

Resolving Sexual Immorality

God intended sex to be for pleasure and procreation within the boundaries of marriage. But when sex becomes a “god,” it is ugly and enslaving. Heaping condemnation on those who are enslaved is ill-advised. Increasing shame and guilt will prove counterproductive and will not produce good mental health, Christian character, or self-control. Guilt does not inhibit sexual arousal, and may even contribute to it and keep us from using our sexuality wholesomely as God intends. Instead of condemnation, I would offer the following steps for those who have a distorted sexual development.

1. Face up to your present condition before God.

There are no secrets with God. He knows the thoughts and intentions of your heart (Hebrews 4:11-13), and you never have to fear rejection by being honest with Him and confessing your sin and need. Confession is simply being truthful with God and living in continuous agreement with Him. The opposite of confession is not silence, but rationalization and self-rejection—attempting to excuse or deny your problem. This will never lead you to freedom. Your journey out of sexual bondage must include God in an honest and intimate way.

2. Commit yourself to a Biblical view of sex.

All sexual expressions were intended by God to be associated with love and trust which are necessary to ensure good sexual functioning. Recent evidence indicates that trust may be one of the most important factors determining orgasmic capacity in women. To ensure trust means that we never have the right to violate another person’s conscience. *If it wrong for your spouse, it is wrong for you.*

Too many wives tearfully have asked if they have to submit to their husband’s every request. Usually their husbands are asking for some kinky expression hoping to satisfy their lust. Some actually appeal to Hebrews 13:4, saying the “*wedding bed is undefiled*” and claiming that the Bible permits all expressions of sex in the marriage. No four words are taken out of context more than these. Finish the verse: “...*for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*” The idea is to keep the wedding bed undefiled with no adultery or fornication. A wife can meet the sexual needs of her husband, but she will never satisfy his lust.

A Biblical view of sex is always personal. It is an intimate expression of two people who are in love with each other. People who are in bondage to sex or are bored with it have depersonalized it. They become obsessed with sexual thoughts in hope for more excitement, and because obsessional sex is always depersonalized, boredom increases and obsessive thoughts grow stronger. Fantasizing another as a sex object, as opposed to seeing them as a person created in the image of God, is precisely the problem.

A Biblical view of sex is also associated with safety and security. Outside of God’s plan, fear and danger can also cause sexual arousal. For instance, sneaking into a porn shop will cause sexual arousal long before actual sexual stimulant is present. And

voyeurism is very resistant to treatment because arousal is not just from the viewing - the act violated a forbidden cultural standard. The emotional peak is heightened by the presence of fear and danger.

Such people must separate fear and danger from sexual arousal. A Biblical view of sex includes the concepts of safety and security, so that the maximum fulfillment comes from a complete surrender of oneself to another in trust and love. Some people buy the lie that forbidden fruit is the sweetest, denying the crucial importance of the relationship between a man and a woman in finding pleasure and fulfillment in sex.

Why are we continually looking for the ultimate sexual experience? Why are we not looking for the ultimate personal experience with God and each other, and letting sex within marriage be an expression of that? Good sex will not make a good marriage, but a good marriage will have good sex.

3. Seek forgiveness from all those you have sexually offended.

I encourage every man to go to his wife and ask forgiveness for any violation of trust. Our wives can sense when something is wrong; do not let them guess. They are actually a critical part of our living sexually free in Christ. Men are incredibly vulnerable sexually and need the caring support and discernment that a loving wife can provide.

4. Renew your mind.

Abnormal sex is a product of obsessive thoughts. These thoughts become self-perpetuating because of the physical and mental reinforcements that comes from each mental perception and repeated action. The mind can only reflect upon that which is seen, stored, or vividly imagined, and we are responsible for what we think and for our own mental purity.

Paul writes in Colossians 3:15, *“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”* How are we going to let Christ rule in our heart? The next verse says, *“Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

Just like Jesus, we must stand against temptation with the truth of God’s Word. When that tempting thought first hits, take it captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy Word.....Thy Word have I treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.” (Psalm 119:9,11)*

Winning the battle for our minds is often two steps forward and one step back. Then it is five steps forward and one back, until there are so many positive steps forward that the “one back” is a fading memory. Remember, you may despair in asking God to forgive you when you fall again and again, but He never despairs in forgiving.

5. Seek legitimate relationships that meet your needs of love and acceptance.

People with sexual addictions tend to isolate themselves. We need each other; we were never designed to survive alone. Few seek Christian help because of the shame. Consequently, they stay in bondage. When we are satisfied in our relationships, deep legitimate needs are met. Finding fulfillment in sexual expressions instead of relationships will lead to addiction.

6. Learn to walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 says, “*Walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.*” A legalistic walk with God will only bring condemnation, but a dependent relationship with Him with His grace sustaining us is our real hope.

Admittedly, sexual bondage is a difficult bondage to break, but every person can be free from Satan’s grasp in that area. The terrible cost of not fighting for that freedom is too high a price to pay. Your sexual and spiritual freedom is worth the fight.

7. God designed the sexual relationship to be enjoyed within the context of marriage.

To experience fulfillment, sex must be kept within the guidelines God has given in His Word. Satan strives to distort our God-given desires in order to destroy God’s purpose and our fulfillment in marriage.

8. There are at least eight ways Satan attempts to destroy God’s purpose for sexuality in our lives:

Each of these is condemned in Scripture and brings negative consequences when practiced.

- Lust
- Incest
- Homosexuality
- Rape
- Adultery
- Harlotry
- Defrauding (arousing another’s sexual desires outside of a marriage relationship)
- Fornication (general term for sexual promiscuity)

9. Violating God’s moral guidelines brings negative consequences.

Some of the consequences we may experience include guilt (leading to distance from God), conflict with one’s spouse, feelings of rejection, inability to show sympathy, lack of respect for one’s spouse, lying to cover moral failure, distrust in the marriage, inability to communicate, financial loss (Prov. 5:10, 6:26), inability to respond physically in marriage, and calamity (2 Sam. 12:14).

10. Emotional intimacy in a marriage cannot occur if there is unresolved moral failure from the past.

Whatever the past moral failure has been, if left unresolved it will affect one’s ability to love and respond to one’s spouse. Unresolved past moral failure brings inner guilt and dirty feelings into a marriage relationship, preventing a couple from

experiencing emotional oneness. For example, if a husband has not spiritually resolved his involvement in pornography, he will not be able to emotionally love his wife above a 3% level and she will feel unloved, used, and dirty whenever they come together physically. However, when a husband resolves his moral sins and focuses every desire and thought on his wife, they will emotionally bond and her feelings of being unloved, used, and dirty will disappear.

11. Moral failure must be resolved spiritually.

It is important to spiritually resolve each area of moral failure in order to be free from the guilt of past sin. In addition, one must receive God's forgiveness for those past failures. When each area of moral failure is acknowledged and genuine repentance occurs in the heart, the result is that a person becomes free to respond as God intended in life and marriage. Genuine repentance involves a transformation of the heart, which removes the consequences of that sinful behavior.

12. God designed marriage for two individuals to become one emotionally, spiritually and physically.

Most couples go through marriage never knowing the joy and fulfillment that could be theirs if they were only clean from the guilt, shame and consequences of their past moral failures. God has provided a way for us to be free. It's exciting to observe couples as they confess the failures of the past and genuinely repent. Those who do will feel the difference in the emotional closeness of their marriage. After going through the cleansing process, most couples say, "We've never experienced this type of emotional intimacy in our entire marriage!" Freedom can be obtained and emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy regained by genuine cleansing of the heart.

Introductory Prayer

"Lord, I acknowledge that I have violated Your moral values by yielding to sinful passions and activities that have brought guilt, shame and distance from You. I have given ground to the enemy through my sinful desires, thoughts and actions, damaging my effectiveness as a believer.¹

I want to acknowledge and renounce each area of desire, thought and action that has violated Your moral values. I want Your cleansing so that I can be free from the enslavement of each moral sin. Please reveal to me each way I have violated Your moral principles in my desires, thoughts and actions. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen."

Concluding Prayer

“Lord, I confess each of my moral violations and ask for Your complete cleansing from these sins. I ask You to take back ground that was given to the enemy through my moral failure. I yield every desire, thought and action to Your control I choose to be set free from sin and be committed to being an instrument of righteousness.”¹

I choose to forgive myself for each area of moral failure causing me to experience guilt, and the consequences of my sin. I am willing to accept the emotional pain and consequences I have caused myself. My desire is to give each area of my heart to You so that I will be free from the enslavement of moral sin and experience the fulfillment of Your plan and design.² I desire that You control every area of my life. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.”

Step 1 Make a commitment to the guidelines of moral purity given in Scripture.

- Guard each moral thought and desire. (*Proverbs 7:25*)
- Obey God’s Word and seek His wisdom. (*Prov. 7:1-5, Prov. 2:12-17*)
- Don’t spend time with immoral people. (*Proverbs 5:8*)
- Never listen to the enticing statements of a person who is or wants to be immorally involved. (*Proverbs 2:16, 5:3-5, 7:15,17-21*)
- Flee moral temptations. (*1 Corinthians 6:18*)
- If married: Rejoice in the spouse God has given you and let him/her meet your sexual needs. (*Proverbs 5:15-18*)
- Be intoxicated by your spouse’s love. (*Proverbs 5:19*)

Step 2 Be prepared to defeat each moral temptation.

Be assured that temptations will come in the areas of your weaknesses and originate from one of three sources: the world, the flesh, or the devil. If one is tempted by the flesh, the problem stems from a failure to yield that desire to the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 6:11-13 gives the solution to yield each area to His control. If one is tempted by the world or the devil, Scripture and prayer will destroy the temptation. Pray the following prayer aloud each time you are tempted personalizing it to fit your situation.

“I am a child of God and I want all of my thoughts, desires and actions to please Christ. I renounce the enemy’s desire for me to focus my thoughts and desires on _____ (name the particular moral failure you struggle with) leading to guilt, insecurity in my spouse, and lack of emotional intimacy in our marriage. I choose to yield every thought and desire to the control of the Lord Jesus Christ and to allow Him to direct them so that they please Him and bring security to my spouse.”

Follow the prayer with a verse of Scripture such as Job 31:1, *“I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look on a woman to lust after her in my heart”* (Female translation of Job 31:1 ... *“I have made a covenant with my hearts desire, not to yield to the desire to lust after another man in my heart.”*) Place the prayer on a 3x5 card and keep it with you. Whenever you are tempted by the world system or the enemy, read the card immediately. You will be surprised at how rapidly the desire for the temptation will disappear.

Step 3 Be accountable to another individual other than your spouse.

Meet weekly to answer specific questions regarding your areas of personal struggle. Sample questions may include the following:

- Have you had lustful thoughts for more than four seconds at a time? If so, how long did they last?
- What was the source of your temptation? Was it the world, the enemy, or your own flesh?
- Have you been with a member of the opposite sex in a way that could be considered inappropriate?
- Have you exposed yourself to any form of pornography?
- Have you lied about any of the above?

Rev. Jeffrey Pokone, has been a Biblical counselor and Center Director with the Indiana Biblical Counseling Center since 1998. He counsels in the following areas; marriage, trauma and abuse, sexual addictions, spiritual conflicts, and relationships. Jeff has been married for over 30 years to his wife Suzette and has five adult children.