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A Man's Strategy for Conquering Temptation

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Bob Vereen

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BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

A MAN'S STRATEGY FOR CONQUERING TEMPTATION

PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS

12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200

Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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ISBN 978-0-307-45761-5

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Previously published under the title *How Can a Man Control His Thoughts, Desires, and Passions?*

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

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Printed in the United States of America

2009

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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A MAN'S STRATEGY FOR CONQUERING TEMPTATION

We live in a visual world. Every marketer knows that capturing the attention of a potential client is crucial, and visual appeal is key to stimulating a positive first impression. This is one of the reasons we see so much seductive sexual imagery in advertising and marketing. Every merchandiser around the world knows that he can capture the attention of most men through sexually explicit images. Every male product imaginable is being promoted by an attractive woman in seductive apparel.

We live in a world inundated with sexual images. Some of the most popular television programs among men today are filled with scenes of nudity, passion,

and promiscuity. Men are renting pornographic video movies at an alarming rate. Husbands are staying up late, after the wife and kids are in bed, tuning into their favorite late-night porn cable channel or hooking up to one of many pornographic Web sites. *After all*, they tell themselves, *I'm just looking, not touching*.

We live in a promiscuous world. The divorce rate is staggering. Immorality is becoming the norm. Sexual activity outside of marriage is condoned and promoted in every way imaginable. Sexual misconduct is becoming commonplace in even the most sacred of professions.

In the midst of this unbelievable bombardment of sexual immorality, is there any chance that a man can control his thoughts, passions, and desires? Should he even try? What does the Bible say about today's sexual standards? How can a man resist the temptations he faces on a daily basis? How can he overcome his weaknesses? How can he keep his thoughts under control, his passions in check, and his desires in line?

These are just a few of the questions we want to answer as we search the Bible *inductively* regarding this subject. This means you will observe the Word of God for yourself. Once you discover what it says and means, you can then adjust your life to live accordingly.

Let's get started.

WEEK ONE

Rules for behavior generally are established by the society in which one lives. Sometimes traditional values are written as laws, and sometimes they are simply understood and embraced by the majority of its members. With the passing of time, standards may change for a variety of reasons. What is considered acceptable behavior today may have once been deplored, and what was considered normal behavior at some point in time may one day be labeled “old-fashioned.”

God, too, has established rules for behavior. His standard, however, never changes; it has remained the same throughout the ages.

Which standard should the believer follow—God’s or the one established by his society? And in what area of life will a man experience the greatest pull between two standards? In what specific ways does God’s standard differ from our society’s, and how should it impact our daily choices?

Let’s see what we can learn about the answers to these questions as we dig into God’s Word.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 aloud.

- As you read these verses, have the group say aloud and circle every reference to **the recipients**, particularly the pronouns **you**, **your**, and **us** (when “us” refers to all believers).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

¹ Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and

please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

² For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

⁶ and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is

INSIGHT

The word *walk* in verse 1 describes one's lifestyle, conduct, or behavior.


DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking the references to the recipients?
- Considering the definition in the Insight box and looking closely at verses 1 and 2, what would following the instructions and commandments enable the recipients to do?

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 again. This time have the group call out the following key words as they mark them as follows:

- Draw a box around each occurrence of the word *sanctification*.

- Draw a cloud shape like this  around the words ***sexual immorality, lustful passion, and impurity.***

INSIGHT

The word *sanctification* refers to that ongoing, daily process of becoming holy and pure in mind and body, consecrated to God for His purposes and living separated from the influences of a sinful society.

DISCUSS

- According to verse 3, what is God's will for the believer?
- Look at each place you marked the word *sanctification*. What lifestyle was Paul contrasting with the sanctified lifestyle?
- What did Paul say believers had to "abstain from" in order to be sanctified?

the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.

⁷ For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

⁸ So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

- According to verse 7, for what purpose has God called us?
- If a man ignores Paul's teaching regarding the relationship between sanctification and immorality, whom is he rejecting?

INSIGHT

Sexual immorality refers to any sexual activity outside of the biblical marriage relationship between one man and one woman.

In the Greek the word translated as *abstain* is in the present tense, implying a continuous, habitual, ongoing lifestyle.

Many of the new believers in Thessalonica had formerly participated in pagan religious ceremonies where sexual immorality was part of the worship experience. In addition sexual immorality of all forms was accepted as the norm in their culture.

- Considering the culture in which the Thessalonians lived (see Insight box), why do you think Paul raised the issue of sexual immorality in connection with pleasing God? How might this be a particular concern for this group of believers?
- What similarities, if any, do you see between their culture and ours?
- What are some of the messages our culture sends men today regarding sexual immorality?

OBSERVE

Leader: *Read aloud 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 again.*

- *As you read these verses, have the group double underline the word **vessel**.*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-5

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

INSIGHT

In verse 4, Paul used the word *vessel* to describe something that the Thessalonian believers were to possess “in sanctification and honor.” Theologians are somewhat divided as to whether Paul was referring to one’s *body* or one’s *wife* when he used the word *vessel*. In the original Greek, the same word carries both definitions in the New Testament. Whatever Paul intended, both interpretations demand that the believer live before God in holiness and purity.

The word *possess* basically means “to get for oneself, purchase, or acquire.” It also carries the connotation of having something under control. If his wife is the vessel a man is to “possess,” then the believer is to acquire and maintain a marriage relationship that honors God through its sexual purity. If it is his body that a man is to “possess,” then he is to keep the desires of his flesh under control at all times and not engage in any sexual activity that is not holy and pure.

DISCUSS

- In light of the context of verses 3-5, if verse 4 read, “that each of you know how to possess his own *body* in sanctification and honor,” how would that affect a man’s daily choices?
- What boundaries does this set for a man, whether single or married, regarding what he does with his body?
- If verse 4 read, “that each of you know how to possess his own *wife* in sanctification and honor,” how would that affect a man’s marriage relationship?
- How should this affect what takes place between the husband and wife in the marriage bed? Are all behaviors biblically legitimate, or do the words *sanctification* and *honor* imply some limitations?
- According to this passage, what could prevent you from having the will of God accomplished in your life?

1 PETER 3:7

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- Based on all you've learned from this passage in 1 Thessalonians, what is God's standard for the believer, and what must the believer do to attain it?

OBSERVE

Keeping in mind the definition of vessel as wife, let's further consider Paul's instruction to possess one's vessel in sanctification and honor. We'll look at some verses that deal with the man, his wife, the marriage relationship—and how these relate to his sanctification.

Leader: *Read aloud 1 Peter 3:7.*

- *Have the group underline the words **wives, she, and her.***

INSIGHT

The phrase *someone weaker* could be literally translated as “a weaker vessel,” using the same word that appears in 1 Thessalonians 4:4.

DISCUSS

- How are wives described in this passage?
- How are they to be treated?
- How does living with your wife “in an understanding way” affect your sexual relationship with your wife?
- If a husband does not show his wife honor, what effect will it have on him?

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud 1 Corinthians 7:2.

- Have the group draw a cloud around the word *immoralities*.

DISCUSS

- According to this verse, why does a man need his own wife and a woman need her own husband?

1 CORINTHIANS 7:2

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

HEBREWS 13:4

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

OBSERVE

Leader: *Read Hebrews 13:4 aloud.*

- *Have the group underline each occurrence of the word **marriage**.*

INSIGHT

The word *fornicators* refers to those who engage in sexual immorality, which the Bible defines as the following:

- sex with biological family members or those related by marriage (incest)
- sex with animals (bestiality)
- sex with someone of the same sex (homosexuality and lesbianism)
- any sexual activity with a person to whom you are not married, which includes pedophilia, prostitution, casual sex, etc.

An *adulterer* is a married person who commits a sexual act with someone other than the spouse.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about marriage from this verse?
- What defiles the marriage bed?
- If the marriage bed is defiled, what will happen to the offender?
- Is viewing sexual images on the Internet, in movies, or in magazines—anything that stimulates the imagination regarding sex with someone who's not your wife—consistent with honoring the marriage bed? Explain your answer.

OBSERVE

Now let's take the definition of vessel as body and examine some verses that deal with the man and his body and how this relates to his sanctification.

Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Have the group do the following:

- *Underline each occurrence of the phrase do you not know.*

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

¹² All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

¹³ Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

¹⁴ Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

¹⁶ Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "The two shall become one flesh."

- *Draw a box around every mention of **body** or **bodies**.*
- *Draw a cloud around every occurrence of **immorality** or **immoral**.*

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking references to the body?
- What happens when a man joins himself to a prostitute?
- What happens when a man joins himself to the Lord?
- How does what we do with our bodies affect our sanctification?
- What liberties do you have with your body?

- According to verse 18, what are we commanded to do? Why?
- From what you read in verse 20, what should be the ultimate goal regarding the body? Can you do this and be immoral?
- Look at every place you underlined *do you not know* and see what Paul expected his readers to know.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud *Ephesians 5:3*, reprinted on the next page.

- Have the group draw a cloud around the words ***immorality*** and ***impurity***.

INSIGHT

A *saint* is a sanctified believer—pure, holy, and blameless in heart and life. The word *saint* comes from the same root word in the Greek as *holy*. It means “to be set apart, consecrated to God.”

17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

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

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

EPHESIANS 5:3

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from this verse about immorality and the believer?
- Taking into consideration all the scriptures you've looked at this week, discuss the standard God has set for the believer and why immorality seems to be such a problem among Christian men.
- Through this study, have you felt convicted about any behaviors in your life? Take some time to talk privately with God and confess any sin, if necessary.

WRAP IT UP

Through this week's study we've seen that the will of God for the believer is sanctification. We are to live holy, pure, upright, blameless lives. Sexual immorality—adultery, fornication, lustful passions, sexual fantasizing, embracing sexually impure thoughts or images—defiles the body and the marriage bed. Of all sins, the sexual ones can cause the most damage to an intimate relationship with God, with spouses, and with fellow believers.

Holiness. Absolute purity. This is the standard for the believer. How in the world can a man overcome the fiery, powerful passions that challenge his firm commitment to live righteously? Wonderfully, God has not left us on our own to accomplish this.

God gave us the Bible so we could know the standard. If you learn its precepts, call them to mind in times of temptation, and choose to obey them without hesitation, then you will experience sanctification. We have been instructed on how we ought to walk and please God. Each of us is to “know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thessalonians 4:4).

Marriage, as Paul noted, can satisfy a man's sexual passions through an intimate relationship with his wife. In addition to honoring her before men, this allows a man to be holy before God. If he violates this principle, God will judge and avenge any illicit actions.

God also gave every believer, married or single, the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and lead us in the ways of righteousness.

Yet despite all of this, staggering numbers of believers are falling

into sexual immorality. What's the problem? Are men doomed to failure in this area? Are we incapable of successfully living a life of holiness? How can we possibly please God amid a culture that advocates sexual immorality as a man's right?

If you want to know the answers to these questions, then don't miss the next five weeks.



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