

# Strategies for Fighting Sexual Sin

*Northwestern College Chapel*

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By John Piper April 17, 1995

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1. Recognize that sexuality is a good gift from God.

Genesis 2:24-25

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Proverbs 5:18-20

Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love. For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4:3)

2. Recognize that Biblical prohibitions are intended to protect something precious not deny something pleasant.

Exodus 20:14

You shall not commit adultery.

1 Corinthians 6:18

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 7:2

But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

Thessalonians 4:3

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

3. Believe God is for you.

Psalms 84:11

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Mark 10:29-30

Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

4. Ponder the eternal danger of lust.

Matthew 5:27-29

I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Remember the story of the man who cut off his leg to save his life.

5. Think often that God has given you even now many good things.

Genesis 39:7-9

And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in

this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?"

6. Preach to yourself that there is more joy in God's presence than in sin. Transpose desire.

Psalm 4:7

Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound.

Psalm 16:11

Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.

Psalm 73:25-26

Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Peter 2:2

Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

7. Realize that lust disables and weakens our capacity for higher spiritual joys with God.

Peter 2:11 (war on soul)

Abstain from fleshly lusts that wage war against your soul.

Mark 4:19

The desire for other things enters in and chokes the word and it becomes unfruitful.

8. Don't ask, What's wrong with it? Ask: Does it maximize my experience of the power of Christ, my enjoyment of his fellowship, my perception of his beauty, my reflection of his glory?

Philippians 3:12

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

9. Cultivate a passionate devotion to the honor of God's name.

2 Samuel 12:10, 14

"Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. . . .

However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

10. Develop a worldview that views absolutely everything in relation to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

11. (For singles) Recognize that sexual relations are not essential to full personhood and happiness.

Jesus was single and chaste and fully human.

Isaiah 56:3-5

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from His people." Neither let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." 4 For thus says the Lord, "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, 5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

12. (For the married) Recognize that God designed marriage to be a living parable of his commitment to the church.

Ephesians 5:21-32

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.

13. Be vigilant over your eyes. Avoid unnecessary stimulation.

Job 31:1

I Have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?

Romans 13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

2 Timothy 2:22

Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

14. Look on the opposite sex as eternal persons. Realize that lust inevitably depersonalizes and despiritualizes people.

John 5:28-29

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Matthew 25:46

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:16

From now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

15. Think often that Christ suffered agony for your purity. Fight image with image. Christ crying in agony.

Titus 2:14

Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

1 Peter 1:18; 2:24

You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, [but with the precious blood of Christ]. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

1 Corinthians 5:15

He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Hebrews 10:29

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

16. Beware of assuming past successes guarantee future purity.

1 Corinthians 10:12

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Galatians 2:13 (Contrasted with Acts 11:24 (Barnabas))

Barnabas was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. (Acts 11:24)

And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (Gal. 2:13)

17. Beware of feeling above accountability.

3 John 9 (Diotrephes not submissive)

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

18. Do not be excessively alone.

19. Get in a group where you exhort one another every day against the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:12-13

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

20. Memorize many scriptures.

1 John 2:14

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Psalm 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 119:11

Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.

21. Stockpile your thoughts with good things.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

22. Read the great literature of devotion, biography, etc.

When I read the stories of how much others have suffered and fought and struggled and achieved measures of joy and holiness and fruitfulness in fellowship with God it makes me want to give my all to this quest and settle for nothing less than all that a saved sinner can be for the glory of Christ.

23. Never assume that you are above suffering or that you deserve relief through sin. The pitfall of powerful self-pity.

Acts 14:22

[Paul went to his churches] strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:58

And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

2 Timothy 2:3

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 4:16-17

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth.

24. Get busy with some task.

25. Pray at all times in the Spirit for God's deliverance.

Matthew 6:13

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Luke 22:40

And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Psalm 119:18

Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Thy law.

26. Be encouraged; God is patient

Exodus 34:6-7

Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations. "

Nehemiah 9:17

And they refused to listen, And did not remember Thy wondrous deeds which Thou hadst performed among them; So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But Thou art a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness; And Thou didst not forsake them.

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