Please e-mail your feedback to mike.kozlarek@navigators.org
Postscript

In Greek mythology, the Sirens were three dangerous bird-women, portrayed as seductresses. Sailors who sailed near the shores where they lived were compelled by the Sirens' enchanting music and voices to shipwreck on the rocky coast.

Greek mythology mentions two heroes who needed to go through the Sirens’ waters. One hero was Odysseus, who was curious to hear what the Sirens sounded like. He told his men to tie him to the mast. He ordered them to leave him tied to the mast, no matter how much he would beg. Then he had the men plug their ears with beeswax. Meanwhile, he remained bound, able to hear but not free to follow his desires. And he safely passed by the Sirens.

The other hero, Jason, had a different solution for the Sirens. When Jason had to sail past the Sirens, he brought along Orpheus, the mesmerizing musician. When Orpheus heard the Sirens singing, he drew out his lyre and played his music more beautifully than the Sirens, drowning out their voices. Jason and the rest of the crew didn’t pay any attention to the Sirens. They were not even curious about them because a more beautiful song captivated them.

Ultimately, this is our answer. We need to be so in love with God, so captivated by God, so convinced that His design is the best plan, so sure that His song is the most captivating song, that anything the world has to offer is drowned out by Jesus’ voice saying, “I came that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

This is the ultimate goal of this discovery guide—to paint the picture of God's mesmerizing song, a song more beautiful than the song of our culture.