
The Mighty Man Manual

Victory and Freedom From Lust
and Pornographic Addictions

By Jon Snyder

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Thanks, praise, glory and all accolades to my Lord, my Savior, my confidant, my tutor who made me, loves me unconditionally, draws me to His presence, changes my heart daily and inclines my ear to hear His voice, who taught me line upon line, truth upon truth. Who is like the Lord our God? And words of thanks ineffable to my loving wife who believes in me and has labored in love and prayer for my freedom. Thank you for making me a better man.

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The Good News...

Many of you who have found your way to this book have been searching for answers. What seemed like innocent entertainment at first has become a lifestyle of shame and bondage. Many of you have probably tried many times to give up pornography and are worn out from trying.

Jesus says to you, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28,29).” There are many places to find treatment for addictions, but I can say with confidence, Jesus is the ONLY source of true freedom. If you want to be totally free and restored in your mind and heart, Jesus is not AN answer... He is THE answer.

2000 years ago, He claimed to have come to give salvation for sinners, to heal the broken hearted, to set people free who are in spiritual captivity and to give liberty to people bound in oppression (Luke 4:18). 2000 years later, His mission hasn't changed! If you want to be free, Jesus died, conquered sin and death and lives today so that you can be!

He isn't waiting for you to get it all right before He helps you. *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).”* He has borne our sins and carried our sorrow. He wants to give us freedom that only He can give. He wants to forgive your sins and give you a fresh start if you'll let Him.

If you have not known Jesus as your savior, as the healer of your heart and as the One who will set you free, you can know Him today. You are not too far gone for Him to save you. The Bible says He is able

to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him. There was no person on earth when Jesus lived who He was unwilling to save and love if they'd come to Him – and there is no person today who He is unwilling or unable to save. There is no depth of bondage that He can't free you from. He did it for me and He will do it for you too if you'll put your hope in Him.

He offers salvation and eternal life to people who put their faith and future in His hands. The Bible says it is an unbreakable promise: in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, (Titus 1:2).

If you have become addicted to pornography, nobody needs to tell you that sin enslaves and leads to death. You know this better than most people. All God's ways lead to life and freedom. You don't have to work for this freedom. It is God's gift to those who trust in Him. You receive that gift by confessing your sins to God, turning from them, asking Him to forgive you and to give you His free gift of eternal life.

If you would like to know Jesus as your savior, use the prayer below as a model, but make the words your own:

SALVATION PRAYER:

Father God. Forgive me for the sins and bad choices I've made that have hurt you, others and myself. I'm sorry and I want to be saved. I believe that you love me despite my sin and even sent Jesus, Your Son, to die in my place for my sin. Jesus, please take the place for my sin right now and make me clean and whole. I turn from my life of sin now and ask You to help me live for you and what is right. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

HEALING PRAYER FROM BONDAGE:

Father, I confess that I have a problem with pornography and sexual addiction. Please forgive me and right now, start working in my heart and life

to set me totally free. Please give me mercy if I should mess up and grace to overcome when temptations arise. I confess that I belong to God and not to sin. Please cleanse my body, my soul and my imagination from every former act and let even the memories of the way I was fade away. Please also use the lessons of this book to teach me how to overcome and to know You better every day. Amen.

If you made Jesus your savior, you are on your way to freedom from the bondages of lust and pornographic addiction. God says that in Christ we are more than conquerors and can do all things through Him who strengthens us. So let us begin this journey out of bondage together. Better things are to come.

The Making of a Mighty Man...

IT DOESN'T TAKE A 'SPIRITUAL GIANT' TO SLAY GIANTS.

*...Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Sippai, who was one of the sons of the giant.
And they were subdued.*

*... Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the
shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.*

*...Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature,
with twenty-four fingers and toes, six on each hand and six on each foot; and he
also was born to the giant. So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea,
David's brother, killed him.*

*... These were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and
by the hand of his servants.*

1 Chronicles 20: 4-8

Most of us have heard about David and Goliath... One giant defies a nation and one boy with faith in a great God defies the giant... then against all natural odds, the boy defeats an enemy that men of greater stature could have never defeated. The thing I love about the passage above is that this story of slaying giants didn't end with David and one giant. His actions inspired others with the message, if God can do that with me, he can do that with you. Israel continued to be tormented by giants, but one man's actions changed everything.

Throughout Israel, men began to stand up and slay their own giants. I love these stories found in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. It tells me that even the people who weren't spiritual giants at first and allowed their giants to rise up, can themselves become more than conquerors. They tell me that a "little old me" can slay giants - but not because I am great. Rather because the One true Mighty Man, the Lord Jesus Christ lives in me and operates through me. I may not be a David. I may have been one of the Israelites that hid on the sidelines. But many of those in hiding, after seeing God deliver one man, stood up, took a stand, were transformed into mighty men of faith and valor and started slaying giants.

Why does this epic mythology of the mighty man resonate with us so deeply? Why do we love stories and movies about heroic men who do the impossible? I think maybe it is because in our heart we know that each one of us is destined to do great things – not because we're so great – but because an amazing God has put His Spirit in us and the possibilities are endless. We may not all have the strength of Samson or the wisdom of Solomon; but I think within each one of us is a realization that through God, we can do mighty things.

THE MIGHTY MAN PITFALL

Mighty men through history have had their fatal flaw: lust. It is a story we see over and over. The Beowulf's of history can outmatch any man on the battlefield, but succumb to the beautiful maids. Samson had his Delilah. David had his Bathsheba. Solomon had his, well, all of them... and the list goes down through the ages.

My giant too was lust and pornography. It ruled over me for years. And I'm not alone. The statistics are shocking if not staggering how rampant this problem has become in Christian circles. Nearly every survey I've seen indicates that pornography is a problem for over 75% of Christian men. I even recently heard a study where 95% of Christian

men admitted to struggling with lust and pornography. Just as Israel had its giants in the land, Christians today have theirs too. We are living a modern Beowulf saga, tormented by the seeds of lust spawned by our own weaknesses.

This book is the story of one “little-old-me” who God strengthened to slay his Goliath. This is my story of transformation from meek to mighty in God. Chapter after chapter represents lesson after lesson that God taught me to walk out of my addiction and overcome. Like the men who saw another man slay a giant, may all who read this become Mighty Men of Valor, slay their giants and take back the Promised Land.

Getting the Most out of this Book

This book is about the struggle that we face with pornography from a Christian, Biblical perspective. But we will still be addressing “unchristian” concepts and talking openly in some parts about pornography or worldly influences. Even reading about pornography will make the struggle more difficult for some men. But in the end, I believe you will find great freedom through these lessons.

Through the course of these lessons we will retrain our mind, body and spirit how to think, act and react to the influences that bring struggle.

MIGHTY MAN TRAINING AND APPLICATION SECTIONS

Many chapters will have a section at the end for notes, prayer and action that should be taken. I think this is an important aspect to this book; because whereas stories and lessons may be very applicable, each person must make the lesson their own – take ownership, if you will – and allow God to do the work that only He can in order to get true freedom.

For this reason, this is more of a manual or workbook than a piece of literature to be read without responding to it. Take action! Ask God to speak to you through each chapter and help you understand how my lesson can relate to your struggle.

Understand that many of the lessons in here took time to be formed in my heart. You may need to go back and read a portion that seems really applicable to your areas of struggle while God works that lesson deep into your heart. I don't think that this manual is a template A-B-C formula for freedom. Every person is different and is in bondage for a different reason. That is why I believe this interactive, Spirit led approach is so important.

So prepare for your training. God wants to set you free and make you a Mighty Man of Valor...

Book Overview

PART I: MY STORY

This is my account of how I became addicted to pornography, saw it escalate in my life, and how I began my journey out. This section isn't intended to be deep or doctrinal. I get into teaching and application later. My story is just that... my story. If there is anything that I want it to teach is that God can heal any man... no matter how stuck in sin he may be. I'm not proud of the things I've done, but praise God who works all things together for good! I hope what I have come through can help bring freedom to many other men.

PART II: FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

This section includes lessons that are so important, so completely foundational, that every other lesson is meaningless without them. They

provide the backbone for every man's freedom. You may be tempted to see chapters about grace or love and glaze over them. Don't. Most people think they know about grace. But it is more deep and more profound than any of us can ever fully grasp.

PART III: FIGHTING BATTLES

Coming out of this sin WILL NOT be easy. I don't believe the intense struggle has to last forever. There is real freedom in Christ over our battles. But in the time between now and true heart change, you will have your share of battles to fight.

Lust is difficult to overcome because it is one temptation that can have roots in the fleshly dimension, mind and soul and in the spiritual. I don't know of any other books on this topic that take the time to really address all three areas of temptation with practical teaching and tactics. This part of the book has tough lessons that focus on how to train your mind and heart so that you are equipped to win the struggle "next time" and every time.

PART IV: FINDING FREEDOM

Many other teachings and workshops on the topic of lust depict a grim picture of "victory." I don't accept that victory is merely the ability to whip my flesh into shape. I believe that true heart change is both possible and taught in the Bible. While I believe learning how to fight our battles and temptation is essential to ultimate victory, simply knowing how to win a battle doesn't translate into "freedom." To be free, the heart must change. This is the work that only God can do and is addressed in the fourth and final section of the book.

The purpose of this book isn't to help you manage your sin. I'm not into "solutions" that don't bring about a true change of heart. This book's purpose is to bring you *through* the struggles into a place of true

intimacy with God. From that place of true love and intimacy, we find the thing our souls really longed for in the first place and healing for the heart issues that keep us stuck in sin.

With God's help and guidance, every one of us will be able to say one day, "I don't struggle with lust or pornography." That is true freedom and the only solution I accept as valid.

APPENDIX:

This part of the book contains additional teaching and scriptures about subjects that are mentioned or addressed elsewhere in the book, but for the sake of readability, etc. are not fully developed.

The web site is also an ongoing developing forum and appendix. As we receive information, questions, and helpful links, we expand our resources for the benefit of all. If you have a question or helpful information, feel free to email us... perhaps what you have to say is exactly what another man needs to hear.

As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

- Proverbs 27:17

~ Part I ~

My Story

This account isn't for the faint of heart. I was an addict. My Struggle with pornography and my search for Godly freedom may shock some people. I'm certainly not proud of the things I've done. But praise God who is still in the business of saving and restoring sinners.

I'm not trying to establish doctrine from my story. It is simply that: my story. We will get into some heavy teaching in the following parts of the book that talk about the lessons I learned on the way out. But for now, here's how the journey begins...

CHAPTER 1

The Journey In

It is a story and a sin that too many Christian men share: pornography. My fascination with it started... well, as early as I was aware of. I can remember sneaking around even as a very young boy to try to find revealing pictures of women. This continued into adolescence and only got worse. My friends and I were so nonchalant about it. We'd talk about it, share magazines and movies and always conspire new ways to get our hands on more of it. When the internet came along and it got easier to find massive amounts of porn at the click of a button any time of night or day, that's when things started getting bad, but I didn't even know it at the time.

Amazing grace! Despite all my sins and shortcomings, God got a hold of my life along the way. I became a Christian and got saved in college. My fixation with pornography didn't stop, however once I was a Christian. I discovered that my Christian friends and I now I shared pornography in a different way: as a secret addiction that couldn't be shaken. I was stuck with a habit that I hated and despite my best efforts I was stuck. **And I stayed stuck for years.**

I wish I could say that my journey out had a quick solution, some magic pill that any man can take and instantly the desire and struggle with this be gone. But that wasn't my story. And maybe there

is a grand solution for some men stuck with this addiction, but they're probably not the ones reading a book like this. I think for most of us, the reality is that something that took years to get where it is doesn't go away overnight despite the most sincere prayers, pleas and tears.

“SOLUTIONS” THAT DIDN'T WORK.

It isn't that I didn't want to be free. I tried all the “solutions” that people and the Christian books I was reading claimed to work. I installed internet filters and cyber sitters. These could keep me from certain sites, for a time. But then the internet got smarter than the filters and some sites would still get through. And in times of desperation, rather than surf easily from site to site, I just surfed to see what sites and images I could find that wouldn't be blocked by the filter. I was getting frustrated. I was still an addict. I was just an addict with an internet filter. Eventually I learned a little more about computers and how to disable these filters even if I didn't have the password and I found myself right back in the addiction again with full force.

I realized that by putting a filter on my computer, I was just putting a wall between my wicked flesh and my wicked ways. A cyber sitter didn't change me, it just changed my circumstances. And I suppose these things have their place, but I wanted more. I wanted freedom – real freedom – not a band-aid. **I wanted a higher standard - a higher truth - to make my decision because I love God, not have my decision made for me by some program.**

I do think an internet filter is absolutely essential in a house with children - and extremely useful in avoiding accidental exposure to offensive content. So I'm not telling you to remove one if you've got it on your computer... yet. But like a child must remove the training wheels on a bike to know if they can really ride it, the acid test of your victory will be to see if you are free when there are no external restrictions in place. So there should come a time when you are the administrator of your own internet filter and can set your own passwords

and disable them - to be bound by nothing but your convictions. You aren't free until freedom comes from within.

I can honestly say that today I am walking in freedom. I don't need an accountability group or a cyber filter. I have no restrictions on me and I still walk in freedom. That is where we are going... but right now, this is a story about where I was. And so my search for freedom continued...

Next I tried accountability. I do think that accountability groups have their place and can be one important step for many men. I'm not convinced, however, that they are an answer by their own merit. My experience with them was just OK. A bunch of Christian guys confessing our sins to each other in a small format men's Bible study group. All 6 of us in the group struggled with the same sin - lust and pornography. And so the dynamic was interesting. We all started strong. But after a couple weeks, in any given meeting at least a couple of us messed up that week. And while it was shameful at first, after a while it was almost a given that most of us would have messed up and the power was gone. It is hard to be tough with someone who messed up that week when you either messed up yourself or spent the whole week wanting to.

There was no shame or embarrassment in acting shamefully. It just became normal for us to be messing up. And after a while, it was more of us falling in a week than standing strong. Some weeks there was not one of us who didn't mess up. And so our accountability group turned into just a group... Maybe we weren't hard enough on each other. Maybe we should have really laid on the condemnation so that we really felt more crappy about ourselves when we screwed up. Maybe we should have laid the guilt on thick, or verbally berated each other to make the shame worse. But is any of that the way that it is supposed to work? Why does the loving kindness of God lead men to repentance (Rm. 2:4), but shame groups are supposed to do the job in Christian circles?

I've heard of accountability groups getting more creative. Some groups require someone who falls to buy dinner or simply fine each other

for each slip up – some as much as \$1000 per offense. And I think to myself, is that the answer? Do we trade our love of lust for the love of money and call ourselves free? Or have we just replaced one godless desire for another?

I was quickly disillusioned. This tool of accountability that so many Christian men swear by was not doing what I had hoped. But even if it did, is that the “freedom” I was hungry for? Did I want to be free simply because I’d be afraid of the shame of telling someone else? If shame is the only reason I keep my hands clean, I haven’t conquered my sin, I’ve just found something I like more... pride.

I was still hungry for real freedom: to do what is right because I love God. Period. Don’t get me wrong... accountability is good and has its place - I’m not telling ANYONE to stop fellowship or accountability. But an accountability group will never be anyone’s savior... nor can the input of men affect the heart change that can only come from God. Accountability alone can’t be what makes it happen for you. Victory comes from freedom within, not fellowship without.

Eventually that group fell by the wayside. But I met a wonderful girl and started dating her. We began praying with each other regularly and I thought, “Maybe this is my answer. She doesn’t share my struggle. I’ll have her as my accountability partner. Then I’ll really be too ashamed to mess up.” And so I confessed my struggle with her. And she confessed her issues with me, and we prayed for each other regularly and I confessed my sins to her when I’d mess up. And she kept dating me and forgiving me and I got used to her stuff and she got used to mine and eventually the sting was gone from that arrangement too. And I was back to my old habits. And eventually, accountability was more of an afterthought with us.

She married me and kept on forgiving me and loving me... but I didn’t get better. Maybe she should have been tough on me and refused to marry me until I was better. Maybe she should have thrown a fit over my sin to make it a big problem. Maybe she should have threatened to divorce me for marital unfaithfulness with these fantasy girls online. But none of that happened. But if it had, would I be free, or would I again

have to choose between something that I wanted and something I wanted. Carnal solutions to carnal problems are just more carnality in the end.

What I really wanted was to choose God over my sin. I wanted to love God more than my lust. I wanted to honor Him with my body, soul and spirit. Even though I would have been happy for any of these other approaches to work, they really were not what I wanted deep down.

I was crying out for FREEDOM. Real freedom.

I heard about deliverance from demonic strongholds. I thought that would be my answer. Any man who has struggled with this sin for long enough comes to realize there are spiritual things happening beyond ourselves in regard to this – perhaps removing these creatures from the equation would result in the freedom I was hoping for. Now, I actually have had amazing success in some areas of my life through deliverance. And this may be the answer for some people – I don't presume that the answer for me was the answer for everyone.

So I met with a pastor at my church and we talked and he prayed and laid hands on me and told these devils to leave. And I felt pretty good about it. I didn't feel any different, but I was taking that as my answer by faith. And a few days went by and I was OK and then I started to struggle again. It was horrible to have the realization set in that after deliverance, I was still struggling this hard. I had now tried just about everything you could imagine and I still wasn't free. I have come to realize that deliverance is one spiritual solution. However, Lust can be triggered by the flesh, the mind and soul or the spirit. So even if you get rid of the spiritual tormentors, you can still be chained in your flesh and soul.

I turned the counseling up a notch and tried some 3rd party "Mega-Counselors." These people went through family history and broke generational curses, broke soul-ties with everything that could be remotely tied to this thing, looked under every rock and spiritual corner, even tried theophostic-type prayer. All this is good and has its place. I even recommend reading about some of these things in the appendix

and applying them in prayer... but this alone did not make me free. The struggle was just as bad as ever. Over time and through all these efforts, despair and a disgusting feeling crept in that there was no hope for me.

I guess that's when it started to get really bad.

CHAPTER 2

The Journey Deeper

Pornography became a lifestyle for me. It wasn't an occasional slip-up. It was a daily event – sometimes multiple times every day and for hours on end I would sit and gratify this sin. I hated it and I hated myself for doing it. But I was stuck.

This became one of those self-perpetuating cycles: your self-esteem is in the toilet because of your addiction, but your addiction takes your mind off the fact that you hate yourself and so you run back to it. You feel like dirt... or like sludge on the underside of dirty dirt... so you wallow in grief and self-pity for a while and then run right back to your tormentor for another quick fix.

I'd cry out to God over and over, "Save me! Help me! Deliver me! Forgive me! Don't forsake me!" But the longer this cycle continued, the more I feared that God really did forsake me. I was afraid that I just got too dirty for Him to use. I assumed He certainly couldn't like me or accept me the way I was... after all, I couldn't like me or accept me the way I was and I'm not a holy god. But often, I'd have these wonderful times with God and it seemed like I was growing in other areas of my life and walk. So it seemed like I could keep these areas of my life separate. On the surface I was Jon, the growing Christian man that people respected... at home I was the miserable porn addict.

In church, I'd be fired up for God and certain that I would never go back to porn ever... but the temptation would come and I'd be right back into it. Every breakthrough that I had in God, I was sure would be the crucial component that would guarantee my freedom. My logic was, "If God hated my sin as much as I did, wouldn't it be the first thing on His list to 'fix' on me so that He could actually love me and so that I could love myself?"

They say that insanity can be defined as doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results. If that is an accurate definition of insanity, I'd say that I was certifiable. I can't tell you the number of times I'd tell God, "that was the last time." And I'd repent as hard as I could and feel good for a day or two and then be right back in it again. Sometimes I'd pick myself up right away and other times I'd go into a self-esteem spiral and on a porn bender for days.

I got bad enough that I literally couldn't be left alone. If I had any time without people around, it was almost a guarantee that I'd be in front of the computer getting a fix. I'd probably want to cry if I actually calculated the cumulative hours and number of years of my life that were wasted gratifying this sin... But that wasn't the part that frightened me the most.

THE LAW OF ESCALATION;

Every good junkie will tell you, they started small and their habit became an addiction and their addiction a prison. Pornography is no different. The law of escalation will affect EVERY person who thinks they can play with sin. If you have been struggling with pornography for any length of time, my guess is that you now watch more hardcore things than you used to. This is the path that I also was on. And it scared me.

In college there was a nice guy across the hall. Nice guy. Nice girlfriend. Not so nice porn addiction. A friend and I found out about this one day when we decided to pull a prank on him – nothing harmful

- we just thought it would be funny to move all his furniture around in his dorm room when he was away for a couple minutes. We started to move his bed and quickly discovered that the full length of the bed underneath had boxes full of porn. We quickly moved the bed back to its original location. We went to move the arm chair in the corner only to find stacks of boxes filled with porn behind it as well. We went to move a smaller chair only to find the same thing, a box of porn underneath that. Out of curiosity, we opened his closet and, sure enough, there was box after box of porn in there too. Our prank was foiled by not wanting to expose his intense addiction. A couple years later and a couple girlfriends later, he “came out of the closet” and announces that he’s gay. But his path to homosexuality started with porn. His porn collections when we saw them were “straight” porn, he didn’t start out gay, but years of searing his conscience to sexual sins and escalation led him down a path of perversion that he couldn’t escape. I have heard this same testimony from a number of homosexuals. Even recently, a pastor in the news who was caught with a transsexual prostitute shared this same testimony – a “straight” porn addiction escalated into a perversion that was insatiable.

Sexual orientation is not the only way that people can dangerously escalate in their addiction. I was in a hotel lobby and a TV in the corner was interviewing a felon in jail. He was convicted for child molestation. When they asked him how he got started, it may shock some people that he started with “innocent” softcore porn. His response was one word, “P---boy.” Now this well known enterprise doesn’t have a secret, underground child porn branch. Nor will every person who looks at softcore become a child molester or violent criminal - however, porn, by its very nature induces an escalating addiction. An addiction to softcore will turn into addictions to hardcore and so on... the only way it can go is to grow. This guy kept feeding his demons and his addiction grew and grew and turned vile. Rapists will often have the same story: escalation. I’ve heard the same thing from every branch of sexual pervert and sex offender.

Lust and perversion can never fill the hole in the heart that it promises to fill. No addiction can. And so when we try to meet our

needs with something that can never do the trick, we must increase our dosage. It doesn't happen overnight. But it happens. Perversion takes hold and escalates the problem. And when the next level of the addiction doesn't fill the hole either, our soul searches for more perverse ways to "fill the hole." You can only play with fire for too long before you start to get burned.

This was the part that really scared me. I remember seeing a couple scenes that originally shocked me. Later, however, I wanted to go back and see them again and others like them. This time the shock of what had at one time been too "hardcore" now had a perverse fascination for me. My conscience was just a little more seared.

I realized that this is how the horror stories start and if I didn't get a handle on this, in 10 years I'd be a violent criminal whose story sounded like the others... "it all started innocently enough."

Deeper in my addiction than ever, but with a new fear in my heart, I began what I could call the first stages of the journey out...

CHAPTER 3

The Journey Out...

My freedom didn't come overnight or with one swift deliverance. But over a period of more than two years, one truth at a time God led me out. It is my hope that with the lessons from this manual, God can lead you out in a much quicker time.

You've heard it said that a journey begins with a single step. My first step was to understand that I was in too deep to get out alone and to get help from the person who knew me the most. So with a new conviction that I had to be free, I approached my wife with my problem. I needed to come clean with her and ask for her help and forgiveness in a bigger way.

"I need you to pray for me." I said. "Pray hard. Pray every day. Pray as often as you think about me. I've been struggling with pornography. More than I told you before. I'm addicted and not a day goes by, hardly, that I'm not messing up. I don't know how it got this bad, but **I need to believe that I can be free.**"

She was hurt but supportive and we prayed that night that God would free me and set me on a right path. We'd follow up every night that we prayed together and continued to intensely pray that God would lead me out of this addiction and give me faith for freedom.

This was a type of accountability partner that I probably needed all along: one who would pray, pray and pray some more. Prayer changed me in a way that just confessing sins through accountability never did. We had a purpose together beyond simply holding me accountable: she was fighting for me. We were in it to win it this time... together. She would encourage me and I would stir myself up. Nothing changed overnight. I was still messing up almost constantly. But in about a month or so, one thing had changed. I started to believe that I could be free.

This was a huge step. My first real step. For years, I honestly didn't ever think I was going to be free. I went from slip up to slip up hardly fighting. But just to believe again and have hope was like catching a glimmer of light from a dark place or a cool breeze in a sweltering attic.

I went from thinking "I can someday be free from this" to believing it, to having strong conviction that I was going to kick this and that God was fighting with us. I think this was an important first step. It started bringing me into an attitude of faith and agreement with God. Hebrews 11:6 gives us an important insight: without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. We must come to God with this attitude of faith. Faith is like a key that unlocks what God is doing.

When Jesus was alive, even though He was God in the flesh, God wouldn't overstep His bounds and go beyond people's participation of faith. When Jesus went to His home town, the Bible tells us He couldn't do many mighty acts there because of their unbelief. And in Matthew 9 when the father of the epileptic child came to Jesus, He zeroed in on the man's belief saying "All things are possible for him who believes." It then says that immediately the man cried out "Lord, I believe... help my unbelief!" He confessed his unbelief and gave God the little bit of faith He did have. Jesus then did what He does best: He brought freedom.

Jesus wants to bring us the freedom He paid for with His life. I had cried out to Him so many times and didn't see answers that I had

begun to doubt His willingness to help me. But there were heart issues that He needed to heal before I could be set free. I came to realize during my journey out that my deliverance was layer upon layer of heart healing. It takes time to heal a broken heart. And God has never been holding anything back. He wants my freedom and your freedom even more than you do. He wants to bring you into a deeper relationship with Him even more than you do. He wanted it enough to die for it. If He already gave up His only Son and most precious possession to buy your freedom, how much more will He also give you the inner healing to bring you up out of this and set you on a rock to make you the mighty man of valor you are called to be in Him?

Your freedom is inevitable if you are pursuing God with all your heart. “Be confident of this, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it (Php 1:6).” God didn’t draw you to Himself to leave you high and dry. He won’t leave you or forsake you. He won’t brush you aside. Jesus tells us He came to heal the broken hearted and to set the captives free (Lk 4). He didn’t just come for salvation. He came to give an abundant life of freedom.

The journey out starts with a single step. I had just taken my first step. I would find that there were many more layers of bondage and wounding that I would have to go through. This book follows my order of progression to be set free. You may have to learn these lessons in a different order, in which case you may want to re-read this a second time. Or you may have lessons that you need to learn that aren’t in this book. But God will take you through them and set you free. He has promised it. Believe that you can be free. Ask God to give you the faith for your freedom and let the promises of scripture speak to you. Trust God that’s He’s willing to fight for you and you aren’t in this alone. Stand on His word and His character. All things are possible to him who believes.

Time for your Mighty Man training... get ready for battle.

~ Part II ~

Foundations of Freedom

As God led me out, these lessons became integral to every other lesson. Don't glaze over these "familiar" concepts. Rather learn their lessons as a fresh start and perspective. Apart from these foundational truths, every other lesson found after them is virtually meaningless...

These will serve as a backbone of theology and form basic understanding of terms and concepts throughout the rest of this text.

CHAPTER 4

More Than You Can Bear...

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF GRACE

Before we get into practical teaching on how to fight and win our daily battles, we have to get one thing straight. **This is the most important thing you can ever learn: your victory isn't about you, your will, your endurance or mastering your temptations - ALL glory must go to God alone!** The real lesson is this: it is by grace only that you stand. All real strength, real virtue, all willpower, all ability to walk in the Spirit is from God alone.

Grace is bigger than we realize. 99% of the teaching and understanding of it focuses on its role in forgiveness and salvation – but this is just the tip of the iceberg, the entry point into God's grace. The beauty and majesty of God's grace that brought us into His Kingdom as sons grows deeper and more beautiful and more powerful if we allow it to keep operating in our lives. This is the same grace that Jesus needed for His earthly ministry in Luke 2:40 – not the salvation from sin, but the grace to destroy the works of the devil and receive from Heaven the power that He, living as a man in a man's body, as a model for us all, could exhibit through grace. When you lay a hold of THIS grace, EVERYTHING changes. The years of struggle in the power of your

own will and flesh come into context; and the things that *should* have worked now take on a new life and power. Glory to God alone!

I've heard testimonies from people who claim to get free from this, but their story is all about them. And I have heard these same teachers then condemn people still stuck in the very thing they used to struggle with. And I wonder, "The same God who gave me all the help, revelation, grace, mercy and strength to overcome - was this the same God that helped them?" Brethren, this is important: only God holds the keys to your victory; only God heals the heart; and so only God can get the credit for your victory. To think anything else is pure pride. This lesson is so foundational, and until you really get this, you'll never walk in victory because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jas. 4:6). God will literally oppose your victory until you begin to grasp how very desperately you need His guidance through each and every moment and temptation.

The Bible teaches that God won't **ALLOW** us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13)... now understand the implications of that statement: **no matter how strong you are, there are temptations stronger than you!** You see, if by walking with God, HE keeps away temptations beyond what you can bear, then it logically follows that when you are not walking with God, there **WILL** be temptations that you are not able to bear. You are not your own keeper. **YOU** aren't the one who overcomes temptations. There are spiritual forces at work that you haven't ever contemplated and levels of temptation that you will never face because God has decided in His grace to shelter you.

The enemy is smarter than you and has been successfully tempting people for thousands of years. Apart from the active work of the Spirit of God, this isn't a fair fight. If it is just you and the devil... I'm sorry, but you are in way over your head. Thankfully God does shelter us according to His sovereign wisdom. **This is a function of grace.** You don't deserve this protection - you receive it by grace. Since God alone can keep you from temptation that goes over your head, none

of us can boast in our strength or overcoming virtue. By the grace of God we walk and by grace alone we stand.

But Jon, you say, I've been in battles over my head and lost time and again. That's why I'm reading this book. True, but there is another function of grace that you also must discover: the enabling power of God through you. Winning this battle has nothing to do with you and your strength; for the Bible says that victory is not by might and not by power but by God's Spirit (Zec. 4:6). **You will NEVER stop sinning by trying to stop sinning.** Your carnal mind, carnal flesh and carnal will cannot stop carnality. This is why you've tried and tried with no success. Once you are born again, you are a new creation. God isn't trying to teach you how to not be a sinner, but how to be a son. He isn't teaching you how to NOT walk in the flesh but how TO walk in the Spirit. By the Spirit we put to death the desires of the flesh; and we learn to walk in the Spirit by grace.

Does grace mean we just sit back and don't fight when we are being tempted? Not at all. When you read through Romans, Paul admonishes us in chapters 5 and 6 to fight our battles, present our bodies as slaves to righteousness, etc. etc. But then in Romans 7, he talks about the fact that even though he knows the good he's supposed to do, he finds that he doesn't have the ability to do it and he keeps on sinning. He doesn't downplay the fact that we still have to fight sin. Just don't think for a minute that grace will make the journey out of this sin easy. What does this mean to us then? **It means there is a higher law than "try harder."** It means there is deeper truth to be found.

Paul continues his dissertation on overcoming sin throughout the rest of Romans with teachings about victory through setting our mind on the spirit, walking in the spirit, and taking on the mind of Christ. That is basically to say the same thing as Galatians 5:16: *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

Our victory has everything to do with the Spirit and very little to do with our own strength. We must fight the battles we face - and this takes heart, preparation and endurance - but God's grace places us in battles that are not too great for us and by unlocking the

power of grace, we receive what we need to walk in the Spirit and have victory in the midst of those battles. Despite all your preparations and fighting – mentally, emotionally and circumstantially – only God can keep you from falling. Proverbs says, “*The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory is of the Lord*” (Pr 21:31). There is not one of us so great or so powerful in the Spirit that we can endure and stand strong if God were to allow the devil full access to us. We are protected at all times and sheltered from the brunt of attack. Just as the devil had to ask permission of God to afflict Job and Peter, he also has boundaries that he can’t cross in our lives.

This is why Jesus prayed, “*And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*” (Mt 6:13). Jesus knew that ALL the power is from God and if God were to lead us to a place where the temptations were greater than we could bear, there is no man that could survive a full frontal attack from all the forces of hell.

What about when we do fail? If God’s Word says we will not carry out the desires of the flesh if we are in the Spirit, then it stands to reason that the times we fall should cause us to step back and say, “Where did I stray from walking in the Spirit.” I propose to you that the times we feel like we couldn’t stand up under the weight of the temptation we were facing, we had pride creep into our hearts and steal the grace that would allow us to stand – steal the truth of who we really are in Christ. God will still allow the battle to get intense... so intense, in fact, that it may even seem that it is more than you can bear. However through humility, you will receive the grace to escape your temptations.

The reality is this: we should pray every day that God, in His grace would help us to be humble enough to give Him all the glory for our victories, deliver us from all the attacks of the devil and not allow us to have a temptation that is more than we can bear. We will still have to fight and struggle, but we will have no illusions about who gets the real victory for the win. The strength to fight is even an act of grace, because real strength is from God, even as Paul admonishes in Ephesians

6:10: *Finally, my brethren, be strong **in the Lord** and in the power of HIS **might**.*

HOW TO RESPOND TO FAILURE

Have you ever beat yourself up after messing up? It is common to have an attitude of, “I can’t believe I did that... I’m such a jerk... I’m the scum that jerks wash off”... that is actually pride speaking and not humility. You heard me correctly. It doesn’t SEEM like pride when we are beating ourselves into the mud, but think about this. **If YOU are disappointed that YOU failed, it was YOUR strength that you were relying upon.** You put hope in the power of your faithfulness to God as opposed to trusting in the power of God’s faithfulness to you. That self-effacing, berating mentality says, “I’m disappointed in my own lack of strength... I thought I was stronger than that.” God isn’t surprised by our lack of strength. Why should we be? It is evidence that we had an exaggerated opinion of our strength (pride) and we just got knocked down a peg. If you beat yourself up after sin, you’ve got a pride issue and need to learn the law of grace.

I’ve gotten to the place before where “I was doing so well” at staying free from sin, that I literally thought I’d beaten it forever. And then I got hammered with temptation that I just couldn’t fight. It was a wake-up call. I wasn’t the strong one. I simply had figured out how to beat the level of temptation that I had known. There were higher levels of temptation that I simply wasn’t ready for. My pride went before my fall.

Peter warns in his first epistle, “*Humble yourself in the sight of God casting all your cares upon Him.*” We tend to think that humility is “carrying our cross” and we’ve got to bear our own burden. That is actually the *opposite* of humility. We can’t bear our own burden. That’s why Christ had to take our heavy yoke in exchange for His light one. When we take up our own cares, we are doing the opposite of humbling ourselves. There is no person who is strong enough to stand against the

devil if God were to remove His protection. So why do we feel as if we are so responsible for our success? That is the attitude of pride that opens the door for us to sin. That pride chokes out grace.

We are sinners. We *deserve* no good thing from God. We deserve the wages of our sin, but Jesus gave us the wages of His righteousness. Grace is our ONLY strength. Some people look at themselves and are proud of a strong self-will or their intellect or spiritual gifts. But who can take credit for the way God sovereignly chose to make and equip them? Our gifts and equipping are a function of sovereign grace.

If you are realizing the power of grace right now, it is because God has given you the grace for your spiritual eyes to be opened. You can't even take credit for learning about grace because the Bible teaches that God allows the curse of spiritual blindness on all people to be lifted by His mercy! So even what you know, you know by grace. We need grace even to get grace! Without grace, we are spiritually deaf, dumb, blind, helpless, hopeless and stuck on a highway to Hell.

Grace allows you forgiveness. Grace allows you access to God. Grace enables you to learn spiritual truth. Grace allows you to walk in the Spirit. Grace keeps the devil from full access to you. Grace. Grace. Grace. It all comes down to grace.

You are God's workmanship. He is the potter. We are the clay. Hands off the pottery! The sooner you settle that you can take credit for nothing and give God ALL the glory for your victory, the quicker God can work.

My attitude must not be to say that I've attained because of something I've done or trust in my strength. We need grace first and imparted strength second. Grace places us in the right battle and then God imparts strength to win through grace. I must by faith access the grace to overcome by giving all the glory to God.

It is no coincidence that Peter writes to us about humbling ourselves. He struggled with pride to a great extent. Peter was a strong man in his own ability and resolve... so much so that when Christ told him he'd fall that night in the garden, He told God He was wrong! It was that same pride in his own strength and not the grace of God that

opened the door for him to fall and deny Jesus. What if Peter had fallen on his knees and confessed that he was just a man and asked, not for greater strength... but for the grace not to fall. Would the story have gone differently?

I've noticed in my own life, the times I was asking for strength, I didn't notice a discernible help. But when I've asked for grace – grace not to be tempted beyond what I can bear and the grace to walk in the Spirit, to put on the new man, to see myself as I truly am in Christ, I believe God, then has helped me greatly. In this way we also don't have the space to make excuses for our sin. Some use grace as a license to sin, thinking that if they fall, "Oh well... God's grace will cover me." That is an abuse of grace and a cheapening of what we have available to us.

The truth of our identity in Christ is that we HAVE been made a new creation, we ARE now the righteousness of Christ, we HAVE been set free from the power of the enemy, we HAVE EVERY spiritual blessing already in Christ, our old man HAS been killed and crucified with Christ, we ALWAYS are victorious in Christ. When we get the grace to actually believe these truths from the Bible, it changes everything. As you read this book, God will establish these things in your heart more and more and heal you of many heart wounds. But through grace we don't have to wait until "some day" to walk in freedom – we are free today and in the Spirit we have access to everything we need to win every battle.

People who have tried time and again, and I was one of them, often have a difficult time believing that they can really be free. The truth is that you already are – your soul just hasn't figured it out yet. But know this: your starting point will dictate your end place. If you start, believing that you are in bondage, helpless and hopeless, then you have little to look forward to because Christ isn't going to die again for you. But if you start this knowing that Christ HAS made you free, then there can be no doubt as to whether you will find freedom. The answer is yes and amen in God!

The difference begins in relating to God through grace and enjoying the total paradigm shift from trying to walk out freedom in YOUR strength versus by the Spirit. It is grace that allows us to not be

tempted beyond what we can bear. As soon as man's strength (pride) enters that equation, it chokes the grace and we indeed experience temptation beyond what we can bear. Aren't you glad God isn't telling you to try harder! He began a good work in you and He will complete it. Let us access this grace today and discover that it will change EVERYTHING!

~Mighty Man Training & Application~

If you have never tapped into God's grace for your life you can start today! Take the words of the sample prayer below and make them your own.

God, forgive me for living by my own strength and arrogance. Please change the devil's boundary lines and give me greater grace - space to come right. ALL the provision to overcome sin was paid for in Jesus. He makes me able to have victory.

I repent for identifying more with the old man who is dead than with the new man you have made me to be in Christ. Give me the grace to walk in the Spirit and to put on the new man today. Give me the grace to see myself as a son and not as a sinner.

I pray that I would not be tempted beyond what I can bear today, tomorrow and this week. Show me how to overcome temptations as they arise and give me the strength in Your Grace to fight as I should. But let me not think in pride that I have done this by my strength. All glory to you for my victories. Amen

CHAPTER 5

The Lesson of Love

It is a frustrating thing to want to be free, believe you can be free and fight harder than you've ever fought and still be messing up regularly. I was fighting now... struggling daily for freedom... and that was a big step from messing up and just accepting that as normal. But I was only keeping clean for a week or so at a time and then I just lost the power to fight. The constant battles, the dreams... it all wore me down until I just couldn't fight any more and I'd give in and go sin (sometimes throwing off all restraint for days before I'd get "back on the wagon").

Frustrating isn't the right word for it. Heartbreaking. Demoralizing. Awful. Those are maybe more accurate terms. I'm sure you know how this feels. Feeling battered down, I heard about a counseling program from a friend that had a great reputation, so I decided to get some professional help.

The morning of the counseling session, something amazing happened... but not with the counselors. As I was getting out of bed, God gave me a vision. There's no other way to describe it. I was sitting up on the edge of my bed, not sleeping or dreaming and I started to see a scene as though I were dreaming.

The following took place:

I was on the ground in a sort of pit with a highway overpass up above me. The color was that sand colored concrete that they make those overpass slabs out of. And I could see two lanes or roads up above. And so I was jumping to get out of my pit, trying to grab a hold of one of the concrete slabs which started this highway above me. I was jumping and jumping, but couldn't reach it. So I thought I'd try to reach the other lane (which was just as high) and I started jumping for that one. But I couldn't reach that one either. And so I desperately kept jumping and trying to reach these platforms, going back and forth between the one on the left and the one on the right until I was exhausted. It was once I realized I could NEVER reach those platforms that I looked to my left and saw a doorway out of this pit. The door was on the ground and I could have easily walked out. But there was an interesting twist. In my vision, I had been jumping for so long, that I couldn't STOP jumping. I was like a human pogo stick. I pogo'd my way over to the door and discovered that the door was only high enough to walk through. As I would jump, my head would crest the top of the doorway and I couldn't go through it. In my vision I began to cry and called out to God, "God I don't know how to stop jumping so that I can walk out this door?... I'm so tired."

The vision stopped and I went to the shower and just fell down on the floor of the shower crying. I still didn't understand all that God was trying to tell me in the vision. As I sat there, I asked for the interpretation. This is what God told me. The two roads or platforms symbolize the ways that I thought I'd have more love and acceptance from God. The one road was the things that I was going to not do (i.e.: sin and lust and porn, etc.). The other road was things I was going to do (i.e.: be pure, write books, do ministries, win souls, etc.). I subconsciously thought I'd have more of God's love and approval if I did all these good things and less of it if I did all these bad things. I realized from that vision that I was trying to *earn* God's love, approval and

acceptance *because I didn't really love myself* or understand how fully God loves me.

My self esteem had been so hurt and continued to be so demolished by the porn addiction that I didn't feel acceptable to God. I saw myself as a tarnished, dirty vessel. The way I felt about myself was such that I could never love myself as long as this sin was in my life... so I assumed that God felt that way too. It wasn't a conscious thought, but in my heart I was believing, "If I can only stop sinning like this, then God will love and accept me more. If I can only walk in purity and do great things for God, He'll have a reason to give me favor and approval." I was trying to jump for God's approval and love. The doorway on the ground represented the easy availability of God's love for me. But as long as I was trying to earn it by doing this and not doing that, I could never walk through that door and experience it.

Can you love and accept yourself today even though you have this sin in your life? Say, "I love myself and who I am" out loud right now. If that is difficult to say and believe, you are seeing yourself through what you do rather than as who you are in Christ. This lesson is for you.

KNOWING THE UNFAILING, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR FREEDOM

What I was beginning to learn was a cornerstone revelation that would be the foundation for my inner healing and growth. Let me say something shocking: God will minimize His help for you to overcome your sin until you start to see yourself as lovable and as something of great worth. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rm. 5:8)." Until you learn this lesson, God actually *has* to oppose your freedom, because to set you free with this in your heart would literally reinforce the notion that you are unacceptable now and more acceptable when you are "good." To reinforce these beliefs would desperately entrench your heart in idolatry.

What idolatry, you ask? The idol of Perfect You. When we feel as though we *have* to get it right and as though God is *waiting* for us to get it right, we are trusting in ourselves for acceptability and strength instead of God. We are saying, “When I’m perfect, I’ll be acceptable and lovable. When I have it all right, God will certainly love me then.” So we’re putting our faith in a potential-future-you rather than in the truth. We can’t trust our commitment to God more than God’s commitment to us. There is no comparison.

The idol of perfect you further reinforces a vicious cycle of shame. Though we may seldom even be consciously aware of this idol in our hearts, the devil likes to taunt us with these notions of all the things we aren’t - not just in regard to our sexual integrity, but in every area of life. We have the ideas of what the perfect Christian should be, the perfect spouse, the perfect career, parent, etc. We compare ourselves to our ideals and fall short every time. This breeds shame, resentment, anger, frustration - all the things that often serve to trigger our desire to escape, self-gratify and find an outlet in sexual acting out. The acting out breeds more shame and further reinforces how far we are from our mark... and the cycle continues.

A key indicator which lets us know when we have this idol in our lives is how we respond when we mess up. If you beat yourself up and get depressed when you’ve messed up, you have an idol in your heart. The Bible tells us there is a difference between Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow; between Godly repentance and worldly repentance. “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Corinthians 7: 10).” It then goes on to describe the characteristics of Godly repentance and sorrow: diligence to clear yourself, vehement desire, zeal, vindication, etc.

Conversely, what most of us do when we mess up is we start to beat ourselves up, “I can’t believe I did that again. I’m such an idiot. Why can’t I just get it right? I’m scum... I’m the scum that scum doesn’t even like. Etc. etc. etc.” What are we doing when we think this way? We are comparing ourselves to our idol of potential-future-self

rather than seeing ourselves as the Bible tells us we are. We are trusting in our works rather than in God's grace.

We are allowing that devil to cut us down. Why? Here's the interesting bit of psychology behind it all: humans don't like to feel bad about ourselves. If we create a scenario where we feel bad and thereby punish ourselves for what we've done, we're creating a reinforcement tool to not do it again. If we don't like to feel bad about ourselves, we'll try hard to not do the thing that makes us feel bad any longer. We are trying to create an environment where we can save ourselves out of our sin through self-chastisement rather than use the Bible's principles to save us and define our self-image.

God CAN'T set you free when you are operating in this mindset! If He were to do so, He would be affirming your idol as truth. If God were to give you freedom and fellowship while you actually believe in your heart that you have to earn it, He would create a monster 1000 times worse than you struggling with porn. Most of us don't consciously believe in our mind that we can earn God's love. We "know better." But if you struggle with self-deprecating thoughts after sinning or if you find it hard to run to God in prayer IMMEDIATELY after sinning, a good psychologist will tell you that in your heart, you think that God will accept you more if you've stopped sinning. I'd guarantee if this is the case, this idol is in your heart. It has to go before the sin does.

GET GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

The reality is that our sin doesn't change the way God feels about us. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35, 38-39)."* Your sin doesn't separate you from

God's love. He loved you even before He saved you; and He saved you even knowing you would blow it over and over after salvation.

Nothing changes His love. Somehow we get the idea that God is up there with His arms folded and a frown on His face waiting for us to get it right. Nothing could be farther from the truth. God understands our weaknesses. That's why He gave us grace in the first place. Jesus knows what it is like to be a man.

"We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15, 16)." This same High Priest "is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Heb 7:25)."

I hope you catch the depth of this: Jesus **always/continuously/without ceasing** lives to make intercession for you because He loves you and understands what you are going through. If you could run into heaven right after messing up, you'd see Jesus doing this very thing: interceding for you. You'd hear Him saying the same thing He did on the cross, "Father forgive him... he doesn't know what he's doing."

The Bible says there is no condemnation for those in Christ (Rm 8:1). That means He's never holding you at arm's reach. God wants us to be able to run to Him when we feel dirtiest, not once we've cleaned up our act. We can't clean ourselves. Only the blood of Jesus can. So therefore, run where the blood is immediately and learn to access His love and grace instead of finding guilt and shame. Jesus took your guilt and hung naked and ashamed for you, so you'd never have to bear it again. He took your sin and its punishment so you'd never have to take it again. He gave you His righteousness, a righteousness that you'll never deserve. And when we walk in worldly sorrow, we agree with the devil instead of choosing to see ourselves as righteous.

HOW YOU SEE AFFECTS HOW YOU ACT

Have you ever offered someone something to eat but had them refuse because they “just brushed their teeth.”? Or have you ever seen someone spill something on themselves and hear them say, “I just washed this shirt!”? If they had a dirty mouth or a dirty shirt it wouldn’t have been a big deal to get it dirtier.

If you see yourself as pure, you won’t want to get dirty. It’s like a spot of dirt on a clean car... it bothers us so much more than if the car is filthy. So when we see ourselves as dirty, it’s like, “Who cares... I may as well go sin.” But when we see ourselves as God sees us, we will have something worth fighting for. Purity doesn’t come by our actions - it came by Jesus actions on our behalf. If we begin to build our self-esteem through the intense love of God rather than self-effort, we will be less susceptible to the devils lies and will have less desire to project our own negative self-worth on the women in porn (this is one of the dynamics that takes place in pornography).

We don’t truly understand how deep God’s love is for us. I don’t think I can say it better than Jesus did in John 15:9. "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you." **YOU HAVE TO GET THIS:** Jesus says, “I love you as much as God loves me.” But that’s not all! In John 17:23, He prays that we would come to know that the Father loves us as much as He loves Jesus. Can you fathom that? The Father and Jesus want you to know this: **there is as much love in Heaven toward you as there is for Jesus.** The Father loves you as much as He loves His perfect son! Jesus Loves you as much as the Father loves Him! You are that important to them. Who can fathom that much love for sinners like us? But it is there. And we must learn to trust this love and run to God with our sin instead of away from Him. God loves and accepts me with all my junk and all my stuff.

Only when we begin to understand that we are truly loved like this can God have the freedom to set us free. When we understand that He won’t love us any more when we’re sin free than He does now,

powerful forces will be set in motion and it won't be long until you are free indeed.

You may have been waiting for God to smack you on the head with a two-by-four, but the only one you'll find Him use is Romans 2:4, "the loving kindness of God leads us to repentance." Why? Why is this the path? Why isn't it a ten-step program or the next big conference? The Bible teaches that we receive strength in our inner man when we are rooted and grounded in love - that as we know this love of Christ, we are filled to the fullness of God (Eph. 3:16-19)! Love is God's launching platform.

When we begin to fathom the love that sent Jesus to the cross for us, the love whereby He loves us as much as the Father loves Him, it can finally go from head knowledge to heart knowledge that His work on the cross is a finished work. He already purchased our freedom. He already purchased the healing of our hearts. He already made us acceptable. He gave everything. There is nothing left to give or to be done. I lived my whole life as though something were "missing" - as though I had something left to get from God. When it came to spiritual matters, my cup was always half empty rather than half full. Actually it was more like I saw it as all empty rather than all full. Having a revelation of God's love enabled me to stop seeing all the things I'm not and embrace all the things I am in Christ.

When you start to realize that you have a spiritual inheritance, that you are spiritually rich, that you are now a son of God, your identity will begin to be more than just a Biblical concept but a truth that governs how you think and act. You'll begin to access the grace to receive and walk in the truths that are already a Kingdom reality in your life. You will have something to protect rather than feeling that you have nothing to lose by giving away your inheritance. You will begin to see your self-worth and immense value to God. You'll be able to cast away that idol that says, "You'll be acceptable when..." These are the FOUNDATIONS of real freedom.

When we have tried and failed, it is because the foundation is faulty in our hearts. It REQUIRES something of us to fight temptation. If our "spiritual reserve tank" is empty because the devil has sucked it

dry through shame, we will have nothing from which to draw in order to resist the devil. Furthermore, if we have no foundation - if we are not "rooted and grounded" in love, all of our self-efforts and attempts at faith will eventually fail because the scriptures teach that faith works through love is what avails in Christ (Ga.5:6).

Learning to walk in love is 99% of this battle. Really. I didn't understand it myself for so long. For years I cried out for answers and God would minister His love to me... and I'd resist it because I felt too dirty and didn't love myself. I had an intellectual knowledge of God's love for me without the experiential knowledge of it. But make no mistake about it, the Bible says that, "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him (1 Jo. 2:5)."

Did you get that? If you are able to walk in God's ways and keep His word, it means that the LOVE of God has been perfected in you. We've emphasized so many things in Christianity. People think that pursuing holiness is more important than pursuing love. But love is the key to it all because God is love. All His ways work through love and come alive and make sense in love. God needs you to know His unfailing love more than He wants you to stop sinning. Really. But if you learn this love you will also stop sinning. But you will not stop sinning if you think you need to in order to receive His unfailing love. His love is so much bigger than your sin. It always has been. It always will be. At your worst, God's love is at its best: indomitable, unchangeable, infallible, unfailing, unfathomable... and plainly wonderful.

Love is the key, my friend. It unlocks our spiritual inheritance. It unlocks a healthy self-image. It unlocks relationship with God. It gives a foundation from which we fight. It gives us emotion and spiritual reserve. If you want to know what you have been searching for in lust and pornography, look no farther than love - real love - the love of God. He is ready to heal your heart and pour out the love that you have been dying for. Don't listen to the voice of the devil that says it can't be for you. Listen to the voice of the Spirit and let Him fan the flame of His love for you.

THE POWER OF LOVE

Let me ask you a question: if you had never sinned and if this sin was not in your life, how differently would you think and relate to God? How would your expectations differ from the Lord? THIS is how you need to begin to think and relate to God now because it is an insult to the sacrifice that Jesus made to live any other way as a Christian. He gave everything and took what you deserve so that you could be free and get what He deserves. You, therefore deserve the right to relate to God with the same confidence that Jesus has before the Father.

Let me ask you another question: what do you really think that getting over this sin will add to Christ's work for you? Ouch. You've probably never looked at this sin that way before have you? But that is what we are doing when we make this sin out to be something more than it is: one of many works of sanctification that God will do in your life that have nothing to do with your position before God. Your relationship with God exists because of Christ's works, not yours. Your blessing is the blessing of Christ. Many have been taught to think that God will bless us more if we are good. But the Bible is clear that God has already given us EVERY blessing, has given us ALL things that pertain to life and Godliness and with Christ will withhold no blessing (Eph. 1:3, 1 Pet. 1:3, Ro. 8:32). What else is there? Will you earn for yourself more blessing than the "ALL THINGS" that God has given us in Christ. What more do you hope to gain that Christ hasn't earned on your behalf?

Your freedom is Christ's freedom. How, by getting over some stinking sin, do you hope to improve upon perfection? Will you earn for yourself more acceptance or love than the perfect love and acceptance that Christ has earned for you? It is time to cast off our illusions and simply embrace the simplicity of the gospel of grace. You are loved more than you can imagine today. THIS love is the power for change.

The devil has perverted Christianity and the gospel of grace to remove Jesus from the center and in His place give us a works-based treadmill. The pursuit of life for most Christians isn't relationship with

God but what they are doing and aren't doing "for God." They are trading the unconditional love of the Father for a performance based acceptance that no one can live up to. And this isn't to say that freedom from sin isn't possible. It is! But it flows FROM relationship that God has already paid for. We must stop trying to get to a place of right relationship and receive by faith that we already have it.

God, in one mighty blow, through the cross, has settled the sin issue as it relates to our position as sons once and for all. God isn't giving you power to stop sinning any more than He is giving you the power to kill the corpse of your long-dead great, great, great grandfather. Both your sin nature and old gramps, as far as God is concerned, are dead men. WE, not God keep resurrecting the old dead man rather than reckoning him dead as the Bible tells us to do. God IS, however, giving you power to love – to freely receive His love with no strings attached; to love yourself and who He made you to be; to love Him who first loved us with the measure of love that He gives; and to love others through this miracle of love. Stopping sin will be the BYPRODUCT of that radical heart change; again, Bible says that if anyone keeps God's word, truly the LOVE of God has been perfected in him (1 Jo. 2:5).

Love is the power of God. Ephesians 3:16-21 are some of the most powerful scriptures in the New Testament and regularly used by pastors world-over in their benedictions: *"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."*

We want God to do exceedingly, abundantly above what we can ask in delivering us from this sin, right? Well what is the POWER that works in us? The POWER of God in us is LOVE! It is not force of will. The power of God is not self-control. Self-control is a FRUIT of the Holy Spirit, not of our will (Gal. 5:23). Love will take you father in

obedience than your will ever could. Love will give you the power to see yourself as someone of great worth; and therefore not someone to debase with worthless lust. Love will give you the power to change the way you see the people selling themselves into pornography or that girl flaunting what she has. Love will compel you to love God with all your heart so that the thought of sinning against that love breaks your heart. You don't have a lust problem. You have a love problem. If you will change your pursuit to a life of love, everything else will change by default. Mighty Man, pursue God with the radical abandon that can come only by knowing that there is nothing and will never be anything between you in this relationship.

~Mighty Man Training & Application~

1. Make it a habit to take time after every and any sin to run to God.
2. Ask God to show you His love for you every day.
3. Think about the verses above from John. Say out loud, "God loves _____ (your name)." There is something powerful about declaring God's love for you aloud. Now try the even more powerful statement, "God loves _____ AS MUCH as He loves Jesus." Do that until the love of God starts to penetrate your heart.
4. Repent for agreeing with the devil who tricks us into thinking that we need to be better before we're acceptable to ourselves, others and God. Try a prayer like the one below:

Father, forgive me for seeing myself as dirty when you have made me clean. Forgive me for trusting in my actions more than I've trusted in Your love. Thank you that You love me as much as you love Jesus. Thank you that you accept me just as I am. I renounce all agreement with every performance-based idol and receive the free gift of grace in Jesus Christ. I choose to forgive and love myself today, in Jesus name. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Understanding the Nature of Sexual Addictions

Sex is designed to be an activity that stimulates us on every level of our being: body, soul and spirit. Consequently, breaking addictions will involve understanding the different nature of temptations and how they affect us on multiple levels and multiple dimensions of our being. It is this multi-faceted nature of sexual temptation that makes it so very ensnaring and so difficult to navigate into freedom. We can be tempted to sin in our mind, in our soul, in our flesh and by demonic forces in the spirit. We can also be tripped up in unhealthy understandings and misunderstandings of sex and sexuality. I believe the fact that we can be tempted time and again on so many fronts is one reason many men are plagued by this for years; and why the enemy can so easily exploit this particular area of weakness. Just when we think we have something that works in one area, we get blindsided by temptations on a whole other level. The devil is an expert at reading us and knowing which area is weakest at any moment.

Understanding the nature of your temptation will help you know how to fight it. This chapter gives a basic overview of the nature

of the temptations as well as what makes addictions form. Chapters that follow will serve to equip you with more specific strategies to overcome in different situations.

BEAUTY AND FASCINATION

Even before we begin to delve into temptations on the various levels of our being, I believe that there is one important aspect of this temptation to address that doesn't fall into the category of a temptation but rather becomes a stumbling block due to misunderstanding and bad teaching. I believe that many men do not know how to appropriately respond to the issue of beauty and being drawn to it. This learned and inappropriate response to a natural tendency results in or augments different temptations and contributes to the problem. This then, is more of a dysfunctional behavior pattern and is not a "temptation" in and of itself.

I remember taking psychology classes in college and one of the clinical studies we observed related to the idea of beauty. The study would take infants and show them pictures of different people and gauge responses such as interest, demeanor, pupil dilation, etc. Without exception and across every race, gender and culture, the babies gave more attention, smiled at, and were captivated for a longer duration by the pictures of beautiful people.

They did other studies with adults and photos of people as well. Adult men and women would look at varying photos of men and women and try to determine character traits and rate how well they thought they would get along with the subject. Again, people of all races, ages and genders, on average, ascribed more favorable character traits to more attractive people and also gauged that they would want to spend the most time with beautiful looking individuals.

In the secular realm, I recently heard a bit by a comedian who was making fun of his looks. He made the comment that life is hard as an unattractive man because if you make eye contact with people or

smile at them, they think, “Who is that creep and why is he smiling at me?” “But if you are attractive,” he jokes, “people want you to look at them. They smile back. They think, “Ooh, what a nice guy.” There is a lot of truth to his bit.

Simply put, people are fascinated and drawn to beauty. It happens in infants from before they know to judge or form prejudice. Our human fascination and fixation with this isn't limited to human beauty. We love beautiful natural surroundings, beautiful paintings, skillful craftsmanship, majestic creatures... Simply put, things of beauty fascinate us. And do you know what? Our partiality to beauty and fascination with it isn't sin. You can no more repent of seeing a beautiful woman and thinking “wow” than seeing a beautiful view from a mountaintop and saying, “wow.” Now I don't want to confuse what happens in us when we see something beautiful with what happens in us when we see an image that is designed to incite lust or a woman who is dressing provocatively. These instances are overt attacks and are to be handled differently than the way we should process the impact that happens in our soul when we encounter a thing of beauty.

The "wow" factor that happens when we see a beautiful woman or any thing of beauty isn't sin. The sin comes with how we process that stimulus and what happens next in our souls. We need to learn what to do with the “wow.” God made mankind in His own image. We are beautiful creatures. Lucifer was also a beautiful creature... the most beautiful of all created beings. It is no accident that his beauty made him suited to direct all praise and worship in the universe toward God. However, he eventually wanted creation to marvel at his own beauty rather than allow himself to be a reflection of the magnificence of his Creator. And he is perpetuating this tragic slip-up even to this day. Therefore, Proverbs 5 warns us not to lust after beautiful women or let them allure you. Misused beauty does have this power. And part of the problem with pornography and lust is simply that we have an innate NEED to gaze on beauty, get caught up in it, marvel at it, and so on. It is a literal need of the human soul. And we must be careful to learn to recognize when this need is being misdirected and perverted.

In my experience, when we see a beautiful woman, we are prone to misdirect the “wow” in one of two ways. Either we pervert our attraction and allow ourselves to begin to lust and desire the woman, or we repress the emotion, wish it weren’t there and beat ourselves up for the fact that it is. Both are dangerous and both responses will kill us. Lusting causes us to elevate the creation to a place of an idol. We allow the woman to hold our attention/worship for an undue amount of time instead of saying, “Wow God, you made that one beautiful on the outside. Show me Your beauty and let me be fascinated with that!”

Conversely, the second option, repression, will only cause us to yearn within until something must come out. We lie to ourselves when we see image after image in every walk of life and pretend that they don’t affect us. I am convinced that one source of major temptation is that we don’t recognize enough our inherent need to enjoy beauty and by the time we fall, we have so much bottled up inside us that we can’t think or function normally whatsoever. We begin to dream, daydream, fantasize and mentally rehearse the emotions we repress until we can’t take it anymore. Hence, we get fixated on man’s beauty and do not spend enough (or any) time reflecting on the beauty and majesty of the Lord in our daily lives.

It is this inherent fascination with beauty that will cause us to be abandoned worshippers of the Lord in this life and in the next: “Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (1 Ch16:29)!” Job tells us that He arrays Himself with glory and beauty (v. 40:10). God is beautiful. David was both a mighty man, and at the same time completely fascinated and captivated by the Lord’s beauty. David says he had only one desire in life: to dwell in the house of the Lord all his days and spend them gazing upon the beauty of the Lord (Ps 27:4). That is a pretty serious beauty fix coming from the man who God called “a man after His own heart.”

I am designed to love and respond to beauty. So are you. As I was walking out of this sin, I would sit and ache to look at porn. I didn’t understand why, however. I hated it. I came to realize that often, it was just a powerful combination of my sex drive, which was

created by God, coupled with my soul's need to meditate on beauty. If you will really lay hold of this truth, it will be one of the most liberating revelations your soul can ever encounter and destroy the devil's ability to take you into a downward spiral of shame.

THE ROOTS OF SEXUAL SHAME

The devil has done an excellent job in perverting sex and sexuality in our culture. But we must remember that on the sixth day, God made us male and female - thus He created our sexuality and said, "It is good." In Genesis 1:28, His first commandment and blessing, the first Holy Sacrament, if you will was, "Be fruitful and multiply" - i.e.: go have sex and make babies. God gave us a sex drive (and make no mistake, it is a driving force). But this sex drive is designed by the Master to accomplish His purpose - and it is good -not bad as the devil would have us believe.

Understand this: when something works according to God's design, that is good. When a dog barks, God is glorified because He designed that dog to bark. When our sex drive operates as God intended, driving us toward sex, that is good - and He is glorified because our sexuality is functioning as He intended.

In that understanding, please don't get ahead of me. I'm not going to condone the gratification of lustful desire in any way - but draw a dividing line that is so critical to understand the dual nature; and necessary dual response to sexual temptations.

I spent most of my life with a dysfunctional, unbiblical view of my sexuality. I'd feel the allure of sexual things and think, "I shouldn't be attracted to that." That sounds like the truth doesn't it? But that was a lie, in reality. For, you see, I have a sex drive that was created by God with Divine purpose. The fact that my sex drive exists is why sexual temptation is tempting in the first place. This is one of the most controversial teachings in this book - and will also be one of the most liberating if you really get it. Again, I have to stress this because many

will read this and think that I'm giving a license to sin. I'm not saying and will never say that lust is OK, looking at pornography is OK or that lusting after a woman is OK. Sin is sin - but the sex drive itself is Godly.

Am I saying that it is OK to be driven toward or attracted to pornography? Well, one would have to eliminate their sex drive, thus causing us to stop operating by God's design to not be attracted to sexual things. So the *temptation* itself or the drive isn't the sin. Did you catch the difference? Being tempted simply confirms that we have a sex drive - giving into temptation is sin.

Remember, the Bible teaches that the Lord was tempted in all ways as we were, yet was without sin (Heb. 4:15). That means that if, while the Lord lived, someone showed Jesus a picture of pornography, it isn't that He would not have been tempted or felt its allure. But He would not have sinned. If we create a theology that thinks that sex wasn't temptING to Jesus, then the Bible couldn't say that he was temptED when faced with temptation. I dislike cooked carrots. It is impossible for someone to "tempt" me to eat them because there is nothing appealing about them to me. In order for Jesus to be tempted in ALL ways as we are, the things that we find tempting also must have been tempting for Him. We also understand that He was sinless. Therefore, we conclude that liking sex and being driven toward sex and sexual things is a function of our sex drive and isn't sin in and of itself; rather, what we do when tempted is either sinful or Godly in response to that temptation.

The fact that we, as humans, like sex isn't sinful. God designed us to like sex and made it pleasurable for that reason. We must learn to reclaim the part of our sex drive that is healthy for the purpose of developing a healthy self-image as well as to use this as a tactic in defeating sin and shame.

I remember my first exposure to pornography as a boy. I remember being drawn into its allure - and I also clearly remember the shame of knowing that I wasn't supposed to look at it... and consequently that I wasn't supposed to LIKE it. Without realizing it,

there were *agreements* being made subconsciously that were destroying my foundation to respond to the temptation in a Godly way.

When a person sees temptations and thinks, "Don't look. Don't be attracted. That has power over you. That is bad." What happens in this scenario is that the person is driven away from God because in their heart, as they try to convince themselves that they shouldn't like the bad thing but realize that on some level that they do, they are forming a shame-based agreement that says, "I'm attracted to a bad thing - therefore I'm bad - my sexuality is bad." Do you remember that Adam and Eve hid from God when they realized they had sinned and were naked? Shame will always drive us AWAY from God in our time of need.

I grew up with this thinking that my sexuality was somehow "broken." Understand something about shame: conviction is healthy - it is the Holy Spirit's work to show you when things you've done aren't right. Shame is the demonic belief that you, yourself aren't right. This is why it is so critical to destroy the foundation of shame so that a proper foundation of love can take root in our hearts. If this is in your heart, you can't come into right relation with God. I spent countless years, then, with this rift between me and God - feeling that I could never be fully acceptable to Him until I was no longer attracted to sexual things - constantly reminded by my urges of how "unholy" I was.

I can't tell you the number of times I prayed prayers like, "God, help me not to be attracted to that. Deliver me from my lustful ways." What I didn't realize was that subconsciously I was saying, "My sex drive is bad. Take away the sex drive that You gave me and is supposed to be there. The devil is running my sex drive." Did you catch that last thought? Is it any wonder the devil had power over me to lead me into lust and sexual addiction? If you feel like your sex drive is out of control and bad, you have given the reigns of it to the devil. Let me say that again: if you believe your sex drive is bad, you have already given control of it to the devil - you can't possibly ever be free in this state.

Conversely, when we recognize that God put the drive in us and glorify Him, it empowers God and is tantamount to saying, "I have a powerful sex drive. God gave it to me. He owns it. I can use it for His

purposes." This is shocking because it runs so counter to our "Christian" teachings on sex and sexuality: you SHOULD be driven toward sexual things because you have a sex drive. YOU aren't bad for this attraction. Knowing this puts you back in the driver seat of your sex drive. HOWEVER, you must THEN take authority over the lust and perversion so that you don't fall into sin. I submit that this later step is only fully possible when operating in this revelation of your godly sexuality.

When I'm sexually tempted now, I Glorify God and often even say humorously, "Thank you God that my sex drive is still working properly. It is good and I am good. I now reject any lust or perversion that the devil would sow through that temptation. (If there is a person involved, operating in lust or seduction, I may add: Forgive that person for exploiting the beauty that You gave them." Wow! Do you see the difference? By acknowledging that my sex drive is good, it drives me toward God. If you feel like your sex drive is bad, it drives you toward the devil. **When a man realizes in his heart that his sex drive isn't going to go away, and feels like it is something that God can't accept, there is no reconciliation for this wound in the soul. But when a man can find himself in the throes of temptation and realize that God isn't discouraged, ashamed or repulsed by his sex drive, the man becomes whole again before his Maker and able to make choices that make the Father proud.** You will always gravitate toward the direction of your core identity beliefs. As we properly lay the foundation of God's love for us, it is so encouraging to know that God loves ALL of us - sexuality included.

If my view of my sexual identity is that it is bad, I will always identify more with the sin nature than with who I am in Christ. If I correctly understand that my sexuality is good and Godly, I am forming an identity foundation that leaves no space for the devil to corrupt. When I now see a lustful picture, the temptation doesn't go away. The only way to ever have that temptation go away is to destroy your sex drive - and I promise that you don't want that to happen. But when you see that picture and say, "Wow, God. I'm attracted to that," and instead

of feeling bad that the attraction is there and rather feel GLAD that the attraction is there, you will draw closer to God. James 4:6-8 tells us that in temptation God gives a grace to both resist the devil as well as draw near to Him. Both are critical to walk in victory. You can ONLY draw closer to God when tempted if you understand that you are good, pleasing to Him and that everything is working according to the Maker's design.

When you don't respond to temptation in this way, but repress or feel like you shouldn't even feel this temptation, in your mind you have already sinned before you actually sin in God's eyes - you've empowered the devil and kicked the Spirit of God out of your sexuality. It is only a matter of time before that manifests in some slip-up because you've already empowered the devil and agreed with a lie that is more fundamental than the temptation itself.

Understanding this will give you the freedom to also simply be "normal" when exposed to beauty in a non-lustful setting. I've seen some of the most prominent and pervasive "Christian" resources that tell you to avert your eyes, corral your wild heart, quote scripture and change your mind when you see a beautiful woman so that you don't fall into lust. What a bunch of pseudo-Christian garbage. It is no wonder that this sin is escalating in the church when we have a completely wrong foundation loosely based on scriptures in Job to combat it. Whereas in the book of Job, he makes a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a woman, the context and the other teaching of scripture (and even many translations of this verse) make it clear that this "not looking" is in reference to lusting. To simply not ever look at a woman would require a life of abject reclusivity.

The consequent damage that has been done to men's souls by this prevalent "Christian" way of reaction to beauty has perverted the natural response and made it seem as though we have no power over lust or the devil. I believe in a victorious Christianity and in real freedom that doesn't require our sexuality to be non-existent in order for freedom to become a reality. You can never repress the normal Godly response to beauty. And if you call, bad, something that God designed as good, you've just completely changed the nature of things - the word for that

is perversion. Furthermore, you've empowered the devil by saying in your heart, "that thing has power over me."

What if you *have* to interact with a beautiful person at work or at school or at church? Will you drop out of society in fear of your urges? Most of the time in our normal life as we interact with people, they won't be overtly trying to be seductive. So much of what we "struggle" with and call temptation isn't actually temptation at all but a dysfunctional way of processing beauty and unhealthy understanding of our God-given sexuality. This simple understanding will allow you to be in control of your sex drive rather than feel that it is out of control and a ticking time bomb just waiting for a spark of temptation to set it off. This revelation is such a blessing. Not only will it bless you as you face the typical day-to-day temptations that we all face, but it will help you simply to react and interact normally with the people around you in life.

When you see a beautiful woman and your heart says, "Wow!", agree with God that she is beautiful (He creates people with a gift of beauty for His purposes), direct your heart into communion with Him and take notice of what happens in your soul. A good benchmark of whether you are having a "normal" response to beauty or not is to discern whether the temptation drives you toward God or away from God. If you see someone beautiful and you immediately begin a dialogue with God about what you see (that isn't shame-based and self-berating) there is a good chance that you are processing the stimulus in a healthy way. This will "clear" the temptation and leave nothing to fester in your soul. Thus the stimulus that would have previously been a big temptation becomes a virtual non-event in the course of your day and leaves no space for the devil to corrupt.

However if your thoughts continue to meditate on the person, that's probably unhealthy and creating a lustful response. If you find yourself thinking about the person or temptation later, you definitely didn't process it in a Godly manner or may have needed to go a little further with God. (If a woman is overtly trying to exploit her beauty with seduction, simply reject the seduction and the demonic associations - but it is still healthy to allow your soul to admit that she is beautiful.) If you are confronted with a temptation that is overtly sexual in nature,

that depicts sexual acts, that is perverted or reminds you of a particular area of weakness, this is the proper time to quickly avert your eyes (but still recognize that the attraction to the sexual nature of things is OK but perversion is not). We see that sexual temptations can be complex - especially in pornography which almost always has an element of perversion - but with this understanding we affirm that we are Godly sons of God and the lust or perversion is bad. It is important to draw this dividing line of understanding.

The devil has blurred this line. We need to understand that our sex drive is Godly and pleasing to the Lord, beauty is from the Lord; but lust, seduction and perversion is from the devil. This understanding gives you the freedom to love yourself as you are and trust that God loves you as you are. Your sexuality isn't broken because you are drawn to sexual things or beautiful people. The fact that you are drawn to sexual things only proves that you are working as God intended. Confess something to God even now. Tell Him something that He already knows, "My sex drive is very good, very active and very pleasing to God. He isn't waiting for me to no longer have a sex drive before He loves and accepts me. He loves me today." Now do something just as liberating: forgive yourself. "I forgive myself for being attracted to sexual things. I repent for giving the devil control of my sex drive. I now take it back from the enemy and commit it to God for His intended purposes."

SOUL TIES & ADDICTION

Now that we understand more about how to respond to stimuli that confront us daily, we must also lay a foundation for victory in our thought-life. These unseen temptations may not be as obvious as when we can simply see the thing that is causing us to have a sexual urge. The first area that requires understanding is in regard to soul ties. An interesting (and potentially scary) thing happens during heightened stimulation and orgasm: a combination of chemical and hormonal release and the immense ecstasy taking place in our body and senses

opens receptors in our brain that are only open at that moment of extreme pleasure. When those receptors are open, studies show that we get “imprinted” with whatever object or person we are meditating on at the moment of orgasm.

God created this part of the brain to be used in conjunction with marriage. When a man and a woman consummate their marriage, what takes place in the brain should serve to create the soul ties with them. The Bible has a lot to say about how the act of sex “joins” a man and a woman and even talks about this taking place with prostitutes and outside of marriage. (Other chapters and the appendix have more information and scriptures about soul ties and how to deal with them - this chapter is more of an overview.)

As we give in to the desire to lust upon things like pornography, the pleasurable experience forms soul ties or bonds with the things that we are seeing – it can be individuals, specific scenes or even body parts (giving rise to fetishes, fixations, perversions and such). Once the bond is formed, these images come back into our mind over and over. And the more porn we see, the more we become desensitized to various types of images and also the more fixated and imprinted we get with various things we’ve seen.

Many people mistakenly assume that these recurring and sometimes obsessive thoughts are demonic in nature. And while I agree that there are aspects to our temptation that are highly spiritual, often the temptation is taking place in the realm of the soul due to these soul ties rather than being a spiritual temptation. Christians who have been raised with a deliverance ministry mindset may grow discouraged, wondering why they keep “binding the devil” with no success. It is very possible that they are trying to bind a soul tie, calling it a devil.

Soul ties in the context of marriage are wonderful. They can also cause intense pain in the event of the death of a loved one. When a person dies, the joy and pleasure and fond memories associated with them have no resolve in the soul any longer. When they die, a part of us dies too... the part that was attached to them. The reality with pornography is that we’ve formed a bond in our heart with the things we’ve seen. Those bonds must be broken and addressed before God.

And a part of us has to die in order for this to happen. For this reason, a large number of the lessons of this book deal with the emotional pain that comes from severing these soulish desires. Giving up pornography and our fixations is every bit as painful as breaking up with a lover or saying goodbye to a dying loved one.

Soul ties are often compounded by the physical aspects of sexual addiction. There are many books that deal more thoroughly with the chemical science of sexuality and related addiction. The chemistry isn't as important as the fact that at a fundamental physical level, regular and repeated sexual stimulus can be as habit forming and addictive as hardcore drug use due to the chemical release that takes place in the body - but will abate over time.

I went to many counselors who tried to “deliver” me of demonic and spiritual temptations to no avail. The reality of my condition was that a large component of the temptation I faced - especially in the early stages of trying to quit was happening on the soul and physical/chemical level of my being due to doors I had opened. I may or may not have had spiritual temptations going along with it. Why is this so important to note at this stage of the book? Simply put, there is a lot of opposition to your freedom in the early stages of breaking the cycle of addiction and you have to fight this type of battle differently than spiritual battles and access a different aspect of God's grace for help.

When it comes to the soul ties, the first thing that I'll usually do is obvious: repent. I'll ask God for His forgiveness and covering for the sins I've committed. I'll also usually renounce my association with that woman, image or scene. I'll also renounce my association with any demonic forces that may have been associated with that. I ask God to break those ties, clean my mind and separate me from that torment. I'll also usually pray for the person that may be the focus of that fixation (more on this in later chapters). Finally, I usually ask God for the grace not to run back to old idols and make them stronger. I want to steal the devil's strength, not the other way around.

Don't be surprised, however, if there are still ongoing and strong lustful desires. Just like a junkie will go through withdrawal, you also will have to come to terms with the fact that there will be a withdrawal

period that will vary in its severity from person to person. The deeper the addiction, the stronger the soul ties. You will want to get honest with God as to what you need to do to get over and through this time of physical and soulish temptation. These initial stages of withdrawal are most aptly combated by time rather than a swift deliverance. The *Mighty Man Manual's* workbook provides a great 8-week path for those who may want a little more structure to navigating this time as well as take the cornerstone teachings of this book to the next level.

PERVERSION AND SPIRITUAL TEMPTATIONS

I don't want to overemphasize the physical or soul-realm temptations to the detriment of addressing the spiritual component of this struggle. At the end of the day, I see this as mostly a spiritual issue due to the fact that things that usually get us into this mess in the first place and can trip up someone who has been avoiding sin for a while are the spiritual aspects of this struggle and their points of origin in the heart. The devil knows how to exploit our wounds and needs. Thus we must be cognizant of this fact and ready to wage the spiritual warfare that will take us through to a true and lasting freedom.

One good way to begin to identify areas of spiritual temptation are to identify when perversions are present in our thought life and in temptations. Perversions are not natural tendencies. They run contrary to the designs of God. However, they can become an issue, especially as people get deeper into pornography. Perversion is a dangerous thing that should let us know that something is happening spiritually that we can't see. God made sex to exist in marriage between one man and one woman and to build each other up in our masculinity and femininity.

The devil hates everything that God ordained as good. Every time we look at pornography, in addition to escalations of soul ties, we are also making an agreement with the devil and whatever particular perversion we are watching. We are agreeing that his temptation is good and we choose it over the truth of God's ways. As we form these

agreements, we open ourselves up to demonic thinking. You will begin to think like the spirit you follow. This is a Biblical principle.

In Galatians, Paul prays that Christ would be formed in the believers' hearts (4:19). In Ephesians, he prays that the Spirit would strengthen the heart, or the inner man so that Christ could dwell in us (3:16). Now we know that when we are born again, the Spirit of God resides in our *spirit*. So we see that despite having ALL of God in our spirit, we must have God's character FORMED in our heart or soul. In our heart/soul or the "inner man" as it is sometimes called, we must CHOOSE what spirit to yield to. If we yield to the Holy Spirit, Christ is formed in our hearts and we are being sanctified. That means we will become more Christ-like. If we listen to other spirits, we will become like those spirits... perverted.

Perversions, then, are areas where we have seared our own conscience and taken on a demonic mindset because of habitual areas of agreement with evil spirits. Many of the books and seminars that address the issues surrounding lust and pornography do very little to tackle the area of temptation that take place in the spiritual realms - so this will be a new concept to many believers - yet it is as essential for our freedom as it is to understand how to deal with fleshly temptations.

Part of the Great Commission that Jesus gives to us is not just to preach the Gospel, but also to cast out devils and demons - early church fathers considered this understanding to be fundamental in basic Christianity. One out of five dealings that Jesus had with people involved the removal of an unclean spirit in order for them to be free. So I would venture to say that it is logical to assume that when we are tempted, there may often be demonic or spiritual forces contributing to the problem. Therefore many chapters will teach us components of spiritual warfare. (For more on this, you can read about it in the Appendix section of the book.)

Many Christian circles reject notions of deliverance because they don't understand the dynamic between the spirit of a man and the soul. The idea of spiritual warfare for a believer is not that their spirit is inhabited by a demon because we understand that God places His Spirit within us. Rather, we are tempted and agree with the spirits causing the

temptation and give them power over our minds - a part of the soul that will conform to the spirit it listens to as we read in Galatians and Ephesians. These areas where we've given the devil permission and space must be reclaimed and the strongholds torn down or the devil will take more and more space until we are destroyed.

We hear about this all too often, a pastor is caught in an affair or sex scandal. Very recently a pastor of a large church made the news. He was caught with a trans-gender prostitute. That level of perversion doesn't happen overnight. Perversions will continue to fester and infect your mind because they are permissions given to the enemy in the spiritual realm. He will corrupt your mind until you think and act like he does. The devil hates God's children. All violent acts of sex and every filthy perversion are human manifestations of a devil's mind and attitude.

Therefore, we can conclude that if a perversion is present, most likely there is an evil spirit present who has been given permission to influence your thoughts and warp your conscience by your agreement with its lies. These agreements must be recognized and broken when they arise. Whenever you recognize that a thought is a perverse thought – one that goes in contrast to the way God presents sexuality and His heart of love toward His created children – you must recognize that it is a devil who has trained you to think that way and that is not you! You do not think that way if the Spirit of God dwells in you, because the Spirit thinks God's thoughts. Start agreeing with the thoughts of God's Spirit in you and you will start to reverse the perversions that are corrupting your mind. This is important. Just as you have made conscious choices to agree with temptations and lies you must consciously (and I even recommend verbally) make declarations of agreement with God's Word that contradict these temptations.

When you repent of your sin and break your soul ties, you must also repent for agreements you've made with the enemy that have given him permission to follow you around and corrupt you. Ask God to forgive you for choosing the devil's lies over God's truth. Ask Jesus to root out strongholds and footholds in the spirit from doors you may have

opened. Ask Him to ransom you back from the devil, purify your mind and deliver you from the presence of your tormentors.

As you begin to do this, God will begin to minister to the need or wound that gave the devil this invitation in the first place. Perversions should cause us to revolt against them. When they don't, there is a lie behind the lie that the devil has used to give you the inclination or proclivity toward that fetish, fixation or perverse urge. We'll deal more with heart wounds and needs later; but these are the open doors through which the enemy enters and whispers lies that we'll believe.

FLESHLY TEMPTATIONS

Temptations that take place in the body can be learned or habitual or they can be literal, understandable fleshly desires. The reality is that the desire for the physical (and emotional) release that comes through orgasm and ejaculation is a real fleshly desire. Sometimes the most difficult times to stay pure are when we find ourselves physically aroused and have no Godly outlet for that, or when we have a habitual trigger such as frustration and we have formed an association with orgasmic release as the answer for this. However, outside of God's provision, gratifying this desire is sin and the Bible makes no excuses for it. Nowhere in the Bible do we read a quid pro quo that says, "Men, if thou art horny, God shall look the other way." Rather, it says, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Ga. 5:16)."

I was talking with a single friend I met on a missions trip. Somehow the topic came up about masturbation. And I was impressed to find out that it had been over three years since he had gratified any fleshly desire with masturbation. We hear much about "men's needs" but he had learned to overcome the lie that orgasm is a need. That freed him to serve God with his body, soul and spirit – and God was definitely using him.

The reality is that orgasms are nice, but they aren't a need. Really, if you never had another orgasm, you would not die. By elevating a pleasure to the level of "need" we create a scenario where we disregard the truths of the Bible and reject the notion that God can actually supply ALL our needs. I think most men either consciously or subconsciously feel justified by their "needs" in their rebellion against God. They think things like, "God, if you'd only give me a spouse, I'd quit." Or "God, if you'd only bless my marriage sex life and make my wife a sex-crazed nympho, then I'll never..." But these thoughts are completely twisted. God can't bless something that you aren't willing to give to him. Masturbation, lust, pornography, etc. are evidences that you have not given your sexuality over to God; you are still trying to control it and be master of your own gratification. We must settle the fact that God is not obligated to bless you. Rather, His sacrifice for us obligates us to honor and reverence Him even if we never were to get one thing in return. But the wonder of His goodness is that He also rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6).

Conversely, the devil will use those fleshy desires and cause you to stumble so that he can steal your future, steal your blessings, steal your peace, steal your joy and shipwreck your calling. And we must learn to change our mind when we are being tempted by our flesh. We don't have to listen to the "voice" of our flesh calling to us. There is another voice within us calling: the voice of the Spirit. You have the power to choose which voice to listen to. *"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish... For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Ga. 5:17, Ro. 8:5,6)."*

It is time to give God a chance and go after Him with your whole heart. Gratifying the flesh is a learned response to stimulus. The stimulus can be frustration, loneliness, low self-worth or any of a number of emotions. We must simply break the bad habit of gratifying these emotional needs with fleshly sin and learn to set our mind on the things

of the Spirit. God has the answers for all of your needs. Fleshly solutions only mask the problem and make us forget about the real need. It is a drug that keeps us stuck in the long term. Many of the sections of this book help deal with matters of the heart and the fleshly response.

So we see that we can be tempted in the spirit, in the heart and soul or in the flesh. We must have God's help and grace to recognize these temptations and to have the strength to overcome them. But, knowing the enemy and understanding what you are being tempted with can make fighting your battles so much easier.

~Mighty Man Training & Application~

Understanding the nature of your temptations is very important as you begin your journey to freedom. As you face temptations try to start to ask yourself key questions and identify the nature of the temptation.

1. Is this temptation simply the result of being a normal human with a sex drive? Has shame about your struggle and urges made you feel distant from God or as though you can't approach Him for fear of rejection.
 - a. Remind yourself daily that you are good. Even if you blow it, run right back to the fact that you are pleasing to God and a new creation. Don't throw this truth out when tempted. Draw near to God and resist the demonic nature of the temptation without believing that YOU have a demonic nature. The Bible is clear that we are a new creation in Christ.
 - b. When you are out in public or watching a TV show or movie and see a beautiful woman, try to practice Godly solutions to deal with beauty in such a way that you don't repress normal emotions or take it too far into the realm of idolatry or lust.

- c. When tempted in this way, pray prayers like: *God, you made my sex derive and it is good. You also made that person beautiful on the outside. I can't wait to see You, the One from whom all beauty flows. I reject any lust or perversion and rejoice that I'm fully pleasing to you.*
 - d. Repent if you allowed any lustful thoughts to enter. Remember that this sin didn't take God by surprise and get back on track right away.
 2. Recognize thoughts and temptations in the realm of your soul. Is this a repetitive obsession or indicator that you may be experiencing withdrawal symptoms of a physical addiction or soul tie? Does it feel like an emotional longing to see a familiar girl or scene? This may be a soul tie that needs to be broken. In addition to resting in the fact that these strong urges will diminish over time, you may experience some relief by breaking soul ties in prayer.
 - a. Try a prayer like this: *Father, forgive me for joining myself to this thing. Right now I renounce my partnership with So-and-so and for finding my comfort in this instead of You. Please break these soul ties, deliver me from temptation and please also forgive and work to save the people I'm thinking about right now. Now I address the object of my desire: So-and-so, I'm leaving you behind. I can never see you again. Goodbye forever. Now Father, please set me free from them and from every devil and demon associated with them and those acts in Jesus name. Grant me the grace and wisdom to know if there is anything else I should do to get through this time of trial. Amen.*
3. Dealing with temptations in the spiritual realm. Are the tempting thoughts perverse or indicate that there is spiritual warfare taking place?
 - a. Try a prayer like this : *Father, forgive me for the doors I've opened in this area. Forgive me for agreeing with the enemy and giving him*

space in my heart. I now reject these perverse thoughts in Jesus precious name. These thoughts are not mine, for I have the mind of Christ. I reject, now and forever, every devil and unclean spirit associated with these thoughts and tell you to get out of my life in Jesus name. Now Father I ask that you would restore my mind and heart. Show me the areas of my heart that have allowed this temptation to take shape and heal me. Make me more like You and help me to love the things You love. Speak to me even now and give me wisdom. Amen

4. Dealing with Fleshly Temptations. Are you feeling an actual physical stirring or have you convinced yourself that sex is a need rather than a desire? Do you actually feel something in your body causing you to be tempted or aroused? You need to change your mind and get your mind off that fleshly desire. It will pass soon. Try the following:
 - a. Get up and go do something else. Leave where you are and what you are doing.
 - b. Start to think God thoughts and meditate on those. Ask yourself what God is teaching you and doing in your liferight now. Dream with God: ask Him to speak to you about your calling and His plans for your life. Ask Him to speak to you about the things He loves about you. Let Him fill you up. Think about the things that you'd like God to do in your life – and that your like to do for God. Know that the sin will only put you one step farther from those things.

CHAPTER 7

Destroying the Foundations of Shame

We have touched on ways that sexual shame drives us from God and perpetuates the cycle of sinful acts. Now, God willing, we will destroy the foundations of shame once and for all.

I love the Song of Solomon. Many people don't realize that this book is not so much a story about Solomon and a woman but a picture of our relationship with God and His radical love for us. In the first verses of the first chapter, the Shulamite bride is enraptured with the love of the king... until verse four. Here the king brings her into his chambers and she realizes that she must stand naked before him. In verse six she laments, "*Do not look upon me, because I am dark, Because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me the keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyard I have not kept.*" The rapture she feels, knowing that she was chosen by the king becomes overshadowed by the realization of her own shortcomings and imperfections.

We, like the bride, are often swept up with Jesus when first saved, but as we continue to sin, shame surfaces in our hearts we don't feel worthy to stand "naked" before Him... because we realize all of our shortcomings. We assume that He wants these things to be out of our

lives as badly as we do. We assume that we are less lovely to Him than people who are "more perfect" than we are. We assume that our sin has disqualified us from our calling and ministry. And we, like the Shulamite, downgrade our love level to one that is more acceptable with the level of acceptance we assume that we have - the degree to which we accept ourselves.

Shame drives a wedge between us and God and we live continuously, like Adam and Eve after the fall, feeling as though there is something not right, not acceptable and lacking in us; with part of us hiding from God, settling to have relationship with Him from the bushes rather than walking in full exposure. This feeling is exacerbated after we've fallen; and rather than coming boldly to the throne of grace as the Bible teaches, we avoid God and prayer, go into a cycle of shame and self-berating and live below our heavenly station until we again work up the courage to relate to God as we know we ought. We may theologically know the facts of our position in Christ, but the beliefs of our heart, not our head, dictate our realities.

I mentioned earlier that I always felt as if my sexuality was "broken" and unacceptable to God. Really, I had such an issue with shame that I continuously lived with this heart of shame in other areas also, an overall apprehension that I was missing something - that I was fundamentally unacceptable and disappointing to God. When I would pray, it was always with a feeling that I needed to get something from God that I didn't already have. I was always fighting FOR acceptance rather than FROM acceptance - fighting TO GET my inheritance in Christ rather than fighting WITH my inheritance. Thus there was always a gap between how I saw myself and who I was in Christ; an inability to access the things that I already had in Christ; and a settling for a cheap counterfeit that was more in line with my sinful, lack-based self-perception.

Shame is one of the devil's favorite tools to make us identify with our old nature rather than our new one; and thus, keep us from running to God, keep us from receiving the things God has already given, steal our blessing and calling and much more. Shame drives us toward the

devil, isolates us from other people and causes us to settle for cheap, sinful counterfeits to salve the wounds of the soul.

In this shame-based cycle of sinful coping, it is nearly impossible to stop unhealthy patterns until the foundation of shame is first destroyed. Humans need a foundation, an emotional and spiritual springboard or reserve for all things in life. To face the challenges of each day, you need to know that God is with you. Shame is present at some level in most people but is especially pronounced in addicts. The addict knows that they are making unhealthy choices, but this foundation of shame has so raped their soul that this emotional and spiritual reserve is nonexistent and they cope with the pain of their perpetual inadequacy with unhealthy habits that only, in turn, reinforce more shame.

As I began to see the effects of lustful addiction spread to other areas of my life, you would think that would have been a wakeup call to make me stop. But in my heart, I didn't feel as though I had an inheritance with God - so my heart reasoned, why fight for something that I don't have? I didn't *feel* like I had His love and approval and fellowship - so what did I have to lose? When the devil would come with his worthless temptation and dangle it in front of me, I'd go down without a fight because even though his offering was a cheap substitute for the real love that my heart needed, *something*, even if it was cheap, was better than the nothing he had already convinced me that I had. Then after I would fall, it would only serve as confirmation of how worthless I must be to God - and I would beat myself up about having fallen again.

Remember the theme of the last few chapters, "if YOU are disappointed in YOU when YOU fall it is YOUR strength you are counting on"? All of these foundational elements are linked and show evidence that we still have work to do on the basic foundation for our souls. The inability to relate and access the graces of God is linked to shame. The inability to receive the love of God is linked to shame. The distortion of our self-perception and godly identity is linked to shame. Shame is a killer and grows with each defeat.

THE SHAMELESS MIGHTY MAN

There is one mighty man in scripture who so remarkably reflected the heart of the One true Mighty Man, the Lord Jesus that he receives special honor. This, of course, is David, who the Bible identifies as the man after God's own heart.

Let's learn a little about him. David had an adulterous affair and then murdered the woman's husband to cover up his affair. He rebelled against the word of God through His prophet and moved into Philistine lands wherein he had to continuously lie to the king to live at peace with God's enemies. He disobeyed the commandment of the Lord, numbered the people and brought a horrible judgment of God on the nation that cost 75,000 innocent lives. He told blatant lies that resulted in the slaughter of an entire city of God's priests.... and God said, THIS is the man after my own heart. THIS is the man through whom the Messiah will come. My perfect Son will be called the son of THIS man and will sit on his throne for all eternity. It wasn't David's actions that caused him to have such great favor with God - and this serves as a testimony to every sinful mighty man whose heart cries out for favor and intimacy with God.

What was it in David's heart that made him so special? I believe it was the way in which he so radically embraced God's love and approval for him - even after doing some things that would send most any other "normal" person into a downward spiral for decades. David's attitude after these events would almost be seen as arrogant and shocking - but from it, we can learn a pattern of how to bounce back from defeat, stand shamelessly before God and walk in the fullness of His plans and anointing.

Coming from this shame-based background, the attitudes of David after he "sinned big" were shocking. 1 Samuel 21 tells of David's escape from Saul's house when Saul first set out to kill him. He goes to Nob, the city of priests and lies blatantly to the High Priest to get him to give him weapons and food (the showbread which wasn't lawful for him to eat according to God's word). When Saul arrives and questions

the priest and finds that he helped David, Saul orders the death of the priest and every man, woman, child and beast in the entire city of priests. One young priest escapes to tell the story and David laments to him saying, "I have caused the death of all the persons of your father's house (1 Sam. 22:22)."

When I think of how many families even one pastor touches, I can't imagine the extent of loss that an entire city of priest must have had on the country. The young priest actually stayed with David and his men (and eventually turned on David at the end); and I can imagine that he would be a constant reminder to David of what he had done. But this chapter of David's story doesn't end with shame. God gives him the 52 Psalm to write after this event and we see a picture of David's outrageous repentance. He compares himself to the man who actually killed the priests. In contrast to this man, David trusts in the Lord and concludes that he is like a green olive tree in the house of God - he has a fresh start. David trusts in the mercy of God and can stand unashamed in the presence of God's saints. David realizes that this act didn't affect how God sees him. This didn't disqualify him or steal the anointing from his life.

David is like a rubber ball that always bounces back. He was an adulterer, a murderer, a liar and committed sins of rebellion against God's word that cost tens of thousands of innocent lives. Yet each time, he would bounce back with an undaunted confidence that God loved him, accepted him, had a plan and great calling for his life, that he had an anointing. This level of confidence in the fact that God's goodness is better than his badness is shocking. Yet, over and over we see David take this radical approach of confidence in God and His mercy after the most egregious of sins. This was the thing that made him the man after God's own heart - he knew the heart of God never waivers in love toward us.

Paul is another saint who did horrible things against God but in the end probably made more of an impact in Christianity than any other person in history. He, like David, had a similar understanding of God's unfailing grace and inexhaustible mercy. He writes that God will never repent of or remove the gifts and calling that He has given to each

individual (Rom. 11:29). He understood that he was the "chief of sinners" (1 Ti. 1;15) but still completely qualified for everything that God had called him to do based on God's work, God's calling and God's grace. He opens nearly every New Testament book with a reminder that he is called according to grace and prays for an impartation of grace to the readers.

THE PRIDE OF SHAME

How can these men who were chief of sinners rise so high in God? How did they "bounce back" from sin so indomitably? At times, theologians have accused them both of pride, but in reality, shame is the ultimate expression of pride. That seems counter-intuitive doesn't it?

If you were to tell someone that you were the most humble person on the face of the earth, they'd laugh at you and call you proud. But did you know that God actually moved upon Moses to write that he was the most humble person on the face of the earth in Numbers 12:3? If God told most any person that they were the most humble, they'd probably play it off and say, "No... I'm not really all *that* humble, Lord." But that would actually be pride speaking - exalting our opinion over God's. It takes real humility to agree with the things that God says because so often they are so outrageously good. Moses actually had to be incredibly humble to agree with God and write that he was the most humble man on earth. Shame, on the other hand, exalts our opinion and the devil's opinion over God's, all the while masquerading as humility.

What do we really believe when we agree with the voice of shame? What is our heart saying? Shame will tell you that your sin is SO BIG that it is the one that is bigger than God's love. *Your* sin is the one that He can't cover. Each time you sin, shame says, "Surely that was the one sin that will steal my gifts and calling... Now God will really reject me." But what does the Bible say? God's word says that He will NEVER leave us or forsake us. He has made us acceptable. We ARE righteous.

We HAVE every spiritual blessing. Every lie of shame contradicts the clear Word of God that is to dictate our reality.

Shame ultimately is a way of seeing that taints every area of your faith because your faith is not rooted in Christ if shame is in your heart. Shame exists because we are looking at ourselves rather than Christ... and we will come up short every time. When we look at Jesus as our sufficiency, our righteousness and our means, all things are possible. When we relate to God through Christ and see ourselves in Him, we have an accurate view of how God sees us. But when operating in shame, you feel as though you don't have anointing or calling or capacity for victory because, you know what... you don't! Apart from Christ we are about as spiritually capable as a stone.

This is why John admonishes us that if we abide in Him, we will not be ashamed before Him (1 Jo. 2:28). But when YOU are looking at YOU, you cannot help but be ashamed when standing in the presence of a perfect God. Only when our focus is on Jesus does everything in the Christian life fall into place. The more your eyes are on you, the more shame you will feel in your soul. The person most steeped in shame is proud to the core. But a humble person accepts what God says about them even if it is outrageously good. They don't exalt their opinion of themselves over God's - even if it means trusting in His grace and goodness to such an extreme that you, like David, bounce back immediately after even the most heinous of sins.

Paul so trusted in the grace of God that he wrote that where sin abounds, the grace of God abounds all the more. Remember that grace isn't just the vehicle through which forgiveness comes. It is the vehicle through which every promise of salvation and our calling comes. You and your sin are not greater than God's grace. Your calling isn't about you. Your righteousness isn't about your works. God's opinion and works are the ones that matter.

This is so hard to grasp because we are raised in a world that uses shame and condemnation and guilt as punishment tools. But 1 Corinthians 4:9 says that God puts us on display before men and angels. What a picture. When we stand naked before God and all the heavenly

hosts, we expect Him to have disapproval like the world. But instead, His love gushes forth and all of heaven marvels as the righteousness of Christ shines through us. It doesn't matter how dirty you get, you can't diminish the light of the Spirit that dwells in you. No amount of fleshly imperfection diminishes the perfection of the Spirit in you.

People like David and Paul understood something about walking with God. They understood that they could sin but walk away from it knowing not one guilty knowledge against themselves (1 Cor. 4:4). David was so good at fully coming clean on his sin and its consequences while trusting in the outrageous covering of God.

This is the power that we can enjoy as we break free from shame. We bring all of our sin and all of its consequences into the light and rather than hear disapproval from God, we discover that His love, mercy, grace, calling, and Spirit are *greater* than our sin. His ability to redeem a life is greater than our ability to destroy it. We can then walk away knowing that we are rich and with confidence of knowing that His gifts and calling and nature will shine through us. I can say, "I'm perfect" - not because of what I've done but because of who I am in Christ. If He has imputed perfection to me, then it is mine. Who am I to argue with God?

KEEPING A HEALTHY BALANCE

The voice of the devil and the world will want to say, "That is arrogance." Even Bible teachers who can theologically expound on the spiritual realities of our perfection in Christ would balk at the idea that a person should actually be so bold as to apply that truth as a reality in their lives... what about consequences to sin and responsibility? The real issue is that this, like many other Christian truths must be held in balance between the extremes. There are segments in Christianity who preach an "easy believism" or "greasy grace" wherein essentially grace is a license to sin without consequence. Make no mistakes, there are consequences to sin and we'll discuss them later. There are other

branches of Christianity who preach a gospel wherein salvation is difficult and losing your salvation is easy - leading to a rigid, works-based walk of faith in which shame breeds easily. I believe in balanced theology and that we will find truth and freedom for our souls keeping both aspects of the truth in check.

There are consequences to sin - both in our lives and souls as well as for the people who have been hurt by our sin. Part of being delivered of shame is taking an honest evaluation of these consequences and bringing them before God. Taking honest stock and store of our situation will help us to get brutally realistic with what we have to do to get out of the mess our sin has created. But getting delivered from a heart of shame won't make us LESS responsible, it will actually give us that emotional reserve to be MORE responsible.

Shame makes us want to hide from full exposure before God and people because we don't have the capacity to really deal with the consequences. We are already operating from a core belief of defeat when shame is ruling our heart. Thus we don't want to really stand eye-to-eye with the realities of our sin and its consequences because that will require something of us that we don't feel we have to give. We don't want to get brutally honest with where our lives will go if we don't course-correct and start to make Godly choices - so we hide from responsibility, from God and from reality in our unhealthy coping habits that give us a false sense of security even if the world is crumbling around us.

Many of us need to fully come to terms with our sins but shame wants to keep these things in the dark. We fear that if we really look at all this sin has cost us, the grief would overtake us. Some reading this have lost jobs, money, marriage, self-respect and so much more at the hand of this sin. All of us have lost precious time. But I think of the story of Joseph when he was sold as a slave. Before he was even taken into the house of Potiphar, God called him a prosperous man (Ge. 39:2). That is interesting because as a slave he didn't have a penny that he could call his own. But God called him rich. Similarly, we have been slaves to sin but are rich because of the riches that God has deposited IN us.

Getting brutally honest with yourself and others is healthy and critical to formulating a plan for wholesale life change. When shame isn't part of our foundation, we can face these difficult truths because we have confidence that one thing is certain: God's love for us never falters no matter how badly and how long we've blown it. He is always waiting for us to come to Him without shame and set us back on our feet with all the resources of Heaven and our inheritance in Christ at the ready to help us. That isn't to say that it will instantly be easy. We must sow to the spirit before we reap a spiritual harvest.

Shame-free living is part of the crucial foundation for life and spiritual growth. When this is gone we know that circumstances will be OK because we have a core belief that WE are OK. When shame is gone, grace isn't a license to sin; rather our understanding of our godly nature serves as a driving force to stay pure.

THE ATTITUDES OF SHAME-FREE LIVING

When we are looking at life through the "lens" of shame, it's self-view and worldview likely extends into many areas of your life. Jesus said it this way in Matthew 6, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

When shame is tainting the way we see ourselves and God, we look in the mirror and feel that we are not enough. We look at our bank statement and feel as though we are not enough. We look at our anointing and feel as if we are not enough. You name it. We disqualify ourselves from virtually every good thing eventually as this cancer spreads. It may start small and just seem like "normal dissatisfaction", but any self-perception that is based in lack is a root of shame that can grow. The voice of shame says, "I don't have..." When you are delivered from this, your heart can say, "I HAVE... I am enough."

The Bible is clear that Jesus already HAS given us ALL things that pertain to life, Godliness and our calling. He HAS already blessed us with every spiritual blessing (2 Pe. 1:3, Eph. 1:3). He HAS made us acceptable. He HAS put His Spirit in us. Every spiritual blessing that I can think of is listed as a past-tense reality for us. **One of the reasons that we don't access them by grace is because we are still trying to get them** rather than trying to receive grace for the faith for what we already have. Grace is the conduit through which every heavenly reality manifests on earth. Shame blocks that conduit by stealing our faith.

Christianity as a general rule has faith upside-down. What happens when we are sick or when we need something? We plead and petition God to give us healing or give us what we need. When that doesn't work, we may try to pray and fast and clean up our act to convince God further. But this is all backward faith. Jesus already paid for healing and defeated all disease. We already have the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead living in us. We already have ALL things that pertain to life and Godliness. We already have every spiritual blessing. Thus we conclude that the goal isn't to get God to give us the things we need because we already have them. So when we relate to God out of our feeling of lack rather than from an understanding of His fullness, this is nothing more than faithlessness. Faith is the EVIDENCE of things not seen - the title deed if you will (Heb. 11:1). God has given us the title deed to ALL things unseen. But without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). When you go to God without faith, asking Him to give the things He has already given, is it any wonder when you don't receive?

Acts 3:5 tells a story of Peter healing a lame beggar at the temple. He says to the man, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." This verse always intrigued me because Peter recognized that HE HAD something that was tangible enough to give away. We also possess an inheritance that is tangible enough for us to spend if we will only receive the grace to walk in it. It is important, when we approach

this struggle to know that God has already defeated the devil, changed our nature and that our victory is certain.

Conversely, shame creates a hole in the heart that can never be filled. The blessings of God are directly linked to the prosperity that we perceive in our soul (3 Jo. 1:2). As we walk free from shame, walking in our calling will come naturally. However, if shame is in our life, it hinders our calling and blessing because we are putting things into a hole that can never be filled. The bottomless pit of shame also steals glory from God because all the glory that should go to him goes right to our needy soul. Having people's respect, approval or a flourishing ministry at church are blessings that God wants to give - but when shame is part of the picture, we NEED these things to fill the void of these things in our hearts. We crave "God's validation" on the things we do because we don't feel His validation of who we are.

There are many people who God would love to prosper financially but can't because if they had wealth it would make them feel better about themselves or superior in a destructive way. God would like to pour out the anointing on more people, but His "stamp of approval" on our ministry would cause us to devour the admiration of others rather than give all glory to God. When you compare our reality to the realities of heaven found in the Bible and see that there is a discrepancy, it is usually because there is a hole in the heart that is stealing the blessing that God wants to and has already given. Being healed of shame is part of the foundation - not only of walking free from sin but for launching into your life's calling and purpose because God can add things to you without feeding your demons.

I always found it interesting that God put His stamp of approval on Jesus ministry BEFORE it started. As Jesus came out of the water, having been baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the voice of God spoke saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased (Mt. 3:17)." Jesus had the Father's approval before He ever did anything to earn it. **We, as sons of God, enjoy that same blessing and unconditional approval.** It is so amazing to stop and consider that God not only loves us, not only accepts us but actually

is pleased with us. God enjoys you. You bring Him pleasure. He loves the way He made you.

If you have to remind yourself 100 times a day that you are pleasing to God and that you have a calling do it. Ask God to show you the great things about being you. Then use this knowledge to defeat self-condemning thoughts when they arise. Something amazing happens when you realize that you are pleasing to God: you want to please Him more. Something amazing happens when you realize that you have access through grace to every spiritual blessing: you start to access them.

What if you really believed that when you pray you would receive from God? Would you pray more and be excited to pray? What if you really believed that when you leave your home, God is going with you and that His favor is upon you? Wouldn't you have an expectation of great things coming your way? What if you really believed you have a calling and an anointing from God? Wouldn't you step out in faith more? What if you really believed that you have something worth fighting for? Would you be so quick to sacrifice that for a cheap counterfeit in sin? Do you see that the attitude of living shame free creates a platform for growth in every area of life? This is the key that makes faith begin to work.

The moment after you sin, you should be able to look yourself in the mirror and say, "Man! I'm something special in Christ. He has gifted me. He has forgiven me. He has called me. He has crowned me with righteousness and tender mercies. He loves me. I bring Him pleasure. He has a future and a hope for me... etc." If you do this, you won't go into a downward spiral that makes sin come naturally... because sin isn't natural for you any longer. It is time for our identity to become the one that God says we have.

Is it any wonder that the loving kindness of God is what leads us to true repentance rather than fear or condemnation? There are so many ministries that use shame and condemnation to achieve a "godly" result. But if there is no condemnation in Christ as the Bible teaches (Ro. 5:16, 8:1), then we understand that God is understanding - that there is a higher law than "try harder." God's ways truly are the good news. And

this foundation of love is the very thing that you have needed to soar with God.

What is stopping you from casting off shame forever now? There is no sin so great or heinous that it took God by surprise or that God can't and hasn't already forgiven. You may feel unqualified or too weak for the mountains in your life. Good. You never were qualified or mighty - your qualification and might are through Christ. Your sexuality as we previously learned isn't something of which God is ashamed. You have a mighty calling on your life. The worst that you have done serves only to give glory to the depths of God's mercy and redemptive power. Stand "naked" and unashamed before Him now, fully accepted as a full son and as a full heir in the inheritance of Christ. Know that you have gifts, a future and a calling. It is only a matter of time before they start to manifest because God is a rewarder of faith.

~Mighty Man Training & Application~

1. It is time for us to live shame-free before God. Go to Him in prayer now. Imagine yourself standing in His presence before His throne. How do you feel? Do you feel as though the things you've done make Him love you less? Repent.

Lord, I don't know how your love can be so big, but You say You love me as much as you love Jesus, even after all my sin. You have given me Your Holy Spirit and gauge my acceptability by the perfect work of Jesus. I haven't related to You as though these things are true, however. but I repent. I thank You that I am fully righteous. I thank You that I have gifts and a calling that I can still walk in. I thank You that You are never surprised by my sin, knew my ways and still desired to save me. I am good enough. I am smart enough. I am spiritually acceptable. I am attractive enough. I am prosperous. I am loved. I am accepted. I am new. I can go on with my life as though I had never sinned.

2. Change how you see yourself for good. Don't think that because you have a great time with the Lord right now as He reveals this in your heart that shame will be gone forever. Patterns of thought that have dominated for years will want to come back. This is true of most of the lessons in this book. We must daily rehearse and practice walking, thinking and acting in the truth because we have habitually walked in lies for so long that they often feel more natural and real than the truth. Every morning you should "put on" shame-free relationship with God just as the Bible tells us to daily put on the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6. In fact, the belt of truth is very much what we are putting on when we agree with the truth of God's word.

3. Daily Affirmations: as you go through your day, remind and affirm the truth of God's opinion by saying aloud:
 - a. I am God's beloved son in whom He is well pleased. I bring pleasure to God.
 - b. I am fully righteous. Even after sinning I can never be more righteous than I am now.
 - c. I have a spiritual inheritance and access to every heavenly blessing.
 - d. My sexuality is good and pleasing to God.
 - e. I have unique gifts and a calling in the Lord.
 - f. God loves me.

We hope you have enjoyed the first two sections of the Mighty Man Manual by Jon Snyder. These chapters lay an important foundation for freedom. From here we'll learn how to possess our souls in sanctification and honor as God changes the heart to remove the very roots that give this sin space in the deep parts of a man's soul. If these sections have blessed you and you would like to read more, please visit www.mightymanmanual.com to download the full version or purchase a copy in print.

Mighty Man Ministries also offers an 8 week freedom course both for individuals and groups. If you are a men's ministry leader, we invite you to write to our ministry and a small group coordinator can get you a teacher's guide for the workbook and answer any questions.

Best & Blessings always,

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