



PURSUING PURITY

By Aaron Berry

Chapter 1: Through the Lattice

A study of Proverbs 7

Introduction

Sin is irresistible in the moment but detestable when you step back and see the full picture. If you picked up this booklet, chances are you are sickened by how irresistible pornography is to you. You hate it, but you love it. You never want to look at it again, but you know you're going to. This is the agony that so many men face on a regular basis.

I hope that you're looking for an answer, and I'm overjoyed to tell you that the Bible has that answer. But before we look at the remedy, there is one important step we need to take. We need to take a good, long look at ourselves. In a way, we need to step outside ourselves and look at that man in a dark room, huddled over his glowing laptop screen, glancing over his shoulder, and clicking from site to site. We need to see how sinful we are and how serious our problem is. Only then will we see the glory and hope of God's Word.

In Proverbs 7, Solomon tells a story to his son. It's a story about someone he sees through the lattice of his roof. As you read this story, put yourself in it. Consider how Proverbs 7 helps you come face-to-face with yourself.

Pause and read the whole chapter of Proverbs 7.

The Vulnerability of the Simple Man – Proverbs 7:6–9

After Solomon's introductory exhortations in verses 1–5, he describes the character of the story. In this description we see red flag after red flag, yet the man obliviously continues down the path. As we read and study this passage, ask God to shed light on your own life and on the red flags that you are ignoring.

Who do you see? Read Proverbs 7:6–7. How do these verses describe the character of this story?

This is someone who is full of passion (youthful lusts; 2 Tim 2:22) with no discernment or self-control. This is a foolish person—one who has not treasured wisdom and knowledge, but lives for his own appetites and does little to control them.

What is he doing? Read Proverbs 7:8. Do you think he is innocently wandering the streets or intentionally marching toward the woman's house? Perhaps a little of both?

When is he doing it? Read Proverbs 7:9. Why do you think this simple man chose to go at night?

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Although this passage is talking about adultery, it is very applicable to the struggle of pornography. After all, the lust of the eyes is the adultery of the heart (Matt 5:27-30). Place yourself in the shoes of the simple man. You might not be passing along a street corner at night, but you may be surfing on the web in your bedroom. Imagine how Proverbs 7:6-9 would read if Solomon applied to your specific struggle:

*For at the window of my house,
I have looked out through my lattice,
And I have seen among the youths,
(Your Name) lacking sense,
Surfing through the internet,
“pointlessly” browsing the web
In his bedroom, with the door closed,
At the time of night and darkness.*

And behold, the woman meets him....

The intensity of the temptation – Read Proverbs 7:10–20

This is when temptation is the strongest. All three conditions are met: **a vulnerable person, a vulnerable place, at a vulnerable time**. It is moments like these in which we are most likely to fall. Our flesh is ready to give in to the slightest pull. But temptation doesn't pull slightly in these situations—it pulls savagely and intensely. List some ways that these verses describe the intensity of temptation:

When you are in a vulnerable state in a vulnerable place at a vulnerable time, you are likely to fall for this onslaught. The allurements and enticements are almost too strong for you to resist in that moment. The temptation calls to your fleshly desires and promises their fulfillment and satisfaction. It promises secrecy. It promises to make you feel good about yourself. And the result is often disastrous.

As you look at yourself through the lattice, a vulnerable person in a vulnerable place at a vulnerable time; as you consider the strong pull of pornography as it promises you so many things and calls to your strong desires, it's time to take a step back and look further down the road. It's time to look at the part of the equation that is usually invisible in the moment of temptation: The disastrous end.

The Disastrous End – Read Proverbs 7:21–23

This is the part of the equation that we often ignore in the moment. But as we look through the lattice on ourselves, we must look at where this encounter leads:

- He is both persuaded and compelled to give in (v. 21)
- He follows her “all at once” (v. 22) –no thinking things through, no stepping back and considering the consequences; so often, we give into temptation “all at once.” It just “happens” before we even think about it.

Solomon provides three vivid illustrations that depict the gullibility and destruction of those who give in to temptation:

- “As an ox goes to the slaughter”: A dumb animal being led along, not knowing his final destination.
- “as a stag is caught fast”: Once the trap is set, the stag is rendered helpless, simply waiting for the final kill shot.
- “as a bird rushes into a snare”: It doesn’t slow down to take in his surroundings.

One of the deadliest lies Satan tells is that sin isn’t deadly. We often fall into the trap of thinking that pornography won’t hurt us, and even if it did, it wouldn’t hurt anybody else. We wrongly think if it’s short of adultery, we haven’t done anything *too* bad. But Jesus told us in Matthew 5:27-30 that lust of the eyes is adultery of the heart, and for us to think that we can wallow in pornography and then arise unscathed and unscarred is foolishness.

Centuries ago, the church Father Chrysostom spoke of the incredible damage attending the immoral theater. His words are eerily applicable to us today:

“Even if you did not have intimate relations with the prostitute, in your lust you coupled with her, and you committed the sin in your mind. And it was not only at that time, but also when the theatre has closed, and the woman has gone away, her image remains in your soul, along with her words, her figure, her looks, her movement, her rhythm, and her distinctive and meretricious tunes; and having suffered countless wounds you go home. Is it not this that leads to the disruption of households? Is it not this that leads to the destruction of temperance, and the break up of marriages? Is it not this that leads to wars and battles, and odious behaviour lacking any reason? For when, saturated with that woman, you return home as her captive, your wife appears more disagreeable, your children more burdensome, and your servants troublesome, and your house superfluous. Your customary concerns seem to annoy you when they relate to managing your necessary business, and everyone who visits is an irritating nuisance.”

My friend, your struggle with pornography is destroying you and your relationships. It is eating you from the inside and seeking to gain a stronger foothold each and every day.

Do you see yourself through the lattice? Do you see the vulnerability? Do you see the intensity of the temptation? Do you see the disastrous consequences?

It’s time to reflect:

See your own vulnerability:

Proverbs 7 says the target of the temptation was one who was youthful, simple, and lacking sense. As you look at your own life (your habits, your schedule, your hobbies, etc.), are there indicators that you aren't living by wisdom but by foolish desire? If so, write some of those indicators below:

The vulnerable man of Proverbs 7 took himself to a vulnerable place, "taking the road to her house." In your struggle with pornography, what are the vulnerable places in which you are most susceptible to pornography (certain websites, rooms of the house, social media profiles, etc.)? Be as specific as possible.

Have you ever "innocently" visited certain websites, all the while knowing that you fully intend for it to lead to lust?

The vulnerable man was at a vulnerable place at a vulnerable time: "at the time of night and darkness." During which times are you most vulnerable to pornography (time of day, state of mind, circumstances)?

See Temptation's Intensity

Temptation to indulge in pornography truly does lie in wait "at every corner" (v. 12). In a given week, how often are you faced with the temptation to look at porn?

What are the lies that you believe when you give in to the temptation?

See your disastrous destination

Pornography is leading you toward a destination. Like the slaughter house for the ox, the kill shot for the stag, and the snare for the bird, pornography only leads to destruction. In what ways will it damage your relationships?

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In what ways will it damage your attitude toward sin and holiness?

In what ways will it damage your walk with God?

Conclusion

It's not a pretty sight, is it? Our sin and its consequences truly are detestable, but it was necessary for us to be honest with ourselves—to frankly and bluntly confront the foolishness of our own thinking. If you're struggling with porn, you're heading toward destruction. To sugarcoat the issue would be of great disservice to you. If you're dabbling in or addicted to pornography, you are being simple-minded and foolish, you are believing the lies of the Devil, and you're acting like an ox being led to the slaughter house.

If we want to bask in the light that Christ provides, we need to open our eyes, look through the lattice, and see ourselves and our sin. Only then, will we desperately look to Christ.

Before next time...

- **Ask for grace.** Ask God to give you a clear vision to see your own sin. Ask him to break your heart as you honestly confess your sin to him.
- **Read Proverbs 8.** Write ways in which the woman of Proverbs 8 is contrasted with the woman of Proverbs 7.

Chapter 2: A Good Kind of Hurt

A Study of 2 Corinthians 7:11

Introduction:

You have come face-to-face with yourself, and chances are, it's not a pretty picture. If God is pricking your heart, then you are most likely experiencing a level of grief over your own failure and hard-heartedness. So...what now?

If you are grieving, that's good—but it's also dangerous. You are at a pivotal point in your fight against pornography. Will your grief lead to repentance or to destruction? This was Paul's concern for the Corinthian believers in 2 Corinthians 7. **Take a moment and read the whole chapter.**

Paul, the Nervous Wreck

The Corinthian believers had deeply offended and sinned against Paul. Desiring to see their restitution, Paul wrote a highly confrontational letter to them (v. 8). Paul immediately started to regret it. He began to get nervous about how the Corinthians would respond. All he could do was wait. He knew that the Corinthians could respond in one of two ways: They could respond with worldly grief that only lead to death, or they could respond with godly grief that let to repentance.

If you were to respond to your sin with worldly grief that leads to destruction, what might that look like?

Godly Sorrow: The Precursor to Repentance – Read 2 Cor 7:7–10

The response Paul received was the source of incredible joy and comfort for him (vv. 7-9). Yes, they were grieved, but that wasn't the source of Paul's joy. The source of his joy was the repentance produced from their grief (v. 9). While worldly sorrow might wallow in self-pity, sulk over the fact that you got caught, or grieve over your loss of reputation, godly sorrow recognizes the seriousness of your own sin before a holy God.

This is the distinction between simply feeling sorry for your sin and actually repenting. Grief without repentance is useless grief. True repentance will *always* result in action. Therefore, godly grief is necessary, but it's also temporary, for it morphs into a frontal assault against your sin.

Repentance, Close-up – Read 2 Cor 7:11

2 Corinthians 7:11 provides one of them most thorough descriptions of what true repentance looks like. As you grieve over your sin of lust, pray earnestly for God to produce in your heart an attitude of true repentance. 2 Corinthians is not meant to be a check list that you sequentially mark off as you seek to display true repentance; it is a litmus test of your heart. As we consider **the seven characteristics of true repentance**, examine your own heart.

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- **A sense of urgency** – “what earnestness”: The Greek word here could be translated “strong effort,” “haste” or “eagerness.” True repentance is fully committed to change and will waste no time in pursuing that change.
- **A correction of testimony** – “what eagerness to clear yourselves”: This word is usually translated as “defense” (ἀπολογία). This is *not* describing a desire to make excuses for sin, but a desire to be an accurate representation of a child of God. An addiction to pornography hurts the cause of Christ. True repentance sees that.
- **An anger over sin** – “what indignation”: This is “a mental state of extreme emotional disturbance.” It is an irritation and agitation – a hatred – toward sin. A good indicator of true repentance is the level of aversion and hatred you have toward the sin you have committed.
- **A recognition of God’s presence** – “what fear”: True repentance soberly remembers God’s constant presence, leading him to a healthy fear. Isn’t it true, after all, that when we are lusting, we are forgetting God’s holy presence? R. Kent Hughes once wrote, “When lust takes control, God is quite unreal to us...when we are in the grip of lust, the reality of God fades.”
- **An acceptance of confrontation** – “what longing, what zeal”: Verse 7 clarifies that this longing and zeal the Corinthians had was a longing for the Apostle Paul (“he told us of your longing, your zeal for me”), the one who had so strongly confronted them. True repentance readily accepts and welcomes those who confront them; it doesn’t run away.
- **A desire for justice** – “what punishment”: True repentance accepts consequences. It wants whatever it takes to make things right, even if that means chastening. A heart that objects to justice reveals a lack of seriousness toward the offense.

This far more intense, all-encompassing, and fervent than “I’m sorry.” It’s far deeper than simply feeling bad about your sin. So consider your struggle with porn. No doubt, you have experienced times of grief over your sin, but how many times has your grief led to a repentance like Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 7:11? Has God worked so deeply in your heart that your grief morphed into this type of repentance?

What about You?

It’s time for some more honest examination. Just as we took a careful look at our sin, we must now take a careful look at our response. If you took an honest self-inventory as you “looked through the lattice” in the last study, you should be experiencing grief over your struggle with pornography. Now, it’s time to examine how you should respond.

A sense of urgency – Write down some indicators that would show that you are fully committed to pursuing change in your life. If you were “earnest” in your repentance, what would it look like?

A correction of testimony – How does your struggle with porn paint a wrong picture of your relationship with Jesus Christ?

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An anger over sin – what Scriptural truths could help develop a strong aversion and anger toward pornography?

A recognition of God’s presence - List some characteristics of God that would help form a healthy fear of him in the moment of temptation.

An acceptance of confrontation – If you have ever been confronted over your struggle, how have you typically responded (even internally)? Why should true repentance more toward its confronter?

A desire for justice – Ask yourself this question: would you be ever be willing to pray this prayer to God: “Lord, whatever you need to do to help me grow, I’m ready to accept it—even if it’s painful”? If not, what does that say about how you’re viewing your sin?

Conclusion

This type of repentance is painful, not doubt about it. But being dominated by an addiction to pornography is infinitely more painful. As we saw in the first study, the end is destruction. But God has provided a way for us to turn. If you are his child, you have his Holy Spirit. None of these characteristics of true repentance are natural responses—they require divine intervention. They require the work of the Spirit.

So far, this study has forced us to take a good long look at the ugliness of our sin and our rebellion against God. But this painful process has a joyful, glorious end! After hearing of the Corinthians’ true, genuine repentance, he told them, “At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter” (v. 11). Would it not be wonderful that phrase to be said concerning your struggle with pornography? God’s Word says that this *can* be true of you! Seek true repentance in your own heart, and you will be on the road toward freedom!

Before next time...

- **Read Psalm 32 and 51.** Find elements of true repentance, as describes above, in these Psalms and write them down.
- **Ask for grace.** If your heart isn’t marked by true repentance, cry out to God and ask him to convict you and break you of your sin.
- **Recommended resource:** listen to the sermon, “Repentance in the Life of the Believer” by Dr. Jim Newcomer - <http://cbcypsi.org/resources/sermons/repentance-in-the-life-of-the-believer/>

Chapter 3: Drawing the Battle Lines

A Topical Study

Introduction

If God has truly broken you over your sin, then he both calls you and enables you to return to him. It's time to do battle against your flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you ready to fight? As the song says, can you testify, "Compelled by joy, I fight the sin that turns my gaze from your glory"?

You may feel that this battle against pornography is daunting, but praise the Lord, Christ Jesus has not left you alone in this fight. Philippians 2:12–13 says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Both the ability and the desire to fight against sin comes from God, not from you. He is with you every step of the way. He helps you analyze the enemy, he provides you with weapons, he trains you with your fellow-soldiers, and he is your closest ally. As we draw the battle lines in your battle against lust, thank the Lord for his grace and mercy toward you!

The Nature of the Battle

Before you go rushing into battle, it is vital that you understand both your enemy and the battlefield. What may seem like a simple objective—"kill porn!"—might end up being a lot deeper than you think. There are two things about the battle you have to understand.

- **The battle has many fronts:** You may be thinking to yourself, *If I can just conquer my battle with porn, I'll be in good shape*, but chances are, there are other sins in your life, along with porn, that all have the same root sin.

In Peter Jackson's movie adaptation, *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*, Thorin Oakenshield and his comrades find themselves completely outnumbered as they seek to defend the Misty Mountain. As they begin to lose hope, Thorin and his best warriors charge away from the battle toward the enemy camp where the commander of the orc armies is overlooking battlefield. When Bilbo the Hobbit and Gandalf the Wizard spot them, Bilbo asks Gandalf what they are doing. "To cut the head off the snake," Gandalf replies.

When the commander is defeated, his armies are rendered powerless. In your battle against sin, this is what you must do. Your battle has many fronts. As you examine your life, let's say that you discern four struggles: laziness, eating habits, temper, and porn. Committed to conquering your battle with porn, you gather all your forces and charge directly at pornography with everything you've got, all the while leaving your laziness, your eating habits, and your temper unaddressed. But what is the "commanding sin" behind all four struggles? Maybe it's a lack of self-control. Your surrender to your own appetites has led to a number of struggles, only *one* of which is porn. And as you attack porn, your lack of self-control simply manifests itself even greater in the other struggles, and eventually you gain victory over none of them.

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This is why Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:25, “Every athlete exercises self-control in **all things**,” not just one thing. Your battle against sin must attack the “commanding sin”—the one that manifests itself in multiple ways in your life. The main enemy is not pornography – it is the sinful heart that pursues pornography.

Do you see other sins in your life that might have the same root problem as your addiction to pornography? What are they? After writing down the list, see if you can find a root cause—a “commanding” sin—for all (or most) of them.

- **The battle is progressive:** You need to realize that you are starting on a journey. Change doesn’t happen overnight. So often, we adopt an unrealistic understanding of our spiritual journey that only produces greater discouragement when we fail.

Have you ever seen those signs in the workplace that say, “This department has worked _____ days without an accident. The previous record was _____ days. Let’s set a new record!” When an accident occurs the first number is erased and you start back at ZERO. We often look at our Christian life like that: *I have gone 4 whole days without looking at porn!* But when you fall back into it, you erase that number and start all over as if all your progress was for nothing and you’re back to where you started.

This isn’t how the Christian life works. Although you should grieve and repent over failure, you should also rejoice over the progress God has worked in you. When you stumble and fall in a race, you don’t go back to the starting line; you get up from where you fell and continue forward. As the Apostle Paul says, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil 3:12).

Have you targeted your enemy? Do you know what the root problem is? Do you know the Nature of your fight?

The Weapons for the Battle

It would be foolish to enter into battle without acquiring the proper weapons. God has given you *incredibly* powerful weapons that he wants you to use in this fight. I’m not going to make this complicated, I’m not going to say anything ground-breaking or earth shattering. What I’m about to tell you is what your Sunday school teacher told you when you were 5 years old. There are children’s songs about this, and you heard it preached all the time. There are two main weapons that every Christian possesses: **The Bible and Prayer**. In Ephesians 6, having described the Christian’s spiritual armor, he describes their spiritual weapon: “And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the **word** of God, **praying** at all times in the Spirit” (6:17–18).

You may be thinking to yourself, *it can’t be that simple! I’ve tried those! I read my Bible! I pray! Why aren’t I winning my battle against sin?* Well I can tell you right now, **it’s not because there is anything**

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wrong with your weapons. 2 Peter 1:2-4 says that God has given to us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” You have all the resources and all the weapons you need to defeat sin in your life. So why do we experience so much defeat? **It’s because we are unskilled with our weapons.** You know the weapon is powerful, you know the weapon is effective, but you don’t know how to use it.

Read Hebrews 5:12–14. Write down the key phrase that explains how we become experts with God’s Word.

Practice, practice, practice. Intense Bible study and prayer is not just for pastors, it’s for the Christian. A vibrant, healthy prayer life is not just the “spiritually elite,” it’s for the Christian. God designed life to only work *one way*: to give your life as a “living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1) in worship to God. To put it bluntly, the *only* way for you to defeat your obsession with pornography is to be *obsessed* with God, reading his Word diligently and praying constantly.

Write out some ways that you can practice using the spiritual weapons of God’s Word and prayer this week.

The Fellow Soldiers in the Battle

You are not a one-man army—God never intended or permits you to be. He has sovereignly created his church, the body of his Son, and you are called to be a part of it (Heb 10:25). God has designed it so that your struggle be fought within the context of a local church, fighting side-by-side with brothers and sisters in Christ. Unfortunately, since addiction to pornography is typically a very private sin, we try to fight against it very privately—a one-man army.

I’m not just talking about confessing your struggle to a trusted brother in the church, I’m talking about complete and total commitment to the church, making it a priority in your life. You need the church and the church needs you.

Describe briefly your current level of involvement in your local church.

Your church is the place where you can be better trained in your spiritual weaponry. It is the place where you can learn and benefit from the strengths of your fellow Christians. It is the place where you have the opportunity to use the gifts God has given you to help mature the body of Christ (Eph 4:12–13).

The church is vital, not only because God commands it, but also because it is a means by which you can conquer sin. Hebrew 3:13 commands us to “exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” If you consider that verse inversely, your heart will be hardened toward sin if you don’t put yourself in a position to be daily exhorted by fellow

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believers. I am not suggesting that you shout your struggle from the pulpit or publish it in the bulletin, but I am suggesting that you consider someone within your church in whom you can confide. It should be a more mature Christian with Bible knowledge and life experience.

Write down the reasons why you might be hesitant to get help from someone in the church. Then write down how you can overcome those hesitations.

The church is a non-negotiable. Isolation in your fight will only lead to frustration and defeat. Get connected, get help, get accountability. God was gracious enough to give you fellow soldiers to fight with you.

The Allies in the Battle

As I said in the beginning, you are not alone in this fight. God not only has given you the weapons, but he has also given you *himself*. And as the triune God, each of the three persons of the trinity are working for your growth and sanctification in different ways. You have God on your side!

Turn to Romans 8. This is, in my opinion, one of the most gloriously comforting chapters in all the Bible. In it, we see each member of the Godhead at work in our lives. But before we enjoy chapter 8, we need to understand Paul's flow of thought leading up to it:

- **Romans 6:** Through Christ's death and resurrection, sin has been put to death (vv. 1–11). We are no longer slaves to it (vv. 12–14), so we must not yield ourselves to sin any longer, but instead yield ourselves to righteousness (vv. 12–23).
- **Romans 7:** We have died to the law (vv. 1–6); however, there is an internal struggle between the flesh and the spirit that can be both frustrating and discouraging (vv. 7–25).
- **Romans 8:1–11:** The good news is that we are in Christ Jesus and are no longer condemned. "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit."

Having described both our battle against sin and our position in Christ, Paul describes the glorious benefits of being "in Christ." In the following verses we can see how each member of the Godhead is our ally in our fight against sin:

God the Father: Read Romans 8:15–17; 28–30. Write down what God the Father has done for you.

God the Holy Spirit: Read Romans 8:16; 26–27. Write down what God the Spirit has done for you.

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God the Son: Read Romans 8:3–4; 34–39. Write down what God the Son has done for you.

It's no wonder that in Romans 8:31, Paul exclaims, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" When you fall into sin, you can never blame your allies for failing you. You have the triune Godhead on your side! He has given you the powerful weapons of his Word and prayer! You are fully equipped to fight, not only pornography, but any sin that seeks to exalt itself in your life!

Conclusion

What a glorious God we serve! It is truly breathtaking when one considers the unmerited love that God has shown us. Why would you pursue lesser things? Why would we entertain ourselves with the very things for which Christ died? There is a battle to fight, so start your weapons training and get to know your allies. You are more than a conqueror through Christ.

Before next time

- **Read Psalm 119.** Try to describe in a paragraph how David valued God's Word.
- **Read the prayers of Paul in Ephesians 1:15–23 and 3:14–21 and ask for grace.** Pray these prayers to God for your own spiritual battle.
- **Recommended Resources:** *How to Read the Bible for All its worth*, by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart; *A Call to Prayer*, by J. C. Ryle (available on PDF online); *Finally Free*, by Heath Lambert.

Chapter 4: Spiritual Far-Sightedness

A Topical Study

Introduction:

You know the nature of battle, you're equipped with the right weapons, you're battling with fellow soldiers, and you have the triune God as your ally. When you confess and repent of your lust and lack of self-control, it's somewhat easy to stay motivated in the battle for a little while. The challenge comes when the battle drags out. What will keep you on the right track?

The battle against lust is a battle of desire. **But desire is not the enemy**, in fact, desire is a crucial element for victory. If you want to endure in the fight, the fight needs to be fueled by desire, not emptied of it. The question is: what do you crave?

Think of your most favorite food. Personally, I have a thing for Taco Bell. But if you find that revolting, think of the food of your choice. Now, imagine that I haven't eaten in three days. If you came up to me, placed a huge Grilled Stuffed Burrito from Taco Bell (or whatever you're thinking of) in front of me, and left me with the simple command, "don't eat the burrito," How challenging would it be to resist? *Incredibly challenging*. I'd eat it in two bites the moment you leave the room.

Now let's change the scenario slightly. I haven't eaten in three days, in you come with the burrito and the command: "*don't eat the food.*" But as I look over your shoulder, I see someone else in the room. This individual holds up a check for \$1,000,000 and says, "If you don't eat the burrito, you get this check." How much easier did it get to resist the temptation right in front of me? It's a ridiculous illustration, I know, but I hope the point is clear: **the most effective way to reject an immediate craving is to look past it toward a far greater reward.**

How an Allurement becomes an Annoyance – Read 2 Timothy 2:4

There is no doubt about it—pornography is alluring. It calls out to our *natural, God-given* desires for sex and encourages us to fulfill that desire apart from God's will, God's way, and God's timing. If you're struggling with pornography, it's because *you really, really like it*. There is a deeply-rooted desire so strong that it often seems impossible to conquer. How do we fight this desire? **With an infinitely greater, infinitely more fulfilling desire.**

2 Timothy 2:4 describes the Christian as a soldier. A good soldier doesn't get "entangled in civilian pursuits." **What civilians see as allurements, soldiers see as annoyances.** What is the greater desire that keeps the soldier from pursuing the world?

You have been enlisted by the King of kings! He has graciously saved you, washed you, and remade you! As recipients of God's bountiful grace and mercy, how do we get to the point where "pleasing the one who enlisted" us is our strongest desire?

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Our desire to please him springs from our thankfulness for what he has done. Paul alludes to this earlier in the chapter when he speaks of the One “who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (v. 9). As you grow in your gratitude for the Gospel, you’ll grow in your desire to please the one who has called you and the sins you once craved will start looking more like annoyances and entanglements that distract you instead of allurements that you crave.

How is the ‘annoyance’ of pornography robbing you of greater joys?

Running in Jesus’ Shadow – Read Hebrews 12:1–17

If you read Hebrews 11, you see example after example of regular men and women who looked past the here-and-now and onto a far greater reward. Abraham looked past his home country toward “a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (v. 10). Moses looked past the “fleeting pleasure of sin” because he saw the “reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt” (v.v. 25–26). And on and on the list goes. This is what faith is: “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). Every single person in Hebrews 11 was enticed by the world, yet God gave them the gift of faith—to see past the allurements and onto the true treasure that God had promised.

Hebrews 12 shifts the attention from these Old Testament Saints onto you today: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1). You have sins that are weighing you down, including your lust pornography. They cripple you and trip you up as you run the Christian race.

According to Hebrews 12:2–4, what is presented as the energizer of endurance in the race?

How did Jesus provide an example for how to run the race (read also Hebrew 4:14–16)?

Just as Christ endured hardship by focusing on the joy before him, we are called to endure this life by fixing our eyes on our great reward. What is the joyous reward promised to those who follow in Christ’s footsteps?

PtP BIBLE STUDIES – PURSUING PURITY

Not only does it take faith to see this, but it takes faith to *desire* this. Your desire for pornography will never fade until you grow in your joyful pursuit of Christ. Paul says in Philippians 3:8, “I count everything as loss because of **the surpassing worth** of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” Do you see the knowledge of Christ of greater worth than *any* other pursuit in your life? Until you do, do not expect victory over your lust.

Preoccupied with Righteousness – Read 2 Peter 1:3–10

It’s common to get addicted to porn during times of relaxation and laziness. The good news is, if you pursue Christ, there will be plenty to keep you busy. Every day presents itself with new opportunities to please your Master, new circumstances in which to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and new temptations that seek to pull you off course. Being a Christ-follower is full-time job!

As we conclude this study, 2 Peter 1:3–10 is fitting. In it, we find a snapshot of the Christian race. We find the fuel that drives us forward, the promises that prod us on, and the virtues to practice—topped off with both warnings and encouragements for those in the race.

Verse 9 describes the fuel for the Christian race and how we receive it. What are they?

Verse 10 mentions “precious and very great promises” through which we “become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in this world because of sinful desire.” What do you think are those promises?

Verses 5–7 provide a detailed list of virtues that we are to pursue in the Christian life. Out of this list, name 2-3 three that you are particularly weak in.

If you do not possess these qualities, how does verse 9 describe you? And how it make you vulnerable to temptations attacks?

Verse 9 gives a comforting reassurance: “be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, **for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.**” What a guarantee! “*Never fall*”? You see, if you’re so preoccupied with pursuing Christlikeness, you’re more likely to side-step temptation. You’ll see it more as an annoyance than an allurement. You see it as a weight that is holding you back. You’ll see it as a blinder that makes you forget your own redemption. And you won’t want that if you desperately want Christ.

Conclusion

Christian, there is hope for you. Although the fight will be long, and the enemy will be fierce, the God of Heaven is on your side. He saves you by grace, fills you with his Spirit, blesses you with his Word, grants you access through prayer, enables you to fight, convicts you when you're wrong, promises you with reward, provides you with an example and intercessor through Christ, and ultimately promises your glorification. One day, you will be released from the very presence of sin and provided entrance into the very presence of your Savior. Let this joyful reality fill your soul. Let it enrapture your heart with praise. And don't let something as vile, filthy, and disgusting as pornography rob you of that joy. You have a battle to fight and a race to run. Through Christ, let's get to it.

About the Author:



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