

Pure Victory

**22 DAYS TO MORAL FREEDOM FOR
MEN**

Dwight A. Clough

A word from the author

You are about to embark on a life-changing journey. The principles embodied in this program are a result of 30 years of searching for answers that work in real life. Please be assured of my prayers that the Lord will use these 22 days to make an eternal difference for good in your life.

Information on ordering additional copies of this resource is available at www.dwightclough.com

**Dwight A. Clough
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Acknowledgements

I believe in answered prayer. I have been praying for you, that the Lord would use this course to make an eternal difference for good in your life. I'd like to hear what the Lord is doing for you. Please take a moment and drop me a line at dwight@dwightclough.com.

I credit Jesus Christ for the changes He has brought about in my life during the 35 years since He accepted me into His family. I thank God for His kindness to me despite my many faults. I am also thankful for the support of a loving wife who has stood by me when many others would have walked away. I pray that this 22-day journey will bring freedom and victory to readers, and glory to God.

Dwight A. Clough

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Day 1

The surprising place to start

Today ...

A simple, but powerful tool releases God to fight on your behalf. Do you know what it is?

Multiply the impact ...

On Day 18 you will learn the Biblical principles of spiritual “judo,” an amazing technique that robs temptations of their power over you. Spiritual “judo” works hand-in-glove with what you will learn today, and they each magnify the impact of the other.

How God sees it ...

*He who sacrifices thank offerings honors Me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God. Psalm 50:23
(from NIV)*

What powerful but often overlooked weapon releases God to fight on your behalf? Thanksgiving and praise!

Yes, this is simple. But don't underestimate it. Giving thanks to God has been credited with doing everything from saving marriages to healing cancer. Expressing gratitude to God helps lift depression, loosens the grip of addictions, and sets God free to work.

The outcome of World War II was largely determined by a little piece of real estate known as Normandy Beach. When you give thanks, you give God a Normandy Beach in your life. When He takes that beachhead, every enemy in your life knows that the beginning of the end has come.

Thanksgiving releases your faith to grab hold of the Almighty God who can do anything. It builds bridges between you and God, and those bridges allow God to get access to more of you. And it puts the problem into perspective. This bully in our lives is really just a little punk compared to God.

The most important time to give thanks is the when you don't feel like giving thanks. This sacrifice of thanksgiving is a powerful

way of pushing past the clutter of our own failures to achieve results with God.

Thanking God is not merely a considerate thing to do for God, it is an intelligent thing to do for yourself. It is the first step to taking porn, lust, sexual addictions and/or temptations and throwing them down on the mat.

What can you thank God for? How about this -- your “impossible” problem is just the kind of challenge God loves to get His hands on. Here’s another thought: God’s plan for your sex life is worth celebrating. Yes, your thought life or sex life might be temporarily messed up, but God has a wonderful plan for the rest of your life. Thank God for sex. What a beautiful gift! Thank God for your sex drive. It is a gift from above. Do you feel conflicted or ambivalent about your struggle with temptation? Does part of you want to hang on to your old life, while part of you hates yourself for doing so? Thank God that He knows just what to do with all those conflicting desires.

Powerful point ...

Giving thanks releases God to fight on your behalf.

Journal question

What are the biggest challenges in my life right now? How can I turn my challenges into an opportunity to give thanks?

Connecting with God

Thank You, God, that You have given me a problem that I cannot solve on my own. Thank You for this wonderful opportunity to enter into a partnership with You, and to see You do what You love to do -- the impossible. Thank You for the gift of sex. I am so grateful that You have a much better plan for my sex life than I could ever dream up or imagine. You are in the business of creating masterpieces, so I stand back and marvel and what You are doing in me. I have challenges, but I know these are opportunities for You. Here they are ... [refer to journal].

Thank You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- This principle of thanksgiving can be applied to every problem we face in life. Test drive it on your other challenges!
- The Discoveries Daily Devotional shows how to find God and His goodness inside challenges. It also features links to inspiring stories of God showing up for people in times of trouble. It's free. Your email address is never revealed, shared or sold and you may unsubscribe any time. More info at <http://www.dwightclough.com/discoveries/discoveries.html>

Tomorrow ...

Every soldier needs to know why he's fighting. On Day 2 we give you the basis for the battle and much needed encouragement that this is a fight worth winning.

Day 2

The basis for the battle

Today ...

Every soldier needs to know why he's fighting. Today we explore the basis for the battle and gain much needed encouragement that this is a fight worth winning.

Multiply the impact ...

What you gain today will form the basis for Day 12 - breaking unholy ties. Many people don't know how to properly disconnect from those things that defile. As a result, sexual temptations continue to have inordinate power in their lives.

How God sees it ...

Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex. Hebrews 13:4 The Message

In the Narnia Chronicles by C.S. Lewis, the Lion, Aslan, represents Christ to the children. As the children grow, Aslan, grows. In the same way, as I've grown, God grows in my understanding. Years ago, when my wife seemed unattractive, our sex life hopeless, and our marriage a trap, my perspectives were skewed by a small and mean view of God. In those days, God seemed too cruel to satisfy my desires with good things, too weak to mend our sexual conflicts, too distant to care about the cries of my heart. I see now that He cared deeply about my wife and me all along. I see how very smart God was to use the immature desires and attractions we had as young adults to bring together the very two people he wanted to join as one. And now I see that God is sex-friendly. It is God who says of sexual love in marriage, "Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers." (Song of Solomon 5:1) It is God who says, "Do not deprive each other [of sex in marriage]." (1 Corinthians 7:5) Sex is a great reason to embrace God.

If God is sex-friendly, why are sexual boundaries so important?

The Bible is full of prohibitions against illicit sex (Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 18, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:12-7:5, Hebrews 13:4, etc.). Jesus takes those boundaries a step further when He prohibits us from even looking at a woman to lust after her (Matthew 5:28).

The more you think about the sexual boundaries God has defined, the more they make sense. Take any sexual sin you want and follow it to its logical conclusion. For example, if I start undressing in my head the women who walk by my office window, then soon I'm discontent. Instead of elevating my wife, I would begin comparing her unfavorably to the women who walk by. Imagine what that would do to her self esteem! No longer is she the delight of my eyes and my heart. As one of many women that my heart desired, she would never be sure of her place with me. And what would happen to me? I would become angry and frustrated, because I can't have what I really want. I would resent God who put these boundaries in place that prevent me from snatching any of these women I desire and having her for myself.

But, suppose I could have any woman I wanted any time I wanted her. Suppose, for sake of argument, that pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases weren't an issue. If I could do this, I would have turned half the human race into sex objects that exist purely to satisfy my sexual desires. If I had this freedom, then, at any moment, I could pull them out of the context of their lives and force them to have sex with me. How degrading! And I'm ignoring the three billion other guys out there who might like to do the same thing. If they could, what would happen to my wife, my daughters, my mother, the women that I love and care about?

If I entered into a sexual relationship with a woman I'm not married to, then I would have given away something sacred that belongs to my wife. Part of the glue that holds our marriage together would be gone. Sex would lose its specialness, and marriage would lose its uniqueness. Our family and home would cease to be stable. My children would never know when they would wake up and find that they no longer had a father, because he left for someone else.

I remember hearing the story of a mom who was fighting with her three year old child in the grocery store. That child was certain that she wanted to buy cigars, but Mom knew better. I don't give my children matches and explosives to play with, because, if I did, sooner or later they would get hurt. I don't tell them not to play, but I do tell

them not to play with things that will hurt them. In the same way, God puts sexual boundaries in our lives not to keep us from having fun, but instead to ensure that we can continue to have fun, not for a moment, but for a lifetime.

Powerful point ...

God has your best interests at heart when He creates boundaries for sexual expression in your life.

Journal question

How have God's sexual boundaries benefited me?

Connecting with God

In Your great wisdom, you set sexual boundaries that elevate, rather than degrade human beings. I've thought about Your boundaries have benefited me, and this is what I've come up with. [Refer to journal.] Please work in my heart so that I desire only what You want for me.

Going further

➤ Discovering that God's ways and intentions are good was the theme of several stories in our book *Amazing Faith: Stories of Christians in Defining Moments*. In the chapter entitled "Carrot Cake and Romans 8:28," Ruth Senter shares how she discovered God's unexpected goodness while immobilized with a broken back. Check out <http://www.dwightclough.com/amazing.html>

Tomorrow ...

To fight the battle for moral purity, we must understand what we are fighting. On Day 3 we identify the enemy.

Day 3

Identify the enemy

Today ...

To fight the battle for moral purity, we must understand what we are fighting. Today, we identify the enemy.

Multiply the impact ...

On Day 20, you will take these concepts to a much higher level. You will discover how to successfully disarm even the most powerful sexual temptation.

How God sees it ...

But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. Proverbs 6:32 NIV

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:28 NIV

I once heard the story of a man who was obsessed with the idea of having an affair. He wanted to experience extramarital sex because something inside was telling him how wonderful it would be. Finally, he got his chance. On a business trip, he hired a prostitute and she spent the night with him. The next morning, when he woke up, she was gone. He stumbled into the bathroom. There, written in lipstick on the bathroom mirror, were these words: “Welcome to the world of AIDS.”

Sex is God's wedding gift to be lovingly shared between husband and wife. Sex outside God's plan is destructive and sinful. This includes lust, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pornography, and evil fantasies. (Hebrews 13:4; Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 18, Romans 1:26-27; Matthew 5:28, and so on.)

It's easy to see how illicit sex was destructive in the example of the man on the business trip. But God calls on us to “above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Actually, much damage had already been done before the man ended

up in the hotel room with this other woman.

This man had set his heart on desiring something outside the boundaries of what God permits. When we desire what God prohibits, we are driving a wedge between ourselves and God. We are telling God that He doesn't know what's best for us, that we know better than God.

For example, if I'm at the beach with my family, and I see a woman in a bikini, my radar picks up on that. That bikini jumps out at me. Suppose I think, *Wow, look at that body! Look at all she's letting me see. Look at all those curves. Suppose it were just her and me. I wonder what she would look like if she took it all off. I'd like to take this one home with me.*

If I do that, I insult God. I am telling Him that His plan for me and for sex is not good; my plan is better.

If I take the bikini woman home in my mind, if I'm thinking about her instead of my wife when we're having sex, I'm also sinning. I'm saying to God, I can't be satisfied by what you gave me; I need something different.

Of course, most of us don't need a woman in a bikini or a porn magazine in order to think impure thoughts. We are quite capable of coming up with all kinds of inappropriate sexual fantasies on our own.

Moral purity is about trusting God with our powerful sexual desires. Did you ever wonder why there are so few dynamic male leaders in the church? I'm convinced this is part of the reason: In the psyche of most men, there is a deep division between faith and sex.

Don't misunderstand me. Sex isn't supposed to be a church service with three hymns and an offering. But, if you kick God out of the bedroom, guess who walks in!

What is the enemy? Any use of our sexual desires that draws us away from God and His good plan for our lives.

Powerful point ...

Moral purity is about trusting God with our powerful sexual desires.

Journal question

What is the condition of my heart? Are destructive thoughts racing through my mind? How much pull do sexual temptations have on

me?

Connecting with God

Dear God, I can see that You care deeply about what goes on in my mind. I can see that this battle is won or lost in my mind. I've given some thought to where my desires are, and this is what I've come up with. [Refer to journal.] This is where the battle lines are drawn. I invite You into my life, and into my sex life so that together we can win this war. Thank You!

Going further

- Sometimes you may not be sure if certain thoughts or activities are sanctioned by God. Be sure to take these up matters with God in prayer. Keep on praying about these things and keep on reading God's word, the Bible. God will show you what is right for you.
- If you haven't already downloaded the one-page resource, "Sexual Purity: A Battle Plan," it is available at no cost at http://www.husbandsforhealing.com/sexual_purity.html - pass it on to others!

Tomorrow ...

Don't take blame you aren't supposed to take. There's a big, big difference between sinning and being sinned against.

Day 4

Sorting out guilt, blame and shame

Today ...

Don't take blame you aren't supposed to take. There's a big, big difference between sinning and being sinned against.

Multiply the impact ...

Day 12 contains very important information on how to disconnect from past experiences in which you were sinned against. And you don't want to miss Day 22, because now there are powerful new tools to bring complete healing and recovery to survivors of sexual abuse or assault.

How God sees it ...

The Spirit of the Lord is on Me [Jesus], because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed ... Luke 4:18 from NIV

Most of us have experienced some level of guilt or shame when it comes to sex. God does not want this guilt or shame to remain a part of our lives; He wants to address it.

In secular pop psychology, guilt is usually denied. Secular analysts have correctly observed that some shame is based on lies. Each individual is responsible to set his or her own sexual boundaries, these “experts” contend, but they usually fail to acknowledge God's right to set sexual boundaries. As a result, they have reached the incorrect conclusion that all guilt feelings should be dismissed.

Many Christians have gone to the opposite extreme. By placing great emphasis on sin and personal responsibility, they have incorrectly concluded that shame is always a product of one's own sin.

The truth is actually somewhere in between. If we have sinned,

sexually (or any other way), there is guilt. That guilt is based on truth. That guilt is put there by God so that we will come to God to make things right.

(In Supplement A - "Release from guilt and shame," I cover the critically important issues of resolving our guilt with God and finding freedom from shame. I urge you to take a few moments and read it right now, so that you can be sure that guilt and shame don't block you from finding the healing goodness of God.)

Shame, however, is different than guilt. For our purposes, we will define shame as false guilt. It is not based on truth, but rather based on lies. For example, it is no sin to be the victim of sexual abuse or assault. In that case, the perpetrator has sinned against you; God wants to heal the damage. However, almost every sexual abuse survivor feels shame. This shame is based on lies that are implanted during the abuse. Victims are almost always made to feel that the abuse was their fault because they enjoyed it, because they were "paid" something for it, because they received the abuse because they were evil, because they asked for it, etc. These are tactics that perpetrators use to make their victims compliant, and they leave the survivor with deep feelings of shame.

In addition to the shame, many survivors feel like they are "damaged goods." This feeling of being dirty, of being good for nothing but sex, of being tainted compounds the feeling of shame.

Because sexual abuse is so very common, if you are male, there is at least a one in six chance that you are a survivor of sexual abuse -- and some experts put the numbers much higher. The chances that you are married to a sexual abuse survivor are at least one in three. If you suspect that you are a victim of sexual abuse, or that you are married to one, I urge you to complete this entire course -- Day 12 and Day 22 will be especially important to you. Also, I encourage you to read Supplement B: "What does a victim experience during sexual abuse and how does that affect the adult survivor?"

If you don't already know it, you will discover that Christians hold widely different views on what kind of sexual behavior is acceptable. While the Bible is very clear about certain kinds of limits (any kind of sexual activity between people who are not married is always forbidden, for example), it is much less clear on other issues (e.g., masturbation, oral sex in marriage, etc.). Even Christians who love God and believe the Bible hold widely divergent views on some of

these topics. You may find yourself plagued with guilt on some of these issues and not be sure whether you've really offended God or not.

Here's my best advice: Take the struggle to God. Ask Him to sort it out for you. Talk to Him about the reasons you have engaged or want to engage in these activities. Be honest. You can't hide from God anyway. Study the Bible. Ask God to reveal to you whether the activity you are concerned about is right or wrong for you. I could give you my list of do's and don'ts. But, ultimately, you will become a much stronger Christian if you come up with that list on your own -- just you and God, with the Bible as your standard and wise input from godly, mature fellow believers.

Powerful point ...

Bring true guilt and false shame to God because Jesus is the answer to both.

Journal question

To what extent is guilt or shame an issue for me? Am I wrestling with true guilt or false shame? Why?

Connecting with God

Dear God, Your boundaries around my sex life are good. I ask you to search my heart to see if there is any true guilt or false shame in me. I want You to lovingly remove the guilt and shame from my life. Where I have sinned, I agree to renounce that sin and do whatever You tell me to do to make it right. If I have been sinned against, if I feel false shame, please speak the truth, deep inside my soul, so that I can walk in the freedom you desire for me. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Learn more about critically important methods of resolving guilt and shame in Supplement A - "Release from guilt and shame."
- If you or your spouse suspect that you may be a survivor of sexual abuse, please read Supplement B: "What does a victim experience

during sexual abuse and how does that affect the adult survivor?.”

Tomorrow ...

In your battle for moral purity, don't settle for a cease fire when you can get total victory!

Day 5

Don't settle for less than total victory!

Today ...

In your battle for moral purity, don't settle for a cease fire. Go for total victory!

Multiply the impact ...

The rest of this program, Days 6 through 22, will show you, step-by-step, how to achieve total victory. Day 22 will be especially powerful in showing you how God can resolve any lingering struggles that remain.

How God sees it ...

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Exodus 20:2 NIV

Don't settle for less than total victory. When your desires match the desires God wants you to have, then you have victory. God is the God of freedom. When you are completely free, evil desires lose their attraction.

Freedom is different than responsibility. Here's the difference: I process hundreds of emails every week. I get a certain number of porno come-ons mixed in with my email. When I get an email that says something like, "See barely legal teens having sex for the first time," I do the responsible thing. I immediately delete it to the trash bin. Then I go into the email trash bin and delete it again, so that, in a weak moment, I can't dig around in the trash, find the email, and visit the porn site.

That's responsibility. I double delete these messages whether I feel like it or not. I double delete them because I know that if I visit one of these sites, my soul will be defiled, I might get hooked, and the chains of pornographic addiction are too heavy for me to break.

Sometimes when I'm deleting these messages, I feel some of

their gravitational pull. A little voice inside me whispers: *Aren't you just a little bit curious? Wouldn't you like to take a peek? Nobody will know. It might really be exciting ...* and so on. That's why I try to delete them within two seconds of finding them, so those voices inside me don't have time to work on me.

That's responsibility.

Jesus, on the other hand, is free. He doesn't feel the desire to flip through the pages of a pornographic magazine. He doesn't drive by the adult bookstore and wonder what kind of videos might be inside. These porno websites have no attraction for Him. He sees them as they really are.

James says that each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed (James 1:14). I have my own unique collection of lusts that give the world, the flesh and the devil leverage to work on me.

The good news is this: Jesus is working on those deeply buried desires inside me -- those vulnerabilities that make me susceptible to temptation, just like geologic fault lines make the Pacific Rim susceptible to earthquakes. Jesus is the reason that pornography has much less attraction to me now than it did twenty years ago. And Jesus is the reason that some day it won't have any pull at all.

Freedom is different than coping. Coping says joy and peace -- the fruit of the Spirit -- joy and peace are just words, mere illusions. Coping says that we must grit our teeth, say our verses, go through all kinds of gyrations, expend enormous amounts of energy to appear spiritual, to act normal, to avoid sin.

Freedom is what happens when we no longer feel the pull of lust and porn, of illicit sex and evil fantasies.

Freedom understands the words of Jesus: "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). Freedom is rest and not striving.

Freedom is a miracle. Freedom is impossible. Freedom is something that only God can do.

Only God can make us free. If I had any musical talent, I'd turn this idea into a song:

Only God can break a sea in half.

Only God can make a giant fall.

Only God can make the blind man see.

Only God is Lord of all.

Most people don't believe that. They think God is unnecessary. Most people believe that if they just try a little harder, if they just spend more time in prayer, make another trip to the altar, get the right kind of counseling, or whatever, that they will be free. But freedom doesn't come from us. It doesn't result from our efforts.

So, if God likes us so much, why doesn't He just wave His magic wand and instantly set us free from everything that troubles us?

Good question.

We'd like freedom to come all in one moment. We'd like to walk up to the big God vending machine in the sky, pop in some change, push the freedom button, and pull out that bottle that instantly and forever delivers us of everything that might have hooks dug into our flesh.

But it usually doesn't work that way. God drives these things out, yes, but He often drives them out a little at a time. (See, for example, Deuteronomy 7:22 and Judges 3:1-2.)

Each of us is a work in progress. But that's okay. God has a time table. God has a plan. And He's going to set us free.

Powerful point ...

When your desires match the desires God wants you to have, then you have victory.

Journal question

How much pull does lust, porn, evil fantasies and/or illicit sex have in my life? How hard do I need to struggle to keep from sinning?

Connecting with God

Thank You, Father, because when You take off the chains to lust and impurity, then I am really free. I believe that Your Son, Jesus, is the One who makes me free indeed. Jesus, please give me the desires that are right for me, and take away the ones that aren't. I'm asking You for total victory, for true freedom. Thank You for how You are going to answer this prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Give yourself a rating each day for how much pull sexual temptations seem to have on you. Talk this over with God, and see what insights He gives you. As you go through this 22-day program, God will show you amazing ways to disable temptation and walk in freedom.
- “The Oxygen Mask Principle” shows how important it is for us to achieve freedom, so we can help others. Read it from our Discoveries archive:
<http://three.pairlist.net/pipermail/discoveries/2002-December/000061.html>

Tomorrow ...

Shame theology sounds so very holy that millions of Evangelicals and other Christians buy into it. But it is a subtle trap -- a trap that can sabotage your ability to get moral victory, and, instead, leave you in chains to lust and frustration.

Day 6

Shame theology -- It isn't Biblical, and it never works!

Today ...

Shame theology sounds so very holy that millions of Evangelicals and other Christians buy into it. But it is a subtle trap -- a trap that can sabotage your ability to get moral victory, and, instead, leave you in chains to lust and frustration.

Multiply the impact ...

*Escaping the trap of shame theology actually results in less sin, rather than more, because it frees you to receive God's righteousness as described in Day 16: *The Two Paradigms of Holiness*.*

How God sees it ...

As [Jesus] went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

John 9:1-3 from NIV

Like the disciples, many Christians practice what I call "shame theology." Shame theology teaches this: If a little bit of conviction is good, then a whole lot of conviction must be better. If you have a problem, there must be something wrong with you. Shame on you. Don't you realize that you've sinned? Snap out of it! When someone has a problem like sexual addiction or depression (or whatever), the shame theologians never consider that the problem might be an opportunity for God to do something special. Instead, they are ready to jump in with their prescriptions: read the Bible more, pray more, give more money to the right TV evangelist, or whatever -- because your problem is your own fault and you need to fix it yourself.

Shame theology isn't anything new. Job's three friends relied

on it, because when Job's experience shattered their paradigms about who God was and how He works, they decided to hold on to their paradigms instead of accepting reality. Read the Old Testament book of Job. In the end, you'll find out what God thinks of shame theology.

To illustrate shame theology, I'm going to retell the famous Bible story about Moses bringing the people Israel out of Egyptian slavery:

One day God was looking around and he noticed that His people were all slaves! How embarrassing! How would people ever respect Him if they knew that His chosen people had been reduced to slavery? God was in a real quandary. What should I do? he wondered. Should I wash my hands of them, and start over with someone else? Or should I try to get them to straighten up? After thinking about it for a while, He decided to give them one last chance to straighten up. So he put in a phone call to Moses.

Ring, ring!

"Hello."

"Hello, Moses, this is God. I have a job for you."

"God, I already have a job. I'm tending sheep."

"Well, I'm sorry to bother you, but I have a problem. My chosen people are slaves. I need to get somebody to go and tell them to clean up their act."

"Well, God, I can try. But I doubt they'll listen."

"It doesn't matter that much. If they don't listen, I didn't like them that much anyway. I'll just start over with somebody else, somebody who didn't let himself get into such a mess."

"Okay, God."

Several weeks went by. Moses made the trip to Egypt. He talked to God's people. He told them how wrong it was for them to be slaves. He explained how ashamed they should be. He told them what a terrible sin slavery really was. He pounded on the podium and demanded that they straighten up.

A small group gathered to listen. They nodded their heads. Yes, they agreed, slavery is a terrible sin, and we are very shameful for allowing ourselves to be enslaved.

One or two actually decided to stand up to their Egyptian masters. But it didn't go well. The headline on the Cairo Times the next day read, "More Work Given to Slaves: Unsuccessful Uprising

Proves They Have Too Much Free Time.”

One day God stopped playing cards with the angels long enough to place a call to Moses.

Ring, ring!

“Hello, is this Moses?”

“No, God. This is Aaron, Moses' brother.”

“Oh. Where's Moses.”

“He got a new job, selling camels in Saudi Arabia.”

(If you don't know the real story, get a Bible and read the first half of Exodus.)

As ridiculous as this story sounds, it really comes close to the view many people have of God. But, the preamble of the Ten Commandments paints a different picture of God. Here, at one of the most strategic points in all history and in all of scripture, God seizes a chance to identify Himself. How does He do it? Does He say, “I am the God who created the universe”? No. Nor does He say, “I am the God who gave Adam and Eve a choice in the garden.” Nor does He say, “I am the God who brought the flood.”

Instead, God says, “I am the Lord, your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2)

If God had a business card, it might read:



That's how He wants to be identified.

Likewise, Jesus chooses to be identified as One who brings freedom. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has ... sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and ... to release the oppressed ...” (Luke 4:18)

So I ask you: *What is your Egypt? What is your land of slavery? Is it pornography? Is it lust? Is it bitterness? Is it shame? Is it guilt? What is your Egypt?*

Whatever your issues are, God isn't out to shame you. God has compassion on you. He has heard your cries. He knows you can't

free yourself. He doesn't expect you to. That's why He sent a Moses -- only, this time, He sent someone better than Moses. He sent Jesus Christ.

Jesus isn't here to shame you either. He is here with the full power and authority of God, to speak to the pharaoh in your life and to demand your release.

God is not at war with you. God is at war with the Egypt that enslaves you.

Powerful point ...

Our problems are God's opportunities.

Journal question

What is my Egypt? What am I fighting?

Connecting with God

I thank You, Father, that You are not at war with me, but rather with all the things that enslave me. Thank You that my problems are Your opportunities. Here's my Egypt: [Refer to journal.] I ask You to remove those things that hold me in bondage. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Make a list of sins, problems and other challenges in your life. Explain how each can be an opportunity for God to show up for you.
- Discoveries Daily Devotional is designed to be an alternative to "shame theology." Each day we focus on how God turns our challenges into opportunities to do good.
<http://www.dwightclough.com/discoveries/discoveries.html>

Tomorrow ...

If you want to win the battle against sexual impurity, it is essential that you understand the enemy's strategy. This eye-opening information will help you understand how and why the enemy

achieves so much success.

Day 7

Understand the enemy's strategy

Today ...

If you want to win the battle against sexual impurity, it is essential that you understand the enemy's strategy. This eye-opening information will help you understand how and why the enemy achieves so much success.

Multiply the impact ...

Knowing how to do battle begins with understanding the enemy's strategy. On Days 14 & 15, we build on this understanding to develop strategies for engaging and defeating the enemy.

How God sees it ...

When he [the devil] lies, he speaks his native language, for his is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44b NIV

The devil has a plan for your sex life. His plan is a direct assault on you, on your very being, and it is designed to destroy you.

He wants to destroy you using the candy-coated poison of deception. That deception shows up in several ways. Part of the devil's public relations strategy is to get people to think that sex is naughty, that it is a cute little evil. He wants to drive a wedge between your sex life and God, because he knows if he controls your sex life, he controls you.

The first step in the devil's plan is to get you sexually abused as a child, if possible, so that all your life (apart from healing) you will be conflicted about sex, feeling alternately aroused and disgusted with it. At least one adult in four is a survivor of sexual abuse. Alternately enticed and disgusted by sex, many survivors find sex both luring and loathsome.

Sexual abuse is a perfect opportunity for the devil to plant all kinds of soul-destroying lies. Here are a few: *I'm shameful. It's my*

fault. I enjoyed it, so I must be evil. I am damaged goods. I can't get away. It's hopeless. I need to give sex to get approval. And the list goes on and on. All of this is designed to rob survivors of the enjoyment of marital intimacy that God intended.

As an alternative to - or in addition to - sexual abuse, the devil wants to attach unmet nonsexual needs to your sex drive. For example, if you feel unloved as a child, then the devil may try to get you to sexualize that feeling. In other words, beneath your conscious awareness, he wants you to associate your hunger to get those unmet love needs met through sex. Other unmet needs may include a need for validation, for hope, for power, for a sense of belonging, for a sense of safety. A big one for us men is the need to establish a masculine identity.

All of us have unmet needs. That's a product of living in a fallen world. Jesus can and will meet those unmet needs, if we allow Him to. They need to be taken to Him and He will find the exact place in your soul where those needs need to be met and He will meet them. In doing this, He will untangle those unmet needs from your sex drive. (More on this on Day 20.)

Unmet needs that have been sexualized create powerful temptations for you to get involved in sexual activity outside God's plan for you. Here's why. You have your normal sex drive which is plenty strong all by itself. But then you have this great unmet need fueling that sexual attraction. It's like pouring gasoline on a fire.

The devil wants you to have sex outside of marriage so that experience can get in the way every time you try to have sex inside of marriage. The devil ensures that there are diminishing returns for sex outside of marriage. Because the sex partner cannot meet the underlying need that is helping to fuel the sexual attraction, one or both parties will turn away unsatisfied. Then you experience the searing pain of severing the relationship. I've heard it put this way: Having sex with someone and then leaving them is like licking the flagpole when it's 20 below -- you leave part of yourself behind.

The plan then is to enroll you in a series of broken relationships, where each partner has a piece of your soul.

If possible, he wants your illicit sexual relationships to result in a pregnancy that you aren't ready for, so that you can either go the abortion route or the single parent route with all the attendant pain either of those choices cause. Even with adoption, there is great pain.

We have also discovered that moms who conceive children illegitimately may curse the child in their hearts, creating legal ground for the enemy to harass that child for life (unless that ground is later removed).

Even if you never participate in an illicit sexual relationship, the devil does want you to experience impure thoughts, lust, unholy fantasies, and/or pornography. God gave us an imagination. It is a powerful tool. And, while sexual fantasies are not automatically evil,* the devil knows that if he can get you to desire what God abhors, he creates a wall between you and God.

Even if you manage to keep all of your sexual expression inside marriage, the devil wants you to use sex inside marriage to meet nonsexual needs. That way, sex will create problems and conflicts for you, because instead of sharing in the sexual celebration of each other, you are busy trying to get your spouse to meet needs that he or she is not designed to meet.

After he's inflicted as much pain as possible on you, then he wants you to get divorced and rejected so that you can spend the rest of your life lonely and sexually frustrated.

The reality of the devil's plan is a far cry from his public relations lie that sexual enjoyment is for the crowd that rejects God. In the devil's plan, sexual enjoyment is only the flavoring makes you think you want the poison.

**Sexual fantasies are not automatically evil. If you set your imagination on what God desires for you -- and this includes your sexual imagination -- the Bible has a word to describe that. That word is faith.*

Powerful point ...

The devil wants to destroy you using the candy-coated poison of deception. He wants to drive a wedge between your sex life and God, because he knows if he controls your sex life, he controls you.

Journal question

To what extent do I recognize the enemy's strategy. How has he worked to create trouble for my wife and me?

Connecting with God

Father God,

I invite You to search the data banks of my mind and my experience to uncover every bit of deception that the enemy has planted in my heart. I don't want his lies to drive a wedge between You and me. Uproot those lies, and destroy his work, I pray.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Going further

- Take the time to read this section with your wife. How can you work together to protect your marriage from further harm?
- I'm favorably impressed with Neil T. Anderson of Freedom in Christ Ministries (www.ficm.org). He has extensive material on the enemy's strategy and how to defeat the enemy in your life.

Tomorrow ...

Sometimes we are "looking for love in all the wrong places." A satisfied man is not easily tempted. But do you know where and how to get your desires satisfied?

Day 8

Discover the secret to getting your desires satisfied

Today ...

Sometimes we are “looking for love in all the wrong places.” A satisfied man is not easily tempted. But do you know where and how to get your desires satisfied?

Multiply the impact ...

Days 8, 9 & 10 work together to help us understand God’s role in our sex life and the role of sex in our lives.

How God sees it ...

*You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.
Psalm 16:11 from NIV*

I talk to God about sex almost every day. One day I asked Jesus about sexual frustration. I asked Him, “What do I do about this?”

In reply, He gave me two verses.

“Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5) was the first verse. God is always available, even when my wife is not. Obviously, God meets my needs and desires a different way than my wife does. But the God who has given me a sex drive and a wife, is not far away. He's right here, and He's not interested in tormenting me.

The second verse was this: “You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand” (Psalm 16:11). My deepest needs and desires are not ultimately fulfilled in my wife. They are fulfilled in God. God understands and can sort the unmet needs that I've sexualized, and my legitimate desire to have sex with my wife. He can sort out the good, the bad and ugly, the appropriate and the inappropriate. God satisfies my desires with good things (Psalm 103:5). The verse doesn't say that God satisfies my good desires. Some of my desires may not be good. But I bring them all to

God, so He can figure out what to do with them. In fact, the more I dug into this verse, the more I learned that all of my desires, even my sinful desires, are based on some legitimate need that God wants to meet. For example, suppose I secretly wanted to visit some internet porn site. I could give you a list of reasons why God doesn't want me to view those images. But, rather than hide that desire from God, I take it to Him anyway. And I keep taking it to Him over and over again, as long as the desire is there. Why? Because God knows what unmet emotional needs are fueling this desire. In this example, God would satisfy my desire by meeting my unmet emotional needs. Then these sites would become less and less of an issue for me, and I become a much happier, satisfied, content person.

I asked the Lord to take these truths and move them from the top of my head to deep in my gut, so I'm not pestering my wife with needs that only God can meet. After the Lord spoke these verses to me, I immediately felt less desperate, more at peace, more able to laugh at my sexual frustration and not so uptight about it.

Later, as I continued to take these issues to God day after day, and as I prayed through them with a pastor friend, the Lord brought to mind a specific sin I had almost forgotten about, but I had never really properly renounced and disconnected from it. I did, and a totally amazing thing happened: The sexual frustration that had been part of my life for years and years vanished. I felt like a brand new person. Today, my sex drive is completely intact. And, no, I don't always get to have sex as often as I want. But that deprivation desperation is gone.

Ultimately, the God who created our needs meets our needs, even our sexual needs. The Bible says, "He [God] humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you ... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 8:3 NIV)

What's the point? The point is this: When we have needs, we take them first to God. When we have desires, we take them first to the God "who satisfies your desires with good things" (Psalm 103:5). Yes, God does meet sexual needs by giving us a spouse or by giving us the gift of being contently single. But if you find yourself in a marriage where those sexual needs are not being met, come back to God, not to request a new spouse, but rather to find out what the next step in His good plan to meet your needs is.

You might be pleasantly surprised!

Powerful point ...

Ultimately, God, not your wife, meets your needs.

Journal question

Do I feel comfortable sharing my desires with God? Why or why not? Have I made a mental or written list of my desires, including sexual desires?

Connecting with God

I'm excited that You want to satisfy my desires with good things, because in this process I'm going to share all kinds of things about myself with You and I'm going to learn a lot about You. I know that You are able to bring a level of satisfaction that is beyond what I can imagine. After all, You are God. So here goes! Here are my desires. [Refer to journal.] I'll keep bringing them to You, and I'm excited to see what You are going to do with them. Thanks!

Going further

➤ I keep a list of my desires for every area of my life in my pocket and I refer to this list often when I'm praying. God wants to know what I want! You may want to try the same approach.

Tomorrow ...

It's easy to develop resentment against God if sex isn't going the way you want it to. Use your anger as an opportunity to meet with God and to better understand His good plan for you.

Day 9

Don't shoot yourself in the foot!

Today ...

It's easy to develop resentment against God if sex isn't going the way you want it to. Use your anger as an opportunity to meet with God and to better understand His good plan for you.

Multiply the impact ...

On Day 1 we began with thanksgiving. Today we take that concept a step further as we wrestle with the challenging issues in our lives. This will pave the way for Day 17 when we ask for and get "cover protection" from God.

How God sees it ...

"Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?" Job 2:10 NIV

For many husbands, their struggle with moral purity is aggravated by a less than ideal sex life with their wives. Does it seem like the deck is stacked against you? Does it seem like God is determined to make you miserable? One husband put it this way: "For years I had longed for a satisfying sexual relationship. It just wasn't materializing the way I had hoped. And, now, to top it off, it seemed like God had one plan for my life: To kill me and deprive me of sex forever."

Are thoughts like this going through your mind...? *It isn't fair! How did I get stuck in this marriage? If she didn't want to have sex with me, why did she say, "I do"?* This self-pity laced with bitterness leads us to want to pin the blame on someone. And who do we usually blame when life doesn't go the way we want it to? Most of us, whether we care to admit it or not, get angry with God.

I certainly have been there. Here's how I processed my resentment. I talked to God about it -- not just once, but again and again. Over time, this is the explanation I got back: Every good gift comes from God. (James 1:17) Sex, with its attendant drives and

pleasures, is a gift from God. It is a wonderful gift.

God always satisfies our desires with good things, but He doesn't always satisfy our desires right away or the way we expect. Most likely, God will satisfy your desire for good sex with good sex in this life.

But what if He doesn't? Some people never enjoy good sex in this life. Some remain a virgin, never marrying. Others marry, but the marriage is a nightmare. Sometimes death, disease or injury takes a spouse away. In the fifty plus nations where Christians are persecuted for their faith, some husbands or wives are dragged off to prison and never heard from again. Some are raped, abused, or tortured.

The Apostle Paul knew all about these kinds of hardships, yet he figured that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with what's ahead in the next life. (Romans 8:18) I find myself here passing on a message that I don't fully understand. Paul and others have experienced pain in a way that I hope I never experience. Yet they remain triumphant in their confidence that this pain is a small thing compared to the great reward of knowing God. (See John 17:3)

The lesson here is this: If God calls you to give up sex -- if God never satisfies your sexual desires in this life, then He must have something better. You never trade down with God, only up. Any time you hand Him something, He always gives back something better.

Or, put another way, God is going to make it right.

Eternity is much bigger than this life. God is not mean, cheap, and stingy. On the contrary, just as Jesus saved the best wine for last (John 2:10), there is no doubt that God has reserved the best gifts for our eternal existence. Whatever He has, whether it is something like sex, or something completely different, it will be better, much better. I overheard someone talking about an experience his friend had with God. It sounded like this friend had some sort of preview of heaven. The friend was telling about how wonderful it felt. So he asked, "What do you mean wonderful? Was it like sex?"

The answer: "Oh, no. This was far better than sex."
Something to think about.

Powerful point ...

You never trade down with God, only up.

Journal question

Has resentment toward God been an issue for me? How have I dealt with it?

Connecting with God

God in heaven,

Somehow Paul knew that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to what lies ahead. Here's how I've handled some of my troubles. [Refer to journal.] What truth do I need to understand deep inside so that I can trust You with my frustrations and my troubles? Some things I cannot change. I wish I could, but I cannot. I accept these things from You without giving You a deadline to remove them. Grant me the grace to trust in the goodness of Your motives and the wisdom of Your plans.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- As you look over your life, can you see examples of God taking bad situations and turning them around for good?
- My book, *Weathering Storms*, is organized around the theme of trusting God in difficult times. Check it out at <http://www.dwightclough.com/storms.html>

Tomorrow ...

Sometimes it helps to put things into perspective.

Day 10

Don't let sex push you around

Today ...

Sometimes it helps to put things into perspective.

Multiply the impact ...

Sexual temptations and frustration begin to lose their ability to mess with your mind when you combine the power of perspective (today) with the power of identity (Day 11).

How God sees it ...

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 from NIV

Sometimes it helps to put things into perspective. Moral purity wouldn't be a struggle if sex wasn't such a powerful drive, and such an important part of our lives. And sex was meant to be powerful and important. As a rule, I don't think God is at all interested in blunting our sex drive (more on this on Day 18). But, having said that, in the whole scheme of things, sex is one of God's lesser gifts. It is a wonderful and powerful gift. But, think about it. The Bible says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV). Sex is a gift for this life. The greater gifts are gifts for eternity. Sex is given even to people who hate God. The greater gifts are reserved only for those who love God.

The same God who designed your sex drive and the means for its satisfaction, has designed drives for eternity and their means for satisfaction.

As I talked with the Lord about this, an illustration came to mind: When I was a little child, I may have desired to suck my thumb. And that may have been a perfectly normal, appropriate desire at a certain age. But now, I have no desire to suck my thumb. Not only would it be inappropriate, but I can't work up the desire to do it. The things that I enjoy in life now are a thousand times better

than sucking my thumb.

If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, someday in heaven you will look at sex much the same way you look at sucking your thumb now -- that was just something I did at that stage in my life, but what I have now is a thousand times better.

I say this to encourage you. The God who created gifts far better than sex for you, is not interested in shortchanging you when it comes to sex. He will see to it that your needs are met -- and, if He calls on you to make any sacrifices, please remember that you never trade down with God, only up.

When I was a child, I didn't know about sex. When I first found out about intercourse, it sounded gross to me. When I grew up, I found out how really neat it is. There are things about heaven and things about the future that we are not now permitted to know. (2 Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 10:4) We don't know what God has planned for us when we "grow up" and receive our resurrection bodies.

But we know that it's going to be good.

Powerful point ...

God will never shortchange you.

Journal question

What do I imagine God has in store for me?

Connecting with God

God,

I don't know what You have planned for me, but I know it's going to be good. After all, if I can use sex and the other good gifts of this life as a baseline for comparison, Your plan for me is beyond what I can imagine. Please, work in my heart so I will see things from Your perspective.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Our book, *Amazing Faith*, is filled with examples of people who discovered God's perspective in the defining moments of their lives. Check it out at <http://www.dwightclough.com/amazing.html>

Tomorrow ...

This simple, but powerful, paradigm shift is usually overlooked. It takes only a moment, but it strengthens you for a lifetime.

Day 11

Protect your true identity.

Today ...

This simple, but powerful, paradigm shift is usually overlooked. It takes only a moment, but it strengthens you for a lifetime.

Multiply the impact ...

This is the first step in “rewiring” your sex drive. Days 12, 18, 20 & 22 will show you how to “disconnect” from those things that can corrupt your sexual desires and damage your relationship with your wife. You don’t want to miss this!

How God sees it ...

I will write on him My new name. from Revelation 3:12 NIV

Once we understand that sex is a gift from God -- just a little something to demonstrate God's ability to give good gifts, and, by no means His greatest gift, then we can begin to put a few things into perspective. Sex is not my god. I like sex; I like it a lot. But it isn't essential to who I am.

In my case, my sex drive was plugged into my identity. On the surface this may seem subtle and unimportant. But I discovered that this is a powerful and pervasive trap.

One day I was praying and talking with a pastor friend. During our conversation, I complained about my sexual frustrations and temptations. Then I said, “After all, I am a sexual being.”

“Wait a second!” he said. “I think we have to be extraordinarily careful about how we identify ourselves. I have learned that I am not a sexual being. Instead, I am a spiritual being, created to have an eternal friendship with God. I have a sex drive.”

At first I resented what he said. But then I got thinking about it. He was right. I was not created primarily to have sex. I was created primarily to know and love God.

I decided to give it a try. I would adjust my identity. I talked to God. In my prayer, I renounced my self identification as a sexual

being. I instead identified myself as a spiritual being, and I acknowledged that I do have a sex drive.

It is difficult to describe the difference that took place, but it was immediate. Suddenly, I felt different. I felt cleaner and stronger. My sex problems seemed somehow smaller, somehow more manageable.

Disconnect your sex drive from your identity
Take a minute and try it!

Powerful point ...

You are a spiritual being, not a sexual being.

Journal question

How would I describe the place I have in God's heart?

Connecting with God

Father God,

I have identified myself as a "sexual being," but now I want to step away from that self identification. I renounce that I am a sexual being, and instead announce that I am a spiritual being, created to have an eternal relationship with You. I thank You for the sex drive you've given me and for the gift of sex. Thank You also, that You are smart enough and strong enough to come up with a good way to satisfy all of my sexual needs.

In Jesus' name, Amen

Going further

- What makes you uniquely you?
- In our Discoveries Daily Devotional, we frequently address the kind of relationship God wants to have with you. Subscribe for free at <http://www.dwightclough.com/discoveries/discoveries.html>

Tomorrow ...

Properly disconnecting from sin -- your own sins and from those

who sinned against you -- robs sin of its continuing power in your life.

Day 12

Breaking unholy ties

Today ...

Properly disconnecting from sin -- your own sins and from those who sinned against you -- robs sin of its continuing power in your life.

Multiply the impact ...

God wants us to be strong in Him and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10. Disconnecting from sin paves the way for the principles covered in Day 14 "Armed and dangerous!")

How God sees it ...

The night is far gone and the day is almost here. Let us then drop (fling away) the works and deeds of darkness and put on the [full] armor of light. Romans 13:12 AMP

Whenever you have sex with another person, a union is created between you and that other person (Genesis 2:24 & 1 Corinthians 6:15-16). This one flesh union creates ties between you and your sex partner(s). If that sex partner is your spouse, then the tie is holy. If the sex partner is someone else, then the tie is unholy, and that unholy tie needs to be broken.

Past sexual sin needs to be confessed and renounced. In other words, you are declaring that you no longer want anything to do with that sin, that sexual relationship.

Ask God to identify and remove any legal ground the enemy may have in your life. Unholy ties with previous sex partners appear to give the enemy legal ground to harass you. You don't want that. That's why it's important that you properly disconnect

- (1) from current illicit relationships,
- (2) from past immoral relationships,
- (3) from any past sexual abuse or sexual assault in which you were the victim.

- (4) and from generational sins, curses and other generational

issues.

Each of these involves a slightly different process, and I've covered them in more detail in the three supplements that follow.

If you are currently involved in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, it is critically important for your survival that you break free. In order to get the true God of the universe in your court, fighting for you, you must disconnect your sex drive from any illicit relationship. (See Supplement C.)

If you are not currently involved in a sexual relationship outside marriage, then you can be thankful for that. If you were involved in one or more sexual relationships outside marriage in the past, you need to disconnect your sex drive and your soul from those persons and those experiences.

WAIT! If your mind is saying skip on down ... that was then, this is now ... that's all in the past, let me encourage you to slow down and read this carefully. Most people leave illicit relationships without properly disconnecting from them. As a result, those relationships can continue to cause harm in your life, even if you aren't aware of it.

Illicit sexual relationships establish patterns of relating to other people that you want to break and not bring into your marriage. They also create unholy ties between you and previous partners that you need to break, so that you are free to relate to God and to your spouse as God intends. And they give God's enemies on a spiritual level a beachhead in your life, i.e., a legal right to harass you. (See Supplement D.)

So far, I have been referring to sexual relationships where you participated willingly as an equal, or to any situations in which you were responsible for the sexual activity. I was not referring to situations in which you were the victim of sexual abuse or assault.

If you were the victim of sexual abuse, then you were not at fault and not to blame for what happened. But you do want to disconnect from that experience so that it loses its power over your life. This is a complex process, but we can get you started here (with Supplement E) and give you an expanded game plan on Day 22. Remember, God is great and can accomplish great things.

If you have engaged in sexual activity with anyone other than your spouse, please don't skip these supplements -- they are critically important.

The Bible also makes it clear that consequences of sin are

passed down from one generation to the next (e.g., Exodus 20:4-6). I and many others have found that renouncing and disconnecting from the sins and curses of previous generations gives a new measure of freedom and power. Sometimes people get stuck in their recovery process because they overlook this important step. (See Supplement G)

Powerful point ...

Disconnecting from sin makes freedom possible.

Journal question

As I reflect on today's principles, does the Lord bring to mind any sins (my own or someone else's) that I need to break away from?

Connecting with God

Dear Father,

If I don't already know, please reveal to me any sins that I need to disconnect from. Whether they are my own sins or someone else's, I don't want them to have power over my life. Please show me where to get started here. I know that You are not about condemnation, but rather about restoring and protecting Your people. Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Disconnect from current illicit relationships - Supplement C.
- Disconnect from past immoral relationships - Supplement D.
- Disconnect from any past sexual abuse or sexual assault in which you were the victim - Supplement E.
- Disconnect from generational sins and curses with Supplement G.

Tomorrow ...

For years I overlooked this simple, yet powerful approach. Then, one day I tried it and I was amazed at the results.

Day 13

Call in the minesweepers!

Today ...

For years I overlooked this simple, yet powerful approach. Then, one day I tried it and I was amazed at the results.

Multiply the impact ...

Spiritual “judo” (Day 18) is a great tool for gaining leverage when battling temptations. But nobody is capable of fighting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When we limit our engagements with temptation, the tools we use to fight it become that much stronger.

How God sees it ...

Lead us not into temptation. from Matthew 6:13

Jesus commanded us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13). I don't know why, but I always thought that verse was just a decoration in the Bible. I never imagined that it really meant anything. But one day I rediscovered this instruction, and tried it.

“Father in heaven, please keep temptations away from me. Lead me in Your path for me, and command these temptations to get off that path.”

The results were astounding. Ninety-five percent of my temptations just disappeared. It was like I suddenly entered a different universe. I found myself looking around and saying, “Where did all the women go?”

A few years ago I was reading every book I could find on alternative house construction. One of the subjects that came up often was passive solar heating -- how to heat your house in the winter and avoid overheating your house in the summer. I remember discovering that if the sunlight passes through the glass window, the heat has already been generated. If you want to keep a house from overheating, put the shade on the outside, not the inside, of the window.

In the same way, it's much easier for me to deal with lust, if the images never pass through my eyes. Once they enter my eyes, then I must work much harder to control the impact they have.

Let God make a covenant with your eyes

Job said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1). I didn't trust myself to keep any such promise, so I asked God, the Holy Spirit, "Since You live inside me, would You make a covenant like this with my eyes?"

Again, I was astounded by the results. Right after I prayed this, I was in an office building. This woman with tight fitting shorts stepped off the elevator. The eyes of all the men standing around me were glued to her body as she walked down the hall. But the moment that elevator door opened, my eyes shifted. I knew she was there, but I wasn't looking at her. I could have forced my eyes to follow her, but I felt the freedom not to, and I didn't.

We have a role

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Flee youthful lusts," and "Avoid every appearance of evil." King David wrote, "I will set before my eyes no vile thing." (2 Timothy 2:22 KJV, 2 Thessalonians 5:22 KJV, Psalm 101:3 NIV)

I remember getting a lingerie catalog in the mail every month or so. Neat stuff. I think I even ordered an item or two for my wife. But I finally had to write them and say, "Thanks, but no thanks." The images of those models wearing that lingerie was too much of a temptation to lust.

This is why I immediately double delete all the porn come-ons that I get in my email. I don't want them working on my mind. I don't want to sit around thinking, I could run a search of past emails and find a link to some juicy porn site.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Yes, it's a cliché, but it's true. If you've never done porn, don't start. Go to God and ask for the strength to stay away from it. If you desire to click onto those porn come-ons on the internet or rent that video or whatever, bring the desire to God and see what He can do with it.

I wish I had done that. Back in the 1970s, I had access to a stack of pornographic magazines for a period of several months. I

didn't buy them, but what difference does that make? I looked at them. And I read them.

I rationalized in my own mind that this was okay. (*I see my wife naked, so why is it wrong to see these women naked? Reading this will help our sex life. I'm not really committing adultery with them in my heart; they just turn me on so I can have sex with my wife.* And so on.) Every time I did that, my heart drifted a little farther from God. I grew a little colder, a little more bitter inside.

Every time I opened one of those magazines, the power of that sin over me grew a little stronger. Jesus said, "everyone who sins is a slave to sin."

I once knew a prison guard who challenged his inmates. He held up an 18 inch piece of string and said, "I bet I can tie you up with this so you cannot escape." These big, burly prisoners laughed at him. But when he tried it, they didn't laugh any more. He took one finger from each hand and wound the string around and around those fingers. Although the prisoner could easily break the string by itself, when it wrapped around and around, he was suddenly powerless to break free.

Every time I opened one of those magazines, the string wrapped around me one more time. Soon I couldn't stop even when I wanted to. God had to take the magazines out of my life. Someone came along and physically removed the magazines. Fortunately, I was too broke and cowardly to go buy the magazines myself.

As I write this in 2003, porn has lost most of its attraction for me. I have plenty of sex drive, but, for the most part, it isn't connected to anything porn has to offer. But God needed to do a deep work of cleansing and healing inside me for that change to take place.

If the chains of pornography or other sexual addiction are wrapped around you, I want to encourage you: Jesus can set you free. But, if you've never dabbled in it, don't start. You would never give a loaded gun to a baby; it's too dangerous. In the same way, this is a temptation you don't want in your life.

Powerful point ...

Ask God to remove temptations from your life.

Journal question

When and where do I face the strongest sexual temptations?

Connecting with God

Dear God,

This is a wonderful opportunity! I am asking You to remove temptations from my path. I am asking You to do a miracle and reorganize my world, so that temptations are gone. Holy Spirit, since You live inside me, could You please make a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at anybody? Thank You.

Please show me any part you want me to play in this? Do I need to remove something(s) from my possession? Do I need to take a different route to work? I identified when and where I usually face temptations [refer to journal], and I'm asking You to show me exactly what You want me to do about this.

Thank You so much!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

➤ Keep a journal of the emotion you are feeling just before you are tempted. Ask the Lord if there is any connection between the emotion and the temptation. If there seems to be a connection, ask Him to get to the root of what is corrupting your desires and permanently resolve it.

Tomorrow ...

Most people are unaware of the combat raging around them. Either you are fully armed, or you are a sitting duck!

Day 14

Armed and dangerous!

Today ...

Most people are unaware of the combat raging around them. Either you are fully armed, or you are a sitting duck!

Multiply the impact ...

Today you “suit up” with the full armor of God. On Day 15 we will focus on using your most important offensive weapon -- the word of God.

How God sees it ...

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Ephesians 6:10 from NIV

Without Jesus, you are a sitting duck.

Let me explain. One of the basic teachings of the Bible is that there is an entire unseen universe that intersects with our universe and, yet, is somehow separate. Some people call it the spiritual realm. It is the place where God can be seen, where angels -- good and bad -- live. This spiritual realm is not a serene, peaceful place. Instead, it is a place of constant activity and incredible conflict.

And you, believe it or not, are the subject of some of those conflicts. Most people are unaware of the combat raging around them. But the Apostle Paul was keenly aware of this battle. He wrote, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:10-12)

If you are a true follower of Jesus Christ, then you have been given authority and weapons to fight and win over the spiritual forces that threaten you and your family. (See Ephesians 2:6, 6:10-18; 1 John 4:4; 2 Corinthians 10:4; Revelation 12:11, Luke 10:17-20, etc.)

God grants us powerful armor that will enable us to engage the enemy and defeat him. The Apostle Paul describes this armor in Ephesians 6:14-17. He begins with the belt of truth. Truth is foundational because the enemy's real power lies in his ability to deceive. The more Jesus brings truth to the deep recesses of our soul (Psalm 51:6), the more the truth can set us free (John 8:32). Because our righteousness comes from Christ, the breastplate of righteousness protects us. The more we open up all the hidden rooms in our hearts to Jesus, the more His light shines and transforms us. Peace from Christ gives us sure footing and allows us to be ready with His good news. Faith is our shield, because it allows us to see past the accusations, the intimidation tactics and the temptations brought by the devil. Salvation is our helmet, and Christ is our salvation. Apart from Him, we have no protection. The spoken word of God is the sword of the Spirit, our one offensive weapon. Jesus demonstrated its use when confronting the devil during the wilderness temptations (Matthew 4:1-11). (More on the use of the word of God on Day 15.)

I claim this armor daily, and seek God so that He will make everything represented by it a real part of my life.

Powerful point ...

God grants us powerful armor. If we use it we can engage and defeat the enemy.

Journal question

To what extent is truth a part of my life? righteousness? peace? faith? salvation? the word of God?

Connecting with God

True Lord Jesus, You are my Commander, and You have a place for me in the battle. You are the Master of tactics and strategy. So I report to You. If I'm fighting with You, then I am on the winning side. Please guide me to victory. By faith, I put on in Jesus Christ the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the readiness of the gospel of peace. I take up the shield of faith. I put on the helmet of salvation, and take in hand the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Please teach me to be strong in You and in

*the power of Your might.
Thanks much!
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Going further

- * Diane Hawkins, in her book *Supporting Ritual Abuse Survivors*, presents an excellent explanation of how the armor of God works. Even though her book is somewhat specialized, this discourse on pages 67-90 makes purchasing it well worth the cost. (Supporting Ritual Abuse Survivors, by Diane W. Hawkins, M.A., Restoration in Christ Ministries, PO Box 479, Grottoes, VA 24441-0479)

Tomorrow ...

Here's basic training in your most powerful weapon.

Day 15

Use the sword of the Spirit

Today ...

Here's basic training in your most powerful weapon.

Multiply the impact ...

The sword of the Spirit enables you to meet temptations head on.

On Day 18, you will learn an additional approach that will give you more ways to combat temptation.

How God sees it ...

Take ... the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:17 NIV

If you haven't already figured it out, I do believe in the reality of malignant spiritual beings called evil spirits or demons or fallen angels. I do believe they are organized under a real spiritual person called the devil or Satan. I believe they have an agenda in your life, and they have an agenda in your sex life.

Not only does God's revelation to us, the Bible, make the existence of these beings abundantly clear, but I've also personally encountered them on more than one occasion, and my wife has also. I've also seen the good result when they are acknowledged and properly dealt with.

If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, claim your authority in Christ (Ephesians 1&2, esp. 2:6), and put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). Pray to render the enemy powerless in this area of your life. Ask God to identify and remove any legal ground the enemy may have in your life. Neil T. Anderson of *Freedom in Christ Ministries* (www.ficm.org) has plenty of good material on this.

When Jesus was tempted, He combated the devil with the same weapon we have available to us, i.e., the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Matthew 4:3-11, Ephesians 6:17). Jesus answered each temptation quotes from the Bible.

It's worthwhile to memorize Bible verses. Some men that I

know have memorized Romans 6 in connection with lust. For them, this has been a powerful passage to combat this common male temptation. When the temptation comes, they recite these verses aloud - or, if they are in a place where they cannot do that, then they meditate silently on these verses. I have used other verses such as Psalm 23:1, Psalm 103:5, John 8:36 and so on, in much the same way.

Here are some good verses to start with:

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

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Galatians 5:16 NIV

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:7-9 NIV

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:11-14 NIV

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age ... Titus 2:11 NIV

Powerful point ...

Answer temptations with the word of God

Journal question

What verses am I using to answer temptations?

Connecting with God

Dear Father

Thank You so much for Your word which is like a fire, like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces. I believe Your word will never return to You unfulfilled, but will accomplish the purpose You send it out to accomplish. I ask You to please make me an effective swordsman with the word of God. Speak Your word into my life, and enable me to speak it in answer to the temptations I face.

Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Use a concordance (Bible index) to find verses that pertain to the temptations you face. Write them down on 3x5 cards and pray through them every day until it becomes automatic to answer temptations with them.
- There are several on-line Bibles that allow you to search several Bible versions for verses containing whatever words you select. I use this one regularly: <http://www.gospelcom.net/ibs/niv/>

Tomorrow ...

This powerful, but often-missed concept, releases the power of God in your life.

Day 16

The two paradigms of holiness

Today ...

This powerful, but often-missed concept, releases the power of God in your life.

Multiply the impact ...

Understanding the two paradigms of holiness will allow you to get the cover protection you need (Day 17) so that you are never unprotected in this fight for moral purity.

How God sees it ...

A man with leprosy came and knelt before Him and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. from Matthew 8:2-3 NIV

There are, I believe, two Biblical paradigms for human holiness. For many years, I lived under the first paradigm, the Levitical approach: What we touch makes us unclean (Leviticus 15:31 etc.).

Pornography is a great example. My email address has been bought and sold by spammers all over the world. I receive porn come-ons in my inbox almost every day. If I choose to click on those links, I will quickly be defiled by the words and images I allow into my mind.

If I wish to be holy, I must not touch.

Having nothing but this first paradigm to work with, my spiritual life was a roller coaster ride. Bolstered by vows, altar calls and accountability groups, my "try harder" Christianity occasionally yielded self righteous victory. But, in the inner closet of my own darkness, I knew the reality of moral defeat. Whatever the issues -- lust, fear, bitterness, greed, pride -- I seesawed back and forth between the fig leaves of self-righteousness and the nakedness of my

own moral poverty.

As I say, I get these pornographic advertisements in my email. Do I delete them? Yes. But, do I feel their pull? If so, what kind of emotional neediness has attached itself to my sex drive, creating corrupted desires?

The Jews were obsessed with cleanliness, i.e., not touching anything ceremonially unclean. But Jesus comes along and clarifies the standard of holiness (Mark 7:15). He shows us that the infection of sin is much closer than we imagined. It is within. When life comes along and jars us, what comes out reveals the infection within. When someone cuts me off in traffic, my unholy anger reveals that something isn't right inside. Or, when I'm driving, and I feel the transmission slipping, and I know my finances are tight, my unholy worry reveals what is wrong with my view of God.

Unholiness is also a heart issue. For example, I have never climbed into bed with another woman. But, when Jesus sets the standard in my heart, I must confess along with nearly every other member of my gender, that I have fallen more than once. Yes, I did pull out 1 John 1:9, but, when I look at that passage more closely, I realize that God doesn't just want to forgive my sins. He wants to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

What about survivors of sexual abuse? 38% of women and at least 17% of men are survivors of sexual abuse. What about the terrible memories that are locked in the basements of their souls? How will they shake the shame, the taintedness, the deeply ingrained sense that they are “damaged goods”? They didn't reach out and touch some defilement. Rather defilement reached out and touched them.

Can these dear people be holy?

It seems appropriate to me that a leper would introduce the second paradigm of human holiness. Lepers don't choose to be unclean. They live with a terrible condition they have no power to erase. What a picture of the fallen human race! How powerless we truly are to do anything constructive with our miserable condition. How very needy we are!

The leper comes to Jesus in Matthew 8:2-3. He cries out, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” Jesus answers, “Be clean!”

Important: Jesus did not heal this man from a distance. Our

Holy Savior touched him despite his uncleanness. Yet Jesus was not defiled by that touch. Rather, a measure of Christ's holiness was imparted by His touch. Or, to say it more simply, what Jesus touches becomes clean.

In Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*, the great ring of power corrupts the person who wears it. Yet Tom Bombadil took the ring, placed it on his finger and showed no ill effects. He was immune to its corrupting power.

But Christ is beyond Bombadil. He is not just incorruptible; He is the healer of humanity. He is creating incorruptibility within His people.

For humans living in a fallen world with so much suffering and evil, the path to holiness is, I believe, found in Psalm 103:5. God satisfies our desires with good things. The verse doesn't say that He satisfies our good desires. Rather, He untangles and untwists our corrupted desires, identifying and satisfying the real needs.

What Gwen Shamblin of *Weigh Down Workshop*® calls “head hunger” is merely unmet emotional needs that the enemy has corrupted by attaching them to a struggling person's hunger drive. Legitimate needs are twisted (the root of iniquity) together, to create a powerful temptation. Shamblin's advice, to “pig out” on God, works because, as Jesus demonstrated in the wilderness temptations, God is the only one who will correctly satisfy our deepest desires.

This is why, I believe, it is so frustrating and, ultimately, unsuccessful to deal with pornography and lust as sexual sins. If I am undressing a woman in my head, do I need to become less sexual in order to conquer this sin? I don't think so. God isn't out to extinguish my sex drive, only to purify it.

Moral purity, at its foundation, is not a “no,” but rather, a “yes.” (I understand there is a “no” involved (Titus 2:11-12), but that “no” is only a gateway to the great “yes” of God.)

At its core, holiness is not responsibility. It is freedom. When I delete the porn email, I do the responsible thing. But when its pull on me subsides, that is freedom and true victory.

Holiness is freedom. It is no mistake that God introduces the Ten Commandments by identifying Himself as the God who sets His people free.

Moses climbed the mountain, not primarily to become holy, but rather to meet with God. Holiness was a by product of his meeting

with God. When Moses returned to the people, he did not realize that his face was radiant (Exodus 34:29). Holiness had been conveyed without Moses even being aware of it.

We too must stop hiding from God as Adam did, and instead climb the mountain to meet with God bringing with us our self-righteous fig leaves and the moral poverty of our own nakedness, so that God may clothe us with true righteousness, and set us apart for Himself.

To put it in computer terminology, Jesus isn't just another application, He is an entire operating system. When Christ is deeply installed in our soul, every application changes.

Holiness, then, for me, is no longer a frustrating ideal that just proves what a hopeless sinner I am. Rather, it is the joyful by-product of a life that draws deep from the heart of God.

Christ stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 2:11). Yes, we open the front door at the moment of salvation. Jesus is within. But He has found other doors. Doors to the dark closets of our soul. Patiently, quietly, He knocks. Will we open to Him?

Powerful point ...

What Christ touches becomes holy.

Journal question

Have I allowed Jesus to touch and transform what is unclean in me?

Connecting with God

Dear Lord Jesus

If You are willing, You can make me clean. Thank You that You are willing. I bring to You whatever is unclean and impure in my heart and ask You to touch and transform me, so that I might be holy, just as You are holy.

Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

➤ God's power and desire to transform us is a frequent theme of the

Discoveries Daily Devotional. Check it out at:
<http://www.dwightclough.com/discoveries/discoveries.html>

Tomorrow ...

Nobody wanders into a battlefield without cover fire. Have you arranged to get yours?

Day 17

Get cover protection

Today ...

Nobody wanders into a battlefield without cover fire. Have you arranged to get yours?

Multiply the impact ...

When you are used to getting cover protection from God, it becomes much easier to learn how to disarm temptations (Day 20).

How God sees it ...

... apart from Me you can do nothing. from John 15:5 NIV

Get cover protection. Don't try to run out into the open without cover fire from God. Take every evil desire, every secret fantasy, every sexual decision straight to God. If you don't feel like obeying, tell Him you don't. If you try to do this on your own, you'll just get shot down.

In short, don't hide from God.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together to make clothing, but when God came walking through the garden, they felt naked still, even with their clothes on. So they hid. They hid from God. But God had to deal with them in their naked state before He could give them clothing that covered their nakedness (Genesis 3:7-21).

Our instinct is to hide from God. Especially, when it comes to sex. We really want to shut the door and keep God out of our sex lives. The problem is we can't. The Bible says, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13 NIV).

Since we can't hide from God, I want to encourage you to do just the opposite of your instincts. Instead of hiding from God, embrace Him. Open the door of your life - including your sex life - to God. Come to God and say, "This is who I am."

I don't know what kind of person you are, or what kind of sex you desire. But God does. So rather than hiding it from Him, bring it to him. Don't run from God. Invite Him in.

When you invite the God of the Bible into your life, you will encounter Someone who knows you better than you know yourself, Someone who loves you more than you love yourself. He knows about your desires, and He will satisfy them with good things (Psalm 103:5). (Don't invite any other gods in - I can't make any guarantees what they will be like.)

God forgives. He heals. He fixes. He strengthens. He satisfies. He renews. He makes things right. He remembers. He supplies. He knows. He's a good guy. He's honest. He tells it like it is. He won't stab you in the back. He won't abandon you. While He may not do everything you want immediately, and while He may still allow us to go through difficult times, you can trust Him more than you can trust yourself. (See Psalm 23, 34, 103, 139, 145 and Romans 8 for starters.)

God makes a powerful promise in the Bible about moral purity. *"I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."* Galatians 5:16 NIV.

This is such an important promise, it's worth looking at in other translations:

The highly accurate New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates it this way: *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."*

The Amplified Bible (AMP) puts it like this: *"But I say, walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God)."*

Or, more simply, the Worldwide English (New Testament) (WE) translates: *"So I say, let the Spirit tell you what you should do. Then you will not do the wrong things you yourselves want to do."*

The Message (MSG) puts a little different twist on it: *"My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness."*

What does it mean to live by the Spirit (or walk in the Spirit)? Becoming a follower of Jesus Christ involves giving all we have to God (e.g., Matthew 19:16-22). Living by the Spirit walks out that transaction. We give each moment, each thought, each desire, each

possession, each part of our soul to God. Whatever God holds, sin cannot defile. Because God's Spirit lives inside us, everything we've given to Him comes alive with the touch of God. God directs and enriches every part of our lives.

I will go into this in more detail on Day 18, when we discuss spiritual “judo.”

Powerful point ...

Don't hide from God!

Journal question

Have I invited God into my sex life?

Connecting with God

Dear Father,

My inclination at times is to hide from You. But I cannot do that. I am inviting You into my life -- my whole life, including my sex life. Where You find sin, please remove it and restore me. I confess that I am powerless over sin apart from You. Where You find shame, please grant me instead the radiance You give to the children of God. Give me the cover fire I need so that I don't try to fight the battle on my own.

Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- If you haven't already done so, invite God into every other part of your life -- your financial life, marriage, family life, career, hobbies, dreams, ambitions. God wants to share intimately with you!
- Walking in the Spirit has been a theme in the life of missionary Chad Stendal. In fact, one of his books is entitled, *Walking in the Spirit in Colombia*. I invite you to check out all of the Stendal books at <http://www.dwightclough.com/Stendal.html> -- you will read story after story of God showing up in the middle of incredible crisis. Enjoy!

Tomorrow ...

When your opponent is stronger than you are, you need leverage to use his energy against him. Do you know where and how to get this leverage?

Day 18

The Biblical principle of spiritual “judo”

Today ...

When your opponent is stronger than you are, you need leverage to use his energy against him. Do you know where and how to get this leverage?

Multiply the impact ...

On Day 20, we will gain additional skills that will allow you to defuse and defeat evil thoughts and desires.

How God sees it ...

[God] satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalm 103:5 from NIV

In judo, the object is to use your opponents energy to your own advantage. If your opponent throws a punch at you, rather than trying to stop the punch, you use the energy of that punch to throw your opponent off balance, and, ultimately, to disable him.

If I found myself in a fight with someone much larger than me, and that person threw a punch at me, I would have two choices: stop the punch, or get out of the way. Trying to stop the punch sounds to me like a pure stupidity. Why get hurt? It takes a lot less energy to get out of the way. And, if I use the right technique, if I get the right leverage, I can use his punch to put my opponent just where I want him.

My purpose, of course, is not to suggest that you enroll in a martial arts class, but rather to draw an analogy.

When we struggle with moral temptations, we are struggling with something that is stronger than we are. Trying to stop our desires is like trying to stop the punch of a larger opponent. It just doesn't work very well. Instead, we need leverage.

Here is a step-by-step technique that will give you leverage over

these powerful desires.

Step 1. Acknowledge the desire. The Bible says that each one is tempted when he is “drawn away by his own lusts and enticed” (James 1:14). Each of us have our own unique collection of lusts, of evil desires. (On Day 20, we will discuss where those desires come from.) Denying that the desire is there doesn't make it go away. If someone is determined to throw a punch at you, pretending he isn't there won't stop the punch from being thrown.

Step 2. Ask to speak privately to God. This is my own thought -- I don't have any Biblical basis for this, so you can make your own decision on this. But I figure, hey, this is a matter just between God and me -- I don't know what other spirits (especially evil spirits) may be present, but I don't think they need to hear this, unless God wants them to for some reason.

Step 3. Explain the desire to God. I find that it helps to be very specific. “I want to look at this pornography because I want to pretend that I'm sexually desirable to these women and right now I don't feel like my wife cares if she ever had sex with me.” “I want to think about to think about having this kind of sex with this woman because it feels like an adventure in which I would be the hero.” Or whatever.

Step 4. Acknowledge the (potential) sin. “God, I know that this represents a desire for something You prohibit. Part of me wants to sin, and part of me wants to do what You desire. I need You. Without You, the sinful part is going to win this battle.”

Step 5. Ask for God's instruction and intervention. “What do You want me to know about this? Something beyond my sex drive is fueling this desire. Something is corrupting my sex drive. Could you please uproot whatever it is that is corrupting my desires?”

This step is important because it affords an opportunity for us to grow and to discover more about God. For example, I was talking with God just the other day about a sexual fantasy of mine. I laid it all out before God. Then He spoke into my spirit. “Okay, you have this fantasy. You want to do this. But are you willing to trade in this scenario for who your wife really is?” It got me thinking. One of the things that makes sex exciting is that you are interacting with a different human being who brings her whole personality into the bedroom. Would I rather have sex with this two-dimensional fantasy that responds exactly as I program it to respond? Or would I rather

have sex with a three-dimensional human being where there is always going to be an element of unpredictability? Wouldn't I rather discover who my wife really is and celebrate her for who she is?

That got me thinking about God's relationship with us. He could program all of us to respond a certain way. We would all be much more "spiritual." But we wouldn't be us. Instead, God goes for unpredictability, He allows for the wild card, He lets us make our own decisions. It makes for much greater fulfillment on both sides.

Step 6. Thank God for satisfying your desires with good. The Bible says that God satisfies our desires with good things (Psalm 103:5). He doesn't just satisfy our good desires, but rather, He satisfies our desires with good things.

God knows that pornography, for example, will never meet our deep unmet needs. It becomes an addiction that never satisfies because the craving for porn arises from needs that porn never touches. No amount of pornography is ever going to make any of us a real man, a hero, give us the deep sense of approval we need, or satisfy whatever other deep need that causes us to pursue it.

On the other hand, God knows exactly what is missing in the deep recesses of our souls. He knows and He can and will supply what is missing, so that sexual and other addictions lose their power in our lives.

I thank God for satisfying my desires. Sometimes I need to do that by faith, because maybe I'm not sure right away exactly how He's going to do that. But He does and He will. He promises to do so.

When I finish going through these six steps, instead of being closer to sin, I'm closer to God. The temptation drove me to Jesus. The struggle became an opportunity to find the goodness of God.

Spiritual judo like weeding a garden. I bring my soul -- my thoughts, my feelings, my experiences, all of who I am -- to Jesus day after day. He pulls out the bad thoughts and helps good thoughts to grow. Over time, the inside of me looks more like a garden and less like a vacant lot.

Powerful point ...

Let temptations drive you to Jesus.

Journal question

To what extent am I bringing my temptations to God?

Connecting with God

Dear God

I don't want temptations, and I ask You to take them away. But, when they come, I want them to drive me to You. Please enable me to give You access to whatever is driving my evil desires so that You can disable evil, without harming what is good in me.

Thank You for Your great kindness to me. I praise You for the wisdom of Your plan, and the certainty of Your victory!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

➤ This same principle can be applied to nonsexual temptations. For example, tempted to yell at the wife and kids? Get away and give the temptation to God!

Tomorrow ...

It seemed like crazy advice. But it worked!

Day 19

How sex objects lose their power

Today ...

It seemed like crazy advice. But it worked!

Multiply the impact ...

It becomes much easier to see other people (including scantily dressed women) for who they really are once the lies that turn people into symbols and objects are removed. (See Day 22.)

How God sees it ...

Treat ... younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. from 1 Timothy 5:1-2 NIV

A young man chose to serve God as a missionary in France. He moved into an apartment building near the beach. He looked out his window, and there were scores of young women in the barest of bathing suits. Every time he looked out his window, he felt the most terrible temptation to lust after these women. He cried out to God, "What am I going to do? I'm supposed to be Your representative, but, instead, I'm locked in an apartment, struggling with lust."

Go talk to those women, he heard a little voice inside his head say.

That can't be God, he thought. These women are the cause of all my problems.

But the voice persisted. *Go talk to those women.*

Finally, he didn't know what else to do, so he went out and started talking to those women wearing those bathing suits. An amazing thing happened. Once he established a relationship with those women and they became real, three-dimensional human beings, his problem with lust ended. He stopped looking at their bodies, and started caring for them as fellow human beings.

Lust can be anonymous and impersonal. Love cannot.

I'm not suggesting that you necessarily run out and start talking with every cute woman who walks by. There are other ways to turn them into real human beings in your mind. A friend of mine shared with me, when he was tempted by a pornographic image he accidentally stumbled across, he cried out to God to remove the image from his mind. God's answer? *Pray for that woman*. He began praying for her, and all temptation evaporated.

The reason Jesus is not tempted by pornography is because He sees these women for who they really are -- hurting human beings who desperately need God.

Even in marriage, we can turn our wives into sex objects. Even though I've seen my wife's body thousands of times, I never get tired of looking at it. I am, to tell you the truth, awestruck. I find myself staring, open-mouthed.

Now that can be good or bad, depending on what's going on inside my heart.

A friend of mine said to me: "I've learned not to lust for my wife." What a statement! I had to ask myself, *How am I looking at my wife? Am I viewing her as a sex object to satisfy my desires? Is she just a substitute for pornography? Do I elevate her in my heart, or do I degrade her?*

Song of Solomon helped me here. As these lovers looked at each other, their vision was filled with admiration, affirmation and gentle encouragement.

In this process of sorting through these issues, I discovered another problem with my approach to sex. I was always looking for some way to capture and energize my wife's sex drive. I wanted her to desperately want me, and to be really, really glad she got me when we had sex. There is a place, of course, for wanting to please your wife sexually. But this went way beyond that.

The problem was manipulation. This was becoming one-sided. If my wife often wasn't excited about having sex with me, I wanted to make an end run around her feelings, and seduce her, that is, to cause her to want me sexually almost against her will. This is manipulation. Trying to gain that kind of control over her is like mind control, like witchcraft. It's wrong.

Sex is a participation sport. Both sides have to engage. It is consensus, not coercion; democracy, not dictatorship.

I needed to confess and renounce the sin of trying to control and manipulate my wife. I also needed to bring this unmet need -- this need to control, this need to be needed to God to see what He wanted to do with it. As I've prayed through these things, God has enabled me to be much more relaxed and accepting of who my wife is sexually. She is more a human being, and less a sex object.

Powerful point ...

Let human sex objects become human beings.

Journal question

What can I do to give my wife and other women the dignity and respect God wants them to have?

Connecting with God

Dear God

Thank You for creating a whole different gender. Wow! I know that You don't want me to cheapen my fellow human beings by turning any of them into sex objects. Please show me how to elevate each one in my heart to the position of honor you want each to have. Keep me from temptation, and enable me to see my wife and other women as You see them.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

➤ Ask your wife what she thinks of pornography. I did this, and my wife's answer really helped me better understand a woman's heart and how it is torn apart by sexual exploitation.

Tomorrow ...

Why and how temptations become enormously powerful, and what you can do disarm them.

Day 20

Defuse the bombs!

Today ...

Why and how temptations become enormously powerful, and what you can do disarm them.

Multiply the impact ...

On Day 22, we will look at a tool that will empower you to reach new levels of effectiveness in untangling and defusing moral temptations.

How God sees it ...

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Psalm 51:6

Why men stay trapped: Many men fight a losing battle against lust and pornography. In my opinion, here's why: (1) They try to overcome these sins with their own strength rather than by relying on the power of God. (2) They try to deal with these sins on a purely sexual level, rather than giving God access to the emotional, psychological and/or spiritual root causes.

I look at it this way: You can mow a field of dandelions, but that doesn't get rid of them. If you want to get rid of dandelions, you have to get at the root. Confessing the sin of lust is like mowing a dandelion. Bring the whole plant to Jesus and let Him pull up the root.

Unmet nonsexual needs attach themselves to your sex drive without you realizing it. You think you want sex, but what you really want is power, affirmation, protection, approval or love. As a result, your sex drive becomes corrupted and temptations become enormously powerful. If you desire what God prohibits, ask Him what is really behind those desires, and ask Him to rewire your sex drive by meeting your unmet needs. Allow Him to satisfy your desires with good things.

For example, why are men drawn to pornographic images? We

all know that men are visually wired when it comes to sexual arousal. And we know that men are less relational than women when it comes to sex. Is that attraction to porn explained purely by male sex drive? Is testosterone the culprit? I don't think so. I think porn gives the male sex drive something to latch on to. But I think the pull of porn comes from someplace else. If you feel drawn to porn, there are more dynamics at work than pure sex.

When unmet nonsexual needs attach themselves to your sex drive, you think you want sex, but what you really want is power, affirmation, protection, approval or love. As a result, your sex drive becomes corrupted and temptations become enormously powerful.

How does this happen? All of us grow up with unmet needs -- that's just part of living in a fallen world. Even if your parents were perfect -- which they weren't, but even if they were, we all suffer emotional wounds in our childhood. Those wounds leave us with deeply embedded lies -- for example, "nobody loves me," "I'm trapped," "I'm powerless," "no one will take care of me," and so on. These lies operate way below the surface to influence how we experience life. And they create powerful needs that drive our behavior -- for example, a need for power, a need for control, a need for approval, whatever. I don't know exactly how these needs get sexualized, or get attached to our sex drives, but they do, and I think this happens to some extent to nearly everyone.

Porn is addicting not primarily because it feeds our sexual appetite, but rather because it feeds some other appetite that has become so closely associated with sex in our minds that we can't tell the difference. Porn has pull because we have hurts and lies. Take away the lies and porn loses its power.

If you desire what God prohibits, ask Him what is really behind those desires, and ask Him to rewire your sex drive by meeting your unmet needs. Allow Him to satisfy your desires with good things. (See Psalm 51:6; 103:5) Jesus knows the exact dynamics behind your desires. And He knows how to untangle desires that have been twisted in order to corrupt your sex drive.

I found an interesting way to get at some of those unmet emotional needs. One day I sat down and made a list of all the reasons I want to have sex with my wife. If you've never done that before, you might try it. You and your wife both might learn a lot about yourselves. To help you here are some questions you can ask

yourself. What does sexual deprivation feel like to me -- not just physically, but also emotionally? When I don't get enough sex, what does that say about me? How do I know when I've had really good sex? How do I feel, not just physically, but also emotionally, before, during and after sex? Why do I feel that way?

Why ask these questions? They not only give you something to share with your wife and with God, but they also help you to identify unmet needs that your sex drive is plugged into. In my case, I noticed sexual deprivation seemed to tie into something else inside me -- something other than simple, unfulfilled sex drive. It seemed to tie into feelings of abandonment, of not being cared for, of not being loved. I needed to sort out what was really sexual desire and what was something else

For example, my list of reasons for having sex included things such as attraction, passion, loneliness, arousal, curiosity, discovery, self-esteem, stress relief, philanthropy, pragmatism, a need to be needed, intimacy, masculine affirmation, creativity.

Some of those reasons are legitimate, and some of those reasons pointed to unmet nonsexual needs in me.

Take for example, affirmation of masculinity. I realized that I was having sex with my wife because I wanted to get my manhood affirmed. When I went out and got beat up in a competitive male world, I wanted to come home and crawl into bed with my wife and feel like a man again.

About this same time, I was reading *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge (which, by the way, is a book I highly recommend), and the Lord used that book to show me that I was looking in the wrong place to get my manhood affirmed. You don't go to a woman to become a man, argues Eldredge. And I think he's right. What we don't get from our earthly fathers, we need to get from our Father in heaven, not from our wives.

Since making this discovery, I've been going to God and asking him to rebuild and restore my masculine identity. Part of my own woundedness has been a struggle to establish my own masculine identity, and that it isn't fair for me to expect my wife to supply it during or outside of sex. Now God is piecing together my masculine soul. That takes a lot of pressure off my wife and off our marriage, because I was trying to get her to meet a need that she wasn't designed to meet. It also makes sex more enjoyable, because I don't

have unrealistic expectations attached to it.

The bottom line is this: I was trying to get my wife to meet needs she wasn't responsible to meet. God met those needs, and now they aren't there any more. Since they aren't there any more, lust, porn and related temptations have much less power in my life.

Powerful point ...

Take away the lies and porn loses its power.

Journal question

If sex were removed from my life, what would that feel like, emotionally?

Connecting with God

Dear God

Thank You that You meet all of my needs both sexual and nonsexual. Thank You that You satisfy all of my desires with good things. If sex were removed from my life, here's what I would feel like, emotionally: [Refer to journal.] Could You please sort though this? Are there unmet emotional needs here that You need to disconnect from my sex drive and meet some other way? I lay all of these needs before You. I trust and believe that You will find appropriate ways to meet my needs, and satisfy all my desires with good things.

Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- If you haven't already read it, I recommend you buy and read *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge.
- Make a list of the reasons you want to have sex with your wife. Make a list of reasons you are tempted by immoral thoughts, images or relationships. What are you discovering about yourself?

Tomorrow ...

Some battles are best not fought on your own.

Day 21

Build a coalition

Today ...

Some battles are best not fought on your own.

Multiply the impact ...

If you and others in your group learn the principles described in Day 22, you can minister to each other on a deeper level as the Lord uses each of you to facilitate healing ministry to one another.

How God sees it ...

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Some battles are best not fought on your own. To succeed in disconnecting your sex drive from lust, pornography and impure thoughts, you may need the help of others. Find at least one other godly person (same gender) who can pray with you and hold you accountable. Encourage each other. (Ecclesiastes 4:9, Proverbs 27:17)

For years I've been a member of various men's groups. These groups are usually 4-8 men who meet weekly to encourage each other to live godly lives. We try to befriend one another and hold each other accountable.

All of us have blind spots. It is difficult for God to guide us in the area of our blind spot, because, hey, we can't see what He's trying to show us. That's why other people in the body of Christ are so important. And we cannot help each other from a distance. We need to get involved enough in each other's lives so that we know what the real issues are.

Rick Warren and others have put together good material on starting and maintaining small groups. If you aren't involved in a men's group, I encourage you to join one, or talk to your pastor about starting one. These groups can be enormously valuable not only in maintaining moral purity, but in giving men the sense of friendship

and community that so many males lack.

Even meeting regularly with one other man to pray can be a great help and encouragement. Sometimes we do stumble and fall; and here a group can be a great help. James says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

James 5:16 NIV

In healthy relationships, people respect and honor each other. Confidentiality is carefully maintained. People don't berate each other, but look for ways to restore and encourage. (Galatians 6:1-5, James 3:13-18, 2 Timothy 2:24)

Mentors, coaches and friends are a gift from God. They will enrich our lives.

Powerful point ...

Don't try to fight this battle on your own; enlist the help of others.

Journal question

To whom am I accountable? With whom have I built enough trust so that he and I can talk honestly about our struggles?

Connecting with God

Dear God,

Thank You for godly men. Please guide me to other men I can help and who can help me to win the war against immoral desires. Please give us the kind of relationship that honors You and enriches one another.

Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

➤ If you are organizing a men's group for the first time, be sure that each member understands the purpose of the group, how each meeting will be structured, attendance and assignment requirements (if any), procedure for allowing visitors and new members into the group, the need for confidentiality. Be sure to

- create a structure that allows everyone an opportunity to share without one person dominating every meeting. A book, a book of the Bible, or a course such as the one you are reading now can help give some direction to each meeting, but always be open to the leading of God's Spirit if He wants to change the agenda.
- There are hundreds of good resources on developing small groups. Rick Warren's resources have been popular lately. You can check them out at <http://www.purposedrivenlife.com>

Tomorrow ...

The truth will set you free, but why do some people know the truth inside and out, and yet aren't free? Here's the amazing answer that gives hope to all of us.

Day 22

A powerful new paradigm for freedom

Today ...

The truth will set you free, but why do some people know the truth inside and out, and yet aren't free? Here's the amazing answer that gives hope to all of us.

Multiply the impact ...

Because this process involves bringing Jesus into the closets of our soul, it adds another layer of freedom to everything we've covered in Days 1-21.

How God sees it ...

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32 NIV

The scripture says: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32)

I believe that.

But truth is a funny thing. I can know something to be true, and yet not accept it because something inside me won't let me accept it.

I know, for example, all these verses: The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1) God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a Spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7) I will fear no evil, for You are with me. (Psalm 23:4) and so on.

I probably know 50 verses on fear and I say them often. But that doesn't keep me from being afraid of dogs.

I am afraid of dogs.

One of our relatives owns a dog.

I dislike the animal.

I know that I could probably make friends with him and he'd

probably get along fine with me. But I don't want to make friends with this animal. The idea of approaching teeth and snarls, animal hair and dog slobber is too repulsive to me. If I could ignore the dog, he would probably ignore me. But I can't. When this dog is present, an alarm goes off inside me, and I cannot relax and pretend he isn't there. I know that I'm at least five times the size of this creature, that even if the dog did bite me, it wouldn't be the end of the world, that in any kind of struggle I would prevail. But that doesn't seem to prevent me from feeling paralyzed by fear when he stands there barking (growling) at me.

In short, what I know to be true, and what I feel to be true, are two different things.

I've had this fear of dogs for as long as I can remember. I've done all kinds of things to try to get rid of this fear, and it has gotten better, but it hasn't gone away. I've prayed. I've quoted verses. I've done therapy. I've tried to make friends with dogs. I've prayed some more. For a while, we even owned a dog. (One day she bit my wife. That was the end of that experiment.)

Even after all of this, something buried deep inside me keeps generating this fear of dogs.

Will the truth set me free?

Absolutely.

But the truth that will set me free will need to get at this deeply buried part of me. It isn't going to be cerebral, logical truth. It is going to be truth that alters the core of my experience. It will be the kind of truth that only God can speak.

In the last five years, there has been a quantum leap in discovering how Jesus brings the truth to the core of our experience to heal deep emotional hurts and bring genuine, lasting spiritual renewal. While Jesus has always healed people, it seems like He has now revealed new tools to make His church a dynamic, powerful change agent in these last days.

These new developments provide a way to move the truth from our logical mind where it has little impact deep into our "gut" or our inner selves where the truth can change who we are.

At the forefront of these developments is an approach that has been named "*Theophostic*®.*" *Theophostic*® means "God's light," in Greek, the original language of the New Testament. The idea of

Theophostic® is to bring people to Jesus, and get out of the way, so Jesus can shine the light of God's truth on the darkness of deeply embedded lies resulting from traumas or painful childhood events. This is not a haphazard process. Instead, it is a carefully structured process, based on thousands of hours of clinical research and trial.

As an alternative to counseling, a Theophostic® minister brings Jesus Christ into one-on-one prayer ministry so that He may heal hurts, replace deeply embedded lies with the truth, free people from anxiety, depression, anger, addictions, disorders and other troubling challenges. He or she uses a structured process of "getting out of the way" so that Jesus can deal with the root cause of any presenting problem.

The result is not only healing and deliverance, but also a whole new dimension of spiritual growth. Suddenly, God and His love come alive in a way never imagined before. As a by-product, marriages, families and churches are strengthened. This approach has been enormously effective for delivering people from sexual addictions, from bondage to pornography, from sexual orientation difficulties, and from the devastating aftermath of sexual abuse.

It works. It works well.

Why?

It works because Jesus does the healing. Theophostic® ministers don't try to do what only Christ can do.

The Theophostic® process was formalized by Dr. Ed Smith. In his work with incest survivors prior to Theophostic®, Dr. Smith normally started the process with a lecture about how the healing takes two to five years, that full recovery is difficult, maybe impossible, and so on. After discovering the Theophostic® process, Dr. Smith found that some of his clients experienced substantial or complete recovery in one or two sessions. Certainly some did not -- some people do require months or even years of ministry. But the healing process seems to work much faster for most, and the results seem to be much better.

Dr. Smith reported that one pastor had secretly struggled with sexual addictions for years. He was completely delivered in one three-hour session. When I say "delivered," I mean that porn and illicit sex lost its attraction. Jesus found exactly what was driving his addiction and disabled it at the source so that it no longer had any power in his life.

My wife and I have personally gone through the process and continue to do so. We also are receiving training to facilitate the process for others. (Although I don't intend to be a full-time Theophostic® minister, I liken this process to spiritual CPR -- it's a skill I want to have so when the occasion calls for it, I can be there for someone.)

In a Theophostic® prayer ministry session, here's what happens. We ask Jesus to identify the deeply embedded lies that are creating problems for us in the present. Once we've zeroed in on the lie and the unpleasant or inappropriate emotion that lie is creating, we ask Jesus to take the person to the place where that lie began -- usually some childhood memory. Once there, we invite Jesus to replace the lie with truth.

Sounds simple. But the results are profound. In a short time, lifelong problems, fears, addictions simply evaporate and they do not come back.

Although the process is simple in some ways, it only should be attempted with someone who has been properly trained and prepared, because there are many ways to make mistakes, and some of those mistakes could be spiritually or emotionally damaging.

Theophostic® is not a cure all for everything. Some problems are genuinely physical or chemical. While I believe that many healing professionals are way too quick to consider brain-chemistry-altering drugs as the first, best and final solution to anxiety, depression, ADD or whatever, in some cases, the problem and the solution are chemical. Theophostic® also will not work for someone who is unwilling to take the journey. It is painful to reopen old wounds. It takes courage. Although Jesus does miraculous "surgery" to heal those old hurts, getting to them can be a scary and painful process. Some people are unwilling to go there. There is a need, sometimes, to forgive. Some people are unwilling to forgive, even when the pain of the injury is taken away. While Theophostic® seems to work on Christians and nonChristians, if you are unwilling to allow Jesus to heal you, He won't heal you.

Many Christians are opposed to Theophostic®. This comes as no surprise to me having been a Christian for 35 years. Many Christians seem to think that all problems are caused by sin, and that the proper response to sin is to shame people into trying harder, so

that they won't sin any more. Many Christians point to the words of Paul in Philippians 3:13 "Forgetting what is behind" to mean that we should forget about the traumas of the past and live in the present. In my view, they ignore both the context of this passage, and reality. Paul was forgetting his past accomplishments, which he now realized were without value because they had not been empowered or directed by Christ. People in Theophostic® would love to forget the past; the problem is, the past won't forget them. For example, my wife would love to blot out the terrible trauma of having been sexually abused. But that trauma doesn't go away, unless and until it is squarely faced. (For more information, see Supplement F: "In Defense of Theophostic®.")

And, of course, Theophostic® ministry works best when the person receiving ministry enjoys warm and supportive relationships that should be part of a healthy local church.

How to locate a Theophostic® minister.

The main Theophostic® website <http://www.theophostic.com/> at one time provided referral information on persons who had been trained in the Theophostic® process. However, since those referrals seemed to imply endorsement, and since some who have received training are not using the process responsibly, the site discontinued the practice of making referrals. However, I did notice that referral information was a menu item when I dialed their switchboard, so you may want to go to the site, get the phone number and call. The International Association for Theophostic® Ministry (IATM) has a site <http://www.tpassociation.com/> - hopefully, they will be providing a directory sometime. In the meanwhile, first, pray. Then network with churches in your area to see if anyone knows of a Theophostic® minister in your area. If that doesn't work, try connecting with churches in the nearest metropolitan area. Or do a search of the word "Theophostic" on the web and you may uncover some ministries that provide Theophostic® ministry.

May God bless and encourage you!

(Theophostic® is a registered trademark of Dr. Ed Smith and *Alathia Ministries*.)

Powerful point ...

We are set free when Jesus brings truth to the core of our experience.

Journal question

Are there moral struggles or other issues in my life where -- despite my best efforts -- I'm not making the progress I would like?

Connecting with God

Dear Father,

Thank You for Your promise that the truth will set me free, and that the Son (Jesus) will set me free indeed. I desire that complete freedom. I invite Jesus to find all the hidden corners of my soul where His light needs to shine in me. Please unfold Your perfect plan for me whether it is Theophostic or some other path.

Thank You so much!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going further

- Check out the Theophostic® website at www.theophostic.com
- I would love to stay in touch with you. The best way to do that is to subscribe to my daily devotional --
<http://www.dwightclough.com/discoveries/discoveries.html>

Supplement A

Release from guilt and shame

God, being Ultimate Integrity, sets high standards (sexual and other standards) for men and women. None of us meet His perfect requirements, nor are we capable of doing so. The Bible has a name for our failure to meet God's perfect standards. Our failure is called sin.

Sin is an objective reality. It drives a wedge between us and God. It creates true guilt (as opposed to false shame). Until sin is taken care of, God cannot accept us.

This creates a dilemma for God. He isn't about to lower His standards, but we have no hope of meeting them. What is He going to do? God solved this problem by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life -- Jesus met all of God's righteous requirements -- and then to die a sacrificial death to pay the price for every time we miss the mark of God's perfect requirements. Then God raised Jesus from the dead, so that He through God's Spirit could come and live inside us and give us the power to do what pleases God.

So then, forgiveness is now possible, because Jesus. Because Jesus died on the cross for us, we can ask for and receive forgiveness. All our guilt is wiped away, and God warmly receives and embraces us as His children. Because Jesus is alive today, we can receive Him into our lives to be in charge. When He comes into our lives, He empowers us to please God.

This is meant to be a once-for-all decision that allows God to unfold His good plan throughout the rest of our lives.

That doesn't mean, of course, that we will never sin. We will. However, when we do, we don't cease to be God's children. We just have an issue with God that needs to be cleared up. We clear it up by bringing our failure to God, acknowledging it as sin, renouncing it, and receiving God's forgiveness and cleansing.

This is an issue-by-issue process. If we sin, we deal with it with God, and go on with life. God is quick to forgive, and all true guilt is washed away.

If you have never made the once-for-all decision to give your life to

Jesus Christ and become His follower, here is a prayer for you to consider and then to pray if that is your choice:

Dear God

Jesus Christ paid for all my sins. I come to You and ask You to forgive me, accept me and embrace me as Your child because Jesus died for me. And, Jesus, I open the door of my life to You. Please take charge of my life, do Your work inside me so that I will please my Father in heaven. Thank You for creating a place for me in Your family and Your home.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

If You have prayed this prayer, then I want to congratulate you! You have made a profoundly important decision -- one that opens up all kinds of wonderful possibilities for you. Jesus will never leave you, nor forsake you. Any time you have a need, a desire, or a problem, turn to Him. He wants to share and enrich life with you, day by day, moment by moment.

I would also like to recommend that you consider going through my 21 day program for discovering a meaningful relationship with God. http://www.husbandsforhealing.com/relate_1.html

If you are dealing with sin and guilt as a follower of Jesus Christ, then here is a prayer for you.

Dear Father

I have done wrong. This is what I did: [name the sin or failure] This did not please You, and I am sorry. I renounce this sin; I want no connection with it. Please forgive me. Please make me clean and pure inside. I bring to You whatever motivated me to commit this sin, so You can change my heart so I desire what You want me to desire.

Thank You for forgiving me and restoring our relationship.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sometimes (not always, but sometimes), after we pray a prayer like this to God, God will direct us to do something specific, not to gain God's forgiveness, but rather to straighten out the mess we've gotten ourselves into. For example, if we sinned against someone else, 99%

of the time, we will need to go to that person and ask for forgiveness as well. Or God may want us to remove from our home (car, room, whatever) something that was tempting us to sin.

What if we go through this process and we still feel guilty, dirty, shameful or condemned? Then we take those feelings to God. For example, one day I picked up a piece of pornography that was laying on the side of the road. I stopped and looked at it. It was wrong. I knew I wasn't supposed to pick it up, but I did it anyway. I immediately saw that I had caused all kinds of harm by my disobedience. I had insulted God. I had dishonored my wife. I had violated the woman in the photographs by uncovering her nakedness. And so on. I could barely lift my eyes to heaven.

“Oh, God,” I prayed, “what am I going to do?”

The Lord's reply? “Confess it and keep on trucking.” In other words, “Yes, it was wrong. Deal with it, but don't wallow in it.” God forgave me and my relationship with Him was restored.

I've learned to tell the difference between the Lord's voice and the enemy's voice, when it comes to sin. The enemy always wants to condemn me and convince me that I am beyond hope. The Lord is in the business of restoring people. If I do wrong, God doesn't shrink back from confronting me. But, once it's dealt with, He doesn't bring it back up and wave it in front of my face. It's over with -- time to move on.

Sometimes the feelings of shame are very strong, very stubborn, very persistent. On Day 22, we will cover an approach that will get to the very root of this shame and remove it from your life forever. But, meanwhile, let me suggest this. God knows about your shame. He knows the entire truth about you, everything there is to know. Your instinct will be to hide your shame from God, but the best, most healing thing you can do is just the opposite. Keep bringing it back to God. Ask Him to find the place the shame is coming from and bring His truth and healing to that place.

The Bible says, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” (John 8:32) When God brings truth to your inner person (see Psalm 51:6), guilt and shame are wiped away. “Those who look to Him [God] are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.” (Psalm 34:5)

Don't give up. Freedom from shame doesn't often happen

instantaneously. But God will give you that freedom; just keep coming back to Him.

Supplement B

What does a victim experience during sexual abuse and how does that affect the adult survivor?

What a victim experiences during sexual abuse profoundly affects the adult survivor. Survivors of sexual abuse suffer from a condition similar to the post-traumatic stress syndrome experienced by some soldiers returning from combat. Since each person is unique, and since sexual abuse comes in many varieties, each survivor's experience is going to be unique. But what I've described here is common to many survivors. During episodes of abuse, the victim may feel any or all of the following:

Terror -- especially if force or threat of force is used

Powerlessness -- all the power is on the side of the abuser

Arousal and sometimes even orgasm -- yes, God created our bodies to experience sexual pleasure, it was NOT the victim's fault that he or she experienced arousal, it was NOT his or her fault if he or she experienced orgasm - it was just the body's natural, involuntary response to what happened. In order to survive the ordeal, the victim may have needed to focus on the sexual feelings as a way of coping with the tremendous psychological pain.

Physical pain -- Many perpetrators seem to care very little that they inflict physical pain and harm on their victims. Preschool children are raped; it does not feel good. One survivor told me that she needed reconstructive surgery to repair the damage of repeated rapes while she was growing up.

Confusion -- especially very young victims, they don't even know about sex -- they have no category in their minds under which to process this experience; but even older victims feel confused -- especially when the perpetrator is a family member who is supposed to protect them

Betrayal -- The person I trusted has betrayed my trust.

Shame -- It must be my fault that this is happening. Even though it wasn't the victim's fault, perpetrators are masters at manipulating children and even older teens into believing that they are at fault. This shame, while illogical, is so powerful that it keeps many survivors from seeking the healing that could be theirs. This shame can be magnified if the perpetrator offers some gift or reward ("payment for services"), tells the victim he or she is bad or evil, or if the perpetrator manipulates the victim into "asking for it." Because of the difference in power involved, perpetrators exert enormous control over their victims, and they generally use that power to reinforce the message that the victim is at fault so the victim will not reveal what is happening to someone in authority.

Taintedness -- I'm "damaged goods." Sometimes this results in survivors acting out sexually because "all I'm good for is sex." In any case, this is a tremendous blow to the survivor's self esteem and self respect.

(I know that Christians have mixed feelings about the term "self-esteem." There seems to be a mistaken sense that self-denial and self-esteem are incompatible. But God wants us to know that we are His sons and daughters. The value placed on each of us is incalculable. One of my relatives attended a conference on rape prevention and healing put on by a former rapist who, himself, was a survivor of horrible sexual abuse. In this conference, he said that a rapist can tell within seconds whether or not he can get away with raping a given person. How? The rapist studies the potential victim's body language and her response to his first sexual advance. According to him, if someone doesn't have enough self respect to stand up for herself, he could get away with raping her, and he knew she would never fight back or report the crime. While sexual assault is NEVER the fault of the victim, a lack of self esteem, it appears, can set a person up for further victimization. God does not desire this. Self denial, on the other hand, involves yielding our rights to God whose motives and plans are always good, wholesome and healing.)

Ambivalence -- The victim often has a love/hate relationship with the perpetrator, especially if the perpetrator is a family member. Often victims feel a need to protect the perpetrator. Jesus took my wife back to memories where, as a young child, she was completely convinced that her grandfather would go to hell if she told anyone

what he was doing to her. She also was led to believe that the only way anyone would love her was to allow her grandfather to molest her.

Hopelessness -- Abusers routinely threaten children with harm if they tell, and some victims have no one to turn to anyway. Many times other family members dismiss, disbelieve or minimize reports of abuse, complicating its damage. Victims feel trapped.

Denial -- to really believe that Daddy (or another close family member) is here not to protect me but rather to sexually use me is too overwhelming for most children to process. Some form of denial is necessary for psychological survival.

Dissociation -- “checking out” mentally. As in the case of denial, the experience is too overwhelming to process, so the victim's soul is fractured into parts -- one part to handle the pain, another to protect, another to handle everyday functioning and so on. In cases of severe trauma or ritual abuse, the dissociation may create separate personalities or “alters” that can remain for life, unless deep healing takes place.

These feelings and experiences become permanently etched in the soul of the survivor. They don't go away simply because survivors and their spouses wish them away.

Disturbing or frightening dreams about being sexually violated may occur as the survivor tries to process the overwhelming trauma of her childhood. There may be fragmentary or whole memories of sexual abuse experiences.

Control. Most survivors experience a strong need to be controlling. As a child, their world was so out of control that they now need to control the circumstances and people around them just to feel safe.

Fears. The feeling of being trapped can show up as claustrophobia, and panic or anxiety attacks. Hopelessness can give way to suicidal obsession and depression. Sometimes the overwhelming force of these or similar emotions is paralyzing to a survivor making it difficult or impossible for her to function with everyday tasks like keeping house, holding down a job, caring for children. Unusual fear of doctors or dentists can occur. It just makes sense -- if you were sexually violated, would you want someone poking around your body in the very place you were violated? Some survivors have an unusually strong fear of having children, or of

having children of a certain sex, because this ties into past feelings of abuse.

Triggering. Unpleasant memories of being molested may be so deeply ingrained in a survivor that she experiences a visceral reaction to an innocent display of affection from a loving spouse. For example, a husband just wants to put his arms around his survivor wife, but she is visibly repulsed by his action. If this is happening to you as a husband, remember this: Her feelings are real, but it isn't you she's rejecting. It's someone else.

Dysfunctional sex or a strong temptation to engage in sexual activity that God prohibits is a common outcome. For example, a survivor ties into past pain and experiences painful intercourse even when there is no physical reason for sex to hurt. Deep shame -- so deeply embedded that the survivor may not even be consciously aware of it -- may drive the survivor to block all sexual feelings, so she experiences little or no arousal, and cannot achieve an orgasm. Or a survivor might not be able to enjoy sex without reliving past experiences of abuse or without intrusive fantasies of unacceptable sexual behavior. Another survivor, feeling like the only way she can get approval is through sex, might become promiscuous, or strongly tempted to engage in extramarital sex. If sexual abuse was followed by some kind of reward or gift, the survivor may use sex in the marriage as a way of getting something. And so on.

True dissociation doesn't go away without healing. It remains present in mild or severe degrees. On one end of the spectrum, a survivor might "check out" or dissociate at times (especially during sex). Her body is there, but her mind is somewhere else. In more severe cases, survivors might switch from one personality (or alter) to another.

Addictions. Survivors may try to cover over the pain with compulsive behaviors such as workaholism; alcoholism; compulsive gambling, shopping or eating. Some survivors try to divert or control the pain with self-mutilation or cutting or eating disorders. As bizarre as some of these behaviors might seem (even to the survivor), they make perfect sense at some level of the survivor's soul. The pain of the abuse never went away, and so the survivor is trying, on some level, to cope with the pain.

Most of us don't appreciate the depth of the damage done by sexual abuse (unless, of course, we've experienced it ourselves). "Get

over it,” we think, as though we married a machine that can jettison part of her experience and pretend it never happened. That was then, this is now, we cry, and we can't understand when the survivor in our lives isn't able to hear those words.

The good news is this. God wants to heal. God can heal. And, when God heals, He takes away the power of the sexual abuse to create any further pain in the adult survivor's life.

Supplement C

Disconnect from current illicit relationships

If you are currently involved in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, it is critically important for your survival that you break free. In order to get the true God of the universe in your court, fighting for you, you must disconnect your sex drive from any illicit relationship.

Let me give you some leverage to do that:

True God of the universe,

I need You. In the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ, who died that I might be forgiven and restored to You, I ask You to forgive me and break the power of this unholy sexual relationship in my life. Please give me the strength and wisdom right now to do exactly what I need to do to break free.

I renounce my involvement in this sexual relationship outside of marriage. I ask you to break any and all unholy soul ties that I have with this other person(s). I may have mixed feelings about this, so I ask You to let this prayer prevail over all other desires in my heart.

I ask You to break the power of this sin in the life of my partner(s) and bring, as appropriate, repentance, forgiveness, healing and restoration to You.

Please guide me in the days ahead so I can stay in your plan for my life.

Thank You!

I don't pretend that it's easy to disconnect from a non-marital sexual relationship that you might be in the middle of right now. It isn't easy. It might not even be possible. There are many dynamics at work -- emotional and sexual needs are being met -- at least at some level -- and there are strong spiritual forces at work to keep you entrapped in a relationship that is ultimately harmful for you and your partner.

If God didn't take this so seriously, I wouldn't even bother mentioning it to you. But He does. He wants sex inside marriage only. Period. No exceptions. And He describes in the strongest terms the consequences for those who refuse to play the game by His rules. (Proverbs 5 & 7, Hebrews 13:4, Revelation 21:8, etc.)

Here's my recommendation if you are struggling with this decision. Take your struggle to God. Tell Him all the reasons why you don't want to disconnect from this sexual relationship or why you don't think you are able to. Ask Him what He can do about that. Talk to Him about it. I think you will be surprised at the results. If you are willing to be honest with God, you will begin to see some profound changes in your life. And if any part of you is willing to obey God on this, by all means, bring that part to God too. See what God is able to do for you.

God is a God of freedom. Sex outside of marriage is a trap, though it is hard to see that when you are in such a relationship. If you are willing, God will exert supernatural energy to free you from this trap if you come to Him, and keep on coming back until He does.

There is a principle, by the way, of tugging at God's elbow. I have four kids, and, sometimes, the persistent ones get what they want from me. God honors persistence, when that persistence honors Him.

Supplement D

Disconnect from past illicit relationships

If you are not currently involved in a sexual relationship outside marriage, then you can be thankful for that. If you were involved in one or more sexual relationships outside marriage in the past, you need to disconnect your sex drive and your soul from those persons and those experiences.

WAIT! If your mind is saying skip on down ... that was then, this is now ... that's all in the past, let me encourage you to slow down and read this carefully. Most people leave illicit relationships without properly disconnecting from them. As a result, those relationships can continue to cause harm in your life, even if you aren't aware of it.

Illicit sexual relationships establish patterns of relating to other people that you want to break and not bring into your marriage. They also create unholy ties between you and previous partners that you need to break, so that you are free to relate to God and to your spouse as God intends. And they give God's enemies on a spiritual level a beachhead in your life, i.e., a legal right to harass you.

Below is a prayer to disconnect from these past relationships. Pray aloud through this for each illicit sexual relationship you have had. (If you've had so many that you can't remember them all, then pray through it once for all of them as a group, and then ask God to bring to mind any specific sins He wants you to renounce.)

True God of the universe,

I need You. In the name of the true Lord Jesus Christ, who died that I might be forgiven and restored to You, I ask You to forgive me and break the power of this past unholy sexual relationship with _____.

I renounce my involvement in this sexual relationship outside of marriage. I ask you to break any and all unholy soul ties that I have with this other person(s). Please remove any foothold this has given the enemy in my life. Please remove from my life any enemy that has found his way in as a result of my sin. And please give me a

pure heart, so that I may relate to You (and my spouse) in the way You desire.

I ask You to break the power of this sin in the life of my former partner(s) and bring, as appropriate, repentance, forgiveness, healing and restoration to You.

Please guide me in the days ahead so I can stay in your plan for my life.

Thank You!

Supplement E

Disconnect from past sexual abuse

If you were the victim of sexual abuse, then there is a fair amount of work that needs to be done, but God is great and can accomplish great things. Here's a place to get started. And there will be more information particularly for you on Day 22.

Dear Father in Heaven

As You know, I was sinned against, I was sexually abused.

I am asking You, in Your great power and love, to completely disconnect my sex drive from the perpetrator(s) and from the lies implanted during these episodes of abuse.

I renounce the lie that I belong to the one(s) who sinned against me. I announce that I belong instead to the true Lord Jesus Christ, that I was bought with the price of His precious blood.

In the name of the true Lord Jesus, I break any and all unholy soul ties I may have with the person who abused me. I renounce any vow I may have made to protect my perpetrator(s), and I turn them over to You for You to deal with according to Your wisdom.

Father in Heaven, I commit my soul to You. Do Your deep work of cleansing everything unholy and unclean from me. You know the lies the enemy has implanted deep inside of me and the legal ground he thinks he has as a result. Take away his ground, take away his lies, wash me with the truth.

Part of me may feel like the abuse was my fault. Tell me the truth where I need to hear it. Was it my fault? I know that You are in the business of restoring people, so I look to You.

What was done to me was terrible. Only You can measure the true depth of the evil that was done to me. And only You can give me the grace to forgive my perpetrator(s) and the wisdom to establish proper boundaries between my perpetrator(s) and me. As You lead me through the healing process, I purpose to follow You in connecting with Your anger toward this sin against me, releasing that anger to You at the right time, and forgiving my perpetrator(s)

by Your grace.

Thank You that these words are connecting with the God who brought the whole universe into being just by speaking a few simple words. Now, I pray, speak Your words into my life and bring order and peace, where there was chaos and anguish.

In Jesus' name,

Thank You!

Supplement F

In Defense of Theophostic®

Why this Christian inner-healing approach is Biblical, workable and a good choice for many people

In the last five years, Theophostic® has emerged as a powerful tool to bring Christ's healing to emotional pain. Not surprisingly, it has many critics. Theophostic® advocates are so busy facilitating healing for many hurting people that they often don't have time to respond to the many criticisms that are published. I hope this brief article will allow those who would like to explore Theophostic® the opportunity they need to give it the consideration it deserves.

I should say at the outset that I am not associated with Dr. Ed Smith or his ministry, and I don't pretend to speak on his behalf. I speak merely as a person who has experienced and observed the benefits of this type of prayer ministry. I encourage you to check out the official Theophostic® website www.theophostic.com

Is God allowed to do something new?

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? Isaiah 43:19a

God has the right to do something new. In every generation, there are people who challenge His right to bring new insight, new discovery, new methods, new technology to the people He created. Pioneers are always criticized and often persecuted. Galileo was ordered to recant, the Wright brothers were ridiculed, Tyndale was martyred, Jesus was crucified.

If you were dying of cancer, and someone invented a cure, would you refuse it because you cannot conceive of God withholding the knowledge of a cure for thousands of years, and then revealing it suddenly in these "last days"?

Gutenberg (considered by many to be the most influential person in his millennium) revolutionized not only the church, but also the entire world with his invention of the movable type printing press. In a sense, his invention wasn't new (Ecclesiastes 1:9) -- he just recombined existing technologies and discovered a revolutionary application for them.

In the same way, the basic principles of Theophostic® are, in a way, nothing new. God speaks to His people (John 10:27 among many related passages). Satan is a liar (John 8:44). Truth sets us free (John 8:32). When the Son brings truth, there is true freedom (John 8:36). Share our struggles with and confess our sins to God (all of Psalms for starters).

The genius here, is that these truths have been recombined in a new way; a new paradigm has been realized that brings powerful and good results.

Are Christians allowed to dabble in psychology?

Some Christians are suspicious of Theophostic® because it uses some truth that psychologists have discovered. For example, it acknowledges that we are complex human beings, and our present way of experiencing life is heavily predicated on our early childhood experiences. They feel that any information that does not come from God's inspired written word, the Bible, cannot be reliable. They seem to have forgotten that God did not use Divine revelation to get names for all the animals He created. Instead, He used science. He told Adam to discover, to classify, to name. That process of science has continued now, for over 6000 years. Of course, some scientific discovery is skewed by sinful attitudes, godless philosophies and human limitation. But, if you throw it all away, you really must get rid of most of the food you eat, burn the house you live in, destroy the car you drive -- they are all the product of science.

Some critics label Theophostic® as “Freudian,” and argue that it replaces sin and guilt with insight psychology. I say, wake up and look around. Is God really as simple as your theology? Is man really as simple as your anthropology? The human experience is incredibly complex. Yes, sin is a reality. Yes, guilt is a reality. But sin and guilt is not the sum total of who we are. In God's universe, multiple dynamics operate simultaneously in the same system. It is easy to shame people with our pat answers about their guilt. It is harder to bring the healing and delivering power of Christ into someone's life to set them completely free. Yet, I suggest to you that this is the gospel -- the good news -- the *euangellion*. The gospel is not just a prayer at the end of a tract that admits that I am a rotten sinner and need to be forgiven. It is much more.

It encompasses the entire redemptive work of Christ.

That Theophostic® exchanges moral accountability for a victimization mentality leading to bitterness and desire for revenge simply has nothing to do with reality. The critic who suggested this obviously has had no contact with people who have been through Theophostic®.

The Theophostic® process is about forgiveness. My wife was horribly abused by someone outside her core family. She has always wanted to forgive her perpetrator. But only through Theophostic® has she been able to deeply and completely forgive and release this man. This forgiveness came about not through her own effort, but through the healing presence of Christ.

One critic suggests that Theophostic® is hedonistic apparently because it releases people from pain. He claims that sanctification, growth and maturity would involve pain and “negative emotions.” I'm faced here with the thought: Do I even need to respond to this? I guess I will.

If pain is so desirable, why did Jesus go around healing people? Some critics are troubled by the thought that the Theophostic® process takes place somewhere other than in the part of our mind where we do our logical thinking. Here's a logical problem for you to solve: If everything we need can be received in our logical mind, then why were the disciples terrified while Jesus was sleeping on a cushion on the bottom of the boat. And why, after He woke up and calmed the storm, did Jesus say, “Where is your faith?”

I ask you, “Where was their faith?”

I will suggest an answer: It was in their logical mind. But it wasn't their logical mind that was terrified.

There are other parts of us, you know, and those parts of us need Jesus just as much as our logical mind needs Jesus.

What about sin, discipleship, and self-control?

One critic points to the several passages on “self-control” to establish that Christianity is not the effortless freedom that Dr. Smith describes, but rather a “struggle.” But the most famous verse in the Bible on self-control shows us clearly that self control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The struggle here, then, is not to produce self-control on our own, but rather to access the deep river of God's grace.

Note that the way of the transgressor is hard, but Jesus said,

“My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Some object to the idea that some guilt and shame is false. I think this conflict arises because people are living in different worlds, dealing with different issues. The pastor who is trying to confront a person who climbs into bed with the wrong person, that pastor knows the sinner's guilt and shame are real, based on sin. But the therapist who is dealing with the woman who feels terrible shame because she was sexually molested at age three -- the guilt here is false. It wasn't her fault, and that false guilt needs to be taken away.

Critics have a great deal of trouble with “lie-based” vs. “sin-based” theology. One went to considerable effort to show that believing lies, is, in itself, sin.

I think the real issue here is about how much power we have in our flesh to do good. In Romans 7 and other passages, Paul makes it clear that we don't have the power on our own to do good. That's why Jesus came along, to set us free from sin (John 8, Isaiah 61, etc.).

Notice the pattern in the way Jesus ministered. When it came to prostitutes, adulterers, tax collectors and other sinners, Jesus first set them free, then told them to “go and sin no more.” But, when it came to religious leaders who thought they were better than everyone because they had enough self-power to produce their own righteousness, Jesus came at them swinging. He plowed into their hypocrisy, and stung them with His rebuke.

“Lie-based” theology doesn't release us from culpability for our sins. Rather, it explains the process by which sin gets control over us, and reveals the path Jesus uses to set us free.

Many people do not understand the difference between freedom and responsibility. I am responsible not to look at porn. So when the porn come-on appears in my email inbox, I immediately delete it. That's the responsible thing. I do that whether I am tempted to go to the porn site advertised or not. But freedom comes when Jesus gives me His mind and His heart toward pornography and it just doesn't pull on me any more.

This is why some people struggle almost every waking moment against an insatiable desire to drink alcohol. Perhaps they've been dry for years, but yet they struggle. They are responsible, but they are not yet free. When Jesus sets them free, alcohol loses its pull on them.

Galatians is a powerful book because in it we are exhorted to move beyond responsibility into freedom. Jesus wants us free.

When critics speak of lies people believe, they are often speaking of superficial lies that come about in adult experience. But Theophostic® is focused on lies that are usually implanted at a very young age, are deeply buried, and often go unrecognized. Does it really come as any surprise that the devil would look for ways to damage vulnerable young children, and take advantage of their gullibility to implant lies deep in their hearts?

2 Thessalonians 2:10, Romans 1:18 and other passages are quoted by critics to establish that those who believe Satan's lies are guilty of sin. These interpretations, in my mind, help to establish why God alone is Judge, and we are commanded not to judge others. Every human being, except Jesus and innocent children, crosses the line and sins at some point. True guilt is established. God will judge because He knows exactly where the guilt is and where it is not. A three year old child who believes a lie told to him or her by Satan is not guilty of sin. Remember, they are only children.

I think the relevant verses here are: Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. And, mercy triumphs over judgment. All of us were vulnerable, fragile, gullible children at one point.

However, what seems to happen as a result of Theophostic® is this: When these childhood lies are exposed and deliverance comes from Christ, persons receiving ministry suddenly realize areas where they have sinned and go and make them right. For example, a wife may be delivered from lies surrounding childhood sexual abuse, and then realize that she needs to apologize to her husband for some of her behavior in the marriage.

In my own experience with Theophostic®, I am ready and willing to confess and repent of whatever sins I may have committed. I don't go to Theophostic® as a way of escaping responsibility for my sins. I go to Theophostic® because I want Jesus to have 100% of my heart, including everything that is deeply buried inside me.

One critic objects that the demolition of strongholds mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 could have nothing to do with Theophostic® because our weapons are truth, salvation, faith, righteousness, and prayer. But look at Theophostic®. It is about replacing lies with truth. It is about salvation - i.e., Jesus saving, delivering, rescuing, healing, fixing the things we cannot fix on our own. It is about the

righteousness of Christ. And the process is prayer, nothing more or less than good old fashioned prayer. The only difference is, we expect, believe and receive answers to those prayers. God really does show up and He really does deliver people.

Critics haggle with Dr. Smith on his trichotomistic (spirit, soul and body) view of man. Although I could respond to their objections point by point, I think it boils down to this: Dr. Smith is trying to explain what he sees happening, and is using orthodox Protestant theology to do so. Even if his theology is inaccurate (and I don't think it is), that doesn't invalidate the process. It only invalidates part of Dr. Smith's explanation of why the Theophostic® process works.

One critic says that Dr. Smith takes John 8:36 out of context when he uses it to discuss the freedom that Christ brings through Theophostic®. The freedom here, the critic argues, is freedom from sin, not from painful memories. But this is a very superficial analysis. John 8:36 is a summary statement characterizing much of Christ's ministry. This good news of freedom is expanded in passages such as Isaiah 61:1-3. Jesus sets us free from our slavery to sin, and also from all the effects of sin in our lives. I don't think anyone could dispute that Christ's freedom comes to us in steps, one supernatural deliverance at a time. Let's not box Jesus in and tell Him that He must free us only from our sin, He may not free us from our pain.

One critic also wanted to prevent Jesus from being a therapist by claiming that “Wonderful Counselor” in Isaiah 9:6 reduces Jesus to the role of being a statesman or an advisor. If this is true, then what prevented Jesus from being an advisor to Dr. Smith when he formalized the Theophostic® process?

Is God allowed to be pragmatic?

Critics object that this process is so experiential -- it originated from an experience, rather than from a scholarly review of the Scriptures; it relies on a real live meeting with Jesus, rather than on recitation of Bible memory verses; it is validated by people truly being set free from bondage, rather than by proof texts.

When Jesus shows up, He always faces these criticisms. “Where did this man get his teaching, having never studied (in our club)?” “With power and authority He cast out evil spirits ... he spoke as one having authority, not as the scribes and the Pharisees.” (John 7:15, Luke 4:32, Mark 1:22 etc.)

I say, “Let God be God.” When God shows up, things change. New paradigms are introduced. Authority to make changes in the real world, miraculous changes far beyond our ability to produce or duplicate, is present whenever God appears.

Some Christians are so afraid of the supernatural that they forget something: God is supernatural.

Critics are concerned because they find no Bible verses telling us to “embrace the emotion, and return to the source and origin of the lie.” There are also no Bible verses telling us to print tracts, teach Sunday School, open coffee houses, start a bus ministry, or do any of thousands of activities we do as Christians. Yet we do these things and God shows up and blesses them.

If Theophostic® is as revolutionary as it claims to be, why did God wait until the 1990s to unveil it as part of His plan? Ultimately, I don't know. But I do know that almost every tool the church uses to make disciples, from the printing press to airplanes, came into use after thousands of years of waiting. And I know that God has always been a healing God, and that He wasn't prevented from healing anybody in the past just because Dr. Ed Smith wasn't on the scene, any more than He is prevented from healing anyone in the present because Dr. Ed Smith has critics. He does what He wants to do. And, just perhaps, He wants to do something new in these last days that will give His church a greater impact on a lost world.

Critics claim that Theophostic® is extra-Biblical or anti-Biblical. But I have yet to see the proof that it contradicts Scripture. Sometimes it forces us to look at the same Scripture in a new way, but that is not a bad thing. Jesus and the apostles often pointed out new applications for Scriptures that had previously been seen from a different perspective. For example, Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 to introduce the then radical concept of the Trinity. Throughout church history, certain passages of scripture have “come alive” at different times as God begins doing something new in the church.

Does Jesus really speak to His people? What about the Bible?

God speaks to His people (John 10:27 among many related passages). This doesn't invalidate the Bible or relegate it to second place. Sometimes when Jesus speaks in a Theophostic® session, He actually

gives a Bible verse. This has happened to me more than once -- I've been given portions of 1 Kings 19:11, Psalm 16:11, Hebrews 13:5 in Theophostic® sessions. I had memorized these passages, but Jesus knew exactly what I needed and brought the precise Scripture that would set me free. At other times, He has needed to say things to me that aren't Bible verses. For example, He once described someone in my life as "a broken man trying to be whole." As a result of that word, I immediately experienced a much deeper compassion and respect for this person.

I believe there is a place for memorizing Scriptures and meditating on them. I believe in positive confession - that is, remembering and reciting the promises of God. Dr. Smith's point is this: There are some issues that require a precise word from Jesus to the precise place in our soul where the lie is stored and the pain is generated. Quoting verses, even relevant verse, doesn't get the right word to the right place to make the difference. God needs to step in and do what only He can do.

Richard Wurmbrand who spent 14 years in prison for his faith, was asked what Bible verses sustained him through all the torture and cruelty he experienced. His answer? There are no Bible verses that can bring you through that kind of experience. Only God can sustain you.

Jesus warned the religious leaders of His day that although they were proficient at searching the Scriptures, they had missed the God of those Scriptures, and, as a result, had missed eternal life. As Christians we must take care that we worship God, not the Bible. God saves us, the Bible doesn't. God uses His word, but God does the saving, the healing, the washing, the forgiving.

What about the flaky people who are doing Theophostic®?

There is an effort on the part of at least one critic to pin on Theophostic® a guilt-by-association charge, because he experienced dominant women using authority they had gained in their Theophostic® ministry role to emasculate the men in the church. He had a bad experience in his church with someone who claimed to be a Theophostic® minister. Now he condemns all Theophostic®. This is like finding a rotten apple and concluding that all apples are rotten.

Yes, there are people claiming to do Theophostic® who are not well enough themselves to be attempting to do prayer ministry with

others. Some claim to do Theophostic®, but don't understand the principles and are really doing something else, something that can cause damage. If Theophostic® is really of God, and I think it is, it should come as no surprise that the devil will attempt to damage and discredit it wherever he can.

Aren't we supposed to forget the past?

Many critics rip Philippians 3:13 out of context and claim that we should never return to painful childhood experiences because we are to “forget the past.” In context here, however, Paul is talking about forgetting past accomplishments made in the flesh. Hurting people don't want to dwell on past hurts. They would like nothing better than to forget the past. The problem is: the past won't forget them. Once they are able to return to the past with Jesus and resolve what is disrupting the present, the past fades, and these same people who were hurting so badly are set free to live full and productive lives in the present.

The passage in 1 Corinthians 13:11 about putting away childish things, again doesn't apply. The verse is merely a way of illustrating that there are stages in the plan of God, just as there are stages in a person's life.

What about the demonic?

One critic objected to the supposedly Theophostic® notion that Christians can be inhabited by demons. But Theophostic® doesn't say that Christians may be demon possessed. Rather it acknowledges that even God-loving Christians can be demonized, that is, afflicted by demons, and these fallen angels, as a rule, inhabit the lies deeply buried inside us. Paul complained of a messenger from Satan sent to torment him (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Isn't Theophostic® just about Ed Smith's need to be successful?

Dr. Ed Smith came upon the Theophostic® approach when he cried out to God in his frustration over not being able to bring anything more than “tolerable” recovery to survivors of incest. You can look at this in two different ways: You can say, here's a guy with a midlife crisis who needed something to prove to himself that he was

successful, so he fabricated this process which just happens to be wildly successful. (That claim reminds me of Aaron's statement to Moses, "I threw the gold into the fire and out jumped this calf!") Or you can say that we never really accomplish anything in life until we come to the end of ourselves and our own resources and rely on God to do what we cannot do.

You have to decide for yourself.

Some also criticize Dr. Smith for not being responsive enough to their criticisms. I cannot and do not speak for Dr. Smith. He and I have never met. But I do come back to the famous quote from Teddy Roosevelt, "It is not the critic who counts ... The credit belongs to the man in the arena." While I understand concern over mavericks that take off without heeding authority and without accepting any accountability, we must also recognize that without pioneers such as Martin Luther and others, we Protestants wouldn't be here.

Is Theophostic® a cure-all? Is it for everybody?

Of course not. It's just another tool. It has its place, just like Bible memorization has its place. Neil Anderson's *Freedom in Christ* material is good and can integrate well with Theophostic®. Confession of sin is important, and Theophostic® is no substitute for admitting our guilt before God. Theophostic® is a powerful tool that can benefit many people; but it might not be right for you. Who am I to say what you need at this point in your spiritual journey? That is for God to decide; and He will give you insight into that as you seek Him in prayer, in the Word, and in counsel with godly, mature Christians.

Bringing healing to people who have been deeply wounded, even with Theophostic®, can be a tedious process. That's why I hope and pray for new discoveries and new paradigms that will make Theophostic® obsolete in some cases. There are so many needy people, that I hope and pray for something even more miraculous to come along. Maybe God will allow that. But, in the meanwhile, I'm sticking to Theophostic®.

One person complains that the Theophostic® model relies on case studies of sexual abuse almost exclusively, and therefore cannot be applied to the general population. That's an interesting objection. Anyone who has struggled with the aftermath of sexual abuse understands its devastating effects. Therefore, the testimonies here

are dramatic, because the wound is so deep. When Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind, the testimony was stunning. But that didn't limit Him to only working with blind people, any more than Jesus now delivering survivors of sexual abuse limits Him to only working with that population. Dr. Ed Smith, naturally, is going to speak from his experience; and much of his experience centered around working with incest survivors. As more and more people practice Theophostic®, more testimonies will filter in from others, and the literature will be more balanced. In my own case, I have no memory of ever being sexually abused, yet Theophostic® has been an enormously beneficial part of my spiritual journey.

There's plenty of mud, but does it stick?

Some critics want to attach nasty names to Theophostic® -- names like Gnosticism, heresy, occultism and sorcery. This is sad, but it is nothing new. Throughout history godly men and women have been labeled heretics and worse. Particularly in the centuries before and after the Reformation, vicious persecution came from fellow churchmen, who woke up to the reality of what they had done only after the blood of thousands of martyrs was shed. Jesus also faced name calling and character assassination. “It is by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that he casts out demons,” his religious critics sneered. But Jesus cautioned His critics to take care. “All sins and blasphemies can be forgiven,” He said, “but not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.” He said this because His critics were attributing His work to the enemy.

Even Gamaliel prevailed in the Sanhedrin with a voice of reason. “If it is from God,” he said, “you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

None of us wants to embrace heresy or practice sorcery. And none of us wishes to blaspheme. Some or all of us may be mistaken on some points, but let us use gentleness, restraint and wisdom in dealing with one another when we disagree. The name of God is at stake.

I have to skip over the criticisms of so-called professionals who obviously haven't even read with any care the basic information available about this process. When people refer to Theophostic® as “guided imagery,” as “reprogramming the conscience” with self-effort, as “victimization,” as “sanctification by works” it is clear to me that

they are reacting to something they haven't studied and don't understand.

Conclusion

I have little interest in armchair theology. I wouldn't bother responding to the criticisms of Theophostic®, if I did not believe that this is a powerful, God-given tool that deserves a serious consideration.

I believe that many who criticize Theophostic® are sincerely interested in defending Biblical Christianity and all that it represents. I think constructive inquiry, examination and dialogue is possible and desirable. We must each remember that no one of us has exclusive right to all of the truth. That right belongs to God. Our individual inadequacies should keep each of us humble enough to seek God and to learn from one another.

For further information about Theophostic® see www.theophostic.com

Supplement G

Disconnect from generational sins

The Bible makes it clear that the sins of our ancestors can have a profound impact on us (e.g., Exodus 20:4-6) and others. But the good news is that when we come to Christ, God becomes our Father (John 1:12, 1 John 3:1), so we have a new family heritage. Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13 etc.).

There are many ways in which sins, curses and wounds are passed from generation to generation. The most common way is for parents to act from their own woundedness, and thus pass wounds on to their children. For example, if I feel unloved as a child, I may try to get my children to fill the love void in my soul. By doing this, I bring damage on them by not meeting their need for unconditional love, and by reversing the parent-child role. (Breaking free of wounds that are passed to you from parents and other caregivers is covered in more detail on Day 22.) Parents also model and exemplify bad behaviors which are adopted by their children. One generation might open up legal ground for the enemies of Christ (evil spirits) to operate in a person's life. In some cases, that legal ground is inherited by succeeding generations. If you study the life of David, you can see that his family paid dearly for his sins.

By renouncing the sins of previous generations and removing any curses or legal ground that was passed to us, moral freedom (and every other kind of spiritual freedom) becomes that much easier. Sometimes people get stuck in their recovery process because they overlook this important step.

If a parent or grandparent or other ancestors were involved in adultery, pornography or other sexual sin, it is easy to see the connection between that and any struggle you might be facing in achieving and maintaining moral freedom. However, don't overlook other sins (e.g., abuse, anger, witchcraft, etc.) because they might create legal ground for the enemy to operate in your life. Sometimes the result is deeply implanted lies and unmet nonsexual needs that

attach themselves to your sex drive and get acted out sexually. (See Day 20.)

Get a pad of paper and a pen ready, and then use this prayer or one like it to break generational curses.

Dear Father in Heaven

I want every generational curse in my life to be broken. I am asking You to give me the wisdom I need to make this happen.

Please reveal to me every sin of my ancestors that is being passed down through family lines, whether blood lines or through adoptive / caregiver relationships. [Jot down what the Lord brings to mind.]

I now reject and renounce any and all sins of my ancestors, including but not limited to _____ [from the list just created]. As a child of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, I have confessed these sins, and I choose to believe that I stand forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness in Christ. I have been crucified with Christ, raised with Him, and seated in heavenly places with Him. Therefore, I renounce every assignment the enemy may have in my life, my ministry and/or my family. I choose to believe that Jesus has broken every curse placed on me, no matter where that curse may have come from. I announce to the enemy that Christ became a curse for me when He died for me. I reject any claim of ownership Satan or his demons may have over me, for I belong to Jesus Christ and I was purchased by His blood, and that transaction supercedes all others for now and for eternity. By the authority I have in Christ, I command every enemy of Jesus to leave my presence.

Father, I ask You to cancel any and every assignment the enemy may have in my life, my ministry, and/or my family. Please break now every curse and set me completely free. I submit to You. I am Your child, and I give You my body to be an instrument of righteousness. Please fill me now and always with Your Holy Spirit.

Thank You!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

As always, the Lord may bring to mind something specific He wants you to do to complete this process. For example, He may want you to remove from your possession some object of false worship that was

passed on to you from a previous generation. Or He may ask you to forgive a parent or grandparent, etc. Be sensitive to God's Spirit. This is not a formula, it is a partnership with God, and we need to stay in step with His Spirit.

Neil T. Anderson (www.ficm.org) has excellent material on breaking generational curses. Another site, www.shieldofaith.org contains powerful prayers of renunciation if previous generations were involved in occult activity or secret societies that bind members and their descendants with curses. I've used both resources personally, and recommend them.