

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

**IMMORALITY:
SEX MISUSED**

SIN FAMILY #6

LUST
PREMARITAL SEX **ADULTERY**
IMMORALITY
PORNOGRAPHY HOMOSEXUALITY
IMMODESTY

BILL BRIGHT & HENRY BRANDT

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

*Experience
True Healing and Freedom*

BILL Bright & Henry Brandt

Foreword by Tim LaHaye

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He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

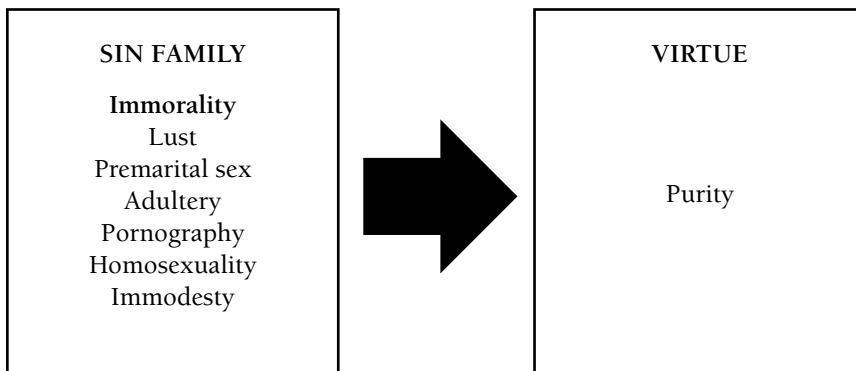
—Psalm 147:3 NIV

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IMMORALITY: SEX MISUSED



Lust is the ape that gibbers in our loins,” declares the character Godric in a novel by Frederick Buechner. “Tame him as we will by day, he rages all the wilder in our dreams by night. Just when we think we are safe from him, he raises up his ugly head and smirks, and there’s no river in the world flows cold and strong enough to strike him down.”

Godric concludes by crying out to heaven, “Almighty God, why dost thou deck men out with such a loathsome toy?”¹

Many of us might nod along with Godric, having felt inside ourselves a lustfulness that would push us toward sexual immorality. But let us be clear about one thing from the start: it is lust, not sex

itself, that is the “loathsome toy” and the “gibbering ape.” Lust is unbridled sexual desire that is directed in the wrong way.

Sex per se is not loathsome at all. In fact, when properly expressed (that is, between a man and woman who are married to each other), sex is a great thing—one of God’s best blessings to us. Sex without sin is a beautiful act of union, becoming “one flesh.” (See Genesis 2:24–25 *KJV*). An entire book of the Bible, Song of Solomon, uses sexual imagery in a positive way. Only when this good gift of sex is perverted into an evil through lustful desires do we see the multiple expressions of immorality that mar our world.

Here are a few examples of perversion:

- The college student who “hooks up” with strangers at dorm parties.
- The homemaker who costars with a neighbor in her own romantic fantasies.
- The wayward husband who knows the numbers to call-girl services in every city where he travels on business.
- The girl who loves the attention she gets by dressing seductively.
- The man who logs on to immoral websites when his wife and kids have gone to bed.
- The woman who lets herself be led to the bed of another woman whom she once considered just a friend.
- The step-father who darkens the doorway of his step-daughter at night.

These are only a few of the types of sexual immorality that sadden the heart of God.

Counselors sometimes categorize sexual sins as “victimless” sins and “victimizing” sins.² Examples of “victimless” sins include calling a phone sex line, viewing pornography, and going to a strip show. Of course, these are not truly victimless activities. For example, someone who buys pornography helps to fund the porn industry, which goes on to ensnare other people with its immoral product. But other than indirectly, these activities involve

no one who is participating unwillingly. In that sense, they are “victimless.”

Victimizing sexual sins are more dangerous, even criminal. These include such actions as exposing oneself in public, molesting a child, and touching another person in a sexual way without his or her consent. If you or someone you know is involved in any of these kinds of victimizing sexual behaviors, more than just repentance is needed. Immediate intervention may be required to prevent someone from being seriously harmed. If you are connected with a situation like this, seek legal or professional help.

Whether the sexual immorality is “victimless” or “victimizing,” it is a violation of God’s will for human beings. And since sex is such a powerful “toy” (to use Godric’s term), a pattern of sin can quickly set in. Some may call this a “sex addiction,” but we prefer to call it a sexual sin habit needing healing.

Recently, I (Henry) was asked by a Christian couple to counsel their twenty-year-old son, who has started sleeping with his girlfriend. When I asked the young man about it, he said he knew his behavior was wrong but he had no desire to quit because he was having the most fun of his life. This is a person who has discovered the power of sex. This young man was caught in a sin habit but had no desire to break from the sin.

Sin habits must be broken. Time and again, Scripture warns us against misusing the gift of sex.

Don’t participate in...sexual promiscuity and immoral living.

—Romans 13:13

Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires.

—Colossians 3:5

You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust.

—1 Peter 4:3

In another passage, the apostle Paul laid out the rationale for sexual purity among Christians. Since we are spiritually united

Are You Immoral?

The following self-evaluation quiz will help you determine whether you have a tendency toward sexual immorality.

- If you are single, will you be able to honestly say to your future spouse that you have saved yourself for him or her?
- If you are married, have you done (or thought about doing) anything sexually that you would want to hide from your spouse?
- Have you ever had an affair while married (or while the other person was married)?
- Have you ever engaged in sex with someone of your own gender?
- Do you ever choose what you will wear based on how effectively it will attract the attention of the opposite sex?
- Do you ever undress a person of the opposite sex with your mind?
- Do you ever look at pornography, whether “soft” or “hard”?
- Do you spend time fantasizing about sex with anyone other than your spouse?

with the Holy Spirit, we cannot be physically united with anyone other than our spouse.

But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies....

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

—1 Corinthians 6:13, 18–20

We recognize that the causes for sexual immorality may be complicated. Childhood sexual abuse, for example, often predisposes its victims to making poor choices about their sexuality in later life. One's other sins, such as self-indulgence or deceit, may be related to improper sexual behavior. But regardless of these other factors, sin is still sin.

Let's look at some of the major types of sexual immorality. Do you have a problem with any of these?

SEX WITHOUT MARRIAGE

The older term for sex by unmarried persons is *fornication*. Today we are more likely to call it *premarital sex*. Either way, it is wrong in God's book. A young person (or an older one for that matter!) who is unmarried and tempted to have sex would do well to take to heart Solomon's speech to a young man about the temptation and costs of casual sex, recorded in Proverbs 6:24—7:27.

On the one hand, we are sympathetic to single people who are tempted to engage in premarital sex or who have already given in to that temptation. The sex drive is strong for most people, and without the acceptable outlet of marriage, people may be left with powerful feelings of sexual desire that they do not know how to

manage. They consequently may allow their physical longings to override their moral standards and better judgment.

We are also aware that once a single person begins sleeping with a boyfriend or girlfriend, it is hard to quit. The powerful binding effect of physical intimacy makes it hard to break away from the sin habit of premarital sex. (Of course, the binding effect is also what causes much of the heartache that attends sex before marriage.) Desires for affection and security can lead to and reinforce premarital sexual behavior.

Because of the temptations facing single people today, an option that many (even some who profess Christ) would promote is a couple's cohabiting before marriage. This arrangement seems more acceptable than casual sex because it involves a "committed," quasi-married status. And so the practice of "living together" has become almost too commonplace for comment. Currently there are around 5 million unmarried couples living together in America. At least half of all marriages involve couples who have lived together before the ceremony.

But is a "trial marriage" good for the real marriage that follows? It seems not. Scott Stanley, co-director of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver, has found that "men who cohabit with the women they eventually marry are less committed to the union than men who never lived with their spouses ahead of time."³ Not surprisingly, the divorce rate for those who cohabit and then marry is as much as 50 percent higher than for those who marry without living together first.⁴

In addition to increasing the risk of future divorce, premarital sex carries with it many other costs, including the danger of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, worry about creating an unwanted pregnancy, and the loss of the ability to give a future marriage partner the precious gift of one's virginity. It all adds up to a hefty price tag! But even if there were no practical drawbacks to premarital sex, it would still be wrong. Let's be frank here. Regardless of our sympathy for those tempted to engage in sex before marriage, we must agree with God in calling such behavior sin.

No matter how powerful the desire to start or continue having sex before marriage may be, God is more powerful still.

Many have remained chaste before marriage—or even for an entire lifetime. So regardless of how many times you hear that you “can’t help” having sex, it is possible. No matter how powerful the desire to start or continue having sex before marriage may be, God is more powerful still.

A. C. Green is a former NBA player with the Los Angeles Lakers, as well as other NBA teams. He still holds the “Iron Man” of basketball record for most consecutive games played. Both during and after his basketball career, Green has been an outspoken advocate—especially to youth—of sexual abstinence and about putting an end to premarital sex once it has started. He was married in 2002, but prior to his marriage, he had this to say about sexual purity:

God is the God of the second chance. I am a virgin by choice, and I hold that decision with honor and respect. But if you can’t make that same claim, then God can help you reclaim the virtue of purity. He can enable you to regain self-control and self-respect and that desire to be a strong Christian.⁵

Regardless of your past sexual history, with God’s help you can begin today to choose to remain pure. Every day you wake up alone will be a victory for you and a delight to God.

VIOLATION OF THE MARRIAGE BED

While fornication is sex between two unmarried persons, adultery is sex between two people who are not married to each other and when at least one of them is married to someone else. This violation of sex is called *infidelity* and *extramarital sex*.

One of God’s top-ten commandments is “You must not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).⁶ The author of the letter to the Hebrews offered one of several New Testament repetitions of the original ban on adultery when he wrote, “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4 NIV).

Few people begin a marriage imagining they will ever cheat on their spouse. But time passes and temptations arise. Eventually a spouse finds himself or herself choosing to do what had previously seemed unimaginable.

For some adulterers, an affair can seem to restore the emotional intensity he or she has not felt since courtship before marriage. The intensity of the adultery serves to prolong the guilty relationship. Perhaps the adulterer likes the thrill of the chase. Serial conquests make him or her feel proud. Whatever the motivation, a pattern of destructive feelings, thoughts, and actions has developed.

Intimate relationships with the wrong people are not the only cause of adultery. In Matthew 19:9 the word usually translated “adultery” is *porneia*. It is a general term referring to any kind of sexual trespass. Therefore, such solitary behaviors as entertaining sexual fantasies and viewing pornography might qualify as adultery of a sort.

People caught in the habit of sexual sin keep on violating their marriage vows. They even think they will get away with it. Never! Adultery has subtle—and often not so subtle—destructive effects in this life. Certainly in the next life, adultery will come under divine judgment.

Can a man scoop a flame into his lap and not have his clothes catch on fire? Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? So it is with the man who sleeps with another man’s wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished....

But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys himself. He will be wounded and disgraced. His shame will never be erased.

—Proverbs 6:27–29, 32–33

For many unfaithful spouses, the attraction of adultery lies in its forbiddenness. This is nothing new. Solomon described a representative woman named Folly who called out to men, “Come home with me. Stolen water is refreshing; food eaten in secret tastes the best!”

Solomon had an answer for that kind of seduction.

Drink water from your own well— share your love only with your wife. Why spill the water of your springs in the streets, having sex with just anyone? You should reserve it for yourselves. Never share it with strangers.

If you feel you do not love your spouse anymore and do love someone else, the answer is not to get involved with that other person; the answer is to yield to the love of God.

Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an immoral woman, or fondle the breasts of a promiscuous woman?

—Proverbs 5:15–20

Adultery is often the last step in a series of sins that take place within a marriage. Disappointment or conflict in a marriage is never a justifiable cause for adultery. If you feel you do not love your spouse anymore and do love someone else, the answer is not to get involved with that other person; the answer is to yield to the love of God through repentance and obedience. Repentance will change your thoughts and actions so that you can love your spouse and reject all others who would come between you.

SAME-SEX SEX

Few special-interest groups in our society are as vocal and aggressive as the gay rights movement. If members of this movement get their way, they will have all of us believing that sex between persons of the same gender is as right as sex between a husband and a wife. But is it?

The Old Testament law plainly states, “Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin” (Leviticus 18:22). Male prostitution was a part of pagan worship in the Old Testament, so it had a doubly wicked appeal for some Israelite men. Sentencing guidelines for persons convicted of a homosexual act in ancient Israel decreed it to be a capital offense (Leviticus 20:13).

In New Testament times, the apostle Paul included gay and lesbian acts in his analysis of how the human race has gone astray.

God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

—Romans 1:26–27

Paul also included male prostitutes and homosexuals in his list of sinners who will not “inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians. 6:9–10)—unless, of course, they repent.

It is important to realize that people make the choice to engage in homosexual acts. Some have touted genetic findings as proof that people are “born gay.” But the truth is that if there is a genetic component to some people’s homosexuality (and this is by no means finally settled), it at most opens the door to that behavior; it certainly does not *determine* that behavior. The decision to indulge in homosexual activity is a choice, and a sinful one.

It is also important to realize that people who have engaged in gay sex in the past can change. They do not have to believe the “once gay, always gay” propaganda of some gay and lesbian leaders.

In 1973, prominent psychiatrist Dr. Robert Spitzer led the movement to remove homosexuality from the *American Psychiatric Association’s* manual of disorders. But a quarter century later he encountered some ex-gay protestors, and though he was skeptical, he decided to investigate the possibility of a person’s changing from a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual one.

Spitzer’s study results showed some remarkable results. He interviewed 200 subjects (143 men and 57 women) who claimed to have left homosexuality behind. “To Spitzer’s surprise, good heterosexual functioning was reportedly achieved by 67 percent of the men who had rarely or never felt any opposite-sex attraction before the change process. Nearly all the subjects said they

now feel more masculine (in the case of men) or more feminine (women).”⁷

We are not saying that breaking a homosexual sin habit is easy. But whether you have indulged in homosexual activity a little or a lot, or if you have just wanted to, God is more than able to help you escape the temptations you face. He loves gay people just the way He loves all sinners (that includes every one of us), and He can help you to have a chaste life as a single person or a satisfying marriage with a person of the opposite sex.

IMMODESTY: THE SEX APPEAL

Supermodel Kim Alexis appeared on over five hundred magazine covers, including those of *Vogue* and the *Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition*. Then in 1990 Alexis committed her life to Jesus Christ. This new spiritual relationship changed her perspective about the industry in which she participated.

In her 1998 book, *A Model for a Better Future*, Alexis says, “The worst part of this business is that you are constantly asked to compromise your moral standards. There are pictures I look back on today and think, *Oh, why did I let them talk me into that?* I made some choices I’m not proud of.”

Based on her own experience, Alexis has advice for others. She says, “Many women are playing with fire in the way they dress. Dressing like a floozy tells the world, ‘Look at me, want me, lust after me. I’m easy and you can have me.’ Displaying intimate parts of the body is a form of advertising for sex—so if you dress to attract sexual attention, you can hardly blame anyone else if that kind of attention comes your way.”

On the other hand, “Dressing modestly tells the world, ‘I respect myself and I insist on being treated with respect.’” Alexis adds, “It’s possible to be stylish and attractive without wearing something that is too short, low-cut, or see-through.”⁸

Of course, modesty is not all about covering up with clothes. Wendy Shalit is a young woman who got interested in the subject of modesty when she was forced to use coed bathrooms in her college dorm. She later wrote,

Dressing modestly tells the world, “I respect myself and I insist on being treated with respect.”

Many of the problems we hear about today—sexual harassment, date rape, young women who suffer from eating disorders and report feeling a lack of control over their bodies—are all connected, I believe, to our culture’s attack on modesty. Listen, first, to the words we use to describe intimacy: what once was called “making love,” and then “having sex,” is now “hooking up”—like airplanes refueling in flight. In this context I was interested to learn, while researching for my book, that the early feminists actually praised modesty as ennobling to society... Simone de Beauvoir...warned in her book, *The Second Sex*, that if society trivializes modesty, violence against women would result. And she was right. Since the 1960s, when our cultural arbiters deemed this age-old virtue a “hang-up,” men have grown to expect women to be casual about sex, and women for their part don’t feel they have the right to say “no.” This has brought us all more misery than joy.⁹

God’s prescriptions of sexual abstinence before marriage and of fidelity within marriage protect us from harm and at the same time offer married couples the freedom and enjoyment of sex as it was meant to be.

What Wendy Shalit, Kim Alexis, and other men and women have rediscovered is nothing more than a principle taught long ago in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote,

I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.
—1 Timothy 2:9–10¹⁰

Let’s be clear about a couple of things. First, a woman’s immodesty in dress or behavior does not justify men in lusting after her or—certainly—in committing acts of sexual violence against her. Second, men can be just as guilty of immodesty as women. But regardless of who is behaving immodestly and why, that person is guilty of degrading himself or herself while tempting others to sin. As Paul said, let us make ourselves attractive through goodness, not sex appeal.

SEXUAL SINS OF MIND AND EYE

Not all sex involves two bodies coming together; sometimes the sin occurs with just the eye or the mind. For women, the problem is often one of sexual fantasy. They may read love stories or watch romantic movies and imagine themselves to be acting out the illicit situations that are portrayed. For men (who tend to be more visually stimulated), the problem more likely is ogling. An attractive woman passes by, and they do not merely notice and then glance away, but they keep on staring after her.

The Bible is realistic about the problems of ogling and sexual fantasy. And it does not downplay their seriousness, as we might do. Jesus said,

You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

—Matthew 5:27–29

Jesus was using hyperbole, or exaggeration for effect. But His points are clear: intent is morally equivalent to action, and lustful looks require a radical response.

In a sermon, Minnesota pastor John Piper emphasized the importance of reacting quickly and aggressively when we have an immoral thought.

We must not give a sexual image or impulse more than five seconds before we mount a violent counterattack with the mind. I mean that! Five seconds. In the first two seconds we shout, "NO! Get out of my head!" In the next two seconds we cry out: "O God, in the name of Jesus, help me. Save me now. I am Yours."

Good beginning. But then the real battle begins. This is a mind war. The absolute necessity is to get the image

and the impulse out of our mind. How? Get a counter-image into the mind. Fight. Push. Strike. Don't ease up. It must be an image that is so powerful that the other image cannot survive.

Piper suggested using an image of Christ dying on the cross as one's "counter-image."¹¹

Another effective response might be to imitate Job, who said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman" (Job 31:1). No matter how deeply ingrained the habit has become, one who ogles can make a "covenant with his eyes," or establish a new commitment not to stare at women.

But there is more to the problem than just ogling. The wrong in staring lustfully at a woman applies equally to staring lustfully at the *picture* of a woman. We are talking here about pornography—a plague that has come to take a monstrous toll in our society.

Pornography is almost as old as human history. Archaeologists have found sexually titillating pictures molded on the lids of clay objects in Israel, glazed onto the sides of Grecian pottery, and painted on the walls of homes in Pompeii. What's new these days is the quantity and availability—not to mention the widespread acceptance—of pornography. When Hugh Hefner launched his *Playboy* magazine in 1953, pornography began to go mainstream in American culture. Dirty books, magazines, movies, and videos soon abounded. Then in the 1990s, when the world logged on to the Internet, porn proliferated like never before, with viewers able to access a seemingly endless supply of prurient images without ever leaving their homes.

When you look at pornography, it is as if you are filing away a photo in a photo album. From then on, the image remains buried in your unconscious and may surface to fill the eye of your mind even when you do not want it to, repeating its harm again and again. Why put pollution like that in your heart?

The argument goes on as to whether pornography contributes to incidences of sex crimes, and courts struggle to define what is "obscene." But we do not need to wait to declare pornography sinful. By encouraging lust, turning human beings into objects,

and redirecting sexual desire outside of marriage, pornography is clearly wrong.

And if you have any doubts about the harm that pornography causes those who appear in it, willingly or unwillingly, you should consider the firsthand testimony of one of its victims, “Sandra.” In her thirties today, in childhood Sandra was raped by her grandfather and was forced into posing for pornography when she was still in her early teens.

The memories of posing for those pictures are so painful, more so than the physical and sexual abuse. At least then I was fighting with someone or I could get caught up in the pain of the struggle to distract myself. Posing was different. It was more vulnerable and exposed. I often prayed to God that he wouldn't look at me until it was over. I was so ashamed and didn't want him to see me like that. I also would worry about other people seeing the pictures and was terrified of what people would think of me. Having someone stare at me and judge me from ten feet away while taking pictures, as I stood there naked, cold, exposed, embarrassed and humiliated, made me wish I could be nothing. He [the photographer] would talk to me as if I was an object and was oblivious to my pain. I wanted to turn into an object but I couldn't, no matter how hard I tried I couldn't go that numb. My soul and heart just hurt so much every time the flash from the camera would go off. It felt like someone was knocking my worth down lower and lower, and by the time the roll of film was done I didn't have any worth. When it was over, getting dressed was like getting some dignity back. The worry of what would be done with those pictures would plague me from then on.¹²

Hardly a victimless crime, is it? Porn hurts both those who are featured in it and those who choose to view it.

If you are involved with porn, stop it now and stop it for good. Declare with David, “I will set before my eyes no vile thing.”¹³

YOUR PURITY POTENTIAL

We have not dealt with all the possible forms of sexual immorality. There are also prostitution, incest, and other behaviors that frankly we do not even care to mention. However, our tour of sexual sins has been enough to demonstrate the many awful ways that the gift of sexuality can be perverted and turned into something degrading and shameful.

The bottom line is that the only place where sexual activity is acceptable is between a man and a woman who are married to each other. As hard as it may seem, sexual abstinence is the requirement for anyone who is not married. And for married couples, sexual attention can be directed only toward your spouse.

Harder than these restrictions are the costs of sexual misbehavior. Guilt. Shame. Abuse. Disease. Broken marriages. Even criminal charges.

God loves us and wants to preserve us from such suffering. His prescriptions of sexual abstinence before marriage and of fidelity within marriage protect us from harm and at the same time offer married couples the freedom and enjoyment of sex as it was meant to be.¹⁴ Most of all, they show the way to holiness in relation to that important part of our life known as sexuality.

We are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God.

—Titus 2:12

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

—2 Timothy 2:22

God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor— not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and His ways.... God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives.

—1 Thessalonians 4:3–5, 7

Reading such scriptural passages, you may find yourself saying, “But I just can’t! I’ve tried and I can’t stop my compulsive immorality.” You are right. You can’t stop sinning in this way—on your own. It takes the supernatural intervention of God to control the “ape gibbering in your loins.” And He is glad to give that intervention if you will ask for His help.

Need some encouragement that, through the power of God, you really can beat your immorality habit and become pure once more? Let us close with the story of “Jeff.” He was formerly involved in pedophilia, often considered an intractable or even an incurable behavior. But by God’s grace, and with the help of a ministry called Harvest USA, he is finding his way back to purity.

God has brought me very low. I finally came to see that without Christ’s work on the cross my own selfish desires would have me totally enveloped in my sin to the exclusion of my wife, my son, and everything I’ve ever cared for. I truly am nothing without his continuous grace in my life. After several months of being separated from my family, going through a court hearing in which God miraculously worked his sovereign grace, hearing in Harvest meetings how men are being transformed by God’s power, and seeing the continued deep depravity of my own heart, God has begun his transforming work in my heart. I am seeing that the cross truly breaks the power of sin in my life—even my sin of pedophilia. I am seeing that God is faithful, even when we are faithless, and He is not limited by human institutions or people’s opinions. It is his sovereign plan to set his children free from the law of sin and death and bring us into the eternal liberty to be shared with his Son.¹⁵

Purity is a beautiful thing. Its blessings exceed any brief pleasure that sexual immorality might offer. We pray that, like Jeff, you will take God’s hand and let Him lead you into purity.

SOUL PRESCRIPTION FOR IMMORALITY

Are you struggling with a habit of sexual immorality? We have outlined a five-step process to help you repent and heal in this

area of your life. Take all the time you need with each of the steps below.

Step 1: Adopt a Correct View of God

An incorrect view of God that sees Him as some kind of wishy-washy being who will simply look the other way when you sin will keep you in the vicious cycle of immorality.

- God is holy and cannot tolerate sexual immorality.

God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin.

—1 Thessalonians 4:3

- God is present everywhere. There is no place you can hide your sin.

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable.

—Hebrews 4:13

Make no mistake about it: God sees your sexual sin for what it is. He does not look away, and you cannot hide it from Him. Pursue a study of God's holiness and justice in Scripture. Admit to yourself that He sees and judges what you are doing.

Step 2: Revise Your False Beliefs

The false ideas from the world, related to sexuality, are almost unending. The harm they produce in people's lives is almost unending as well. Just for starters, consider these self-evaluation questions:

- Do you believe your sexual immorality is acceptable?

Some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us

to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

—Jude 1:4

- Do you believe your sexual desires are impossible to resist?

Dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do.

—Romans 8:12

Given the ease with which we can unknowingly adopt false beliefs about human sexuality, we need to work hard to understand the truth about how God made us to be sexual beings. Using a concordance or topical Bible, learn more about God's views on sexuality. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth about your sin and to help you change your thinking.

Step 3: Repent of Your Sin

Do you use pornography? Have you been cheating on your spouse? Have you been dressing immodestly to get attention? Whatever your form of immorality has been, do not duck it—admit it to yourself and name it.

Pray a prayer like the following, asking God to forgive your sin and empower your obedience.

God, I am guilty of the sin of _____. I know that my immoral behavior is wrong and that it causes You great pain—I am truly sorry for that. Please forgive me for my sin. Cleanse me now of this sin and of its effects in my life. Fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit so that I may never return to this sin again. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray, amen.

If you have harmed others with your sin, apologize to them. Seek reconciliation and offer restitution where appropriate.

Step 4: Defend against Spiritual Attacks

You will be attacked in your area of weakness—count on it. Every time you turn on your TV, log on to the Internet, or walk out your front door, the enemies of your soul will be there. Watch out for the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

The world's values about sexuality are not God's values. The world system tells you, "There is nothing wrong with two consenting adults finding pleasure in each other's bodies." But God says, "Your body was not created for sexual immorality. It does not belong to you; it belongs to Me." Become so familiar with God's values on sexuality that you can immediately see the error in the world's values.

Your flesh (your sinful nature) will seek the pleasure of the flesh (your body) in the same old sinful ways you have known. Remember that the flesh (as your old sinful nature) is dead, having been crucified with Christ. You have been raised as a new person by the Holy Spirit. Live by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

Satan will set out the bait of sexual immorality for you. Protect yourself from these darts of temptation with the "shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:16). Then the Devil's suggestions that you can find true happiness by doing something forbidden will fall harmless to the ground.

Most likely, you will need a defense against temptation for a long time. Prepare for a prolonged battle, yet keep up your hope, because God is stronger than all your foes.

Step 5: Flee Temptation

Sexual temptation can be hard to avoid. The roots of sexual desire run deep and feed off many different stimuli. If you are to remain free from this habitual sin, you must learn to avoid the things that feed it as much as possible.

- Focus on your relationship with God.
Seek a rich spiritual relationship through regular worship of God. Physical stimulation through sinful means will then seem less appealing to you.

- Latch on to God's promises.
Find biblical statements or stories that encourage you in your fight against sexual immorality. Commit at least one verse to memory so that you can use it in your fight against temptation, just as Jesus used Scripture against the Devil in the desert. Here is one verse to consider using:

You are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.

—Romans 8:9

- Establish safeguards.
What sets off your lustful acts? Put a barrier between that sinful trigger and yourself if you can. Take as many practical precautions to guard yourself. For example,
 - Immediately break off any immoral relationship you have.
 - If you rent pornographic DVDs, get rid of your DVD player. Or if you go to sexually explicit websites, install filtering software.
 - If you tend to dwell on lustful thoughts, choose a substitute image to put in your mind.
 - If you have homosexual tendencies, seek a Christian counselor skilled in reparative therapy.
 - Ask a trusted Christian friend to hold you accountable in your commitment to remain sexually pure.
- Expect victory.
You may have fallen to sexual immorality in the past, but that does not mean you cannot know sexual purity now. Believe in God and in the path toward holiness that only He can bring.

Visit www.SoulPrescription.com for more insights and resources, and to download a free leader's guide for small group Bible studies.

Appendix A



HOW TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so there are spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God.

Law 1: *God loves you and created you to know Him personally.*

God's Love

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

—John 3:16

God's Plan

This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

—John 17:3

What prevents us from knowing God personally?

Law 2: *People are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love.*

Human Beings Are Sinful

All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.

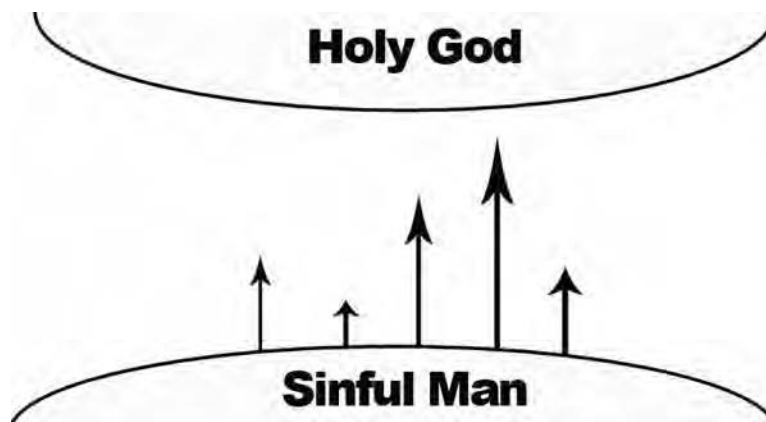
—Romans 3:23

The human race was created to have fellowship with God. But because of our own stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own independent way, and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Human Beings Are Separated

The wages of sin is death [spiritual separation from God].

—Romans 6:23



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and humanity is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that people are continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through their own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion—but they inevitably fail.

The third principle explains the only way to bridge this gulf.

Law 3: *Jesus Christ is God's only provision for human sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love.*

He Died in Our Place

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

—Romans 5:8

He Rose from the Dead

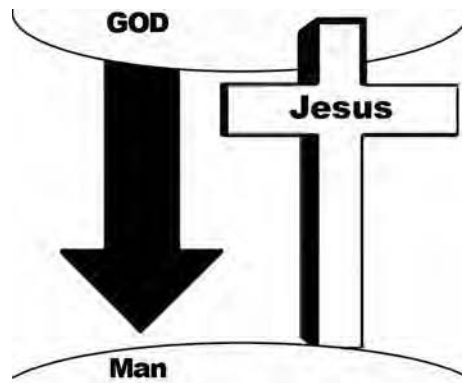
Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time.

—1 Corinthians 15:3–6

He Is the Only Way to God

Jesus told [Thomas], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

—John 14:6



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place and pay the penalty for our sins.

It is not enough just to know these truths.

Law 4: *We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then we can know God personally and experience His love.*

We Must Receive Christ

To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

—John 1:12

We Receive Christ through Faith

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

—Ephesians 2:8–9

When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth

After dark one evening, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to speak with Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you."

Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

—John 3:1–8

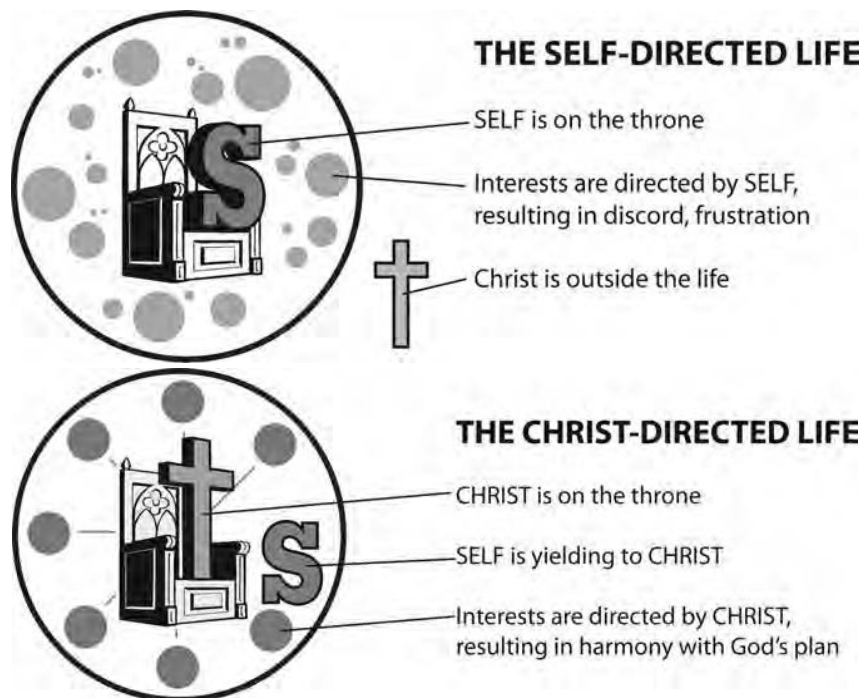
We Receive Christ by Personal Invitation

[Christ said,] "Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends."

—Revelation 3:20

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of our will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives.



Which circle best represents your life?

Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

You Can Receive Christ Right Now by Faith through Prayer

Prayer is talking with God. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

How to Know That Christ Is in Your Life

Did you receive Christ into your life? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said He would come into your life and be your friend so you can know Him personally. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.)

The Bible Promises Eternal Life to All Who Receive Christ

“This is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God’s Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life. I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”

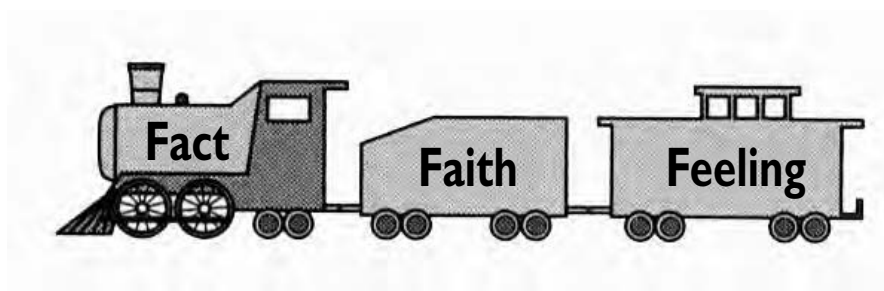
—1 John 5:11–13

Thank God often that Christ is in your life and that He will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). You can know on the basis of His promise that Christ lives in you and that you have eternal life from the very moment you invite Him in. He will not deceive you.

An important reminder...

Do Not Depend on Feelings

The promise of God’s Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship among fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feeling (the result of our faith and obedience). (Read John 14:21.)



The train will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

Now That You Have Received Christ

The moment you received Christ by faith, as an act of your will, many things happened, including the following:

- Christ came into your life (Revelation 3:20; Colossians 1:27).
- Your sins were forgiven (Colossians 1:14).
- You became a child of God (John 1:12).
- You received eternal life (John 5:24).
- You began the great adventure for which God created you (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Can you think of anything more wonderful that could happen to you than entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Would you like to thank God in prayer right now for what He has done for you? By thanking God, you demonstrate your faith.

Suggestions for Christian Growth

Spiritual growth results from trusting Jesus Christ. “The righteous man shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11). A life of faith will enable you to trust God increasingly with every detail of your life and to practice the following:

- G** Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7).
- R** Read God’s Word daily, beginning with the gospel of John (Acts 17:11).
- O** Obey God moment by moment (John 14:21).
- W** Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19; John 15:8).
- T** Trust God for every detail of your life (1 Peter 5:7).
- H** Holy Spirit—allow Him to control and empower your daily life and witness (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16–17).

Fellowship in a Good Church

God's Word admonishes us to "not neglect our meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25). Several logs burn brightly together, but put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with your relationship with other Christians. If you do not belong to a church, do not wait to be invited. Take the initiative; call the pastor of a nearby church where Christ is honored and His Word is preached. Start this week and make plans to attend regularly.

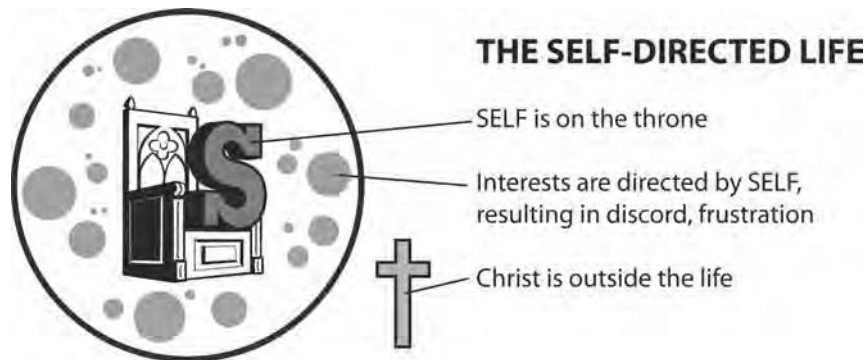
Appendix B



HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Every day can be an exciting adventure for the Christian who knows the reality of being filled with the Holy Spirit and who lives constantly, moment by moment, under His gracious direction.

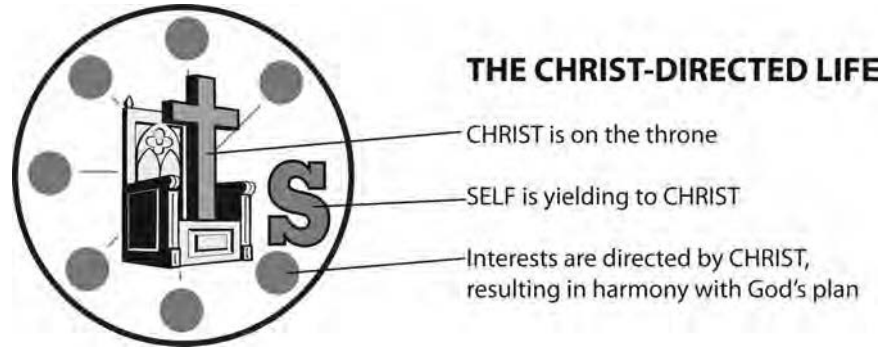
The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people:



1. The Natural Person: One who has not received Christ

People who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

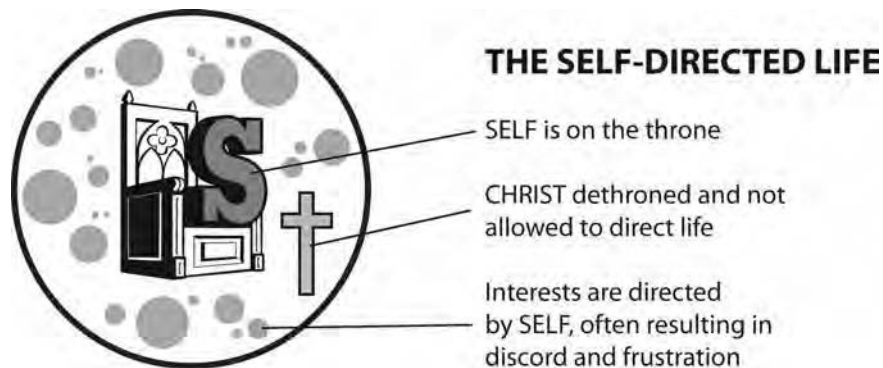
—1 Corinthians 2:14



2. **The Spiritual Person:** One who is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit

We who have the Spirit understand these things.... We have the mind of Christ.

—1 Corinthians 2:15–16



3. **The Worldly (Carnal) Person:** One who has received Christ but who lives in defeat because the person is trying to live the Christian life in his or her own strength

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord.

—1 Corinthians 3:1–3

The following are four principles for living the Spirit-filled life:

1. God has provided for us an abundant and fruitful Christian life.

[Jesus said,] “My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”

—John 10:10

[Jesus said,] “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

—John 15:5

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

—Galatians 5:22–23

When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

The following are some personal traits of the spiritual person that result from trusting God:

Christ-centered
Empowered by the Holy Spirit
Introduces others to Christ
Effective prayer life
Understands God’s Word



Understands God’s Word
Trusts and obeys God
Experiences love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness,
faithfulness, gentleness,
goodness, and self-control

The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends on (1) the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of life and (2) his or her maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he or she is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

Why is it that most Christians are not experiencing the abundant life?

2. Worldly Christians cannot experience the abundant and fruitful Christian life.

Worldly (carnal) people trust in their own efforts to live the Christian life:

- They are either uninformed about, or have forgotten, God's love, forgiveness, and power (Acts 1:8; Romans 5:8–10; Hebrews 10:1–25; 2 Peter 1:9; 1 John 1; 2:1–3).
- They have an up-and-down spiritual experience.
- They cannot understand themselves—they want to do what is right but cannot.
- They fail to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life (Romans 7:15–24; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 3:1–3; Galatians 5:16–18).

Some or all of the following traits may characterize the worldly person—the Christian who does not fully trust God:

Unbelief

Disobedience

Poor prayer life

No desire for Bible study



Legalistic attitude or critical spirit

Impure thoughts, jealousy, guilt

Worry, discouragement

Loss of love for God and others

(Those who profess to be Christians but who continue to practice sin should realize that they may not be Christians at all, according to Ephesians 5:5 and 1 John 2:3; 3:6–9.)

The third truth gives us the only solution to this problem.

3. Jesus promised the abundant and fruitful life as the result of being filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15).

- One becomes a Christian through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, according to John 3:1–8. From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the

Holy Spirit at all times (John 1:12; 14:16–17; Colossians 2:9–10). (Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled—that is, directed and empowered—by the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis.)

- The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life (John 7:37–39).
- The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ (John 16:1–15). When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he or she is a true disciple of Christ.
- In His last command before His ascension, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:1–9).

How, then, can one be filled with the Holy Spirit?

4. We are filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit by faith. Then we can experience the abundant and fruitful life that Christ promised.

You can appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit right now if you:

- Sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:6; John 7:37–39).
- Confess your sins. By faith, thank God that He has forgiven all of your sins—past, present, and future—because Christ died for you (Colossians 2:13–15; Hebrews 10:1–17; 1 John 1; 2:1–3).
- Present every area of your life to God (Romans 12:1–2).
- By faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit, according to

His command: Be filled with the Spirit.

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.

—Ephesians 5:18

His promise: He will always answer when we pray according to His will.

We can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

—1 John 5:14–15

Faith can be expressed through prayer.

How to Pray in Faith to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. However, true prayer is one way of expressing our faith. The following is a suggested prayer:

Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have sinned against You by directing my own life. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. As an expression of my faith, I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If so, bow in prayer and trust God to fill you with the Holy Spirit right now.

How to Walk in the Spirit

Faith (trust in God and His promises) is the only way a Christian can live the Spirit-directed life. As you continue to trust Christ moment by moment,

- Your life will demonstrate more and more of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and will be more and more conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Your prayer life and study of God's Word will become more meaningful.
- You will experience His power in witnessing (Acts 1:8).
- You will be prepared for spiritual conflict against the world (1 John 2:15–17), against the flesh (Galatians 5:16–17), and against Satan (1 Peter 5:7–9; Ephesians 6:10–13).
- You will experience His power to resist temptation and sin (Romans 6:1–16; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 1:19–23; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Appendix C



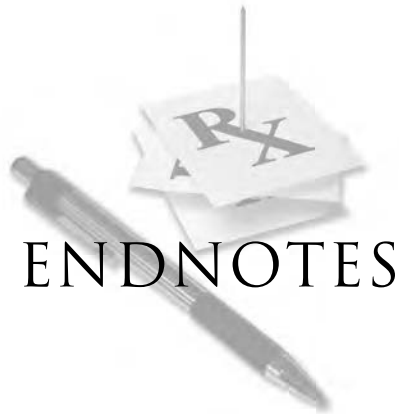
SPIRITUAL BREATHING

If you become aware of an area of your life (an attitude or an action) that is displeasing to the Lord, even though you are walking with Him and sincerely desiring to serve Him, simply thank God that He has forgiven your sins—past, present, and future—on the basis of Christ’s death on the cross. Claim His love and forgiveness by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him.

If you retake the throne of your life through sin—a definite act of disobedience—breathe spiritually. Spiritual breathing (exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure) is an exercise in faith that enables you to experience God’s love and forgiveness.

1. *Exhale:* Confess your sin—agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1–25. Confession involves repentance—a change in attitude and action.

2. *Inhale:* Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you, according to the command of Ephesians 5:18 and the promise of 1 John 5:14–15.



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Chapter 14

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10. See also 1 Peter 3:3–5.
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13. See Psalm 101:3 NIV.
14. William Mattox, in a magazine article, summarized how "a 1940s Stanford University study, a 1970s *Redbook* magazine survey of 100,000 women and at least one other study from the early 1990s all found higher levels of sexual satisfaction among women who attend religious services." Mattox speculated on the reasons as including (1) a lack of "sexual baggage" from promiscuity before marriage; (2) the confidence that comes from a mutual commitment to marriage; (3) an absence of sexual anxiety because the couples do not fear sexually transmitted diseases and other ill effects of out-of-wedlock intercourse; and (4) an ability to enjoy the spiritual dimension of sexuality. William R. Mattox Jr., "Revenge of the Church Ladies," *Plain Truth*, July–August 2001, <http://www.ptm.org/01PT/JulAug/revenge.htm>, accessed November 2003.
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Dr. Henry Brandt is often called the "Father of Modern-Day Biblical Counseling." For decades he personally counseled individuals to evaluate their heart attitudes and behavior in the light of biblical teaching and guided them to a godly solution. His teaching continues to be a source of inspiration to people throughout the world through the Henry Brandt Foundation's resources and Web site:

www.HenryBrandtFoundation.org.

Dr. Bill Bright was devoted to holy living and spent more than five decades building and leading Campus Crusade for Christ. Fueled by his passion to present the love and claims of Jesus Christ to every person on earth, he wrote the booklet The Four Spiritual Laws, which has been printed in 200 languages and distributed to more than 2.5 billion people. Find out about his 100 other books and pamphlets at:

www.BrightMedia.org.