

THE FIRST

40

DAYS

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Introduction

- ✓ I have a body.
- ✓ I live in a world where sin affects sex.
- ✓ I want good sex.

If you or someone you love would agree with the three statements above, welcome to an exciting 40 day journey.

When Conquerors through Christ (a small organization that helps people rejoice in God's dream for sex and reject the devil's lies about sex) first had the idea for this devotional, we wanted to give people who were struggling a daily resource that would set them on a new path. As the devotions were researched and written (many thanks to our writers!) one thing became clear: Everyone can use a fresh start and a "first 40 days" to get used to having the right path beneath their feet.

So, friend and fellow sojourner, read on. Highlight, dog-ear, notate, and take in what's helpful for you in the few moments each day you spend investing yourself in God's good dream for you and your body. And when you've finished, pass it on. Invite another on the journey with you, as we are inviting you. Thank you for joining us.



DAY 1

You are already finished.

No matter how many times you pick up this book, no matter how many times you fall down during this fight, no matter how many times you have to start this book over, every single time, those words will be right here on page 1. “You. Are. Already. Finished.”

It’s hard to believe when you’re starting a journey away from something that feels like it still has its claws in you, or at least have the scabs where those claws used to be. But go back to line 1. You are already finished. When God sees you, he doesn’t see a project or a work-in-progress. He sees a perfect person because his son did everything perfectly and gave you credit for it.

That eternity-altering truth will be the foundation of every single day of this journey, and it will be part of every single day after you close this book.

We call that “repentance.” Repentance is two things: 1) Admit that I’m messed up and need help. 2) Believe that only Jesus can save me.

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By opening this book, you admit you need help. And on page 1, you will always find those words borrowed from the man on the cross who said them almost 2,000 years ago. This journey will be challenging, and we will be here for you through every one of these 40 days, but more importantly, those words will be right here for you on page 1. And they will always be true.

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.”
With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30 NIV)



DAY 2

God be praised! You made it to day 2! As much as we'd love to pat you on the back, this is, unfortunately, one-way communication from us to you, so you'll have to carry on just knowing that we totally would if we could. But while we can't hear you, God can. He does. It would be great if a book could empower you to beat porn, but in truth, God is the one who will help you.

So today (and every day), pray.

Ask God to go with you on your journey, to lead you not into temptation, and to deliver you from evil. Ask him to draw your eyes to his glory and love. Ask him because, unlike a little devotion book, he can hear you.

It may not seem like much to put down this book and speak up to God, but it's vital. It doesn't seem like much because Satan is trying to disconnect you from God. He tells you God can't hear you because he hates it when you pray.

But the Bible speaks a different word. It says that God is with you, God will love you, and God is listening to you.

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“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!” (Psalm 66:18–20 NIV)



DAY 3

Have you struggled to believe all the glorious things that this book has been saying since Day 1? For example, when you began this journey, we claimed that you are already perfect in the eyes of God.

But how can that be? If you have a long history of embarrassing sins and, perhaps, have stumbled since you picked up this book, how could “perfect” be true for you?

The author of Hebrews knows. He writes, **“By one sacrifice [Jesus] has made perfect forever those who are being made holy”** (Hebrews 10:14 NIV). You should adore the grammar in that verse. It admits that Christians **“are being made holy,”** implying that you are a work-in-progress, not yet finished. This is why you are tempted, why you still stumble, why you still are drawn back to the poison of porn.

Yet please don’t miss what the author said first. **“Jesus has made perfect forever”** those very people who are still works in progress. Day 1 was no lie! You already are perfectly clean and pure in the eyes of our Father. You don’t have to fear his judgment or anger or

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disappointment. Your Savior endured all of that on the cross.

Theologians call this the “already/not yet” of the Christian life. So, child of God, keep fighting. You are not yet holy in your habits. And, child of God, keep resting. You are already holy in your blood-bought identity.



DAY 4

When you find yourself addicted to porn, you might assume that you are not normal. You might think you're the only one who struggles so fiercely, so regularly, so pathetically.

But you'd be wrong.

The Apostle Paul can relate to you when he writes, **“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing”** (Romans 7:15–19 NIV).

Are you frustrated by what you often do? Saint Paul can relate. Each Christian may struggle with a different personal evil (you lust; she worries; he gets angry), but we all have this in common—we don't do the good we want to do. Not yet.

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The normal Christian struggle is what drives us back to Jesus. Day after day, fighting and failing, we learn that only Jesus can help. Only he can make us good enough to stand before the Father. And our common struggle drives us to each other. Christians struggle and, like Paul, we would love to pray about it.

So, don't let the devil convince you that you are too abnormal to belong. You belong here, with us, in God's family, at the foot of the cross.



DAY 5

When I was studying New Testament Greek at Bible college, I can't say that I always loved it. Nitpicking grammar and translating foreign words wasn't nearly as fun as playing FIFA on my XBOX.

But sometimes, being a Greek geek returns big-time blessings. Like Romans 8:1 (NIV). The English itself is glorious— **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Just after admitting his constant struggle with sin in chapter 7, Paul declares that Jesus has already saved Christians just like him, just like you.

But the Greek is even better. The Greek begins, **“None, therefore...”**. Paul can't wait to tell us how much condemnation remains after the death and resurrection of Jesus—None! In English, we have to wait until the fifth word of the sentence (**“no condemnation”**), but Paul wanted the Romans to have peace right away.

Isn't that amazing?! How much condemnation is hanging over your head right now? None. How much disapproval is left in God's eyes when he looks down on you? None. How many minutes do

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you need to worry about going to hell, falling from grace, or being rejected when heaven's feast begins? None.

If you are discouraged today, read how intensely Paul struggled in Romans 7:14-25. Then smile wide as he begins chapter 8 with a glorious word—

None!



DAY 6

I hear a lot of confessions about pornography. Both men and women, both young and old, both married and single, all sorts of people schedule a time to talk about their addiction. For the first time, they bring their darkness into the light. “Pastor, I have a problem with... you know... porn.”

My response to these courageous confessions is almost always the same.

First, I tell them that God loves them.

Second, I thank them for trusting me enough to talk about it.

Third, I try to figure out how intense their struggle is.

Fourth, I ask them a question—Who in your life could you talk to about this?

For some people, that question is easy to answer. “My brother.” “My best friend.” “A woman from my small group.” But for others,

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that question is met with silence. It's hard to know who would respond well to your sexual sin, who you could trust, who is a good ally in your fight for self-control.

How about you? Who in your life could you talk to about this? If someone immediately comes to mind, praise God! Reach out today, tell them your story, and keep confessing. But if you are unsure, here's where to start—pray for people. Pray that God would open your eyes to a person who is capable of walking with you. Pray for someone in your church or your circle of friends. Pray for someone who would be honored to pray for you so that you may be healed.

Then keep your eyes peeled. Look for God's answer to your prayer.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8 NIV).



DAY 7

Do you believe that prayer works? Do you trust that the words we speak in Jesus' name reach the ears of God and move the hands of God to increase the blessing of God? I do. While I can't fathom the details of the process, I believe that Jesus was telling the truth when he taught us about the power of prayer.

If you share my confidence in prayer, you should confess your own porn problem to other people. That's what Jesus' younger brother, James, said when he wrote, **"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective"** (James 5:16 NIV).

Note the domino effect. First, you confess your sins to other people. Next, those people pray for you regarding temptation. Finally, God responds to his righteous people and sends healing down from heaven.

It's easier to ask others to pray for things that are not too personal. "Please pray for my grandma, who's sick." Or, "Lord, give us all safe travels." But James urges us to pray for intensely personal

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things, like our embarrassing sinful habits that we can't seem to shake by ourselves. Why? Because when righteous people pray, God listens. Even better, when righteous people pray, God heals.

So, swallow your pride, confess your sins to others, and trust that the resulting prayers are not pointless. By God's grace, prayer is a powerful way that God might change your habits and heal your heart.



DAY 8

There is only one thing more agonizing than confessing your sexual sin to another Christian, and that is confessing your sexual sin again.

Here's why I say that—It takes tremendous courage to confess your porn use to a friend. However, after your confession happens, the temptation isn't over. Sometimes the Tempter triples his efforts the very night you brought your struggle into the light. And, sadly, sometimes that temptation works. You fall. You fail. A few hours after you take a bold step forward, you take an embarrassing tumble backward.

What do you say to your friend in that moment? How mortifying is it when that conversation didn't "work," not even for a week, perhaps not even for a day? The embarrassment is enough to make you avoid the issue altogether, to claim vaguely, "I'm doing pretty well this week."

Please don't. When James wrote his classic verse on confession, his original Greek said, "**Keep confessing your sins to each other**" (James 5:16). The God who inspired his words knew that

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confession isn't a one-and-done sort of thing. It's a lifestyle, a habit, like going to the gym week after week, trusting that the repetition will produce slow and steady results.

So, keep confessing. Whether it was a good week or a bad one, keep this part of your life in the light. This practice will give your inner circle another chance to encourage you, pray for you, and tell you the best news in the universe—Jesus is ready to forgive you *again*.



DAY 9

When Ananias reached out his hands towards the serial killer, I wonder if they were trembling. God had spoken directly to Ananias, sending him to the house where Saul of Tarsus was sitting, praying, and waiting.

Ananias knew about Saul. Everyone did. Saul was a bad man. He was obsessed, violent, and relentless, the kind of guy who would walk the length of six marathons, from Jerusalem to Damascus, just to hunt down people who believed in Jesus, tie them up, and systematically end their lives one at a time.

So, what would Ananias say when he met the man who came to kill him? Acts 9 tells us, **“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul’”** (Acts 9:17).

No joke. That’s what he said. The first word out of his lips was “brother.” Saul, you are my brother in Christ. Saul, you and I have the same Father. Saul, despite what you have done, you belong at my table as my brother in faith.

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If you have been struggling with sexual sin, you might imagine what other people would call you. Weak? Self-destructive? Embarrassing? But that is not who you are. In Christ, you get a new name, purchased at the cross and guaranteed by his empty grave.

Through faith in Jesus, you are my brother or sister, my sibling in the holiest family on earth. Believe it and live according to your new title.



DAY 10

Once, there was a pastor who had a secret stash of pornographic magazines. One day, when his wife was gone, he indulged his sinful nature but immediately felt the shame of his hypocrisy. So, he carried the whole stack of magazines to a big metal dumpster and heaved them over the side once and for all.

Well, not exactly once and for all. Something within him didn't want to give up those fleeting moments of pleasure, so, before his wife returned, the pastor decided he would get the magazines back. He reached over the edge and—ready for this?—fell, head first, and broke his arm. That's where he sat, at the bottom of the dumpster and unable to escape until his wife came home.

Seriously. That happened.

Porn use, on its worst days, can feel like that. You love it, you hate it, you love it again, and sometimes end up broken and bottomed out. There are moments when we can make no sense of our sin, but we only feel the intense shame of our habitual choices.

That is why Romans 5:20 (NIV) is worth memorizing. **“Where sin**

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increased, grace increased all the more.” When your sin feels so big it could crush you, remember what is always bigger—God’s grace. When our Father finds you in the dumpster of immorality, he doesn’t walk away. Instead, he offers a hand, cleans you up, and stays by your side to nurse you back to health.

He cares that much. He is a perfect father, after all.



DAY 11

I wish self-control were a microwave meal. Pop in a prayer request, wait a minute or two, and your self-control comes out, steaming and ready to resist sexual sin.

But Paul didn't call self-control a microwave meal. He called it "fruit." **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"** (Galatians 5:22–23 NIV). The Holy Spirit can give you the strength to control yourself, even in a world where explicit videos are a few clicks away, but he will produce that strength in you just like he produces produce.

First, you plant a seed of truth (porn is poison; I am a holy child of God; I don't want to do this). Then, you water it with prayer (your prayers; the prayers of your closest allies. Next, you warm that seed in the promises of God's love (during home devotions, while at church, through your worship playlist). And then, in due time, self-control shows up.

Forget about "fruit," and you'll get frustrated that you're not porn-free after a few weeks. Remember "fruit," and you'll keep

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nourishing that seed until you become the kind of person that you weren't before, a person who enjoys the fruit of self-control.



DAY 12

If things are going well in this round of your battle against porn, I want to praise God with you. And I want to quote God to warn you.

God once said, **“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”** (1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV).

Sometimes success makes us feel like we’re standing so firm that we don’t need to be careful. We can forget that God blessed us with success *because* we were working his steps to victory.

Have you ever met someone who decided to stop taking their medication because they were feeling mentally healthy? They forgot that they are healthy *because* of the medicine.

Have you ever met a teenager who grew up in the church and decided that they didn’t need a church during college because their faith was so strong? They forgot that they were strong *because* of the church.

Don’t take that bait when it comes to purity. If you have a few

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porn-free days under your belt, praise God and keep working the steps. If praying, confessing, and filling your heart with the Word has been working, then keep doing what's been working. If setting boundaries with your screens and avoiding certain media has helped you avoid masturbation, then stick to the status quo.

Stand firm in the process that God is using to produce self-control in you. That is how you stay standing and avoid an unexpected fall.



DAY 13

If things aren't going well in this round of your battle against porn, I want to grieve with you. And I want to quote God to encourage you.

God once said, **“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it”** (Isaiah 55:10–11 NIV).

Sometimes failure makes us feel like God's words don't work. We can forget that God often works in ways that human eyes cannot yet see.

Think of the winter snow and the fall harvest. If someone told you that snow produces grain, you might laugh. The snow falls and sits (and gets shoveled) and melts, and then...nothing happens. But beneath the surface, the melted snow is soaking into the soil and preparing the ground for seeds.

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Your journey with porn is like that. You might not see immediate results. All these devotions about God's love, the power of prayer, and the necessity of community might be producing change that you cannot yet see. But God swears that his Word "will not return to me empty."

Have faith in the cycle of Scripture. Yesterday's message might be precisely what you need two months from now. Last week's devotion might pop into your head in a fierce moment of temptation or a lonely evening of self-loathing. The Word is working. God said so.

And God never lies to his children.



DAY 14

If I made you write an essay listing all the reasons to avoid pornography, how long would your report be?

I won't give you a minimum word count or force you to cite your references in APA format (I'm not a monster!), but I wonder if you could find a pen and scribble down all the motivating reasons that pop into your mind. Fix your eyes on all the good things God loves, which porn threatens. Remind your heart that our father truly knows best when he says, **"Flee from sexual immorality"** (1 Corinthians 6:18 NIV). Now make a list of what motivates you. Go ahead. I'll wait.

To get you started, let me say my top two. Second on my list is the drama that porn causes in my life. King David wrote, **"Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more"** (Psalm 16:4 NIV). The false God of pleasure asks me to sacrifice too much—my integrity, time, honesty, and intimacy. The more porn I run after, the more I suffer.

But even more motivating than suffering is Jesus' love. **"For Christ's love compels us"** (2 Corinthians 5:14). The more we

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meditate on Jesus' love, the love that gave up all pleasure and endured ultimate pain, the more we simply don't want to look at porn. We have found something more satisfying, enjoyable, and interesting than naked bodies misused to make money. We have found a love that never fails.

Reflect on those two reasons and add a few of your own. God motivates us in many ways to say no to sin and yes to Him.

- Porn makes me suffer.
- Jesus loves me.
-
-
-
-
-
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DAY 15

Once, I heard a brilliant teaching on the need for adding rules to the Bible. If that sounds bad, it wasn't. It was wise.

The pastor talked about personal “guardrails,” rules that keep us far from the edge of a tragic fall into sin. For example, if you struggle with drunkenness, limiting yourself to one drink (or no drinks!) might be a guardrail that keeps you from going over the edge and hurting the people God loves. No Bible passage demands, “You shall have no more than one drink,” but there is wisdom in knowing yourself and acting carefully.

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise” (Ephesians 5:15 NIV).

What might be a wise guardrail in your life? Is it not bringing your phone into the bathroom where no one will see you? Is it refusing to take your tablet into bed when your brain is tired and looking for digital candy? Is it avoiding the bestselling book or must-see series that has just enough sex to lure you down the broad path to destruction?

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You will never look back and regret playing it safe with your sexuality. So, be a student of your own story. Note the times, places, and devices that are most often connected to your sin, and make the bold choice to stay far from the cliff of temptation.

That's how wise people live.



DAY 16

Years ago, I tapped into my Bible nerdery and tried to count all the names the Bible uses for Christians. In some verses, we are called “sinners,” “weak,” and “of little faith.” In other verses, we are called “saints,” “strong,” and “loved.”

It makes sense that we’d be called bad names and good names. We are sinful in our behavior. At the same time, we are perfect in Christ.

What shocked me, however, was the ratio of bad names to good names. If any unofficial tally was correct, I found 72 bad names in the New Testament, and—you ready for this?—610 good names! 610! For every one time God called us “sinners,” nine times he called us “saints”!

I wonder if this is what Paul alluded to when he wrote, **“Where sin increased, grace increased all the more”** (Romans 5:20 NIV). Yes, our sins are many, but his grace is more. Much, much, much more.

So, as you go through the daily battle to deny yourself and honor

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God with your body, feel free to call yourself a sinner. The Bible does. But, if you want to be biblically balanced, then call yourself all the other names too—

Holy. Pure. Loved. Chosen. Justified. Sanctified. Redeemed.
Blameless. Spotless.

That's not me trying to make you feel better about yourself. That's God trying to remind you of your incredible identity in Christ Jesus.



DAY 17

I wanted to write a devotion about Collosians 3 short enough to fit on a single page. But when I tried to pick out a favorite, I realized that you would be more blessed by God's words than by mine. So, I'll stop writing and let you ponder and pray about this. Enjoy!

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:1–5, 12–13).



DAY 18

Nothing is genuinely empty. When you empty a water bottle, your water bottle is now full of air. The human heart is no different. When you take one thing out of it, something else inevitably fills the void. As you fight to empty your heart of the influence of pornography, it's essential to fill your heart with something else.

Think about the new “space” you have when you take porn out of your life. Suddenly, there's extra time, mental space, and energy you used to spend on porn. Psychologists call this “free energy.” They also say that if you don't use your free energy, it could cause anxiety. And when we are anxious, we tend to go to what is familiar.

But you didn't need a psychologist to know that. God told you that. And so, today is the day to fill the void. You're already filling it with repentance and prayer; now fill it with God's Word. Go read a chapter of the gospel of Luke. Read Ephesians 2, Romans 8, or 1 John.

Fill your heart with God's words of grace,

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So porn will simply have no space.

“Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word” (Psalm 119:37 NIV).

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8 NIV).



DAY 19

Porn is a lonely thing.

Sure, some people watch porn with others, but those people are rare. The average porn viewer is watching alone. On the other hand, one of the best deterrents from porn use is being around other people.

Many Christians try to convince themselves that “God is watching.” They hope it will deter them from using porn. That strategy might work, but it also ignores what God has said. God inhabits his people. The Bible calls Christians “the body of Christ.” Do you want to be around Christ? Be around other Christians.

Now, if you’re ready, please tell someone about your struggle. Go to your pastor, go to a trusted friend. Confess and be healed.

If you’re not ready to share just yet, then make time to be with other Christians. You don’t have to talk about porn; just talk about Jesus. Strengthen your relationship and get to know the body of Christ.

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When other Christians know you and love you and pray for you, that's Jesus knowing you and loving you and praying for you. And that can destroy temptation.

“Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22 NIV).



DAY 20

The wisest man who ever lived (except for Jesus) warned his children to avoid sexual temptation.

“I was watching the gullible people. Among the young men I noticed a youth without sense. He was crossing the street near her corner, strolling along the road to her house, in the twilight, in the evening of the day, when the darkness of the night was coming. Suddenly a young woman meets him. She is dressed like a prostitute with a scheming heart!

She grabs him and kisses him. With a brazen face she says,

“Come, let’s drink our fill of love until morning. Let’s enjoy making love. Look, my husband isn’t home. He has gone on a long trip. He took a bag of silver with him. He will not come home till the next full moon.”

She deceives him with enticing words. With smooth lips she seduces him. He follows right after her, like a steer going to slaughter, like a deer prancing into a noose, until an arrow pierces its liver, like a bird darting into a trap. He does not

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realize this will cost him his life.

Now, you sons, listen to me. Pay attention to the words from my mouth. Do not let your heart turn in her direction. Do not wander on her pathways, because she has brought down many victims. Those she has killed are countless. Her house is the road to the grave. It goes down to the chambers of death (Proverbs 7 selected verses EHV).

Don't walk in the direction of porn. Stay as far away as you can. Run from anything that could give you access to porn. Because once you're close, it's often too late.



DAY 21

Cut it out!

When Jesus taught on sexual sin, he said that if your eye causes you to sin, you should gouge it out, and if your hand causes you to sin, you should cut it off. Was he talking about lust and masturbation? He probably was.

So, does that mean dismemberment is in your future? No, because Jesus also commanded us to protect and cherish our bodies. Besides, if you were missing a hand, would that honestly help you avoid sin? No, your hand is not the culprit. But there are things in your life that if you cut them out, you would be less tempted. Jesus teaches that if something causes you to sin, get rid of it!

Does that mean charging your phone in the kitchen at night? Does that mean moving your home office to the dining room table? Does that mean getting rid of Instagram so you can't see things that would lead you to lust? Does that mean getting accountability software on your devices?

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In Jesus' mind, getting rid of temptation is more critical than having body parts! What can you "cut off" today to make your fight against porn a little easier? Do it right now!

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:27–30 NIV).



DAY 22

“War is hell.” That’s what William Tecumseh Sherman said about the American Civil War. I’m sure you can think of many reasons why that’s true, but here’s the question: If war is hell, why does anyone do it?

That’s what people were asking about a hundred years after the Civil War in America. People are still asking that question.

Maybe G.K. Chesterton can help. He wrote, “Hatred is created by [war]; hatred does not create it. Love creates it—some kind of affection or desire.”* Chesterton argued that a soldier would not endure the hell of war to attack something he hates, but he will go through hell to defend something he loves.

The Apostle Paul agrees. He wrote, **“But you, man of God, flee from all of this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses”** (1 Timothy 6:11–12 NIV).

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He said the fight is “good,” literally, “wage the beautiful war.” Paul knew that living a Christian life can feel like a hellish fight. But he knew that it was worth it because of the One we love. Long before your battle began, Jesus already died that you might take hold of eternal life. That’s something and Someone to love!

So, fight for what you love, your Baptism, Jesus’ declaration that “It is finished,” and the sure promise of eternal life.

*London Illustrated News, No. 3743, vol. CXXXVIII, January 14, 1911.



DAY 23

“I know it when I see it.” That’s what Justice Potter Stewart said in 1964 when he tried to define hard-core pornography.

Porn can be challenging to define. If porn has desensitized your mind, it’s even harder to distinguish. Which images are OK and which are not?

The Bible takes a different tactic. When it comes to sexual immorality, it doesn’t get too precise about a line. It says, “Regardless of where the line is, you should be nowhere near it.”

Satan often tries to fill the void of porn in our lives with something that isn’t strictly porn but might as well be. It might look like social media. It might look like something that’s “part of the plot” of a show or movie. It might be merely pictures, not videos. Don’t fall for this! It’s a trap and a trick!

Remember Christ who gave himself up for you to make you completely clean, not just “a little less dirty.” Remember the love you have for God and other people as you stay as far away from lust as you can!

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“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (Ephesians 5:1–3 NIV)



DAY 24

Have you ever heard of “decision fatigue?” It’s the psychological term for how our brains “wear out” after a day of work, just like our bodies. If you’ve ever eaten a half (read: whole) tub of ice cream at 10pm, you have experienced brain fatigue.

It turns out decision fatigue can be a significant factor in whether or not we give in to the temptation of pornography. Maybe the end of a stressful day, perhaps a few drinks to lower your inhibitions, or maybe just the fact that you’ve been “clean” for a couple of days or weeks can make you more susceptible to temptation.

God understands. Galatians 5 contains a famous Bible passage about the “fruits of the Spirit.” A lesser-known section of that same chapter lists the “acts of the flesh.” They are the antithesis to the fruits of the Spirit. The first three acts of the flesh are “sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery.” Debauchery is that thing you do when you are tired of having self-control, and you give in to whatever is tempting you at that moment.

Can you see how sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery might be linked? So, another strategy in your fight against porn is

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managing your decision fatigue. Get a good night's sleep, don't drink alone, and make sure to keep yourself away from temptation when you're vulnerable. Every day, spend some time with Jesus. In him, your flesh, and all its acts, has been crucified.

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:19, 24 NIV).



DAY 25

Tell someone.

You've been at this for a little while, and even though it still probably feels difficult, it's time to tell someone if you have not already. Often the most significant factor in whether or not someone beats their pornography addiction is whether or not they confess their sin to another Christian who responds in compassion.

But confession is more than just an excellent idea for your success in this fight. It's essential to your health. Refusing to confess can make you sick. David talked about this in the Psalms, saying that his bones wasted away when he did not reveal his sins!

Think that's just hyperbole? It's not. Research has shown that physical health and emotional health are deeply connected. Many people who battle porn alone experience higher levels of stress, which can damage their physical health.

It's time to tell someone. Do it for your spiritual health. Do it for your physical health.

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“Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:1–5 NIV).



DAY 26

Confessing porn use and receiving forgiveness is not easy, but it usually is quick. The moment we confess and repent, Jesus is right there to remind us he already paid for that sin. But restoring relationships with those we have knowingly or unknowingly hurt through our sin is a long, sometimes painful process. Endurance comes only from one source—Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 (NIV) says regarding Jesus, **“For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame.”** He focused on the joy that his suffering would achieve.

You can look beyond your current struggle to the joy that will be revealed in this life or the next. There will be opposition from Satan and even from the people with whom you have damaged or destroyed your relationships. After all, they have sinful natures just like you.

But the same love that moved Jesus to die for us now moves us patiently to endure resistance without losing heart. Jesus alone can give you the desire and ability to heal relationships.

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Can we guarantee a positive earthly outcome? No. Spiritually healthy recovery in Christ is always possible, but earthly reconciliation may not be possible. Either way, Jesus will use the process to continue building our faith and bring you closer and closer to him until you see him face to face in eternity.



DAY 27

Hebrews 12:1 compares Christian living to running a race in front of a crowd. It reminds me of Olympic marathons. Spectators in the stadium follow the progress of the runners on the giant scoreboard. Anticipation builds as the athletes approach after nearly 26.2 grueling miles. Finally, the lead runner enters the stadium to thunderous cheering. What an adrenaline rush!

Recovering from porn use and restoring relationships is a long exhausting effort. You are in a grueling race with eternal consequences. You'll likely hit a wall at some point and doubt you can keep going. Yes, the strength to carry on comes from Jesus, but often he uses other believers from the past and present to encourage us.

Look at some of the folks in the stands. (That's what Hebrews 11 is all about.) There's Abraham, who slept with his wife's servant rather than trust God. The prostitute Rahab is holding up a banner with your name on it. That guy raising the roof is King David, the adulterer and murderer. All were sexual sinners who came to rely on God's forgiveness and his power to heal their relationships.

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A support network of fellow believers can help strip that 100-pound sack of shame off you and break the ropes of porn that used to tangle you up.

Your pastor, a Christian counselor, and trustworthy Christian friends can all provide invaluable encouragement, accountability, and insight. Also, check out the Recover resources at Conquerors through Christ. Let's run with perseverance.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1 NIV).



DAY 28

Natural disasters destroy structures in seconds that took months or years to make. Tornadoes, earthquakes, wildfires, and the like quickly wreak havoc. Clean-up and recovery take enormous amounts of time.

So it is with the emotional disaster porn brings. The devastation can be total; recovery, humanly speaking, can be painfully slow, if not impossible. With Jesus, all things are possible, but that doesn't make them easy or quick.

As you consider the effort needed to restore and repair your relationships, cling to your Savior in prayer, Word, and Sacrament. Only Jesus' love for you lasts long enough to provide the stamina you need. Only Jesus' love will motivate you to steer clear of future temptations so that you avoid doing more damage with an aftershock. Only Jesus' love will give you the humility to ask for forgiveness and seek the help you need.

Satan is real and your sworn enemy. He does not want you to recover nor your relationships to survive. He craves strife and distrust. Only prayer, Word, and Sacrament can equip you for this

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part of your battle. Seek to build or rebuild Christian friendships that will encourage your daily struggle. And remember, the deeper the broken relationship, the deeper the hurt, and the greater the time and effort needed to restore.

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14–15 NIV).



DAY 29

Our natural inclination is to believe that smooth sailing in life is evidence of God's love, and tough times are evidence of his anger. The Bible instructs us that often the opposite is true. The trouble that drives us closer to God is robust evidence of his love. It's not payback for our sins; Jesus already paid that price in full. Instead, it is correction and discipline that makes our faith purer and more vigorous. It prepares us for challenges we have yet to face.

Navigating the stormy waters of recovery and reconciliation will challenge you. You can't know how people will respond to your recovery journey. Though God forgives unconditionally, everyone else struggles. Trust that has been destroyed can only be rebuilt a tiny bit at a time. There is no timetable. People heal in different ways and at different rates. A desire for restored closeness may not be reciprocated for a long time, if ever.

Cling to your Savior's promise that the painful aspects of recovery from porn use will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace. But don't try to dictate to God how that harvest ought to look. God allows some couples to reconcile and find peace; others find their peace separately. We may have to find a "new normal" in

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our earthly kinship with friends and family. Finally, remember that ultimately all our interactions will be completely healed and restored in eternity.

“Do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son... No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:5–6, 11 NIV).



DAY 30

We are often hindered by short-term vision, especially in spiritual matters. Though we speak about eternal salvation, we have trouble taking our eyes off the pain, fears, and doubts that plague us now. Satan gets us to worry about our earthly failures and shortcomings.

We need to refocus. The process of recovery benefits from a longer view. It helps to “begin with the end in mind.”

When we remember that Jesus has already done the heavy lifting, that is, paid with his life to guarantee our eternity with him, we have a better perspective. Our hopes, desires, fears, doubts, and anything else connected with our earthly life are negligible compared to the joy and glory of eternity.

The pressure to be perfect is gone. If we live for Christ’s glory, any earthly outcome can be joyful. While a sound, restored marriage or friendship is indeed a great blessing, it is for here and now. We will only fully experience joy when Christ perfects all our relationships in heaven.

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So let's strive to forgive as we have been forgiven. As far as it depends on us, let's seek to live in harmony with one another. Such actions may allow us to give the reason for the hope that we have. And let's thank our savior whose love and presence we'll enjoy now and forever.

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18 NIV).



DAY 31

“Cancel culture” is a modern form of ostracizing someone, either online by blocking their social media or in the real world by firing them or cutting ties with them. Sometimes it’s because of unacceptable actions, and sometimes it’s because they expressed an unpopular opinion. I’m not saying I’m always a fan of this. It’s often immature and unloving. But there is a good cancel culture that has been a valuable part of Christianity for a long time.

While our culture, and sadly often churches, “cancel” people who have done terrible things, Jesus cancels the terrible things people do. Jesus cancels sin, but he forgives people that cancel culture ostracizes. While news reports choose never to forget a high-profile failure, Jesus chooses never to remember.

Christians are part of Jesus’ culture. We have no right to cast people aside for things they’ve done or the opinions they’ve expressed. We condemn their sins, just like God does, knowing that God nailed those sins to a cross when Jesus died, and they are sunk in a grave never to return. Then we love the saints who are sin-free thanks to Jesus. We love them because Jesus has canceled our sin and forgiven us!

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Your conscience and God's word tell you that porn use is an unacceptable action. Maybe it has canceled relationships for you. But it has not canceled your relationship with Jesus. Jesus took that sin to the cross, and it is canceled.

“[Jesus] forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross”
(Colossians 2:13–14 NIV).



DAY 32

In high school, we called it “popcorn.” That was the codeword. Just take the -OPC- out of popcorn, and you have what it really meant. Some guys downloaded hours of pornography, and they would invite others to watch it with them. “Hey, you guys want to go get some popcorn?”

Giving pornography a nickname is a dangerous game. It makes it seem humorous and harmless. The fact that young men extended invitations for “popcorn” showed that it was becoming socially acceptable. If the social stigma of porn is gone, then all that’s left is the appeal.

For high school boys, there was plenty of appeal. Pornography is exciting and attractive. Sin so often is, but that doesn’t make it safe or harmless.

The fact that we used a codeword also shows that we knew it was wrong. And no matter how socially acceptable it may be, every misuse of God’s gift of sex is harmful. We try so hard to make sin seem harmless and acceptable, but sin is always disgusting no matter how it looks.

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Jesus didn't die on the cross because you like popcorn. He died on the cross because you like pornography—because you like sin. Look at the cross and see that what harm can do. Look at the cross and see something genuinely worthwhile. There is a God who loves you enough to die for you, wants you desperately, and forgives you.

Don't be deceived. Pornography, like all sin, is always harmful.

“Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed/ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters”
(James 1:14–16 NIV).



DAY 33

The golden calf was a symbol of fertility. Do you know how people worshipped something that symbolized fertility? It was pornographic.

In the Old Testament, God warns his people not to worship at Asherah poles. Those were also pornographic. Asherah was a fertility goddess, a highly sexualized idol. Some believe that Asherah poles were shaped like gigantic phallic symbols.

In Acts 19, a crowd is obsessed with Artemis of the Ephesians. That was also porn. Artemis was a false fertility goddess depicted with many large breasts covering her torso.

Ancient people worshiped the human body. They wanted to medicate the unrest they felt in their hearts. And where did they turn? Not to the God who was good to them and gracious about their sins. They became impatient and impulsive. They turned to fake, unsatisfying images of sex.

What primitive, degenerate people! Can you imagine a culture so foolish that they'd turn to fake sex to feel some meaningful

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connection? Perhaps you don't have to imagine. Our own culture makes the identical mistake, with screens in place of statues.

No matter what culture you're from, the objects we lust after will never love us or satisfy us. Only Jesus can.

Pornography is an ancient issue. The accessibility of pornography is new, but not the sin. So, what's God been doing the whole time? How has God been responding to such pornographers for centuries? God has continued to love his adulterous people with an undeserved love. And he has continued to give us his Word. Pornography is not the only thing that's more accessible than ever. God's word is too.

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5 NIV).



DAY 34

The God who guided Moses through the Red Sea and empowered Joshua to topple the walls of Jericho is the same God who **“goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”** (Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV). God knows the battle you are enduring and the effort it takes. He hasn’t left you to struggle against pornography alone. He is right here, right now, fighting by your side.

When you have to travel the rough and challenging places, God will be alongside you to show you how to walk in a way that honors and glorifies him. God won’t necessarily remove the obstacles that tempt you, but by his Word, God will show you the roadblocks and provide a way around them without ever letting temptation overwhelm you. **“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it”** (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV).

Our God is the one from Psalms. **“For the Lord will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance”** (Psalm 94:14

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NIV). He will not abandon you because you keep giving in to the same temptation again and again. He loves you. He died for you to buy you as his own at a great price. He wants you to trust him. He wants you to be free.

The God who paid for your sin at the cross and set Christ free from the grave still calls you his child today. God's Word helps you focus your mind on the truth that God walks with you, and the God beside you calls you pure.



DAY 35

When lust fueled my mind and self-gratification was the goal, my actions often pursued ways to achieve that goal. My view of women, my understanding of sex, and my approach to life were about me and my pleasure. My thoughts led me down dark and dangerous paths in shameful directions, making regrettable choices.

What we think about eventually becomes what we do. God knows this, so he said, **“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things”** (Philippians 4:8 NIV).

God’s Word presents me with the amazing truth of who God is and the humbling reality of what I am. It shows me where my thinking is wrong. It takes my mind off of King Me and puts it squarely on King Jesus.

When you fix your mind squarely on the Savior, you will no longer be put to shame by your lustful, sexual impurity. Fix your mind on Jesus, whose focus was never on himself but always on

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helping others. Fix your mind on the Father who loves you as his child, provides for you, helps you, teaches you, forgives you, and welcomes you.

When you're recovering, you're someone who needs to be loved. But when you're recovering from sin, you have guilt and people you've hurt. Maybe you don't have the romantic relationship you want. Perhaps you feel like you don't have anyone who understands you. You do. You have a Savior who was tempted in every way, just as you are. He understands your struggle, and he loves you still. There is nothing you could ever do to make him love you less than he does right now. There is nothing you could ever do to make him love you more. Fix your mind on him and his unprompted love. What you think about will eventually become what you do.



DAY 36

“Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your life, that vanishes like vapor, the life which God has given you under the sun, all the days that vanish like vapor, for that is your portion in life and your reward from all the hard work at which you worked so hard under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:9 EHV).

What do sex and McDonald’s hamburgers have in common?
Absolutely nothing.

McDonald’s is the same for everyone.

- It’s cheap.
- It’s not good for you.
- It’s mass-produced.
- You get it in a hurry between more important tasks.
- It’s made better by cheap toys.
- You are a recipient of it, not a contributor to it.

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Whenever sex shares these attributes with McDonald's, it is not a cause for rejoicing. Cheap sex, in any form, may give you momentary pleasure, but it will never leave you filled with joy. It's a shame that cheap sex is popular because God invented sex so that you could be very, very joyful. God designed sex to be like an organic meal that two people craft together.

- It requires an investment.
- It's wholesome.
- It's a unique and personal experience.
- It takes time.
- There's no need for gimmicks.
- You are a contributor to a team project.

When sex is one invested spouse serving another something that delights them, then you've made some love to be joyful about.



DAY 37

“See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land” (Song of Songs 2:11–12 NIV).

God intends sex to lead to rejoicing. Thinking about sex, engaging in sex, every aspect of it should be like an over-the-top happiness scene from an animated movie. Flowers burst into bloom; birds sing, while rainbows and sunshine sparkle on delightful woodland creatures who frolic to soaring orchestral tones.

That’s actually how the Bible talks about sex all through the book of Song of Songs. If you’re unfamiliar, Song of Songs is a section in the Bible about a couple that’s elated about having sex with each other. Sort of.

Song of Songs is that and more. That excited couple is also a metaphor. The author uses the passion between lovers to show how God feels about being close to you and how you can feel about being close to God.

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Perhaps your experience with sex doesn't feel like an orchestra of sunny woodland bliss. But that's what makes Song of Songs so perfect. You see, the goodness and rejoice-worthiness of sex is an example of the goodness and rejoice-worthiness of God's love for you.



DAY 38

You can rejoice about sex, no matter who you are or what your relationship status is. I promise. That's not to say that the devil won't use sin to mess sex up for you. He does this to everyone, with everything, as often as he can. The devil hates the idea that even in a messed-up, sin-infected world, God can still deliver some goodness and joy to people through things like sex.

The good news is that God is wiser than the devil and more powerful too. He's ten steps ahead, all the time. That's why he can offer you a way to rejoice in sex no matter how you've felt about it before.

It's called "redemption." Redemption is the work of God through his Son, Jesus. It's a word that means "to buy back," and that's precisely what Jesus does. He buys back those things that the devil has stolen.

Has the devil stolen potentially good sexual relationships from you? Jesus buys that back.

Has the devil stolen sexual time from you through abuse or

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addiction? Jesus buys that back.

Has the devil stolen sexual hope from you through trauma? Jesus buys that back.

It cost him his life, but Jesus has purchased everything the devil wants. Now Jesus, in all his grace, has printed across your entire existence one life-changing word: “MINE.” You can rejoice in sex because Jesus is, even at this very moment, redeeming your sexual story.

“They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted” (Isaiah 62:12 NIV).



DAY 39

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:7 NIV).

Judgment is an intimacy blocker. It’s challenging to be close to someone if you think they might reject you because you’re not good enough. That’s why judges in a competition strive to remain impartial and impersonal. They don’t get too close to the people they’re judging.

Loving relationships, especially between Christians, are intimate. They work best when two people unconditionally accept one another. The love has to flow both ways. Unconditional acceptance permits people to be vulnerable, and vulnerability allows people to be intimate.

The very first instance of sexual sin was evidence of this. It took place in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve ate the fruit God had commanded them not to eat, **“the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.”** (Genesis 3:7 NIV). In one moment, Adam and Eve realized that the other person could see them, judging them. They knew they were no longer

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receiving unconditional acceptance. Talk about an intimacy killer!

On the spot, God gave Adam and Eve good news. It's the same good news he provides to you. Even though they had sinned, God wasn't going to judge them. God would exact all his justice on his Son, Jesus, so that he can accept you without condition, no matter what. God's unconditional acceptance allows you to be intimate with him. It's also a great example of how you can share intimacy with others, no matter what kind of relationship you have.



DAY 40

“I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me.

Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom—there I will give you my love. The mandrakes send out their fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, both new and old, that I have stored up for you, my beloved.” (Song of Songs 7:10–13 NIV)

The winks and nods around wedding nights have got to stop. I’m not trying to be prudish. I’m saying just the opposite. I’m saying that people, and especially Christians, should talk about wedding night sex and (s)expectations much more and much more clearly. These conversations should happen because it is a rare celebration when life and choices and chance all combine so that a husband and wife have sex for the very first time on their wedding night. It’s such a special thing that we should talk about it.

If you’ve ever lamented the fact that fewer and fewer couples have this gift to give each other, consider the thought that they might not

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be working hard to save sex for marriage because nobody seems to celebrate when they do.

Jesus celebrates it. He also celebrates when it isn't the couple's first time. He also celebrates when the groom used porn for years and is working to develop a sexual relationship exclusively with his wife. Because for Jesus, through his forgiveness, it's just like the first time.

That's worth celebrating.

Conclusion

Congratulations, you've done it! By reading this devotional you have gained a total understanding of purity and will live a life that never again has to contend with the effects of sin on sex.

That's not true, of course. Lovely to think about, but that's what heaven is for, I suppose.

You have done something, though—and something good. You've spent time with God's good gift of sex, instead of spending time with the devil's evil, hollow-hearted, bait-and-switch of selfish lust. For each devotion, each Bible verse, and each meditative thought you enjoyed with this book, you've invested yourself in seeing and comprehending something beautiful, powerful, and exciting.

Congratulations!

The team at Conquerors through Christ loves you and is grateful that you've even taken the time to open this resource. We're praying for you, no matter where you are in the struggle for Christ's victory in sex. We are with you, because we are all sexual beings, made by God with his dreams and ideals planted deep inside us. As you go forward from this resource, you are not alone. We march forward with you, contending against whatever temptations, regrets, and complications come, knowing that we are joined by God himself as he makes us all conquerors through Christ.

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