

A muscular man with dark hair is shown from the chest up, shirtless, wearing blue jeans. He is wearing metal handcuffs on both wrists. He is smiling and looking towards the viewer, with his right hand raised in a fist. The background is a mix of blue and red vertical stripes, suggesting a jail cell or a stage set.

Escape

from LUST

*How to be set free from
lust and pornography.*

Lee E. Eddy

Escape From Lust!

Lee E. Eddy

ESCAPE FROM LUST by Lee E. Eddy
Published by Cross and Sword Ministries
Printed by Whitehall Printing company
4244 Corporate Square, Naples, Florida 34104-9290

This book or parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means- electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise- without prior written permission of the publisher, except as provided by United States of America copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible, third Edition, Copyright 1995, Used by permission of the copyright holder, Jay P. Green, Sr

Copyright 1999 by Lee E. Eddy. All rights reserved

ISBN 0-9718276-0-5

Printed in the United States of America

Cover art by Sheila Ford.

Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments	v
The Need for this Type of Book	1
The Endless Cycle of Sin and Guilt	5
Shame and Reproach	17
Repeated Sin	
Why Did Sex Get So Perverted?	25
The Question	
The Mark of the Covenant	35
The Levels of Lust	39
The Will	
The Strong Desire	
Coveting	
Fleshly Pleasure	
Consuming Lust	
Unbridled Lust	
The Salvation of the Mind	61
Conforming and transforming	
The Power of the Mind	
The Thought Process	
Saved Thinking	
The Account Books	
Reasonings	
The Imagination	
How to Use Your Imagination Correctly	
Channel of Love, Not Lust	
Exposing the Lie	
Honesty Before God	
Am I Demon-Possessed?	107
How Strong Can Demonic Influence Get?	
Won't He Bring Back Seven That Are Worse?	
What Can I Do Against a Demon?	

Resisting	
Casting and Resisting	
Binding	
Being Set Free	
Soul Ties	
The “Gospel “ of Pornography	133
“Women Want Sex as Much as Men Do.”	
“Sexual Focus is Normal.”	
“If I Don’t Have Sex Every Night, I Have Pain.”	
“Sex Between Consenting Adults is Harmless.”	
“If You Don’t Have Sex With Someone, You	
Don’t Love Them.”	
“If I’m Not Sexy, I’m Not Acceptable.”	
“If You Don’t Have Sex, You Aren’t Really a Man.”	
Size and Comparisons	
Masturbation and Other Areas of “Auto-Erotica”	151
Physical Fascination	
Masturbation Requires Wrong Thinking	
Masturbation and Youth	
Wet Dreams	
Equipped to Win the Battle	167
Let me Pray for You	
Appendices:	171
Other pathways of repentance	173
Over-sin	
Sin of others	
“But I have to sin!”- the false doctrine of a sinful nature	183
Romans 6	
Romans 7 and 8	

Dedication

*To my Dad whom I love,
You have believed in me,
prayed for me,
supported me,
blessed me.*

I honor you.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my most gracious wife, who pushed me and supported me until it was accomplished. What a woman of God!

To Rawie and Scott who put up with my first attempts and helped me get it right.

To Angie for the incredible editing that couldn't have been easy, considering the content.

To the many friends and family members that have supported me and encouraged me and worked with me. Your help was immeasurable and I thank you so very much. Without you this would not have been possible.

And mostly to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who saved me and then through His grace and mercy set me free from bondage and showed me how to bring that freedom to others.

Chapter 1

The Need for This Type of Book.

I had an addiction to pornography for 17 years. It nearly destroyed my life, my ministry, my family and every relationship I had. It was a well hidden addiction. My wife never even suspected it, and neither did anyone else. I knew my sin and went through horrible times of guilt, condemnation, and consuming lust. Then I would try to pay for it with religious service while still finding ways to get more porno and do it better. I will tell you how the Lord set me free from this powerful bondage and show how you, too, can have freedom. I believe that anyone can be set free. There are always differences in people's addictions, but the power to be set free is from God, and He gives this knowledge to anyone who wants it.

Whenever I have gone to churches to minister and the Lord allows me to bring up my past addiction, it never fails that I find someone who has had enough of living in sexual sin, pornography and lust and wants help to be set free. When they show the courage to come and ask for help, others are drawn in the vortex, and soon I have a group of men who listen intently so they can help "their friend" get out of his problem. I know that there are many men in every church who are really struggling with a problem of lust or pornography in some way or form. I meet them all the time. The Lord almost always shows me men who are hurting and don't know how to get free. This book is for all those who want to be set free but don't know how. Most men aren't willing to confess this sort of thing to their pastor

or even to a trusted friend because of the heavy judgments that come with it. People who don't know how to help others will just condemn them or judge them. They might even have the same problem, but they don't want to look weak. I've been there. I understand. But God also understands, and in His Word He has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness. There is hope! And there are ways provided to obtain that hope and to get the freedom that God has for all of us. I went through it, and God showed me how to get out of it. I am free. I'm not bragging on myself, just boasting in the power of God.

There are things that are written in this book that may take some real courage to do. It might take some extra study for this knowledge to become revelation knowledge to you. If you really want to be set free or want to help others, you need to begin by praying for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to all deceptions and expose your sin for what it is. I pray that you will be desperate enough to pursue this all the way until freedom is obtained and maintained. A little knowledge used incorrectly will cause you to think that the help offered here won't work for you. It will if you will let it and use all of it. There are no easy, quick fixes. How long have you been in the sin? It will take time for you to be free. There will be times that you will fall. Get back up, and get back to the Father. This will have to be tested by time and proven in your own life. This process will stand the test. Do not be discouraged; there is freedom available to those who persist in the process.

Even if you don't feel it or believe it, God loves you very much. He wants you free even more than you

do. I know that you can be the godly man that God has called you to be. You can walk a pure and undefiled life before Him and your family. It will take work and time, but the end result is more than worth it. Believe me. I've seen both sides.

There is a reason why this book is laid out like it is. There are things that you must understand before you can obtain true freedom. I am writing this to the believer that has pornography or lust in his life. Since "My people die from a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6), there are things that you must know. You must know how things work for you to be able to fight correctly and gain the victory. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Keep going and don't be discouraged. You will reap a harvest if you do not faint.

Chapter 2

The Endless Cycle of Sin and Guilt

As we go through life, the decisions we make on a regular basis cause patterns to be formed in our lives. When we continually make the same decision, we build patterns that dictate how we respond and what our next action will be. The longer and more often we make those same decisions, the more entrenched these patterns become. After a while we know what we are going to do and the outcome of those actions. Sometimes this is good, and sometimes this is very bad. These patterns of behavior can be predictable and very strong. We know that we want to do what starts the cycle, but we don't want what is going to follow, and we have no control over that. When the desire for the initial action is greater than the consequences, we are building into our lives an addiction. The thing that we desire becomes more and more important and causes other things in our lives to become lower in priority. In truth it is starting to consume us. Soon we have our value system so messed up that we are even confused about what is right and wrong. We then are trapped by cycles in our lives that we feel can never be broken. Without God's help, they can't be.

I was born again at the age of 5 in a little Baptist church in the mountains of Colorado. My whole life revolved around that church and the activities in it. My family always went. Whenever the doors were open, we were there, no matter what the weather or circumstances. Just to show the extent of my devotion, I

received my 14 year pin for never missing a Sunday in Sunday school. This was really difficult when we went on vacations! My dad was a deacon in that church for so long that I can't remember when he wasn't. We outlasted several pastors. I felt called of God at the age of 11. I did everything that was available to do or was asked of me in that church. Like the apostle Paul, I had zeal beyond my friends and had my life filled with legalism and religion. But there was another legacy given to me by my father that I received with the same gusto: pornography.

When I first found his "stash" of books, I was captured by curiosity and desire for knowledge. My heart was thrilled with the "secret knowledge," and sneaking around gave me the excitement of adventure. I could always find what he had, no matter how well he thought he had hidden it. I never learned where he got it, but he always had a new assortment that covered the whole array of sexual behavior. I received an education that I didn't know I didn't want. I thought I wanted it. Years later I wished that I had never seen or read any of it. A pattern was being built into my life.

I knew that I was going to go looking for his books, and I knew that I would find them. I knew that I would spend as much time as I could with them and that I would carefully guard my time there. I knew I would masturbate; I even prepared everything so that there was no evidence. Then I knew I would try to cover my trail and hide that I knew anything about it. Then I knew I would feel incredibly guilty and dirty. My heart would pound as I feared that someone would catch me. I was very ashamed of my actions, and I hated myself for doing them. I would tell God that I was sorry, but I was only

sorry for the consequences and the guilt. I really knew that I wanted to go back, that I would go back. The repentance was not real. The guilt and shame were very real. I thought that I couldn't quit. I tried to quit after every time I fell. There would always be the promise that I would never do it again even though I knew I would. I would confess it to the Lord every time and go through all the motions of repentance. At the same time I would be making provision for the flesh and planning my next time. I always knew there would be a next time.

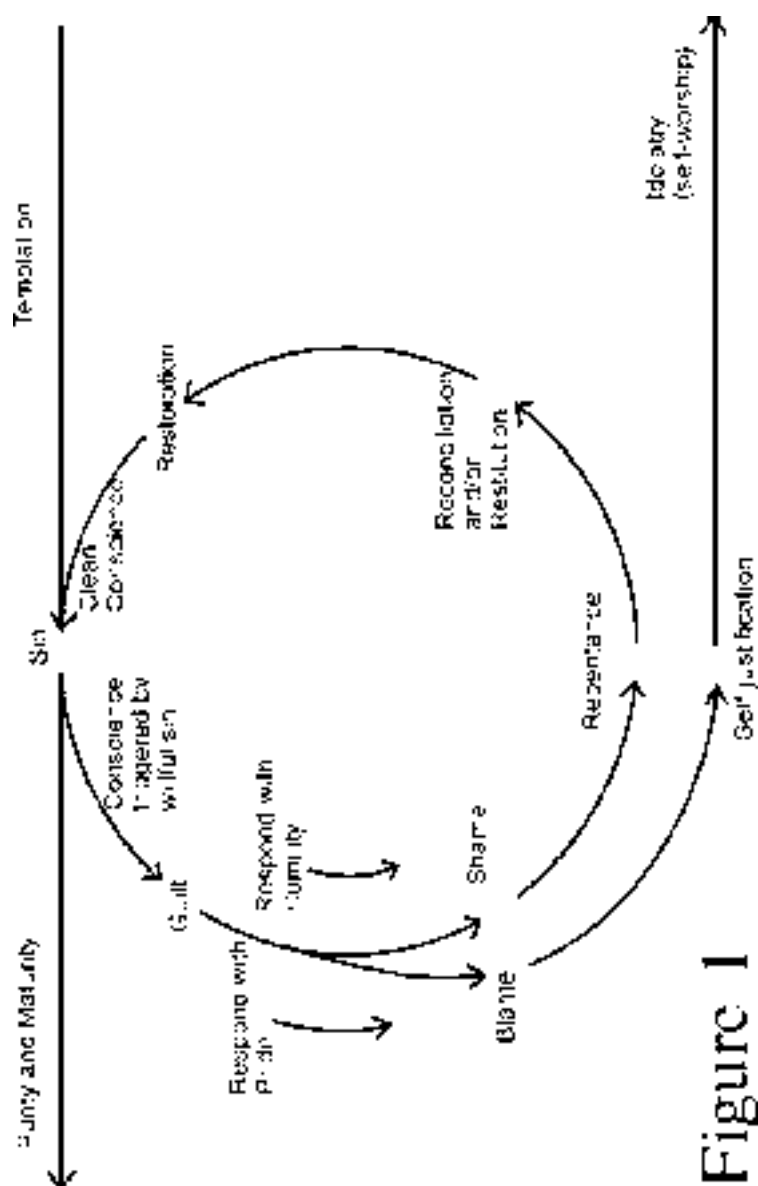
Then I would go to church or do something special for God to prove to Him that I was holy again. I would do all sorts of things to "buy" back my religious sanctity. If I did enough, then I would feel religious again and back on track for God. The problem was that my "penance" was never quite enough. I knew that I was going to fall again. In fact, I made sure by secretly planning it in the back of my mind. In the front of my mind I was repenting, but in the back of my mind (where I am the only one there) I wanted more. I would entertain lustful thoughts, but then, I would superficially and piously reject them. The fact was that I thought them and enjoyed them. My superficial rejection of them was only a religious attempt to show God that I was still holy. I could deceive myself by having sexual thoughts and enjoy them and then think religious thoughts to manipulate my conscience. I could make myself feel pure and deny that I had a problem while I waited for the opportunity to sin again. With this system I could control and choose my timing so that I wouldn't get caught.

The problem with this whole pattern is that it wasn't true repentance. I carried this guilt around with me, and I knew that there was a barrier of sin and guilt

between me and God that was keeping me from getting close to Him. This kind of self-deceiving life will catch up with you eventually. The payments will come due. Your sin is writing checks that your soul can't cash. Eventually your sin will find you out. God isn't playing games, and the principles He has put into effect will always work no matter what. This can work to your advantage or to your disadvantage. When you are playing with sin, it is definitely to your disadvantage. God will always come against the gods that you worship. He does that because of His great love for you. He knows that this kind of living is going to kill you eventually, and He doesn't want that for you. He wants you to have life and life more abundantly. He will continually try to bring that life to you. If He has to fight you to do it, He will.

God has given us the way to get rid of both sin and guilt in His Word. If we use these principles, we can have freedom. If we ignore them, we will get into greater and greater bondage. Addiction is not hopeless. It is tough because of the way it is built as a consuming fixture in our lives. When we build our addiction, the roots of it go into the very fibers of our being. It will take radical spiritual surgery to get it out. It can be done. Freedom can be yours. It can even be given to others. But you first must understand the process of that spiritual surgery. It needs to be applied very carefully, honestly and powerfully. We have put ourselves in the war, so let's continue the battle.

To begin, we first need to understand more about how repentance works. We hear people talking about repenting, and yet (if we get totally honest) we really don't understand how it works. Most of the time it is a game that we play with ourselves and others to gain



self-respect or prestige in the eyes of others. We really don't want to get rid of our sins, we just want to skirt their nasty consequences. So we go through the superficial motions of "repenting" without really changing our lives.

Let's look at the normal procedure of both true and false repentance. Look at figure 1. When we walk along in our lives and are confronted by temptation, we are given a choice. Temptation is not a sin. We know that Jesus was tempted in all points like we are, but He was without sin (Heb. 4:15). We are continually being tempted. When we choose to yield to that temptation, it is sin. Therefore, we make the decision to sin. Sin is always a decision. In a later chapter we will tackle the problem of theology that tells us we must sin. Sin is always a choice. When we choose to sin, it triggers a chain of events that are inevitable.

The first thing that happens is a violation of our conscience. All of mankind received a conscience when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden. The fruit that he ate of was the "Knowledge of Good and Evil". Every man born after him has this knowledge. When we do something wrong, our conscience is triggered (Romans 2:15), and we don't feel right about it. We can continually ignore it or suppress it until it becomes a defiled conscience (Titus 1:15), or an evil conscience (Hebrews 10:22) or even until the conscience is seared and doesn't work at all (1 Timothy 4:2). It requires the consistent work of healing to return to a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:5) or a pure conscience (1 Timothy 3:9). That process is the repentance process.

The next thing that happens (almost simultaneously) is guilt. Guilt is a judicial truth. We, in fact, did

break a law, and we know it. There are volumes printed on how to deal with guilt. The normal way given by scripture is to repent and have the guilt washed away. But that can't happen unless we truly repent. That won't happen unless there is another thing true in our lives—shame.

Shame has been misunderstood, and much has been written about it. Most of the time people refer to it as being very negative. I disagree. It is false shame or perverted shame that is damaging and harmful. Real shame is useful and valuable. Shame is when there is a break in a relationship because of the wrongful actions of one of the parties. Shame is when my sin makes me think that others disapprove of me. I feel rejected in their sight, whether they see it or not. It is how I perceive it. When I do something that wrongs a friend of mine, he is the last person I want to see. There is shame there, and he may not even know anything about it. When I used to do things that I knew my father didn't want me to do, I would have a hard time being with him. I knew that when he found out, I would be in grave trouble. There was a definite break in the relationship that he could sense and that made him look for the problem.

I use shame very effectively with my own children because it isn't just "breaking the rules" that is the problem. No, the real issue that is at stake is why the rules were broken. Until the relationship is restored, things are strained in the family. I have a good relationship with my children based on love. If I didn't have that good relationship, then they wouldn't experience shame very well. It would only be guilt. Guilt can be suppressed, but a good relationship causes a shame to be felt and that is hard to ignore because of the value that has been

placed on the relationship. The better the relationship, the greater the desire not to damage that relationship by wrong actions and attitudes.

In figure 1, we see that if someone doesn't have a good relationship with the Father God, they will not have the correct shame to help them want to keep that relationship pure. It is easier to do whatever we want, and that is pride. Because of our self-focus and the knowledge of guilt, we must do something with that guilt. So we blame someone else and impute our guilt onto them. That way we don't have to take responsibility for our own actions. This sounds familiar, doesn't it? We can justify ourselves and continue doing what we want. Eventually we will sear our consciences and worship ourselves.

However, if there is any relationship with the Father at all, then shame will show up. If we desire to walk with Him, then we will humble ourselves, agree with Him about our sin (confess our sin), and turn away from it because of the damage that it causes in the relationship. When He is more important than the sin, then we can truly hate the sin. As long as we love the sin more than we love the Father, we are worshipping ourselves as a god and we are using our Father merely as a source of benefit.

The reason most people have a hard time repenting is that they really aren't sorry for the actual sin; rather, they are sorry just for getting caught at it. They really like the sin and the benefits that they believe they are getting from it. That is because they don't have a relationship with the Father that they really value. When they value the relationship with the Father more than the

sin, then they can truly hate the sin and what it does to them. When our sin takes away from our relationship with the Father, then we really want to get rid of the sin, and repentance becomes easy. We can actually turn from the sin and walk toward God. It is the turning from the sin that puts us back on the track towards walking in purity and maturity (figure 1). After we really turn from the sin, it loses its hold on us. Then we can come to the Father, reconcile the relationship, and make whatever restitution is needed. If we must pay someone back for the damages we caused, then that payment is proof of our repentance, not paying for our sin. Jesus paid for our sin; we are just walking out that payment. We can ask for forgiveness or forgive others because it is the relationship with the Father that we are trying to restore.

When we see the Love of God and the way that God's blessings far outweigh sin's supposed benefits, we can then focus on Him and not on our weaknesses or wrongful desires. The Bible says in Romans 2:4 that it is the Goodness of God that leads to repentance. That word in the Greek literally means His usefulness. When we see that He is much more useful (life) than the sin (death), we will turn (repent) from the sin and go to God.

Then comes the valuable part: restoration. We have been washed in the blood (1 John 1:9), and we now have regained fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:7). Our conscience is restored, and we are once again walking a path of purity towards maturity.

This is the normal way things work. In the common, everyday experiences, this is the way of walking through repentance. The problem is, not everything is normal.

Christians add another element to the equation when we throw in religious works to compensate for the break in the relationship. Instead of true, honest repentance that keeps us from repeating our sin, we have built a theology that allows us to keep our sin and feel justified in it. We then do all sorts of religious things that “prove” that our relationship with God is doing “just fine, Thank you.” We may even have prophecies and “worship experiences” that help blind us to the fact that there is a break in our relationship with our Father. What we need is to be honest with ourselves and with God. We can’t do anything about our sin, He has already done it. It is the depth of relationship with God that suffers.

We choose on which path to walk. When we sin, we can understand the guilt, experience the shame and humble ourselves unto repentance. After that we are able to walk through the reconciliation and restitution that we need to do with others and then we can be fully restored in our relationship with the Father. We can have our conscience cleansed and set back in place and our lives put back on the track of growing in Jesus Christ. Or, we can respond with pride and impute blame on others and justify ourselves. That choice will take us on the pathway of self-worship and condemnation. Unless we walk in God’s path of humility and repentance, we will find all sorts of deceptions that we can live, but the outcome is always the same- slavery. Religious acts, sacrificing valuable relationships, putting others down, sneaking around, and lying are all traps that we invite into our lives when we don’t repent. We are the ones that make our lives miserable; that isn’t what God desires for us. To get what God wants for us and to live that fulfilled life requires a humble response and a

determination to walk things out God's way. It is always a choice.

Chapter 3

Shame and Reproach

There is so much that we need to understand about how shame works and how it can be perverted to something that causes damage. Now that we know a little more about the normal way things are, we can look at some of the abnormalities.

There are consequences to sin. There are things that happen in our lives because of the continued effect of sin. When we continually sin, then there are continual consequences to that sin. We are going to look at 3 different variations of the theme on repentance and what the outcomes are. As we examine them, we will find out about many of the different problems that people are facing today.

Repeated sin

This one is the one that I lived. Figure 2 is a diagram of how my life went. As I walked along in life and temptation hit me, I didn't know that I could overcome it. Actually, at the beginning of temptation, I didn't want to overcome it. I could not foresee any consequences, and the thrill of what I was doing was very rewarding to me at the time. As time went on, however, things got to be more complicated. I kept coming face to face with my guilt. Because I had a relationship with the Father, limited as it was, I was experiencing shame. I already had a very bad view of myself as being a rotten sinner in the eyes of God and everybody else. More guilt just reinforced what I knew to be true, that I was a reject

without any hope of ever becoming anything. The guilt caused me to reject myself (self-condemnation). Since I had to prove my opinion of me to be correct, I made others reject me, too.

Then I lived in fear and insecurity and lived a double life of good-boy church kid and secret sexually-driven animal. Every time I fell to masturbation and fantasy, I would have to make up for it by doing things at church that proved I was still a Christian.

Since I had a view of myself as **being** a sinner and now as **being** a pervert, another scriptural principle came into effect: reproach. Reproach is when you take shame and wear it as a garment. It becomes how you think of yourself and how you find your identity. When you receive information that is contrary to this identity, you ultimately reject it and cause others to reject you in the same way. I was quickly losing all hope of ever **being** different than my perceived identity. That's how I saw myself.

Since I was a little boy, I had the teaching pounded into me that we are all sinners (though we are saved by grace) and that we are wretches that can do nothing but sin. My pastors continually beat me over the head with the verses "There are none righteous, no not one" and "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God!" Since it was built into how I thought of myself, I had no hope of ever getting out of it. Since there was no way out, I was bound to do it again. I was a slave to it. My problem was: how do you repent from something that you know you are going to do again? This kind of repentance is not true, and, it is (sadly) incomplete. What I was weeping over was actually the consequences of my sin, not the sin itself. I didn't have

the ability to repent; I didn't know how. I was always grovelling before God, going forward at church services, and re-dedicating my life to God with tears. I was the perfect person for travelling evangelists to count as one of the ones who would repent at their meetings, scoring one more number for their tally sheets. I even went to Bible college in this condition.

This lasted for a total of 17 years. Because I felt that God was rejecting me, it was easy for me to reject anything from God that didn't match my theology, anything that might have set me free.

Finally, I gave up. I lost all hope of ever getting free on my own. There was no one in whom I could confide. By this time, I was the youth and music pastor of a Baptist church and was in my first full-time position. The hypocrisy was killing me and the deceitful life I was living was eating me up inside. By this time I had been married to a wonderful woman for 10 years, and we were getting ready to have our first child. I couldn't be trusted to have time alone, and I hated being alone. I had a fairly good ministry, and things looked really good (on the outside). But I finally came to God and told Him that if He couldn't get me set free, He wasn't much of a God. I quit focusing on myself, and my heart cried out to God. That is when He started to give me revelation knowledge of things in the scripture that showed me my "stinking thinking".

2 Peter 1:3-4 tells us that it is through revelation knowledge that we are given all things for life and godliness. We are given revelation knowledge of the One who has called us through all glory and virtue. It says that God has given us great and precious promises that

we might become partakers of the divine nature. It says that we can escape the corruption of the world caused by lust. We can have all that because we have revelation knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Father God, and the Holy Spirit. When we receive revelation, it means that God Himself tells us things and we can understand His heart and purposes. This is the *rhema* Word spoken to our hearts. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the *rhema* of God (Romans 10:17). When we receive revelation knowledge, we are then able to do all that He tells us to do.

I received two pieces of revelation at first. The first was that God loved me and He didn't reject me. I had rejected myself and believed the lie that God also rejected me. When I discovered that He really did love me and wanted to give me all that I needed to set me free, my outlook changed. I became receptive to all that He would give me. I finally felt accepted.

Secondly, God showed me that I don't have to sin. Romans 6:14 came alive, as if God Himself were speaking it to me, "Sin shall not lord it over you!" I knew that sin had lied to me and kept me its prisoner all these years. That made me very angry, but my anger this time was directed at the right thing. I started proclaiming that sin is no longer my master and I am no longer its slave. This revelation revealed a demon that was inhabiting me that I saw very plainly in a mirror hanging in the living room of my house. It also gave me the authority to cast him off. The curse had been broken, and I was now free to start on the long road of restoration. I submitted my past to the cross and was reconciled to my Father. Restoration had begun.

Part of that restoration was that I had to find full

reconciliation of the relationships that had been damaged. I had to start by forgiving myself, my father, and all the others that I had blamed for my sin. I also had to clear things up with my wife by confessing my double life to her so she would be aware of my weakness. I needed her forgiveness because I had defiled her without her knowledge. She forgave me, and then she was able to help me go through all the cleansing and strengthening that I needed. Forgiveness was a key to my spiritual freedom.

It took about a year to grow enough in my revelation to be set free. After that, the war intensified and it was an uphill battle for about 3 to 4 years as I continued to learn more and more about the why's and how's. There are still battles, but they are not as intense as they used to be. Now I am fighting for others to have this freedom. The other pieces of the puzzle that were given to me will be detailed in later chapters.

Look again at figure 2. The two different pathways separate when I come to the end of my ability. The guilt, rejection, shame and inability to repent were all evident in my life, and they built a pathway that was alarmingly easy to follow and repeat. The time span for me was a 16 year period of repeated guilt, rejection, and shame that led to a self-view of reproach. I had walked the path of repeated sin until continual self-condemnation was a foregone conclusion. When I finally hit rock bottom, God was there to help me. My desperation brought me to the humbling realization that I couldn't do it on my own. My heart cried out to God, and He gave me the necessary revelation knowledge for me to be set free. I received His love for me, and He gave me the ability to repent in truth. I came to the cross (a concept we'll cover in chapter 5), and, I was able to pursue forgiveness and

reconciliation with both myself and others. Restoration was mine to experience. For the first time in my life I was put on a path of purity that freed me to grow in the Lord. My problem had been my distorted view of God and what He had done for me. I had been trapped by a false concept that kept me in sin and didn't allow me to repent.

When the truth came to me, I was able to act on the truth of repentance. I finally had the ability to experience genuine repentance and freedom. I had finally taken responsibility for my sin, and I had come to God for the answer. I finally saw the truth and received it. The truth had set me free indeed.

For further study into this, see Appendix A.

Chapter 4

Why Did Sex Get So Perverted?

I had become so sick of this cycle of sinning, feeling guilty, experiencing self-condemnation, seeking atonement through religious service, waiting with this sick feeling in my stomach, and then eventually falling again to start the cycle over, that I started to ask questions and really search the Bible. I still enjoyed the sin, but I was hating myself and my actions more and more until I was starting to fear what I would do next. I knew that eventually I would do something even more stupid, such as get involved with someone else. The “Law of Diminishing Returns” was working in my life. The “Law of Diminishing Returns” is this: what gave you a thrill last time doesn’t quite do it for you this time, and you need more of the same stimulant to get that same feeling again. So you do stronger or more kinky or more perverted things, until you find yourself doing things you never believed were possible for you to do. Now your little habit is running away with you. What you thought you could control has you by the throat, and you don’t feel that you have control anymore. I was starting really to fear myself.

This happened in my life so much that I knew I was going to fall. I began hating my sin, even though I knew I would do it, and I would even plan out how. I hated it when I knew that I was going to be alone in the house for any length of time. If I were alone, then I would probably do it again. I would fight it with all my might. I would try to get busy doing something else, but my focus was already on the sin, and my body was on a

runaway train. Everything I looked at caused lust to rise in me. Even a simple pencil was my enemy because, being artistically minded, I was able to draw my own pornography, and I could make the images of my drawn women do anything I wanted. I hated the anticipation and I hated myself for what I knew I was going to do. Sometimes, I just hurried and masturbated so that I could get it over with. I believe that is called being fatalistic.

In this desperate state, I was praying more and more. I had changed and had become some form of monster that I knew I had better fight with all my might. I had to fight this battle alone. There was nobody in whom I could place trust and confide. The people that I knew were very legalistic and condemning. What complicated matters even more was the fact that I was the youth and music pastor in a Baptist church. I had been the youth pastor in every church I had ever been a part of, and I had been doing a very good job. I didn't want this to spill over onto the kids, and I was scared to death that I would maybe involve one of them someday. I had maintained this double life-style for almost 17 years! At that time I had been married for almost 10 years and was a full-time pastor. If anyone had found out about this, my life would have been history and my ministry would have been ruined for the rest of my life. I had everything at stake. The only thing I had left was God Himself, and I knew that He knew everything already. So I went to Him for answers to my problem.

The Question

The Lord had been teaching me how to study and how to teach the Word of God. One of the biggest keys to Bible study is to learn to ask questions, real questions;

find the answer; and live it. So I started researching this particular subject that I needed an answer for so greatly. One day while I was fighting this struggle inside me, about to fall once more, I asked out of frustration, "Why does Satan want to pervert sex so much? Why sex? Everywhere I turn, there is the promotion of wrong sex. Why is sex such a focus of perversion?" I realized that if Satan is putting so much effort into perverting sex, then there must be a reason. It really must be important to God and crucial to understanding God, or else Satan wouldn't work so hard at perverting it. Satan must be trying to keep us from knowing something that God is trying to teach us. So I began my search with the prayer, "Father God, teach me why sex is so important." What a ride I was in for!

Ephesians 5 was the first place He started answering me. I was just reading there, and the answer jumped out at me. Looking at Ephesians 5, starting in vs. 22, it reads:

Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the Head of the church, and He is Saviour of the body. But even as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up on its behalf, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the washing of the water in the word, that He might present it to Himself as the

glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things; but that it be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies- he loving his wife, loves himself- for then no one hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Lord the church, For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. "For this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh." The mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ and as to the church. However, you also, everyone, let each love his wife as himself, and the wife that she fears the husband.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the husband. We, the church, are the wife. The relationship between an earthly husband and wife is real and important. They communicate with each other (or at least they are supposed to). They relate to each other and care for each other. They are in covenant with each other in every sense of the word. They both have their role to play and their responsibilities to fulfill. They raise up offspring and pour their lives into them. Their whole lives are spent working for each other and in an intimate and personal relationship with each other. This is the way it is supposed to be. This is how God intended marriage to be. Marriage is something that we know quite a bit about.

What I am going to share now must be taken correctly. If we take this concept and apply it in areas that are not proper, it will be very damaging to the body

of Christ. However, if we can understand it correctly, it will help us comprehend why things that God designed as pure and holy are becoming so twisted. Prayerfully consider what I am about to say. Once we know the truth and how it is being perverted, we will be able to fight the perversion and the deception it carries.

There is an aspect of marriage that we all understand, but few of us apply to the relationship between Christ and the church. That aspect is sex. I am not saying that we need to have sex with Jesus, and I must state that very emphatically. Please do not interpret this statement as some kind of kinky religious thing to advance the perversion. It is important that we understand this concept, though, so we can get things back to the way God intended.

Sex has never been, nor will it ever be, only a physical function. We know that every time a person has sex with someone else, there is a bond made between them. Women especially sense this, and when a woman acts promiscuously, her very nature has been perverted. Sexual intimacy is something that has been so destroyed over the years that everyone fears it yet desires it at the same time. Sex is a precious and intimate act. When society had a solid moral standard, everyone knew that when a couple came together on their wedding night, they were sharing with the person of their dreams a great intimacy that they had been saving for each other. Only one person could ever have that intimacy- the one you have been waiting for. You cannot give that kind of intimacy to everybody you meet. In fact, you can't give it to two people. The more you narrow down those with whom you are intimate, the greater that intimacy will be when you give it.

When I came to Jesus Christ and made Him my Savior and Lord, a great intimacy was shared. I let Him into the very deepest parts of me. He came into my spirit, and there He shared with me the greatest intimacy I had ever known. I had a relationship with the very God of the Universe, and He showered me with His love and attention. He and I were joined in the greatest way any two could ever be joined. It is impossible for me to explain to anyone the depth of the love that Jesus has for me. When I think of Him, I get all warm and mushy, just like a love-sick schoolgirl. I know that I could never have that kind of intimacy with anyone else. Only my God is so trustworthy that it is safe to give Him every fiber of my being. He will never leave me nor forsake me. Look, He will be with me always, even to the end of the age. If this isn't an intimate love relationship, then there isn't such a thing. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said to the Father, "...that all may be one, as You are in Me, Father, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:21) Being one with someone is ultimate intimacy.

I didn't understand this very well until I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. The intimacy that God wanted to have with me was revealed to me in a powerful way. I could never replace that intimacy with anything. That was the true beginning of the end of my addiction.

With this newly found intimacy I discovered new meaning. God invented sex to teach us the most intimate thing that we could have in a relationship with Him- worship! Worship is a function that requires both persons to come together to shower their love on the

other. I come into worship with the full intention of giving to God all that I am and all that I ever will be. My greatest desire is to magnify Him, to glorify Him, to promote Him. I want to shine on Him all that I am and cause Him to be the focus of my entire being. But I can't live there. I can't take it. It is that much more precious to me because it doesn't happen continually. I worship Him, and then I have to stop. I can only take it so much. He knows that, and as the worship time subsides, I am left with the greatest satisfaction in the entire world. But even though I am satisfied and completely fulfilled, I want to come back for more. I plan it, look forward to it, and even get grumpy when I haven't had it in a while. I hear Him calling to me to come into His presence and spend time with Him in worship, calling me away from the cares of this life and into the realm of His kingdom of love. All of this is what God intended us to have with Him, and the object lesson He uses to explain it to us is sex.

No wonder Satan tries so hard to pervert it! He hates that kind of relationship with God. If he can keep us away from understanding this intimacy, he will keep us from the heart of the Father, and we will never be what God intended for us to be. Instead, he promotes that we can have sex with anything that moves and some things that don't. If that is true, then we can worship any god and it doesn't matter. Well, it does matter! When Israel fell to worshipping idols, what did God call them? *An adulterous nation!* God has always equated idolatry with adultery. What is adultery? Adultery is illicit sex outside of the covenant of marriage by those who are already in a marriage covenant. What is idolatry? It is illicit worship outside the covenant of God by those who

are already in covenant with Him.

As bad as that is, there is even more. Idolators are worshipping for selfish gain. What do you call sex for personal gain? Prostitution! Ezekiel 23 tells us about Samaria and Jerusalem as they prostituted themselves for the sake of idols, seeking to gain what they could from the nations. Verse 37 says, "For they did adultery, and blood is on their hands. And they did adultery with their idols, and even their sons whom they bore to Me they make pass to them, to be devoured." The judgments came upon them because of their adulterous idolatry were great and severe. If you read this whole chapter with understanding, you'll find that their sin was quite disgusting.

God wants a people who will save themselves just for Him. He is a loving God who deeply wants to have intimate relationship with His people. He is immeasurably forgiving. The book of Hosea talks almost completely about God dealing with His people, a people who have prostituted themselves. As a type of living object lesson, God told Hosea to marry a prostitute. She left him, though, and went back to prostitution. God told a despondent Hosea to win her back and bring her home. God even named their children as illustrations to the nation of Israel. God wants us to understand that He is God, and He alone is to be worshipped. Worship of anything else is a direct assault on who He is and what He has made us to be and do. We are to be worshipers in spirit and in truth; everything else is false and counterfeit.

Since we are made to worship God and He gave us sex to help us understand worship, then misusing sex

misuses our own spiritual function. We pervert the very reason we were made. That is why sexual problems are so powerful. We were made to focus all our worship on God. When we pervert that purpose, it causes our focus to be on other things, and we are taken captive by that focus. It really is a spiritual function to have sex.

When sex is done as God intended, it is something with which God directly involves Himself. When sex is perverted, then all that God intended is perverted. The power of it in our lives is strong. Since sex was intended to be powerful by God, the perversion of it is also powerful. This is why sexual addictions are so hard to break in the natural. It is a spiritual function that must be dealt with in a spiritual way.

Now you know why sex has been so perverted and why it is such a focus in our lives. I will be showing you how to bring the sexual focus of your life back in order. The outcome is a thing of great beauty. Capture the vision of it. Desire to have everything restored the way God intended it to be. Let your spirit cry out for an intimacy with Him, a pure and undefiled intimacy. When we see the beauty of what God offers and the ugliness of the perversion, then we are actually on the path to hating the sin and not just its unpleasant, outward consequences. When we actually hate the sin, it is easy to break it. It will lose its hold on you. I cannot be tempted by something I don't want. You can't tempt me with cottage cheese. I don't want any.

Chapter 5

The Mark of the Covenant

Now that we see why God invented sex in the first place, we can understand some of the other aspects of sex and God's plan for it in the scripture. One of the most important is the mark of the covenant.

When God made the covenant with Abram, He did something very interesting. Covenant always has with it some way of identifying the persons involved with the covenant. In the past it was done by exchanging rings bearing the family mark or giving weapons that had the family crest or colors. But when God made a covenant with Abram, He told him to signify their covenant in a very unusual way- circumcision.

When a male baby is born, he has an extra flap of skin on his penis that he doesn't really need. God knew how He had designed man and how He had made him to be. Can you imagine what Abraham (his name was changed at the making of the covenant) was thinking when God said to take a sharp knife and cut the extra skin off his penis? What would you feel at a time like that? Every male I know cringes at the thought. Why did God do that? Was He just being cruel, or was there some reason for the order?

Men are very protective of this part of their bodies. This is where their manhood is. Most men seem to have a connection with their brains there. I heard a father say of his son once, "He let his brains slip between his legs again." When we think only of sex, it tends to

control the rest of our thoughts. So God said to take a knife to his sexual organ. I'm sure that got Abraham's attention.

Whatever happens to a man's sexual organ captures his whole thought process. God wanted the men of Israel to remember Him at all times. Every time they thought of sex, they were to be reminded of their covenant with God. They knew that they were different from all the rest of the world.

Abraham knew that God was going to use his body that was marked with the covenant to start the lineage that God promised him. Abraham wasn't circumcised when he had sex with Hagar, which resulted in the birth of Ishmael. In fact, Ishmael was circumcised at the same time Abraham was. Ishmael was 13; Abraham was 99. The son of promise had to be conceived through the covenant for the covenant to be in effect in Abraham's life and descendants. Abraham took his body that was marked with the covenant and used that very part to cause God's promise to come about in his life. I'm sure that his thoughts were related to that when he went in to Sarah by faith to see God's power at work in his life. His covenant marking was being used of God.

This became very clear to me one day. I was right in the middle of doing my thing, when I looked down and realised that I had the marking of the covenant in my hand and was using it for perverted purposes. The covenant mark in my body that was intended to remind me of God was the exact part of my life that was tearing me away from God. It occurred to me that this member of my body was God's to use for His purpose and not mine. I was using God's tool for my own pleasure. As

it says in Romans 6, I had yielded the weapons of my body to be used for the cause of wickedness. I needed to use the weapons of my body to fight for righteousness. This revelation ruined my time that day.

Later, I was looking at some pornography when I realised that the majority of men in those books were also circumcised. Every time I saw them, it reminded me of the covenant. God was showing me that He had an intended use for sex that was being perverted. I couldn't use for perverted purposes what God had sanctified and made for special, godly purposes. The men in the pornography that were uncircumcised were men that were teaching me about covenant by showing the unsanctified use of their bodies in perversion. I saw them as outsiders trying to steal me away from God and His covenant. If I thought of God every time I thought of sex, it caused such turmoil in me that it started to ruin whatever pleasure I thought I was getting from the sin. Actually, what it did was amplify the guilt of what I was doing. That increased the self-condemnation and started pushing me more toward hating myself. What stopped that downhill slide into destruction was the fact that God slowly and carefully made those feelings of guilt a positive thing to me. I began to see that He wasn't just saying, "You're doing it wrong!" but, "You could be doing it right!" I was beginning to glimpse beyond the condemnation into the hope that Jesus Christ provided.

The condemnation I was feeling was coming from my own heart. 1 John 3:21 says that if our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence before God. God is greater than our heart (vs. 20) and is able to bring revelation knowledge to us even in the middle of an

addicting sin. If we are truly crying out in the spirit, the Father will respond and bring us what we need. He will meet us where we are and give us the way out. God is so good.

What was being placed in my heart was the growing understanding that I had a covenant with God. The covenant is the circumcision of the heart, but I had wilfully allowed my heart and hand to do what was directly opposed to the purposes of God FOR ME! He had sanctified my heart, hand and penis for a greater purpose than I was allowing. Now I was intrigued. God had a way out for me and a way of restoring what I could have in Him.

Chapter 6

The Levels of Lust

Lust is an interesting emotion. First of all, we need to know something very important: God created us with the capacity for lust. Lust is the ability to want something passionately. We all have that capacity. We all really want things. God made us that way. But, He also told us to want the right things and not to want the wrong things. When we pervert the purposes of God, then the weapons that God gave us become “weapons of unrighteousness.”

One of the hardest things to understand and to study is the soul. Tying the soul down long enough to study it is not an easy task. The soul is made of the mind, the will and the emotions. They are all tied together and built on each other. Nobody is totally emotional and no one is totally logical like Spock, either. Everyone has their own way of expressing emotions. Everyone has their own logic, even though it is difficult to figure out with some people. There have been many studies about the mind and the emotions. We will be looking at what the Word says about the mind in the next chapter, but there doesn't seem to be much taught about the will. When we gain an understanding of the will, we will find the keys to the way many of us think and act.

The will is the part of our soul that controls our desires. Determining what we want and how we want it is the function of the will. We have heard much talk about the “strong-willed” person. In essence, he is someone who wants things very badly and who isn't persuaded

easily to do things someone else's way. When someone's will is yielded to the will of the Father, then they desire what the Father desires. When our will is not submitted to the will of the Father, then we do what we want and disobey the will of God. God has definite desires. His desires are based on His love and His understanding. When our will is against God, it isn't based on love, but rather on a selfish focus. In that case, our will isn't saying, "Not my will, but Yours be done" like Jesus did; instead, it is shouting, "Not Your will, but mine be done."

When your will rules your life, you are controlled by what you desire. When you have a very strong desire for something, it becomes lust. God gave you the capacity for lust. He gave it to you so you could turn your lust toward Him, to desire to have the fullness of Him in your life, to desire to attain all that He wants for you to have. There are many scriptural examples of godly lust and desire. 1 Timothy 3:1 says that if anyone reaches out to overseership, he desires a good work. The Greek word for "desires" here is the word *epithumia* and it is translated almost everywhere else as "lust." God knows that when someone wants to go higher in working for Him, they have to desire it pretty intensely. Many times Paul tells people how he "longs" to see them (Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:4) and "longs" for them to grow up in God (Philippians 1:8). Desiring and greatly wanting something is not sin in and of itself. It is when we use desire for the wrong purposes that it becomes so bad. I have found that there is a pathway of ever-deepening lust that occurs in someone's life when desire is turned the wrong way. In the same way, I have found that a man can grow in his desire for the things of God until it becomes consuming. Most of

these levels of lust have a good and a bad side. What I have witnessed the most in people is the ugly side of lust.

As we look at these different levels of lust, we will not be trying to do an exhaustive study. There are several words that I will not be using because they are not very common or they are not very distinctive. The ones we will consider are words that appear the most frequently, Greek words for lust that are commonly used and best understood.

The Will

The first word we'll examine is the Greek word *thelo*. It means "to want to." It is the word that means "the will." To want to do something is to will it to be done. The will is the part of us that we use to decide or to desire. Since we have this ability to decide, we have the option to decide to go the wrong way. This power of choice is a great power that God put in us. We can choose to do what is right or to do what is wrong. It is this trait that distinguishes us from other life-forms; we have the power to choose. Trying to convince people to make the right choice has been a continual problem in the church. Most things that happen in people's lives occur because of their own choices. Everyone is responsible for what they do. They have the choice. They may not always understand the choices given, but they have the choice anyway. This shows up very clearly in Matthew 23:37, when Jesus said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her. How often I desired to gather your children in the way a bird gathers her chicks from un-

der her wings! And you did not desire it.” Both of the words underlined in that passage are the Greek word *thelo*. Jesus had a desire that was unfulfilled because the people of Jerusalem did not desire it.

Everyone that I have ever met who has a ministry that focuses on helping people has told me the same thing: no one can be helped until they truly want it. Everyone that truly desires assistance can be helped. Choice is that powerful.

We can choose not to do God’s will, but we will probably do the will of others. As Christians we are always talking about doing God’s will, but we also are doing things that others want. In 2 Timothy 2:26, it says, “...and they may awake out of the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him, so as to do the will of that one.” People are in the snare of the devil and are doing *his* will, not even necessarily their own. They might not be doing their own will, but because they haven’t chosen to do differently, they are doing the will of the devil. They don’t have to do the devil’s will unless they aren’t born again. If they are born again, then they can choose not do the will of the devil. If they are not born again, they can make the choice to become born again and therefore escape from doing the devil’s will. John 8:44 says, “You are of the devil as father, and the lusts of your father you desire to do.” Even if I am doing the will of the devil, it is my choice. If I continue to do it, it must be because I want to continue down that path.

Before I was born again, my desires and the desires of the devil were not too different. I had a nature

that made me go that way. Ephesians 2:3 says, "... among whom we also all conducted ourselves in times past in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed of the flesh and of the understandings, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest." But it does go on to say that by grace we have been saved, and that now we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

We now have a choice to make. We can choose to follow after God, or we can choose to follow after our own lusts which are fed by the devil. I am a new creation in Christ Jesus, and I am choosing to walk as I have been created to walk. But it starts with a choice.

The Strong Desire

The next word is *epithumeo*. It is the most common Greek word for lust and can be used to describe either a positive or a negative desire. The Bible uses it both ways. In Luke 24:14, Jesus said, "With desire I desired to eat this Passover with you." It literally can be translated, "With lust I have lusted to eat this Passover with you." The meaning of this particular Greek word is to have a very strong desire to do or to have something. We can strongly desire to walk with God or strongly desire to look at pornography. Having a strong desire is not wrong or right in itself. It is what we strongly desire to have or do that makes a difference. If we can focus our desires on the right things and let our desires to be used the way God intended, the outcome will be life, not death. We must use our will to choose the right desires, though.

We understand this word for desire very well. Matthew 5:28 says, “But I say to you, everyone looking at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Whenever I talk about lust, people automatically think of this verse and assume that I mean sexual lust. Truthfully, the word lust is used most commonly in reference to sexual lust. Probably, too, most people think of it in this way because they are either guilty of sexual lust or they have been damaged by it. Yes, lust can be sexual in nature, but people lust after more than just sex. People lust after anything that will give them benefit or personal reward without stopping to think about whether the reward is temporary or permanent. If the attraction of short-term reward is more appealing to them than the long-term consequence, then they will pursue the object of their lust. Remember, most people are not sorry that they did something; they are just sorry when they get caught and have to pay the price for it.

We fight this battle of lust in our lives everyday, and the most frequent victim is our own soul. We do things to make our soul feel good. We let our mind, will, and emotions rule our lives so that we can do what we want. When we let lust rule us, the damage is great, and we discover that the once alluring rewards are deceiving. 1 Peter 2:11 tells us, “... abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” In every war, whether physical or spiritual, one side usually tries to kill the other to take over its territory. We are in just such a battle. What is at stake is severe and eternal. Galatians 5:16,17 says, “But I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh;

and these are contrary to one another; lest whatever you may will, these things you do.” The Spirit greatly desires you to walk in the ways of God. The flesh greatly desires to do its own thing; it does not want to come under submission to the Spirit. We talked about the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit in Romans 8. We also noted that the end result of walking in the mind of the Spirit is life and peace, but the end result of walking in the other is death. The Spirit of God loves you passionately and wants you to have life and peace, not death. These two enemies, the flesh and the spirit, fight each other. It is our choice, too, that determines which side will claim the victory in our own lives. We can choose to have abundant life and peace by choosing to walk in the Spirit and actively choosing not to walk in the flesh. We have that power.

There are things that we can do to help us where we are in the middle of the fight. I know that I fluctuated in my ability to fight lust. If we work on being stronger when we are not under attack, then we will be able to win during the times we are attacked. If we don’t train ourselves to use the weapons of the Spirit when we are relatively free from attack, we will be setting ourselves up to sin at our convenience. We set ourselves up so that we are able to come back and sin later when the opportunity is better. Look at professional soldiers as an example. During times of peace, they train themselves, condition their bodies. In war, they use the lulls in battle to examine, repair, clean and reload their weapons. In short, they make adjustments during times of calm so that they will be more effective the next time they come under attack. The same principle holds true in the spiritual war against lust.

Romans 13:14 slapped me across the face one day about this particular issue. “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do not take thought beforehand for the lusts of the flesh.” In my life at the time, I was doing the exact opposite thing. I would figure out beforehand how I could sin the next time. I even had my “stash” of books, magazines, or other materials in a place where I could get them to use for just such a time. Then the Word of God told me that no matter how much I tried to deceive myself, in reality I was just planning beforehand how I could fulfill my lust the next time it arose. I had tried to lie to myself by claiming that it was something that spontaneously came on me. I thought I had no choice but to do it, when all the time I was really just trying to figure out how I could set myself up for the next time. I realized that I could either choose to perpetuate my sin or choose to stop it.

Let’s look back for a second to Galatians 5:16. It offers us a “battle plan” for success. The main thrust of this scripture is that if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. We do have a way out of this trap of lust. By walking in the Spirit, we have the power to do what we don’t have power to do in the flesh. In the natural, we know that we don’t have the strength to walk free. Sometimes the knowledge that we can’t do it on our own gives us the impression that we are hopelessly stuck, in bondage to lust forever. Since we don’t know that we have the power to be free, we can justify our sin by telling ourselves that we have to sin and that we will be doing this for the rest of our lives. But this verse tells us that if we walk in the

Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. There is hope! The lust of the flesh does not have to rule our lives.

I can just hear you ask as you read this: What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? How can I walk in the Spirit?

Walking in the Spirit means walking according to the principles of the spirit realm, not the physical realm. It means believing that what God says is true, is true. When you walk in the Spirit, it doesn't matter how things seem to be according to our eyes. When we bring the natural into submission to the spiritual, higher laws govern. Greater power is available. In the Spirit, we are being empowered to do things that we can't do in our fleshly strength. In the Spirit, we can understand things that our human minds had no hope of comprehending. We now walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). We adhere to the way the scriptures tell us things are and see those higher principles at work in our lives.

Our ability to choose is an amazing power. When we choose to walk in the Spirit, we bring to our lives all the power of God to accomplish what He wants us to do. What God wills, He empowers. All He needs is for us to line up with how He does things and allow Him to work in us. When we walk in Him, He can walk through us. The limitations of our flesh are no longer a factor. We can do what He calls us to do. That includes walking free from fulfilling the lust of the flesh. It requires a change in our focus- from focusing on ourselves and our wants to focusing on

God and what He wants. Then our fleshly lusts will not rule us, and we will find true fulfillment for our lives. What a good deal!

Epithumeo can be changed from a negative thing to a positive thing. It just has to be aimed in the right direction. In this level of lust, we can go from the bad to the good by making the right choices. If we find ourselves ensnared in the next levels of lust, it will be increasingly more difficult to reverse our focus. As we continually choose to feed our lust and seek the things of the flesh, we also continually build something else. We begin to build a tendency to choose the lust and the temporary fulfillment it brings. It gets easier and easier to choose the lust. As we choose to lust, we pave the path to make it easier to make similarly ungodly choices. Eventually, the choices will become almost automatic. We know which way we will choose, and we also will sense that it's harder to hear the voice of God. By consistently choosing ungodly lust, we will be laying down a path from which escape will be more and more difficult.

The fact that you are reading this book shows that you are not too far down that path to escape, though. There is hope for you right now, and all it takes is for you to make the right choices and follow them. Use whatever God gives you to fight the things you've been dealing with. If you learn how to fight using the weapons that God has given His children, you will be able to come out as an overcomer. You can be victorious. However, along with this glimmer of hope comes a warning. If you choose to continue in sin, there are deeper levels of lust waiting to ensnare you. You cannot stay here. It will get worse. The next levels of lust

are not funny, and they should not be played with. I've seen them. I've met people who are trapped in them, and it isn't a pretty sight. The Spirit is calling you to come out from among them and be separate. Be the man of God He made you to be.

Coveting

The next level of lust seen in the scripture is described by the Greek word *pleonexia*. It is translated mostly "covetous, coveter" and it means someone who is consumed with getting more of something. This type of lust embodies the law of diminishing returns. It drives a person always to want more and then more and then more. We most commonly see *pleonexia* manifest as a drive to gain more money, but anything can be the focus of this snowballing type of lust. It can be money, power, control, sex or all of the above. Ephesians 5:5 tells us how God views any individual who is driven by *pleonexia* lust. "For be knowing this, that every fornicator, or unclean one, or covetous one, who is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This scripture states very clearly that anyone who is a covetous one, who allows *pleonexia* to control them, is an idolater. Their focus is always to get more for their god, which, of course, is themselves. This is reinforced in Colossians 3:5 which says, "Then put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil lust, and covetousness, which is idolatry." It is interesting that the word idolatry is used in reference to covetousness in both verses. There is something about covetousness in a person's life that is a deep spiritual focus of desire. It brings lust into the realm of worshipping ourselves and obtaining things so we can present them as offerings to our god, self.

One of the earmarks of this level is that people with this bondage use others to help them get what they want. 2 Peter 2:1-3 talks about false prophets and teachers who will be in our churches doing great damage. "But false prophets were also among the people, as also false teachers will be among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, and denying the Master who has bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. And many will follow their destructive ways, by whom the way of truth will be evil spoken of. And by covetousness, with well-turned words, they will use you for gain- for whom judgment of old does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber." It says that by covetousness (*phoenexia*) they will use people for gain. This shows a definite disregard for people. They see other people as just a means of gaining their own desired end. Verse 14 describes them even further: "...having eyes full of an adulteress, and never ceasing from sin; alluring unsettled souls; having a heart busied with covetousness; cursed children." Alluring unsettled souls means that they use people that are not strong enough to fight them. It even gives the real condition that makes a difference- hearts busied with covetousness. The lust is in their heart. They have chosen this pathway so many times that their heart has been hardened. Their heart focus is on getting the target of their covetousness. People are just a way to get it. That type of callousness shows a hard heart.

Jesus warned us very clearly in Luke 12:15 when He said, "Beware, and keep back from covetousness, for one's life is not in the abundance of the things which are to him." The things we want are only temporal or

for this time. The things of the Spirit are eternal and are for now *and* forever. What is more important and of greater value- what is going to be destroyed or what lasts forever? Is my temporary lust fulfillment worth more to me than the lives of other people? Very good question!

Fleshly Pleasure

The next word is actually the root word for a word we use in the English language- hedonistic. The Greek word is *hedone*, and it means “pleasure”. Many things in life cause pleasure, but everyone knows that there is pleasure and there are other pleasures. The different kinds of pleasure come from the different kinds of feelings that are produced. I get a completely different feeling from my small child perched on my lap, hugging me and telling me how much he loves me, than when I see some woman taking off her clothes. One is a beautiful and pure pleasure that brings both a positive and tender feeling with it. The other is a dark, evil pleasure that I feel when I think I am getting away with doing something that I know I shouldn’t do. This kind of pleasure is exciting and thrilling, but I can sense the damage that it wreaks. The former is a feeling that I would love to tell people about and elicit a rewarding response from them. The latter is one that I don’t want anyone to know about. It is this second, dark pleasure to which the word *hedone* refers.

We saw this passage when we talked about *pleonexia*, but 2 Peter 2:13 says, “...being about to receive the wages of unrighteousness, having deemed indulgence in the day to be pleasure; revelling in spots and blemishes, feasting along with you in their deceits.”

This passage shows that these people are losing normal restraints and are doing these things “in the day.” When our lust gets to the point that it filters into other areas of our lives and is showing up at all sorts of times, then we are seeing hedonistic behaviour. The temporary thrill is more important; it is so important, in fact, that the act which causes this hedonistic pleasure is done almost in the open. Normal restraint is being lost, and we are doing things during times that we would never have done them before. The taste of the thrill is with us most of the time and is accessible very quickly. Sometimes the lust is there without us knowing what triggered it, and we look around for the focus or cause of its sudden onset.

This is very easily illustrated sexually; when a person is bound by *hedone*, things that aren’t even close to being sexually alluring do produce a sexual response in us. Even an everyday occurrence like a woman walking by causes the thought processes to turn to sex even if she wasn’t dressed for sex. The mere fact that she is a woman is enough to cause the thrill to flow. This is hedonistic pleasure.

Understanding it outside of the realm of the sexual is a little more difficult to see. However, whatever it is that gives us the thrill or personal benefit is usable for *hedone*. James 4:1-3 gives us such an example. “From where do wars and fightings among you come? Is it not from this, from your lusts warring in your members? You desire (*epithumeo*) and do not have, you murder, and are jealous and are not able to obtain. You fight and you war, and you do not have, because you do not ask God. You ask, and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order that you may spend on your lusts.” Both of the

underlined words are *hedone*. If we can track back all the fightings in the church to some form of pleasure, then there must be many kinds of pleasure with which people are dealing. One thing that is certain is this: no matter what it is that causes our perverted pleasure, it is killing us and keeping us from having what we could have in Jesus Christ. If our relationship with Him is where we get our pleasure, then it won't drain the life from us. It will put life in us.

God knew that pleasure would be a pull on people to walk away from Him and what He offers us. In Luke 8, Jesus explained to His disciples the parable of the Sower sowing the seed. We know that the various kinds of soil are the various ways that people respond to the message of the Gospel. A person can be whatever kind of soil they want. In verse 14 Jesus is explained about the seed that fell among the thorns. He said, "And those falling in the thorns, these are those hearing, but under cares and riches and pleasures of life, having moved along, they are choked, and do not bear to maturity." These are the ones that have received the Word of God and get their focus off Him. Pleasures become more important than what God could give. It says that they don't bear to maturity. They have no fruit. They are useless. They take the nutrient from the soil and the water, but they don't grow up and produce what they were created to do.

Pleasure is a dangerous thing to have as a focus. It might feel good for a while, but it will cost more than we can afford to pay, especially when we realize that it is only a temporary feeling that will need to be fulfilled again and again.

Consuming Lust

The next to the last Greek word for lust is *orexis*. This type of lust is a consuming lust. It is used in 1 Timothy 6:9,10. "But those having purposed to be rich fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts (*epithumia*) which plunge men into death and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils, by means of which some having lusted after it were seduced from the faith, and they themselves pierced through by many pains." These people were seduced away from the faith, which means that they were once part of the faith. Seduction to evil is open to all, even Christians. But the reason I feel this word is here in the order of the degrees of lust is because of Romans 1:27. "And likewise, the males also forsaking the natural use of the female burned in their lust toward one another, males with males working out shamefulness, and receiving back in themselves the reward which was fitting for their error." This is a level of lust that is consuming. The homosexual mind-set is a great tragedy. I know that I will probably be in great trouble with many people, but sin is still sin no matter what kind of false logic you want to use. My message to the homosexual is this: You don't have to be one; you can be set free. With homosexuality becoming rampant, it is becoming more evident that people justify sin because of their seeming inability or lack of desire to do anything about it. Jesus is still the answer to all problems and the answer comes to each person by their own choice. Homosexuals aren't born that way; they choose that way. All conditions of sinful behaviour are because of choice. Jesus is the only way out. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Lust is not unconquerable by the blood of Jesus. On the contrary, His blood is much more powerful than any sin. The challenge is

that we have to choose to receive His freedom. Only the Spirit of God can touch people where they are in life so that they may make the choice to be set free.

Unbridled Lust

We are ready to look at the last level of lust. This one really scares me. I've met people who are in this condition and it really breaks my heart. It is the Greek word *aselgeia*, which means to be totally out of control, being controlled instead by lust. A term that is used in defining this word is "incontinence", a word that defines someone who has lost self-control. When I was a paramedic, we used that term in our reports to describe someone that had lost bladder or bowel control and had messed themselves. Nobody wanted to deal with an incontinent victim. People trapped in this lust condition elicit the same response from other people. Their unbridled lust produces such a mess that no one wants to help them or even knows how to help them.

Let's look at what the Word of God says concerning this. "For speaking great swelling words of vanity, by the lusts (*epithumia*) of the flesh, by unbridled lusts, they allure those who were escaping the ones living in error." (2 Peter 2:18) What a tragedy! They find people that are escaping the life of error and win them back! These are active evangelists of the lust gospel. They scream that people can live free from all rules and do whatever they want, and they claim that kind of lifestyle is freedom. "This is who you are, and you can't suppress that," they say. "Live the way you are and do all things that you want to do in free expression of yourself." That isn't freedom; that is anarchy. True

freedom is not living without any limits. True freedom is not just doing whatever you want. True freedom requires discipline. If you want the freedom to be able to play the piano, you must have the discipline to practice and learn it from someone. Without discipline there is no freedom, just different forms of bondage. So, people who are consumed by lust want others to be trapped just like them so that they are not alone in their error. That way they can justify their guilt and do not have to deal with it. They will have to deal with it some day, but by then it will be too late for them to change.

We have more to learn about the people of *ase/geia*. In Ephesians 4:17-19, it says, "Therefore, I say this, and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk even as also the rest of the nations walk, in the vanity of their mind, having been darkened in the understanding, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance which is in them because of the hardness of their heart, who having cast off all feeling gave themselves up to lust, for the working of all uncleanness with greediness (*pleonexia*).” This condition of giving themselves up to this lust is because they have made the choice to throw off all feelings of guilt, shame, right or wrong, and have given themselves up to being out of control. The condition that makes this possible is hardness of heart. Hardness of heart comes from continually saying “no” to the Holy Spirit. Every time you harden your heart to what He is trying to do in your life, your heart gets a little bit harder. Eventually the heart becomes unable to hear, and things get very bad for that person. They will never come to God unless there is someone who is praying for them. That is heavenly cheating. We can go against someone’s wishes and pray for them. That may be the only thing that will save their life.

We can get an even deeper understanding of this. Look at Jude verse 4. It says, “For certain men crept in secretly, those having been of old marked out to this condemnation, ungodly ones perverting the grace of God for unbridled lust, and denying the only Master, God, even our Lord Jesus Christ.” God’s grace is His love for us. When someone perverts the grace of God for their unbridled lust, they are rejecting the only thing that can save them. That is scary to know that they are trying their hardest to destroy the only thing that can help them. When they do that, they deny Jesus Christ and all that He did for them. If they remain in this condition, they will find themselves in Hell. Unbridled lust isn’t something to play with. It isn’t funny when someone just lets themselves go and becomes controlled by their lust. When someone wants a cheap thrill more than what God can do for them, they are playing with the greatest power in the entire universe, and the outcome will always be devastating.

As you can see, the scripture is not silent about lust. The warnings are very strong, and the end result is devastating. We can get deeper and deeper into lust until it consumes us completely, or we can get out of the trap and begin to reverse the process. There is a word in the Greek that also means strong desire, and everywhere it is used it has a positive and godly connotation. It is the word *epipotheo*, which means to have a craving, to long for, to yearn for. In Philippians 4:1, Paul tells the church in Philippi, “So that, my brothers, ones loved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, beloved ones.” He told them in chapter 1 verse 8, “For God is my witness how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” Paul loved these

people and had incredibly deep desires for them to be the people of God. He desired that all the churches he worked in should have the very best in their walk with the

Lord. Even his wishes to visit them were motivated by his desire for their benefit in God. In Romans 1:11, he says, “For I long to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you for the establishing of you.” These desires burned in him and drove him to do all the traveling that he did. Obviously, then, desires aren’t always evil. They can be very healthy and can be a motivational force in our lives to get us to do the things of God.

In 1 Peter 2:2-3, we are told, “As newborn babes desire (*epipotheo*) the pure soul-nourishing milk, that you may grow by it; if indeed you tasted that the Lord is good.” Desires that are in control and working the way God designed them to work will bring us great benefit. Our choice is the key to everything. What do you want to desire? Our desires can bring us to God or throw our lives in Hell. Which do you desire?

To sum up this chapter, I will simplify the whole understanding. Lust in any form is self-seeking. It desires to get something for selfish purposes. It wants to have something that it doesn’t have right now. Lust is wanting to take something from someone else.

Love, on the other hand, is by nature giving or sacrificing for someone else. Love is defined by John 15:13, which says that there is no greater love than to lay down your soul for your friend. To have a greater love, God tells you to lay down your desires and needs to help another fulfill their desires and needs. Jesus is the manifestation of that in Philippians 2. He continually

humbled Himself to do what the Father was asking of Him so that He could bring salvation to us all. To live like Jesus is to be one who gives to others out of our reserves in the Father. We are to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love others as ourselves.

Lust gets. Love gives. Lust serves self. Love serves others. What you lust, you cannot love. What you love, you cannot lust. We will see the power of this principle in the following chapters. Remember this principle. Here is a simple handle that you will be able to remember and use. When you lust after a woman, you cannot possibly love her. If your heart were to change and you loved her with the Love of God in you, then you couldn't lust after her.

Chapter 7

The Salvation of the Mind

When we were born again, our spirits were totally and miraculously given salvation. Salvation is a Christian term that has been losing its meaning over the years. We have asked people if they are saved and have talked about someone receiving salvation, but we have turned it into a word that is hard to define. If we were to use a more modern word that would clarify the meaning, we might be better able to communicate. The meaning of salvation in both the Greek and the Hebrew is easier to understand when it's defined as the act of being rescued. When someone is drowning and a brave person jumps in the water and drags them out, we say, "John just saved Tim from drowning." When there is a danger of death, and someone comes and takes people to a place of safety, they have been rescued. They have experienced salvation. The church has taken this, however, and overused it to the point that the original meaning has been lost.

In the scripture, though, the image of being rescued and taken to a place of safety is very accurate. If we are still in danger, then we haven't been rescued. Our spirits have been totally rescued. We have been taken from a place of danger (Hell) to a place of safety. Our spirits are saved, and that is a completed work. Our problem, however, is not in our spirit if we are already believers, but in our souls. Our souls, as we have seen already, are made up of our mind, will (desires), and emotions. If we are already working on getting our desires under control as we saw in the last chapter, then

we need to continue the process by bringing our minds under control.

The Bible has much to say about the salvation of our souls. Often it deals with the different parts of the mind, the will, and the emotions. When someone is born again, it is only the beginning of their new lives in Christ. Now that they are newborn children of God, they need much in the way of care. They now must walk a new path and strive to obtain a heavenly goal. We know that there is a growth process that each Christian must undergo. One of the most important processes is *the renewing of the mind*.

The Bible states in Romans 12:1,2 “Therefore, brothers, I call on you through the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what is the good and pleasing and perfect will of God.”

Notice that this passage starts with making our bodies a living sacrifice. It is a living sacrifice, but not because we are called to human sacrifices or offer blood on an altar anymore. Nonetheless, it is still a full sacrifice, involving the total commitment of our life. In 1 Corinthians 6, we see some very strong principles. In verse 12, Paul talks about how things are lawful but not everything is beneficial and then about foods and the body. But then he changes direction in verse 13 by saying that the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. He tells us that our bodies are for the Lord no matter what our bodies tell us. He then goes on to

tell us that anyone who is joined to a harlot is one body with her. Sex, as we have seen already, is designed for covenant. Everyone who is joined to a woman sexually is bound to her spiritually as well. God intended that we join to only one woman and then only in marriage. Sexual sin is a perversion of the one flesh relationship that God wants us to understand. Verses 16 and 17 show us the correlation between sex and what God wants us to understand from sex: an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Lord further addresses this in 1 Corinthians 6:16,17 “Or do you not know that he being joined to a harlot is one body? For He says, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’ But he being joined to the Lord is one spirit.”

When someone sins sexually, he releases forces in the spirit realm that were never intended to be released. He causes damage in a very intimate area between him and the Lord. That is why Paul goes on to command us to flee sexual sin because it is a sin against your body, and your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are the body of Jesus Christ on this earth. We have been bought with a price and do not belong to ourselves (verses. 19-20). What we do with this body is totally up to the One who really owns it. When Jesus gave us His body on the cross and died for us, He set a spiritual principle in motion. When we accept Him as our Lord, we give to Him what He gave to us. He gave us everything He had, and now we are to give Him everything we have. He gave His body, and now it is only our reasonable service to give Him our bodies as living sacrifices so that He can live through us here on earth. **When we sin sexually, we are causing the**

Lord's body to be used for idolatry.

It is very important that we understand This concept in a practical context. To be blunt, when I masturbated, I used the Lord's hand on the Lord's penis so that I could worship at the altar of a demon. I didn't know that then. As I became aware of these things later it really disgusted me. I saw how low I had actually stooped in pursuit of temporary, cheap pleasure. Since it is idolatry, it creates a very bad picture of me making Jesus worship idols. How disgusting!

That is why Romans 12 tells us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. When we start to put our body's desires into proper perspective, we can start to bring them under the control of a much higher principle. Our focus is usually on what our body wants and how we can fulfill it. When our bodies rule us with the habits and desires that we have allowed them to have, then we are only puppets along for the ride. We need to understand that we have been purchased and that there is a higher purpose for our bodies than just to experience fleeting sexual sensations. We actually have a purpose and a destiny that has been planned for our bodies. They are the temples of the Holy Spirit and the houses of the God of the universe, vessels He uses to make contact between God and this world. When we are fulfilling the desires of this world, we are not able to function in our higher calling. The penny is telling the \$100 bill what to do, and the bill is lowered in value to that of a penny.

When we come to understand that our bodies are to be used for a greater purpose, we begin to let go of minor purposes. There is a great danger that many in an addiction cycle cannot see themselves as having

the ability to be anything other than just an addict. Most have tried to get free before and have failed. They are very quick to condemn themselves and tell themselves that they will never be able to get out of the cycle of lust. They don't see a higher purpose. Even if they do, they only see themselves as a greater failure for not being able to live up to the higher purpose. They then condemn themselves with a greater degree of efficiency. That is why the scriptures don't stop with just urging us to give up our bodies as living sacrifices.

Conforming and Transforming

The next step after offering ourselves as sacrifices is one of the hardest steps because it is totally private. The renewing of the mind is something that has been discussed at length by many teachers and pastors, but it is hard to put into practice. It is hard to become accountable to someone else with our thoughts because they can't really share them. The Vulcan Mind Meld is only good on TV. We can't really share each other's full thoughts. However, if we can expose the deceptions, we will be much closer to obtaining our goal.

Romans 12:2 says that we aren't to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. Being *conformed* is a very interesting process. The Greek word comes from two words meaning "together" and "a plan or schematic drawing". This combination means that we can become exactly like the schematic that has been drawn. The problem is that the plan is the world. We can become exactly like what the world has planned for us to be by living according to the principles and desires of the world. I have worked with schematic drawings all my life, and when you make

several items by following the same plan, every one of them turns out exactly alike. The world wants everyone to be exactly alike in order that we may be locked away from Jesus and the life He intended. When we start to renew our minds, we must start remaking our thought processes according to new schematics, a new plan. It takes time to re-route old circuits. We are continually seeing old patterns that cause us to think the way the old world system thinks. When we open the Word of God, it shows us areas where we don't think correctly. We then have the choice to change our old patterns and think differently.

We are not to conform to the world but be *transformed*. The word for transformed comes from the words *meta* (in the middle or midst; inside) and **morphoo** (to form or fashion or change). The English word that came from the Greek word is *metamorphosis*. In biology it is the changing from one form into a completely different form. The two greatest illustrations of metamorphosis in nature are when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly or when a tadpole becomes a frog. The second form of these animals is completely different from the first form. There has been a total change in everything from lifestyle to eating habits. What is interesting is that they cannot properly reproduce until they have been transformed. The transformation is what brings them into maturity so they can properly reproduce. Like the caterpillar and tadpole, we must be changed from one form into a completely different form by the renewing of our mind. I used to be one way, and now I am doing things a different way. I used to think a certain way, and now I think differently, not just in conclusions but in the

process itself.

The Power of the Mind

Once I was teaching in our Bible school in Moscow about sexual propriety, telling the Bible students how to behave correctly and avoid major problems that could take them out of the ministry. We had dealt with many problems that showed us they were having trouble with the concepts of purity. We encountered many who held the European attitude toward sex, that it was fine to have sex with anyone who was consenting; that it was only natural. It was quite a revelation to many of them that we weren't going to accept that attitude as a godly one.

As I was teaching them about sex and how it worked in the scripture, I realized that I had to get pretty graphic with them or else they would miss the subtle meanings. We separated the men and the women for these discussions, and my wife ministered with me in these sessions. I was telling the men about the importance of their thought processes and how they had to control things in their minds before they could control things in their bodies, but it was becoming difficult to explain. So I told them that I was going to show them my main sexual organ. My wife just about freaked out. Everyone was staring at me in disbelief. With every eye in the room watching very intently, I looked around to make the most of the moment, and then I slowly pointed to my head with both index fingers. They all got the idea. Sex begins in the mind, not the penis. The way you think determines the way you behave. Controlling your thoughts is the first step to controlling your body.

The scripture is not silent about how you think, either. There is so much in the Word of God about the workings of the mind that we don't have room here to tell everything. There are several books out on the renewing of the mind, and most of them are very good. As I write this, I am completing a study on the mind in the scripture. To date, I have tracked 74 different Greek words that have to do with the mind in the New Testament. This alone shows us that God is very interested in how we think. He is so interested, in fact, that He even tells us how to do it through the scripture.

The Thought Process

One of the most important Greek words is the word *phroneo*. *Phroneo* means "the thought process," or how to think. In Romans 8:5-7, we see this: "For the ones that are according to the flesh mind (have the thought processes of) the things of the flesh. And the ones according to the Spirit (have the thought processes of) the things of the Spirit. For the mind (the thought processes) of the flesh is death; but the mind (the thought processes) of the Spirit is life and peace; because of this the mind (the thought processes) of the flesh is enmity towards God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be." (Parentheses added)

We see that the way of thinking of the flesh is death, but the way of thinking of the Spirit is life and peace. You cannot do the things of the Spirit and at the same time think the things of the flesh. It doesn't work. You are the product of your thought life. Your sexual addiction is not just the feeling of thrill that your body feels, but it's the product of the thoughts you have long before you actually do anything. **If you change (transform,**

metamorphosis) the way you think, you can have the control you need over your body.

Life and death happen first in our thoughts. That is why Jesus said that if you lust after a woman in your heart, you have already committed adultery with her. What we think is just as real as our actions. What happens between our ears is as real and as important to deal with as what happens between our legs. We sin with our minds much more often than we do with our bodies. God is in our thoughts, and He understands everything we think. When we make a judgment against someone in our minds, it causes a spiritual effect by actually making things happen in the spirit. We condemn them to continue doing the things we don't like. We don't love them out of it. When we have lustful thoughts against someone, we cause defilement toward them in the spirit. God holds us accountable for every thought, and every thought that doesn't keep God in His rightful place is idolatry. When we lust after something with our minds and take it with our thoughts, we are sacrificing that to the idol of self and our selfish desires.

God knows that it will kill us to have these thought patterns. That is why He gave us the power of the Holy Spirit to help us renew and transform our minds until we have the thought processes of the Spirit.

Saved Thinking

As I stated at the beginning of the chapter, salvation actually means to be rescued and taken to a safe place. That can be true of our thoughts also. We can have our thoughts brought to a place of safety, a place

where it is safe to think. We saw in Romans 12 how we are not to conform to the world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Look at verse 3 of the same chapter:

“For I say through the grace given to me, to everyone being among you, not to have high thoughts (*hyperphroneo*, too high of a thought process) beyond what is right to think. But set your mind (thought processes) to be right-minded, even as God divided a measure of faith to each.”

The word there for “right-minded” is the word *so-phroneo*. It comes from two words, *phroneo* (which you know already as the thought processes) and the word *sozo*, which is the word for salvation. In other words, this word means thought processes that are saved or saved thinking. The verse says to make your thought processes to be like those of one who is saved in his mind. You have to change your way of thinking until it is the way that God would think. This is done only by the power of the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 1:7, a very famous verse, further describes saved thinking: “For God did not give a spirit of fearfulness to us, but of power, and of love, and of self-control.”

The word for self-control there is the word for saved thinking. God has given us a spirit of saved thinking to help us in the transformation of our minds. But just like everything else, it isn’t that God is taking over our thoughts and making us the kind of people He wants us to be. He is giving us something that we have to use faith for, like it said in Romans 12:3, “But set your mind to be right-minded (saved thought processes), even as

God divided a measure of faith to each.” We have to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians. 2:12). That means we bring the salvation that He has given to us out of our spirits and work it through our lives until every aspect of our lives is transformed.

The idea of working out our salvation means that we have it in us, but that we have to work hard to get it working out of us. Have you ever run very low on toothpaste? You were supposed to get some at the store, but you forgot. Now here you are in the morning with a toothpaste tube that has been squeezed and manipulated for several days. You know that you can get one more toothbrush full if you really try. So, you start at the very end of the tube and start squeezing it very methodically, bit by bit, until you work all the way up to the open end. You have to bend the tip over and keep working at it until you finally squeeze out the last remnant of toothpaste in the tube. It's just barely enough for that one, last brushing. That is the idea of working out your salvation. It is in us, but we have to squeeze it through all the areas of our lives. It must effect every last one of them, until everything in our lives has had our salvation worked through them and they are now saved also. It isn't easy to work out our salvation through our thought processes. It requires constant supervision and maintenance. It doesn't just happen accidentally. We have to make it work.

When we have a thought process that isn't of God, we have to take it captive and bring it to obedience to Jesus Christ. Look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: “... for walking about in flesh, we do not war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly,

but powerful to God in order to pull down strongholds; pulling down imaginations and every high thing lifting up itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.”

We have noted before that everything that isn't for God is against Him. If our thoughts are lifted up against the knowledge of God, they have become a stronghold. A stronghold is a place where we can fight from that is protected and hard to reach. This is a great problem when the stronghold hides us from God and we resist what He tells us to do. Yes, we are in the flesh, but we don't have to have the thought processes of the flesh. We can have the thought processes of the spirit and work our salvation into our thought lives. We need to tear down that stronghold that we have built against God and bring into captivity every thought. When the battle is won in the thought life, it is easy to make it work in the body.

God has given us His weaponry to fight this battle. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us in this struggle. So often we forget that God is intimately involved in our lives and wants to have intimate fellowship with us. The only problem is that too many times we choose not to allow God into the strongholds that we have built for our own personal pleasure. In those strongholds we reign supreme. It threatens us to think about letting God have control over those areas. If God owns those areas, we might never be able to do the sin that we want to do again. That is why we don't want God to have those areas in our lives. We are actually setting up our lust lives as gods higher than God, lifting them up against the knowledge of God. This all happens

because we don't have control over our thought lives.

When we really start to realize that God is totally aware of our thought life, it does away with one of the deceptions that we have allowed to blind us. We all will acknowledge verbally that God knows our every thought, but we don't really believe it, and we certainly don't live like we believe it. If we were constantly aware of God's presence in our thoughts, we would not dwell on the kinds of thoughts that we do.

For example, how could we have all sorts of sexual fantasies about a woman in our thoughts if we also had God's thoughts about her? How can we lust after her, take away her purity and innocence for our own momentary pleasure, and then throw her away when God's thoughts of her are that He loves her as His own daughter, gave His own Son to die for her and wants to have a perfectly pure and intimate relationship with her forever? Remember that you are looking at her with God's eyes because He bought you with a price, so you are really using God's mind to create a sexual fantasy with her for your own pleasure.

Even unsaved men think differently about a woman if they truly love her. I was working on a construction site once, and there were a couple of men that were obnoxious and obviously lusting after every woman that came in sight. They were ogling several women who were just walking past. After a while, a car pulled up, and a very beautiful young woman got out and walked onto the job site. One of them said all sorts of vile things about what he wanted to do to her, and the other man suddenly got very angry. "That's my daughter, you *&%\$&^\$**%@!" All of a sudden, it was

different. He didn't want anyone to lust after his daughter the way he was lusting after someone else's daughter! It almost caused them to have a fist fight right there. It was amazing to me that they didn't see or understand any of it. The little amount of love that father had was enough to stop his lust attack. Thinking of any woman from God's point of view will do the same thing.

Another day I heard two guys lusting away, and a woman came on the site. One of them verbalized his normal lustful thought until the other one said to him, "Cool it, man. She belongs to Mac." Mac was the meanest man on the job site. He loved to fight and all the men around feared him. They knew that if Mac caught them lusting after his woman, he would "bust their heads." The knowledge of power and retribution kept their lust in control. If we really understood the power of God's retribution against those who are wanting to damage and use those He loves, we wouldn't allow lust to overtake us. Again, love and lust are mutually exclusive. You cannot lust what you love, and you cannot love what you lust.

Godliness and purity are greater than momentary pleasure. I've been on both sides of that issue. Hanging onto my lust was killing me. Now that I am free from it, I am living a life that is impossible to explain. Joy and freedom with peace is so much better than the guilt, bondage and fear that I used to experience. The key to it was the renewing of my mind. Standing before God with peace in my mind is a much greater pleasure than anything I had ever before experienced. It was only the deceptions that kept me in the darkness and stopped me from seeing what was truly valuable. Until I really came to the understanding that I hated what was going

on in my mind because of what it did to my relationship with God, I couldn't find freedom from it. Until I admitted that it was sin in my mind and I was responsible for my thoughts, I couldn't repent of them. When I finally truly repented for my thought life, then God was able to teach me how to have a pure thought life and set me free from bondage. As long as I still wanted it, I was going to keep it. As long as lust was more important to me than what God was offering me, I would be stuck in it. Soon it was no longer worth the price. It was a cheap imitation of what was truly valuable.

The Account Books

If you had a set of secret accounting books for everything in your life and everything was logged according to its value to you, what would those books say? Let's say they used a numbering system on a scale from one to one hundred. These books would tell what you held as valuable and what you held as cheap. An entry might go like this:

eating steak	89
eating french fries	65
eating what is good for you	15

You would have all sorts of interesting entries that no one but you would know about. Your wife or friends might think that you have some specific item as a higher scaled entry because you have always lied to them about it. They may think you would put it around 53 and in reality you would put it down around 20. That is the reason we keep them as PRIVATE books. No one

knows what is in them and what the priorities are. No one knows, that is, except you.

You may not really believe it, but God knows also. Your books are wide open to Him and fully understood. He knows that football games score much higher than church and that on any given Sunday you would rather know the score than the scripture reference. He also knows why you gave Miss Tightsweater a higher score in your books than you gave Mrs. Gargoyle.

That is why God told us to get our books in order. One of the Greek words that God uses to teach us about the mind is the word *logizomai*. It really means to log it down in the books as true or to take inventory. There are a few verses that really bring this idea home. The first one is in Romans 6:11, where it says to “count (*logizomai*- log it in the book as true) yourselves to be truly dead to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That means to log it down that it is really true that you are dead to sin and alive to God. Put it in your book that sin has no value and life in Jesus has the greatest value. It is entered in the book as being the truth by which I now live, and sin no longer has any hold on me. Because that is true, verse 12 makes sense because I can now truly not allow sin to reign in my mortal body and I can refuse to obey it in its lust.

The Bible tells us what the priority is in how to think. Philippians 4:8 tells us that “whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is *pure*, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report; if of any virtue, and if of any praise, think (*logizomai*- log it in the book) on these things.” We must make sure that it is a thing of value. That is a priority to God. If there is

something that isn't true, I must not value it enough to log it in my book. If something is not honourable, it is beneath me to do anything with it. If I hear something that isn't a good report, I must not give it any credence by listening to it and giving it value. I cannot repeat it or make a judgment because of it. God is telling us that there are true priorities in the way we should think.

If *purity* is of high value to God in the way we think, and *lust* is of high value to us in the way we think, then we have a conflict in our thought processes. We definitely don't have saved thinking. We are in great need of the renewing of our minds. The thought process of the flesh is death. If we don't have the thought processes of God and our values are not set according to His values, then we are dying.

God loves us so much that He doesn't want us to die in any part of our lives. That is why He warned us to think a certain way. If we don't, we bring about death in our lives because of our unsaved thoughts. The more we continue to think that way, the more death fills our thoughts and thinking. It becomes harder and harder to think the way God does. We see people who find it very difficult to do what is reasonable. It is difficult for them to think like God thinks, and it is hard for them to understand the things of the Lord. They see preaching as a threat to them. When they hear things that threaten their way of thinking, they resist it and fight it. They fear that what they have put their security in is in danger. They are afraid of so many different things, and the fear will cause them to want to run away. They justify their actions and say things like, "They just don't understand me and what I need." Death in their thoughts breeds more death in their thoughts. It is a downward spiral.

When we log things into our books as having value to us, it will determine how we think. How we think depends on what we consider valuable. That is why you need to understand how someone thinks before you can understand how to help them. One of the words that we get from the root word *logisomai* is the word *logic*. How a person responds to something depends on what they have “logged” in their values. Because everyone has different values for different reasons, everyone has different logic by which they operate their lives.

One day it hit me like lightning: “Everyone is logical.” Each individual will respond according to their own data and their own value system. When you discover what they value and why, you can usually determine how they will respond. They will respond “logically” according to their own logic. When people don’t respond the way we think they should (i.e. according to *our* values), we say they are illogical and irrational. If we really understood how they thought and what was of value to them, we would discover that they responded quite logically.

I used to watch the old Star Trek T.V. show with Kirk and Spock, and I would laugh when Spock would argue with Kirk about logic. Spock would always tell Kirk that he was responding illogically. Truthfully, Kirk always responded the same and always according to what he wanted. I was always waiting for Spock to wake up and realize that emotions are logical for an emotional person. They have value, and just because Spock didn’t log them in his book as having value did not mean that others didn’t value them. Of all the people on the show,

Spock was the most illogical because he couldn't learn about other's values, so he tried continually to bend others to his way of thinking. He had a hard time growing in his understanding.

As a pastor, it used to really bother me how a man could throw away his family, health, and everything else of real value for a moment of fleeting pleasure. Couldn't he see what was happening? No, he couldn't. He desired something, and the more he thought on it, the higher it grew in value and the more he wanted it. The more he thought on it, the more the mind of the flesh operated. Death began filling his thoughts and clouding his mind. He was incapable of thinking clearly. The things that were of real value were diminishing further and further in value as his focus concentrated on only one thing. Since he gave himself over to lust, it grew in value until he threw away his self-control and finally just did what he wanted to do. For a moment he had all he wanted and was temporarily satisfied. Then reality struck, and he found himself naked, ashamed, and stripped of everything that was truly important. After it was all over, he would seek repentance with tears, but he would only find self-condemnation and shame. Until he could prove that he had control over his thought life, his wife wouldn't trust him, and it would usually end in major trauma for the whole family. All this happened because of the man's value system and how he used it. No wonder God told us how to use it and warned us of its importance. He wants us to have life and life more abundantly, but that has to be something we value over the things of the world. That is why He told us to log in our account books

whatever is true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, of good report, and of virtue.

Reasonings

We needed to understand the word *logismos* so that we can go on to a word that comes from it: *dialogismos*. The prefix *dia-* simply means “through.” Combining our knowledge of how we log values with the idea of building a logic by which we live, it really means to have a “through-logic.” This paints a picture of someone carefully planning a path from one point to another and making the path go as they want it to go. Everyone can build their own logic to justify any action they want. They know what they want to do, so they construct a logical way of thinking from this point to that one until they have built a full logic that takes them there. When it is finished, they have a firmly set path on which to walk that will take them where they want to go. Every step is perfectly logical and correct to them, even though no one else may be able to understand it. “That is fine, because others just aren’t as logical as I am anyway. If they understood correctly, they would agree with me, and everything would be wonderful.”

Everyone I have ever met uses this method in some way. As I was explaining this system of manipulation to my wife, she said, “So that is what you used to do to me! It used to drive me crazy! There was no way to fight it because you had built a logic that couldn’t be shaken or argued with. Then you would tell me that I am illogical.” She was right; I was very good at it. It seemed that I was able to justify just about anything.

I had the debate skills necessary and could convince others to go along with it. If they didn't go along with it, I would crush them with my ability to argue. If that didn't work, I would just fight them, get angry, and judge them thinking how stupid they were not to agree with me.

Then my wife said, "I am so glad God set you free from that. What a difference there is in you now." I agree. There is a vast difference now. That doesn't mean that I don't have to deal with this problem anymore. However, knowing about it and exposing it to the truth has helped me to have more freedom in my thought life. I exposed the deception to the light of God's word, and the truth set me free. Every time I do that, I am much more free.

We all have to deal with faulty reasonings that we have built. The twelve disciples had to deal with it. In Mark 9:33, Jesus asked the disciples what they were arguing (*dialogismos*) about. They had been caught arguing about who was the greatest. They were building logic castles to live in according to their self-importance. Their logic wasn't built on truth but on their own thoughts of self-importance. Jesus had to tear apart the foundational logic they were building because it was going to take them where they didn't need to go. He redirected their logic so that they had a proper way of thinking regarding their importance. His correction of their thoughts was the basis for one of the strongest principles in scripture. To be the greatest, you must be servant of all.

Another time, Jesus was trying to teach His

disciples a concept, but they were having a hard time comprehending it. Jesus had just dealt with the Pharisees who completely missed what was being taught to them by the feeding of the 7000. They had tried to pervert what was done for their own benefit. Jesus rebuked them and left in a boat with His disciples. Jesus told His disciples in Mark 8:15 to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. The disciples were feeling guilty because they hadn't brought enough bread with them and started reasoning among themselves about whether or not Jesus was upset about not having enough bread. Jesus perceived the problem and asked them why they were building such a wrong path of logic. If they had only asked Jesus, He would have told them everything. Instead, they tried to figure it out with their own power of reasoning. Jesus was always quick to help someone turn their thinking around. Truth is always better than building and living by a deception.

It was the Pharisees who had this technique of building a deception down to a fine art. In Mark 2:1-12, we see the story of the man who was lowered down through the roof so that Jesus could heal him. Instead of just healing him, Jesus had to mess with the minds of the Pharisees and forgive the man. It caused them to reason in their hearts and build a pathway by which they thought they would be able to catch Jesus. Their logic was impeccable to them, but to Jesus it was foolishness. He even asked them why they reasoned in their hearts incorrectly. "Which is easier? To say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you' or to say, 'Rise up and take your cot and walk'?" It was equally difficult for the Pharisees. It was equally easy for Jesus. His thought processes were right.

Matthew 15:19 says that out of the heart comes forth evil thoughts first. That word for evil is *dialogismos*. Out of the heart comes forth evil logic paths, evil ways of building our thoughts. After the evil thoughts, there come murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, blasphemies- things that truly defile the man. It is after a man thinks of a way to do something that the rest is conceived and born into an action. The process always starts with a man thinking of a way to do, justify, or accomplish something for his self-satisfaction.

1 Corinthians 3:20 states that the Lord knows that the reasonings of the supposedly wise are worthless. We think we are so smart to figure out how to get our pornography, hide it, lust secretly, and hide behind facades to accomplish our lusts. The truth of the matter is that God is fully aware of the pathways we build to assist us in our effort to see more pictures, videos, or whatever. He knows that we have figured out the time frames so accurately so we can spend the time with our pornography, masturbate, and still leave ourselves enough time to hide the evidence. He also knows how we plan our false repentance and restitution by good works to appease our consciences while we are all the time planning how to sin all over again.

God is in on all of our thoughts and plans, even the ones we use to deceive ourselves. We are not private in our thoughts like we would like to think. How pure are your thoughts and reasonings? It is in this arena that the battle will be fought and won or lost.

The Imagination

In Romans 1:21, God talks about idolaters who

will eventually make anything into a god to worship for their own pleasure and lust. It says, "Because knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations (or reasonings) and their discerning heart was darkened." This is the normal path for a person whose focus is on sexual fulfillment at any cost. They will become vain in their reasonings. It is in the imagination that the trouble really begins.

Men are sexually aroused pictorially or visually. There is very seldom any thought of sex without the imagination reading into it personal involvement. Every man has a very active imagination. Every man I have ever met has a fantasy life that is very important to him. How we perceive ourselves in our fantasy is how we deal with who we are and how we act. A person that is very secure in himself will have an active fantasy life that has him doing all sorts of things. A lot of them are things that he could actually do if the situation were right. Men who are insecure, on the other hand, still have a very active fantasy life and it is in this life that they live out things that they would never do in reality. But they *can* do it in fantasy. In their imagination, they are stronger, smarter, better looking, attractive to females and able to handle anything. Our fantasy life is one of the ways we deal with the stresses of life. If we have an overbearing boss, in our imaginations we shred him on a continual basis and do things to him that would make Hollywood blush. Every now and then, a man can go too far, and actually live out his fantasy. Maybe he killed someone or many people and it is all because he was pushed too far in his imagination.

One of the things I do with groups of men that I

speak to is tell them their fantasy. We all think we are different and that our thought life is unique. Most men I have talked to have used a weapon in their fantasy life on the day I talk to them. They have either shot someone, used a sword on someone, or used a karate move on someone. They all have starred in some kind of action fantasy that allowed them to save an innocent person (like a luscious looking babe, room full of kids, etc.), kill a bad guy (usually many bad guys) and escape as the hero. When I do this little survey, at least 75% of the men have done most of this that day in their minds. The remaining 25%, with very few exceptions, have usually had this kind of action fantasy within the past few days. This is the reason Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger are so wealthy. Do women go to these movies? Usually, women only go because the men take their women to see these movies. Such action films give us fantasy food to use in our imaginations for a long time to come.

When it comes to pornography, the fantasy is even more personally real. It takes the imagination to get us aroused, and then we fantasize about all sorts of things while masturbating, thereby getting a real physical connection with the things going on in our minds. This actually makes a connection between our fantasies, the chemicals they produce in the brain, and the physical pleasure we feel from the masturbation. That link is one of the addictive chemical links that makes porn an addiction. This also makes the fantasy that goes on in a man's mind seem more real because of the physical reaction it brings. It is something that can be acted out with the fantasy, and that gives him a link between the fantasy and reality.

Understanding this isn't hard, but fighting it is. It requires a strong desire to fight it. Our hate of what it is doing to us must be stronger than the desire to get the pleasure from it. Now, I can't force anyone to do what is right. I can only help them if they want help. If you want to continue in your sexual fantasy life, you will. If you want to stop, I can help you. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it. It will take all your strength, and (for a while) all your time. It will require honesty on your part. The only one you will truly deceive is yourself if you aren't going to do this all the way. The effects of sexual sin WILL manifest themselves, and there isn't anything you can do about it except to get free from the bondage. The choice is yours, just like it has always been.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 states this: "For walking about in flesh, we do not war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful to God in order to pull down strongholds; pulling down imaginations and every high thing lifting up itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ."

The word for imaginations here is the word *logismos*, which is the logic that we have built according to the values that we have used. We have developed pathways of thought that are well-worn and often-used. We have used those pathways to gain something for our flesh. These ways of thinking have been set up as a high thing against the knowledge of God. It is a god that we have been worshipping and from which we gain all our benefit. We have power in the weapons God has given us to tear down that idol and the stronghold

that we have built around it. The main weapon that we have been given is so simple that we have missed it. **We can take captive every thought** (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The word for “thought” in this verse is the Greek word *noayma*, and it means all the working of the mind itself. We have been given the power to control our thoughts and direct them to where they should be. We aren’t being held hostage in our minds beyond our ability to fight. We have the Spirit of God living in us with all of the fruit of the Spirit and the armor of God. We have access to *saved* thought processes. We have been given the power to choose sin or to choose not to sin. The more we choose not to sin, the easier it is not to sin. The first few times are traumatic! But the process must be started. The next thought will have to be the one you start with. **You must decide to take your thoughts captive, start the fight, and never to turn back.**

It must be done for the right reason. If you try to do this in the power of your will or human strength, you are defeated before you begin. But if you are doing this in the strength of the Lord and for Him, you will have all that you need to win. It is His will for us to have Godly thoughts. He will help us. You must know that He is in the fight with you and you are dependent on His help and His strength. Your flesh wants to lust, so it doesn’t do any good to fight lust with your flesh. If you get in the fight, it must be because of your relationship with the Father God and because you want to get closer to Him. Your pornography is keeping you from the most important thing in your life: your walk with the Father.

How to use your imagination correctly

If God gave us weapons to fight with, He will show us how to use them. David said of God that He “teaches my hands for war, my fingers for battle” (Psalm 144:1). God wants us to know how to fight to win.

When I finally admitted to the Lord that I used my imagination for evil, I then asked Him how to fight my own imagination. What He showed me was quite interesting. God invented the imagination, and then He expected us to use it for Him, not for sin. God made us in His image. He has qualities and attributes that He has given to us in a lesser degree. As we learn to live like Him, we have access to things that we had never known possible. He gave us the capacity to lust and then told us to lust after the things of God, not the things of the world. God has given us many things that we just don't understand.

God is the Creator. He creates. It is part of who He is to be creative. He has given that creative ability to us, thus distinguishing us from everything else on earth. When we use our imagination, we are using the part of us that is made in the image of God the Creator. It is very important that we use it correctly. God has given us various capacities in order that we can be like Him. When we pervert something God has given us and we use it against Him, the effect is horrible. God gave us the capacity for fear and told us to fear Jehovah. Anything that we fear other than Him is giving credibility to a false god. God gave us the capacity for anger; then He told us to direct it toward sin and not people. But when God gave us the capacity to create in our minds, He gave us an awesome weapon of incredible strength

and power. Our imagination sets us apart from every other thing on earth. Animals have been given instincts and reactions, whereas we have been given imagination and the ability to think, reason, and dream. When the imagination is used incorrectly, it can cause great damage. The Tower of Babel is a perfect example, since it says in Genesis 11:6, “And Jehovah said, Behold, the people is one, and the lip one to all of them, and this they are beginning to do, and now *all which they have imagined to do will not be restrained from them.*” (italics added)

God knew that if men used their imaginations for wrong, it was going to be a very great wrong. Why did God wipe out the earth with the flood? Look in Genesis 6:5. “And Jehovah saw that the evil of man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the day long.” God knew that when the imagination of all mens hearts was only evil continually, there was no hope. Praise God Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

So, as I was asking the Lord about how to conquer this problem of the imagination, He gently reminded me that I have the responsibility to use correctly what He has given me and not just let it run wild. He showed me that I must actively use it and not just passively let it run away with me. I can make my imagination see whatever I want it to see. Everyone can. Let's prove it by performing an experiment.

Black dog. Big black dog. Big black dog with long shaggy hair. Long tail. Droopy ears. Immediately, you can see that dog. It didn't take much to get your

imagination to work. Now you can choose to make that dog bark, jump up on someone, or even drool a lot. Take your pick. What did your big, black dog with the long, shaggy hair, long tail and droopy ears do? You can make him fly if you wish. Give him 9 inch fangs. Give him wings. Make him laugh. Make him grow or shrink. I don't know if you noticed, but I suggested to you very cunningly that it was a male dog. Did you accept my suggestion? Probably. You didn't even have to think about it.

One time I was teaching on this subject in a prison. I was teaching the inmates how to win in the fight over lust. In the room were several large men who had nothing to do all day but work out on weights and lust after women in magazines. One very large, arrogant man was quite cocky about the fact that he had total control of his life and no one could tell him what to do. I told him that I was going to tell him to do something, that he was going to do it, and that there wasn't anything he could do about it. He bristled up at the challenge and told me that I couldn't. I looked him straight in the eyes and said, "Think of a black dog." He did. "Big! Long hair! Long tail! Droopy ears!" As I kept going he was really trying not to think of what I was telling him. I stopped and said, "I told you so."

The next week he came to me and was very receptive to the teaching. What he said was, "I need your help to control my thoughts. I can't stop thinking of that stupid black dog!"

We are so accustomed to using our imaginations that we don't think about the fact that we are responsible to control it. As I was working on this understanding, the Lord had me think of several ways I could use my

imagination to conquer the old habits of thought.

Instead of thinking of bursting through a door or window and killing everyone in the room to save the hostages, I started making my imagination think of ways to win the head guard of the prison camp to the Lord. I saw people in the hostage situation miraculously saved by an angelic visitation. People weren't getting blown away anymore because it was more fun to see what God could do on the earth through a vessel that was committed to being used by Him. I could actually see people getting healed. I used my imagination to think about the scriptures, to imagine how Jesus lived and walked. This opened up the Bible like I had never seen it before.

Then came the time when my old, lustful flesh started wanting to look at pornography. I started crying for help. "Lord, there has got to be a way to control these thoughts!" Pictures from my vast experience of porn were coming up on the screen of my mind and it was starting to scare me. "Capture one, and deal with it!" God commanded. So I stopped one picture, and the Lord said, "Look at her through my eyes." I had to figure out how God would see her.

First of all, God wouldn't lust after her; He would love her. He wouldn't look on the outward appearance, but He would see her heart. He would love her where she was and want to save her from the sin that surrounded her. As I was thinking these things, I discovered that her body wasn't important to me. I was actually looking at her face and her eyes. I was growing concerned for her as a person for whom Jesus died. I saw that she was in a terrible situation, because it

isn't natural for a woman to expose herself to men or a camera or anything else. A woman will naturally cover herself. My heart started to break for her because she was caught in a defilement that was ruining her life. I really started to love her, and I could no longer lust after what I was loving.

Next, I discovered that I was totally disgusted at the thought of what men (including me) wanted to do to her. I felt God's heart about how He would feel about men using her. I saw the heart of the Father as He was looking at His daughter. I saw how I would feel if someone wanted to do that to my daughter. Even beyond that, I knew that God loved her and wanted good things for her more than I could ever love anyone. Our human love isn't enough to understand the love of the Father. As I started witnessing the love of the Father toward this woman, I was feeling a greater love than I had ever experienced before. It was so much stronger than the lust I had for her that the lust became a thought that was unthinkable. I didn't want it, and I didn't do it.

I learned a powerful lesson. I can't be tempted by what I don't want. I didn't want to lust for her anymore. Seeing her naked was degrading to me. I actually found myself imagining her with clothes on, praising God at church, clean, undefiled, innocent and in the joy of the Lord. What a different picture than the one I had first seen on the theater screen of my mind.

I had experienced what it was like to use the power of creation to make something. I had changed a thought to do what was right with it. With the help of the Lord, I had gone from severely lusting for a woman, to intensely loving her with the heart of the Lord. This

process left me very tired and with conflicting emotions. I was so happy to have won a major victory. I was saddened by the life of the woman the Lord had shown me. I was excited to have a weapon to use, but I was petrified that I was going to have to use it. I had always failed before. I thanked the Lord for what He had done for me and took a walk to recuperate.

That was only the beginning. That happened while I was alone in my office, and I had the time to go through the entire process without distraction. I started asking the Lord how I could use this weapon quickly in an emergency situation. It always seems that I am going somewhere when out of the blue I am confronted with a lust situation. There standing in front of me is some woman that doesn't seem to realize that she isn't wearing enough clothing, or I am suddenly standing face to face with a full size poster designed to make me want her. What should I do in those situations? I usually don't have time to sit and think through everything. I need a "quick-draw" weapon.

The Lord reminded me of the reason sex was invented. It isn't wrong to want my wife. Sex was intended to draw me closer to her, to understand the love of God better, and to understand our walk with the Lord. I understood that I could use my imagination to create a picture of my wife in my mind any time I wanted to. I can see her right now. It doesn't even have to be a sexual picture of her. It could be just a picture or something that reminds me of my covenant with her. I started to practice seeing her. I would also watch her to fill my mind with images that I could use later.

The Lord also showed me that I could see Jesus

beyond people or superimposed over them. If I could view people through the cross, I would usually view them with the right view. I played with it some, and it seemed to work.

Then came the day I needed all my guns, loaded and ready. I was pastoring a church in Colorado. There were several men in my church that were growing in the things of the Lord. We did things together and not just “spiritual” things. We played and did some fun things, too. We had a minor league baseball team in Denver then, and we had all decided to go to an afternoon game and have some fun. We had some hot dogs and drinks, good seats, and we were really enjoying ourselves. I was sitting on the aisle, so everyone who wanted to go to the concession stands from our section had to walk right by me. It was a hot, sunny day in the Rocky Mountains, and there wasn’t even an overwhelming crowd.

We were a couple of innings into the game, when all of a sudden a woman stood up in front of us about ten rows down. She was tall, very sexy, and she was wearing a string bikini that didn’t have enough cloth in it to make a handkerchief. She turned around and stretched. There wasn’t a male eye in the place that wasn’t riveted on her. She stepped out from her seat and started climbing the steps right toward me. I heard the Lord say very clearly in my spirit, “Use the weapons NOW!”

I very quickly superimposed a picture of my wife over this gal. I was immediately in the drivers seat of my mind, not on a roller coaster ride of lust. I had taken

control. Then I superimposed a picture of Jesus on the cross and saw Him dying for her. My heart broke. I saw her for what she was, and it wasn't as a sexual plaything. She was a very hardened, bitter person who used her sexuality to get back at men and to get what she wanted. She was so severely abused and hurting that I was amazed. The closer she came, the stronger I prayed for her. I didn't feel that there was anything I could have done for her or said to her that would have helped her. I only felt I should pray.

As she passed, I looked back out to the field with all this running through my mind. Then I realized that the entire group of men from my church was watching me! I looked at them and asked, "What?" The man sitting next to me looked at me like I was made of green cheese. "You only watched her face. How did you do that? You only watched her face!" They had all looked to see how I was going to respond to her. They watched me as I went through the entire process of taking captive my thoughts and leading them to obedience of Jesus Christ. The man next to me had expressly watched to see what I was looking at. He didn't think it was possible to respond in purity in that situation. After that we had one whale of a discussion.

It is possible to take your thoughts captive. We have been told a lie when someone says that we can't control our thoughts or that we can't be free from doing things that we have done for many years. We can be men who are different. It just takes courage.

Channel of Love, not Lust

I have made a wonderful discovery. When I am used as a channel of God's love, He is able to do things in me and through me that He had never been able to do before. This is the key to victory in the Spirit. When you are a channel of His love, then you are a channel of His power. We have been robbed of what we could have done because of the deceptions we have been in. As long as the enemy can keep us lusting instead of loving, then he will keep us weak and helpless in the things of God. It is the love of God that causes us to be able to flow in His power.

I worked as an electrician when my family and I were preparing to go to the mission field. I worked with a new believer who hadn't had much teaching. His wife wasn't a believer, and that was making things tough on him. Being a healthy, normal male, he was having a very hard time in the area of lust. When I had first started working with him, he had a very strong sexual focus and almost every joke or comment he made was sexual. After he became a believer, it was an area of great struggle for him. I tried various things to help him and was asking the Lord to help me show this guy how to live in victory.

One day we went to a new job that was only going to take a few hours. We went to a business that had offices in the front of the building and a machine shop in the back. We both had our hands full of materials and tools for the job we had to do. As we turned the corner on the way from the office area to the workshop, we were confronted with a very large poster of a very sexy woman wearing nothing. There was nowhere to turn. We had to walk this way, and it was the only thing on the walls. This poster dominated the hallway and

everything around it. It was totally unavoidable.

My friend let out a sigh of despair. "How can you not lust after her? She is too much to ignore!"

"Put your stuff down. Let me show you something," I said.

I took a box of wire that I was carrying and put it up against the picture so that you could only see her face. "I want you to look at her face. Look in her eyes as if you know her. We are going to pray."

"What? Pray in front of a naked woman?" He exclaimed.

"Certainly. God is here with us. He knows everything we are doing, everything we are thinking, and everything we need to do. We are going to pray for her. Let's allow God to show us her life." We started praying and asking the Lord to show us what was going on in her life right then. We were asking for a word of knowledge about a woman in a photograph.

After a little while, the Spirit showed both of us the very same thing. We both knew that she had died of a drug overdose. We both understood that she had been trapped doing things she didn't want to do. She knew they were wrong to do, but she felt she had to do them to get out of her situation. It didn't help. She died a very lonely and sad death. We both had tears in our eyes as we stood in front of the picture looking in the eyes of a dead woman who was beyond hope. As we compared notes on what the Lord was showing us about her, it was awe-inspiring to see how we both knew the same things. We had identical words of knowledge.

“Well, what do you think? Do you want to lust after her now?”

“No,” he said, “I have absolutely no desire for sex right now.”

He had had his lust replaced with love, and what he was loving he couldn't lust. It was amazing that every time we walked down that hallway our hearts would break. It isn't always easy to see people through the eyes and heart of God.

For quite a while after that, every time I would see him looking at a girl, I would ask him if he wanted to pray for her. He would usually decline, knowing that it would end up with him seeing and knowing more than he wanted to see or know. One day he finally told me, “You know, you really do ruin a guy for lusting.” I took that as a high compliment.

If we want to be used as a channel of lust, we can. But if we want to be used as a channel of God's love, that is also available to us. However, we can't be a channel for both. If someone wants to continue lusting, they will pay the cost of not inheriting the Kingdom of God here. In Galatians 5:19-21, the Bible clearly states that those who pursue the works of the flesh will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The first five things on the list are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness, and idolatry. Each of these starts in the mind. Pornography entails all of them. The mind of the flesh that thinks these things is death. If we take captive our thoughts and start using the mind of the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Instead, we will be a vessel that allows the fruit of the Spirit to blossom. The first of these fruits, of course,

is love. We have the choice which channel we will be, lust's channel or love's channel.

Exposing the Lie

For someone to use a clear mind and think correctly, they must have good information with which to work. As long as someone is believing a lie, they will make the wrong decisions. There are several things that people have believed, and as long as they continue to believe them, they will make the wrong choices and go the wrong way. They will never be able to walk on the right path until the lies are exposed and the truth is made known. Jesus wanted us to know the truth so that the truth would make us free.

One of the first lies is that sex is only physical. Of course it isn't just physical. If it didn't involve your emotions and desires and the mind, you wouldn't enjoy it. It is also spiritual, or else there wouldn't be such a strong move in the moral realm to pervert it. If it entails all of that, there are complications that are involved that we will all have to deal with. It is a lot more complex than we are led to believe. The consequences are vast and widespread. Even sex that is only mental and acted out in masturbation has deep consequences that we haven't been honest enough to admit. Sure, you probably won't get AIDS this way, but you will get a focus that will run away with you and will eventually carry you further than you had planned. Addictions are like that. That is why they are addictions.

One of the lies that I personally had to deal with was the lie that having sex with "her" (whoever she might be) would be wonderful. I finally had to see the

truth that having sex with “her” wouldn’t be as good as I imagined it would be. She would want to have some kind of commitment, and as soon as I had sex with her I would be tied to her soul to soul. Sex is never free. It always has a cost. There would be the momentary thrill, but there would come after it the very long-lasting payments that no one can really afford. Our fantasies are always based on just that, fantasy. Nothing is as we thought it was supposed to be. People who have sex a lot will tell you that it isn’t what it’s cracked up to be. There is a principle that is at work here called the “Law of Diminishing Returns.”

The Law of Diminishing Returns is something that occurs in every kind of addiction. When someone starts smoking marijuana, he gets a buzz or a tingling sensation from it. He enjoys it and he wants to do it again. After a while, though, he needs to smoke a couple of joints before he gets the same feeling he used to get from just one. Eventually, he will have to go to stronger drugs for the same effect he craves. He will go for more and more drugs that are more and more potent. The returns he gets from his addiction is not what they used to be. The rewards diminish with every round.

The same principle takes effect with sexual addictions. It requires more sexual stimuli to arouse a man as much as he used to be effected. I found myself wanting to see things I had never seen before. I wanted to see things that were getting strange and “kinky.” When I started there were only books and home films available, but then they started coming out with videos and you could watch live action on your own VCR. Now they even have pornographic CD-ROM and internet access. I know that everyone who is reading this book understands this principle. You are doing things now

that you never thought you would do before.

The lie you initially believed was that this would be a good thrill. Now you find yourself doing things that aren't fun, but you still want to do them. You feel like you are trapped in something. You may even be dealing with unexpectedly intense feelings of fear and guilt. You are realizing that you are not controlling things, but they are controlling you and you are just along for the ride. You can't get out. Sin promised you a good time, but it lied to you. It isn't as fun or rewarding as you had thought it would be.

Another angle on this lie is that the sin will bring satisfaction. There is a moment after masturbating where there is a fleeting feeling of satisfaction. There is physical and emotional release for just a minute. All that effort culminated in a moment of thrill that was fun for a moment, but then the enjoyment was gone. How long did it take before the satisfaction wore off. Two minutes? Five maybe?

Complete satisfaction doesn't come. It is always out there promising to fulfill you, but it just doesn't live up to it's promise. Not very long after each episode comes the nagging emptiness of unfulfillment. Not only are you unsatisfied, but you are on the prowl either to do it differently or more frequently, or you at least yearn to do it again.

I was in this addictive lifestyle and way of thinking for the first ten years of my marriage. I was always trying to get my wife to be what my fantasies were. My focus was on myself and my "need for satisfaction." My pleasure was the only thing that was important.

My search for sexual fulfillment was a never ending battle. There were periods of release and excitement, but they constantly got fewer and harder to come by. As I started looking to the Lord to teach me sexuality from His point of view, things started changing.

As He was renewing my way of thinking, He was showing me how godly pure sex was and what He had intended for it to be. He was showing me that sex was intended to show love and the intimacy of love and it wasn't to be used as a channel for lust. The more I understood what God meant by love, the more I understood what He was talking about. The term "making love" is a complete lie. If you don't love your sex partner with God's love before you ever have intercourse, you aren't going to "make love" by having sex that is totally based on lust. Having sex for personal satisfaction is idolatry since you are worshipping yourself and your desires. You are willing to sacrifice anyone to your godhood so that you can get your satisfaction. That isn't love.

Love always gives. Love is always looking out for the other person. Love considers others as more important than themselves. Love is always looking for the fulfillment of others even if it costs something. Since sex is an expression of that intimacy, it must be done in love or it isn't being done the way God intended. If it is not done the way God intended, it won't have the results that God wanted.

As I started applying that knowledge to my marriage, our sexual life immediately improved. I love my

wife. The more I love her with the love of God, the more I want to give her everything I have and everything I am. I cannot do that with other women, either in person or in my mind. God said that sex was only for marriage. For me to touch another woman either physically or mentally is adultery. For complete fulfillment sexually, I have to do it God's way, not my way. As I began doing things God's way, it was remarkable what happened sexually for me. The fulfillment was there. The satisfaction was there. There wasn't any guilt associated with sex and it caused the relationship between my wife and me to rise to a new level.

The more I pursued God's way, the more He taught me. It was like taking sex lessons from the One who invented sex in the first place. He was showing me what He had intended sex to be like and why. As the purity of my thoughts increased, so did my ability to love my wife and the hold that lust had on me began diminishing rapidly. Thinking of having sex with another woman became increasingly disgusting to me. I realized that God was definitely interested in my attitudes toward sex, my marriage, and other women.

In fact, it finally occurred to me that I could pray about my sex life. God didn't leave me when I had sex with my wife. On the contrary, He was involved in the relationship since He loves my wife more than I do. He sanctified the marriage relationship and gave it to us to show us His love. We have known other couples that have been like us and have actually prayed before they had sex together. God is absolutely interested in sexual purity.

I have also met many men who were into por-

nography because of a sexual problem they had with their wives. Their wives were abused when they were younger or they had grown up with bad teaching or attitudes toward sex. They had some kind of problem that didn't show up before the marriage. After they were married, their sexual life together was far less than satisfactory. The men felt betrayed and abandoned, even robbed of what they felt they should have had. So they turned to pornography for their sexual fulfillment. It didn't work.

Going to the devil for counsel for sexual problems isn't the smart way to do things. Putting hardness of heart and sexual sin as a barrier between you and your wife isn't the way to better your relationship. Focusing on yourself doesn't make her feel more comfortable with you; instead, it actually makes her feel that something else is wrong, then she backs off even more. The only thing she will respond to is the command given to husbands in the first place. In Ephesians 5:25 we are told, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up on its behalf." If you will love her with the love of the Lord, she will be drawn closer to you, not pushed further away.

If you will throw away your selfishness and start to renew your mind, you will begin to see changes that you never thought could happen. Remember that God is involved in your life and loves you more than you understand. He wants you to pray about your sex life, your wife, and everything else in your life. However, He can't change your wife's attitudes about sex until he changes yours. If you are continually defiling your wife with your sexual sin, how is He going to set her free? You must work with God, not against Him. Don't

use her problems as an excuse to sin, as many men are all too apt to do. Your sin may have started out as an attempt to solve your sexual frustration, but now it is only an excuse and a self-justification to continue. Look at your focus. It is still on you, your needs and satisfaction. I suggest you start loving your wife by seeing her through the eyes of the Father.

Honesty before God

This is a secret that I have learned and want to pass on to everyone I meet. We created most of our problems ourselves because we wanted to sin. We talked ourselves into sinning so that we could do what we wanted to do. Even when we seek counsel from our friends, we don't tell them everything. If we tell them what we want them to hear, then they will tell us what we want to hear. We have deceived others into helping us justify our situations, and we have built a lifestyle that will keep us trapped in the sin. There is one thing that can break through it all: **getting honest with God.**

We can't truly hide from Him. When we get totally honest before God, then He can set us totally free. When we lie to ourselves, it only hurts us. We know what is right and wrong. We know what we have done wrong and that it is damaging to our relationship with the Father. Many of us sit in church and know that God is showing us sin in our lives. He is gently calling us to get it straightened out. When you get honest before God and want your sin removed, then He is able to do something about it.

When I look in the mirror, I know that I can't lie to myself because I know when I am lying. I know

the truth. So does the Father. When I look Him in the face, I know I can't lie to Him either. For me to continue in my sin, I have to stay away from the face of the Father. That makes worship a little difficult. Is my sin so important to me that I am willing to sacrifice eternity for it? Don't lie to yourself. The price is too high.

Chapter 8

Am I demon-possessed?

I have been asked this question so many times that it really gives me insight into what many people are thinking. Many are in great fear as to whether or not they are controlled by demons who are making them do the sin to which they are addicted. Let's look at the lies before we look at the truth.

First of all, there is no such term in the Greek as "demon-possessed." Demon possession was a term used in the King James Bible to show that a person had a demon and that the demon controlled them and made them do things they didn't want to do. Ever since the term was first used, it has caused a great deal of confusion and fear. Demons don't own anyone, but they would love for people to believe that they do. Demons want people to think that they have a right to control your life and that they are permanent fixtures that can't be thrown out. This is a lie.

The actual Greek term would be better translated as "demonized." Demons *can* come into a person's life and influence them and cause certain behaviors. When you open yourself to sin by willful choice, a demon can become attached to you. A demon can "help" someone sin, direct them in the sin, or even help them find things that they wouldn't normally be able to find (such as pornography stashed somewhere or drugs or alcohol that someone has hidden). They can bring thoughts to mind and can remind someone of the things they have seen. They can be a constant source of thoughts to keep us

thinking the wrong things over and over and over. Yes, demons can make a life very miserable, *but they don't own you.*

If you have been born again, the Spirit of God lives inside of you. Your spirit is saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He truly does possess you. You have been bought with a price, and you are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Have you noticed that He doesn't force you to do things? He influences you and directs you, but He doesn't exert direct control. He is looking for obedience and a willingness to follow Him.

However, you can open yourself to sin, and a demon can attach himself to you. As long as you focus in that direction, you are under his influence. The more you give yourself to that thought pattern, the stronger that thought pattern becomes in your mind and the more it has direct influence on almost every thought. When it comes to the point that you are thinking along those lines all the time, the demon has a pretty great influence on major parts of your life. It then seems that he "owns" you.

Do not buy the lie. His influence on you can be broken, and he can be evicted, never to bother you again. You must believe that. If you have a demon, there is hope of getting rid of it.

Do you have a demon? It is possible. Even Christians can get a demon attached to them if they walk in willful disobedience. Not everyone who has ever looked at any pornography is automatically oppressed by a demon. Sexual sin is an area of sin that has a high degree of demonic activity. It is easy for a demon to be

attached to you when you sexually sin. Pornography is an area where there is a lot of demonic influence. Demons like to hide in darkness and cause damage in people's lives. "Hidden" sin is tailor-made so it is easy for them to do that. Sexual sin influences everything that a man does, and it can be done while he is appearing to be holy and do all the Christian things. But with sexual sin, there comes a defilement that affects men, and they can't see it because of their own deceptions. The lies of demons lend themselves to this kind of lifestyle. The lifestyle of doing hidden things and living a lie is just the kind of lifestyle on which demons thrive.

I had a demon, and I was really shocked to discover him one day. When I looked in the mirror on that fateful day and saw the demon on my shoulder, I was surprised. But the Holy Spirit rose up strong in me, I cast it off myself, and it left in a big hurry. Then I understood why my thoughts had been so strongly on pornography. That little liar was just sitting there, lying to me, and presenting sexual thoughts to me all day long. He would lie to me the strongest when I was alone. He knew that was my weakest point. When I started crying out to God, He gave me the revelation that I didn't have to sin. God gave me the scripture "Sin shall not Lord it over you." (Romans 6:14) When that rose up in my heart as revelation, I had a new lease on life! I was actually able to be free. My eyes were opened for the first time!

When that happened, I had the *rhema* knowledge that sin wasn't my master. Jesus was. Then I was able to see with the eyes of the Lord the things that were hiding from me and hindering my Christian walk. Immediately I saw the demon, and I knew him. I really

don't know how many years that creepy sucker had been attached to me, but I know that I knew who he was. I had the authority to make him leave. With all my power in the faith that *rhema* brings, I commanded him with true faith and power to leave. It didn't take hours or even minutes. He left immediately! I even saw him go out the front window of our house. I felt the righteous indignation of God in me and power like I had never felt before. I knew that I was free. I didn't just think it; I knew it!

Don't ignore the possibility that you might have a demon, just don't give him more power and credit than he deserves. Yes, he came there probably by your invitation. But that doesn't mean that he has to stay. You are not his because you belong to the Almighty Lord God of Holiness. You are very close to your freedom. The Lord lives inside you. If you will renounce the self-worship that brought the demon, he will completely lose his hold on you. You must repent and turn away from the connection that vile liar has in your life. You can get free from him instantly and totally.

Demons love to do what Satan does. Satan has spent a great deal of time telling people he doesn't exist. Demons love to try to convince you that they don't exist and that you can't possibly have one. Sure you can. If you have been doing any pornography, it is a distinct possibility. So what? Don't deny the truth, just get rid of him. Need help? Fine. Find a strong Christian that will be able to stand with you. Your pastor may be able to help or some other minister. There is nothing like confessing your faults one to another and being healed (James 5:16). They can help you

renounce all the uses of your body for wrongful sexual purposes. If you are in a church that doesn't believe in casting out demons, pray and let the Lord show you someone who can help you. At the end of this chapter, I will lead you in a prayer specifically for this and other strongholds that I will be talking about in this chapter.

How strong can demonic influence be?

Some of the people I have met are very strongly influenced by the demons they are carrying. Yes, I said demons as in more than one. There are several activities that can bring demons into our lives. One of these is any form of witchcraft or devil worship. This is almost guaranteed to demonize someone. Also, if a person is strongly involved in some form of religious behavior, they can pick up religious spirits. Then if a person also includes sinful sexual behavior, it will cause a different kind of demon to attach to them. You can see that it isn't simple when you get involved in demonic activity. A person can be influenced in several ways and in several areas at the same time. The more a person pursues the activities that the demons are influencing, the stronger their attachment becomes and they have more influence in his life. Their controlling power can become incredibly strong. Look at Legion in the Bible (Mark 5:1-20). Despite the amazing number of demons influencing the one man's life, the power that Jesus walked in overcame the combined strength of the thousands of demons that were in that one man.

Demonic influence is only as strong as you allow it to be. Fear is the key. The more I was afraid that the sin was in control, the stronger the grip it had on me. The fear of not having the sin can also exert a

very strong grip. People who want to sin and become addicted to that sin are dependent on that sin. Their sin provides them with a false sense of security by giving them what they think they need. Thus, the idea of being without their sin and the temporary fulfillment it brings causes great fear. Are you afraid that if you get rid of your sin then you won't be able to have a good sex life anymore? Are you afraid that normal sex won't be as pleasurable as the porn and masturbation was? What is it that you are afraid of losing? Have you ever thought that it is the demon that is afraid of losing you? Maybe that is why it is so difficult to explain the feelings of fear that assail men when they think of not living with their sexual sin anymore.

There may be other activities in your life that have brought in demonic influences. Pornography might only be one of them. Only the Holy Spirit knows everything about you. You are going to have to put yourself completely in His hands to be set free completely.

I also know that if you have a demon, he isn't too happy about you reading this book. I guess you are just going to have to make him really cranky and finish it and then get rid of him. That is something that should really make you feel good. Just think, what would it be like to not have his influence in your life anymore? All you need to do is hate the sin in your life that brought him in and love the things that the Lord wants for your life, and then he will lose his grip. It is your faith that will get rid of him. Doesn't that sound like a good idea?

Won't he bring back seven that are worse?

Many people are afraid that if someone casts a

demon off them, he will leave for a while and then he will come back and bring with him seven more demons worse than he is. That is scripturally based, but these scriptures need to be understood.

Matthew 12:43-45

“But when the unclean spirit goes from a man, he goes through dry places seeking rest, and does not find it. Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came out. And coming he finds it standing empty, swept and decorated. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and entering dwells there. And the last things of that man become worse than the first.”

There are some concepts that must be understood here. The passage really starts in verse 22 when a demonized man was delivered and healed of blindness and dumbness. The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons, Beelzebub. Jesus then asks the Pharisees a very good question. “If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons throw them out? Because of this, they shall be your judges. But if I cast out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come on you.” (verses 27-28) Jesus was comparing how they cast out demons and how He cast out demons. There was a great difference. I believe that the sons he was referring to were the sons of Sceva who were traveling exorcists. They didn’t have much success and tried using the name of Jesus to cast out demons, and the results were disastrous. In Acts 19:13-16 the story is told of how these exorcists tried to use the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached, and the demon told them that he

knew Jesus and he knew Paul, but who are you guys? Then he beat them up and sent them running bleeding and naked.

After Jesus posed this question to the Pharisees, He got into quite a discussion about how this generation was going to be condemned for not having anything of reality in the Spirit. When a demon was cast out by them, it went for a season and then returned where everything was put in order religiously but no real spiritual change (like the indwelling of the Spirit) had occurred to fill the house. The demons that it would bring back with it were the religious spirits that make a person think that he is doing works that will obtain for him salvation. The end result is that the person still has all the demonic influence, but since he also has the religious spirits, he won't know that he needs to repent and he will stay in darkness until he dies.

Jesus preached very strongly against the form of religion that didn't do anything for the person except put them in greater bondage. That is why He started talking about the strong man. If a demon wants to plunder someone's house, he is first going to have to bind up the strongman so that he can do what he wants. Who is the strongman? You are! You are the strongman of your house. If a demon can bind you up with some form of bondage (i.e. sin), you will not have the strength to cast him out. He will then be able to plunder your house in every way.

When Jesus casts out a demon, it is completely different. He replaces it with His Holy Spirit, and then the strongman (you, the owner of the house) is stronger

than any demon because you are empowered by the Holy Spirit of God! The demon cannot enter again unless you allow him to return. Why do you think Jesus kept telling people to go and sin no more?

Jesus continued His confrontation with the Pharisees and religious leaders by condemning the practices of the day and preaching that a man must be judged by his fruit. He told them that their words would condemn them. He told them that their seeking after signs would condemn them. He told them that if preceding generations had seen what they had seen, they would have repented long ago, but now this present generation will be condemned because of its hard heart.

Then He comes to the verses where He explains if a demon is cast out by the present religious system, the only thing that happens is that the soul is made receptive to more things that put men in bondage. It isn't really a redemptive work of the Spirit. That is why He added on the end of verse 45, "So it will be also to this evil generation."

At this point His disciples told Him that His mother and brothers had come to see Him. He responded by saying that the ones that were in real relationship with Him were the ones who were going to do the will of His Father. It is the will of the Father to set people free from demons. There is hope that you can be set free and stay free. In fact, we don't have any scriptural evidence that anyone from whom Jesus cast out a demon was ever re-demonized.

What can I do against a demon?

The first thing you need to understand is that you have power over him. He is not your master, Jesus is. The devil wants false worship from you. He will use lies and fear to control your thoughts and make you think that he is stronger than you and that he has much more power. It is a lie.

You are a king and a priest before God (Revelations 1:6). Your household is your kingdom. This is the area of your authority. In this realm you are held responsible for everything that happens, and you have complete authority. If you choose, your kingdom can be inhabited by demons, sin or whatever else you allow to come in. However, you can choose to take control over your kingdom. You can reign in the holiness that God gives. The authority you use is given by the King of Kings, the One to whom you have submitted your kingdom. In that understanding of authority, *you* decide if a demon can enter or if he has to leave.

Make no mistake, this isn't a game. This isn't something to play around with. It's like playing with war. You can get hurt if you don't pay attention, fight according to wisdom, and use your weaponry correctly. But if you are working under the King of Kings and with the authority He gave you, only what is supposed to be in your life can stay there. Demons are trespassers who must be run out of the kingdom. The law by which this kingdom is run is the Word of God itself, and that is the final and total authority.

In any kingdom, a king must exercise his authority before anything major happens. Just because there are laws in a land doesn't mean they are enforced. You must know the rules by which you live and do warfare.

How did the demon come, and why? What is the true extent of his ability, and how much authority does he have in your life? As you find the answers to these kinds of questions, you will receive revelation knowledge and with it the faith to use your weaponry to the fullest extent.

In my house, I am constantly on the lookout for signs of attack and infiltration by the enemy. I don't always see everything. My wife (and every wife) is equipped with a God-given ability to sense things that the men can't sense. She has a "radar" that picks up things. My wife sees things coming that I don't. She tells me, and I muster the troops and organize them for battle. I then lead them in the fight. It isn't left up to only one person to do all the fighting.

When I am in sexual sin, however, not only am I the one that opened the gates to my kingdom for the enemy to enter, I am also not open to the radar of my wife to give me a warning. There is a barrier between her and me that keeps us from working in unity, and "a house divided cannot stand."

As I take the responsibility of my kingly position, humble myself to submit to the King of Kings, and take the lead of my kingdom, I then have all the authority I need to set my kingdom in order. I can have incredible strength when I order my kingdom cleaned from the demons that want to live there. It isn't his kingdom, it is mine. I will choose who has say in this kingdom. Demons have no power here. My wife is my queen, and she has the ear of the king whenever she wants it. I listen to her wise counsel, and we discuss the affairs of the kingdom. We reign together in a kingdom of holiness and power. That kind of authority is available to

every son in the Kingdom of God. Take your authority.

Next, you must use your authority to cast out demons. Mark 16:17 says that we will do it and that we have the authority to do it. Don't deny it or be in great fear about it. Walk in faith, not fear. Simply cast them out. You have all the authority you need for delivering yourself and your family. Cast them out. Don't feel sorry for the demons. Cast them out. If you don't like the old way of saying it, then say it like this: Kick them out. Bounce them. Throw them out on their ear. Chase them away. Run them out of town. Command them to leave immediately and never to return. Rescind their invitation, and never reissue it. Whatever language you prefer, just do it!

Resisting

The next thing that you should do to take care of demons is to resist them. James 4:7 is one of the best verses to learn. "Then be subject to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you." This whole passage is an excellent manual on spiritual warfare. Verse 5 shows us that God desires to have a relationship with us. He wants us to be close to Him and have intimate fellowship with Him. He yearns for us. This is so precious to me. But then James goes on to say that God sets Himself up against the order and authority of those that are proud, and gives His grace to the humble. This is a highly important principle in scripture. This is how we either receive grace or have God Himself fighting against us. It all depends on our pride or humility. Then James says, "Therefore."

A long time ago, I was told the old adage that

when the scriptures say “therefore,” check to see what it’s “there for.” When you see the word “therefore” in the scriptures, it means that you are going to learn something because of what was just said. A foundation has been laid, and now the Lord is going to build something on it. So we can say it like this: God really wants to have a relationship with us. He knows that if we have pride, He will come against us, and if we have humility He will give us all the grace we need; therefore, we must submit to God.

“If we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will lift us up” (1 Peter 5:6). Our attitude will show our submission to Him, and our attitude determines whether God will fight us or lift us up. When we are submitted to God, we can go on with all that God has for us in that position.

THEN we see the mighty phrase: “Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.” When we are under the authority of God and His command, we have all His authority and power to act out His will. Only then do we have the ability to resist the devil.

The word for “resist” is the Greek word *anthistemi*, and it comes from the words *anti* (against) and *histemi* (to stand). It is used in the verse that tells us that we have the ability to withstand in the evil day (Ephesians 6:13). The idea that comes with this word is to stand your ground and not let anything past. If something tries to get past, you will fight it. You will use whatever means you have at your disposal to stand in this spot and not give any ground to the enemy. There is an attitude of violence, of extreme protection, of willingness to take

on the fight.

When a Christian takes on this attitude, the results are already foretold. The devil and all his evil little cohorts will run for their lives. They know that they aren't able to withstand that kind of warfare. They just don't have the power or the weapons to do this kind of fighting. They understand that they will flee if the resistance is based on true submission to God and the empowerment provided by Him and His Word. In our areas of authority, in our kingdoms, we can have complete victory and complete cleansing. Our only limitation is in which areas we are willing to be submitted to God. The greater our submission, the greater our areas of victory. The less our submission and the greater our pride, the more we will be defeated.

If we are unwilling to let go of the sin, we will not have the ability to resist the devil and see him flee. We must be willing to submit our areas of sin to the Lord. We must be honest with ourselves and know that we wanted the sin and it is there because of our own desires and self-seeking pleasure. The price is too high for that kind of self-worship. We need to humble ourselves before God and admit the sin, the desires, and the control we have used to keep it. We must own up to the responsibility of our own actions, clearly admit it all, and not hold anything back. That will bring us, in humility, to the throne of grace. We will then receive help for our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We will have the confidence that God is able and willing to help and that we are relying solely on Him and His power. We are admitting that we don't have the strength to do anything about it and that He has it all. When we submit ourselves to God, His

righteousness is poured out into our hearts, and it is a cleansing that comes only from Him. Then we know we are empowered to fight with His power. When we have that firmly entrenched in our thinking and understanding, then we have the confidence and ability to stand against the enemy, and it is amazing how quickly he will run away.

I have one very important caution, though. Don't try to manipulate or negotiate with God. We honestly know that we can't lie to Him, even though we try. When the sin is totally submitted, then we can be totally free. God isn't trying to restrict your fun. No, He is really trying to set you free so that you have a joy that supersedes fun. Instead of bondage, you will have freedom. Instead of loneliness, you will have close fellowship with your loving Father. Only then can you have the purpose and fulfillment in your life that you have always sought.

Another thing you may need to understand is that you can't resist just a little. You can't tell the devil that he can only have a little of you and that you will choose what he can or cannot do in your life. You are either doing things God's way or the devil's way. Anything you want to keep as worship to your flesh is actually on the devil's side of things. Either it is God's or it isn't. Romans 6 says that you are either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness. You choose.

God is calling you today to be totally His. He knows that if you submit to Him, He will be able to set you free. He also knows that if you don't, you will face the consequences and all that comes with them. He loves you and doesn't want that for you. What do you

want?

Casting and Resisting

Together, casting and resisting are the two things that God has given us to get rid of demons and their influence in our lives. In 1 Peter 5:5-9 we are told that God is going to stand against the proud but give grace to the humble. It tells us that we are to be humbled under the hand of God and that God will exalt us in due time. It then tells us to throw all our cares on Him because our lives matter to Him. Verse 8 then tells us that we need to be sensible and watch because the devil is walking around as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Then it tells us that we have the strength to resist him. But it tells us how we have that strength-- in faith.

Faith is believing God and trusting Him for all He says He will do. If I am influenced by a demon, I have the calling of the Holy Spirit deep inside me that is calling me away from that. I have God Himself giving me the power to be set free if I will only choose to use it.

My father was an electrician in a small mountain community in Colorado. He also did refrigeration repair for commercial freezers. One night a man called my dad in the middle of the night pleading with him to come to his all-night truck stop because the reach-in freezer that held all of his pies and ice cream wasn't working. He was going to lose all his perishable items if Dad didn't come to fix it right now. Dad asked him several questions, had him do several things, and then told him that he would come and look at it. So, Dad got up, got ready, and took his truck up to the next town to

fix this freezer in the middle of the night. When he got there, he looked at it and determined that nothing was wrong with the equipment or how it ran or anything. The problem was that it just wasn't plugged in! That man was on the verge of financial destruction, and it wasn't because he was lacking in equipment or materials or functionality. He just wasn't plugged into the power that made it all run. He was also very surprised at the bill he got from Dad for just plugging it in! We are just like that! We have everything we need to live the Christian walk in purity and fruitfulness. Our only problem is that we aren't plugged into the power of a relationship with the Father. What is more important to us are our levels of pleasure and getting what we want instead of what He wants.

When we are plugged into Him, we are very capable of casting the demons out of our lives. Then when they are gone, we have to stay in that relationship with the Father, and we will be able to resist the devil in any kind of attack or temptation. Of course the devil is dangerous on his own turf. However, when we stay on our own turf, covered by God's life and love, Satan is unable to do anything. He is like a lion in a cage. If you jump in the cage, you are the lion's lunch. If you stay outside the cage, he is harmless and can't do anything to you. You can hear him roar, but it doesn't scare you like it would if he were free.

Binding

I hear people talking all the time about binding the devil. I haven't found any scriptural basis for this. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the strongman that

is being bound is you. Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27 talk about how you must first bind the strongman if you are going to plunder someone's house. First of all, the devil doesn't own anyone or anything that I want. He is the thief, not me. I am not going to steal from the devil. Stealing is what he does.

Jesus is into redeeming, not stealing. If I attack Satan, it won't be by sneaking in the back door and stealing from him. It will be a straight-forward attack with all the power and authority that comes from being a son of God. I have been given the authority to cast out demons, to resist the devil, and he will flee. That doesn't sound like any strongman. He wants us to think that he is so strong that we need to be afraid of him and sneak around and steal the unbelievers from him. Not a chance. Jesus never told the devil, "I bind you!" Jesus already saw him fall from heaven. He cast demons out, and when the temptation came, He resisted. He then went around undoing the works of the devil, and He was always successful.

The other verses that I have heard people use to support the "binding the devil" concept are the verses that say, "...whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Both of these scripture are talking about binding other things, though, not the devil.

The Matthew 16 passage tells of the time when Peter told Jesus that he thought Jesus was the Messiah and it thrilled Jesus to see the revelation knowledge Peter was receiving from the Father. He then told him about the church and the keys of the Kingdom. The last section was a warning to use the keys carefully. We

can bind people, hurt people or loose people and help them. We have to really be careful with what we are doing in the Kingdom where people are concerned.

The Matthew 18 passage is talking about our man-to-man relationships and how to help a brother in sin. If we don't help him out of his sins and offenses, we will bind his sins and offenses to him. On the other hand, we can help him get out of his sin, loose him, and set him free. This passage is more about forgiveness than demons. If you forgive people and set them free, you will be loosing them from bondages that are as bad as demons. But that is another subject for another time.

Being Set Free

If you feel that you have a demon and want to get rid of it, let me pray with you right now. I am going to pray first, and then I am going to lead you in prayer for yourself. This isn't a religious prayer. This isn't a ritual, nor is it an exorcism. This is prayer. When we get to the prayer that you pray for yourself, you must pray in faith and believe it. This isn't magic; it is warfare. This is coming before God and letting Him show Himself powerful and effective. We are just operating by His Word. First me:

“Father God, I thank You for all You have accomplished in my life and in the lives of your children. I pray right now, Father, for the one who is holding this book. In the mighty Name of Jesus Christ and the authority of that Name, I command the demons who are present to let go. I pray for the eyes of Your child to be enlightened so that he can see the truth and know

You and what You have done for him. I pray that he is able to see in his past where he opened the door for the demon realm to enter. I break the deception that has come on him so that he can see the truth. I wash him right now in the blood of the Lamb so he is able to see the effects of the sin and not want it any longer. Father, help him to hate the sin and to receive Your love. I command that his mind be set free and that understanding be brought to him at this moment. The hold the demon has had on his mind is now being broken, and the grip this demon has had in his life is now being broken free. I forbid the demon to stop him from reading this prayer or this book. In Jesus' name, be set free! By faith, in the mighty Name of Jesus Christ, we know that this is accomplished right now.

Thank You Lord for your ministry to the one holding this book. I give You the glory. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Now it is your turn. Pray this prayer from your heart. Understand what is being said. It isn't the exact words that are effective; it is the intention of your faith that is. Pray this:

"In Jesus' name, I renounce the hold of darkness on my life. I renounce the use of pornography. I renounce the use of the devil's tools. I renounce every use of my body for the purposes of the devil, and I give those body parts to the Lord Jesus Christ for His use. I confess the use of my mind for the working of uncleanness, and I yield it right now to the hands of the Father God and His kingdom. I command the demons to leave me and have no part with me again. I have been bought with a price, the blood of Jesus Christ, and I belong to

Him. I sanctify my life, body, and soul unto Jesus for His use. I now by faith consider it to be done and yield myself to the power of the Holy Spirit for guidance and cleansing. Fill me now, Father, with the Holy Spirit. I thank you for setting me free.

I give You all the glory, honor and praise for what you have done for me today. I declare that I am free today from the bondage of pornography and the demons that accompanied it. I do this all in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen”

Now comes the warfare of resisting. Find a mature Christian who is trustworthy. Tell him about what has been happening in your life and walk in accountability and prayer together. You need to have someone to walk with you. Don’t just try to do this alone. It isn’t easy. Those in spiritual authority above you need to be told about your struggle with pornography eventually. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in wisdom as to how and when this should be done. Be very careful. Until you are able to stand on your own, you will need to stand with someone else.

Soul Ties

Sex is always a spiritual function, a soulish function and a physical function. Things happen in the spiritual and soulish realms that we don’t always know about. When we have promiscuous sex, ungodly sex, or any kind of sex other than what God intended, it causes principles to work in our lives whether we realize it or not. Since sex was designed to be a sign of the marriage covenant, every time people have sex, it is a binding force that brings those two together. We have

talked about the false covenant that illicit sex forms. It causes you to be bound together with that person on a level that goes far beyond just the physical plane.

God said in Genesis 2:24 that when a man and woman come together, they will be one flesh. We understand that easily when we are talking about physical sex. It doesn't take an extraordinary imagination to see that sex makes two people one flesh. What most people don't know is that sex is more than a physical act. It requires and establishes a soul-level bonding also. It is two people becoming one flesh together in their souls as well as their bodies. But since illicit sex isn't a true covenant before God, and because it is done without the sanctity and protection that comes with marriage, those who engage in extramarital sex have a dark, warped relationship (whether they think so or not).

Every woman with whom a man has had sex is tied to him, and he is tied to her. Since covenant means giving of one to another, everybody gives away something of themselves when they have sex. This is called a "soul tie" or a bond between people in their souls. It is a strong bond that has to be broken before a person can be totally free from the things of their past.

It has been said that everyone who has sex with a woman in Thailand will never be able to forget her or be totally happy without her again. Men find they must return to have her again. That is a soul tie taken to an extreme. Is it a soul tie or a demon? It is very hard to distinguish. Both are a form of bondage that keep someone from being free. Both are caused by the choices of the person who has sinned.

It doesn't matter who initiated the sin. Both have

the soul tie. This is why so many people who have had sex with someone else can't seem to get that person off their minds. They become obsessed with them. This happens frequently to women who have had sex with someone in order to get them to make a commitment to them.

Soul ties are very real. They are usually made with actual people, but they can be just as strong with fantasy women also. I had my "favorites" that always seemed to call me back to them. They were the ones that would come to mind when I wasn't expecting it or on my guard. I had to give each one to the Lord. Each soul tie must be broken individually. We must allow the Holy Spirit to take us through that process and eliminate each tie we have made that isn't of Him. We need to confess each one and actively break it by faith and know it is broken.

In the case of actual sex, it is very important to break each soul tie as the Lord brings them to mind. I was counseling a man who had recently come to the Lord and had lived very loosely in the past. As we were walking through his soul ties, it was obvious that breaking all of these was going to take some time. He had soul ties with more women than he could remember. He had to submit his memory to the Lord and commit to deal with each one that came to mind until he was totally free. It took him several weeks and was a very hard time for him. After it was all over, he was a completely new man with a new innocence about him that was beautiful to see. He was finally able to go into a marriage without lugging around his past baggage.

If you have the same problem of real sex or of

fantasy women that are controlling your life, you will have to do the same thing. You must walk through all your soul ties with the help of the Holy Spirit (and possibly a friend) and actively break each one. You must actually speak the words aloud to break them. Here is an example:

“In Jesus’ name, I confess to having made a soul tie with this woman. I confess my sin of adultery or fornication (in body or mind) with her. I plead the blood of Jesus Christ for the cleansing of this sin. I break this soul tie with her in the name of Jesus Christ and denounce all connections with her in spirit, soul or body. Amen.”

This is the first step to get free from soul ties. The next step is the warfare of keeping a clean mind concerning them and not dwelling on the thought of sex with them any longer. You must not commit adultery with them again by thinking of sex with them, thus falling into the same sin all over again.

This next step is for those who have had physical sex with someone. You must ask the people with whom you have had sex for forgiveness. You have sinned against them. This will be a very powerful step in your search for total freedom. However, this could be dangerous. You must do this very carefully and only with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It won’t do any good if you go to her to ask for forgiveness and then end up in bed with her. In these instances, I recommend you ask for forgiveness over the phone. Make contact only with the ones to whom the Lord directs you. Let Him protect your new innocence.

It may be impractical in many situations to ask

for forgiveness since you may not know where they are or even who they are. You may have to let God cover the rest. When possible, though, actually asking for forgiveness personally is the best way to be totally free from soul ties. To ask for forgiveness is to take on the responsibility of your actions. This helps you get rid of the guilt for what you have done. You know that you have sinned against them, their future, and the man for whom they are supposed to save their purity. You used what wasn't yours to use.

After obtaining forgiveness from the people with whom you have had sex, you need to forgive them. You know that it takes two to tango. You have laid some of the guilt on their shoulders. That doesn't help matters. You need to forgive them and let them go. When you forgive them, it releases them to go on to repentance and to be set free themselves. Don't tell them anything about it, because it will make them feel like you are trying to accuse them. Privately, but out loud, say that you forgive them and release them into the hands of Jesus Christ.

Next, you need to forgive yourself. It won't do you any good to go on blaming yourself and keeping guilt alive. If Jesus Himself has forgiven you, who are you to keep the condemnation alive and not forgive yourself? This is true for everyone. If we want to be free, we must also release ourselves.

There is so much that happens in the spirit realm when we sin. That is why God doesn't want us to sin in the first place. He knows how everything works. We are spiritual beings subject to spiritual laws. Our actions affect spiritual principles, and consequences follow.

Because of His great love for us, He doesn't want us to do things that will hurt us. That is why He tells us to do things His way. Now that we have sinned, we need to follow Him in the steps necessary to obtain freedom in the spirit realm. He will lead us if only we will submit and obey. He will make sure we are set free indeed.

Chapter 9

The Gospel of Pornography

Many people don't realize that pornography preaches its own form of gospel. Pornography teaches people many things, things that have become a stronghold in the area of many men's minds. They induce men to think and behave a certain way. Pornography has promoted a form of thinking that has become widely accepted. I have noticed that most men I talk to think the same way, especially those men who have done pornography for any length of time. It may never be something that they verbalize, but they still accept the thought process. Unless the false teachings of pornography are exposed, they will continue to be accepted as truth.

I decided to blow the whistle on many of these lies. I would have really appreciated it if someone would have straightened out my thinking years earlier. It has been a long hard road learning to discern between the lies that porn taught me and the truth. Fantasy made things so real to me. What part of my reality is fantasy? How much of what I thought to be reality was based on a lie? What lies did I accept because I wanted them to be true instead of accepting the truth?

The farther away from porn I got, the more my eyes were opened and I understood the real truth. As each lie fell away, I could see how badly my life needed each truth that I had rejected when I believed the lie. That realization made me root out the lies and really desire the truth. Life with the truth is so much better than

life with lies, no matter how much I wanted it to be the other way. So, I am going to expose some of the lies the gospel of pornography taught me and the attitudes that went with them.

Lie #1: “Women want sex as much as men do.”

Pornography tries to teach us that women want to have sex with us. It always portrays a woman that is as horny as I am who sees me as desirable! She not only is willing to have sex with me, but she yearns to do so! This woman is usually well experienced in multiple techniques, and her sole focus is on ways to thrill and fulfill me. She wants no attachments; she was born just to make sure that I have all the sexual pleasure I can stand (and then some). Sometimes she starts out as a virgin and someone rapes her or talks her into sex, and then all of a sudden she discovers that she likes it. From then on, she is just looking for ways to have sex. When I come along, all her desires are fulfilled in me, and she just lives to do all sorts of things to me and with me.

What a lie! Women are not men. They don't have the same feeling about sex that men do. In my experience of talking with women and watching how people interact, I have seen some great differences. Women who have had premarital or extra-marital sex do so usually as a tie to bind someone to them. Men usually have sex just for the passing thrill. If there is a woman who has sex outside of marriage for the mere pleasure of sex, it is because she has been defiled, and

she is listening to the lie that sex is justifiable.

Just look at a group of young people and you will see what I mean. The women are more protective of themselves, and the men are trying to break down that protection. If there is a female that is trying to initiate a sexual relationship with someone, it is guaranteed that she has already been defiled. A male will try for sex because of his sexual drive. If he has already had sex with someone, he is also defiled and will try to justify his actions. Even if he hasn't had sex, he is interested and ready to go hunting for the female that will yield to him. This is where Christian guys have to win the victory by exercising self-control.

When women who have been perverted through sex are promiscuous, it is usually because they are having sex with men to get back at them or to cover the guilt of their past. A woman has illicit sex to gain something. When it is normal, godly sex in the bounds of marriage, she gains intimacy and security with her husband. When that is perverted, she has sex to gain something, and it is usually a warped sense of security and intimacy that she seeks. Ultimately, though, she finds that what she sought was neither fulfilling, satisfying, nor helpful. Instead it was destructive.

Most women don't want to have sex with anyone but the man to whom they are married or are going to marry. Such "elitism" is natural, and God placed within them from the second He created them. Men who are deceived by pornography see women from a perverted viewpoint. They actually expect to find women who are attracted to them and want the same perversion. It is a lie. Most of the time, women can sense that there is something wrong with that man, and they are repulsed

even if they can't explain why. It affects their sense of security, which is of utmost importance to most women. When they sense a threat, they will pull away. This usually makes the man pursue her and it can become a very traumatic scenario.

I was always looking for the woman that I had in my fantasy. I worked with unsaved women, and some of them were quite beautiful. They regarded me with contempt, though, because of the spiritual problems that radiated from me. Though I was a Christian, I always wanted them to become fantasy women who wanted to have sex with me. At the same time, I was always afraid that it might actually happen and destroy my life. When I was alone, I would fantasize about them when I masturbated, which then gave me great guilt because I had committed adultery with them in my heart. Then when I was with them next, the fantasy would replay in my mind, and it would cause me no end of frustration because they weren't who I deluded myself into thinking they should be. As long as I lusted after them, I couldn't love them and I couldn't have the relationship that God wanted me to have with them. How could I bring them into the purity of salvation when all I wanted was to defile them? My faith was negative and damaging. My lust kept them from becoming Christians.

As God renewed my thinking and set me free from the deceptions, I started seeing women in the role God designed for them, instead of the lie with which I had been agreeing. No one wanted to have sex with me, praise God, except my wife (and she wanted to be intimate with me for the right reasons). As I changed what I thought about women to line up with God's point of view, I could be trusted around women and used of God to help other

men. I could also minister to couples without having the dilemma of wanting their wives to have sex with me. The deception died, and the truth set me free.

Lie #2: “Sexual focus is normal.”

Most men think that everyone has a sexual focus like they do. They want it to be true because then they can believe that they walk like everyone else (and they do not have a problem). Men believe that it is just natural to think about sex all the time. It shows up in the jokes and conversation among groups of men and on the TV. As I was becoming free in these areas, I soon discovered that many men wanted everyone to have this same problem so that they could be justified in their own sin.

At work I often encountered men who loved to joke about sexual things all the time, and it seemed like every conversation had impure sexual undertones. When I started wanting pure thoughts and a pure life, I found that almost everyone around me didn't want me to have pure thoughts and a pure life. They wanted me to walk in the same crud they were walking in. When I encountered Christians that did the same thing, I knew I was in for a fight. They knew it was wrong, but they didn't have the strength to stand up to all the other guys and walk in purity. They just considered it normal to have a strong sexual focus, because that is what men did.

This isn't true for Christian men. I can focus on the things of God. It *isn't* normal to have a sexual focus

unless you consider sin to be normal. When I started walking in purity of thought and life, it was very convicting for the guys around me. The fun was taken out of the sexual innuendos. I set a standard that changed things around the job site. Everyone knew that I didn't go for that sort of thing. They also knew that if they started it, I would jump in and start talking about it and exposing the lie for what it was, and that wasn't very comfortable for them. I set the standard for holiness around me. Everyone knew it. It made my Christian friends walk a greater walk before God, and it was a witnessing tool for the unbelievers around us.

Many crude conversations started when men made comments about the women who passed the rooms where we were working. Most times, though, it ended in a discussion about the Lord and what God's purity standards were and how men were guilty before Him. Many discussions turned to examining our lives before God. Soon, our discussions were only about non-controversial subjects, and sex wasn't the main focus anymore. That was especially true with my coworkers. The word was out that I wasn't going to put up with that kind of impurity and that it was dangerous to talk that way around Lee. I liked that.

Lie #3: "If I don't have sex every night, I have pain."

I have heard this so many times that it is tiresome. Porn tells men that sex is something that they must do every night. Many have also told me exactly what I used to read in the magazines. I read about guys who, when they didn't have sex every night, the pressure was built up in their testicles and they experienced pain. So they

sought to have sex every night just for the comfort and release.

This is a contrivance pornography uses to build a story that portrays a hundred sexual acts in one book. It gives a reason for the main character to have sex so often with so many different women. Since every man lives vicariously through the guy in the story, many men would suddenly come up with the excuse that if they didn't have sex every so often, then they were in pain and discomfort from the pressure. Since they never had sex as often as they liked, they were always under pressure, and therefore it wasn't their fault. They were just "oversexed."

Hogwash. The male body manufactures thousands of sperm everyday. What isn't used is simply absorbed into the body tissue or washed away in the urine. There isn't any built up pressure physically unless there is a major physical problem. If that is the case, sex isn't the cure; medicine and possibly surgery is. That kind of problem is so rare it is virtually nonexistent.

Here is the real problem: The man wants to have sex, and that is all he thinks about. He feels rejected when he doesn't get sex like he wants (or thinks he should have). His thoughts are continually on sex; therefore, what he wants for his genitals is all he is thinks about. When he doesn't get the sex he thinks he needs, he dwells on it even more. The pressure isn't physical; it's mental. He has worked himself up into a sexual frenzy by trumping up a need so he can do what he wants and still feel justified. When he finally has sex, whether with someone or by masturbation, he is relieved and is able to go on for a time. He feels that he has

released the pressure and everything is okay. Then, as the sexual focus returns and he is on the prowl again, the same cycle is initiated, and he looks for release again. With pornography telling him that this is normal and that he can't help himself, he will believe this deception and live in this cycle until something happens to break it. He will take the lie as truth to justify what he wants to do in the first place.

Men throughout history have lived abstinent lives and they weren't in pain from the pressure of their abstinence. With the strong sexual focus of this present time comes the common deception that everyone has to have sex or else they aren't normal. That is a lie. If you don't have sex, you won't die. You may not get what you want, but it isn't life-threatening or even physically painful or damaging. The real problem is that you want to have your sex the way you want it and as often as you want it, and if you don't get it, you will manufacture an excuse so that you can get it (or at least you will try to do that). The control of your mind is the greater issue. Control your mind, and your body will fall into line.

Lie #4: "Sex between consenting adults is harmless."

This is a straight-forward lie. We are not animals. Animals have sex for procreation. It is instinctive. The males are usually motivated by a release of hormones from the female, and this usually occurs only during a mating season. Some, however, seem to be motivated all the time. We once had a neighbor that had a small, black poodle that always tried to mount everything in view. If you stood still long enough, he would jump on

your leg or foot and go after it. I told my wife that it reminded me of many of the guys in our youth group. But that poodle could mate with every dog on the block and still not be in sin or have any consequences for his behavior (except getting all the dog owners on the block angry with his master).

I hope by now I have shown you that God ordained sex for one purpose, and that purpose is found only within the bounds of marriage. Anything done outside of that boundary will bring severe damage and penalties. Sex isn't just a physical thing. It is highly involved within the soul-- your mind, will and emotions. It also has a spiritual involvement with spiritual ramifications, both positive and negative. If two people choose to have sex together, then they have also chosen everything that goes along with that decision. If they do it according to the manufacturer's design and specifications, things will be wonderful for them. If they choose to go outside of those parameters, then they will receive the consequences that must follow when those guidelines are ignored. Gasoline is wonderful fuel when used in the proper way it was intended to be used. If you spill it or slosh it around, and if you like to play with matches, then you will discover the explosive results of not following the safety recommendations. You can ask my friend who soaked a pile of branches and then threw a match on it. He was lucky it only blew him all the way down his driveway instead of into eternity.

Lie #5: "If you don't have sex with someone, you don't love them."

Just the opposite is true. If you love them, you won't want to damage them or hurt them in any way.

Love and sex are not synonyms. They aren't the same thing. Here again is the difference between love and lust. Whenever I have heard this line, it has been from someone who was trying to use a guilt trip to make someone else have sex with them. When the girl finally gave in and had sex with him, then he viewed her as conquered and used merchandise. Then he just threw her away. Another person who uses this line is a girl who is trying to trap a guy into marrying her for her security needs. She doesn't realize that guys think of sex in a completely different way than girls do. Either way, this is a lie, and it doesn't work. Real, true love is exhibited when someone will save themselves for pure sex in marriage with only the partner God gives them. Only!

Lie #6: "If I'm not sexy, I'm not acceptable."

Acceptable to whom? This is a statement from someone who has only seen what the world has to offer and doesn't know who they are in Christ. Since I am writing this book to Christians, I will put it this way: You don't know who you are in the eyes of Jesus Christ or the Father God. Acceptance is a huge issue. But when I find my acceptance in the Lord, then it doesn't matter what the rest of the world says.

One man I know teaches that whoever or whatever determines your identity and destiny is your god. If your friends determine who you think you are and where you think you are going, then they are gods to you. If the Word of God determines who you are and where you are going, then God is God to you. This only comes through a relationship with Him. I must see myself through His eyes. How does God really see me? If

I find that answer, then I don't have to worry about how others see me.

Comparing myself with others is a very dangerous pastime. I will never measure up to how I see them. If I need to have sex with someone to be accepted by them, then I don't *want* to be accepted by them. They aren't really interested in my well-being.

I have met godly, pure women that had a relationship with the Lord, and their inner beauty was much greater than their outer beauty. They were accepted, highly honored, and loved by all who met and knew them. Having sex or being sexy to be accepted by people does not build a lasting relationship. The ones who put that kind of pressure on you will only throw you away when they are done with you.

Lie #7: "If you don't have sex, you aren't really a man."

This is similar to lie #6. I have seen many movies where a young man is about to have sex for the first time and is told, "After tonight you'll be a real man." No, after tonight you'll be a used man. A real man doesn't have to prove his manliness. A real man is secure in who he is and what he does. Someone who always has to prove himself is insecure in who he is. A real man is one who can control himself. Any male old enough to get an erection can have sex. It takes a man of courage to control himself and be godly.

On the job site once, we had a man who kept bragging about all the women with whom he had sex. I had to listen to that crud everyday and finally I had

enough. I told him I wasn't impressed. Any dog can have sex every night with someone else. If he wanted to prove how strong and courageous he was, he should try not having sex for a month to prove his self-control. It became apparent to him that he wasn't in control of his sex-life; instead, it ruled him.

I pointed out a young man we both knew who was walking by. I knew he was a Christian and was living in purity. I told this man that this young man had something that he could never have. He said, "Oh, yeah? What?" "Innocence and purity. How are you ever going to get that back?" He was a lot quieter after that. Promise Keepers has a tee-shirt that says, "A Real Man is a Godly Man." I agree.

Lie #8- Sizes and comparisons

This is one of the greatest deceptions. Most all of us had to endure junior high locker rooms. Everyone was looking at everyone else to see whose was bigger. Pornography preaches that the bigger the penis, the better, and men who had huge ones were to be envied. What a line of junk!

If sex is only for marriage and only with one partner for the rest of your life, what difference does it make? If my wife is having sex with other men, only then does size become an issue. Only then is my performance being rated. In the world of sexual promiscuity, it is normal to compare everything sexual, like the size of penis, breasts, length of endurance, frequency and performance. When sex is saved for marriage the way God invented it to be, there is nothing to compare. When you hear that kind of comparison, what you are really hearing is people com-

paring their defilements. “My defilement is bigger than yours and twice as disgusting.”

Comparisons are what make wives insecure and husbands less able to be the men they need to be. If the focus is always on the past or on someone else or another place or time, then the focus can't be one of loving intimacy. You cannot minister to the needs of your spouse when you are only focusing on yourself or others. Comparisons are only valid, too, if there are multiple partners. That is deadly for true intimacy or for a healthy, loving relationship between married partners. Multiple partners make a person think only of their own wants and not of anything else. It brings about a “disposable” way of thinking. Everything is less important than you getting your desires fulfilled. That makes you the focus of your attention, and you are worshipping yourself. The women you use or think of using are nothing more than sacrifices to your godhood, and they are totally expendable.

However, the real damage comes when someone sees himself as inferior in comparison to others. Many men I know have compared themselves with other men and then see themselves as drastically inadequate. When that happens, they usually try to make up for it in their fantasy life. This is where pornography comes in. They see themselves as more than adequate doing things that they would never do in real life because of the fear of rejection. They imagine themselves having world-class sex with these gorgeous babes who want to have sex with them. They see in their imaginations things that would never be possible in their real lives, and thus they become addicted to the thought life they have built. Fantasy is always a better place to live than

reality. Everything comes easily, and it's always better than anything reality could ever offer.

The more they dislike their real life, the more they are drawn into the fantasy life. The more they live there, the more out of touch they become with what is real and truly valuable. If your reality is a falsehood, then you are living a lie that will eventually leave you with nothing left but your fantasy. Eventually, reality shows up, and when it does, it just makes you feel all the more inadequate. You actually start comparing yourself with your fantasy. You will hate yourself because of your inability to be who you are in your fantasy.

You can see that this becomes a cycle of thinking that can only go downhill. It keeps getting worse, and as it worsens, it causes you to go deeper into other defilements and deceptions. Somewhere along the line you have to face the truth. The truth is you have been lied to. Your inferiority stemmed from a comparison that God never intended you to make. God made you, and He knows your limitations. He said that where you are weak, that is where He is strong.

I lived a life of comparisons in which I always came up short. I was never big enough, strong enough, handsome enough, rich enough or successful enough to make the grade in my own life of comparisons. My penis wasn't as big as others, and I was always afraid that they would notice and ridicule me. I didn't want to have a girl point between my legs and laugh. I could see that happening in my mind because I had already made the comparisons and judged myself to be inadequate. When I was alone, however, no one laughed. I made the rules.

The Lord had to really deal with me about this area. He made me, and it was obvious to me that He didn't know what He was doing or else He wouldn't have done this to me. Since He couldn't be trusted with making my penis bigger, then I would have to just take control of my sex life without Him. It took a revelation to wake me up.

Because of my sexual focus, I defiled every girl I came in contact with. It was only by the grace of God that I didn't have actual intercourse with any of them; it was very close many times. But when I got married, it was the first time I had ever actually had sex with someone. I was a virgin when I got married. I was a tainted virgin; nevertheless, I was a virgin. So was my wife. She didn't know that she was in competition with my fantasy women. She didn't know what I was looking for or what I thought I needed. It was totally unfair of me. She was pure and undefiled. What a wonderful gift from God!

The Lord showed me one day that my wife wasn't comparing me with anyone. How could she? She had no one to whom she could compare me. I was sexually adequate in every way. That was the way God intended it to be. There were no comparisons, only each ministering to the other. I had to get rid of my comparisons and expectations. That meant that reality had to replace fantasy. I couldn't use the fantasies anymore. This all came to me around the same time that God was teaching me how to renew my mind and use my imagination correctly.

He showed me how to love instead of lust. Without the comparisons, everything about my wife was bet-

ter than what I had imagined. When I started to see her for who she was instead of what I could get from her, she became more than I had ever hoped for. I didn't have to perform to validate myself, I only had to love her and keep my heart on things the way the Lord asks of me. It has been so liberating to get rid of the comparisons that pornography taught me to have. It was a bondage in my way of thinking.

Part of the comparison problem also is the lie that you are not handsome. People all around me were trying to look good to be accepted. As a youth pastor for many years, I saw the youth trying to find acceptance through their appearance. One day I did a poll. I asked the most beautiful girl if she thought there was something that needed to be changed in how she looked. I thought she would talk about something little, like her present hairstyle. Instead, she was unhappy with just about everything about herself. She hated her nose (which was really cute), her eyes (which were wonderful) and just about everything else. She had compared herself with others and judged herself inadequate. The others had judged themselves by how she looked. No one was happy. We all finally had to ask the Lord to forgive us for our ungratefulness concerning our looks.

When a man is secure in who he is and isn't concerned with being accepted, but instead is loving, gentle and kind, he will find that he is the most accepted one around. It has nothing to do with looks. (I am talking about things that can't be changed. If you need a bath, take one. Wear clean clothes. I think you get my drift.) It has to do with attitude. The main thing I am hoping to teach here is that you don't have to compare yourself with anyone. Compare yourself with the Word

of God and allow Him to make up the difference as you humble yourself in the sight of God and let Him lift you up.

As you can see, pornography is more than just a sexual fantasy, it has its own way of thinking. It is a self-perpetuating addiction. It gets you hooked and then lies to you about yourself and God to keep you hooked. I want to dispel the lies and shine the truth on what porn is preaching so that people can be set free from this bondage and lies. Please be open to letting God show you the lies that you have received and how to walk away from them. Satan is the father of lies, and with his tool of pornography, he has promoted great deceptions. I pray that you will open your eyes to discern these lies.

Chapter 10

Masturbation and other areas of **“Auto-erotica”**

I once had one of the youth in my church come to me and confess that he was using pornography. I was trying to get him to tell me how deeply involved he was so I could know where to start helping him. I asked him if he was masturbating. He said, “Of course. Without it, what’s the point?”

Good point.

Most men who are into pornography are also masturbating. It is the physical release that brings the feeling of satisfaction. So, I started asking men who were married if they masturbated. So many of them said yes that it amazed me. I started asking them why. The answers were very interesting.

When men were having sex with their wives, they weren’t getting what they wanted. They had to do things for their wives, and their sex life wasn’t as fulfilling as they wanted it to be. However, when they masturbated, they could imagine anything they wanted, and it was thrilling, and there were no expectations on them. Their wives didn’t like the porn, so if they used porn, they did it alone. Plus, as my young friend put it, without the masturbation, what’s the point?

Masturbation is a more frequent problem than most people have understood. It has all the thrills that

come with any other sin, but it can be done quickly, easily, and inexpensively. An old expression for people who masturbate is: they aren't hurting anyone; they just want to be left alone with themselves. But is that true? Are they really not hurting anyone? Is it really a sin? No one else is involved, so how can it hurt anyone? Let's look at these and other questions and expose masturbation for what it really is so that the truth can set people free.

Masturbation is the act of causing yourself to ejaculate. Some men think that because there is no penetration it is a perfectly harmless action. However, masturbation isn't just a physical act. It requires the mental process to accompany it. A man doesn't get turned on without using his thought processes. It is the man's mind that is wanting the sex. The penis is just the tool used to fulfill it in the natural. Because of the endorphins that are released in the brain when a man ejaculates, it is an extremely pleasing, relaxing, and even relieving effect. When there are none of the expectations of others on a man, he can do everything the way he wants. Reality very seldom compares to a man's fantasy. When the things of reality aren't what a man is expecting, he may turn to other sources for the satisfaction of his expectations. Sexual reality is never what a man expects. It just isn't as good as what he imagined. This is one reason why sex isn't completely satisfying. Men are always looking for that ultimate fulfillment.

Because of the "gospel" of pornography, men are trying to achieve what they have been told is possible. They have been told that they can have things that are usually not possible. Therefore, the fantasy they have been fed is vastly different than the reality they are

experiencing. When reality isn't good enough, a man will go looking for what he wants. If he is in a position of never being able to achieve it in reality, he will seek it in his fantasy life. Many men know that they cannot afford to be caught with a prostitute or in adultery. They can't have real sex with another woman, so they make up for it in their fantasy life. This is where the theater of the mind comes into play.

A man can play out any scenario he can think of, and it will be almost true, in the theater of his mind. He can see himself doing things that would never be possible in reality. He can do things that he is not really capable of doing in reality and with such expertise that it is very fulfilling to him and his self-image. He is never a loser in his fantasy, and there is no end to what he can do.

However, it is very costly. When the fantasy becomes more important than reality, then the man is controlled by the fantasy instead of controlling the fantasy. Soon, every time reality deals him a situation that doesn't live up to his fantasy, he skips back into his fantasy world for fulfillment. In other words, he is living a lie.

Living according to a fantasy is living the lie you have conjured up. When you make a lie for yourself to live in, it is only a matter of time before reality comes crashing down. Your lie will not be able to withstand any kind of pressure. You know it is only a lie made up by your own mind. You can only lie to yourself for so long. You know that your fantasy isn't real, and it isn't what you are actually living. In fact, reality comes

in rather coldly and bluntly. You soon realize that all those women that you imagine coming to you wanting sex aren't really coming to you; in truth, they will never do so. Your inflated self-image will actually bring you down even lower than you were before you began to fantasize. A house built on dreams will blow up under the pressure of reality just as if it were sitting on a balloon. It is better to face the lie and expose it than to live it until it destroys you.

As a man continually thinks about the kind of sex life he wants but cannot have, he will fulfill it in his mind. The natural expression of that is to masturbate. Usually if a man allows himself think about sex, he will become aroused. Then it becomes a concentrated focus until the physical release of ejaculation, which will occur either in sex with someone or in masturbation. Once a man has a sexual focus, it is hard to stop it. The mind is fixed, the idea planted, and it is off to the races!

Since most men obey what their body tells them to do (that is called walking in the flesh), they will fulfill what has been started in their body. They feel the physical drive in their body that came when they first started thinking about it. Once their body kicks into gear sexually, there is very little that will stop it until it is fulfilled by ejaculation. It starts in the mind, causing the body to do what it has been programmed to do, and the rest is almost automatic.

Men will typically relate the euphoria they experience when they ejaculate to the fantasy they were playing at the time. They will experience a similar pleasurable feeling when they think about it again. But don't

forget that the Law of Diminishing Returns is in effect. It will take a little more stimulus or a little different kind of defilement to achieve the same results the next time. It never really satisfies.

Masturbation, like sex itself, is never only physical. It involves a high degree of lust and a form of acting out that lust to bring it into completion. It may not involve anyone else, but it has the same effect on you as having sex with someone else does. The defilement is just as deep, the sin just as great.

In fact this is just the beginning. Living in a fantasy realm is the beginning of many different kinds of addictive behavior. Because self-control is soon lost, the fantasy can take all sorts of different avenues of expression. Masturbation is where flashers, and child molesters, and peeping toms start, as well as those who practice bestiality, incest, homosexuality, adultery and just about every form of aberrant behavior. If a man is honest, he will see that once he loses self-control, there is no telling where he could end up. Most men trapped in pornography really don't trust themselves. They know what they are capable of doing, and it scares them.

It scared me. I knew that I already was doing things that I had never thought I would do. I also knew that I could do worse if I lost control (which I was starting to do more and more). The addiction was running my life instead of me controlling it. I stopped being able to use it for my fun and release. It became the master and I was the slave. My fantasy life was going deeper than I had intended. Since I also had a violence focus, I was getting more and more scared by the day. I was

a pressure cooker that was ready to explode, and I had no idea what would happen if I did. This mental runaway train showed me that I needed help. The Lord came through at the time of my greatest need to give me the revelation I required to be set free. Once a person gets on this train, there is only one way for it to go. You must get off the train to change direction.

Physical fascination

One dictionary defines “fascinate” like this: 1) to bewitch; 2) to hold spell bound, as by some irresistible charm; 3) to allure and hold intent, especially by qualities that charm: to captivate. That is just about right. When something fascinates me, I *have* to look at it, study it or focus on it. Once a man has gotten a hold of pornography, he has a fascination for sex and things that pertain to it. That fascination even includes his own body.

Most things that a man does is in accordance with his fascination with the physical. Many men look at everything women do (how they walk, talk, even sit) and continually soak up physical images to use later. Men are visually aroused. They need images. If they can’t find the images they want in a normal way, they will get them through porn in its various forms. Porn becomes a fascination, and everything they see feeds it. TV commercials are ripe with sexually suggestive imagery. So are billboards. Magazines. Newspapers and catalogs. (In one of my attempts to purge my life, I threw away all my porn and was in the midst of withdrawal when I found a Sears catalog. The underwear section was quite sufficient in that time of need.) I even was able

to draw my own, being just artistic enough to feed my addiction. Men will find what they need to feed their out-of-control lust. If a man has a physical fascination, there are plenty of stimuli around to keep it well-fed and healthy. The problem is that this fascination isn't very healthy. On the contrary, it is quite deadly.

As long as a man has a physical fascination, he will be limited in his ability to raise himself to higher levels. It will be difficult for him to work on his soulish relationships. It will be very difficult to live in the spiritual realm. Everything he does will be tainted and changed by his fascination with the physical. The physical realm is the lowest realm of our existence. God created things in that order. The physical was first, then the soulish and then the spiritual. Of the things that are living, plants were made first. They have only physical life. Then the animals were made, and they have a higher form of life because they have a soul. Then man came along, and he was body, soul and spirit. When a man only thinks of his body (or the physical aspect of life), he has lowered himself to the lowest form of life and relationship. When he only thinks of his own physical desires, he is keeping himself from any of the soulish or spiritual benefits of a relationship.

When sex is purely physical, it is the lowest form that sex can take. When a man is only interested in sex with himself, he is experiencing the least beneficial form of sex. It is a very hollow thing. It has no lasting satisfaction. It actually keeps a man from having better sex because it is only self-seeking. This is the same for a man that has sex with many women. He really hasn't been able to experience sex in the best way because

for him it is only a physical thing with no greater function. When someone actually has sex the way that God designed it to be, involving body, soul, and spirit, then he can have the satisfaction that comes with it. This cannot happen with a purely physical fascination.

By the way, this isn't only true with sex. It is also true in other areas of life. If we are working only for materialistic gain and are sacrificing the greater aspects such as loving others and, even more importantly, loving God, then there is no satisfaction. This is why Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (the spiritual), and that the second commandment is like the first, to love others (the soul powered by the spirit). When I love God first and absolutely foremost, I will love others with His love that is in me, and that will determine the use of my body. Sex must be used with this in mind.

Masturbation is sex totally in the physical. It is self-worship. It is putting my desires above everything else and fulfilling myself for myself. It is one of the lowest forms of sex. It really thwarts everything that a man desires because it robs him of who he is and what he could have in the higher realms of life.

Masturbation requires wrong thinking

For several years I was involved with a prison ministry. I was quite close to many men who were in prison for extended periods of time. We had some very lively discussions about sex, pornography, masturbation and lust. I was one of the few men that didn't have

any squeamishness on the subject and could talk freely because of my past history. One man that I was very close to was having a problem in different areas. As we were trying to discover why these problems were continually reoccurring, I asked him if he masturbated. He was a little stunned by the question, but he responded, "Of course! I'm in prison. That's the only sex left to us prisoners unless you are a homosexual. Is it wrong?"

We had just been talking about worship, how to do it, how it works and how it builds our relationship with the Lord. He told me how he loves to raise his hands and just tell the Lord how much he loves Him. As I thought about how to answer him about the masturbation, it came to me to have him try something. "Do an experiment for me, will you? Next time you are masturbating, right in the middle of it, when you are really into it, throw up your hands and worship Jesus with all your heart. If the masturbation is of God, worship will enhance it. If it isn't, then we will see what will happen. Will you try that for me?"

He didn't know if that was a good plan or not, but he reluctantly submitted to the idea. The next week, I came back to the prison for our normal evening meeting, and he was there to meet me. He wasn't a very happy person. I asked him what the problem was, and he told me, "You've ruined masturbation for me! I was masturbating and I remembered what you had asked me to do. I decided to do it and raised my hands and tried to worship and as soon as my mind was on Jesus, I lost my erection. I couldn't stay hard when my mind was on the Lord. I had to think of women or else it didn't work. When I saw the Lord with my spirit, masturbation was

the furthest from my mind, and I knew that He wasn't enjoying my masturbating at all. All the fun went out of it. It isn't worth it anymore." Almost immediately all the porn pictures he had in his locker were gone, and soon he was a different man. He had experienced freedom in the Holy Spirit.

Masturbation cannot be done without lustful thoughts. It requires your mind to think on the object of your desire and the fantasy that goes with it. A man cannot masturbate and have pure thoughts at the same time. Men want to have their fantasy sex and not have any consequences with it. They know that what they are doing isn't godly, but they want the sex more than they want the relationship with God. If men could only understand that relationship with God is what is going to give them satisfaction, not sex, then they would be doing things differently. But many men are afraid that they are going to lose out on their way of having sex, and therefore they do things in secret to keep their fantasies alive.

Philippians 4:8 says: "Whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report; if of any virtue, and if of any praise, think of these things." It is impossible to think on these things and masturbate. Similarly, it is impossible to masturbate and think on these things at the same time.

I can think on these things when I have godly sex with my wife. It is better sex than anything I could have imagined in the past. Don't let the lies of the enemy keep you from what is best. It is called the best because

it is better than anything else. This is what God wants for you. He wants for you nothing stained or cheap. He wants you to have complete fulfillment. Worshiping Him is much more satisfying than any thrills illicit sex could bring you! Give your masturbation to the Lord, and let Him fill the gap that is left behind with Himself. It is worth it!

Masturbation and Youth

I have heard many people say that it is just natural for a young man to have sexual desires, and that young men will naturally masturbate. They won't if they are taught correctly. The problem is that most young men can't stop with the first experimental time because it brings physical sensations that are very pleasurable. It becomes a stress reliever. Soon, they do it every night. Then the physical focus starts, and they start seeing sex everywhere. Since they have already lost self-control, they cannot be trusted to act honorably if they are on a date in a compromising situation with a young woman. They will go with the pleasurable sensation. They will tell you that they couldn't help themselves. Truthfully, they could have stopped themselves, but they didn't want to. They had not been taught self-control in the area of sex and their own physical sensations. They had been taught to experiment sexually with themselves, and they decided to take the next step to experiment with a girl. Bad choice. Because they weren't properly taught what they needed to know in the beginning, they were doomed to defilement. If you don't teach them how to control the fire in the beginning when it is lit, they won't be able to control the fire when it is trying to burn down the house. Masturbation is not a license to indulge in

sex free of charge. It costs very dearly.

Every man I knew that masturbated when he was young had a problem with his sexual focus being out of hand as he grew older. I teach young men how to handle the fire. I show them the purpose of it and the way of it. I also show the dangers and how it can destroy. I believe that youth can handle the fire when trained correctly. I believe that they can be shown the proper uses and the improper uses and how to deal with temptation.

Are the youth going to have problems? Certainly. That is all part of growing up. However, it is not an excuse to be out of control! My father taught me how to use a rifle and a pistol. He taught me how to use them safely. He didn't want me to accidentally shoot someone. He showed me that firearms are a powerful force that could be really fun and beneficial if used correctly. They can also be deadly and destructive if used incorrectly. If I could be taught how to use firearms and then be trusted with one, why couldn't I be taught how to use sex correctly and then be trusted with it? I have used firearms from the age of 7. I was taught at an early age how to use them properly so that as I matured, I could be trusted with their use. Why can't we teach our children about sex at an early age so that when they come of age they can be trusted? When we don't take the responsibility to teach them and train them as they grow, then we are responsible for their destruction and damage. I teach youth about sex because it seems that too few have been taught. They need to know how to handle the potentially explosive dangers of mismanaged sex just as much as I needed to learn how to handle the

potentially lethal danger of firearms. They don't need to be left to their own devices, especially with something as deadly as sex.

When a young man is masturbating, he opens himself to all sorts of influences. He is having sex with himself and is fascinated with his own genitals. Interest in the sexual can be turned against him until he is fascinated with the male organ only. This is how some men fall into homosexuality. They think it is safe sex. No one is going to get pregnant. Instead of masturbating alone, they do it together. Soon, they are doing it to each other. It can quickly become a trap that is very hard to escape. No one is born with a sexual focus or orientation. It is developed.

We have a great responsibility to teach our youth about sex, its dangers, and its benefits. We can then keep them from the defilement that we experienced. They don't need to live defilement to appreciate purity. Once purity is lost, it is usually lost forever. Purity kept is a priceless treasure that will benefit them for their entire lifetime.

Wet dreams

Wet dreams are natural and happen usually to youth that have never had prior sexual experience. They will wake up and find that they have ejaculated because of a dream. If they are prepared for that, it is something that can be used to further teach them about their own body and how things work. If they are unprepared, it could be the event that will cause them to experiment. If done in secret, it can start them down the path to a secret life that will fill them with guilt and a fantasy life

over which they have no control.

Having a relationship with youth that is open and understanding is the only way to help them through this difficult time. As they come of age, they may wake up with an erection, and it may scare them or at least stun them. If they are left to figure it out on their own, they will tend to think about it more than is necessary, which could easily lead to a sexual focus. If the mystery is taken out of it and correct teaching is put in its place, then the problem is defused from the beginning. If not, then it will have to be dealt with eventually. Wet dreams are natural and are nothing to be ashamed of. When they happen, it is an opportunity for a father and son to talk about issues of this nature. If the young man is ashamed of it and has no one to talk to about it, dangerous thinking and actions could result.

Conclusion

There is nothing like a lie from the enemy to sideline our kids to try to destroy their purity and their lives. The truth will set them free and keep them free. It is time that sex education is put back in the hands of the parents. It is time for the church to help parents realize their responsibility and equip them to help our youth instead of just letting them go the way of all flesh.

If parents inform their teens about the sexual realm before they encounter it, then they recognize that the parents know what they are talking about. If parents ignore what is happening in the lives of their teens, then they are being sacrificed to live in the defilement that their parents may have lived. If a teen's parents are not godly, then purity must be taught to them through the church. Youth pastors must be open and straightforward

about the issues of life. They must teach the boys about masturbation, wet dreams and all that they need to know about godly sex and pure thinking. They don't need to talk about sex education in the same manner that the schools teach it (i.e. how to put on condoms, positions and things like that). However, they do need to know how to walk in godliness and how to be set free from all the junk that surrounds them. Not helping them succeed is helping them fail.

Chapter 11

Equipped to Win the Battle

I believe I have given you enough teaching in this book to help you be set free from the addiction of pornography and lust. Here are some final points that may come in handy during the battle.

If you are going through this problem, you need to realize that you *are able* to be free. You can be free from lust and even eventually be clean in your thoughts and your sex life. God made you to be a person able to worship Him freely in Spirit and in truth. He wants us to be free in every aspect of our lives. That includes our sex lives. Hope has great value. There is hope for you. Don't throw away your future. Redeem it. Start today. Don't wait.

It is very difficult to go through this alone. It is much better if you have someone who can and will hold you accountable, someone who will walk with you on the path to purity and righteousness. If you have someone to share this with and can trust them to help you, then please use them to assist you as you walk the path of freedom. It is a much easier path when you walk it with someone you can trust. However, you must use great wisdom in selecting that special friend. When I was into porn, there wasn't anyone that I could trust to help me. There were many who I knew would condemn me, throw me away, and help destroy my ministry. It was one of the most difficult and lonely times in my life.

Pray that the Lord will show you who you can trust

and who will actually help you. Be careful with whom you share your problem. If your pastor is able to handle it and you feel that the Lord would have you share it with him, that is good. It is very beneficial to have our spiritual authorities walk with us in this kind of warfare. If you can't trust your pastor to help you, don't condemn him. Pray for him and lift him up that he may come to the point where he is able to help you and others in this area.

Please, find someone who is mature to help you. If necessary, give him a copy of this book so that you have the same understanding. Who knows? You may be setting him free in the same area. Then you could be accountable to each other.

Make sure that whoever you confide in has a solid foundation in the Word. If you submit to someone who isn't well-grounded, he could lead you away. Remember when Jesus taught about the blind leading the blind and both of them falling in the pit? This is an area where your confidante will need to be strong when you are at your weakest. It needs to be someone on whom you can call at anytime and he won't be bothered. It has to be someone who will love you no matter what secrets are revealed about you. There are people out there like that. God will show them to you.

Get into the Word of God. Don't just read it. Study it. Meditate on it. Ask questions of God. He can and will answer them. Apply these answers to your life. Do what you are told by the Word of God. It isn't flesh that will help you, it is spirit.

Pray. Prayer is a personal time of communication between you and your Lord. Talk normally and honestly with Him. He is right there with you. Be open. Speak what is on your heart. Tell Him about your desires and problems, and then hear His heart. Love Him. Let Him love you. Your relationship with Him is the key to absolutely everything.

Be crucified with Christ. Learn about your personal death on the cross with Him. Memorize Galatians 2:20, and meditate on it until it is true about you. When you see your death, then sin will have no hold on you. Die to your past and give the rest of your life to God.

Be empowered by the Holy Spirit. In Luke 11:9-13, we see that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks. Jesus illustrates this fact by telling of a boy who asks his father for food. How often does a boy ask for food? Whenever he is hungry! How often is that? I have a son. He's hungry all the time, and he asks for food many times a day. How often are you hungry for the Holy Spirit? Ask, seek and knock. The Father *will* give to you as you have need, if you will only ask. This is not an issue of whether you are Baptist or Charismatic. We all need the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's plan in our lives. I can't do anything on my own. Jesus understood that and said that He couldn't do anything apart from the Father. He was the living example of a Spirit-filled man on this earth. You need the Holy Spirit so you can be set free in any area of your life. But when it comes to the warfare that accompanies this battle, you absolutely need the Holy Spirit to empower you or else you will fail. Flesh cannot

conquer lust. It requires a spiritual victory and constant vigilance.

Let me pray for you.

“Father God, I pray for the man who is holding this book, that you will give him the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You. I pray that the eyes of his mind will be enlightened for him to know the hope of his calling and the riches of the glory of Your inheritance in the saints and the surpassing greatness of Your power toward him.

“Father, I pray that you will expose all lies that have been in his life and give him the knowledge of Your truth.

“Father, I ask that you set my brother free and deliver him from the power of darkness. Show him the path of walking in the light as You are in the light. I pray that he will see clearly to be able to understand the deceptions that are in his life and that rule over him.

“Pornography and lust, I cast you out of this man’s life in Jesus’ name and proclaim that his life is off limits for you, for he has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ the Righteous. I surround him, in Jesus’ name, with a hedge of protection.

“Father, please bring laborers into this man’s life that will help him fight the good fight and see Your victory to its completion. I pray that this man whom You love more than can be fathomed, will be set free and brought into a place where he can help others to find their freedom in Jesus Christ.

“I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Appendix

Appendix A

Other Pathways of Repentance

There are many other ways of messing up the normal path of repentance. These two that we are going to examine are probably the most common, understanding them will explain a great many things.

Over-sin

This is probably the first time you have ever heard anyone use a term like this. You may say that all sin is sin; how can there be anything such as “over-sin”? This way of thinking really puts a wrench in the works.

Everyone has a set of morals that defines for them which behaviors are definitely right or wrong. However they also have a margin in their morals for “permissible sin”. In other words, they know that a particular action is sinful, but They tell themselves that it is “not all that bad.” For example, you may never actually go out and steal from someone, but when you fudge a little about whose piece of cake is bigger it never even trips your conviction mechanism. There is a point that for us to do a certain sin is not right, but it is within acceptable limits. Then something happens that causes you to sin far beyond the limits of your moral barrier. You then are put on a path that is very difficult to leave. Let’s say that having a drink every now and then is within your area of acceptable behavior. Then one night you have one too many and driving home you run over a little boy and kill him. These consequences are way too big for you to handle. Murder is too far past your area of manageable

guilt. You see the devastation that is caused in your family and life. What happens is that you push yourself into guilt too far. In the process you become your own judge and jury and condemn yourself completely.

The person on this pathway is on a runaway train in their thought life. They reject themselves and make it virtually impossible for anyone else to accept them either. Getting close to this person is very difficult because of the walls they build. Follow this cycle on the chart in figure 3, starting where sin derails them from the path of purity and maturity.

In this particular case, guilt is both real and false since the individual believes he has sinned beyond hope. Self-rejection is severe and complete. Rejection is attributed to others, too, so that this person can guarantee that others agree with his self-imposed sentence of condemnation. This ensures that he is punished sufficiently and severely in order to pay for his terrible crime. He rejects himself, and he also rejects help from others because he believes that he doesn't deserve to be helped. How can he receive help if he has to pay for what he's done? It is part of the punishment he gave himself to pay for his guilt.

Shame is both very real here *and* very false. He feels a type of shame, but not necessarily a break in his relationship with God. He actually feels false shame before everybody around him from his own point of view. This is a perverted shame because it can never draw him to the Father; rather, it keeps him from Him. Such false-condemnation is the building block of reproach. These individuals view themselves as condemned, guilty

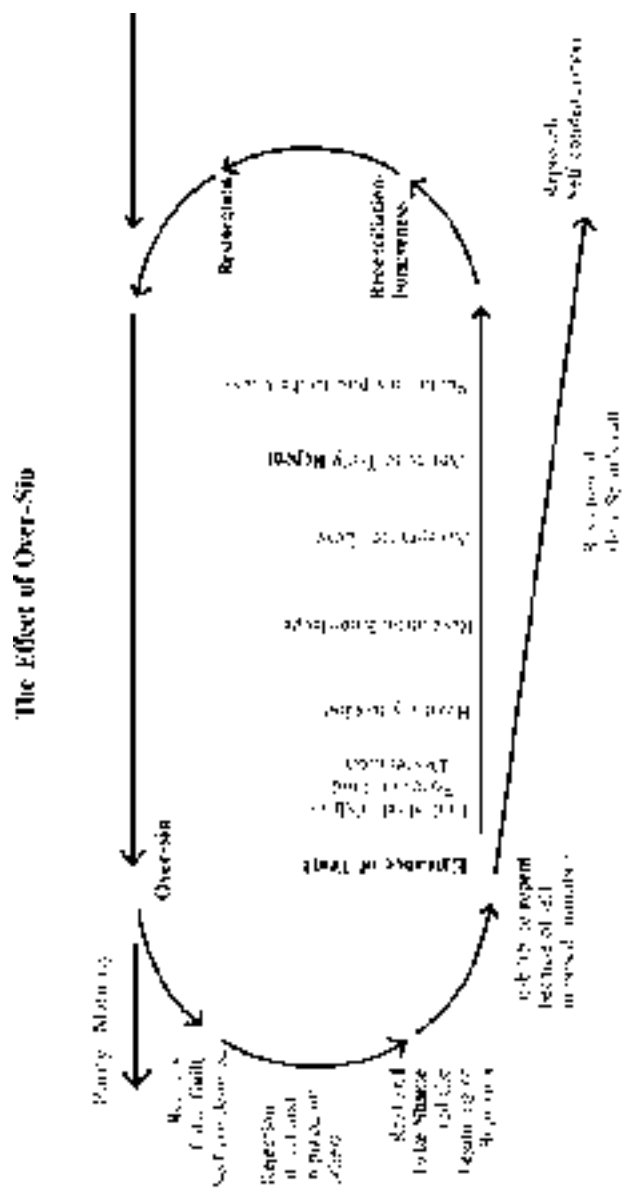


Figure 3

convicts that deserve neither pardon nor freedom.

In actuality, because the focus is on themselves, their so-called shame is actually a form of pride. They only think of themselves and what is going on in their own lives. They believe that the entire universe rotates around what is happening in their lives; that is ultimate pride. However, the language they use to describe themselves isn't boastful; on the contrary it is derogatory and self-abasing. The focus is, nevertheless, on themselves. "How could God forgive me after what I've done?" Translation: "my sin is so great that not even God can deal with it." What they are really doing is elevating the power of their sin above the power of almighty God Himself.

Having that kind of egocentric view makes them unable to repent. The trap here is, "How can I repent for something that cannot be forgiven?" Since this is sin beyond the barrier of acceptable limits, then it is sin that cannot be forgiven. I have met so many people that believe that they have committed the "unpardonable" sin. If your heart is still able to feel concern over sin, then you haven't reached that point where your sins cannot be forgiven.

The way to get off this pathway is pretty much the same as in the last chapter. This person needs to come to the end of his self ability and cry out to God (by the help of the Holy Spirit). Because he has a faulty view of God, he believes there is something that is beyond God's ability to forgive or set right.

Now, this doesn't mean that you can do what-

ever you want, because you know that you can always come to God later, and receive forgiveness. That kind of attitude shows that you are not truly repentant. To become truly repentant, you will have to be brought to the end of yourself. For God to bring you to this point, He has to break you severely. I have known people that said that they were going to choose the sin and repent later. They went through things by their own choice that were incredibly horrible. The harsh consequences far outweighed any pleasure that they received from their sin. What is my response to those kinds of statements? "You may or may not repent for it later, but the price you will pay is far greater than you believe possible."

God is not mocked. What a man sows, he will reap (Galatians 6:7,8). But one who comes to God seeking the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus will be given forgiveness and freedom. It just takes a real call from an honest heart before God. It has been said that "honesty is the best policy," and that is very true before a God who already knows your very heart and thoughts.

When a person finally comes to God in sincerity and openness, God will give him the revelation knowledge he needs to be set free. God will give him complete acceptance on the basis of the blood of His Son. Then the ability to repent will be his. He floods him with His forgiveness. Restoration will begin and his life will start to turn around. Glory to God.

Sin of Others

This pathway is so common, it is unbelievable.

There are many deceptions that come along with it causing all sorts of side-tracks, but they follow the same basic pattern.

There are many people that fall into the trap of receiving guilt from others about something that they didn't do. One classic example is the child that blames himself for the divorce of his parents. The devastating feelings of guilt and intense shame are real, but both are false. Another example is the family of an alcoholic that feels all the guilt and shame, but they aren't the one with the addiction. The wife of a man trapped in a sexual addiction might receive the guilt of "making her husband this way." Most of this guilt comes because the one doing the sin isn't responding to his own sin correctly. Others who have relationship with this person take the responsibility on themselves to repent, or at least respond, for him in an attempt to help the problem. "If they knew what they were doing, they would feel guilt and shame, but since they are incapacitated, I'll go through it for them and help them out. Someone needs to feel shame for this." This is the beginning of codependency.

Look at figure 4. This cycle differs from the previous ones in the way the innocent individual looks at the sin that has been committed. He feels that the break in the relationship with God and others is his fault. Both the guilt and the shame are false because it really wasn't his sin that has caused this situation.

This individual feels the curse that is put on him by the actions of others. He receives the blame or the weight of it all and carries it. He will take on the reproach, feel it, and even cause others to feel it. The ones that are in sin will let this person take the reproach for them,

they might even put more condemnation on him and make him feel even more useless. Since the ones sinning aren't dealing properly with the guilt and shame (because others are doing it for them), they will never get to the point of repentance because the false substitution makes them feel that they don't have to repent. These deceptions are self-feeding and growing. Unless they are stopped, they will consume the life and build even stronger traps.

The big trap this whole scenario presents is this: how can one repent from something that he hasn't done? How can he feel shame from God when he isn't guilty? It is obvious that if I can't repent, then I have no hope of getting out of the effect of sin, whether it is real or just perceived. This problem takes a special answer, but it takes one that is obtained the same way as the others. It requires coming to the realization that he is not able to handle it on his own. He actually never was able to handle it on his own, but he didn't know that. When he finally comes to the point of desperation where he seeks God with all his heart, then opens himself to Him honestly and God will be able to bring to him the revelation knowledge that is so necessary to be set free. This means that all the support mechanisms he has been using will have to be abandoned. His attempts to help the sinner by protecting him will have to stop. He will have to get out of the role of being their savior and let God take His rightful place.

When he starts taking true responsibility for only his own actions and stops taking responsibility for other's actions, then he can be set free in his own life so that

he can truly help the genuinely guilty ones in a way that will work for eternity.

When he experiences the revelation of who God really is in his life and he recognizes His usefulness, then he can receive the acceptance from God. That is very different than the rejection from men. When the acceptance comes, then what was accomplished on the cross for him is readily available. As he decides to walk in what the scripture says instead of the report that others give him, he can submit his past to the cross and start to walk away from the deceptions in which he had been trapped.

Then he will be able to walk through the forgiveness that will completely set him free. He must seek the forgiveness of others and give forgiveness to the one who walked in the sin that kept him bound up in the first place. True forgiveness releases everyone from the ties that cripple them. Now he can truly help the one that is in sin, even if it is in no other area but to pray to a God who really cares.

Restoration to a relationship with the Father and a walk of hope and life is the resulting reward. This person who had the false guilt is set back on a path that will bring them to purity and maturity.

All three of these pathways have something in common right from the beginning. They all stem from a false view of God. The first one perceived God as Judge, One who must condemn. He saw no hope that God would ever intervene in his situation because he did not know about the love of God and the provisions in the Word for being released from the slavery of sin. The second person believed that God was helpless and couldn't forgive even if He wanted to (they obviously believed He didn't want to). He limited God's ability and power through his unbelief and he placed himself

and his actions above the ability of God to help. More hopelessness. The third person saw God as far off and not involved with his life. Other people became the focus that God should have occupied, and therefore he believed that God made just as many demands upon him as other people did. He believed that God imputed sin to him just like everyone else was. The truth on all three cases, though, was quite different. In each case, the Word of God was bursting with news of His abundant grace and love and His ability to set people completely free.

In Matthew 22:29, Jesus gives us the reasons we get into error in our lives. After the Sadducees tried to come up with a scenario they were sure would catch Jesus teaching a theology that they considered heretical, He told them, *"You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."* All the lives that we've looked at, and even ones we haven't, have this one thing in common: they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. When I was in sin, I didn't know that the Scriptures said that I didn't have to sin, and therefore I was in a bondage for a very long time. The person walking in the second lifestyle didn't know God's unfathomable power of forgiveness. The person in the third scenario didn't know the power of God to deliver and set people free. The reason we don't see God working in our lives is because of these two areas of weakness- not knowing either the Scriptures or the power of God. God wants us to be set free. He loves us and cares a great deal about how we live our lives. He has given us everything we need to live a life of fulfilment and purpose. We just need to seek Him in a deeper relationship of love.

Appendix B

“I have to sin”- The false doctrine of the sinful nature

This is one theological issue that I have finally decided just to declare war against. I was taught this false doctrine for so many years that I considered it to be right up there with all the other basic “Doctrines of the Faith” such as the Virgin Birth of Jesus. It just wasn’t questioned. Every teaching I heard on the subject said that Paul’s confusing verses in Romans 7, “For that which I do, I allow not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good,” meant that we cannot do any better than just to go ahead and sin. We have to sin. We have no choice.

Bah! Humbug! God forbid! That is a lie that has kept people in bondage for years, and it hasn’t helped a single person live a life free from sin. Let’s look at these verses to see how God wants us to live a life of freedom from sin and even tells us how! This was the exact thing that God showed me to set me free from the bondage I was in.

The problem is in the word “nature” in the doctrine of Sinful Nature. How a person’s nature determines the actions of that person. If you were to go out in your yard, get down on all fours, eat grass, swish your tail, and moo, you still wouldn’t be a cow. However, if the Good Fairy came down and struck you with her magic wand (bling!) and turned you into a cow, you would automatically stand on all fours, eat grass, swish your tail, and moo! It would be your **NATURE!**

When we were born again, the Bible says that we became a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). It says in 2 Peter 1:4 that we become partakers of the divine nature. We are no longer part of this world, but we are born of the Spirit (John 3:6). Many passages show that we are no longer of darkness but of the Light, etc. But the one passage that really clears up everything is Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Romans 6

The first two verses of Romans 6 are a lot easier to understand and are more to the point than those frequently misinterpreted verses in Romans 7. Romans 6:1 actually says that we are dead to sin! Paul asks the question, "How shall we still live in it?" To stay living in sin was such an outlandish display of insulting theology that Paul was appalled by it. Then he spoke directly to me when he said, "Or are you ignorant about something?" He went on to talk about how we were baptized into Christ Jesus, His death, burial, and resurrection. We were united with Him. The key word to it all is the Greek word *hosper* which is used in verse 4 where it says, "that as Christ was raised up from the dead;" the word "as" there really means "exactly like." What happened to Jesus happened to us. When He was on the cross, so were we. When He was buried, so were we. When He was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Father, so were we! Verse 6 tells us what died. It says our "old man" was crucified with Him. Crucified people are dead people. Our "Old Man" died with Jesus Christ. All the sin that we were, He became.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Him who knew no sin to **be** sin for us, that we (who knew no righteousness) might **become** the righteousness of God in Him. Just as far as Jesus went to become sin out of righteousness, that is how far we went from sin into righteousness. He was totally righteous and became sin. We were totally sinful and became righteous. This righteousness isn't just ours when we reach heaven either, we can live in it right now. We **are** the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. He gave that to us; it isn't something we did by ourselves. We died to our old self so that we might become what God made us to be.

The effect of Jesus' substitution should be very evident. The rest of verse 6 spells it out very plainly for us. "... that the body of sin might be annulled, so that we no longer serve sin!" The Greek word for "annulled" means to render idle or useless. If our "new man" is in control, then our body of sin is rendered idle or useless. To be idle or useless means that it is passive, not active. Our old body of sin isn't the one telling us what to do; instead, it is just sitting there waiting for us to tell it what to do. That is why when we sin with our bodies, there is such a judgment that goes with it. We are actually responsible for every action that it does. When we let it do whatever it wants, we still choose to allow it to do it. We are going against the scriptural principle in our lives that says that sin is not the one in control.

Verse 8 shows us that since we died with Him, we now have the choice to live with Him. Death no longer lords it over Him because when He died, He died to sin once for all, and the life that He lives, He lives to God. Then, in verse 11 the good news really starts to

come out. The sentence structure starts changing. It changes from informational to command form. We are commanded to do what Jesus did and be dead to sin and alive to God. It says to count ourselves as such. The word for “count” means to actually “log” it down or make an accounting of it that it is a done deal. If we truly see ourselves as dead to the sin, then sin loses its hold on us.

Say, for instance, there’s a man who has a real problem with lust. Every time he sees a woman, he is captured by thoughts of sex with her, and he fantasizes about what she is like without any clothes on. He cannot seem to control his thoughts. Then he dies. You take him and hang his body on a hook on the wall. One hundred women could walk in front of him without any clothes on at all and do anything they wanted to do, but he wouldn’t lust after a single one of them, no matter what they looked like! He truly is dead to sin!

God is trying to tell us something here. If we are truly dead to sin, then we have the capacity to walk free from sin no matter what the input or stimuli! The principle of Spirit over body appears to be a higher principle than we have ever understood it to be before. The way to achieve this understanding is by seeing yourself as crucified with Him. You must walk through the process of crucifixion. The substitutionary work of Jesus is a very well-known doctrine, but it needs to be experiential, not merely theological. If we know mentally that Jesus died for us but we don’t receive it by faith, we wouldn’t be saved. If we know that we were crucified with Jesus and buried and resurrected with Him because it says so in the scripture, but we don’t receive it by faith and

walk it through, then we are not really delivered. Verse 11 says to log it, write it in the account book, reckon it to be so. In other words, put it in place and believe it until the effect of it is revealed. I had to go until I could see my face inside of Jesus as He was dying there. I had to really perceive that my “old man” was crucified with Him. Then I had to bury that old, dead carcass, and there is nothing more idle or useless than a dead body.

What was resurrected was the “new man” that has a future and hope. When the sins of the past come back to “haunt” me, I can very literally say, “You don’t have a hold on me any longer. I died to you.” It doesn’t have a hold on Jesus, and it doesn’t have a hold on me since I am *IN* Christ Jesus!

Now would be a good time to pray a dangerous prayer. Dangerous prayers are prayers that God always answers, but they will cost you something, usually an area of your self life. Pray that God would help you see your death, burial and resurrection *IN* Jesus Christ. It is not an easy thing to do to watch your own crucifixion, but the outcome is very much worthwhile. If I can see that the sin that is controlling me is what is dying on the cross, then it loses its hold on me. I can actually see it die.

Many people have tried to teach me to personalize scripture, but it didn’t do much for me until I inserted my sin and myself in the verses of Romans 6. “What shall I say? Shall I continue in pornography that grace may abound? Let it not be! I who died to pornography, how shall I still live in it?” When I truly understand myself to be dead to pornography but alive to God in

Christ Jesus my Lord, then I can finally walk away from it and know that it doesn't reign over me any longer. I continued personalizing Romans 6 and inserting my sin in it until I really did see myself the way that scripture saw me. This was very freeing.

If we have this principle in place, then we can go on to do the next verse, which is also in command form. Verse 12 says, "Do not let sin rule in your mortal body to obey it in its lusts". If I couldn't help sinning, then this verse must be thrown out of the Bible. Why would God command me not to let sin rule if I didn't have a choice? This verse shows me that my sinful body wants me to obey it, but I don't have to obey it.

It goes on to say in verse 13, "Do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin". The Greek word here for instruments is translated almost everywhere else as weapon. This blew my mind, because it described exactly what I was doing! I was using my penis as a weapon of unrighteousness to sin! Every time I was using pornography, I was fighting God's purposes in my life and winning a decided victory for the realms of darkness. It is easy for us to see how we can use our body members as weapons for unrighteousness. However, the verse continues and doesn't leave us hanging there. It says to yield the members of our bodies as weapons of righteousness to God! That means the hand I would use to masturbate with was now the hand that was a weapon for the use of God. I began to see that God could use every part and function of my body. The uses of my body were not just to be perverted to bring me into even greater bondages. I could use my eyes as weapons of unrighteousness for looking at what I didn't need to see, or I could use

them as weapons for God and see what I truly did need to see. I had a choice to use the weapons correctly or incorrectly. The choice had always been mine, I just didn't know it.

Verse 14 says, "For your sin shall not lord it over you, for you are not under law, but under grace." It says that my sin (yes, I do have it) is not to be lord over me. Sin is not my master. For years I believed that sin was my master and that I had no hope of ever getting away from it. I evidenced that in my life by doing what sin told me to do. I would want to sin yet know that I shouldn't. That would be the fight that went on inside me. It wasn't my "sinful nature" fighting with my "Godly nature." It was my desires fighting with themselves. I had to choose which I was to obey. What did I really want? If I have two natures then I am schizophrenic and not in control of either. What the scripture says is that I am responsible for my actions, and the choices that I make are the consequences that I receive.

It was the fact that sin is not my lord, as the scripture says, that set me free. It hit me as revelation that I was finally free. I finally realized that for all those years, Satan had lied to me by telling me that I had to sin. All of a sudden, God told me that I didn't have to sin and that I could live a life of freedom. This made me very angry with sin and gave me a burst of hope that was like a light breaking through into a place that had been dark for a long time. I felt like I had just found out that a close associate had been lying to me. Now as I turned to confront him, I found out that he was the enemy trying to kill me all along. What had been my focus for living turned out to be a demon that was try-

ing to suck out my life. Faith rose up in me because it was a rhema that was spoken to me. Faith comes from hearing the rhema of God. I had the faith necessary to cast the demon away from me, and I knew that he would go. Since I had broken his whole deception and the reason he was there, I have been able to keep him out, and I have not had to cast him out again. I will deal more with this in the chapter on demons.

To move on, verses 15 -18 tell us some interesting things. It was something that I experienced. I knew that I was a slave to the one that I obeyed. I just didn't know that I had a choice in the matter. Now that I knew, it was easy to make the choice to become a slave to righteousness. Being a slave to righteousness was like a dream come true. I could actually obey righteousness now. I didn't have to obey sin. I could obey the master that will treat me well and give me life, not one that hates me and is trying to suck the life out of me. All the godly desires that I had suppressed in my life were able to start to grow and come to pass. I was truly able to walk with God in righteousness and not in condemnation. I was able to see God as the true God of Love instead of the God of Condemnation and Judgment. Now His usefulness was able to come in to me and repentance was readily available and easy. For the first time I was able to come to God and worship him in Spirit and truth. I knew that I was really clean and that I was able to come into His presence because of the blood of Jesus Christ. It destroyed the religious structure upon which I had built my whole life (a structure which wasn't working anyway), and I was finally able to commune with God. All this happened because I was given a verse in the scripture that said "sin shall not lord it over me." Oh,

the power of God unto deliverance!

There is a wonderful principle in verse 19 that we need to see, also. We have all experienced the fact that we go deeper and deeper into sin. We go from lawless act unto lawless act and the outcome is uncleanness. But the principle works even better the other way. We can now go from righteousness to righteousness, and the outcome will be sanctification. I know the downward slide only too well. What I am now experiencing is the upward walk. We can grow in grace from grace to grace, from glory to glory, from faith to faith. We don't have to get worse; we can get better. God often shows us things that we already understand to show us things that we need to understand. We understand how we can get worse and worse. We know that what used to give us a buzz, now requires much more for the same effect. We know a little something now will result in a lot of something later. If we let ourselves go a little bit now, then later we will let ourselves go a lot. What used to be unacceptable before, we will do now and not think anything of it. I remember when saying "Hell" was a bad thing. Now, I know fourth graders that can "cuss the paint off the barn wall" without anyone even thinking it is wrong. We really do understand about getting deeper into sin. Now God is calling us to turn it around. He wants us to grow in Him in the same way, except it will take effort and making the right choices. I want to "press on after the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). The high calling of God is a much better goal than getting deeper in sin.

"But now being set free from sin, and being enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life" (verse 22). I pray that

this fruit is what you are experiencing now. If not, it is something that you can experience. If you know Jesus Christ, you've been united with Him in His death, burial and resurrection. You have been set free from sin and are now alive unto God. You are now enslaved unto righteousness and have the capacity to have the fruit of a dedicated life to God. The end result is having eternal life working itself out through your life and into the lives of others. You can be experiencing that right now if you would only cry out to God and let Him do this mighty work in you. You don't have to have hopelessness. There is hope for your life, no matter what it is like. The God of Hope is your God, and He has set everything in order to bring you into perfect relationship with Him.

Romans 7 and 8

The reason this passage has always been a problem is because people really didn't want to know that they were responsible for their sin. They really did want to have a scriptural basis for sinning because it would explain their powerlessness to conquer it. If you aren't living something in the scripture, then you must build a theology to accommodate your experience. But the truth is really rather simple.

In verses 1-6, Paul is giving an example of dying to the Law and being free to belong to another. He uses the example of marriage to tell his point, but notice that in every verse he uses the pronoun "we". Verse 7 says, "What, then, shall **we** say? Is the law sin? Let it not be! But *I* did not know sin except through law; for also *I* did not know lust except the law said, 'You shall not lust,' " (italics added). Notice the distinct change from using "we" to using "I". There is a literary technique being

used here. Paul is now telling us about his experience and using himself as an example of how it was in his life, and therefore how it is in everyone else's life.

Verse 9 tells us that Paul was once alive apart from the law, but the commandment came, sin came alive and he died. When was Paul alive apart from the law? When did the commandment come? When did sin come alive in him? When did he die? When he was a newborn baby, he was alive apart from the law. Then he became old enough to understand the commandment, and that is when the law came to him. He made a choice to disobey the law. This is when sin came alive, and he died. He died spiritually. He died in his relationship to God. Now he was guilty of all the law. The law which was very good showed the sin in him, and death was the judgment. The law was there to show him that he needed a Savior because he couldn't work his salvation out alone. He was a transgressor and guilty of the whole law. He was a sinner.

While he was still in the discussion of his life as a sinner, after the law had come and he died spiritually, he told us what his life was like in that condition. That is when he told us those confusing verses about not being able to do anything but sin. Even when he wanted to do the good, sin was right there with him. He knew that the desire to do good was in him, because every man since Adam has been given a conscience. He knew that he was going to do things that he didn't want to do and the things that he really did want to do, he couldn't. He was telling everyone what life is like as a sinner. You can't do anything *but* sin. Even the things that you do that are good are really sin because they

weren't done in faith toward God. They don't give God the glory. They are just sin. We know that good works without the Spirit and love are just a clanging cymbal. We also know that life in this condition is characterized by utter hopelessness. Ephesians 2 puts it this way in verse 12, "...without God, without hope in this world." What a tragic state to be in. Paul screamed out in his frustration, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" That is when he called out to God, and God came into his life. "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord!" Now, he was no longer in that state of hopelessness. Instead there is the blessed verse that says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those ***IN*** Christ Jesus!" (Rom. 8:1, italics added) He was finally united in His death, burial, and resurrection and set free from the bondages of sin.

Chapter 8 starts with the understanding that there's a difference between flesh and Spirit. There are two laws at work here, and we need to understand them. The law of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" and the law of "sin and death". We have the law of sin and death constantly pulling on us. Sin used to be in our spirits. When we were dead to God and alive to sin, our spirits had sin living in them. We could do nothing but sin. It was our nature. But when we were born again, our "Old Man" died as we were joined to Jesus Christ. Our spirits were born of God. The Holy Spirit came and took up residence in our spirits, and we had total communion with Him constantly. Sin moved to only being in our bodies. As long as we live in this flesh, we will have certain habits and desires of that flesh. When we walk according to those desires and habits, we are walking according to the "flesh".

When Adam died spiritually as he chose sin over God, the entire human race received death. Something happened, and sin was passed from fathers to their children from then on. Everyone of us was born in sin, but we weren't born into judgment until the commandment came to us and we chose to sin. Then the sin that was in us came alive, and we died. Everyone has received from their father the sin passed on from Adam. The only one who had no sin was Jesus Christ. His father was not a sinner. His Father was God. Jesus didn't have any sin in him from the race of Adam, but the rest of us do. That is why Paul questioned, "who will deliver me from the *body* of this death?" (*italics added*). In 7:17 & 18, Paul talks about how sin is dwelling in him and that he knows that in him, that is in his flesh, dwells no good. When we obey the sin in our members, we reduce ourselves to walking according to the law of sin and death.

We make the choice to walk in the flesh with our will, and that choice is usually based on either our mind or our emotions. People have taught that men usually make the decisions with their minds while women make their decisions with their emotions. That isn't necessarily so. Men are more emotional than they would like people to believe. But either way it is in the realm of the soul that we have the pivot between walking in the spirit or the flesh. The soul is made up of the mind, the will, and the emotions. When a person uses only his soul to do things, then he will automatically make decisions that are not of the spirit. When people do things under their own power, they do them in the flesh, not of the spirit. When they walk according to the desires of the body, that is also flesh. Anything that isn't of the Spirit is of the flesh. I must continually choose to walk in the

Spirit. If I don't, then I will default to doing the things of the flesh. The effect of that is sin and death. Verse 6 says that the mind of the flesh is death, and the law of sin and death are in effect when the flesh is in control.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set me free from the law of sin and death. Now I have a choice in the matter of which law I wish to have functioning in me. Since the law of sin and death is always present, then I continually have to make choices to walk in the things of the Spirit. It has been likened to the constant pull of gravity. Only the law of aerodynamics can set me free from the effects of the law of gravity and only as long as the wings are in place and I choose to fly. If I choose to forget to fly, I will fall like a rock. If I choose to walk in the Spirit, then I will be able to overcome the effect of sin and death. If I choose to forget, I will fall like a rock in sin.

We are told in 8:6 that the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. The word there for "mind" is the Greek word *phroneo* and it means "the thought process". The thought process of the flesh will bring you death. The thought process of the Spirit will bring you life and peace. Look at your life and at the effects of what you are doing. Is there life and peace, or is there death? You should be able to tell if what you are doing is walking in the flesh or the Spirit. God gives us signs by which we are able to tell when things are going according to His way or not. We can see whose fingerprints are on our life by the fruit that is shown. When there is death happening, it is either my flesh or the one who has come to kill, steal or destroy causing it. Neither one is a good choice. We have been

given the right kind of weapons to use to destroy their effects in our lives. If the effects are life and peace, then I know who is working in my life and I give God the glory.

God wants us to be walking in His Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17). I know that it is God's will for me to be free. I know that God loves me and has the best plan for my life. If He has a plan for me, then He has a way for me to be free so that I can walk with Him and work for Him in all purity.

This has only been a short walk through these 3 chapters. Read them yourself. Ask the Lord to make them revelation to you, to show you how to walk free from sin, and to reveal the life of purity that you know God wants you to have. You don't have to sin. You can be free to walk clean. There is hope out of the hopelessness of habitual, repetitive sin. Only through God can it be done. Seek Him out. Let Him do it. The results are worth whatever it will cost you.

