

Proverbs 6:20-35 Commentary

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Proverbs 6:20 My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;

- Pr 1:8,9; 7:1, 2, 3, 4; 23:22; 30:11; Deut 21:18; 27:16; Ep 6:1

Note: All verbs in **bold red** indicate commands, not suggestions!

My son - see Pr 1:8, 9. Here Solomon is giving his **son** that "man to man" talk we all dreaded as young men. Oh, how we "dirty old men" need to hear and re-hear the wise words of counsel in this present evil age modern era, for we live in a time like no other in the way our eyes are bombarded with "bait" of beautiful women which can act like a "lure" tempting us (James 1:14) to secret sins (cp Nu 32:23) in our thought life (2Co 10:4, 5, Php 4:8. We need to hear what King Solomon says to his **son**.

Bridges - The authority of parental instruction is again enforced (Pr 1:8-9, 4:1)—God never intended young people to be independent of their parents. Instruction from every quarter is valuable. But from parents it is authoritative—the ordinance of God. Therefore let it not be a matter of occasional regard. ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

It is noteworthy that in Proverbs 5-7, each of the warnings against sexual misconduct is prefaced by an admonition to **pay attention to the Word of God** (Pr 5:1, 2; 7, 8, Pr 6:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; Pr 7:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, cp Jesus' words Mt 4:4). The Truth of God's Word heard and heeded (James 1:22, 25) keeps us from believing the lies of the world, the flesh and the devil (Jn 8:44, 2Co 11:3, Rev 12:9) that the "grass is always greener" on the other side of the fence. Remember "lust" begins with thoughts (and images that convey thoughts) and the best defense is a good offense, taking in Truth to counter and expose the Lie (Jn 8:31, 32, 36, 17:17).

It makes me think of the **shield** the Word provides, Solomon writing that...

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. (Pr 30:5, cp Ps 119:9, 11)

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MOTHER'S LAW -As I read Proverbs 6:20, which refers to "the law of your mother," I recall some of my mother's unique "laws" that have helped me many times.

The first I call "the law of the warm kitchen." When we got home from school on a cold winter's day or when the holidays rolled around, the kitchen was always so warm from baking and cooking that the windows were steamed. It was also warm with a mother's love.

A second law I call "the law of a mother's perspective." When I would come to her all upset over some childish matter, she would often say, "Pay no attention." Or, "Ten years from now you'll have forgotten all about it." That helped me put things into perspective.

But above all was my mother's "law of faith." She had an unswerving trust in God that kept her strong and gentle amid fears, pressures, and sacrifices of the war years and of the 1950s.

Mom's been with the Lord now for many years. Yet I'm still grateful for her "laws," because they have helped me through many difficult days.

Christian mother, you too are writing "laws" for your children. Are they worth remembering? - D C Egener [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

I love you, Mother, for your quiet grace,
For that dear smile upon your kindly face,
For marks of toil upon each loving hand
That worked for me ere I could understand. - Simpson

No man is poor who has a godly mother. - Abraham Lincoln

Proverbs 6:21 **Bind** them **continually** on your **heart**; **Tie** them **around** your **neck**

- Pr 3:3; 4:6,21; 7:3,4; Ex 13:16; Deut 6:8; 2Co 3:3

Bridges - Bind it continually about thine heart (Pr 3:3, 4:21, 7:3), as thy rule; about thy neck, as thine adorning (Pr 3:3, cp Job 31:36). ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Bind them continually on your heart - The **heart** is the "control center" of our being and is in continual need to nourishment by the Word of God (cp also the need for continual watching Pr 4:23).

The command to bind God's Word to various parts of the body (Pr 3:3; 6:21; 7:3; Deut 6:8, 9) was taken literally by the Pharisees and gave rise to the so-called "phylactery" (Mt 23:5), a small leather case containing four portions of the Old Testament (Ex. 13:1-10, 11-16, and Deut. 6:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 9, 11:13-21) written on parchment. When attending public prayers, the orthodox Jew tied one phylactery to his forehead and the other to his left arm. They also put a phylactery at the door of their house. "**Phylactery**" is a word that comes from the Greek and means "to watch over, to safeguard." It was their belief that wearing God's Word like an amulet would protect them from evil. This practice is not what Solomon means by binding them on one's heart. The picture is that of "fastening" God's Word to our heart, something that can only be done figuratively as when one reads, heeds, memorizes and meditates on God's Word of Truth and Life. In so doing, the student "binds" the Word to his or her heart.

I like what **John Piper** says in his practical message on **Thy Word I Have Treasured in my Heart..**

I believe that the Bible teaches us to memorize scripture the way an ant gathers food in summer: because it is so valuable and will be needed in the winter months. "[The ant] prepares her food in the summer, and gathers her provision in the harvest" (Proverbs 6:8). Memorizing scripture is not a discipline for its own sake. It is because the scriptures are a treasure and will be needed before the day is done to help you escape a sinful attitude and live a life that glorifies God (cp Ps 119:9,11). (Dr Piper's message is highly recommended - I would encourage you if you have time to listen to the audio Mp3 version as it is even better than the transcript - [Transcript = Thy Word I Have Treasured in my Heart](#); or the [Mp3 Audio Version](#))

Bind ([07194](#)) (**qashar**) basically means to fasten or tie something to something else usually by means of a cord, rope, string, thread, etc. We see the meaning illustrated in Ge 38:28 where Zerah's hand was marked by **tying** with a scarlet thread. Rahab was instructed to **tie** a scarlet thread to her window to mark it (Josh 2:18). God instructed Israel to bind his laws (words) to their foreheads and hands (Deut 6:8). Thus, their thoughts and actions were to be governed by his word. In the present context the binding is figurative but is no less real, for the point is that these commandments and teachings are to be so intrinsically a part of who we are that they control what we think, say and do (out of your mouth comes that which fills the heart!). We "bind" them by reading them, memorizing them, meditating upon them and obeying them.

Wiersbe has an interesting explanation of tie them **around your neck** writing that...

God's truth should also control the neck, because a man might be tempted to turn his head and look at a beautiful woman for the

purpose of lusting (Mt 5:27, 28, 29, 30). He may not be able to avoid seeing the woman the first time, but it's looking the second time that gets him into trouble.

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F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - If the son addressed here is bidden to thus care for the words of his parents, how much more should we ponder those of God as given us in God's blessed Book.

When thou walkest, it shall lead thee. — There is a little circle of friends whom I know of who read this book of Proverbs through every month for practical direction on the path of life. A West-countryman said of this collection of wise words, "If any man shall maister the Book of Proverbs, no man shall maister he." Take for instance the weighty counsels of the first five verses. How many lives would have been saved from bitter anguish and disappointment if only they had been ruled by them! Let every young man also ponder the closing verses. Let us all meditate more constantly on the Word of God.

When thou sleepest, it shall watch thee. — The man who meditates on the Word of God by day will not be troubled by evil dreams at night. Whatever unholy spirits may prowl around his bed, they will be restrained from molesting him whose head is pillowed on some holy word of God. And on awakening, the Angel of Revelation will whisper words of encouragement and love.

And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. — The heart is accustomed to commune with itself about many things, but when the mind is full of God through his Word, it seems as though the monologue becomes a dialogue. To all our wonderings, fears, questionings, answers come back from the infinite glory in words of Scripture. Some wear amulets about their necks to preserve them; but the Word of God is both a safeguard and choice treasure.

Proverbs 6:22 When you [walk](#) about, they will [guide](#) you; When you [sleep](#), they will [watch over](#) you; And when you [awake](#), they will [talk](#) to you.

- Pr 2:11; 3:23,24; Ps 17:4; 43:3; 119:9,11,24,54,97,148; Da 11:18, 19, 20, 21

Bridges - Let the law be the friend for all times and circumstances—a guide by day(Pr 3:22, 23, 4:12)—a solace by night(Pr 3:24, Ps 63:5)—yea—a friend for thy waking moments (Ps 139:17-18). Take care that nothing hinders thy early converse with this faithful counsellor—before the world comes in, as the best means of keeping the world out. 'Happy is the mind, to which the word is an undivided companion.' ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Proverbs 6:23 For the [commandment](#) is a [lamp](#) and the [teaching](#) is [light](#); And [reproofs](#) for [discipline](#) are the [way of life](#)

- **Commandment** - Ps 119:98, 99, 100, Is 8:20; 2Pe 1:19
- Rev 2:5
- **Reproofs** - Pr 5:12; 15:31; 29:15; Lev 19:17; Ps 141:5, Heb 12:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
- Pr 3:18; 4:4,13; 15:24; Je 21:8

Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Ps 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

Psalms 119:130 The unfolding of Thy words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

2 Peter 1:19 (note) And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

For - **Always pause and ponder this strategic term of explanation** - Ask (and attempt to answer) at least one simple question - **"What is the writer explaining?"** Remember that when you find a **"for"** at the beginning of a verse, it is usually (not 100% - check the context = **Keep Context King**) a **term of explanation**. In Proverbs 5-7 there are several **"for's"** for you to pause and ponder. (Pr 5:3, 20, 21, Pr 6:23, 26, 34, Pr 7:6, 19, 26). As an aside there are over 9000 occurrences of for in the NASB, which should give you many opportunities to practice (and make "perfect") the discipline of interrogating the Biblical text (See **interrogate with the 5W/H questions**).

Bridges - Such a lamp—so full of light—in this dark world (Ps 119:105) is an inestimable gift. Its reproofs of instruction—as the

discipline of our wayward will—are to us as the way of life. (Ps 19:11, 2Ti 3:16-17, cp Mt 7:13-14) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

In his excellent book (which I highly recommend) [My Heart for Thy Cause](#), written especially to pastors, **Brian Borgman** writes these words regarding guarding against sexual impurity...

as a preventive discipline, the man of God should load his conscience with the warnings of Scripture and the issues at stake. Owen also gives this advice, when he says, 'Load thy conscience with the guilt of it.' First, there is the holy Law of God. The seventh commandment forbids adultery (Ex 20:14). It is such a heinous sin that God continually illustrates spiritual apostasy in terms of adultery.

Next, bring the nature of the sin into the light of the gospel, thinking deeply upon the abundant mercy and grace God has shown in the gospel. Meditate upon His love and faithfulness. Ponder afresh the greatness of forgiveness and salvation. Owen's words are priceless, 'If this make it not sink in some measure and melt (i.e., bringing the lust to the gospel mercy of God) I fear thy case is dangerous.' Consider the threats against adulterers (1Co 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19, 20, 21; Ep 5:3, 4, 5). Consider the danger of tasting that forbidden fruit and then being enslaved and hardened, entering the road to apostasy (Heb 3:12, 13, 14). Meditate upon the terrifying words, 'Depart from me you worker of iniquity!' Cling to God's promises to supply His people with grace to fight the good fight. The author heartily recommends John Piper's *Future Grace* (Sister, OR: Multnomah, 1995) especially chapter 27 on lust (Multnomah, 1995).

Not only does the conscience need to be loaded with the warnings and promises of Scripture, but it also needs to be loaded with the issues at stake. Randy Alcorn gives a number of consequences to sexual impurity: (This list is an edited compilation of a seminary chapel session given by Randy Alcorn at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Or)

- Grieving the Lord who redeemed us, thus displeasing the One whose opinion matters most.
- Dragging Christ's precious name in the mud, giving the enemies of God an occasion to blaspheme.
- Having to face the Lord Jesus at His judgment seat, being accountable for the sin and its consequences.
- Experiencing severe Divine discipline.
- Adding my name to the list of disgraced leaders, held in contempt by the church and world.
- Causing untold suffering to those around me, in the congregation and others, much like Achan.
- Loss of respect from my precious wife.
- Loss of trust from my life partner.
- Untold hurt to my precious children.
- Betrayal of my office, and total loss of credibility in ministry, nullifying all labor.
- Shame to my family (the cruel comments which would come to my wife and children).
- A bloodied conscience, and a sin which would ever be before me.
- Disqualified from the calling and ministry I love.
- Years of training, education, experience, all wasted for a moment of pleasure.
- Irretrievable damage to my witness, especially among loved ones.
- Being a stumbling block for the gospel to those in my community.
- Possible physical consequences (gonorrhea, herpes, AIDS, the infection of my spouse, etc.)

The consequences are painful just to think about! If the mere thinking on these things brings pain, what would be the reality of it! A man who loses his moral integrity loses all respect and confidence. Make no mistake about it, falling into sexual immorality is to ruin one's life and ministry.

Proverbs 6:24 To [keep](#) you from the [evil woman](#), from the [smooth tongue](#) of the [adulteress](#).

- Pr 2:16; 5:3; 7:5; Eccl 7:26

The **evil woman** is on the prowl and she knows how to say the words you want to hear!

As **Thomas Manton** warned...

All sins are rooted in love of pleasure. Therefore be watchful.

Comment: And I would add that many of these **sins are rooted in the pleasure of "love"**, albeit the vapid, empty, selfish, self-serving, narcissistic eros love that the world espouses. Look out! Don't be deceived. Sin is pleasurable but it neglects to tell you the price for what is only passing pleasure. See He 11:25-note)

Bridges - Specially valuable is this lamp and light in sensual temptation (Pr 2:10-11, 16-19, 5:1-8, 7:1-5). Those who choose their own light and wisdom, are sure to fall into a flattering snare (Pr 2:16, 7:21). The neglect of parental warning will furnish in the end bitter matter for unavailing repentance. (Pr 5:11-13) Oh! let the Father's instruction be heard betimes—"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. (Ps 119:9, cp Pr 5:11, 17:4)" ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Proverbs 6:25 Do not [desire](#) her [beauty](#) in your [heart](#), [Nor](#) let her [capture](#) you with her [eyelids](#).

- **Lust** - 2Sa 11:2, 3, 4, 5; Mt 5:28; James 1:14,15
- 2Ki 9:30; Song 4:9; Is 3:16

Bridges - Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. 26. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. 27. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? 28. Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? 29. So is he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Desire - Lxx uses **epithumia** (word study) which in this context speaks of evil lusts (some lusts in Scripture are good - Lk 22:15). Compare other uses of epithumia in the context of evil desires = Ro 1:24 [note], Col 3:5 [note], 1Th 4:5 [note], 1Peter 2:11 [note].

Nor let her capture your eyelids - "The 'eyes' have it" -- Watch out for the eyes men! This is Solomon's advice. This advice is especially vital if you are in a situation where as a man you are giving counsel to a woman who is not your wife. In the first place this is probably (scratch "probably"! not the best course of action but may be unavoidable. Whenever a woman begins to relate her trials or troubles to me and I sense she needs wise counsel, I send her to my wife who is a godly counselor. If as a man you must counsel a woman, number one, make sure your door is open and your window shades are open, so that you **maintain visibility to others outside your office**. (I read once that this apparently was Billy Graham's practice.) Never (ever) physically touch a woman in private, and any/all physical contact should be in full view of others and done with utmost discretion (as brothers and sister's in Christ - I personally would shy away from the "holy kiss" in our modern culture! Ro 16:16-note, 1Co 16:20, 2Co 13:12, 1Th 5:26-note) **Pfeiffer** commenting on the ancient custom of a **holy kiss** writes that...

its character was completely divorced from the sensual. A pure display of the deep emotion of Christian love, this type of kiss remained a Christian custom until abuse and heathen misunderstanding caused the practice to be curtailed. ([Pfeiffer, C F: Wycliffe Bible Commentary. 1981. Moody or Logos](#))

And to reiterate, as Solomon warns in this passage (and remember he had lots of women's eyes to look into over his life time 1Ki 11:3), **beware of eye contact** whether it is flirtatious or inquisitive. Remember, she has eye makeup on and you don't!

Capture - This Hebrew verb **laqah** (03947) can convey the sense of to grasp or seize a person (e.g., see Ezek 8:3)

As the Puritan writer **William Gurnall** well advised...

Set a strong guard about thy outward senses. These are Satan's landing-place, especially the eye and ear. (cp Pr 4:23 -note)

Proverbs 6:26 For on [account](#) of a [harlot](#) one is reduced to a [loaf](#) of [bread](#), and an [adulteress](#) * [hunts](#) for the [precious life](#).

- Pr 5:10; 29:3,8; Lk 15:13, 14, 15, 30
- 1Sa 2:36

- Ge 39:14; Ezek 13:8

For - Always pause and ponder this strategic term of explanation - Ask (and attempt to answer) at least one simple question - "What is the writer explaining?" Remember that when you find a "for" at the beginning of a verse, it is usually (not 100% - check the context = **Keep Context King**) a **term of explanation**. In Proverbs 5-7 there are several "for's" for you to pause and ponder. (Pr 5:3, 20, 21, Pr 6:23, 26, 34, Pr 7:6, 19, 26). As an aside there are over 9000 occurrences of for in the NASB, which should give you many opportunities to practice (and make "perfect") the discipline of interrogating the Biblical text (See **interrogate with the 5W/H questions**). In this context Solomon explains the ultimate danger of making intimate eye contact.

Bridges - By vain beauty, (Pr 31:30, Ge 6:2, 39:6, 2Sa 11:2) and wanton eyes (Ge 39:7, 2Ki 9:30, Isa 3:16, 2Pe 2:14. Comp "Paradise Lost, Book 9.50.620), many a deluded victim has been brought to a piece of bread. (Pr 5:10, 29:3, 1Sa 2:26, 36, Job 31:9, 12, Lk 15:13, 30. Comp. the difference between Solomon's chaste and unholy age. 1Ki 10:21, 27 with 1Ki 12:4) Nay—so insatiable is the seducer's malice, that—like the huntsman, who never loses sight of his prey, till he has pursued it to death—she never ceases to solicit, till she has hunted for the precious life. (Ge 39:14, Jdg 16:18-21 Comp. Ezek 13:18, 20, 21) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Harlot - Is the verb **zanah** (02181) which conveys the main idea of one who commits illicit sex, as when a woman prostitutes herself and is used 4 times with this meaning in Proverbs - Pr 6:26NLT; Pr 7:10; 23:27; 29:3. Note that many of the uses are figurative and describe Israel's unfaithfulness to God and her "whoring" with pagan nations (Isa 23:17, Ezek 23:30, Nah 3:4 and other so-called gods [vain idols] - Ex 34:15, 16, Dt 31:16, Ezek 6:9, Ho 9:1)

Zanah - 83v in the OT in **NAS** - Gen. 34:31; 38:15, 24; Ex 34:15, 16; Lev. 17:7; 19:29; 20:5f; 21:7, 9, 14; Num. 15:39; 25:1; Deut. 22:21; 23:18; 31:16; Jos. 2:1; 6:17, 22, 25; Jdg. 2:17; 8:27, 33; 11:1; 16:1; 19:2; 1 Ki. 3:16; 22:38; 1 Chr. 5:25; 2 Chr. 21:11, 13; Ps. 73:27; 106:39; Pr 6:26; 7:10; 23:27; 29:3; Isa. 1:21; 23:15, 16, 17; 57:3; Jer. 2:20; 3:1, 3, 6, 8; 5:7; Ezek. 6:9; 16:15, 16, 17, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 41; 20:30; 23:3, 5, 19, 30, 43, 44; Hos. 1:2; 2:5; 3:3; 4:10, 12, 13, 14, 18; 5:3; 9:1; Joel 3:3; Amos 7:17; Mic. 1:7; Nah. 3:4.

All uses of **Zanah** in Proverbs...

(Prov 6:26) For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.

(Prov 7:10) And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.

(Prov 23:27) For a harlot is a deep pit And an adulterous woman is a narrow well.

(Prov 29:3) A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad, But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth.

Zanah is rendered in the **NAS** as adulterous(1), become a harlot(1), commit adultery(1), commits flagrant harlotry(1), fall to harlotry(1), harlot(22), harlot*(3), harlot's*(2), harlot's(2), harlotry(3), harlots(5), making a harlot(1), play the harlot(18), play the harlot continually(1), played the harlot(24), playing the harlot(3), plays the harlot(1), prostitute(1), unfaithful (1).

Wiersbe says that "To be "brought to a piece of bread" means to be degraded to the lowest level of poverty." Such is the value of adultery!!!

Adulteress - This feminine noun is **ishshah** (0802) the usual word for woman (Ge 2:23) but can obviously take on other meanings depending on the context - eg, widow (Ru 4:5), adulteress (Pr 6:26, 7:5), even female animals (Ge 7:2)

Hunts - The verb **siyd** (06679) means to hunt down or to ensnare and is used literally of hunting animals for food (Ge 27:3) and figuratively by the prophet Micah to describe ungodly men (Micah 7:2) and by Ezekiel of hunting lives (Ezek 13:18, 20). The picture is clear that the **adulteress** is a female on the prowl, looking for a man of weak moral character.

Proverbs 6:27 Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?

- Job 31:9, 10, 11, 12; Ho 7:4, 5, 6, 7; James 3:5

Bridges - 27-28 Yet neither the present miseries of this wretched course, nor the certain horror of the end, can draw away the foot, that has dared to tread the forbidden path. Self-confidence sees and fears no danger. 'I can look to myself, I need not go too far, and I shall get no harm.' Did the infatuated sinner but open his eyes, he would as soon expect to take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned; or to go upon hot coals, and not be burned; as to go wilfully into sin, and to escape the punishment. (Ex 20:14, 17,

Lev 20:10; 2Sa 12:9, Mal 3:5. Even as a sin of ignorance it was liable to be visited. Gen 12:15-18, 20:1-6; 26:10. So strictly has the holy Lord fenced his own ordinance!) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Can a man take fire in his bosom - A rhetorical (for effect) question, the answer of which is obvious. The answer of course to this part of the question is "yes" he can do something so foolish, but read on.

And his clothes not be burned? - The answer of course is "no". He will be burned, which is a metaphor for complete ruin, for that is what literal fire does to a structure and in this case what the fire of adultery does to a man's life! (cp Pr 5:5, 11, 23, 7:23)

As **G K Chesterton** said...

All healthy men, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, know that there is a certain fury in sex that we cannot afford to inflame, and that a certain mystery and awe must ever surround it if we are to remain sane.

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A DEADLY PET - Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? - It was a shocking tragedy. A 15-year-old boy was strangled by the family's pet. The slender youth had gone to an upstairs bedroom to play with an 11-foot Burmese python. Nobody is sure how it happened, but the supposedly tame snake turned into a killer that took the boy's life.

Why play with a powerful snake that can turn into a horrifying agent of death? Why even bring such a potentially dangerous creature into the house? This news story changes the old adage "Don't play with fire!" into a flashing warning signal.

This warning applies even more to the hazard of playing with sin -- some "small" thing that seems merely to give pleasure without hurting anyone. At first it seems harmless, but feed it, let it grow, take pride in it, and a trifling sin can become a terrible tragedy that "brings forth death" (James 1:15). The writer of the Proverbs applied this truth to the area of sexual purity. "Do not lust after her beauty," said Solomon (Pr 6:25).

As believers in Jesus Christ, we must check even the smallest evil the moment it springs up in our heart by confessing it to the Lord and asking Him to help us overcome it. Toying with a pet sin is like playing with a deadly pet. Sooner or later it will turn on us.-- Vernon C. Grounds [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

We can't afford to play with fire
Nor tempt a serpent's bite;
We can't afford to think that sin
Brings any true delight.-- Anon.

The most deadly sins do not leap upon us, they creep upon us.

Proverbs 6:28 [Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?](#)

The **1828 Webster's Dictionary** says scorched means **to affect painfully with heat**.

[Click link to Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#) -- highly recommended because many of the illustrations are taken directly from God's Holy Word...

"It is reported that Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary contains the greatest number of Biblical definitions given in any reference volume. Webster considered "education useless without the Bible". Noah Webster believed that the Bible and Christianity played important roles in the lives of a free people and its government. "In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed... No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people... " ([Reference](#))

Sure a man can walk on hot coals if he's stupid, but Solomon says he is going to get burned. Pay your money and take your choice. You will reap what you sow. If you want to get really burned, help yourself!

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The Scorpion's Sting - Aesop tells the ancient story of a boy hunting for locusts. The lad had caught quite a few when he saw a scorpion. Mistaking it for a locust, he reached out his hand to take it. The scorpion showed his stinger and said, "If you had but touched me, my friend, you would have lost me, and all your locusts too!"

There are some things you cannot embrace without losing what you have in the process.

King Solomon used a word picture of fire instead of a scorpion as he warned his son against the dangers of sexual sin (Pr 6:27, 28, 29). As a wise father, he wanted his son to know that in this wonderful, dangerous world there are not only flowers and songbirds but also scorpions and fires.

Solomon's warnings in the Proverbs were not just about sexual immorality. Together with the rest of the Bible, such insights help us to understand the wisdom of an eternal God who loves us far more than our own mothers and fathers do. His Word also points us to the One who can help us even if we have "grabbed a scorpion" or "built a fire in our lap."

Life offers us choices. Christ graciously offers us forgiveness for what is past, and wisdom for what yet lies ahead. —Mart De Haan
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Search out in me all hidden sin,
And may Thy purity within
So cleanse my life that it may be
A temple wholly fit for Thee. —Smith

The lessons of life are best learned when Christ is your teacher.

Proverbs 6:29 [So](#) is the one who [goes](#) in to his [neighbor's wife](#). [Whoever touches](#) her will not [go unpunished](#).

- Ge 12:18,19; Lev 20:10; 2Sa 11:3,4; 12:9,10; 16:21; Je 5:8,9; Ezek 22:11; Mal 3:5
- Ge 20:4, 5, 6, 7; 26:10,11; 1Co 7:1

So - Solomon draws a conclusion from his fiery metaphors. Just as when a man touches fire or hot coals, he is burned, so too will he be scorched for touching the fiery coals of sexual infidelity. King David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22, had first hand experience with this proverb (see Nathan's rebuke and prophecy in 2Sa 12:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

Bridges - Sin and punishment are linked together by a chain of adamant. 'The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.' (Comp. Job 31:12, James 1:14-15) He cannot afterwards plead the strength of the temptation. Why did he not avoid it? Who that knows how much tinder he carries about him, would wilfully light up the sparks? Heedlessly to rush into temptation, is to provoke the corruption, which is too ready to stir of itself. Beware of suspicious familiarities on the borders of sin. (Ge 39:10, Ro 13:13, 1Thes 5:22) The temptation to criminality in this atmosphere is fearful.10 Whosoever toucheth shall not be innocent. (Ge 20:6, 39:9, 1Cor 7:1) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Touches ([05060](#)) (**naga'**) is the verb used in (Ex 19:15) where it is translated '**do not go near**' (a woman) (NASB) and more interpretatively by the **NIV** (accurately, which is not always the case with this dynamic paraphrase!) as "**abstain from sexual relations**" (Ex 19:15NIV). Clearly in context and based on other uses of **naga'** Solomon is alluding to sexual contact.

The Septuagint (LXX) translates **naga'** in this verse with the Greek verb **hapto** which means to cause burning to take place (to light or kindle a fire) and came to have a literal meaning of to mean to touch or take hold of (Jn 20:17, Lk 7:39). **Hapto** was also used figuratively and euphemistically of **touching** a woman (ie, sexual intercourse as in 1Cor 7:1, and is also used this way in the LXX translation of Ge 20:6.

In Ruth 2:9 (note) the kinsman redeemer Boaz speaks to Ruth the Moabitess words that convey **a sense of protection** (a godly trait all husbands should seek to emulate) using **naga'** (LXX again uses **hapto**) in a context which clearly alludes to the propensity for sexual assault which would be likely to occur to a foreign woman in a field occupied by a group of hot, sweaty young men in the days of the Judges (cp Jdg 21:25-note; Ru 1:1-note).

It is interesting to observe the final NT use of the Greek verb **hapto** in 1Jn 5:18 where it conveys the sense of "to lay hold of or grasp in order to harm." The believer belongs to God and God protects His children by limiting Satan's power (Job 1:12, later he allows Satan to touch Job [Job 2:4, 5, 6], but He still limited Satan's power for His purposes which are always for good and never for evil [cp Ge 50:20, Ro 8:28, 29-note]. Beloved, to counter **fear** nourish and build your **faith** (Col 3:16-note) in the Father's sovereignty which is an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinite sovereignty and let your **faith** in such a faithful God counter any **fear** you might have of the Adversary [1Pe 5:8-note, cp 1Jn 4:4]. Remember, **faith** is the antidote for **fear** [cp Ep 6:16-note] so in order to strengthen your faith lay hold of the truth in Ro 10:17-note) (See related resource - Fear, How to Handle It)

Will not go unpunished - Solomon alludes to the eternal law of sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7 = STOP being deceived - by your flesh [Jas 1:14-note], the Devil [Re 12:9-note], the world [1Jn 2:15, 16, 17] and sin [He 3:13-note] because God promises = Gal 6:8NLT, Jas 1:16-note, cp Job 4:8, Pr 1:31, 22:8, Ho 8:7, 10:13; Paul speaks of primarily of good sowing in 2Co 9:6)

Sow a thought, and you reap an act;
Sow an act, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.
—Samuel Smiles

And just in case you are so foolish as to think that you have gotten away with sexual infidelity and your "sly" unfaithfulness to your marriage covenant partner (see marriage covenant), take note of the aged Solomon's wise warning in Ecclesiastes 8:11, 12, 13).

Richard Sibbes "Satan gives Adam an apple, and takes away Paradise. Therefore in all temptations let us consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose."

Proverbs 6:30 Men do not [despise](#) a [thief](#) if he [steals](#) to [satisfy himself](#) when he is [hungry](#);

Stealing food is a sin but pales in comparison to another man's wife!

Bridges - Sin and punishment are linked together by a chain of adamant. 'The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.' (Comp. Job 31:12, James 1:14-15) He cannot afterwards plead the strength of the temptation. Why did he not avoid it? Who that knows how much tinder he carries about him, would wilfully light up the sparks? Heedlessly to rush into temptation, is to provoke the corruption, which is too ready to stir of itself. Beware of suspicious familiarities on the borders of sin. (Ge 39:10, Ro 13:13, 1Thes 5:22) The temptation to criminality in this atmosphere is fearful.10 Whosoever toucheth shall not be innocent. (Ge 20:6, 39:9, 1Cor 7:1) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Proverbs 6:31 But when he is [found](#), he must [repay sevenfold](#); He must [give all](#) the [substance](#) of his [house](#).

- Ex 22:1,3,4; 2Sa 12:6; Job 20:18; Lk 19:8
- Mt 18:25

Bridges - Here is no excuse or impunity for the thief. The full restitution that he is compelled to make (Ex 22:1-4. Seven-fold-not literally. Four or five-fold was the extent of the Divine requirement. Comp. Luke 19:8. It means full = Pr 6:3. and satisfactory--an indefinite number. Comp. Gen. 4:15, 24, Ps 79:12, and alia passim. Comp. Job 20:18)—perhaps sweeping away all his little substance—proves that no extremity can excuse "the transgression of the law." (Comp. 1Cor 6:10, with 1John 3:4) Let him earn his bread by honest industry. If the fruits of industry fail, let him, trusting in God, seek the help of his fellow-creatures. If he have faith to trust, he will never be forced to steal. (See Matt. 6:25-33) Yet his extreme temptation renders him an object rather of pity than of scorn—Men do not despise him. ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

He must repay sevenfold - If a thief who is less despised than an adulterer experiences such thorough retribution, should the adulterer except less? Woe!

Sevenfold - TWOT concludes from the OT uses (Ge 4:15, 24; Ps. 12:6; 79:12; Pr 6:31; Is 30:26)

that this term is often used figuratively to indicate something which has or will occur in a far greater intensity than previously. Such an understanding of **shib`athayim**, however, in no way denies or forbids it signifying an exact seven times increase in any particular instance. ([Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Moody Press](#))

Proverbs 6:32 The one who [commits adultery](#) with a [woman](#) is [lacking sense](#); He who would [destroy himself](#) does it.

- Pr 7:7; Ge 39:9,10; 41:39; Eccl 7:25,26; Je 5:8,21; Ro 1:22, 23, 24

Bridges - But the sin of the adulterer claims no sympathy. His plea is not the cry of hunger, but of lust; not want, but wantonness;

not the lack of bread, but of understanding. (Comp. Eccl. 7:25-26, Jer 5:8, 21) He is wilfully given up to his sin. He destroyeth his own soul. (Lev 20:10; Pr 2:18, 19; 5:22-23, 7:22-23, Eph 5:5) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Lacking sense - Literally the Hebrew says this one "**lacks heart**"! (cp Pr 7:7, 9:4, Eccl 10:3)

There is a loss of "common sense" when one enters into an adulterous relationship as David did (and remember he would have probably been a mature man in his late 40's or early 50's, so it's not as if he did not know better - the point is that if this Acts 13:22 man could fall so could you and so could I given the right set of seductive circumstances! 1Co 10:12) in 1Sa 11:1,2, 3, 4, 5 (note one person even tried to "talk some sense" into him by telling him Bathsheba was Uriah's wife! Love may be blind. But illicit love is both deaf and dumb!). To commit this sin amounts to a "temporary insanity" (in a moral sense). Even David must have known the basic divine principle of sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7, 8) and yet his lustful thoughts overwhelmed his common sense.

Proverbs 6:33 [Wounds](#) and [disgrace he will find](#), and his [reproach](#) will not be [blotted out](#).

- Pr 5:9, 10, 11; Jdg 16:19, 20, 21; Ps 38:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; 51:8

Bridges - He gets a rankling wound upon his conscience (Ps 32:3-4), dishonor and indelible reproach upon his name. (Pr 5:9, Gen 38:23, 49:4, 2Sa 3:13, 13:13, 1Ki 15:5, with Mt 1:6, Neh 13:26. Comp. Dt. 23:2) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Wounds ([05061](#)) (**nega'**) is from the Hebrew root **ng'** which describes that which pertains when one thing (or person) physically contacts another. This word then carries the sense of a person being stricken or smitten in some way. It often refers in Scripture to a blemish that has been created by touching, most often a blemish inflicted by leprosy (Lev 13:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc "infection of leprosy"). Nega' could also describe a stroke or some other physical blow. In Scripture, it is usually God Who in some way metes out the plague or stroke. Here are some of the 62 OT uses of **nega'** - Ge. 12:17; Ex 11:1; 2Sa 7:14 - stripes; 1Ki 8:37, 38-plague, affliction, Ps 38:11; 39:10-stroke; Ps 89:32-stripes; Is 53:8 - prophesying of the stroke (Is 53:8ESV) Messiah suffered in our place!

Disgrace ([07036](#)) (**qalon**) is shame and the feeling that comes with shame or dishonor.

Here are the 17 uses of qalon in the OT - Job 10:15; Ps. 83:16; Pr 3:35; 6:33; 9:7; 11:2; 12:16; 13:18; 18:3; 22:10; Is 22:18; Jer. 13:26; 46:12; Hos. 4:7, 18; Nah. 3:5; Hab. 2:16

Reproach ([02781](#)) (**cherpah**) describes a cause or occasion of blame, discredit, disapproval, disappointment or disgrace.

Here are the 72 uses in the OT - Ge 30:23; 34:14; Josh 5:9; 1Sa 11:2; 17:26; 25:39; 2Sa 13:13; Neh. 1:3; 2:17; 4:4; 5:9; Job 16:10; 19:5; Ps 15:3; 22:6; 31:11; 39:8; 44:13; 69:7, 9, 10, 19, 20; 71:13; 74:22; 78:66; 79:4, 12; 89:41, 50; 109:25; 119:22, 39; Pr. 6:33; 18:3; Is 4:1; 25:8; 30:5; 47:3; 51:7; 54:4; Jer. 6:10; 15:15; 20:8; 23:40; 24:9; 29:18; 31:19; 42:18; 44:8, 12; 49:13; 51:51; La 3:30, 61; 5:1; Ezek. 5:14, 15; 16:57; 21:28; 22:4; 36:15, 30; Da 9:16; 11:18; 12:2; Hos. 12:14; Joel 2:17, 19; Mic. 6:16; Zeph. 2:8; 3:18.

Blotted out ([04229](#)) (**machah**) means to be erased or wiped out, something that Solomon will not happen to the foolish man who commits adultery! And yet we know that God's mercy and grace in Christ opens the door to forgiveness and thus David prayed that his sin of adultery before God be blotted out, even as he confessed and repented (Ps 51:1, 9, cp Ps 32:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7!).

Here are the 32 uses in the OT - Ge 6:7; 7:4, 23-wiping out all life by the flood; Ex 17:14; 32:32f; Nu 5:23; 34:11; Deut 9:14; 25:6, 19; 29:20; Jdg 21:17; 2 Ki. 14:27; 21:13; Neh. 4:5; 13:14; Ps 9:5; 51:1, Ps 51:9; 69:28; 109:13f; Pr 6:33; 30:20; 31:3; Is 25:6, 8; 43:25; 44:22; Je 18:23; Ezek 6:6.

Proverbs 6:34 For [jealousy enrages a man](#), And he will not [spare](#) in the [day of vengeance](#).

- Pr 27:4; Nu 5:14; 25:11; Jdg 19:29,30; Song 8:6; 1Co 10:22

For - **Always pause and ponder this strategic term of explanation** - Ask (and attempt to answer) at least one simple question - "**What is the writer explaining?**" Remember that when you find a "**for**" at the beginning of a verse, it is usually (not 100% - check the context = **Keep Context King**) a **term of explanation**. In Proverbs 5-7 there are several "**for**s" for you to pause and ponder. (Pr 5:3, 20, 21, Pr 6:23, 26, 34, Pr 7:6, 19, 26). As an aside there are over 9000 occurrences of for in the NASB, which should give you many opportunities to practice (and make "perfect") the discipline of interrogating the Biblical text (See **interrogate with the 5W/H questions**).

Bridges - The tremendous passions of jealousy and rage shut out all forgiveness. (Ge 34:7, 49:5-7, Nu 5:14, Esther 7:7-10, Ezek 16:38. Schultens remarks that no version fully expresses the strength of the original. Rage, 'Ignio. In loco) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

In **Song of Solomon** we read that...

Put me like a seal over your heart, Like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; Its flashes are flashes of fire, The very flame of the LORD (NIV = " love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame"). (Song 8:6)

Proverbs 6:35 He will not [accept * any ransom](#), [Nor will he be satisfied though you give many gifts](#)

- Pr 4:3; 7:13; 8:25; 2Ki 5:1; Is 2:9; Mal 2:9

No amount of money can "buy off" the offended husband.

Bridges - The face of no one who offered a ransom would be accepted. No compensation, (Ge 39:19-20) however costly, will content. Such are the many sins—the awfully destructive miseries (2Sa 11:6-24)—flowing from the breach of God's holy commandment. 'Oh! how great iniquity'—exclaimed the godly Augustine—'is this adultery! How great a perverseness! The soul, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, is thus for the pleasures of an hour given to the devil; a thing much to be lamented and bewailed: when that which delighteth is soon gone, that which tormenteth remaineth without end.' And shall not this fearful picture of sin and its consequences, (which Solomon, alas! was too well fitted to draw) teach us to dread the first approaches to danger; to close every avenue of sense to the entrance of this seductive poison; to shun all communications, that taint the purity of taste, that familiarize the mind with impurity, that give a vivid interest to associations from which a chaste imagination recoils with disgust? Let us learn to seek divine strengthening to "watch and pray" continually; and while we "think we stand, to take heed lest we fall." (1Cor 10:12) ([An exposition of the Book of Proverbs - Chapter 6](#))

Pastor Steven Cole has an excellent message that relates to the subject of sexual purity/impurity as discussed by Solomon in **Proverbs 5-7**. Take a moment and read his sermon which is in essence his personal testimony to the sufficient grace and power of God to win the battle that rages in men. To God be all the glory. Amen.

WINNING THE WAR AGAINST LUST by Steven J. Cole

I want to answer a very practical question for Christians living in this sex-saturated society: How can we win the war against lust and the overt sexual sin which results from lust? We're bombarded daily with sensuality. You can't watch TV, read a news magazine or drive past bill-boards without being confronted with blatantly sexual pictures and messages. We all know that as Christians, we are to avoid sexual immorality. The tough question is, How? Being a man, I'm writing as a man to men, although what I say has much application to women as well.

For years I fought a losing battle against lust. It wouldn't be profitable for me to go into detail describing my defeats. But so that you know that I've been there, I will say that ever since my early teens, I have been a connoisseur of fine women. Long before the movie, "10," came out, I had a habit of automatically checking out a woman's anatomy and scoring her various features. For a number of years, there were very few "Playmates of the Month" whom I had not scrutinized. I was a Christian, even a "committed" Christian and seminary student during some of that time, involved in serving the Lord. But I was defeated by lust.

I still lose an occasional skirmish. But by God's grace, for many years now, I've been winning the war. I want to tell you how. Several things have helped me move from defeat to consistent victory.

SCARED INTO HOLINESS

I got scared straight. I knew I should be holy. Years ago I yielded my life to the Lord in accordance with Romans 12:1-2. But that didn't make much difference in my battle against lust. Finally I came to a point where the Lord backed me into the corner and asked pointedly, "Do you want to be a man of God or do you want to keep messing around with this sin?" Gulp! I had to make a choice to be holy.

Theoretically, that decision is easy. But in reality, it's a fierce struggle, because, frankly, I enjoy looking at sexy women. Hormones start pumping when I feast my eyes on one of those gorgeous creatures. Besides, it's a pastime I can indulge in secretly. It's all in my head.

God used two things to show me where unchecked lust can lead, which scared me into dealing with my lust habit.

First, I was scared by the devastation wreaked in the life of a friend who was ruined by sexual sin. When I graduated from semi-nary, I checked out several ministry situations. One opportunity involved working as an associate with a man I'll call Bob who is about eight years older than I. He had founded a thriving church in Southern California and needed help with the growing demands. I was attracted to working with him because he seemed to be a deeply spiritual man. He would often get away by himself for times of meditation and prayer. His family life seemed solid. He had been married for almost twenty years and had four children, the oldest in his teens. I thought I could learn a lot about ministry working with him.

I finally decided to accept another pastorate which allowed me to preach regularly. About a year later, I had not heard from Bob, in spite of a letter or two on my part. When I mentioned it to a mutual friend, he said, "Haven't you heard? Bob left his wife and family and moved in with a woman from his church." I was dumbfounded!

A few months later I was at a Francis Schaeffer conference. I rounded a corner in that crowd of over 2,000 and came face to face with Bob. His countenance reflected his agony. We went out for coffee and he recounted the whole mess to me. It had started when he and his wife went too far as teenagers. She got pregnant and they married under pressure. He had always harbored doubts in his mind as to whether she was God's best for him. Satan used those thoughts as the crack to drive in his wedge—another woman who was "more attractive."

About three years later I saw Bob at another conference in another part of the state. He was there to counsel with one of the speakers, a well-known pastor. I'll never forget the continuing look of devastation on his face. He looked haggard and much older. I hung the memory of his face in the gallery of my mind. I stop and gaze at it whenever I'm tempted to pursue the sin of lust.

A second thing the Lord used to scare me into getting serious about holiness was my responsibility as a father and pastor. Bill Gothard has a helpful diagram showing the "umbrella of protection" which God puts over people through proper channels of authority.

He explains that if a father has "holes in his umbrella," due to sin which hasn't been dealt with, Satan can get through to those under the father's charge.

One hot summer day years ago I was pushing our first daughter in her stroller at the shopping mall while my wife was in one of the stores. The women in the mall were dressed (or rather, un-dressed) in native Southern California summer attire. One particularly delectable number walked by, and I found my eyes, true to habit, checking her out. Then I glanced down at our sweet daughter, so innocent in her first year of life. As her father, I would defend her from any foe, human or animal. The Lord stabbed my heart with the thought, "Why are you allowing the worst foe, Satan, access to your daughter through this hole in your umbrella of protection?"

As I reflected on that incident, I broke out in a cold sweat as I realized that not only my family, but the people I pastored would be vulnerable to the enemy if I didn't clean up my act. You may not be a pastor, but if you're a Christian, both believers and those outside the faith would be damaged if you fell into sexual sin. The gospel of Christ would be slandered. Realizing how my toleration of lust opened myself and others to spiritual harm scared me. I had to stop messing around with lust!

ADMIT MY SIN AND WEAKNESS

The next part of the battle strategy was to call my sin what it is: Sin! It's not just a "problem." It is disobedience to God. I had to put away all of the rationalizations which I had been using to excuse it: "I'm just a normal, red-blooded American man. My thought-life isn't any worse than any other man's. It's not hurting anyone. Besides, I'm faithful to my wife." No, I'm in disobedience to God when I entertain lustful thoughts.

Another rationalization I often used was to think that if I fed my lust a little bit, it would satisfy my appetite so that I wouldn't need more. But that was like pouring gasoline on a fire. A little bit of lust for me is like one drink for an alcoholic. It just makes me crave more. I had to make a commitment to be a teetotaler.

I've had to learn that I never will become invulnerable against lust. I've discovered that when I indulge in a particular sin, it makes me more vulnerable to temptation in that sin for the rest of my life.

For example, I've never taken drugs. You could set a grocery bag of cocaine on my desk, and I wouldn't have any problem throwing it away. But I know some Christians for whom that would be an in-credibly strong temptation, because they have yielded to that sin. Having yielded repeatedly to the sin of lust, I have to recognize that I will never become so strong that lust will just glance off me.

When-ever I get to thinking that I've finally conquered lust once and for all, I'm in trouble. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall" (1Cor 10:12).

But being vulnerable to lust and yielding to it are not synonymous. I'll never be free from the temptation, but I can be free from the sin. By constantly recognizing my weakness, I am driven to trust in the Lord, who is my strength. "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2Cor. 12:10, 9).

DEAL WITH MY THOUGHT LIFE

One of the convenient things about the sin of lust is that if you're careful, nobody else knows that you do it. Just make sure you steal your wrongful glances when no one else is watching. Don't look at the magazine rack in a store where people you know might happen by. With those precautions, you can enjoy your sin and no-body else suspects it.

But that's like tolerating cracks in a dam. It's all beneath the surface, where nobody sees it. But sooner or later, the dam will burst and cause a lot of damage. Whenever a man falls into immorality, you can know for sure that he has been tolerating the cracks of mental lust for some time before.

Someone has rightly said, "Watch your thoughts, they become words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits; watch your habits, they become character; watch your character, for it becomes your destiny." Lust must be conquered at the thought level.

In the context of talking about mental lust, our Lord said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away" (Matt. 5:29, 28, 30-see notes). Origen took this literally and castrated himself. That takes care of the sex drive, all right! But I'm not persuaded that that's what Jesus meant! What He meant is, we need to get radical in dealing with sin! I've had to get radical by ruthlessly denying myself the luxury of lustful thoughts.

This means forsaking and confessing any lustful thoughts the moment they occur. Memorizing Scripture, such as 2Corinthians 10:3, 4, 5 (see notes), which talks about "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," has helped. That way I can direct my thoughts from the lust to the Lord. I've had to guard what I look at in magazines, even weekly news magazines. I try to avoid reading detailed accounts of sexual scandals—even Christian sexual scandals! It's amazing how I can remember sensual pictures or stories years later, but I have trouble remembering a verse I memorized last week.

I sometimes tear pages out of Newsweek and throw them in the trash, because I can't read the rest of the magazine without repeatedly looking at the lustful picture. I rarely watch TV or go to movies. I had to throw out a marriage manual because I couldn't handle the explicit pictures. A few years ago when my office was at home, our teenaged neighbor girls, who were amply endowed by their Creator, were outside my study window in their bikinis washing their car. Between gazes out the window, I was struggling to put together a sermon. I finally got up and pulled the drapes, confessed my sin to the Lord, and was able to finish my sermon.

You may think that pulling drapes, tearing pages out of magazines, throwing away books, and avoiding TV and movies is a bit extreme. So is gouging out your eye. I have to deal radically with my thought life to win the war against lust.

DON'T JUST PRAY--OBEY!

Several years ago I heard about a pastor who had a terrible struggle against lust. He actually rewarded himself for finishing his sermon by going to a porno shop! Concerning his battle against lust, he made the statement, "I cannot tell you why a prayer that has been prayed for ten years is answered on the 1,000th request when God has met the first 999 with silence."

Now wait a minute! If you think about it, this man is blaming God for his own sin: "I prayed for deliverance, but God didn't answer. It's His fault!" That offers no hope to the man struggling with lust: "Keep praying, friend. If you're lucky, God will catch you before you go over the falls. But maybe not." Some help that is!

But the Bible never says that the way to deal with lust is to pray about it. It commands me to flee (1Co 6:18). It says that I should cleanse myself from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2Co 7:1-[see note](#)). It commands me to walk in the Spirit so that I won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-note). Pray, yes! But don't just pray: Obey!

God puts the active responsibility for obedience in sexual purity on me. Somehow we've gotten the mixed-up idea that actively to deny lust in obedience to the Lord involves the flesh. So we pray for deliverance and go on disobeying as if we can't help it until that magic moment happens. But Paul never says, "Let go and let God give you victory over lust." He says, "Run!" He says that the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires (Titus 2:11-note Titus 2:12-note). I need to do it and can do it! Otherwise, God wouldn't command me to do it.

Part of fleeing is guarding myself in advance. I used to play games with this. I would go into a store to look at the news magazines

(so I told myself). After a few minutes of doing that, I would find myself thumbing through Playboy or Penthouse, which were always conveniently nearby. (“How could I help it, Lord?”) But now I avoid stores where I could be tempted to browse through sexually explicit magazines. The man in Proverbs 7 (note) wouldn’t have wound up in bed with the loose woman if he hadn’t first gone near the corner where she lived (see Prov. 7:8-note).

SATISFY MY WIFE

I’ve heard Christian speakers say that one way to guard against sexual sin is to be satisfied with your wife. It’s true that being sexually satisfied with her helps me not to be lured by lust for others. But I’m uncomfortable with the approach which puts the focus on my needs rather than on my responsibility.

My responsibility as a Christian husband is not to satisfy myself, but to satisfy my wife. I’ve found that my sexual satisfaction is the result of seeking to meet her needs on every level—spiritual, emotional, and physical. When I focus on that, she responds and my sexual needs are met.

A lot of men are sexually frustrated in their marriages because they approach sex to meet their own needs. Jesus’ words about seeking your life and losing it and losing your life to find it (Mark 8:35) apply to sex in marriage. If I approach my wife to satisfy my needs, neither of us feels fulfilled. But if I work at pleasing her, then I’m deeply satisfied. The best sexual times for me are when my wife is pleased.

I’ve had to tear down my sexual expectations which were built from Hollywood and Playboy and rebuild them from Scripture. The world promotes my needs above all else. It knows nothing of the self-sacrifice which our Lord taught. Many Christians have unwittingly bought into this philosophy: “If my wife can’t meet my sexual needs, then I’ll have to meet them some other way. But my needs must be met.” But the Lord’s way is that I am to love my wife sacrificially as Christ loved the church. The blessed irony is that when I work at that, my needs are abundantly met. I can honestly say with gusto, “They have been!”

Dwight Eisenhower once said, “War is a terrible thing. But if you’re going to get into it, you’ve got to get into it all the way.” That’s true in the war against lust. You won’t win by being halfway into it. But if you’ll get into the battle all the way—God’s way, using His strategy—you can win! ([Winning The War Against Lust](#))