IT was a typical Lord’s Day morning. I woke up excited and looked forward to going to church. I enjoyed being with the Lord’s people and worshiping God with them. My hope, though, was that this time would be different. Not that my worship experience wasn’t consistently inspiring, but I desired to hear from God, especially since the night before had been so difficult.

You see, that Saturday night I had another episode; an episode that I despised with all of my soul, and one that I was becoming all too familiar with. I was a new believer, having been marvelously converted by God’s grace and seeking to live my life in a manner pleasing to Him. Jesus Christ was now my Lord and Savior, and I loved Him for saving me. So much had changed in my life, which could only be
explained by the power of God. But not everything had changed; at least not right away. The wanton desires that I had given into and indulged from my late teenage years into early adulthood were still powerfully raging in my heart. And to my surprise I was engaged in an intense battle—a battle that seemed to grow more intense with each passing week.

That battle was with pornography. I knew it was a sin, and I knew God did not want me to view it, but there I was again that night, lurking by the magazine rack at the liquor store across the street from my apartment. With my heart pounding, I tried to convince myself that I was there just to get a soda and some chips, but deep down inside I knew why I was there. I was there because in my heart there was a smoldering fire that beckoned to be set ablaze by the spark of pornographic images. I peeked, I looked, I gazed, I purchased; suddenly, the smoldering embers of lust were set on fire, and well, there I was again.

So I hoped that on this Sunday I might hear something in the sermon that would help me in my struggle. Unfortunately, I had hoped in vain. Don’t get me wrong, brothers, I had a good time at church that day—I always did. The music moved me, the sermon inspired me, the praise lifted me, the fellowship encouraged me, and I walked away feeling really good. I felt hopeful. I felt clean again. But it wasn’t long before I felt the heat from the embers of lust beginning to smolder in my heart again. And as I tried to resist, it was as if I was trying to put out a raging forest fire with a water pistol. I simply did not possess whatever it took to slay the fiery beast that was now my master, or so I thought.

That was in 1992, and by the grace of God, the fiery beast has since been slain. And with the exception of an occasional spark, the fire has been extinguished. If you’re reading this
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book, you probably know something of the battle of which I speak. Your battle may be with pornography, masturbation, adultery, phone sex, or some other illicit sexual behavior forbidden by Scripture. Whatever the case, by the grace of God, you can experience the same victory that I know and enjoy today. So how did I do it? How can you do it? Brothers, the answer is not as complicated as the Enemy would have you believe. It is also marvelously liberating.

THE CONNECTION

Fed up with what seemed to be a losing battle, I cried out to the Lord in utter desperation. If I was truly a Christian, and Jesus Christ was as powerful as I believed Him to be, then I knew that my frequent moral failures were not His will for me. So I turned to the Scriptures, and there it was. Brothers, it was as if I had never read this particular verse before, even though I had actually read it several times. The words jumped off the page and grabbed me, filling my heart with hope because of what it said and from whose lips it came. They were the words of Jesus, spoken to His Father saying, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17). There it was! The connection that I had missed; the connection that nobody had told me about. It was the connection between the truth of God’s Word and the sanctification of God’s people—the sanctification that I so desperately desired in the area of sexual purity. So that connection set me on a search in which I discovered new hope and sufficient power to win my battle against lust and pornography.

I pored over my Bible, trying to find other texts that would shed light on Jesus’ words in John 17:17. To my joyful
surprise, text after text made the same connection—the connection between truth and purity. For instance,

*How can a young man keep his way pure?* By keeping it **according to Your word.** With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. **Your word** I have treasured in my heart, that I **may not sin against You.** (Psalm 119:9–11)

*If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness.* (1 Timothy 6:3)

*Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.* (Titus 1:1)

*But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.* (1 Timothy 1:8–10)

Brothers, what these texts are saying is that “Your [God’s] word,” “the doctrine,” “the truth,” and “sound teaching,” produces godliness in the lives of God’s people. All of these phrases collectively refer to the whole body of pure scriptural instruction. To put it in a more theologically pre-
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cise way, orthodoxy produces orthopraxy; that is, healthy
document promotes healthy living. These texts point out that
there is a dynamic connection between doctrine and
lifestyle. Take, for example, the 1 Timothy 1:8–10 passage.
Having listed a rap sheet of vices that should make even a
hardened criminal blush, the apostle Paul argues that those
vices and others like them are “contrary to sound teaching.”

Paul is not only saying that these vices do not match
with what sound teaching says, but more fundamentally, he
is saying that these vices are against what sound teaching
promotes and produces. Do you see it, brothers? Immor-
ality and homosexuality are “contrary” to healthy doctrine.
So if you are a man who persists in these types of vices,
among other things, you must ask yourself whether or not
you are receiving a regular diet of sound doctrine upon
which you are building your life. In all likelihood, according
to Paul, the answer is that you are not. For if you were, your
lifestyle would not be so contrary to your doctrine.

Now, to be sure, there are men who are familiar with
sound doctrine and even teach it, who still engage in illicit
sexual sins. Theologians, Bible teachers, professors, and pas-
tors alike, are by no means absent from the sad list of men
who have left behind the wreckage of destroyed families, the
carnage of ruined reputations, and the scandal of stunned
congregations because of immorality. Even the soundest of
churches are not immune to these tragedies.

So how can this be? you ask. I submit to you that these
men do not know sound doctrine as they should. Experience
cannot be the test of truth in these cases. God’s Word makes
this connection, and we must believe it. Sound doctrine will
promote and produce godliness if we know it properly and
follow it faithfully. But a man can be exposed to sound doc-
trine and even agree with it but still not benefit from it just
as a chef can cook and serve healthy food to others without personally benefiting from it. He must eat it for himself.

And you, my brother, must eat sound doctrine for yourself. In fact, later in Paul’s letter to Timothy, he tells him that the very means by which Timothy will set himself apart as “a good servant of Christ Jesus” will be to constantly nourish himself on “sound doctrine” (see 1 Timothy 4:6). So just as healthy food nourishes and promotes a healthy body, in the same way, healthy doctrine nourishes and promotes a healthy soul—a soul not weak and easily susceptible to the infections and diseases of sexual immorality and impurity.

Brother, your soul needs nourishment in order for you to fight your battles against lust and sexual temptation. Victory will not come easily. It takes strength, energy, and focused discipline. That’s why in the next verse Paul tells Timothy to “have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. [But] on the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness . . .” (1 Timothy 4:7). You must not miss this. In verse 6, Paul mentions the nourishment of the “words of the faith and of the sound doctrine,” and in verse 7, he tells Timothy to discipline himself “for the purpose of godliness.”

It is the nourishment from the words of the faith and from sound doctrine that will give Timothy the energy and strength he needs to engage in the strenuous discipline of pursuing godliness. Possessing godliness and sexual purity takes discipline, and discipline takes effort, and effort takes energy. Moreover, sound doctrine is an essential component of the fuel that God has ordained to give you that energy. But sadly, brothers, many of us spend our time dabbling “with worldly fables fit only for old women” as Paul warned Timothy in verse 7. It’s no small wonder that sexual immorality is rampant among men in our churches.
Therefore, brothers, let me stress again, sound doctrine does not automatically produce purity. Passively sitting under sound doctrine will no more produce sexual purity in your life than passively sitting in a gym will put muscles on your body. There is a biblical process known as progressive sanctification. In this process, the believer daily works out the grace of God in his life as he responds to God’s enabling power through trust and obedience. Each man has the responsibility to exercise faith in sound doctrine so that he might experience its sanctifying effect. But the effect is impossible to achieve if, in fact, one’s doctrine is not sound.

Even the psalmist of old recognized this dynamic connection. Notice how precisely the psalmist speaks with regard to desiring purity. He asks, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” (Psalm 119:9a). This is the million dollar question, is it not? In a moment of utter desperation you’ve probably asked the same question, haven’t you? Look at his answer and let the Spirit of God burn it into your soul. He writes, “By keeping it according to Your word” (Psalm 119:9b). The psalmist knew that if he were to have any success in living a life of purity he would have to live in line with and in dependence upon God’s Word. He was so convinced of that reality that he literally “treasured” God’s Word in his heart so that he would not become a prisoner in the war against sin (see Psalm 119:11).

Here then, was a man, brothers, who knew the connection between God’s Word and a life of purity. Do you share that same connection? Are you experiencing the fruit of that connection? Or are you experiencing the fruit of being under unhealthy doctrine—doctrine which is giving you neither foundation nor power to win your battle against sexual impurity? My brother, it doesn’t have to be that way!
THE MISTAKE

Looking back on those early days of my Christian walk, I realize now that I made a fatal mistake—a mistake that cost me dearly. By not recognizing the essential place that sound doctrine plays in a life of purity, I tried to fight the enemy outside of me without first being equipped to capture and hold at bay the enemy within. I involved myself in what Paul refers to as “self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, [which are] of no value against fleshly indulgence” (Colossians 2:23).

I thought it was all up to me to fight in my own strength. So, like many brothers, I majored on what I could do instead of focusing on understanding what Jesus Christ had already done for me. In my futile self-effort to abstain from sexual sin, I was like a man continually walking around the edge of an open pit trying not to fall in. Eventually, I’d get so dizzy from going around in circles, I’d fall right in. To make matters worse, Sunday after Sunday, all I was hearing was, “don’t,” “stop,” “quit,” but I wasn’t hearing anything about the motivation for, or the power behind “how?” Consequently, the “just say no” approach didn’t work for me, as I suspect it isn’t working for you either.

Over time, I came to realize that without the sound doctrine necessary to renew my mind, cleanse my heart, inform my conscience, and empower my will, I was simply fighting a spiritual battle using fleshly weapons which proved to be of no effect. I was trying to build a fortress to stand against the attacks of sexual lust not realizing that Jesus Christ and His Word are the only solid foundation upon which my fortress could stand (see Matthew 7:24–25). And without the understanding of His Word as my foundation, my pitiful fortress was as sturdy as a straw house built on the sand—
constantly threatened and easily blown over by the huffing and puffing and blowing of temptation and fleshly desires.

Remember, brothers, any strategy that you adopt to wage the war against impurity must be grounded in, flow from, and be in accordance with sound doctrine. If it is not, you will simply find yourself fighting a losing battle, or even worse, being self-deceived into thinking that temporary moral reform is the same as genuine grace that brings about growth in purity.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST**

So where does one begin? The answer is, with the Gospel. My brothers, if you are going to experience and maintain any level of victory over lust and impurity, you must first know and believe the true Gospel. It all starts here, for it is the good news of the Gospel that brings you into a vital relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel that defines what that relationship is to be. And it is the Gospel that sustains and builds that relationship. It is the only relationship by which you will be able to stand victorious over the soul-destroying effects of Internet porn, masturbation, being on the down-low, and other sexual sins.

The Bible contains the Gospel, the story of God’s good news to humanity. That story is centered in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and focused on what He did two thousand years ago on a bloody cross. God is the sovereign and holy Creator of all things, and He created humans in His own image with the privileged capacity to have fellowship with Him in love and obedience. But the first humans ruined that relationship by sinning against God and incurring His just condemnation. Their punishment was separation from God as they took on the nature of sin.
This judgment by God put mankind into the inescapable prison of sin and despair. The Bible teaches that men, even at their best, can only muster up filthy rags before God. Without salvation through Christ, men are enslaved to sin, servants of Satan, and enemies of God. We all deserve temporal and eternal damnation for our rebellious nature and behavior, and apart from the gracious saving activity of God in Christ, that’s exactly what each one of us would have received.5

The good news is that God graciously took the initiative to provide a way for sinners to be forgiven and restored to fellowship with Him. God entered this world in the person of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, to do for sinners what they are impotent to do for themselves. Having lived the perfect life, Jesus died a sacrificial death on the cross as a substitute for lawbreaking rebels. It was on that cross that Jesus paid in full the price for sins so that sinners might be forgiven by God. He satisfied the just claims of the law of God so that sinners might be justified by God and absorbed the awful wrath of God so that sinners might be reconciled to God. Then, having triumphed over sin, on the third day Jesus rose from the dead, gaining victory over death and the grave. And now, as the resurrected Lord and King, He is graciously offering salvation to all who will repent of their sins and believe solely on Him for a right relationship with God.6

Brothers, this is good news, and it all starts here.

Is this the Gospel that you believe? Is this the good news that is preached and taught at your church? Is this the storyline that is being reinforced and emphasized from the pulpit that you sit under? When you stand before God, will it be this Gospel that you cast your hope upon or will it be some other gospel? Listen to me, brothers. You can fight as hard as humanly possible against lust and sexual tempta-
tion, but it will be all for naught if you miss it here. And that, my brothers, would be the worst of all casualties of war. Take a moment now and make sure you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is presented and offered to you in the Gospel of the Holy Bible.

**PRACTICE WHAT YOU BELIEVE**

History teaches us that no war can ever be won by accident. Any general taking his soldiers off to battle will have a thoroughly constructed battle plan. Furthermore, he will make sure that each of his men know and execute that plan so that victory can be achieved. Well, it is not much different in our war against sexual impurity. Jesus Christ is our commander-in-chief, and He has given to all His soldiers the perfect war plan. It’s called the Bible, and contained in it are doctrines that are foundational for His men to know and believe in order to achieve victory. But just like any successful war plan, it must be followed to the letter. If not, battles are lost, ground is given up, morale is low, and casualties are sustained.

This means that ignorance is not bliss, nor is it acceptable; on the contrary, it is deadly. Therefore, it should be no surprise to us that ignorance is one of Satan’s most effective strategies to keep us in bondage to sexual sin. If you don’t know God’s plan for purity, you can’t practice it. This makes it essential for you to give yourself to the study of the Scriptures in order to know how to fight. Look closely at this all-important text:

> *Seeing that His [God’s] divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory*
and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1:3–4)

Do you see it here, brothers? The apostle Peter has the answer to how we can escape from the prison of corruption that is found in worldly lusts. His answer is, “through the true knowledge of Him [God]” by which we get “His precious and magnificent promises” (vv. 3–4). And it is “by them” that we then grow in Christlikeness. As a result, the more like Christ we become, the less we will lose the battles against sexual temptation and defiling lusts. So then, the key is to embrace the promises that lead us into a deeper knowledge of God because to really know God is to become more like God. But if we do not know the promises of God, which are in His Word, how can we grow in Christlikeness? That’s the problem. We can’t. We must know God’s promises and stand on them in order to partake of them.

Now, you might be thinking that it takes much more than simply knowing some doctrines and promises of Scripture to win the war against sexual sins. In one sense you would be correct, but in another you would be wrong. There is more to the strategy of Christ’s war plan. He has given to us a multiarrayed arsenal to ensure our victory, and you will become more acquainted with those weapons as you read the other chapters of this book. But do not underestimate the power of knowing sound doctrine and the Word of God. Let me give you two examples of what I mean, one from the apostle Paul and another from the apostle John.

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church, he deals with a myriad of issues. As you read the letter, it’s as if he is writing to the contemporary church in America. The church
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is worldly, immature, doctrinally unstable, and awash with sensuality and sexual sin of the grossest sort. In the second part of chapter 6, Paul deals with a group of men in the church who were apparently visiting prostitutes at the local pagan temple. He writes,

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH” [emphasis original]. But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:15–20)

Brothers, this is as scandalous as it gets. Immorality, prostitution, adultery—it’s all here. So how does Paul deal with it? He appeals to what they should have known. He gives them a command, and in doing so, he gives them the doctrines concerning Christ upon which the command can be carried out. Notice that three different times Paul asks the Corinthians if they “know” something. He’s assuming that they should have known, but since they didn’t, they were committing gross immorality. Their ignorance was leading to their sin. And, brothers, I submit to you, that if you are continually engaging in sexual sins, it is, at least in part, because you do not know something that you should.
Or, perhaps you are not informed in the way that you should be; namely, through sound doctrine.

So Paul reminds the Corinthians of the truth of who they are in Christ Jesus. They are members of Christ (v. 15), one with Christ (v. 17), and purchased by Christ (vv. 19–20). In essence, he reminds them of the doctrines of the spiritual union with Christ and redemption. Paul’s point is that each of these doctrines has sanctifying implications for the Corinthians in serving to liberate them from the enslaving power of immorality. So when he commands them to “flee immorality” (v. 18), it is a command that rests on the foundation of the sound doctrine that he has explained to them and reminded them of.

They can flee immorality because God has already set them free by purchasing them out of the slave market of sin and joined them to Jesus Christ. And the same is true for you, my brother. You too can flee immorality. But, if you do not know and understand the doctrines behind why and how you can achieve this most important goal, you will continue to struggle with sexual sin. This is why it is so important for you to be in a place where the whole truth of God’s pure Word is preached and taught. Consider this, when was the last time you heard a sermon on the believer’s union with Christ? Or when was the last time in Bible study you actually were taught the spiritual implications of being redeemed by Christ? It is my hope that you are regularly being taught these and other biblical doctrines so that you can know and experience the victory that is yours in Christ.

Now, let’s turn our attention to the first epistle of John. In the first few verses of 1 John 3, the apostle encourages his readers to meditate on the profound reality of the love of God. In doing so, he calls their attention to the second coming of Jesus Christ: “We know that when He appears, we
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will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (v. 2b). What’s important to see here is how John teaches that there is a connection between the doctrine of the second coming and the purity of God’s people. Notice in the next verse he writes, “And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

This is so clear. Knowing, believing, and being focused on the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ is to be motivated and empowered to live a life of purity. Why? Because according to John, only he who practices righteousness will have confidence before the Lord at His coming having given evidence that he is truly born of God; and conversely, he who practices unrighteousness will shrink away from the Lord in shame (see 1 John 2:28–29). The reality of the doctrine promotes and produces the purity!

As with these texts, we see over and again this all-important connection between what we believe and how we behave. Consequently, I am persuaded that in this battle for sexual purity there is arguably no greater way to spend your time and effort than in studying your Bible and committing yourself to learning sound doctrine. Do not fall prey to the prevailing thought that has insidiously made its way into so many of our churches that says, “Doctrine divides; don’t focus on it.” Yes, it divides all right. It divides the brothers who are serious about glorifying God and honoring Christ with lives of moral purity from the ones who have waved the white flag of surrender to the Enemy of God’s people. To the latter, the battle cry is to burn that white flag and pick up the bloodstained banner of Christ, for we are more than conquerors in the Lord Jesus. Brothers, we are on the winning side!
S E C R E T S E X W A R S

WATCH OUT FOR LAND MINES

Satan is a formidable enemy. He will use whatever means necessary to destroy your life so that you might bring shame on the name of the Lord Jesus. In addition to trying to keep you ignorant of sound doctrine, he also corrupts doctrine through false teaching. He knows that if you will unknowingly embrace his doctrines, which Paul calls “doctrines of demons” in 1 Timothy 4:1, you will not only be ineffective in your battle against sexual temptation, but you will also be more susceptible to carnal lusts. The apostle Peter understood this and warned the first-century church with these words,

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.

(2 Peter 2:1–2)

Understand this well: bad doctrine not only distorts the way of the truth, but it also corrupts the souls of its hearers by leading its followers to sensuality. Peter further describes it this way, “For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they [false teachers] entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error” (2 Peter 2:18). False teaching is ruinous to your pursuit of sexual purity, for underpinning it is an inherent carnality which wages war against your soul’s genuine longing for moral holiness.

Every time you give yourself to bad doctrine, you are not only undercutting your own ability to live a righteous life,
but you are also opening yourself up to being carried away by sinful lust. This is why it is so important to guard yourself from the many subtleties of Satan’s deceptions that mask themselves as true teachings of Scripture. The only way you will be successful at doing so is to equip yourself through studying the Word of God so that you will be sensitive to it and alert when you hear doctrine that does not ring of God’s truth.

Across the contemporary landscape of American Christianity there are several forms of false doctrine that you need to be aware of if you’re going to be successful in your fight against sexual sins. For example, there is a doctrine which claims that Jesus Christ died so that you might indulge your every desire for wealth and material blessings. This false doctrine does nothing but breed carnal lust and greed within your soul. It will be impossible for you to deny yourself when all you’re hearing from the preachers who teach this falsehood is to indulge yourself. It does nothing but feed the flesh, the very thing that Jesus called us to put to death.

Make no mistake about it, greed is inextricably connected to immorality and impurity. In one list Paul placed them together along with other sexual sins because he understood this connection: “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints” (Ephesians 5:3). It’s clear as a bell. Unmortified greed will bleed out in every area of a man’s life, especially in the sexual arena. It is naïve to think that greed can be compartmentalized.

Moreover, if you’re sitting under the so-called “prosperity gospel,” you are only stoking the embers of the very fire that you desire to put out. Week after week your flesh is being stimulated to crave more and more. Is it any wonder
that you’re finding it so difficult to keep your passions in check? If you sow to your flesh from the flesh, you will reap corruption, as Galatians 6:8 points out.

Equally harmful to your sexual purity, but far more subtle than the “prosperity gospel” is what I call “radical emotionalism.” The danger here is the elevation of emotions to the place of master. It is not that emotions are wrong; they are not. In fact, the Bible places a high premium on them. You cannot serve and worship God properly without them. However, God designed our emotions to be governed by His truth—by sound doctrine. But, in far too many of our churches, the great achievement of many preachers is to get the people as emotionally charged as possible. In many of these settings, sound doctrine is a nonissue, for the people no longer endure sound doctrine but have simply heaped to themselves teachers who tickle their ears and excite their fancies (see 2 Timothy 4:3–4). In this toxic environment, emotions become sovereign and truth is set aside.

Brothers, once you begin to be led by your emotions in this way you will have a difficult time standing on the truth when sexual temptation beckons to your feelings. The man governed by his feelings and not by the truth of God’s Word is no match for the fierce power of sexual temptation, no matter how strong he may be. Remember, it was bondage to his own sensual feelings that made the strong man Samson weak when it came to women.7

Watch out for these land mines and others as well. Far too many of our fellow comrades have already been blown up by them. Do whatever it takes to put yourself in a healthy context in which the Scriptures are accurately and faithfully taught. Study and learn sound theology, listen to faithful preaching, and read solid Christian books. Together they
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will assist you in discerning bad doctrine that cripples the soul’s ability to fight the good fight of faith.

CONCLUSION

Brothers, I’ve given you much to absorb. But it’s all necessary and foundational. Without being committed to sound doctrine your desire for sexual purity will not be easily fulfilled, if at all. The Lord Jesus Christ has not left us insufficiently equipped to fight and win this war. You do not have to be a prisoner of war in the battle for sexual purity. He has given to us a complete battle plan by which, if faithfully followed, we will know and experience victory. If we do our part, God will do His. Not because He is obligated to respond to us, but because He is gracious and kind, and because He desires our purity more than we even know.

I began this chapter by sharing with you the great connection I found years ago in John 17:17, where Jesus prays that all of His people be sanctified by the truth of God’s Word. Let me end by sharing with you a marvelous promise that Jesus makes. It will encourage you to trust His Word in your battle for purity: “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31–32).
SECRET SEX WARS

POINTS OF REFLECTION

1. Jesus prayed in John 17:17 for God to sanctify His people by the truth. Do you think God answers that prayer? Of course He does! So, brother, there should be no doubt that the power of God is available to you to experience victory over sexual sins. We learned though that you have a part to play in experiencing that sanctification; namely, learning, believing, and standing on sound doctrine. Read Psalm 119:9–11 and John 8:31–32 carefully, and write out in your own words how important God’s Word is to your pursuit of sexual purity.

2. In I Timothy 4:6, Paul mentions being nourished on the words of faith and of sound doctrine. The image is that of receiving nutrition from something you’ve eaten. It should be clear to you that “sound doctrine” is nutritious and “bad doctrine” is harmful. How are you nourishing yourself on sound doctrine? What steps do you need to take to receive a regular diet of healthy Bible teaching? If you need help getting started, ask your pastor to recommend to you a solid evangelical study Bible such as The MacArthur Study Bible and a good evangelical book on Bible doctrine like Bruce Milne’s Know the Truth or Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology.

3. In your battle for sexual purity, your understanding of the Gospel is critical. It is the Gospel that not only saves you; it is the Gospel that sanctifies you as well. Many brothers fall into the same trap as the Galatian church members by starting off in the Spirit, only to then try to perfect themselves by the flesh (see Galatians 3:1–3). You must learn
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how to apply the Gospel to your battle with sexual sins. Carefully read 1 Corinthians 6:9–20 and prayerfully study how Paul applies the Gospel to the Corinthians’ situation. Write out how the same truths about what Jesus Christ accomplished on your behalf can be applied to your own situation.

4. The Bible is filled with doctrine, and you might be overwhelmed when thinking about what to study. Let me suggest that in all of your studying that you focus your attention on one area in particular. That area is the grace of God. Simply put, remember that grace is the main ingredient in everything that the Bible teaches about what God in Christ has done for your salvation and promises to do through Christ for your sanctification and glorification. Major on those doctrines.

To get started, read Titus 2:11–14 and reflect on the power of God’s grace. The next time you’re tempted by sexual sin, remembering this passage and putting your faith in it can help you overcome your temptation. Rest assured, if you sincerely desire to do this, the Holy Spirit will be there to help you remember God’s Word and your faith in it will release the power to get the victory.

5. Remember that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20). Whatever your failures have been, God’s grace is available to you through your faith in Christ. There is forgiveness, cleansing, restoration, and power at the throne of grace (see Hebrews 4:14–16). Do not let Satan convince you that your sins are so bad that God won’t forgive you or that you’re so far gone that God can’t help you. The Devil is a liar (John 8:44). Read John 8:1–11;
Meditate on these rich Scriptures that have the power to produce much fruit in your life. Then go and fight the good fight, brother.