

From **SEXUAL SIN** to **SEXUAL PURITY**

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The Prodigal Son

Week 1 Week 2 Week 3

The Two Greatest Commandments

Week 4 Week 5 Week 6 Week 7

God is calling you from sexual sin to sexual purity.

This workbook is designed to help you understand and follow His call.

“You are entering this accountability agreement or group because you are suffering the effects of your sexual sin and desire to change your behavior. God does not want you to be in bondage to sexual sins, but His primary desire is **not** to see you stop them. *His primary desire is to have a loving, intimate relationship with you.* Your sexual sins are an obstacle to that relationship. He desires not only to remove these behaviors, but many other sinful behaviors and attitudes that restrict your relationship with Him.

As you relate intimately to God, He will grow within you the character of His Son, Jesus Christ. Rather than merely stopping sinful behaviors, He will grow within you something alive and active: the holiness, sexual purity, and righteousness of His Son. This workbook will remind you to look beyond the paltry, second-class prize, not engaging in sexual sin, and to pursue the real prize: a vibrant, abundant relationship with God in which you live out the character of Jesus Christ.

This workbook is structured to emphasize the importance of intimate relationships in dealing with sexual sin. The first three weeks examine in detail the parable of the Prodigal Son, focusing on the son’s movement to a renewed relationship with his father. The remaining four weeks survey the two greatest commandments, both of which emphasize love and close relationships. Throughout, you will be challenged to reveal openly before God and other men your heart, mind, and actions as they relate to sexual sin.

Let’s begin this study in prayer: Thank you, God, for loving us so much that you call us into an ongoing, intimate relationship with you. Thank you that in your desire to relate to us intimately, you love us enough to root out anything and everything that harms our relationship. Please use this workbook and all meetings associated with it to fulfill your desires. We pray this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Section 1: The Prodigal Son

This section, lasting three weeks, examines in detail the first half of the parable of the prodigal son and applies it to your sexual sin. Read through Luke 15:11-24 now and reread it before each day’s lesson in this section.

“And he [Jesus Christ] said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his

Note: In order to view parts of this study that reference outside material, and listen to the DeMoss messages (Week 2, Day 1 & 2), you will need to view this document on a computer with an internet connection. Internet links are marked by yellow boxes. Selecting or clicking on them will open up the link in your browser.

neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

WEEK ONE

“And he began to be in want.” (Luke 15:14b)

The prodigal son endured severe consequences because of his sin. This week we will look in detail at those consequences and compare them to the ones you have suffered from sexual sin. This will help lead you to a thoughtful response to the effects of sexual sin in your life.

Day 1

“And he began to be in want.” (Luke 15:14b)

The prodigal son suffered four consequences from his sin: financial loss, hunger, shame, and isolation. Verse 14b speaks of his financial loss. It was so severe that it caused him to suffer bodily, even toward the point of starvation.

Men who have been deeply involved in sexual sin often suffer financial and physical losses. Read through this list and mark as honestly and completely as you can the financial and physical losses you have endured because of sexual sin.

Financial losses:

About \$ _____ over _____ months/years spent for sexual sin itself.

Money or goods given to gain or maintain a sexual partner _____

Fines or settlements _____

Add these to calculate total amount spent: _____

Financially related losses:

Bills that were unpaid or remain unpaid due to sexual sin _____

Calls or letters from creditors _____

Bad credit rating or bankruptcy _____

Money borrowed to cover sex-related debts _____

Loss of time and productivity: approximately _____ hours/days/months/years

Projects not completed or rushed due to sexual behavior _____

Inability to concentrate on work _____

Physical losses:

Decreased sensitivity to sexual stimuli _____

Injury suffered from sexual activity _____

Put oneself or others in physical danger _____

Venereal disease or HIV _____

Fear of having caught venereal disease or HIV _____

Others exposed to disease _____

Attempted suicide _____

As mentioned above, the prodigal son suffered severe consequences because of his sin. Nevertheless, his financial

and physical poverty became the first turning point to a renewed relationship with his father.

If you find that you are distressed when considering the financial and physical losses from your sexual sin, turn to your Heavenly Father right now and depend on Him in prayer for wisdom to deal with them.

Day 2

“And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” (Luke 15:15)

Financial loss and hunger were the first two consequences to the prodigal son’s sin. In order to remedy these, he became a hired servant. To us, this may sound like a reasonable option; to a first-century Jew, it was horrifying. The prodigal son was a Jew, a son of Abraham, one of the chosen people of God, and here he was hiring himself out to a Gentile! And as if that were not degrading enough, he was sent to feed swine, an unclean animal. The prodigal son had to compromise his ethnicity and his holiness or cleanliness to alleviate the financial effects of his sin: the prodigal son suffered shame.

Non-biblical counseling gives a few definitions of shame and how it relates to sexual sin. None of those are intended here. In the Bible, shame is the loss of reputation, position, or self-respect due to one’s behavior. It leaves a feeling of humiliation.

Men who have sinned sexually often suffer shame and humiliation from their sins. Read through this list and note as completely as possible the losses of reputation, position, or self-respect you have suffered because of sexual sin.

Career related losses:

Inappropriate relationships noticed by co-workers or clients _____

Loss of credibility with co-workers, employees, or superiors _____

Loss of clients due to inappropriate behavior _____

Sexual harassment complaints _____

Fear of sexual harassment complaints _____

Threat of losing job _____

Loss of promotion, job, or career _____

Loss of reputation _____

Public exposure of sexual sins _____

Fear of public exposure of sexual sins _____

Avoided gatherings or appearing in public due to feeling guilty or hypocritical _____

Left church/community due to sexual sins _____

Loss of respect and credibility of family members _____

Loss of self-respect _____

The prodigal son suffered shame and humiliation because of his sins. But he did not let it lead to self-pity. Instead, he grew to a more realistic, sobering view of himself before God and his father. If you have undergone shame and humiliation because of your sexual sins. Ask the Lord in prayer right now to lead you to a more humble, realistic view of yourself and to prevent wounded pride or self-pity from entering your heart.

Day 3

“And he sent him into his fields to feed swine...and no man gave unto him.” (Luke 15:15b, 16b)

Besides poverty, hunger, shame, and humiliation, the prodigal son suffered isolation. He had no relationships that brought physical help, companionship or encouragement; instead, he found rejection. This was his choice in part: he

had left the relationships that would have been most meaningful to him in order to pursue sin. Another part was not his choice: apparently he was surrounded by people who had no interest in his well being, people who valued swine more than him.

Men who are engaged in sexual sin often suffer isolation. Frequently this is the consequence of their pursuit of sin: they turn away from relationships that can bring them the most help and encouragement. On the other hand, others may reject them because of their sexual sin or its consequences. This brings a self imposed and other-imposed loneliness that cries out for more sexual sin to relieve it.

Read the list below and recall completely the isolation and loneliness you have suffered due to your sexual sins, whether by your choice or by the choice of others.

Relational losses:

Separation or divorce _____

Loss of custody of children _____

Loss of active role in parenting children _____

Severed relationships with family members _____

Neglected relationships with family members _____

Severed friendships _____

Neglected friendships _____

Pursued unwanted relationships instead of helpful ones _____

Fathered children out of wedlock _____

Encouraged a partner to get an abortion _____

The prodigal son suffered isolation and rejection as a result of his sexual sin. Your sexual sins may have released devastating consequences onto your relationships with people who are most dear to you. If you are in sorrow over broken relationships, turn again to your Heavenly Father and place them in His hands. Hold fast to His promise in Romans 8:38, 39 that nothing, absolutely nothing, will separate us from His love in Christ Jesus.

Day 4

“There [he] wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land...And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.” (Luke 15: 13b, 14, 16)

One would think that with all the devastating consequences sexual sins can bring, no one would engage in them. But leaving sexual sin is not that simple. They bring severe consequences but a great deal of pleasure, too. Riotous living is fun!

Somewhere in verses 13-17, the prodigal son closes the door to his immediate past. He leaves its pleasures and does not go back. Mostly, his circumstances made that decision for him: his poverty and a famine prevented his living in sin. However, he also made a decision to leave that lifestyle. He could have sat alongside the pigpen remembering the good old days when he had a lot of cash. He could have swapped stories about his recent past with the other servants. But somewhere in the parable he chooses to leave behind the pleasures of his sin and focus on the reality at hand.

You may suffer tremendous losses from your sexual sins. You may cause severe pain in the lives of others. But while you pursue these sins, you also derive great pleasure from them. When you fantasize or engage in sexual acts, which of these pleasures do they provide for you? Mark them and give specific examples. See page 5.

My sexual sins:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are a friend when I am lonely | <input type="checkbox"/> Give me a thrill and sense of risk when I am bored |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfy my curiosity | <input type="checkbox"/> Calm me when I am angry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Let me vent my anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Help me regain control when I feel overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relax me when I am tense | <input type="checkbox"/> Relax me when I am burned out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicate painful feelings or physical pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Give great physical pleasure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Let me fall asleep at night | <input type="checkbox"/> Let me avoid difficult circumstances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give me something to do when I have nothing else to do | <input type="checkbox"/> Let me avoid relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help me concentrate when I have difficult work to do | <input type="checkbox"/> Give me a sense of power and control over others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make me feel better than others (more experienced, knowledgeable, satisfied, etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give me affection, appreciation, and esteem of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Make me feel accepted or loved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make me feel more like a man | <input type="checkbox"/> Make me feel more like everyone else |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My sexual sins are something that I do without thinking about it | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

When you commit to change from sexual sin to sexual purity, you give up the pleasures you received from your sins. Instead, you seek contentment and thankfulness in the pleasures of sexual purity and a closer relationship with God and others. That is a tremendous change. At first, sexual purity does not feel as good as sexual sin! Also, pain and discomfort such as loneliness, anger, boredom, difficult circumstances, etc. will continue, begging for a sexual release to make the feelings go away. Are you really willing to close the door on the use of sexual activity to deal with them? Think about it: you may have been using sex in these ways for many years. Are you honestly willing to leave these pleasures behind?

Day 5

“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.”
(Luke 15:16)

The prodigal son felt poverty, hunger, shame, and loneliness because of his sin. His desires were reduced drastically from the desire for riotous living to the desire just to eat pig food. And along with these he learned one more lesson: he had no authority, power, or influence to change his situation.

He would not change the famine. He could not regain the money he had spent or find a new inheritance. He could not persuade others to give him food. Before, when he had money, he could use it to meet his basic needs, fulfill his desires or possibly even manipulate others. Now, with his money gone, he had no influence over anybody.

Men who engage in sexual sin find many ways to influence or manipulate others to fulfill their sexual desires, intensify their sexual fantasies, boost their feelings of self-esteem, or cover up their sexual sin. Read through the following list. Mark the ones that you have used for these purposes, and explain how you have used them.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money / possessions | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical appearance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social contacts | <input type="checkbox"/> Job / position of authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligence / degrees / titles | <input type="checkbox"/> Promises / bargaining with God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to communicate well / humor / flattery / flirting / lying | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Withholding love or communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Insults / verbally belittling others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criticizing others / public humiliation of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal threats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical abuse | |

Some men, like the prodigal son, lose their ability to influence others. They come face to face with their powerlessness and feel inconsequential, humiliated, and isolated. Others must learn how to lay down their

manipulative ways by their own choice. Rather than acting like kings in their own sexual empires, they must learn to humble themselves, respecting God's authority and the integrity of other people.

Are you willing to lay aside the tools that you have used to manipulate others for your sexual pleasure and self-esteem?

Day 6

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: an no man gave unto him.” (Luke 15: 14-16)

Briefly review all of the consequences of your sexual sin that you noted this week. Consider the damage or potential harm this sin has done to your finances, your body, your reputation, your career, your self-respect, and your relationships, even those who are most dear to you. Realize that these consequences may not be removed or lessened as you leave your sexual sins. Other people may not choose to restore trust or relationships with you, return money or a job to you, give you your health back, etc. Severe consequences from your past actions may continue.

Recall how you have used the pleasures of sexual sin for purposes other than the expression of love. Review the ways you have manipulated others to fulfill your sexual desires, raise your self-esteem or cover up your sexual sin. Are you willing to let go of all of these with God's help?

Write down in your own words what you have learned this week. If the Lord leads you to do so, write down a prayer, perhaps a prayer of commitment, or of surrender, or one seeking His wisdom, however He leads you.

While you are studying this workbook:

If you e-mail landfmin4@juno.com and want someone to discuss your situation with you by e-mail please fill out the **Informed Consent/Confidentiality Form** and mail it to Lost & Found, P. O. Box 191, Watkinsville, GA 30677. Your identity, everything you say, and the Informed Consent/Confidentiality Form will be held in the **strictest confidence**.

WEEK 2

“And when he came to himself...” (Luke 15:17a)

“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father.” (Luke 15:17-20a)

Verse 17 marks a turning point in the parable. Here the son moves from primarily feeling the consequences of his sin (verses 14-16) to a deeper reaction from his heart called **brokenness** and **repentance** (verses 17-20), a reaction which leads him to a restored relationship with his father. As we follow the prodigal son through this change, you will see how your own heart is prepared for a deeper relationship with God.

Days 1 & 2

“And when he came to himself...” (Luke 15:17a)

What changed within the prodigal son? How did he move from sorrow over the consequences of his sin to hope for a new relationship with his father? Luke 15:17a says, “he came to himself:” that is, he left his inflated perceptions and fantasies of who he was and returned to a deep recognition of who he really was: a sinner with no hope of changing himself. This recognition is called **brokenness**. It marks a turning point in his life.

Prayerfully listen to the hour-long Nancy De Moss message, *Brokenness: The Heart that God Revives*, where she describes the heart that God transforms and frees from sin. As you listen, take notes and answer the following questions.

You must have RealPlayer to listen to the message. [You may download it by clicking here.](#) Basic RealPlayer is free.

The reproduction and use of this message other than as a companion to Week 2 of the workbook From Sexual Sin to Sexual Purity is strictly prohibited by law. To purchase a copy please call 1.800.729.4351 and ask about Brokenness: The Heart that God Revives by Nancy Leigh DeMoss (95 scs 08 Copyright 1995)

Part One It may take 10-12 minutes to download. The message lasts 30 minutes.

Part Two It may take 10-12 minutes to download. The message lasts 30 minutes.

1. What is brokenness?
2. She compares four pairs of people: David and Saul, the Pharisee and the tax collector, the forgiven woman and Simon the Pharisee, and the Prodigal Son and the elder brother. What did all these people have in common? How did the people in each pair differ?
3. Where do you see pride and unbrokenness in your life? (see below for a list of her comparisons)

Proud People	Broken People
Focus on the failures of others	Overwhelmed with sense of their own spiritual need
Are self-righteous, have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at every one else’s faults with a microscope, but their own with a telescope	Are compassionate; have a forgiving spirit; look for the best in others

Are self-righteous; look down on others	Esteem all others better than themselves
Have an independent, self-sufficient spirit	Have a dependent spirit; recognize their need for others
Have to prove that they are right	Are willing to yield the right to be right
Claim rights; have a demanding spirit	Yield their rights; have a meek spirit
Are self-protective of their time, their rights, and their reputation	Are self-denying
Desire to be served	Are motivated to serve others
Desire to be a success	Are motivated to be faithful and to make others a success
Desire self-advancement	Desire to promote others
Have a drive to be recognized and appreciated	Have a sense of their own unworthiness; are thrilled that God would use them at all
Are wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked	Are eager for others to get the credit and rejoice when others are lifted up
Have a subconscious feeling, "this ministry/church is privileged to have me and my gifts"; think of what they can do for God	Have a heart attitude that says, "I don't deserve to have a part in any ministry"; know that they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives
Feel confident in how much they know	Are humbled by how very much they have to learn
Are self-conscious	Are not concerned with self at all
Keep others at arms' length	Are willing to risk getting close to others and to take risks of loving intimately
Unapproachable	Easy to be entreated
Defensive when criticized	Receive criticism with a humble, open heart
Concerned with being "respectable"	Concerned with being real
Concerned about what others think	Know that all that matters is what God knows
Find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others	Willing to be open/transparent with others
Have a hard time saying "I was wrong. Would you forgive me?"	Are quick to admit fault and to seek forgiveness
When confessing sin, deal in generalities	Deal in specifics
Remorseful they got caught/were found out	Repentant over sin and forsake it
Compare themselves with others and feel deserving of honor	Compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel desperate need for mercy
Blind to their true heart condition	Walk in the light
Don't think they have anything to repent of	Continual heart attitude of repentance

4. What blessings are manifested through brokenness?

5. What specific steps of brokenness is God calling you to do?

Day 3

“He said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father.” (Luke 15:17b, 18)

As the prodigal son’s self-perception changed, his perception of his father also changed. As he became keenly aware of his brokenness, his esteem of this father grew.

Today we may not consider it too strange for a son to receive his share of an inheritance from his living father. A friend of mine received his inheritance from his father while the latter was still alive in order to buy a house. His father had offered it first, figuring that he would rather have his adult, married son established nearby and enjoying his inheritance while the father was still alive to see it. We would probably consider it strange or even rude for a son to ask for his inheritance first, without the father’s suggestion. But in first-century Jewish culture, it was shocking and probably unheard of for a son to ask a father for his share of the inheritance. It was equivalent to saying, “Father, I wish you were dead.”

When the prodigal son asked for his share of the inheritance and left home, we can imagine that he saw his father negatively: whether as unfair, or oppressive, or too traditional, or impertinent, the parable doesn’t say. After the prodigal son is broken, however, he remembers and begins to appreciate other characteristics of his father: he is wealthy, generous, and just in providing for his hired servants; perhaps he will be merciful, too. As the son’s self-perception drops, the perception of his father rises: instead of saying, “Here I am starving to death; I’m better than this!” He says in effect, “Here I am starving to death; my father is better than this!”

When you think of God, which of His attributes stand out the most?

How does God perceive you on a day-to-day basis?

What is God’s reaction toward you when you sin sexually?

On whom do you depend primarily to break the hold of sexual sin in your life? (circle one)

My own effort / The insight of a counselor / A program / The power of God

Days 4 & 5

“And (I) will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.” (Luke 15:18, 19)

The prodigal son did more than just remember good things about his father. He decided to submit himself to his father’s authority again. He recognized his father’s authority by:

1. Calling him Father, a name that expressed respect, authority, and his own willingness to obey that authority;
2. By confessing his sin; and
3. By asking to be placed back under his authority, even in a more humble position.

Who has authority in your life? Most people choose one of two options: themselves or God. If you yourself are judge, master, or lord of your life, you will define sin and sexual purity according to your own guidelines, informed by your feelings and experiences. You may evaluate: according to my experience, these sexual actions are detrimental to my life, these other actions are not as damaging, and those over there are not harmful at all, therefore, such and such is my definition of sexual sin and sexual purity. (This is the type of reasoning encouraged by counselors and programs, Christian or non-Christian, that give “self-centered” guidance in overcoming sexual sin: one’s self, guided by feelings and experiences is the judge of benefits, consequences, and extent of sexual behavior.)

If God is Judge, Master, or Lord of your life, however, you will define sexual purity according to His guidelines, informed by His word. You will evaluate: according to God’s word, these sexual actions are detrimental to my relationship with Him, these others are a blessing from Him, therefore, such and such is the definition of sexual purity. (This is the type of reasoning encouraged by counselors and programs that give Christ-centered guidance in overcoming sexual sin: God, as revealed in His word, has already judged the benefits, consequences, and extent of sexual behavior.)

Who holds authority in your life? Write down the name by which you call him. _____

As mentioned above, the prodigal son confessed his sin. What was his sin? Was it spending all of his money in riotous living? In part. But deeper sins, ones which lay at the root of his irresponsible living, were the sins of self-centeredness and rebellion. The son was determined to rebel against his father, even acting as if his father were dead by seeking his inheritance. In addition, he rebelled against heaven by turning his inheritance into cash and running off with it. God declared that the land was His and must not be sold permanently; an Israelite was considered a tenant in land that belonged to God. The son was responsible for maintaining the land through his generation and to the next (see Leviticus 25:23-28). The prodigal son had chosen to pursue his own selfish pleasures rather than submit to the heavenly and earthly authority placed over him.

What are your sexual sins? If God the Father and Jesus Christ are your authority, your sexual sins are those things you have done which fall short of their standard for sexual purity. While the Bible has many prohibitions against different types of sexual acts, there is only one verse in which God blesses our sexual behavior: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This verse is so fundamental to God's purpose for human sexuality that He repeats it four more times in Scripture (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31), even using it to describe the mystery of Jesus Christ's relationship with us, His church.

God has blessed our sexuality. Praise the Lord!!! He has blessed it within the limits that He has established: union between one man and one woman in a lifelong commitment. When we move outside the boundaries of His blessing; physically, mentally, verbally, or emotionally; we fall short of His blessing; that is, we sin.

There are deeper sins lying at the root of sexual sin. We shall look at these in a later lesson. For now, consider this question: how have you sinned against God's standard of sexual purity? Take as many sheets of paper as you need and list as specifically as you can how you have sinned:

Mentally (for example, fantasizing about a sexual relationship outside of marriage).

Emotionally (for example, engaging in a close, emotional relationship with another woman rather than communicating with one's own wife).

Verbally (such as lewd sexual remarks, flirting, or other comments which do not respect the sanctity of sex within marriage).

Physically

Day 6

"He arose, and came to his father." (Luke 15:20a)

The prodigal son did more than just think about his sin and make plans: he got up and went to his father. Rather than sit around with the pigs and lament his condition, he acted in accordance with his broken identity, his esteemed perception of his father, and his willingness to submit again to his authority: he got up and returned home. He risked a long journey, penniless; he risked public rejection and humiliation, both from the lifelong neighbors he passed on his approach home and from meeting his father; and he risked being turned away justly by his father, left to suffer the full consequences of his earlier actions. He became willing to risk anything and suffer anything to act in line with his new identity and his hope for his father's mercy.

Take time now to go to your Heavenly Father and seek His mercy. Confess your sexual sins and any other unbroken heart attitudes that He reveals. Hand over any part of your life that you are still holding on to for yourself and submit yourself entirely to His authority. Be sure to take time to listen to Him. Write down what He tells you.

WEEK 3

“For this my son was dead and is alive; he was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:24a)

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:20-24)

The prodigal son discovered that even his new perception of his father was inadequate. His father was not only wealthy, generous, just, and merciful, but ridiculously forgiving, as if his son had never sinned. His father was lavishly gracious, giving him a reception and position which were completely unrelated to his actions.

If you are in Jesus Christ, God is the same toward you!

Day 1

“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20b)

If the prodigal son’s sins were shocking, his father’s forgiveness and graciousness were even more so! How could the father be so forgiving: running out to the one who wished he was dead, greeting him lovingly, ignoring his words of repentance and celebrating his return?

The answer to this question comes in knowing both the father and the son.

First, the father, who represents God, cannot help but forgive and love; it is His nature to do so. **“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”** (1 John 4:7, 8). Even when it seems strange, the most ridiculous thing to do, God demonstrates love and forgiveness to us because it is His nature.

Second, this is not just a stranger who came up the road. This is his own son. There is a relationship between them that overrides even the son’s actions. This relationship itself is another expression of God’s love. **“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”** (1 John 3:1a).

The question then becomes: Do you have a relationship with God in which He is your Father and you are His son? When He sees you walking up the road to Him for forgiveness, does He see a son or a stranger?

John 1:12, 13 tells us whether or not we are sons. Speaking of Jesus Christ, it says, **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.”** We become sons of God when we receive Jesus Christ, when we believe on His name: at that point we are born by God’s will into His family.

What does it mean to receive Jesus Christ, to believe on His name? One of the simplest explanations is found in Romans 10:9. **“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”**

To receive Jesus Christ is to confess Him as Lord, to invite Him and His authority into your whole being. The word “Lord” here is the Greek *kurios*, which also translates the Hebrew *adonai*. This is a term used by a slave to call upon his master. It signifies a relationship in which a slave is entirely dependent on his master, trusting him to provide for him, protect him, and guide him. For his part, the slave gives himself obediently to his master’s commands. (Remember how the prodigal son had asked the father to take him back as a hired servant?) When we confess Jesus as Lord, we acknowledge that He is our master, that we are entirely dependent upon Him, and we give ourselves entirely to obey His commands.

When we believe on the Lord’s name, we believe that His death on the cross paid the death penalty we earned from our sins, sexual and otherwise. He, the Son of God, died in our place. And we believe that God raised Him from the dead, body and all. God does the same inside us, crucifying our old selves and raising us up to a new life under

His authority and power.

Have you made the decision to receive Jesus Christ and believe on His name? Have you confessed Him as *adonai* over your life, your body, your purpose, your career, your future, your finances... everything you are and have? Do you believe that His death on the cross eliminates your sin, and that God raised Him from the dead?

If you have not made this decision, or if you would like to reinforce a previous commitment, let your Father know the desires of your heart in prayer: *Father, I've sinned. I have selfishly disobeyed your commands. Your Word (Romans 6:23) says that the wages of sin, or what I have earned from my sin, is death. I believe and accept that the death of your Son Jesus Christ on the cross paid the penalty for my sin. I believe you raised Him from the dead, never to die, and likewise that you have given me now a new life for all eternity. I invite your Son Jesus Christ into my life as Lord. I surrender all of myself and who I am to Him and His control.*

If this is the desire of your heart and you have expressed it to God, thank Him for giving birth to you into His family. You are now His son!

Day 2

"But the Father said..." (Luke 15:22a)

One of my favorite moments in this parable comes after the prodigal son confessed his sin and recognized the broken relationship with his father. ("**Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.**") The father did not even respond to it! Instead, he gave commands based on an entirely different reality, one in which his son's sins had been forgiven already and now he could be rejoined fully to his family.

The father's words have authority. The servants responded to his words, not the son's. During the long walk from a far off land, the son could not have imagined his return being celebrated by his family's household. But the father's words have the authority and power to make even the inconceivable a reality.

God's Word is similar to the father's. He does not react to our confession and repentance on the basis of our having sinned; He speaks from a different reality, one based on our relationship with Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is your Lord and His death paid the penalty for your sins, God responds to us as one whose sins are already forgiven.

Also like the father in the parable, God's words have authority. They do not merely communicate ideas. They are alive and accomplish the purpose for which He spoke them. In the following verses underline the phrases that are commands to you. Then circle the phrases which describe the authority and power of His Word.

- **Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**
- **For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**
- **For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**
- **For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not hither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**
- **For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**
- **Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. (Isaiah 55:7-13)**

Psalm 1 also describes the effect God's word will have in our lives. Again, underline your responsibilities toward God's word, and circle the effects that it will have in you.

- **Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.**
- **But his delight is in the law of the LORD ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.**
- **And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**
- **The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.**
- **Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.**
- **For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.**

Think for a moment about the words and pictures that you have allowed into your mind through pornography and sexually explicit stories, music, or fantasies. Recall from last week's lesson the consequences that they produced in you.

Now, reread all of the words you circled in the verses above. Which results would you rather see in you life?

Also consider this; do you know any counselor, author, friend or other authority figure who can claim that his words and advice hold the same power and authority described in these verses?

As you live out your new life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, His word must have priority daily over the words of all others, over the words of any counselor, over the words of any other book, over the words of any other authority. What will you do to give those words priority daily, day and night?

Days 3 & 4

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." (Luke 15:22)

The prodigal son came to the father seeking mercy and a humble position in his household. The father ignored his request and spoke commands to reinstate him as a son.

When you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God the Father also made you a son and spoke commands to that effect. You did not receive this position because you earned it or deserved it; it is a gift which God the Father has chosen to give you (called "grace") and which He has guaranteed through the authority and power of His word.

Read through the list of Bible verses on this and the next pages several times slowly and prayerfully. Mark the ones that are particularly meaningful to you and study and memorize them. Every one of them is true of you if you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God has already spoken them in your life. Like the prodigal son discovered, your actions have no bearing on whether or not these verses are true: they are true because of your relationship to God through Jesus Christ and through the power and authority of His word.

God has made you His son.

- God, of His own will, has made you His son (John 1:12, 13)
- God has made you His son by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26)
- You are no more a servant, but a son (Galatians 4:7)
- You are a child of light, a child of the day, because you have believed in the light, Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:5 and John 8:12 and 12:36)
- God gave birth to you of His own will with the word of truth (James 1:18)
- God gave birth to you by his word, which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23)
- God demonstrates His love to you by calling you His son (1 John 3:1)
- God chose you to be His child (Ephesians 1:5)
- God has chosen you from the beginning (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

- As a son of God, you are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14)
- As a son of God, you have not received a spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, by which you call God: Abba, Father (Romans 8:15)
- As God's child, you will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty (Romans 8:21)
- As God's son, He made you heir through Christ (Galatians 4:7)
- God made you an heir of eternal life, not by your works of righteousness, but by His grace through Jesus Christ your Savior (Titus 3:4-7)
- God has given you birth to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3, 4)
- Being born of God, you have the ability to love (1 John 4:7)
- Being born of God, you overcome the world (1 John 5:4)
- Being born of God, the wicked one does not touch you (1 John 5:18)
- Being born of God, you are called to follow Him, not the children of disobedience (Ephesians 5:1-7)
- You are light in the Lord and a child of light (Ephesians 5:8)

God has created you again.

- In Christ you are a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- God has delivered you from the power of darkness and has translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13)
- You have been buried, raised, and made alive again in Christ (Colossians 2:12, 13)
- Your old self is crucified with Christ that your body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth you should not serve sin (Romans 6:6)
- You are buried with Christ by baptism into death: that, just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so you should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4)
- You are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world (Colossians 2:20)
- You are Christ's and have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24)

- You are risen with Christ (Colossians 3:1)
- You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)
- Christ is your life (Colossians 3:4)
- In Jesus Christ you shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:15)
- The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made you free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:12)
- As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, so will He give life to your mortal body through his Spirit, that dwells in you (Romans 8:9-11)
- He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise you up also (2 Corinthians 4:14)
- You have everlasting life (Romans 6:22)
- When Christ appears, you shall also appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:4)

God has made you holy and one with Christ.

- Christ is in you and you are in Him (John 14:20, Colossians 1:27)
- You are in God the Father and Jesus Christ (John 17:21)
- You are united with the Lord and one with Him in Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17)
- You are a partaker of God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
- When Christ Jesus appears, you shall be like Him (1 John 3:2)
- In Christ all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and you are complete in Him (Colossians 2:9, 10)
- God has established you in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:21)
- God reconciled you to himself by Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18)
- You have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1)
- There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)
- You were dead in your sins, but God has quickened you together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Colossians 2:13)
- God has made you free from sin and a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:18)
- God has made you free from sin and a servant of his (Romans 6:22)

- God has raised you up together with other believers and you sit in heavenly places with Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:6)
- You are made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- God has given you the Holy Spirit, and your body is His temple (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- You are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:16)
- God bought you with a price; your body and your spirit are God's (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- God sealed you with the Holy Spirit unto the Father (Ephesians 1:13, 14)
- You have access by the Spirit unto the Father (Ephesians 2:18)
- In Christ Jesus our Lord you have boldness and access with confidence to the Father (Ephesians 3:12)
- In Christ you may come boldly unto the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)

God has given you significance.

- God covered you in your mother's womb; you are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13, 14)
- You are the work of God's hands (Isaiah 29:23)
- God is the potter, and you are the clay, the work of His hand (Isaiah 64:8)
- You are called by God's name. God has formed you and made you and created you for His glory (Isaiah 29:23)
- The Lord has chosen you to be one of His holy people, a special people unto Himself above all people that are on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2)
- You are the branch of God's planting, the work of His hands, that He may be glorified (Isaiah 60:21)
- God made you, not you yourself. You are one of His people, a sheep of his pasture (Psalm 100:3)
- You are one of the people of God's pasture, and the sheep of His hand (Psalm 95:7)
- You are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)
- You are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14)

God loves you!

- For God so loved the world that gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)

- God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)
- In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him (1 John 4:9)
- Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38, 39)

God has given His purpose to your life.

- You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which he hath before ordained (Ephesians 2:10)
- Jesus Christ gave himself for you to purify unto himself a unique people zealous of good works (Titus 2:14)
- God has formed you for himself that you may show forth his praise (Isaiah 43:21)
- You are a branch of the true vine, Jesus Christ. Abiding in him, you bring forth much fruit (John 15:1-5)
- God's divine power has given unto you all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3)

God has created you to participate in the life of His family.

- You are a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27)
- You are a member of Christ's body, of His flesh and His bones (Ephesians 5:30)
- God has made you one with all of His children in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)
- You are no more a stranger and a foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints and the household of God (Ephesians 2:19)
- God made you a member of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; you are now part of the people of God and have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9, 10)
- You are a living stone, built up with others a spiritual house; you are a member of a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5)
- You are a stranger and pilgrim in this world (1 Peter 2:11)

- Jesus Christ calls you His friend, for all things He has heard of His Father He has made known to you (John 15:15)
- God has made all of these true of you because of His grace and your relationship to Him through Jesus Christ. As you think, speak, act, and relate to others in accordance from your God-given position in Jesus Christ, you will manifest the character of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Day 5

“His father...fell on his neck and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20b)

Can you imagine what the prodigal son looked like when he returned to his father? He probably had sold off every pair of clothes he owned except the rags he had on. He most likely made the long trip to his father barefoot. From working close to pigs all day he probably smelled like one, an unclean animal to the Jews. I imagine that he looked and smelled terrible, that the father's order to bring the best robe and sandals was out of need as much as a sign of being reestablished in his family. Yet his father runs to him, embraces him, and kisses him!

Despite what we have done, if we are sons, God does not distance Himself from us. He does not stand far off, calling us to strive and fight and finally make it to Him someday. He seeks an intimate relationship with us: He runs to us! The means by which He runs to us, and even dwells within us, is His Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the most complete and compact description of the Holy Spirit is the title of Gordon Fee's study *God's Empowering Presence*. Fee chose each of these words carefully to describe important truths of the Spirit's character.

First, the Holy Spirit is God. We often think of Him in inanimate terms like fire, water, wind, etc., but He is fully God (see Acts 5:3, 4 for one example) and is named the Spirit of God. He also is called the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11), for He has the same desires and character of Jesus Christ and works in harmony with Him for the Father's glory.

Second, the Holy Spirit is the very presence of God. Throughout the Bible we see God's loving desire to be present among His people, whether walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, or in the tabernacle that He instructs Moses and the Israelites to build in the desert, or in Solomon's temple, or in the person of Jesus Christ, or in the new Jerusalem of Revelation twenty one. Yet God's holiness and purity demands a separation from sinful man. In the tabernacle and temple, a massive veil separated God's most holy dwelling place from the rest of the temple and from the people. But the death of Jesus Christ paid for our sins and tore the veil in two, allowing us to enter God's most holy place by His sacrifice (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; Hebrews 6:19, 20; 10:19-22). Even more stunning, the torn veil allows our holy and pure God to come out and be present with us individually and directly (Acts 2:1-4). The means by which He is present with us directly is His Holy Spirit.

Third, the Holy Spirit is an empowering presence. Through Him the power of God Himself is present within us. Signs and wonders and miracles are part of ordinary Christian experience (1 Corinthians 12:8-11; Galatians 3:5). He empowers us in other ways, such as in enduring adversity with contentment, even joy (Colossians 1:11; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

In your desire to walk in freedom from sexual sin, in your desire to relate to God and others in genuine intimacy, there is nothing more powerful than the Spirit of God alive within you. *The wisdom of God, the power of God, the purity and holiness of God, are present within you by His Holy Spirit.*

- Meditate today over the following verses. Write down what you learn about the Holy Spirit.

“[The LORD speaks to Moses at Mount Sinai] And I [the LORD] will send an angel before thee...unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way... And he [Moses] said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name” (Exodus 33:2, 3, 16-17).

“If the son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11-13)

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell within you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:8, 9).

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:12, 13).

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7, 8).

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication...For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth [referring to this will of God], despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7, 8).

Day 6

“And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.” (Luke 15:23)

The father ran out and embraced his son. He spoke commands to the servants recognizing his place in the family. Now it is time to celebrate, not by having a private meal together somewhere, but by inviting the entire household.

If you are in Jesus Christ, the Father has run out to embrace you. By His authority He has spoken commands giving you a new life, holiness, righteousness, significance, and purpose. He has chosen to dwell within you by His empowering presence, the Holy Spirit. And He has made you a full member of His wide, numerous household.

Sexual sin isolates us from genuine relationships. We either separate ourselves from others to carry out our sin alone, or we relate to others in a one-dimensional way, prioritizing the sexual and devaluing any other aspect of relationships. The Holy Spirit, however, gifts and empowers us to participate meaningfully in others' lives and to be vulnerable enough to let them participate in our own.

In fact, a person is not following the lead of the Holy Spirit if he remains isolated from others. This is because nearly everything the Spirit empowers us to do must be carried out in the context of genuine relationships.

Look for example at Ephesians 5:18: **“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”** “Be filled” in Greek is a present imperative, a command which requires a continuous or repeated action. It is also in the passive voice, meaning that we are recipients of this filling, not the ones who direct it. Therefore we are commanded to an ongoing receiving of the Holy Spirit, or allowing Him to fill us continually. This would also mean: a) we must have an ongoing vulnerability or submissiveness to the Holy Spirit in order to be filled by Him, and b) that we will see His gifts and empowering displayed in us continually. Some of those gifts are described in the verses following 18: **“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God”** (Ephesians 5:19-21).

Three main Spirit-directed actions are given in these verses: speaking, giving thanks, and submitting. Note also that there are two contexts for these actions: the Christian community to whom Paul has addressed the letter (“to yourselves” and “in your heart” are both plural), and God. In other words, “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” is not a command to an individual to carry a nice Christian tune in his head as he goes about his day's business; it is a confirmation that individuals gathered together will see their filling by the Holy Spirit

displayed in their speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, in their giving thanks together to God, and in their submission to one another. The importance of relationships in the filling of the Holy Spirit continues in the rest of Ephesians five and carries on into chapter six: submission to one another by the Holy Spirit will be manifest in relationships between husband and wife, child and parent, and master and servant. All of the examples of being filled with the Holy Spirit which follow Ephesians 5:18 are given in context with relationships.

Gordon Fee reinforces how essential the context of relationships is for the Holy Spirit's work in the close of his commentary on Ephesians 5:18. He relates this verse to the end of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19, a nearly inconceivable statement in which Paul prays that the members of the church in Ephesus "might be filled with all the fullness of God." The Ephesians can be filled with all the fullness of God only when they are filled with the Holy spirit. "Here then is the ultimate imperative in the Pauline corpus: God's people so filled by/with the Spirit's own presence that they come to know God in all his fullness and reflect such *in the way they live in relationship to one another and to God himself.*"

God fills us with His Holy Spirit and if we are receptive continually, He will fill us continually and display His presence especially within all of our relationships.

WEEK 4

The Two Greatest Commandments

You have now completed the section of this workbook based on the parable of the prodigal son. You have seen that God has transformed you through the blood of Jesus Christ. He has forgiven all of your sins, sexual and otherwise. He has given you a new life, a place in His family, and made you an heir in His kingdom. He has given you His living, powerful Word to transform your mind and heart. He has surrounded you with other believers who will build and strengthen you and whom you will strengthen as you follow God's purposes. He has even chosen to live within you by His powerful presence, His Holy Spirit. As Colossians 2:10 says, **you are complete in Christ Jesus!**

And this is just the beginning. In your new life, you will carry on a deep, meaningful relationship with God. You have the opportunity to know and experience the Almighty Creator of the universe, the all-wise God. He desires that you know Him intimately: that is why the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. He also desires that, as you experience Him, you manifest His character to others: that is why the second greatest commandment is to love others as you love yourself. (Mark 13:28-31)

These commands are based on love. The Lord commands you to love Him. Those of us who have engaged in sexual sin are much more familiar with expressing lust. We can summarize the difference between the two in this way: **Lust** is the desire to use another person or another person's resources for our own ends; **Love** is the desire to use ourselves and our resources for another's benefit according to God's ends.

As someone whose heart, soul, mind, and body has been scarred by lust, you will face unique challenges to have a loving relationship with God and others. This section will examine your sin-damaged heart, soul, mind, body, and relationships and will show how God desires to transform these in a way that would manifest His character more accurately.

"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)

Days 1 & 2

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart." (Mark 12:30) Part 1 (Matthew 5:29, 10)

The Lord commands you to love Him with all your heart. Your heart is part of your being that includes your will, understanding, and emotions. It contains your deepest, innermost feelings, desires, and motives for your behavior.⁶

Jesus identifies this as the place where sexual sin occurs. **"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart"** (Matthew 5:28). Here is a mental act, one that is not pursued any further, one that a woman may not even notice, but sexual sin has taken place in a man's heart. Jesus did not identify this sin in the way a woman dresses, in whether or not a man's wife fulfills his sexual desires, in his hormones, or in a childhood experience: the sin takes place in his heart. It follows that, as God deals with sexual sin in your life, He will deal primarily with your heart.

You have already learned that God works in a broken, contrite heart. This week we will look at several ways God works in such a heart.

The first way is through the commands Jesus gives in Matthew 5:29, 30, just after discussing sexual sin in the verse we saw above.

"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Is Jesus really telling you to pluck out your right eye or cut off your right hand to refrain from sexual sin? Consider this: a man with one eye missing can still sin with the other. Even a man with both eyes missing will have to struggle with memories of pornography. There have been men in our accountability groups who are unable to function sexually, yet they struggle with fantasizing about sex or the rush that comes from looking at pornography. Remember that Jesus has just identified the heart as the place where sexual sin occurs: eradicating sexual sin is not simply a matter of controlling body parts; it is a matter of purifying hearts and rebuilding protection.

What do these verses mean, then? Jesus is making two strong statements: 1) He expects His disciples, in their hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6), to be prepared to go to extremes in order to be filled, and 2) those extremes include, if necessary, getting rid of those things we consider most valuable.

By speaking of plucking out your right eye or cutting off your right hand, He is referring to an idea similar to Paul's in Galatians 4:15, **"Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."** That is, the Galatians had been so blessed in getting to know Paul that they would have plucked out their eyes for him! In days before automation, when the vast majority of people depended on manual labor for their livelihood, in the days before eyeglasses, Braille, and seeing-eye dogs, the most valuable things people had were good eyesight and their hands. Saying that one would sacrificially give his eyes to another was a manner of expressing utmost love and devotion. Both Paul and Jesus are speaking in context with this idea. We might restate Matthew 5:29, 30 this way: even if the thing you value and depend on most in life is leading you to cultivate sexual sin in your heart, pluck it out and throw it away.

What are these valuable things you need to throw away? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you. Ask Him to sift through your heart and your motives and to show you what these things are. They may include pornographic magazines, videos, diskettes, or CD's, video rental membership cards, unfiltered Internet access, any Internet access, unaccountable time, a certain relationship, a phone number, a credit card, driving through or hanging around certain areas, entering certain buildings: any instrument, person, or place that you use to engage in sexual sin. One part of getting rid of sexual sin and purifying your heart means plucking out, or allowing someone else to destroy, these precious instruments of our sin, even if it feels almost as painful as losing an eye or a hand.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to tell you the physical instruments of your sin that you need to pluck out and throw away. List them here.
- Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to give you strength. Then, get rid of them immediately. If necessary, ask for help from two or three trusted friends to get rid of them for you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to tell you the relationships that must be cut off. List them here:
- Do not attempt to cut off these relationships on your own power. Prayerfully ask Him to cut off those relationships for you. Check with an accountability partner or your accountability group on the most appropriate ways to do this.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to tell you the activities or places which must be cut out of your life. List them here.
- Pray for insights and strength to avoid these places and activities. Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak through your accountability partners in suggesting ideas for avoiding these and replacing them with new ones that will glorify God.

Days 3 & 4

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart." (Mark 12:30) Part 2 (James 1:14, 15)

Cutting of the instruments, people, and places of your sexual sin is one essential part of dealing with this sin in your heart. It is certainly not the only one. Many men have thrown out their pornography collections repeatedly. Throwing out pornography and similar actions, while necessary, will not bring about lasting victory over sexual sin. Lasting

victory comes when you allow the Lord to deal with your heart completely. This includes allowing the Lord to purify your heart's desires.

James 1:14, 15 says, **"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."** Freedom from sexual sin is not only a matter of stopping certain behaviors and resisting temptation, but allowing God to wash away the evil desires of your heart and grow His desires there.

First note that God's washing away of the evil desires of your heart does not mean that you will lose the attraction to sexual sin. God does not promise you an instantaneous change in which you no longer feel the inclination to sin. Two verses earlier, James 1:12 says, **"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"** (my italics). You may never lose the attraction to sexual sin, or lose the capability to sin sexually, or be able to isolate yourself so completely that temptation will never reach you. Sexual temptation will strike, and you are called to escape from it or endure it. (see also 1 Corinthians 10:13)

God's washing away of the evil desires of your heart means He will deal with the foundational sins that have maintained your sexual ones over the years.

For example, when illicit sexual desires conceive in our hearts, they join with other sinful desires that are already present. Illicit sexual desires join primarily with **self-centeredness**. When they find our proud, unbroken, self-centered heart, they conceive, and then we begin to focus on the unhindered, self-centered pursuit of sex. We separate ourselves from God's sexual blessing of husband and wife united as one, and we try to take God's place and see ourselves as the only reliable means to fulfill our sexual desires. We justify our sexual actions as "taking care of my sexual needs." We reward ourselves sexually. We manipulate others through words, emotional attachment or money for our own sexual ends. We justify our self-centered sexual pursuits through a complex web of lies, shifted blame, and self-righteous statements. We grow increasingly critical of others but become very defensive when someone mentions our own faults, sinful behaviors or character. We allow our illicit sexual desire to latch like a parasite onto a deep, self-centered distrust of God's lordship and an unwillingness to submit humbly and entirely to Him. No matter what other actions we take, until we allow God to eradicate our self-centeredness, until we submit to His lordship in our thoughts, words, and actions, it will be very difficult to prevent illicit sexual desires from growing back.

Illicit sexual desires also conceive sexual sin when they join with a **self-centered focus on our own comfort**. When uncomfortable feelings arise such as anger, anxiety, boredom, fatigue, frustration, or stress, the heart that is fixed on its own comfort immediately will seek something to medicate it, such as food, sex, or another pleasure. Until we repent of our exaltation of selfish comfort and allow the Holy Spirit to manifest His peace, patience, and longsuffering, we will continue to turn to sex or other medication to regain a self-centered feeling of comfort and control over a situation.

Illicit sexual desires also anchor themselves in **envy**. We begin to distrust God's gift of a wife or His gift of making us single. (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2, 7) From His infinite love and wisdom He has chosen to bless us, but we begin to look upon His blessing ungratefully. We listen to the sexual lies taught by pornographic magazines, by ungodly counselors, and by the world in general that say real fulfillment is outside of God's blessings. We start searching outside of His boundaries and nurture ungodly, covetous desires for the wife of another. Until we repent of our sin of envy, our illicit sexual desires can continue to grow easily from it. Instead of envy, we must allow the Lord to grow within us the fruit of thankfulness for a wife or a single status.

Someone may say, "But you don't know my wife!" That is true, but I know the One who gives gifts. **"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows"** (James 1:16, 17). When we look down upon one of God's gifts, we not only despise the gift but also the Gift-giver. We demonstrate a lack of faith in His wisdom and love, as if He shifted and changed over time. In contrast, a person who has allowed the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of thankfulness in his heart is able to thank the Lord even in times of distress, not because of difficult circumstances themselves but because of the One who allowed them into his life. **"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior"** (Habakkuk 3:17, 18). When there is apparently nothing to rejoice over, the envious heart needs the Holy Spirit to produce a thankful focus on the Father.

Illicit sexual desires also entangle themselves with **idolatry**. We begin to worship created beings and seek power, success, fulfillment, and control through sexual relationships, fantasies or two-dimensional images just as much as others may seek these things through worshiping images of wood and stone. Until we repent of our idolatry and submit to God as the source of all power in our lives, the people and pornographic images that we worshiped will still hold power over our minds and hearts.

- James 1:15 says, “**when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.**” With what other evil desires of your heart have your illicit sexual desires conceived?
- As God cleanses these from your heart, what other desires should He grow in their place?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you even today how you might be demonstrating these other sins, whether through sinful sexual behaviors or some other means.

Days 5 & 6

“**And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart**” (Mark 12:30). Part 2, Continued (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

In the previous exercise we examined our need to have our hearts purified from our self-centered desires and God’s desires put in their place. How does this happen?

The Bible speaks of five ways in which our hearts are cleansed. These are not five steps or stages. They are five interrelated, ongoing aspects to any life submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. There is a one-time cleansing by faith in Jesus Christ.
2. There is an ongoing purification through the word of God and our reception and obedience to it.
3. There is a cleansing which occurs as we keep a broken, contrite heart before the Lord.
4. There is cleansing and restoration of intimacy with God through confessing our sins.
5. Our hearts are kept pure and strengthened as we walk in the Holy Spirit.

In this exercise we will review each one of these.

1. **There is a one-time cleansing by faith in Jesus Christ.** God’s promises to cleanse and transform radically the hearts of His people begin in the Old Testament.

“**And I will give them and heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart**” (Jeremiah 24:7).

“**But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people**” (Jeremiah 31:33).

“**Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a hew spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them**” (Ezekiel 36:25,27).

The prophesy of Jeremiah 31:33 (and by extension the other two listed above) was fulfilled in the new covenant established by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “**We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified**” (Hebrews 10:10, 14). If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, He has already given you a new, cleansed heart. He has given you a heart of flesh, one which has God’s law written on it, one in which the Holy Spirit lives. The Holy Spirit is a witness to you of this, your sanctification (Hebrews 10:15). This is a one-time work of Jesus Christ sanctifying you

forever. You cannot perfect it or add to it. (see Hebrews 10:16, 17)

Your part is to live out this sanctification through faith, especially among other believers. “Let us draw near [to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:22-25).

2. There is an ongoing purification through the word of God and our reception and obedience to it. The one-time sanctification by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ manifests itself in our thoughts and actions as we receive and submit to God’s word.

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:9-11).

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. The wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:14-17).

The effect of God’s word in our heart is most graphically illustrated by the parable of the sower. Read it and Jesus’ explanation, underlining each time “word” appears. Then answer the questions that follow.

“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold...

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:5-8, 11-15).

In Jesus’ explanation of the parable, where had those by the way side received the word?

What happened to it?

What happened to them?

How had those on the rock received the word?

When did they lose it?

What was the heart condition of those among the thorns?

How did their heart condition affect the fruitfulness of the word?

What did they do with the word?

What did it produce?

In which group are you?

3. There is a cleansing which occurs as we keep a broken, contrite heart before the Lord. In order for God's word to take root in our hearts and bring forth fruit to perfection and fruit with patience, our hearts must remain broken and contrite before Him.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, GOD RESISTETH THE PROUD, BUT GIVETH GRACE UNTO THE HUMBLE. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:1-10).

4. There is cleansing and restoration of intimacy with God through confessing our sins. Part of maintaining a broken, contrite heart open to the word of God is through confessing our sins to God and other believers.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1, 2).

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

5. Our hearts are kept pure and strengthened as we walk in the Holy Spirit. We live out the sanctification of our hearts by Jesus Christ as we obey His Holy Spirit.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:1-8).

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

- Thank your Heavenly Father that He has already sanctified and cleansed your heart through the Lord Jesus Christ. Review the evil desires of your heart that the Holy Spirit brought to your attention in the exercise from days 3 and 4 this week. Confess them. Prayerfully and specifically ask the Holy Spirit to wash every trace of them from your heart and life and to cultivate His desires instead. Write down here the specific actions He directs you to take.

WEEK 5

“The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The LORD thy God is one LORD:
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.
And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
There is none other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31)

Day 1

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart.” (Mark 12:30) Part 3 (Proverbs 4:20-27)

Last week you asked the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and help you cut off or destroy the physical instruments, relationships, activities, and places that allow you to pursue sexual sin more easily. You also asked Him to identify sinful heart desires, wash them away and place His own desires in your heart. Before we move ahead, turn back several pages to week 4, days 1 and 2. Fill in the following information from the first paragraph of that lesson.

The Lord commands you to love Him with _____. Your heart is part of your being that includes your _____, _____, and _____. It contains your deepest, innermost _____, _____, _____ for your behavior.

Remember that removing the physical instruments, relationships, activities, and places, and seeing your desires purified, are essential to finding victory over sexual sin and walking in genuine intimacy with the Lord and others. God also commands you to build protection around your heart.

Proverbs 4:20-27 tells us how to protect our hearts from sin. In last week’s lesson on Matthew 5:20, 30, we caught a glimpse of the fact that our hearts are very closely connected to the rest of our body parts. As you read these verses, circle the word “heart” each time it appears. Then underline the other body parts and verbs mentioned along with them.

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.
Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.
For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.
Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
Put away from thee a forward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.
Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.
Turn not to the right hand nor the left: remove thy foot from evil.”

As you examine these verses, you may notice that the verbs express two contrasting commands. Some of them tell us to hold on to something (attend, let not depart, keep, etc.), and others tell us to keep something away (put away from, put far from, turn not, etc.). On the most basic level, these verses give us a simple rule to protect our hearts: keep the good things in, and keep the bad things out.

In keeping the good things in, these verses mention two things that we should keep in our hearts: close relationships and words of wisdom. We find the words “my son” (verse 20) referring to close, loving relationships described at the introduction to chapter 4 in verses 1-4, “Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.” These relationships echo a close, intimate relationship in which God our Father gives us His word as we studied in days 2, 3, 4, and 6 two weeks ago. Within this loving contest, we give our eyes and ears continually to taking in our Father’s words, keeping them in our hearts.

Notice also, as we saw in Isaiah 55:7-13 and Psalm 1 in Day 2 last week, God’s words entering our heart through our eyes and ears positively affect our entire body, bringing “life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” (verse 22).

These verses also list three body parts through which we keep bad things out of our hearts.

Our mouth - verse 24 - “Put away from thee a forward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.”

Our eyes - verse 25 - "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

Our hands and feet - verses - 26, 27 - "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor the left: remove thy foot from evil."

We protect our hearts by controlling these body parts and keeping them from sin. These commands are entirely consistent with the filling of the Holy Spirit, studied last week. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**" The nature of the Holy Spirit includes power, love, and a sound mind. The words translated "a sound mind" mean discipline, self-control, and sobriety. We see this also in Ephesians 5:18, "**And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.**" The Greek word for "excess" is *asotia*, meaning "prodigal" or "wasteful," the same word that characterized the prodigal son. The Spirit is One of discipline and self-control, in contrast with excess. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit and walk under His control, we share in His nature; we display His discipline and sobriety, controlling our body as Proverbs 4:20-27 and other verses command us.

Days 2 & 3

"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee." (Proverbs 4:24)

The closer translation of the Hebrew in this verse is "put away from thee a frowardness of mouth, and perverseness of lips put far from thee." This makes it clear that this verse is not about putting away from ourselves someone else's perverse mouth; it is telling us to keep perversity from our own mouths.

Sinful sexual relationships may begin with the words you speak. One way comes as you assume an identity outside of your one with Jesus Christ. Face-to-face, over the telephone, or electronically in chat rooms, you may try to put aside your identity in Christ and build a new one based on your words, a profile that would attract and manipulate others into boosting your sense of importance and self-esteem. Through words you may change lords and create an identity subservient to the ideals of others rather than accept your true identity submissive to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Then through this distorted, idolatrous identity, you may try to manipulate others into fulfilling your sexual desires.

Another way you may initiate sexual sin through words is by flirting. Some men flirt intentionally in order to elicit some kind of reaction, and others flirt unintentionally as part of their "culture" (for example, a couple of suggestive, superficial statements that may be exchanged between a female cashier and a male customer). In either case, the person is not walking under the control of the Holy Spirit. Flirting is an expression of lust (I want to use your attention, favor, or maybe even your body for my personal desires) rather than love (I want to use my resources to bless you according to God's desires).

My wife once caught me in a very subtle form of flirting. She told me, "You know, your tone of voice changes every time you talk to an attractive, young woman." "Really?!" I said as my face suddenly turned a deep shade of red, "I would never have guessed," and I managed to change the subject to something else. I was embarrassed because over the years I had built up a habit of expressing my sexual availability through my tone of voice among other things, and now as a married Christian dedicated to my wife, I still sent out those signals because of habit, thinking that nobody else really heard them. Since then I have had to learn to speak to attractive women the same way I would speak to anyone else, and on the other hand to esteem others and value their conversation as much as I would esteem that of an attractive woman. After all, do you think that Jesus' tone of voice suddenly became more compassionate and caring when he turned to speak to an attractive prostitute rather than when He spoke to His disciples?

Perhaps the most difficult cases to evaluate perverseness of lips is in speaking with female co-workers or ministry partners, especially when friendships are involved. A good friend of mine shared with me one example in which there was nothing even remotely sexual about his conversations with the company secretary; he and his attractive female friend simply shared about meaningful events in their lives, news issues that were important to them, even activities in their respective churches. But he noticed a problem one day when a younger, more handsome man interrupted their conversation to say hello and tell the secretary a joke. When she laughed, my friend felt a strong twinge of jealousy in his heart. At that moment he realized that he, a strong Christian and a married man of over twenty years unintentionally had built up a strong emotional bond with this woman. He was seeking her approval to boost his sense of self-worth and cherishing it to the point of jealousy. He had no idea where it would lead him. With the help of an accountability group he admitted to himself that he had been emotionally flirting with her for

months and had begun fantasizing about an emotional, and occasionally a physical, closeness with her that was inappropriate. He repented and, in a polite way, distanced himself from her and sought out stronger relationships with his male co-workers.

Today he tests all of his relationships with women through questions from his accountability partners and by what he calls “the jealousy test.” If he begins to covet a woman’s attention in his heart, he knows he is endangering his sexual purity and that it is time to pull away from that relationship.

Since many of my conversations with women also used to turn to close emotional relationships with sexual undertones (at least in my mind and heart), I have had to come up with a similar test. If I cannot invite a woman to my house to visit with my wife, and leave the two of them alone for a few hours in peace of mind, having no fear of what they might talk about, then I am probably too close to this person emotionally and need to pull away to protect my heart from sexual sin.

Steve Farrar writes of a similar guideline for himself in *Finishing Strong*. His position sometimes requires that he counsel women. He realizes that he needs to protect his heart from sexual sin, and one of the ways that sexual sin enters the heart is through a close, emotional relationship established through spoken words. Therefore, if he is with a client whom, if he were not married, he would ask out on a date, he immediately refers her to a female counselor.

Assuming a false or enhanced identity, flirting, and inappropriate, emotionally-close relationships with women other than one’s wife do not glorify God or edify others; they are self-centered grabs for attention. Our words often create an opening for sexual temptation to nest in our hearts as we begin to fantasize, “What if...?”

Instead of these, I find strength when I establish clear, Godly standards for myself with my mouth. When I speak to attractive women other than my wife or family members, I have a choice: I can either invite temptation into my heart and let it dwell there through perverse lips or silence, or I can speak the truth and tell her, more for my own benefit, of my close relationship and love for Jesus Christ, my wife and my children. I do not do this to push away the other person, but to declare a wall of protection before my heart and to set up a banner that I must carry each time I speak with her again. I try to commit immediately that all of my conversations with her will glorify God, and I continually monitor my heart to know that I am not relating to her for selfish ends.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you have used a froward mouth, perverse lips, and close emotional relationships to allow sexual sin to nest in your heart. Write down specific instances here.

Read through and study the following verses. Write down your observations on how the Lord views the relationship between your heart and your mouth.

Psalm 19:14: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Proverbs 16:23: “The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.”

Proverbs 22:14: “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.”

Isaiah 6:1, 5: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord witting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple...Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Matthew 12:34-37: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Matthew 15:11: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

Romans 10:8-10: "*The word is neigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the work of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*"

Ephesians 4:29-31: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you."

1 Peter 2:21, 22: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*"

Revelation 14:5: "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."

- Declare to God your specific sins of the mouth and lustful emotional relationships you listed earlier in this exercise. Ask forgiveness for these sins. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you and through your accountability partners for specifics on how to turn away from these. Write them down here.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to use your mouth for His purposes instead. Read the following verses and write down ways you can identify the Holy Spirit's use of your mouth for His purposes. Ask Him, as you are filled with Him continually, to direct your mouth accordingly.

Numbers 11:25-29: "And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him [Moses], and took the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

Psalms 34:1-3: "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Psalms 40:3: "And he put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."

Luke 1:41, 42: "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Luke 1:67, 68, 76-79: "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people...And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways: to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Acts 2:5-7, 11: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?...We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

Romans 15:5, 6: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 12:7-12: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Ephesians 5:18-21: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

Days 4 & 5

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." (Proverbs 4:25)

As we have seen, Proverbs 4:24 tells us to protect our hearts by guarding our mouths and letting the Holy Spirit transform them in context with our intimate relationship with Him. Proverbs 4:25 gives us another part to protecting our hearts. **"Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you."** Job made a related statement: **"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"** (Job 31:1).

One way we use our eyes in sexual sin is by directing them to pornography. The results are devastating. To keep with the purpose of this workbook, we will not consider the crippling social, economic, and spiritual effects of pornography on a nation mesmerized by it. We will focus on pornography in an individual's life.

Pornography leads men to diminished contentment in their marriages and in their single life. They tend to isolate themselves from others and even from God, because frankly, it is easier to relate to a two-dimensional image through one's fantasies than it is to pursue genuine intimacy with a living person.

Pornography encourages sexual sin. It is a stepping stone to other activities that are outside of God's blessing for sexuality recorded in Genesis 2:23, 24.

Pornography is addictive. Men use it like drugs or alcohol to medicate feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, stress, depression, or anger, with our behaviors showing all of the unmanageability, cyclical behaviors, tolerance, and self-destruction that any other addiction shows. Men like myself will spend thousands of dollars on it, robbing money from other needs to support it, then finding some way to justify our actions and do it again. Others will stay on the Internet for hours each day, even from sundown to sunrise on workdays, hoping that the next picture they see will produce the high they are seeking. It is a powerful means by which sexual sin becomes the predominant meditation of our hearts.

Other visually damaging material to our hearts is the more subtle forms of pornography that pass for normal viewing material, at least in the United States. Men with a weakness for pornography will page through lingerie or swim wear advertisements, flip through television channels, look up information on models or movie stars on the Internet, rent mainstream videos with provocative scenes, and do other normal, everyday activities as a prelude to looking at something more revealing or as a stimulant to begin fantasizing sexually.

A third way in which we use our eyes for sexual sin is through the “second look,” that is, the lustful look we may take of a woman we see in public. This is the look Jesus speaks of in Matthew 5:28, “**But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.**” Note how seriously God takes this sin. Jesus calls it adultery, and his hearers would have recalled the penalty for adultery: death (Leviticus 20:20). In God’s view, we deserve death for this sin of our hearts and eyes.

The beginning of this exercise focused on the devastating effects of pornography and related visual sins from man’s point of view. Matthew 5:28 gives us a glimpse of how God views this sin.

- Examine the following verses to gain a more detailed picture of this sin from God’s perspective. Write your observations after each one.

Proverbs 27:20: “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

Ezekiel 6:9: “And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.”

Matthew 6:22, 23: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

1 John 2:15-17: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

How then do we keep from these sins? As long as we have good eyesight, it is impossible to stop seeing attractive women!

We differentiate between temptation and sin. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus does not say it is sinful to see or notice an attractive woman. Jesus does not say it is sinful to feel sexual attraction to her. The sin begins when our lust begins. Our lust begins when we seek to use her beauty for our self-centered pleasure.

The common denominator to the sins of pornography, looking at enticing mainstream images, and looking lustfully at women is that we are using our eyes to build a storehouse of images to feed the covetousness and selfishness of our hearts. Therefore, the solution to this sin is to repent of the covetousness and selfishness within, to seek forgiveness through the cross of Jesus Christ, and learn by the Holy Spirit to use our eyes in a way that would demonstrate thankfulness to God and would glorify Him by the things that we look upon.

In repenting from these sins and following the lead of the Holy Spirit, I have had to train my eyes to look in ways that would glorify God. When I see an attractive woman, I admit the attraction to myself and to God right away. I thank Him for creating her. Then I ask myself, “Will the next look that I take glorify God?” In having asked myself this question for years, I have yet to answer it, “Yes!” For me, asking the question, “Will the next look that I take glorify God?” has been very helpful because it transforms the temptation to lust into a straightforward question of obedience: will I look straight ahead and glorify my God, or will I disobey Him and take a lustful look?

In other situations, I am required to converse and look for longer periods of time at an attractive woman. To prevent lust, I ask God to help me see her through the eyes of Jesus Christ, and I begin to pray, “Lord, thank you for

this person and for the plan you have for her life. I admit that I am not part of your plan for her, and I relinquish any claim that I would try to make on her, even in my mind. I thank you instead for the wife you have given me, and I pray that you would bless our relationship and continue to bring us closer together.” Temptation has been transformed into a prayer of thanksgiving.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of how you have used your eyes in ungodly ways. Write them here.
- Seek the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness for these sins.
- Read the following Bible verses and record your observations of how to use your eyes in context with an intimate relationship with God.

Deuteronomy 11:7, 8: “But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it.”

2 Kings 6:13-19: The king of Syria, wanting to capture Elisha, says, “Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he hither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.”

Psalm 119:36, 37: “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.”

Psalm 123:1, 2: “Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.”

Luke 5:24-26: “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.”

Luke 19:37: “And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.”

Luke 19:41, 42: “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.”

1 Corinthians 2:9, 10: “But as it is written, *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*”

2 Corinthians 4:18: “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

1 John 4:20: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

Day 6

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor the left: remove thy foot from evil.” (Proverbs 4:26, 27)

Besides keeping our mouth and eyes from evil, we protect our hearts by keeping our feet from evil as well.

Sometimes men leave their homes or offices with the specific intent of going to an adult bookstore, video store, or other place to engage in sexual sin. More often than not though, men leave their homes or offices with intentions of going somewhere else, then they “just happen to end up in the wrong place.” The same occurs on the Internet, as most men log on to the computer to check their e-mail only, but before long they wander electronically into the web equivalent of adult bookstores and video rental outlets.

Proverbs 4:26 tells us, “**Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.**” That is, before we begin a journey, we should have made a level path already, identifying obstacles and removing them beforehand. Here are some ideas from men who have had to establish their ways through different sources of temptation.

For those who are inclined to drive through specific areas where they are sexually tempted, choose alternate routes to and from a destination, avoiding areas in which they feel susceptible to sexual sin.

- Do not arrive at work before everyone else or stay after hours alone.
- Be accountable with others for the time when you leave work and expect to be home.
- Completely keep out of stores whose merchandise includes pornographic material.
- Only use the Internet when you have a specific site to visit, then be accountable to shut off the computer right after gathering the information needed.
- Use the computer only when an accountability partner or wife is in the room and give him or her the mouse if they leave the premises.
- Use only a filtered Internet service.
- Use the Internet only at a public library, choosing a work station that is easily visible.
- Turn your computer monitor toward the public so that all passersby can easily see the screen.

The main idea behind each of these suggestions is to stay on a predetermined, accountable path without wandering, physically or electronically, always knowing exactly where you are headed, how long it will take, and how to return home.

Proverbs 4:27 also tells us, “**Turn not to the right hand nor the left.**” That is, not only should we prepare for a journey, but we should keep our purpose in mind as we travel. For those who are tempted when walking in malls, supermarkets, or other public places, they should enter knowing beforehand, “What is my purpose here?” and remain focused exclusively on that purpose with each step.

I have had to take these verses quite literally, I used to work in a public building at a specific work station with a computer. In order to get to my station each day, I had to walk by a very attractive and friendly young woman, the kind of person whom, during my years in sexual sin, I would fantasize about constantly and with whom I would

spend hours trying to set up an emotional and physical relationship. If I were left on my own, unaccountable and unprepared, eventually I would have “just happened” to wander over to her desk inadvertently and compromised myself through flirting or corrupt talk.

Instead, each day I would remind myself before I entered the building, “Turn not to the right hand nor the left,” and I would walk directly to my work station. As I passed her she would smile invitingly and say, “Hi! How are you doing?” and I would answer back, “Fine, How are you?” and remember my second rule, “Keep your feet moving.” In a few seconds I was sitting in my work station, keeping focused on the work I needed to do. As part of my work, I would write to an accountability partner by e-mail, telling him how I had handled this daily temptation. Each week, other accountability partners would ask me straightforwardly, “Have you tried setting up a relationship with that woman you are attracted to?” They were a cloud of witnesses who kept me on my predetermined path.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to inform you of any places that you visit, physically or electronically, as a prelude to sexual sin. Write them down here.
- Repent and seek forgiveness for running to evil. Ask the Holy Spirit to use your accountability partners and their suggestions to help keep your foot from evil. Write down these ideas here.

Besides avoiding evil, we are called to use our feet for God’s glory and honor. According to these verses, how would the Lord use your feet for His purposes?

Proverbs 3:19-21, 23: “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion...Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.”

Psalms 119:10: “With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.”

Psalms 119:59, 60: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.”

Psalms 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Romans 10:13-15: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*”

Ephesians 6:14, 15: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

- Ask the Holy Spirit to use your feet for His purposes. Write His answers here.

WEEK 6

“The first of all the commandments is,
Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is one LORD.
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:
this is the first commandment. And the second in like, namely this,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
There is none other commandment greater than these.”
(Mark 12:29-31)

Day 1

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart.” (Mark 12:30)

Summary

Review what you have learned thus far by studying these verses. They are from a Psalm written by David after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sexual sin.

- Circle the word “heart” each time it appears. Underline the other body parts and the actions that are mentioned alongside. How do these relate to your heart? Make a note in the margin or below regarding any other key words that you recognize from our study. Briefly describe their importance to the passage.

Psalm 51:10-17 “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

After you have completed your study of this passage, write your own prayer to God about the state of your heart, your body, and anything else the Holy Spirit leads you to say regarding your desire for sexual purity. Pray it aloud to Him after you have finished writing.

Days 2 & 3

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God... with all thy soul.” (Mark 12:30)

“Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). For the last two weeks we have focused on the heart, the place where sexual sin occurs, the place God desires to purify so that we may learn to love Him and others intimately. But God also wants us to love Him with our whole soul, mind, and strength. This week we will examine how sin has damaged each of these areas and how they are transformed.

God commands us to love Him with all our soul. Our soul is our life within our flesh, our consciousness which allows us to sense and react to our environment.

God created the soul of the first man, and it was very good (Genesis 1:26, 27, 31; 2:7). But Adam’s disobedience gave sin as a legacy to all of the human race (Romans 5:12). Our capacity to live, sense, and interact with our surroundings was damaged by sin (Genesis 3:17-19). In order to relate properly to God’s creation, each one of us must be cleansed of this innate sinfulness, receive God’s holiness and righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, and walk in

His righteousness (Romans 5:15-17; 7:23-8:2). As we lead a new, Spirit-filled life, we nevertheless groan in wait along with the rest of creation for Jesus Christ's return when our bodies and all of the earth will be physically redeemed and created anew (Romans 8:21-23).

While modern humanistic psychology derives its name from the same word for soul, (Greek *psyche*), it completely disagrees with Biblical teaching on the soul's condition. To modern humanists, man's soul is essentially good. The term "sin" is discarded. Undesirable behavior is due to restrictions on man's soul such as a bad environment, improper child rearing, verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, poor education, poverty, suppression of one's creativity, stress, genetic defects, chemical imbalances, poor diet, lack of exercise, racism, intolerance, traditional religion, lack of economic opportunity, or any other of a host of outside influences. The humanist believes that if all of these outside influences are corrected, the innate goodness of a man's soul will show itself naturally, bringing him peace and contentment.

Therefore, if you discuss your sexual sins with humanists, they will give you advice based on this non-Biblical understanding of the soul. Depending on their area of expertise, they will research childhood experiences with you, alter memories, teach you how to change your environment, teach you how to manage stress or potentially destructive emotions, tell you that you should not be so hard on yourself, tell you that your self-imposed restrictions are the real problem, suggest that you act out your fantasies occasionally, try to change thought processes by associating negative stimuli with illicit sexual thoughts, prescribe medication, or offer other ideas to manipulate your surroundings, biological makeup or thoughts – never suggesting that your basic capacity to think, react, and feel in itself is flawed.

While some humanist ideas may be helpful and provide a measure of relief, they demonstrate their ineffectiveness when, having manipulated his actions, thoughts, body chemistry and environment significantly, a client realizes that he still continues to pursue sexual gratification to the point of desperation or to act in other self-centered ways.

The Bible, however, begins with the premise that people in their natural state are self-centered, devious, sinful, ungodly, and incapable of transforming themselves.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5)

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:18)

Therefore we do not seek to nurture or express our natural self. We kill it. We crucify it in the Lord Jesus Christ and let God raise us a new creation in Him.

- Read the following verses and take notes on the condition of your natural self and the transformation that God works within you.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3, 4)

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Romans 6:8-13)

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us... Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” (2 Corinthians 4:6, 7, 10, 11)

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20, 21)

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Galatians 5:16, 24)

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience... And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” (Colossians 3:1-6, 10)

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-6)

Days 4-6

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God... with all thy soul.” (Mark 12:30)

We saw in yesterday’s exercise that, unlike humanism, the Bible teaches that man is naturally depraved because of sin. But when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and crucify our old selves in Him, God the Father creates us again. As newly created beings we learn to walk under the control of the Holy Spirit, to think, react, and feel in accordance with God’s character by His power within us.

Negative outside influences do not go away necessarily. Sinful circumstances such as a bad environment, improper child rearing, childhood abuse, poor education, stress, chemical imbalances, etc. still exist. But we no longer exist – that is, we no longer exist as we used to be. We are new beings, capable by the power of the Holy Spirit to interact within these tragedies in a way that manifests the character and love of Jesus Christ. We depend on Him each moment for strength and wisdom to show the power and love of God in the midst of difficulty. In this way we begin to love God with our whole soul.

- What negative, outside influences have you had to endure, or what influences do you have to endure now?
- Out of this list, which is the most pressing to you now?
- Pray about this situation these three days. Use a concordance or reference Bible to find several verses that pertain to it. For example, if the situation involves dealing with anger, look up verses which include the words anger,

angry, wrath, peace, patience, etc. If you feel inadequate because of a lack of education, look up words like wisdom, foolishness, knowledge, understanding, books, etc. If you do not have a concordance or reference Bible and cannot borrow one, call a group member or close friend and ask for help. Look up the verses and write them down here.

WEEK 7

“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel;
The LORD our God is one LORD :
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:
this is the first commandment.
And the second is like, namely this,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
There is none other commandment greater than these.”
(Mark 12:29-31)

Days 1 & 2

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God... with all thy soul.” (Mark 12:30)

Last week, we considered loving God with our whole soul by considering the nature of our soul. Today we will consider its purpose.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life... That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” (1 John 1:1, 3)

Simply put, God created each of us a living soul so that we would know Him intimately and share that relationship with others.

Modern humanists deny God or try to put Him aside. They deny creation and His authority over it. Therefore they have a much more difficult time trying to find purpose in life. Often they find it in the unhindered pursuit of their own pleasure.

Jesus speaks of the difference between these two purposes of life. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

- What is your reason for existing?
- Where is your heart? Do you live to pursue the comforts of your flesh (more money, possessions, success, ease, better food and comforts, less conflict and pain), or do you live to pursue God’s righteousness and manifest His character?
- Return to your Bible study of Days 4-6 last week in which you studied the Biblical response to a difficult situation you are facing. Reread the Bible verses that you copied. Afterwards, consider your response thus far to that situation – have you been responding from a desire to pursue your own comfort, or have you been responding from a desire to pursue righteousness and manifest God’s character?

Day 3

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God... with all thy mind.” (Mark 12:30)

When I was a junior in high school, I began to have a deep longing for truth. Discarding a religious background that taught a distant, impersonal God, I began studying literature, history, philosophy and foreign languages with a zeal that twelve years later nearly brought me to completed Ph.D. Good grades and a promising academic career were only side issues to my main concern: if I could only find out what truth is, then I could align my life accordingly. Once I discovered truth, everything else would fall into place.

Twelve years of searching through promising humanist resources finally narrowed down to two conclusions. First, there was no absolute truth, and second, everyone was equally entitled to a personal, culturally-conditioned version of truth. In other words, you could do and believe whatever you wanted, as long as you did not hinder anyone else's freedom to do and believe what they wanted. That is the basis for the humanist utopia: everyone is a self-contained whole, energetically pursuing his own desires with no sense of guilt and skillfully avoiding clashes with the self-centered pursuits of others.

It was easy and very natural to align my life according to that "truth of no truth." It made very few demands on me. I had liberty to pursue my self-centered desires as I pleased, especially my sexual desires, as long as I did not infringe on anyone else's pursuit of self-gratification. In reality it nearly destroyed me and hurt many other people in the process (review week 1 if you've forgotten).

I still remember sitting at a desk in the living room of our home one afternoon, twelve years into this search and two months after accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, when it finally dawned on me what truth really is. I may never forget the great feeling of joy marked by a sharp feeling of disillusionment. It came through a short Bible verse: "**I am the way, the truth and the life**" (John 14:6).

All along, I had been looking for truth as a concept. I was looking for a few ideals by which I could guide my life. But truth is not a thought. Truth is a Person. Jesus said, "**I am the way, the truth and the life.**" I knew truth as I knew Jesus Christ. The more I could relate to Him, the more truth I could know. The more I obeyed His words and followed His actions, the more truth displayed Himself in my life. Truth is not a cold, dead concept to ponder. Knowing truth is interacting with a Living Being.

I closed the book on which I was writing my dissertation, pulled out some Bible study questions, and continued studying God's word.

Loving God with all our mind is not some dry intellectual exercise. It is consistent with a living, vibrant relationship with Him.

Jesus Christ is Truth. When you respond to a situation as He would respond to it, you respond truthfully.

- Return to the situation you were studying in Days 4-6 last week. As you look over the verses you have gathered, how do you believe Jesus would respond to your situation? Which verses in particular demonstrate this to you? Write them down here.

Days 4-5

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God... with all thy mind." (Mark 12:30)

Perhaps the first question group members have when they consider loving God with all their mind is, "How do I deal with the sexual thoughts that seem to bombard me at times?"

In answering this we will look first at the nature of our minds. As I pursued humanist studies, I had an interest in creative writing. Humanist literature and creative writing sometimes present the mind as a river. We float along enjoying the scenery of thoughts that come by, following them by free association or fantasy wherever they lead. They say we really do not have much control over what we think, that even as much as 90% of our thoughts are from the subconscious, a murky unseen current underneath the surface of the river, therefore we should do our best to enjoy the ride and let our thoughts lead us wherever they may.

My canoe never got far. I always seemed to get stuck in a marsh called sexual fantasy.

Paul has a different analogy to describe the mind. It is a battlefield. "**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ**" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

We cannot choose every thought that comes into our minds. But we can choose whether our thought process as a whole is lazy and undisciplined or orderly to the glory of God. We can learn to stop unwanted thoughts as they enter our minds and take them into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

How do we take a thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? First, we stop a thought and evaluate it. We ask, "Does this present thought/attitude/self-talk glorify God?" Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8, "**Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**" If a thought has these characteristics, it glorifies God; we can pursue it. If it does not have these characteristics, it does not glorify God; we must throw it out.

For those of us who are accustomed to a flesh-driven, self-gratifying thought life, at first it may seem like we are capturing thoughts and throwing them out several hundred times each day. Disciplining our minds this way is like changing from the lifestyle of a couch potato to training to become a professional long distance runner. It will most likely take a long period of time and much discomfort and frustration before you find success. But remember, we depend on the Holy Spirit for the ability to work this transformation. The Holy Spirit's character is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy. As we are filled with Him and depend on Him daily, these characteristics will manifest themselves in our thoughts. Over time and through continued dependence on Him, we will be more accustomed to thinking along patterns that will glorify God.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)

Find at least one instance today (sexual or non-sexual) when you recognize that your thoughts are not of the Holy Spirit. Stop your natural thought process, evaluate it according to Philippians, and by the Spirit's lead change it to a pattern that would glorify God. Later, describe that situation here.

- Return to the situation you are studying from Days 4-6 last week. Do your typical thoughts about this situation coincide with Philippians 4:8? How would your thoughts have to change to do so?

Day 6

Summary

Our sin-damaged soul does not bear the image of God fully and naturally as it was created to. Because of sin it normally seeks self-gratification, comfort, and avoidance of pain at any cost. Loving God with our whole soul is depending on the Holy Spirit and reacting in a way that will demonstrate the character of Jesus Christ in any environment. In loving God with our whole soul, we learn to see difficult circumstances as opportunities to know Him more deeply and develop His character in us more fully.

Years of sexual fantasy have trained our sin-damaged minds to think selfishly. The Lord calls and empowers us to love Him with all our mind, to think always in context of a relationship with Him.

- Review the situation you have studied since Days 4-6 last week. Recall the differences between the reaction of a sin-damaged heart, soul, and mind to this situation and how God's word and Christ's example teach us to react. What practical changes do you need to make in order to manifest the character and thoughts of Jesus Christ through it?
- On the next page, write a prayer in which you ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to do these.

It is our prayer that you have benefited greatly by this Bible study. Now that you have finished, let us know how it has been helpful to you.

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