



# SEXUAL SIN ADDICTION PLAN

*Guard your heart above all else,  
for it determines the course  
of your life.*

**Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)**



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If you are struggling with sexual sin, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

You may know lots of other people who are struggling with some sort of sexual temptation. But deep inside it feels like they don't experience shame like you do, they're not struggling as badly, or they're not as immoral as you. On the other hand, maybe you don't know anyone else struggling with sexual sin, but you need to know there are plenty of others who are in the same boat. They may be too embarrassed or too prideful to admit it, though.

Maybe you've recently fallen into sexual sin and you're finding out how difficult it is to stop. Maybe you've struggled with it for years or decades and it's impossible to imagine life without it. Maybe you were caught, but don't understand why it's such a big deal. Regardless of why you're reading this, know you are not alone.

There are a few things you need to know about this work book and the process it will take you through up front:

1. You need to know what is meant by sexual sin. Sexual sin = Any sexual activity occurring outside of the covenant of marriage between a husband and wife. This includes: pornography, erotic fiction, sex outside of marriage, adultery, friends with benefits, sexual fantasies, etc.\*
2. You need to have a relationship with Jesus. Efforts to gain freedom without God's power are ultimately pointless. True freedom can only be found in Him.
3. You need to work through this book alongside someone who will support you in seeking freedom. All of us need community and accountability. Also, you'll be amazed at how helpful it is to be able to talk freely about your struggles with someone else. It may be difficult at first, but it will pay exponential dividends in the long run.
4. You need to be so sick of struggling with your sin that you are willing to do whatever it takes to change. You don't have to be perfect, since this will be a process. But you have to be willing to put the work in. Half-hearted answers and attempts won't do.

The purpose of this guide is for you to run to God, get to the root of why your addiction is happening, and receive healing. This can be a difficult—and possibly embarrassing—process, but it's better than the alternative: remaining a slave to your addiction. If you take the necessary steps, you can achieve victory over it. And remember, you can have victory! But it's only going to happen with God's help and on God's terms (James 4:7).

\* For questions regarding whether masturbation, wet dreams or more information on the topic of sexual temptation, we feel the entries on [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) are biblical and helpful.

Everything in this guide is based on the foundation of who God is, His purposes for relationships, marriage and sexuality, and how His boundaries actually give us freedom to enjoy the purity He intends. Having an active and growing relationship with Jesus Christ is necessary to truly gain healing over addiction. If you take the practical steps from this guide apart from God, you'll find many of them useful, but you'll miss out on the power and healing only Christ can provide. God created you, and He knows your heart and your struggle intimately. He loves you more than you can possibly imagine.

If you don't know what God has to say about sexual sin, dig into the Bible. We'll do some of this in this plan, but we can't cover everything, so read/listen to God's Word to learn beyond what this guide provides. Some commands are stated obviously, like Exodus 20:14, where it says, "You shall not commit adultery." However, you won't find "You shall not live together," or "Don't look at pornography" in the Bible. As you read God's Word, though, you gain the bigger picture of what God wants. If you know what you're working toward, you'll be able to better identify the things that sabotage your chances of experiencing God and what He wants for you in relationships, marriage and sexuality.

Meaning of Marriage by Timothy and Kathy Keller is also a great resource to gain a strong, biblical foundation for God's purpose for marriage, and how He uses it to make us more like Christ. It's easier to make impactful changes when you have a better idea of what a biblical marriage should look like!

This guide gives you concrete steps that can be taken to help you overcome your addiction, so it'll require a lot of work from you. You will look up Bible verses, answer questions, dig into your soul, write down your story, make personal steps and goals and plenty of other things. Take your time to really get to the root of what's going on inside you, go through the guide at a deliberate pace and don't give up. This is where having someone who is walking alongside you through this book is key. You're setting yourself up for failure if you think you can do this alone (Galatians 6:2).

If you haven't told anyone about your struggle, your first step before going through this guide is to confess your struggle to God and admit to Him that you want healing and need His guidance. Then confess your struggle to people who love you and are willing to support you, and work through this guide together. We all need community to help us grow.

Fight the fight! God is faithful. With His power, you CAN achieve victory!



# Why We Should Wait: God's Purpose for Sex

Our culture has given us a very broken view of what sex is and when it's appropriate. Sex is a wonderful gift from God, but it's one of the easiest and most dangerous gifts we can abuse. If sex is a gift God wants to give us, we need to be willing to wait for the right time (marriage), the right place (the marriage bed) and the right person (your spouse) to use it responsibly. Taking a gift before it's been given is stealing, and there will be consequences, because sin always takes its toll on our souls.

The desire for sex is good. Sex is pleasurable, fun, and deeply connects a husband and wife. If you want to know how God feels about sex, read Song of Songs! The Bible doesn't blush or mince words at how much pleasure a husband and wife can find in each other. It intimately describes how a woman's femininity and a man's masculinity complement one another, physically, emotionally and spiritually. In 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Paul encourages a husband and wife to devote themselves to one another and to engage in sex regularly to satisfy their passion with each other. Talk about a green light!

Unfortunately, sin perverts a good desire (connection, intimacy, pleasure) by leading to destructive behaviors (sexual activity outside of marriage). In fact, sin causes us to over-desire a good desire, meaning we want that thing more than God. This drives a wedge between us and God. When we want something more than God, our priorities are out of whack, which causes sin to grow in our lives.

If we don't have a strong understanding of God's purpose and context for sex, where did our current beliefs come from? Movies? Friends? Google? What feels good? We need to see what God says about sex and adopt his plan for it. That understanding will provide a proper foundation for us to move on to other steps.

Read Hebrews 13:4.

What does it say about marriage and the marriage bed?

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Who will God judge?

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The second part of Hebrews 13:4 focuses on how God will judge two types of people: adulterers and the sexually immoral. Adulterers are people who cheat on their spouse. “Sexually immoral” means someone who has sex outside of marriage, or someone who prostitutes one’s body for hire. You may not pay money to look at pornography, or to hook up on the first date, but a transaction is taking place all the same. Both parties are taking something that doesn’t belong to them. God intends for sex to be between a husband and wife. In a healthy marriage, a husband and wife give of themselves to each other in the marriage bed through their commitment and trust.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

What does it say about those who indulge in sexual sin? (v. 9-10)

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What does it say about our bodies? (v. 13-14)

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What does sexual immorality do to our bodies? (v. 13, 15-16)

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What does God want from our bodies? (v. 18-20)

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Read Matthew 15:19.

Where does Jesus say sexual sin comes from?

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Read 2 Corinthians 7:1.

What does God want us to do with things that defile our spirits?

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Read Proverbs 4:23.

What does God want us to do with our hearts?

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But these benefits of sex require a place of safety and commitment to truly flourish: marriage. That's why God wants us to be careful with this desire and guard it until we are committed to the other person. God places boundaries on sex because He knows how destructive it is when two people "become one," but then separate because they aren't truly committed to each other. God wants us to protect our hearts.

*In order to protect our hearts, we also must protect our eyes.*

Read Matthew 5:27-28.

What does Jesus say about our eyes?

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Read Job 31:1.

What did Job do to make sure his eyes honored God?

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Our bodies don't just belong to us. Read the following verses. Who else do our bodies belong to?

• 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

• 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Based on God's purpose for sex, how does looking at pornography, imagining sexual encounters, reading erotic literature, etc. sabotage God's intent for it?

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Whether you're having sex with another person, looking at pornography, or imagining sexual encounters, the person you're using to arouse yourself is someone else's spouse, either now or in the future. Even if somehow you meet, fall in love and get married, that person isn't your spouse right now. The same can be said of you. If you're married, you aren't treating your body as if it belongs to your spouse if you are indulging in sexual sin. If you aren't married, you aren't saving your body for your future spouse. And people in all cases are guilty of sinning against God by defiling the body He gave them.

Regardless of whether you already knew much of this information or not, this guide had to be built on God's truth. The "why" needed to be firmly established by scripture before we could move on to the "how." Now, for the good news!

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

What does Jesus do for us, even when we've been sexually immoral?

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It's not too late! God loves you! When you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He wipes out your sins. Not only that, but He also gives you power to fight back.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13.

What does this say about God's provision?

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God wants you to practice self-control. When we become a child of God and God gives us His Spirit, the fruit of self-control is a gift (Galatians 5:22-23). God commands us to have self-control over our bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6), so why would God ask us to do something unless he gives us the power to carry it out? But it doesn't always come over night. Self-control is something we need to allow God to develop in us.

Read 2 Peter 1:5-6. What does this verse say about self-control?

*With God's help as you go through this guide, you're equipping yourself to fight temptation, grow in self-control and take hold of the purity God intends for you. It's not too late. Today is the best day to move toward God with your struggle.*



## Take It To God: Build Victory on the Rock

All sin destroys our souls from the inside out. Whether it's bitterness, worry, pride or sexual sin, sin reveals areas of our lives where we seek joy/comfort/security/satisfaction/etc. from people or things other than God. Sexual sin isn't unique in what it accomplishes, but it is deeply insidious because of how destructive it is to our souls, how easy it is to fall into and how dedicated we become to hiding it. And because we go to such great lengths to hide it, it's easy to fall deeper and deeper into it. The real problem isn't that you're indulging in sexual sin. The real problem is that you're trusting in something other than God to satisfy a deeper need in your soul.

In this section, we're addressing the deeper need only God can satisfy in your soul. We'll get into what form it can take later in the guide, but be thinking through what you're feeling in your heart and why you're indulging in sexual sin to fill it. The wonderful thing about God is that He's fiercely committed to drawing you to Himself. He had to communicate what sin is in the first place (Galatians 2:19), but God must give us His desires (Galatians 5:16-17). God isn't passive. He wants to walk through this with you, so inviting Him in and trusting in His power are necessary for victory.

Read John 8:34.

"...everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." What does it mean to be a slave to sin?

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Have you experienced a feeling of being a slave to sexual sin? How so?

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*Enslavement to sin is not what God wants for you. Jesus came, died on the cross and resurrected from the grave so we could experience freedom and life to the fullest when we know Him.*

Read Romans 8:1-2.

What does God promise for those who are in Christ Jesus?

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What did Jesus set us free from?

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Read Psalm 119:45.

How does God want us to walk?

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What do we need to do to experience that freedom?

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Read Ephesians 3:12.

How does God want us to approach Him?

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*Sexual sin will never provide the freedom God bought for us through Christ on the cross.*

Sin prevents us from experiencing the joy we can only find in Him. Again, the real problem is we aren't looking to God to satisfy a need in our souls. Sexual sin is one of a million ways we can look to something other than God to find joy and fulfillment.

Think through the things that make you fall into sexual sin. Maybe you feel lonely, but an affair or looking at porn distracts you from this. But the feeling alone always comes back. Or you could be using porn and masturbation to relieve stress, but the relief is replaced by shame, making you feel worse than before.

Take some time to think through why you're struggling with sexual sin in the first place. Get past "because I'm addicted," "it makes me feel good," "my wife doesn't satisfy me" or "I don't have a wife." Pray and dive into what's really going on in your soul.

Why do you engage in sexual sin?

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Read the following set of verses. In each one, what does God promise to provide for you?

• Psalm 23:4 \_\_\_\_\_

• Isaiah 40:29 \_\_\_\_\_

• Jeremiah 29:11 \_\_\_\_\_

• Philippians 4:19 \_\_\_\_\_

• Matthew 6:31-33 \_\_\_\_\_

• Psalm 34:17 \_\_\_\_\_

God wants to provide you with everything your heart desires. He wants you to turn away from cheap thrills that fail to satisfy your soul and run to Him. And He has to be the one to provide you with the power to do this.

Read 1 John 3:1-3.

How did God show how much He loves us, according to verse 1?

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What is promised to those who hope in God?

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Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

What is God's will for you?

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Why does He call us to do this?

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Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What does this verse tell you about your temptation?

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What is God's role in helping you fight temptation?

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*God calls us to purity, values our purity, blesses our purity and fights for our purity. He's faithful, steadfast and the only true hope for overcoming any addiction. Take it to Him!*



# Confession: Bring Darkness to Light

We've spent a lot of time digging into God's Word to know why sexual sin is destructive and why all forms of it sabotage God's intent for purity, sex and relationships—especially our relationship with Him. Now it's time to make this personal for you. It's time to be honest by bringing everything to light for you, God and others.

Chances are good you've kept a lot of secrets over the course of your addiction. The longer you keep those secrets to yourself, the more power they'll have over you. James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." You won't find healing and freedom until you confess your struggles. The first step in this process is to disarm the guilt and shame of their power by confessing your secrets through writing it all down. This will probably be uncomfortable, difficult and embarrassing, but getting it all out will be therapeutic and cathartic. This step is necessary to achieve healing.

Use the pages ahead to write out your story. How did you start viewing pornography? How old were you and how long has it been happening? How have you felt since viewing? How has it changed your relationships? Have you lied to keep the secret? Have you betrayed the trust of people you love? What doubts and fears are in your heart because of this struggle?

But don't stop with the negative. Use the end of this exercise to think about what you do want, the person you want to be instead. What are your hopes and dreams for marriage? If you're married, what type of intimacy and connection do you want to have with your spouse? If you aren't married, what foundation do you want your future relationship to be built upon? Most importantly, what type of relationship do you want to have with God, free from the guilt and shame of sin weighing you down?

Bring everything to light. Go into enough detail to make sure you don't gloss over things, but don't go into so much detail that you get bogged down or it causes you to dwell on your mistakes. Let it all out.

Lined writing area consisting of multiple horizontal lines.







Hopefully writing everything out, though difficult, was a freeing experience for you. Being honest about our struggles isn't easy, but we can't keep it inside. Take some time to pray over the things you put on the last few pages. Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to wipe those mistakes clean (Colossians 2:13). You are forgiven and have a greater power within you than anything you've done can have over you (1 John 4:4). Give your mistakes to God, thank Him for His mercy and ask for His grace in combatting your addiction from now on.

Now for the next step: You have to tell people. Not everyone, but a select few you trust who can walk through this with you. Sin makes us feel like people will reject us when they find out, but the opposite is the truth. The people in your life want to be there for you. If you don't have those people, you need to pray that God would help you find stronger and more faithful friends. We need community and accountability. God gives us people to help us through difficult things like this.

Read Galatians 6:2.

What is commanded in this verse?

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What are ways people can share this burden with you?

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Read Proverbs 27:17.

What do good friends do for us?

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Who in your life comes to mind when you read this verse?

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Choose three people in your life you're going to tell. They can be peers, family, mentors, etc. Try to think of people in different walks of life and ages. The more diverse the friends are, the more perspective you'll gain. Here are two important boundaries to set, though: 1) They should be Christ followers and 2) They should be the same gender as you, unless one of the people is your spouse. You want people who are committed to you growing closer to God and the less complexity the better.

Who will your three people be?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Communicate your struggle to these people. You can do it face-to-face or have them read your confession. Either way, bring them into your story so you aren't fighting this alone.

You also need to see if they're willing to be accountability partners for you. This is a bigger commitment than "I'll pray for you," though that's still necessary and good. You want people who are invested in your heart, your healing and your holiness. Think of people who will fight for you, and alongside you.

The rest of this guide contains practical steps you can take to gain victory over sexual sin. Having your accountability partner(s) go through with you will make the process much stronger and more impactful.



## Cause and Effect: Identify What Brings the Desire

Get to the root of what causes you to indulge in sexual sin. It isn't as simple as "it makes me feel good," "I've started and can't stop" or even "I'm a bad person." All of these are excuses or self-pity. Again, your soul is experiencing a deep craving (ex. "I'm lonely and don't want to feel alone") and sexual sin is an unhealthy way you've found to satisfy that craving. If it didn't work for at least a little while you wouldn't do it. So, take time to figure out the things that bring those cravings on so you can 1) be aware of them, 2) avoid them and 3) guard your heart from temptation.

Below are some examples of emotions, situations and/or states of mind that can make you more susceptible to falling into sexual sin. Think and pray through each one and, if you feel it applies to you, write down how.

• Hungry \_\_\_\_\_

• Angry \_\_\_\_\_

• Lonely \_\_\_\_\_

• Tired \_\_\_\_\_

• Bored \_\_\_\_\_

• Stressed \_\_\_\_\_

• Other \_\_\_\_\_

When do you normally engage with sexual sin? (Ex. Morning, evening, after work, when parent/spouse/roommate leaves or goes to bed, on a business trip, a bad day, etc.)

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Where? (Ex. Your room, the bathroom, a friend's house, in a car, hotel rooms, etc.)

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How often do you fall into temptation?

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Think of your specific struggle. If it's with pornography, how do you access it? If it's sexual encounters, what sparks the desire or what avenues do you use to meet people? Filling in these categories is obvious if you struggle with pornography, but if texting gets you in unwise situations, or a magazine cover sparks a sexual fantasy, cataloguing these things is just as crucial.

• Devises (Computer, phone, tablet, console browser, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Websites (List the ones you use to find content, discover people, communicate, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Steaming sites (Netflix, Hulu, Youtube, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

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• Entertainment (Porn movies, movies or shows with sex, nudity, erotic themes, etc.)

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• Social Media (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, Sexting friends, etc.)

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\_\_\_\_\_

• Magazines \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Video Games \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Books, Comics or Other Literature \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Locations (Someone's home, parties, bars, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Try to think outside the box. If all the things you've listed are taken away, what else could you possibly use to satisfy the craving? This may seem weird, but it's better to figure these things out now to better equip yourself. Think through whatever you have access to and how it could be used against you if you're desperate.

Circle all that apply and list others if necessary:

Underwear ads

Music with suggestive lyrics

Movies with scenes that could spark your craving

Situations or things that could stimulate your imagination

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

The more thorough you are the better. The goal is to figure out anything that could potentially be a stumbling block so you can create a plan to avoid these temptations as best as possible. And this is where our next section comes in.

# Starve the Beast: Run from Temptation!

Temptation is a beast that wants to overtake you. The Bible also tells us the devil “prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). We also live in a world that tells us any sex we can get is okay. When these three forces are combined, the beast of temptation becomes difficult to fight. It’s powerful and terrifying and at this point in the healing process you aren’t strong enough to even be around it. You need to starve it first by avoiding anything and everything that can feed it. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

In the early stages of weaning off your addiction, removing the means to indulge in it is absolutely necessary. Someone who struggles with alcoholism shouldn't have liquor in the house, a person recovering from drugs shouldn't hang out with his dealer and you should remove any temptations that could halt your progress. How extreme you need to go in order to Starve the Beast depends on how deeply you're addicted to your struggle. (Tip: It's better to assume it's worse than you think. Pride is the quickest way to hamstring your plans before you even make them.) Let's look at a biblical hero who used this strategy in fighting temptation.

## Read Genesis 39.

What was the temptation for Joseph?

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What did he have to lose if he gave in?

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What was more important to him than sexual satisfaction?

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How did he combat temptation?

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What was he willing to give up to do the right thing?

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We can learn a lot from Joseph. He knew the right thing to do, had his priorities in the right place, knew the consequences of the sin before him, avoided temptation and ran from it when necessary. We may read how the story turns out and think, "But he still lost! What's the point of fighting if things still turn out poorly?" That may seem like the case at first glance, but read chapter 40 onward to see how God blessed Joseph for his faithfulness even when things were difficult.

*How will God be able to bless you if you fight, hold on and gain victory over your sin?*

## Read 1 Corinthians 6:18.

What should we do when faced with sexual sin?

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We need to be willing to do whatever it takes to flee from sexual sin. Joseph was willing to leave his coat, so what do you need to drop in your pursuit of purity? You'll see some examples of things you may or should do to prevent access and contact with things that could trigger temptation for you. These examples aren't merely ideas. They have been done by people who committed to having victory over sin, no matter the cost. They may seem extreme, but the price is worth the freedom you'll gain.

Ultimately, you want to pave the way for whatever transformation God has in store for you. Falling into old temptations and sins suffocates your ability to grow in Christ. Pray for God to renew your mind (Romans 12:20). As God transforms the way you think, it changes the things you want to view, the places you want to be, the people you want to be around and how your joy and satisfaction in Christ influences your choices.

Your life, environment and journey are unique to you, so the following is a list of suggestions; however, your accountability partners should certainly walk through this step with you. Many of these boundaries will be difficult to set, so you need people who will help you make hard choices.

Devices:

- Disable internet access on the devices you use when tempted.
  - Phone/Tablet
    - Have an accountability partner disable your internet, delete phone numbers, lock your app store, etc.
    - Delete any inappropriate photos, videos, etc. you have saved on your phone. (Your accountability partners define "inappropriate.")
    - Install accountability software.
  - Computer
    - Delete any stashes of photos or videos.
    - Be honest if you have hidden folders, saved sites, etc. Wipe the computer if necessary.
    - Don't use a computer at home for 3 months.
    - Install accountability software.
- Remove devices from the home entirely if there's no way to block internet access.

Home:

- Disable internet access at home.
- Have accountability partners change the WI-FI password.
- If internet is necessary for work or other things, only use it at work, a coffee shop, library, accountability partner's house, etc.

Streaming:

- Unsubscribe from streaming services.
- Delete apps off any of your devices.

Social Media:

- Disable accounts.
- Have accountability partners reset the passwords to accounts.
- Delete apps off devices.
- Delete contacts who cause you to stumble.

Others:

- Destroy any stashes you may have of magazines, literature, comics, ads, etc.
- Get rid of any movies with nudity, sexual content or anything that could trigger temptation.
- No using other people's computers unless they're present.
- Don't stay the night at a friend's place for a while.
- Avoid out-of-town business trips, or find a new career if your marriage is at stake.

Again, some of these are extreme examples, but the lengths to which you'll go with your boundaries needs to exceed the depths of your addiction. Go through the temptations and avenues you wrote down in the Cause and Effect section and write boundaries you'll place in your life to further aid you in Starving the Beast.

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Many of these boundaries, such as locking internet on devices are meant to be temporary. The end goal is for you to be strong enough to fight the addiction on your own. Others, however, such as getting rid of stashes and movies with nudity, deleting certain phone numbers or getting off certain apps should be permanent. You need to make serious changes to overcome your addiction. But merely walking away from these for a while won't magically fix the problem. Lots of people get clean in rehab only to revert back to old behaviors once they're out. The next section will help you combat your temptations and make key changes to keep the victory you attain.

# Attack and Defend: Be Proactive in Guarding Your Heart

Sometimes God heals people instantly from an addiction and they supernaturally lose the craving for it. More often than not, overcoming addiction is a process that requires time, energy and effort. If you're going through this guide, chances are pretty good God has the latter in store for you. This can be frustrating, but God uses this process of fighting for our souls, guarding our hearts and seeking holiness to strengthen us in ways we can't imagine until we experience the victory. Give the situation over to Him and trust in His power as you persevere and fight the fight.

What are your habits? When you get home is starting up your computer the first thing you do? When you feel bored do you pull out your phone? When you feel sad do you try to be by yourself? When you check in to your hotel room, do you turn on the TV?

This may seem like a weird way to start this process, but habits can be the keys to positive changes. Habits play a big role in whether people remain free from an addiction or fall back into it. Someone who struggles with alcohol addiction may stop drinking, but if the route home after work each day has a bar he/she used to frequent, that person would be wise in finding a new way home to avoid that temptation.

The main purpose of the Cause and Effect section is to make you aware of what causes you to fall into temptation. The purpose of Starve the Beast is to make your old habits for dealing with this temptation too difficult, if not impossible, to do. The purpose of this section is to look at your habits and make healthy changes so you don't fall back into old behaviors.

The brain has a fascinating process for forming habits, which is referred to as the habit loop: Cue, Craving, Response, Reward. A cue is something that triggers your brain of a need you want satisfied. Craving is the desire that causes you to act to satisfy the need. Response is the way you fulfill the craving and reward is the end goal of your habit.\*

Here's an example of how this can play out for someone who struggles with pornography. Sam is walking home when he sees a couple holding hands. He pulls out his phone and looks on Instagram. He begins by looking at his friends, but once he's caught up, he goes to the search section and sees an attractive girl. He puts his phone away, but he can't get her out of his head. When he gets home he goes straight to his room so he can search her again. In searching for her he sees other women, it sparks the desire and...you get the point.

Let's look at this situation with the Habit Loop as a guide. Sam was triggered when he saw the couple holding hands. Seeing this was a cue for a desire he held: connection. Whether Sam has a girlfriend or not, that's his craving and he engaged in a habit to satisfy this craving: looking at Instagram. That's his response. The reward was the feeling of connectedness he got by looking at social media.

\* All of this information is taken from Atomic Habits by James Clear. For a deeper look into habits, how they form and practical ways to form new habits, this book can be used as a resource.

But this seemingly harmless habit led him into temptation. The attractive girl on Instagram cued the same craving for connection, but his response led him to pornography. The reward from porn in this case was the same for his reward in looking at social media: to feel connected. The problem with porn is the feeling of connection is sinful and false. It's false because he has no real connection, no intimacy, no commitment to the people he views.

And this is the trap of all sexual sin, whether it be pornography, an affair or the person you create in your mind. It temporarily makes the feeling of loneliness go away, but in the long run it creates deeper feelings of loneliness because it damages your ability to truly connect in relationships.

Obviously, this story is a very basic example, but the point is to make you think about your situation, whether you're struggling with porn, adultery, sex outside of marriage, etc. What are your temptations and what are the desires you're trying to fulfill? How have you learned to respond to those desires and why do you settle for the destructive reward sexual sin provides? None of these questions are meant to condemn you, but to encourage and equip you. Your brain defaults to habits you've formed over time, so it's learned to use sexual sin as a way to satisfy a craving. The addiction has formed because sexual sin is a very effective way of satisfying that craving; but, like all sin, it has terrible consequences and will never truly satisfy you.

Think about your temptations. What are the cues that can lead your brain to want to indulge them? Try to be specific in how you outline and describe these.

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What is it you really crave when these temptations hit you? (Ex. Loneliness - to feel connected; Boredom - to be entertained; Stress - to feel relief)

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What are the bad habits you use to satisfy your cravings? (Ex. Masturbating soothes your anger; Looking at Instagram makes you feel connected; Sex relieves stress)

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How does sexual sin give you a “reward” that’s more damaging than helpful to your craving?

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In the story with Sam, remember the response that originally led him to pornography. Looking on Instagram triggered the desire to look at porn. He didn’t start looking on Instagram with that intent, but that habit led him to a more destructive one. How can this apply to you?

Do you fall into temptation after looking at social media? After watching a movie with an actor/actress you find especially attractive? After losing a sporting event or being cut off in traffic? After hanging out with a specific coworker? Think through seemingly harmless activities you do that can lead you to engage with sexual sin.

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Now we need to move to a crucial step most people miss when trying to break a bad habit: replace it with a good one. Merely saying, “I won’t look at porn” or “I won’t hang out with that person” won’t be enough. You still have the craving and you need to find a healthy way to satisfy it.

### Read Philippians 4:8.

- What does Paul encourage us to do in this verse?
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- How can you “fix your thoughts” on these wonderful things Paul describes?
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Below are some examples of how to replace bad habits with healthy ones.

- Delete Facebook and Instagram from your phone. When loneliness triggers you, get up and talk to someone about movies, sports, food or whatever interests you.
- Don’t play video games after 9 pm. Instead, get in bed and read.
- Don’t browse Youtube when you’re bored. Instead, sit down and make a list of all the good things God has done for you.
- After talking with a coworker who’s led you to sin in the past, call an accountability partner to talk through what you’re feeling.

Some of these examples may work for you. Others might not appeal to you at all. You and your accountability partners need to figure out what will work for you. Think through healthy ways to satisfy your craving and set concrete steps to make them happen.

Here are a few tips when replacing bad habits with good ones:

- Make the new habit easy to do. If it’s difficult you won’t want to do it.
- Make it satisfying. Your brain has to like the reward, otherwise you won’t want to do it again.
- Start small. If you want to be consistent you need to actually be able to do the habit.



Look at the bad habits you wrote down (bottom of page 35). Write a boundary you'll set for each and the habit with which you'll replace it.

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Finally, make a habit of replacing the lies you may believe with truth. Memorize some Bible verses that address issues you may be dealing with. Since you struggle with temptation, you could memorize 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. When you're tempted, recite that verse and pray it over your heart. If you're lonely, find a verse that reminds you of God's presence even when you may not feel Him. If you're bored, find a verse about your purpose in Christ. Pray and ask God to show you verses He wants you to internalize.

Example verses:

- Temptation – James 4:7; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; James 1:13-18; 2 Timothy 2:22; Matthew 6:13
- Boredom – Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 3:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- Loneliness – Deuteronomy 31:6; Romans 8:31-38; Psalm 25:16
- Anger – James 1:19-20; Proverbs 19:11; Proverbs 14:29
- Stress – 2 Timothy 1:7; Isaiah 40:31; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:8

What are feelings you struggle with that lead you to sexual sin? What verses will you memorize to replace the lies you may believe with God's truth?

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Now that you've figured out your triggers for temptation, have set your boundaries and set good habits to replace bad ones, you need to figure out what should happen if things go wrong and how you'll be rewarded when you're making progress.



# Discipline and Reward: What Keeps You on Track

Life is a rollercoaster of ups and downs, and the road to victory is no different. The first leg of the journey will most likely be remarkably difficult with lots of temptation, frustration, doubt, setbacks and whatever else you experience. But as you continue to fight you'll notice the lows don't go quite as low, especially as you gain the strength to fight the temptation and make healthy habits priority. To make sure you reach victory, you need to create consequences if you give in during your lows and rewards for when you're faithful despite these lows.

## Discipline

Let's get this out of the way: no one enjoys discipline. We don't like it when our actions have negative consequences. When you touch a hot stove, the pain is a reminder that you shouldn't do that again. The scabs on your fingertips are a reminder that hot stoves are dangerous, a thing to be used responsibly, or avoided at all costs. The consequences you experience from indulging in sexual sin are pain receptors for your heart and soul. When you do things that wreak havoc on your soul, God is trying to get your attention back to Him. It's easy to not want the consequences of sexual sin, but are you taking steps to stop reaching for the stove? God convicts us of sin, not to rub our noses in the mess, but to get us to run from the sin and to Him.

### Read Hebrews 12:1-12

- What's God's purpose for discipline?

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- What's the reward for accepting and learning from God's discipline?

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Proverbs 13:24 reads, "Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their children. Those who love their children care enough to discipline them." Have you ever been around children who have never been disciplined? They're insufferable! God doesn't want His children to be spoiled brats. He wants you to grow, be healthy and honor Him.

To ensure you learn the lesson and grow, you need to build in consequences into your plans. What happens if you use a friend's computer to look at porn since yours is locked down? What if you hack the security on your device so you can reinstall apps so you can hook up? What if you lie to your spouse or accountability partners?

You and your accountability partners need to set up consequences now. This way everyone has a clear idea of expectations if you slip up and they'll know what they need to do to help you. This requires humility from you (Galatians 6:2) and fierce dedication from them (Proverbs 27:17). Yes, grace is wonderful and necessary. You want to know you're loved and forgiven, even when you mess up. But you also need to commit yourself to fight for purity, and discipline is necessary to achieve this.

*There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1-4); however, you also need to pursue holiness and be held accountable for your actions (2 Peter 1:3-11).*

Here are a few examples of consequences you can build into your plan:

- If I have a software on my computer and inappropriate content shows up in a report, my computer or modem will be held by an accountability partner for the next month.
- My accountability partners can look through my texts whenever they ask. If they see I've been sexting with someone or interacting with someone who's been a problem in the past, I lose my phone for a week.
- If my accountability partners catch me lying about falling back into sin, they have the freedom to create and enforce new, more stringent, boundaries.

Look at the boundaries and goals you've set. What consequences will there be if you break your boundaries?

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## Reward

This is the more positive part to plan and it doesn't require much explanation. You need to build milestones into your plan and reward yourself for achieving them. What happens when you get to the end of the day without falling into sexual sin? Oftentimes a day, or even running from temptation in a moment, is an incredible achievement, so don't diminish it. What happens when you make it to a week, a month or a year? When have you earned the reward of having some of your boundaries extended or lifted (getting a computer back, unlocking internet/app privileges on your phone, etc.)? Take time to figure out how you get these things back. Plan celebrations with your accountability partners. Give yourself times and reasons to celebrate what God is going to accomplish in you! This will give you more initiative to keep fighting the fight.

Here are some examples of rewards:

- At the end of each day, if I haven't given in to sexual sin, I will reward myself with my favorite coffee the following morning.
- After a week, I'll have a movie night with friends.
- After 3 months, I'll get my favorite meal with my accountability partners to celebrate.
- After 6 months, I'll get access to install apps on my phone back.

What are the milestone moments in my journey and what are my rewards for achieving them?

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*Humble yourself. Lean on God's power. Look forward to the victory He'll give you and give Him all the glory for your wins!*

# Finish the Plan: Put Everything Together

If you're here, you've put a lot of work into this guide. Now it's time to put all your goals into one place so you and your accountability partners have a clear idea of how you'll move forward. Let's get to it.

What are your triggers that cause you to fall into sexual sin? (page 23)

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What triggers will you remove from your environment, devices, life, etc. to Starve the Beast? (page 28)

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What are your bad habits that lead you to fall into sexual sin? (bottom of page 35)

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What good habits will you adopt to lead away from sexual sin and to God? (top of page 38 )

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What verses will you memorize to replace lies with truth? (bottom of page 38)

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What consequences will there be if you break boundaries? (page 42)

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What are your milestones of victory and how will you celebrate these wins? (page 43)

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Remember that you can't receive true healing without God (John 15:5). He has to be the source of your hope and strength. You aren't just walking away from sexual sin. You're walking toward God. And each step you take toward Him will lead you to a new hope, a new peace, a new victory you never knew existed. You can do this! You've been prayed for in advance. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is sufficient and He is fighting for you now (Romans 8:34). God's Spirit "is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him" (Philippians 2:13).

*Fight the fight! Don't give up! Taste victory for yourself!*

# Commitment Agreement

I commit to adopt God's view on relationships, sex and marriage over my own.

I commit to having been honest about my temptations, avenues through which I feed my addiction, and triggers as I've walked through this guide.

I commit to honor the boundaries we've set up in this guide.

I commit to put in the necessary work to achieve healing in my life.

I commit to fighting the fight. This will be a long and difficult process, but the victory is worth the struggle. I won't give up.

I commit to being honest with my accountability partners about my actions, thoughts and intents when discussing my struggle with sexual sin.

I commit to tell my accountability partners if I give in to temptation and accept the consequences we've laid out in this plan.

I commit to give my failures—past, present and future—to God so I may experience His grace and can get past this sin and addiction in my life.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ commit to do all these things as I work toward overcoming my addiction, receiving God's grace and healing for my sin, and achieving the victory God has in store for me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## A Message to Accountability Partners

The person who asked you for help trusts you. You've received an opportunity to be part of what God wants to do in this person's life. So, what are the responsibilities of an accountability partner?

You're an anchor to help keep this person stable during a challenging and tumultuous time. You'll have the opportunity to

- Meet with this person regularly.
- Help them work through this plan.
- Help set concrete steps to overcome his/her addiction.
- Ask questions.
- Offer rewards and provide discipline.

Here are some tips for your role as Accountability Partner:

- 1. Be consistent.** There are countless stories of people who reached out for help, but the help tapered off over time, so the person reverted to old behaviors. If you agree to be an Accountability Partner, plan to meet regularly, and stick to that agreement. This person needs support for the long haul, so a routine is invaluable.
- 2. Be realistic.** You aren't responsible for fixing the other person. That's the Holy Spirit's job, so don't place that burden on yourself. You are a safe person to confide in, and a rock of dependability.
- 3. Show grace and truth.** With grace, you offer forgiveness, share encouragement and provide love to this person during a dark time in his/her life. With truth, you champion God's standard for sex. Use Scripture to speak into this person's situation. Love this person enough to enforce godly discipline when necessary.
- 4. Ask what needs to be asked.** Sexual sin can be an awkward and uncomfortable subject to discuss, especially for the person who's struggling. By being asked to be an Accountability Partner, you inherently have permission to get to the heart of what's going on. Don't be afraid to ask whatever is necessary to bring things to light.
- 5. Pray, pray, pray.** Again, you can't fix this person. You can ask God to do what He does best: transform lives. This guide gives practical steps that can help, but God's grace is the driving force behind their transformation. Continually put this person in Christ's hands through prayer.

These basic principles are best when combined with the unique gifts and qualities you bring to the relationship. Ask God how He wants to use you on this journey. Listen, learn, experiment, coordinate with other Accountability Partners and seek to show love to someone who's wounded and hurting.

Thank you for what you're doing! We're called to share each other's burdens, so by helping your brother/sister in Christ, you are obeying Him. (Galatians 6:2).

## A Message for Parents/Adults Working Through this Book with a Child or Teenager

If you're a parent or an adult who will work through this book with a child or teenager, thank you for doing this! It may seem like a no-brainer to you, but many adults turn a blind eye to the sexual temptations kids face. According to studies at the time this was written, the majority of kids see their first pornographic image between the ages of 8 and 11—and seeing this image, more often than not, is accidental. Our kids need us!

No child or teenager should have to go through this book alone. Honestly, we're not confident a kid or student could benefit from this book on his/her own. It requires soul-searching, honesty, discipline and a fierce devotion to being transformed by God's power. Even with experience, maturity and a fully-formed brain, that's a tall order. Again, our kids need us!

The world is a complicated place. The ideal situation is you are the parent of the child or teenager, and you have control over the environment. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Many children stumble on a parent's stash (nowadays, this is in their search history), or have family members who have unmarried sex in the home. Thank God for the things you can control in the situation, and ask for His protection from the things you can't.

The child/teenager may have come to you about the problem. You may have heard about it from someone else. You may have caught him/her in the act. Regardless of the circumstances that led to this situation, you have an incredible opportunity and responsibility to help.

Here are some tips as you journey alongside a child or teenager toward the healing only God can provide:

- 1. Show grace and truth.** Children and teenagers need to see Christ active in your life. If you've accepted God's grace for your shortcomings, you'll extend that grace more naturally. If you've built your life on the foundation of God's truth, your life, actions and especially your words will communicate that truth. Encourage, show forgiveness and love the child/teenager, but also champion God's standard for sex, use Scripture to speak into the situation, and enforce discipline when necessary.
- 2. Experiment.** If something isn't working, try something else! For example: If a teenager repeatedly disables accountability software so he/she can look at porn, then you may have to be present whenever he/she uses a computer. This isn't a fun solution, obviously, but pivot when necessary. Don't assume something will work this time if it keeps failing.

- 3. Be patient.** It's a process. The child/teenager may be gun-ho and thankful for your help one minute, then deeply resentful in the next. He/she may do well for two weeks, then relapse for the next two. Answers and honesty may pour out in one conversation, then be extracted with blood, sweat and tears in the next.
- 4. For Parents:** Decide upfront how far your household is willing to go to help your child. If you're a single parent and there are no other kids in the house, this is much easier. If not, your family as a whole will probably have to make sacrifices to help your child. This may mean unsubscribing from streaming services, no Internet in the house for three months, or less time at friends' houses. Honestly, the best level of effort is *Whatever It Takes*. Anything less than that won't be enough, so be prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of your child's physical, emotional and spiritual health. You can't control the outcome, but you can provide the best possible environment for healing.
- 5. For Helping Adults:** Determine the boundaries you'll place on the partnership, the child/teenager and yourself upfront. Focus on what you can help with, and pray about the things you can't. Ask for God's discernment in knowing what belongs in each category.
- 6. Focus on the relationship:** The child/teenager may not remember every step you take on the journey to healing, but he/she will remember if you were loving, reliable and committed. Do all you can, but remember the child/teenager is in God's hands, so don't take it on yourself to fix the person. Focus on being a Christ-like influence through the journey and you'll be on the right track.

Pray for God's wisdom, guidance, discernment, courage and hope to fill your heart so you may be the adult you need to be for this child or teenager. You can do this!



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