

Controlling

The

River

Of

Love



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Controlling the river of Love

Written as an AIDS prevention project

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Controlling the River of Love

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Introduction

This booklet is about the power of love, sex and temptation. As human beings, we all have our feelings and desires, we long for relationships that are exciting, beautiful and satisfying. But in reality many people are very disappointed in their relationships and especially in the area of sex. Sex can be a very painful experience and even if it was enjoyable, there is the danger of unwanted pregnancies and of sexual diseases. AIDS is killing people by the hundreds of thousands. Many girls are sold into prostitution to become a slave to satisfy other people's desires. Many marriages are destroyed because of uncontrolled sexual behaviour. How is it possible that something that is supposed to be so beautiful has become so destructive? Is it even possible to have a good, enjoyable and satisfying sexual life, without being afraid of sexual diseases and other problems? These are some of the things this booklet is about.

I hope you will enjoy reading this booklet, it is my prayer and desire that it will keep you from falling into temptation and from suffering the consequences of an uncontrolled sexual life. That it will keep you from destroying the lives of other people and will lead you into a life of joy and satisfaction; a life in which your life will be a blessing to someone else.

This booklet was first written as a secular booklet as an AIDS prevention project to be used for general distribution. I have now rewritten it as a Christian version to be used for discipleship in the area of sexual life.

To write this booklet, I have made use of other people's ideas and examples and have rewritten those. The main idea of this booklet I have taken from the teaching on Relationships by Dean Sherman. To whom I am very grateful for the things I have learned from his teaching. It has helped me to keep my own life under control.

Above all I thank God the author and creator of life. I especially thank Marjolein, my wife, who has encouraged me to write this booklet and I'm thankful to many friends who have given their input and corrections. May God bless you as you read and study this booklet.

Paul Th. Heiligenberg

1. The River

How would you describe a river to someone who has never one?

Imagine the following discussion:

‘What is a river?

- A river is flowing water.

So, when I open a tap, the river flows out?

- No, a river is lots of flowing water.

So, when it rains a lot and the garden is flooded and water is running into the house, we are in a river?

- No, that is a flood.

What is the difference between a river and a flood?

- A river stays in one place, running all the time. But when there is a flood, the water is running everywhere, destroying everything.

How come a river stays in one place?

- Well, there are either mountains or dikes, riverbanks that keep the water under control.

So, a river is flowing water controlled by banks and a flood is flowing water without any control. Right?

- Right!

Is a river good?

- Oh yes, very good.

What are the benefits of a river?

- There are many benefits. Fish to eat, water for irrigation, hydropower, places to swim and enjoy, clean drinking water, etc.

Is a flood also good or?

- No, a flood is bad, it destroys everything,

What are some of the bad things of a flood?

- It pollutes the drinking water, crops and houses are destroyed, diseases come, and people die.

So, we could say that a river is a source of life, and a flood is a source of death.

This seems very strange. The same thing, flowing water can either be a source of life or a source of death. The difference between good and bad is apparently not

in the water, but in the control of the water. If the water gets uncontrollable and moves outside of the riverbanks, it becomes very destructive.

Let's leave this discussion about rivers and floods for now. This booklet is not about water management after all. It's about something that is far more difficult to manage. Controlling the River of Love is about managing our sexual feelings and activities. Like water sex can either be a source of life or a source of death. Sex can be very good and useful, but it can also be very bad and destructive.

What are some good things about sex?

- Sex is enjoyable. It attracts people together, bringing unity. It enables us to multiply.

What are some of the bad things about sex?

- Prostitution. Child sex. Sexual Transmitted Diseases/Infections (STD's) like AIDS. Adultery. Rape. Incest. Divorce. Unwanted pregnancies and abortion. Loss of virginity. Etc.

It is clear to see that, like water, sex can either be very good and useful or it can be very bad and destructive. In order for us to understand the difference of what causes sex to be either good or bad, we have to go back to the beginning of creation. Where does sex come from? Why, for which purpose, are we created the way we are?

In the Bible we can read that after God created Adam, He stated in Genesis 2:18: *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* (or: a suitable companion for him.) After God created Eve from Adam (Genesis 2:22) we read in verse 24: *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."* From this verse in the Bible, we can learn that God has instituted marriage from the beginning of creation. For which reason? So, a man can be united to his wife. Unity is the purpose of marriage. God planned for a man and a woman to live in complete unity together. Marriage is supposed to be a spiritual, emotional and physical unity.

"They will become one flesh." God has intended the sexual unity to be part of the marriage relationship. Because of this intention we can conclude that sex is a gift from God. He has given it to give an incredible depth to the relationship of a husband and a wife. In another book of the Bible, Song of Songs, we can get an insight of how God wants a husband and a wife to enjoy each other's bodies and beauty. Besides the enjoyment and attraction, it is also through the sexual union that we can multiply. God's commandment to mankind was to fill the earth.

Genesis 1:28 God longed for the earth to be filled with people. He created us in His image, male and female. He is a relational God and longs for our fellowship. 2 Cor. 13:14 *"The fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."* He knows that it is only in the depth of our human relationships that we can understand his heart. God is a loving father and longs to be known as a loving father. He is also a loving mother who longs to comfort and to protect us. (Isaiah 66:12-13 and Math. 23:37) One of the reasons God intended the sexual relationship to be for marriage only is that he intended children to be born in a home with a loving father and a loving mother.

Sadly, we are all aware of the very negative aspects of sex. Many people have experienced a flood of destruction in their life because of sex. This does not make sex in itself bad or dirty. We have seen that sex is a gift from God and therefore something that is pure and life-giving. But just as life-giving water can turn into a source of death and destruction when it breaks through the riverbanks, sex as well becomes destructive when we break through the boundaries God has instituted.

Sex brings good results of pleasure, fulfillment and unity when both husband and wife desire to have a fulfilling sexual relationship.

Sex brings negative results when used before marriage or outside of the marriage relationship with different partners. It also has negative consequences within the marriage relationship if used against the desire of husband or wife. Either not given or uncontrolled. In the next chapter we will look at those negative results.

2. Causing a Flood

Let us have a look together at what happens when people cross the boundaries and engage in sex outside of the marriage relationship.

In 1 Corinthians 6:18 we find a strong warning: *“Flee sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his own body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”*

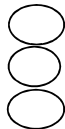
Proverbs 6:32 gives us a similar warning: *“But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.”*

In 1 Corinthians 6:18 Paul is not just talking about our physical body. In the following verse (6:19) he explains that our body is a temple. Our body is a place where a spiritual being can live. In the first place our body contains our own being; our soul and our spirit. But we are also created to live in fellowship with God through His Spirit. Paul speaks of our body being a temple of the Holy Spirit. So when Paul says we sin against our body, it includes that we sin against our own personal being and against the Holy Spirit living in us.

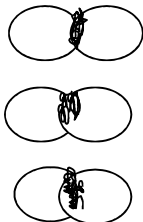
When we talk about sexual unity, we must not think about just our body, but also about our soul and our spirit. When having sex with someone we are uniting ourselves as a total being to another person.

Let's try to visualize ourselves in the following way:

We have: a Body
 a Soul
 and a Spirit



When we have sex
with someone we
are united with that
person in our body,
soul and spirit.



- Body

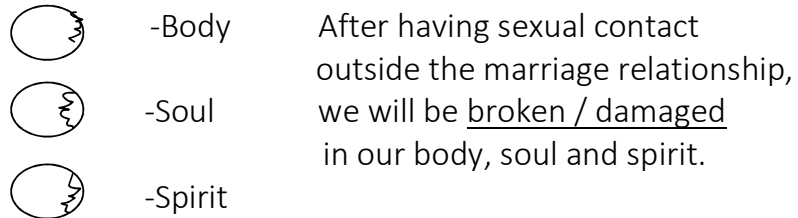
- Soul

- Spirit

This is what the intention of the sexual union is; that we become glued together, being physically, emotionally and spiritually united. That's why the marriage covenant is so important. We promise to each other, to God and to our families that we will stay together for the rest of our lives.

But what happens if this sexual union takes place outside the marriage relationship, before marriage or when having sex with someone else than our wife or husband?

We cannot remain together and we have to separate again. Our unity has to be broken up and we become two again.



In the next few chapters we will take a look at what kind of damage we can suffer in each of these three areas.

3. Damage to our Body

Loss of virginity

The first and immediate negative effect of having sex before marriage is: the loss of our virginity. This might not seem too important to you now, but if you will get married one day, do you want to be nr.1 or nr.21? You will either be the first or their will have been others. Although both the boy and the girl lose their virginity, it is especially important to the girl. When a husband on the day of his marriage discovers that his wife has had sexual relations with others, he will feel betrayed. Nowadays many young girls are having sex with their boyfriends, hoping that they will get married to them one day. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. They often break up instead of getting married.

The boy and girl have both lost their virginity but in the boy's body this cannot be seen or felt. In the girl's body however, the hymen can be broken, and the husband could feel this when they start their sexual relationship. Loss of virginity brings damage to the future marriage relationship of the girl. She might have to face her husband's dismay and rejection for the rest of their life. Of course, the loss of virginity is also a very negative thing in the boy's life. He will either have to hide from his wife the fact that he already had sex with someone else or he has to face the shame of confessing this to her. If he decides to hide this, he will always be living with a secret, and this will hinder their emotional and spiritual unity. If he decides to confess this to her, he faces the change of rejection and maybe his wife's jealousy and suspicion. It is much better to start our marriage with having nothing to hide and nothing to confess.

Many men do not want to marry a girl who is not a virgin. This is a very understandable demand/desire but of course only for those men who are virgins themselves.

Sexual Diseases

Till AD 2020 about 38.7 million people all over the world died from AIDS alone. According to the WHO at the end of 2005 there were about 40 million people living with HIV and 3.1 million people died of AIDS in 2005 alone. Besides suffering from HIV/AIDS, millions are suffering and dying from lots of other sexual transmitted diseases.

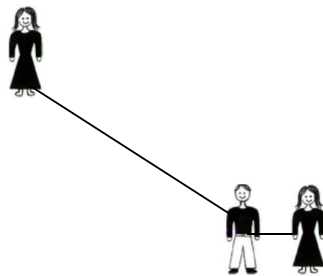
If a husband and a wife who marry each other as virgins, have sex with each other every day for their entire life, they will not risk getting any sexual disease. But when one of them starts having sexual relationships with other people (or had sexual relationships before marriage) there is a very good chance that this person will get a sexual disease, and he/she will then also infect his/her partner. When we have sex before marriage, we have a great risk of attracting a sexual disease, even if we have sex only once.

Let's take a look at the following two people:

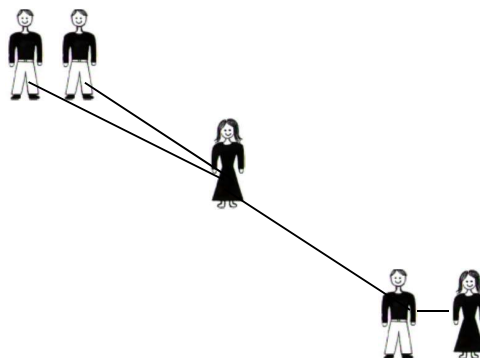


This boy and girl have been dating each other for a while and end up having sex together. For the girl it was the first time and she never did it again. Yet, she can have attracted AIDS or any other sexual disease.

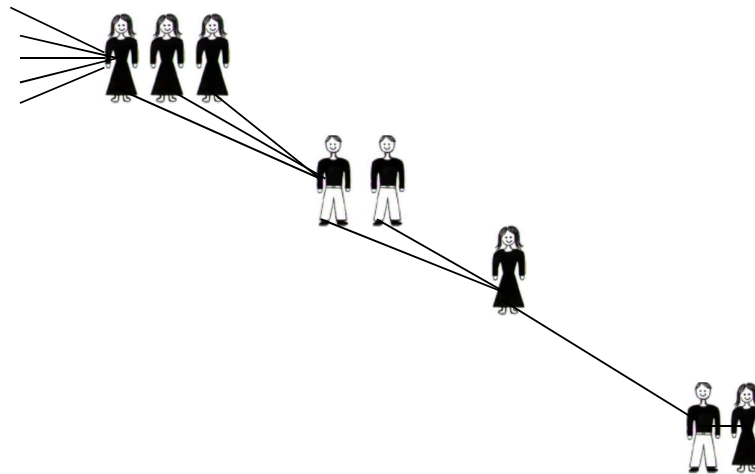
How come? This boy already had sex before, with another girl. Of course he did not tell his girlfriend that she was already number 2. So in reality the picture should look like this:



Sadly this is also not the full picture. The other girl with whom the boy had sex, already had other sexual relationships. She already had sex with 2 other boys before she had sex with this boy. The picture actually looks like the following:



Our picture is still not complete. One of the boys of the last picture also had sex before he met this girl. He already had 3 other girlfriends. One of them actually was a prostitute who already had many sexual contacts.



Now it is very easy to understand that the girl in the last relationship can end up with a sexual disease, even with AIDS, even though she had sex only once.

Once people start having sex before marriage, they believe they will marry each other, but sadly this seldom happens. Often the relationship breaks down. Then they start having other sexual relationships. Through this strain of relationships, one is infecting the other. Of course, not many will inform his or her girlfriend about the other relationships. Everyone will think they are the one and only. You should always remember that if you have sex before marriage, you are most likely not number 1.

In the example above it is even possible that the dating couple gets married without having sex before marriage. How sad it is that even though the girl (in this case), although she never had any sexual relationships before, she married, can still suffer many kinds of sexual diseases as her husband had sex with others before he married.

It must be clear to understand that our body is not made to have sex with different partners. It is made in such a way that we can have a safe sexual life within the marriage relationship between a husband and a wife. That's why it is so important that we marry as a virgin, it is God's way of keeping our life free from sexual diseases.

(If we talk about AIDS, we have to understand that although AIDS is originally a sexual transmitted disease, nowadays people can also get infected with AIDS without ever having had any sexual relationship. They can be infected through infected blood, or through unclean needles in the hospital or by using unclean needles when taking drugs, they can even have been infected by birth by their own parents, etc.)

Unwanted Pregnancies

Unwanted pregnancies are another risk of sex before marriage. A girl can become pregnant even if the actual intercourse is less than half a minute. Even when a man and a woman are sexually arousing each other (petting) and when a man touches his own penis with his hand and then touches the girl's vagina, he can transfer some semen and she can become pregnant. If a pregnancy happens within the marriage relationship it is a great blessing. But if it happens when the girl is not married (or if the pregnancy is not from her own husband) then it is a big problem. The girl will have to get married in a rush, facing lots of shame and anger from the family, breaking off her education, and starting a marriage without a proper preparation. Or if her boyfriend is unwilling to marry her, there will be a baby growing up without having a father.

Because of the tremendous pressure and shame, the girl will nowadays often try to get an abortion. This means she will decide to kill the baby in her womb either through medicine or through an operation. This might seem an easy solution, but once she realizes that she has killed her own child the emotional and spiritual problems are tremendous. Giving birth to the baby and then giving the baby up for adoption will be a much better solution in this situation.

Hopefully you understand that the risk of pregnancy with all its complications is not worth a few moments of passion.

Loss of virginity, sexual diseases and unplanned pregnancies, are the three main ways our body can be damaged. In the cases of rape and incest there can be other physical damages as well.

Throughout history, people have tried to find ways to have sex with anybody they like without suffering negative consequences. We find many advertisements nowadays saying: "Have safe sex, use a condom!"

Does using a condom make our sexual activities safe?

In one way it does reduce the change of physical damage a lot. By using a condom, the changes of getting a sexual disease or of getting pregnant is indeed 80-90% less. But do keep in mind that some sexual diseases are transmitted through the mouth, by kissing and even by coughing. The change of getting pregnant is also reduced by 90% (if used properly). Of course, one will still lose his or her virginity whether a condom is used or not.

But by thinking a condom makes sex safe, people are actually deceiving themselves.

Even when we use a condom, having sex outside of the marriage relationship is absolutely not safe. It will reduce the change of attracting a sexual disease or of getting pregnant, but it totally does not give any protection against the damage to our soul and to our spirit. In those two areas of our life, we actually suffer a far greater damage than in the physical area.

Note: Using a condom or the pill or other ways that prevent a pregnancy for the sake of family planning within the marriage relationship is a very good and advisable practice!

4. Damage to our Soul

As human beings we are not just physical beings but primarily emotional and spiritual beings. We do things because we feel like it or because we believe it is the right thing to do. Our body is just expressing who we are, what we think and how we feel inside. It is an instrument to communicate to other people. Sexual activity is not just something of our body, but it is an expression of our entire emotional and spiritual being.

It is hard to describe the emotional damage that sexual activity outside the marriage relationship can cause. In each situation and person, the extent of the damage will be different. In the case of incest and rape, the emotional damage is almost beyond understanding. Let's have a look from the perspective of a Christian boy and a girl who are in love with each other.

Emotional Wounds

When a boy and a girl feel attracted to each other and they start communicating with each other and spending time together, they will start to feel in love. This involves their sexual feelings as well. They both know that they should not have sex together, but imagine that, stimulated by a 'free' society and by their own fantasies and desires, they end up having sex together. They probably enjoyed having sex together, as this is the way we are made. But after the act they have to go home again, leave each other and be with their parents. How would they feel when they go home, knowing they did something they should not have done?

Most likely they will feel:

Ashamed of themselves because they could not control their desires,

Guilt; 'I should not have done this.'

Regret/ Trapped; 'Now I have to marry this person, but I am not ready to marry him/her, and maybe I don't want to.'

Fear 'What if my parents will find out?'

Fear 'What will happen if our pastor finds out?'

Fear 'What if I'm (she is) pregnant?'

If the girl (or boy) was kind of forced, manipulated by her boyfriend she might feel:

Used 'It is only for sex that he likes me',

Dirty; she will feel dirty and will view sex as a negative thing,

Betrayed; she thought that she could trust him but she could not,

When one or the other breaks the relationship the situation worsens, the other person will feel:

Rejected; I am not good enough

Anger; How can he/she treat me like this?

Despair; What will happen to me now? Nobody will want to marry me anymore.

Or one can manipulate the other, "If we do not do it again, I will break the relationship.", so the fear and anxiety will increase in the other person.

As they have been emotionally united together the one person now has great influence/control over the other person's emotions.

In the book of Proverbs in the Bible we find the following passage: *"But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away; for jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge."* (Proverbs 6: 32-34) Although this speaks of adultery, it clearly shows the emotional response to sexual sin.

All those negative feelings are called emotional wounds. After your first sexual encounter you are a different person, you feel, act and react differently.

After committing a sexual sin, you are wounded/damaged in your soul.

We can compare this with burning ourselves with hot oil. Right now, my skin is normal and healthy. If I bump myself to the table, I just say 'ouch' rub myself and walk on. But if my skin is burnt because boiling hot oil was spilled over it yesterday, even if I will bump it only a little bit, I will scream from pain. Our skin is oversensitive, because of the wound.

Of course, this wound and oversensitivity will not stay forever, after some months my skin will actually be much tougher and harder. A big scar much thicker than the original skin has appeared to protect me from the pain.

This same process will happen in our emotions, we will try to emotionally protect ourselves as we cannot continue for a long time to live with the pain of so much negative emotions.

One way to protect ourselves is that we try to 'harden our heart' so we feel no more guilt, fear and shame. Although this boy or girl felt very bad about what they did, at the same time they also liked it and now their sexual feelings are awakened. Once we become sexually active our sexual feelings are awakened and they become much stronger. The couple will try to ignore the initial feelings of fear, guilt and shame and keep sexually active.

Now they have experienced that if they are willing to have a sexual relationship, other people are more interested in being friends to them. After their initial relationship breaks apart, they may start to relate to other people and have sex with them in order to win their friendship.

Once we 'silence' our feelings of guilt, shame and fear our behavior will progress from bad to worse.

A girl may find it is easy to have friends if she has sex with them. Later she finds she can earn a lot of other favors and money by giving sexual entertainment to a man. She is becoming a prostitute. A boy may start reading a lot of sexually arousing literature (pornography) and when he cannot get another girlfriend, he might go to a prostitute in order to satisfy his desire. Or he is so frustrated with himself and so full of sexual desire that when he sees his younger sister, he does not feel any shame or fear and force her into a sexual relationship (incest). One day he might be attracted to someone who does not like him, but when he gets a chance to meet her alone, he forces her and rapes her. He rapes, because he has hardened his heart, trying not to feel guilty, shameful and fearful. Now nothing stops him from doing whatever he wants to do. After raping someone, he realizes that he might get into trouble with the police and the whole community. In order to hide what he has done a rapist may murder his victim.

We find many examples of hardened hearts in the Bible.

Let's take a look at: Ephesians 4: 18 and 19 *"... due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every impurity with a continual lust for more."*

Having lost all sensitivity - They feel no more shame, no more guilt, no more fear. *They gave themselves over to sensuality* - They only want to do things that feel good to them without thinking if this is right or wrong. Neither do they think of the consequences their actions may have to other people.

With a continual lust for more - Once we lose our sensitivity, we are never satisfied anymore and go from bad to worse.

If you have a Bible you can also read: Matthew 19:8,9 and Hebrews 3:12-13.

Another response might be that after experiencing so much pain, shame and feelings of betrayal etc. we stop relating to others. We kind of freeze our heart. As we have experienced that relationships are very painful and end up in unwanted sexual activity, we lock ourselves up on the inside. (This often happens after incest or after being forced or deceived into having sex.) But when we stop relating, our feelings do not die. We are still desperate for friendship and by not

relating we become very lonely. Out of his/her loneliness this person starts to relate again, and probably gets hurt again and draws more within him/herself, becoming lonelier and suffering more intense emotional pain. This person cannot stand the pain and will look for ways to soften it. She may find out that when she is smoking, she feels better inside. But smoking does not bring healing to the wound inside; after a while he/she needs something stronger and might start drinking alcohol or even taking drugs. The person becomes addicted which brings more shame and rejection from the family. He/she cannot break with the addiction anymore and will start to hate him/herself because of the addiction and because of the rejection from the family. Finally, this person is so desperate and hurting so much inside that he/she sees only one way to stop the suffering and that is by committing suicide.

In the Bible (2 Samuel 13) we also find the sad story of Amnon and Tamar. Amnon fell in love with his sister Tamar and forced her to have a sex with him. But then he started to despise her, and he rejected her. Can you imagine the emotional pain she felt in her heart? At the end, in verse 20, we read that she lived as a desolate woman. She spends the rest of her life in deep loneliness and agony of her soul. Because her father David did nothing to bring justice to her, seeing his sister suffer later resulted in her brother Absalom murdering their brother Amnon.

People suffer tremendously emotionally and do the most terrible sexual things to others. They do this not because they were born this way, but because somewhere they crossed over the God-given boundaries for our sexual behavior, or because somebody forced them into a sexual relationship.

Loss of Will Power

Besides emotional damage, something also happens to our will.

Most people will not easily start a sexual relationship before marriage or outside of the marriage relationship.

Why not? What keeps their desires under control?

-Deep inside them they 'know' that it is wrong.

-They are afraid that their parents will find out about it.

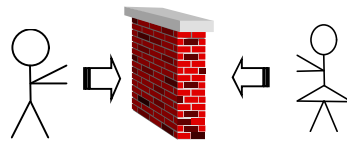
-They are afraid God will punish them for it.

-They are afraid of what society/the church will say about it.

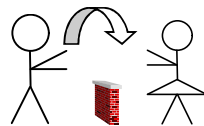
All this fears together we call our 'conscience'. When we want to do something which is not right, our conscience warns us. Most of the time we listen to it and live in peace with ourselves.

If we want to do something according to our desire and against our conscience, we have to silence (stop listening to) our conscience first.

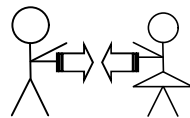
Like those two people here.



They have sexual feelings for each other, but their conscience is like a wall that keeps them from doing what they know is not right.



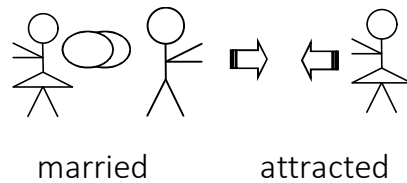
Once they decide to act against their conscience and act according to their desire, their conscience begins to crumble down. The next time they have a strong desire, it is much easier to give in to it and to do it again.



Finally their conscience gives up and stops speaking and they freely do whatever they desire.

Imagine those two people have sex together 6 times before they get married with each other. But they actually do get married to each other. You might think: "good, they have no sexual disease, and they did not betray each other, so this was not too bad." Do you think this is right? Does it leave them without consequences?

After a year or two, this man (or the woman) maybe very frustrated with his wife, but he gets along very well with another woman in his company, and he starts to get sexual feelings for her. He wants to be faithful to his wife, but his feelings for the other woman are getting stronger. What do you think? Will he remain faithful to his wife, or will he commit adultery?



He will probably commit adultery and even though he might want to be faithful to his wife, he will most likely not be able to control his desire. Why not? What is supposed to keep him under control? His conscience! But as he has already killed his conscience while dating his wife, it cannot keep him under control now he is in love with someone else. So having sex before we marry, even when we are engaged is still harmful. It breaks our will power, as it kills our conscience. When we make decisions based on our desire instead of based on our conscience, we will become a victim of our desires and lose control over our lives.

Addiction

Once we lose control of our will, we enter into a more compulsive phase, that of sexual addiction.

Remember Ephesians 4:19 *“Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every impurity with a continual lust for more.”* Once we are living in obedience to our desires, we become slaves of our own desires (with a continual lust for more) and have lost the control over our will and thus over our lives. If we have a desire for our wife, but she has no desire, we force her anyway. If we have desire for someone else, and there is an opportunity, we have sex with that person. If we see a child/teenager that looks attractive to us, we deceive that child/teenager into a sexual relationship. Whatever we want to do; we have to do. If we want a second wife, we take one. If we want to divorce, we do so. If we like someone but that person does not like to go with me, we rape that person. If we desire to go to a prostitute, we go. We have become addicts of our own sexual feelings and instead of using our sexuality to bring unity and pleasure to our wife or husband we use it for our own pleasure and do not care if we are abusing other people. In this process we are destroying our own life and the lives of the people we relate too, we get sexual diseases, our marriage will be destroyed, our children will hate us, etc.

We see this same pattern of destruction in Proverbs chapter 5, although it speaks about adultery, the results are also the same in pre-marital sex. At the end of the chapter we read from verse 20-23:

“Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? For a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; and the cords of sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline led astray by his own great folly.”

5. Damage to our Spirit.

Our spirit is a God given part of us. In Genesis chapter 1 verse 7 we read: *“the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”* God has given us the spirit of life. Through our spirit we can communicate with God and with other spirits. Ultimately our spirit controls our soul and our body. We make our decisions based on what we believe. The more understanding we have of God, the better we can live according to His plan for our life. God is Holy and Pure. Only those people who have a holy and pure heart can relate to God through their spirit.

Matthew 5:8 *‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.’*

Conflict with the Holy Spirit

As we have already discovered, sex is part of God’s creation. He gave it to us as a blessing, to be able to bring Joy, Unity and Multiplication to the marriage relationship. We have also seen that if we use it in any other way than the way God has intended it to be used, sex can be incredibly destructive and hurtful. When we close off our soul and our spirit to listen to God and we start doing whatever we desire, our spirit becomes impure, and we lose the ability to communicate with God.

The Bible shows us clearly what the acts of our sinful nature are and what the consequences will be if we give in to them.

Galatians 5:19-21 says: *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

1 Corinthians 6:9,10 *“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers will inherit the kingdom of God.”*

1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 19 makes it also very clear that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. So, if we are tempted to give in to a sexual impure situation we get into a serious conflict with the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:17 *“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”*

In verse 24 of the same chapter Paul explains that those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. If we do this, we can live in harmony with the Holy Spirit and He will be guiding our lives. If we do not

crucify our sinful nature but give in to temptations, we will not be able to live in harmony with the Holy Spirit. He will not join with us in our sin.

Galatians 6: 7, 8 "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

James 4:4 "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

Unclean Spirits take over

Once we unite our spirit with the spirit of someone else in an impure situation we start living in an unclean spiritual realm. We will get more impure sexual desires initially coming from our own imagination but now also from other unclean spirits which are intending to destroy us. Those spirits inspire people to rape, abuse children and others, kill etc. They try to make us believe that we can do anything we want because there is no God who will judge us, that life has no value and that it is not wrong to use other people for our own pleasure. In our spirit we become a slave to those spirits, whatever they tell us we will have to do. We continue to obey them until our life and the lives of everybody else around us are totally destroyed. Once we give in to the temptation of sexual activity outside of marriage, we become unclean in our spirits and open to the abusive control of other unclean spirits.

One of the demonic spirits that takes control over people who live in sexual sin is a spirit of rebellion. In order to commit sexual sin, we have to rebel. Rebel against God and against our conscience. We find that this rebellion will take over in all other areas of our life as well.

Sexual Sin destroys the Intimacy of Marriage.

Beside the spiritual impact sexual sin has on our relationship with God, our spirit also sub-consciously holds memories. In every sexual encounter we are

emotionally and spiritually united with another person. This also happens when people lustfully look at pornography. Sexual memories are being stored up. Once we are married and have sex with our husband or wife those memories become alive again. Instead of enjoying a deep sense of intimacy you will now have to fight against the invading sexual memories of other people. What was meant to be for just two of you has now become polluted by the memories of others.

6. Restoration of our Spirit

We have seen that the consequences of sexual misbehavior (sin) are very serious. They are destroying one's spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. You might already be suffering some of these consequences and may wonder if there is any hope for you and for others like you?

Well, the Bible is also very clear about this.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 9 and 10 we read:

"Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders will inherit the kingdom of God."

But after this verse we also find verse 11 which says:

"And this is what some of you were. BUT you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

To be washed means: to be made clean!

To be sanctified: to be made holy!

To be justified: to be made righteous! (as having no sin)

From this verse from the Bible, we can clearly see that restoration from sexual sin is possible. Let's look again to the three different aspects of our being and see what needs to take place.

Walking in the Light – Repentance and Confession

We have learned that because of our sin we suffer separation from God. We have become slaves of our sinful nature and maybe even polluted with unclean evil spirits. What do we need to do to come back into a relationship with God and to be able to live in obedience to His Will?

Our first step comes from 1 John 1:7 and 9

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin". "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. All sin includes sexual sins as well. It is only the blood of Jesus that can wash, sanctify and justify us. The Bible makes it clear that we all deserved to die because of our sins. But Jesus Christ the Son of God paid the price for our sins by dying at the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

John 3:16 says: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

If we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has died to save us from our sins, we receive not only forgiveness when we ask for it, we receive eternal life as well. We have become children of God, part of his family.

1 John 1:7 and 9 does bring up some questions:

What does it mean to walk in the light? To have fellowship with one another? To whom should we confess our sins?

To walk in the light simply means: not to walk in darkness. God is light! So, walking in the light means walking with God. But apparently this implies that if we walk with God, we will meet with others. Why? Because we need each other. We need each other to fight the battle against sin and temptation. As long as I keep my sins hidden, secret in my heart, letting no one know about my struggle and temptations, I will never win the battle against sin. It is very important that we walk in the light together and confess our sins to each other.

I would say that walking in the light means: Opening your heart and being honest with each other. To share your struggles and sins and ask someone to pray for you. Walking with Jesus, not doing anything we or he would be ashamed of. This is a process, a lifetime process, not something we do just once. Walking in the light and having fellowship with one another is walking in humility.

The moment we open our heart, and confess our sins, and ask God to forgive us, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sins. Our relationship with God is restored and we will inherit God's Kingdom.

After this we need to continue to walk in the light and to pray with each other in order to break the bondage of our sinful nature and if necessary to break the bondage of the unclean spirits.

Of course, you should be wise to whom you talk to and to whom you confess your sexual sins. If possible, talk with your parents or with your pastor. If it is not

possible or wise to talk with them, then try to talk with an elder of your church or with a mature Christian whom you know and will be able to trust.

This part of our restoration is the easiest and the most instant. The moment we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness and for the blood of Jesus to cleanse us, we are forgiven, washed, sanctified and justified. When Jesus cried out on the cross; "It is finished!" The price was paid in full. Jesus took upon himself, the punishment we deserved.

Receiving and Extending Forgiveness

For most people it is often easier to forgive others than to forgive themselves. But for your restoration to start it is crucial that you forgive yourself. This is also another reason it is important to confess to a fellow brother or sister. After your confession they can pray for you and speak out those precious words: "You are forgiven." If you keep struggling with your feelings, it helps to keep declaring this yourself. Praying prayers like, "Father, I thank you that the blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all my sins. I receive and accept my forgiveness."

As much as not receiving our own forgiveness blocks our restoration, not forgiving those we have sinned against us blocks our restoration as well. If people have been sexually abusing you, it is very difficult to forgive those people. It might help to remember that forgiving others is not the same as saying, "It didn't matter, or what you did was not wrong." When Jesus was crucified, after he was horribly tormented, crowned with thorns and bleeding to death, he prayed this incredible prayer: "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." Of course, they knew they were hurting Jesus, causing him unbearable pain. But Jesus also knew the state of their hearts. He knew that they were people lost in sin, people who did not know the love of God. If the people who have abused you would have been filled with the love of Father God, they would have never abused you.

For those people who have been abused because other people sinned sexually against you, against your will, it is crucial to understand that you are not guilty. Although you might feel guilty and sinful, you have not sinned. You do not have to ask God to forgive you for this terrible thing someone else did against you. You do need to sit in God's Presence and let His love heal you.

There is never an excuse for sexual abuse, and nobody has a right to justify him/herself, but it is crucial for us to understand that it is out of their own pain that hurting people hurt people. Letting go of your hatred and anger against them sets you free. You will need God's help and the help of other loving people around you to come to a point of forgiveness. Don't blame or condemn yourself if you are not at that point yet, but keep turning to God praying "Lord, please help me to forgive." Ultimately forgiveness is a choice. Choosing not to keep clinging to the pain of the past and wanting revenge at the person who has abused you. Learning to say, "God, even if I don't feel like it, I chose to forgive, because you have paid the price for his/her sin as well as for mine. I forgive because you have loved me and have forgiven me, because you are giving me new life."

The Restoration of our Sub-conscious Memories

How can we restore the intimacy of our marriage or of our future marriage? How can we get rid of the memories that are engraved into our sub-consciousness?

Hebrews 10:22 says: *"Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."*

The Bible speaks of having our guilty conscience cleansed. It's only the blood of Jesus that can cleanse our conscience from guilt. Knowing that we are forgiven however does not automatically wipe away all our memories. This will take time.

The more we try to suppress our memories however, the more we ingrain them into our sub-consciousness and the more they will keep coming up. We need to let them go and say goodbye to them. It is only by acknowledging our past that we can be delivered from it. If you are plagued by memories from the past, the best way to deal with them is to talk about them. That's right. Bring them into the light. This is often best done with a counselor. (Someone whom you can trust and share your memories with) By talking about them and confessing them you take them out of secrecy into the light.

After doing this you will need to continue in spiritual warfare and pray prayers like "In the name of Jesus I rebuke this memory. I know this happened, but I have confessed my sins and I am forgiven. I am cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Father God, please fill my mind with your spirit. Create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Ps.51:11)"

7. Restoration of our Soul

Sexual sin is devastating to our emotional life. It leads to emotional wounds, hardness or coldness of heart and to emotional bondage to sin.

Emotional Healing

Emotional healing begins in our spirit. After we have received forgiveness and have been restored to a loving relationship with God the Father, we can start to deal with the pain in our soul.

Ps.23:1-3 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters; he restores my soul."

Forgiveness is instant. Emotional healing will take time. The moment we confess our sins and ask God to forgive us, we are forgiven. But unless God brings about a miraculous healing, emotional healing will take time. It is very important that you find a spiritual and emotionally mature person with whom you can talk about what happened and with whom you can talk about your feelings. Ask this person to pray for you until you feel whole again. You will need to talk about how these sexual activities have been affecting your life.

Romans chapter 12:2 reveals us the importance of renewing our mind.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."

The renewing of our mind is part of our emotional healing. If we want to learn to change our behavior, we will have to begin with changing our mind. Changing the way we think. This is the whole purpose of this booklet. As a writer I hope that this booklet will change the way you think about sex. I hope this will motivate you to live a pure and holy life so that you can enjoy the gift of sex within your marriage.

Most people are not aware that the source of their feelings and emotions is in their mind. According to our experiences as a child, the words "Daddy is coming home," will either fill us with great joy, with indifference or with terror. From early childhood onwards all our experiences with our daddy have shaped our feelings. In this situation our feelings are based on what we really believe daddy will do

when he comes home. Will he give me a hug and a kiss and say that he loves me? Will he tell me to shut up and be quiet, or will he yell at me and abuse me?

In order for a person to really enjoy a healthy satisfying sexual life it is necessary that that person is free from any negative feelings related to sex. It often takes the skills of a good counselor to help you realize which beliefs your feelings are based upon. Once you understand the root beliefs behind your feelings you can start working on replacing these false beliefs with the truth.

For example, because of past experiences, a girl might have a strong feeling/suspicion that her husband will betray her. Because of this feeling she won't be able to trust him neither will she be able to really enjoy her sexual life with him. This might frustrate her husband and in due time push him into the arms of another woman who seems to be more loving and trusting of him. This is very sad. Although her suspicion seems to have proven her right, her marriage could have been very different if she had been healed from her negative feelings. Her past experience might have been that her father has left her mother for another lady. Or that she has had a boyfriend or different boyfriends who have left her to chase after other girls. Or that her mother had always told her 'You cannot trust men.' Although her experiences have been real, her belief that her husband (or all men) will betray her is not true. But because she believes that men cannot be trusted, she has a strong feeling that her husband will betray her. The truth is that some men are unfaithful, but not all men are. If this girl starts to confess and believe the truth that first of all 'God is faithful and will He never forsake me,' it will be easier for her to start believing that her husband wants to be faithful to her. She could then continue telling herself: 'My husband wants to be faithful, because he loves the Lord and he loves me.' Once she starts to trust God and her husband, she will be able to relax and enjoy her sexual relationship more. This in turn will also give her husband a stronger motivation to be faithful to his her.

It might not be so easy for you to find a skillful counselor, but even on your own with the help of trustworthy and loving friends you will be able to renew your mind.

Freedom from Sexual Addictions

For people who have become slaves to their sexual feelings and desires, it takes more work to break free. Sexual addictions are hard to break. Addictions in general do not respond to just will-power.

As we have seen in chapter four if we continue in sexual sin, it destroys our conscience. Without the ability to feel fear, shame and guilt, it is very hard to practice self-control. Once we have lost our conscience, it is very easy to sin again. Restoration can only take place in the light, in fellowship with one another. Sexual addicts recover best with the help of support groups. Groups based on a Twelve Step program from the Alcoholics Anonymous, like Sexaholics Anonymous, work very well for any kind of addiction. www.settingcaptivesfree.com is also a very useful resource. In order to restore your conscience, you need to be accountable to someone. You need to keep confessing your transgressions and sins. For those people it is very helpful to have someone they see ones a month or ones a week, to talk about their sexual activities and feelings.

Restoring our conscience means restoring our self-discipline. Coming to the point where we will not sin even if no one will ever find out about it.

During this time we need to break all our unhealthy relationships and habits (like watching lots of TV). We will need to make new relationships with spiritually and emotionally mature people who will stimulate us to live a holy and pure life. It is often the influence of friends who draw us into a downward spiral. Unless they also repent and want to change, they will keep pulling you down. If you desire to be healed and to change your life, you will need to seek friends who build you up in the way you want to go.

8. Restoration of our Body

Sadly the physical consequences of sexual sin are harder to deal with.

Restoring the Loss of Virginity

Once your virginity is gone, it can never be restored again. You can only hope and pray that your husband or wife to be will forgive you and accept you just as he or she has been forgiven him or herself. But it is very important for the unity in your marriage that you confess to your marriage partner before you marry that you are not a virgin. This person can then work through this disappointment before you marry each other. There is of course the risk that the marriage will be cancelled. But unless you work this through before your marriage, there will be a lot of distrust to work through once you are married. This might damage your marriage so badly it can easily end up in a divorce. If your marriage partner knows the truth and still wants to marry you, it is actually a sign that this person loves you no matter what.

Healing from Sexual Diseases

As we have seen in chapter five, if people have unprotected sex before marriage, it is very easy to contract a sexual disease. You will however not be aware of most sexual diseases for some time. There are many sexual transmitted diseases/infections (STD/I's) and some like HIV/AIDS which although they are fatal might have no symptoms for years. Yet the disease is doing its devastating work in your body. If you ever have had sex outside of your marriage without using a condom, it is best you go and see a doctor to see if you have any sexual disease. This might look shameful to you; to go to a doctor and request a test for STD/I's. You might be able to find a clinic or a hospital nearby where nobody knows you. But even if people know you, most medical practitioners keep to a code of confidence and will not inform anybody to shame you. If they do, you could even take them to court, and they would lose their license to practice. But if you wait till the symptoms show up and you fall ill, it will often be too late to repair the damage. Millions of people suffer seriously from sexual diseases that could have been treated well with medication in an early stage.

If you have HIV/AIDS, there is some treatment nowadays and medication is available in most countries. But it often takes lifelong treatment. Still, it is very important to know if you have it or not so that you will not infect your husband

or wife to be. Some people have contracted HIV before meeting their present husband or wife. Even if they had no sex together before they married, the infected person can still infect the other partner after marriage. In this way they will both have HIV/AIDS and even their children will be born with this dreaded disease which will cause incredible suffering to all of them.

If it appears that a person has HIV/AIDS, he can take a lot of precautions not to transmit this to other people. He or she might still be able to marry though it means they should never have sex without using a condom and even kissing is questionable. Medicine is improving though and by following the doctor's advice life can be more bearable.

Knowing that you have HIV/AIDS (or not taking a test if you know you have been at risk) and getting married without informing the other partner is actually a crime. Some countries are already working on a law that will make a blood test mandatory before marriage.

Dealing with an unwanted pregnancy

Once a girl is pregnant; the situation has become very complicated. No matter how complicated; Abortion is never the solution. Sadly, many girls go for an abortion. The lives of millions of babies are ended every year all over the world. Once they realize that they have taken the life of their own baby, many girls who have had an abortion suffer lots of mental and spiritual problems. Abortion is often referred to as: one dead and one wounded.

We will have to look for other solutions. But before we do this it is very important that we keep the right mindset towards the unborn child. We call this an unwanted pregnancy because the parents are not married, and it has created a very difficult situation. No matter how unwanted or how difficult the situation is, we should never call this an unwanted child. Even though the circumstances of the conception of this child have been sinful, God is still the creator and life giver of this child. Just like each one of us, this child is created in the image of God and has eternal value. Even though God did not plan for this baby to be conceived under this circumstance, be it pre-marital sex, adultery, prostitution, incest or rape, He still has a plan for this baby's life. He has been looking forward to this child coming into existence from before the foundation of the earth. When God created Adam and Eve, he did not have only 2 or 3 people in mind. He said, 'go and multiply and fill this earth.' At that time, He was already thinking of each single

one of us. He also instituted marriage and planned for children to be born within a loving and caring family.

Because of sin, man's disobedience to God's will, there are lots of things happening in our life that have never been planned or designed by God. He did not plan for people to hate, kill, murder and/or lust after each other. But because God has created us out of his longing for relationship with us, he has not taken away our free will. If we could not choose to sin, we could not choose to love either. God breathed his breath of life on Adam and Eve and told them to multiply. Through the sexual communion and the conception, his breath/spirit of life is also transferred to the child once the seed of the man joins with the egg of the woman. A new life has come into existence. This happens whether this sexual act has happened within God's plan or not. Even when someone is raped, which is totally out of God's plan, the baby that is born is still created in God's image. God has a plan for this baby's life and with all his heart, he longs for a relationship with this person. That's why abortion is so awful. It does not only end the baby's life, but it also ends the dream God had for this baby here on this earth. Even though this baby will make a difficult start, which was not planned by God, He is more than able to nurture this child into a successful person who can live a fulfilling life.

If you know that you have been born out of wedlock, or out of rape, I hope and pray that you do not see yourself as an unwanted child. Your circumstances of birth have been unwanted, but you are a wanted child. Wanted and loved by your Father in heaven who longs for you to live a happy and fulfilling life. Whenever you feel overwhelmed by negative feelings, say to yourself 'I am loved by my Father in heaven who loves me with a never-ending love. I am created in His image, and He has a plan for my life. I am not an accident, because life is not an accident.'

(Ps. 139:13-16) Though you are innocent of the sins of your parents, you might still suffer the consequences of sexual sin. You might have grown up with all kinds of negative influences, like being called, a bastard, or an accident or you might have grown up not knowing who your father is or who your parents are. In this case you also need to go through the steps of emotional healing found in chapter 7 and maybe even work through some of chapter 6.

As abortion is unacceptable, we have to look for other solutions.

If it is possible and reasonable, this girl could marry the boy. Even though it brings shame to the families and puts pressure on the couple.

But this is not always possible or wise. Maybe the father of the baby is already married, or he is a drug-addict and the mother an alcoholic.

Hopefully the girl's family will be willing to help her and accept her and the baby within the family. The girl should then accept her responsibility of being a mother until her child is grown up. If a man wants to marry her, he should then marry her and accept the baby as his own child. It would not be fair to the child once he has bonded to his or her mother to be left with other caretakers so the mother can start a new relationship.

This might reduce the changes of marriage for the mother, but at least she will have the peace of mind she has done the best for her child. The man who marries her and accepts the child should be recommended for not being selfish and making the best of a broken situation.

If this also is not an option, the girl could maybe have the baby and then give the baby to an adoption agency. In this way the baby will be able to have a good life within a family who will be very happy to receive a baby. There are many families that cannot have children of their own. In some places there are homes for unmarried mothers where they can go to for the last few months of their pregnancy. They give birth in the home and give the baby up for adoption. A few weeks after giving birth they go back home and nobody in their part of town knows they have been pregnant. In this way the mother can live with the peace of mind that she has done what is best for her baby.

Many women who have gone for an abortion suffer tremendous emotionally from the guilt that follows the abortion. It could be that you are one of them, or that you are one of the fathers who has agreed for or has advised your girlfriend to have an abortion. In this case both of you need help and work through the steps mentioned in Chapter 6 and 7. There is healing and forgiveness for you. Even though the life of this baby cannot be restored on this earth God longs to pick up the broken pieces of your life and lead you into the good plans He has for you.

Even though there is hope, it is painful to think and to write about these things. Sometimes I wish things were different. I wish restoration was easy and simple. But the reality is that it is not. Because sex in spiritual, emotional and physical the impact of sexual sin and sexual abuse is incredibly deep. It's my prayer that this booklet will help you to live your life in a way that will not bring damage to yourself neither to others. Even if you already have been damaged, I pray you will change your ways and seek God's ways so your healing can begin.

Restoration is possible! Don't give up hope, don't be a fool

Save Sex for Marriage!

(And save yourself a lot of pain and trouble.)

9. Controlling our Sexual Feelings

I assume that most people who read this booklet actually have a desire to live a pure life. You might have been confused your whole life, struggling with your own sexual feelings, maybe even praying to God to take your sexual feelings away from you.

Many people however live in lust and sexual fantasies. When lust controls your mind you will eventually not be able to control your body.

1Thessalonians 4:3-5

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;"

Accepting and Understanding our Sexuality

Learning to control our body implies that we learn to control our sexual feelings. As human beings we have been created differently than the animals. Animals only have strong sexual drives during mating time. Their sexuality has been given just for the purpose of multiplication. Our human sexuality is very different. We are created and born as sexual beings. We are sexual beings. It is our sexuality that desires relationship and yearns for intimacy. It causes us to want to develop friendships and to get married. This is what makes us different from the animals. We are created out of God's desire for relationship. Without our sexuality we would not be human. This does not mean we need to have sex in order to relate and to experience intimacy. But we do need to be in touch with our own sexuality before we can control our sexual feelings.

God cannot and will not take your sexual feelings away from you. Without them you would not be human. Learning to control our sexual feelings starts with accepting that we are sexual beings.

I have read many books on sexual life and sexual therapy and have learned most from the books by Penner & Penner. They explain that we have sexual urges every 2 to 4 hours from birth till we die. Those urges become more intense in our early teenage years when our hormone production increases. They come and go without us being able to do anything about them. They are controlled by the nerve system that also controls all the other automatic processes in our body, like our breathing, digestion and sleeping processes. Those urges however only go to a

certain level. They may arouse us a bit and give us a sexual sensation or desire. For them to become a real sexual experience they need to be taken over by our active mind. It is only with the active participation of our mind that we can experience and enjoy an intense sexual feeling.

Animals cannot control their sexual urges; we human beings can. At an appropriate time we can choose to give into those urges and focus on a sexual experience or we can decide to ignore them and let them 'wave away.'

Most of the time when we are busy we do not feel our sexual urges. But we do feel them once we relax. It is the same with our sleeping habits. We cannot sleep unless and until we relax. This explains that many people experience a sexual urge when they sit down to spend some time in prayer and meditation. You want to pray and focus on your relationship with God and up come those sexual feelings. You might have learned to see this as an attack from Satan and try to fight them and to rebuke them. Repressing your feelings usually only makes them stronger. Instead of repressing them, thank God for them. Say: "God thank you for creating me as a sexual being. Thank you, Lord, I am still alive, and my body is functioning well. But right now, I choose to make this a time between you and me, I let these feelings go and want to concentrate on your Word and on your Spirit." You might then take a few minutes to do some more 'active' meditation like reading and pondering on a part of the Bible. After that you can return to waiting on God and listening to his Spirit.

In our early teenage years when our hormone production is sharply increased those urges can be very overwhelming. It's not for nothing 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks about 'learning to control.' This is a process that is not easily mastered. Sadly, most teenagers have to deal with their feelings all by themselves. Their parents might have never talked with them about what is going on in their body. The increase of overwhelming sexual feelings might easily lead them to the practice of masturbation.

Although masturbation is not a practice that should be encouraged, there is no reason to see yourself as a sexual sinner at this stage. Though masturbation at this stage should not be seen as a sin, giving in to your feelings and developing a habit of masturbation is very destructive for your sexual development. You are meant to 'learn to control' not 'learn to give in.' Not learning to control your feelings will lead you to become a slave of your sexual urges.

Once boys have learned to control their feelings and not to give in to their urges they might still experience 'wet dreams' as a physical release of the buildup semen in their body. This is a normal, not sinful, part of their physical cycle like girls experience a monthly period as well.

If things were perfect, your parents would have talked to you about the changes in your body and the increase of sexual feelings. If parents talk about them and you understand what is going on in your body, you can see this as a process of preparation. You will understand that sex is a positive and enjoyable part of marriage. But your parents will also show you the necessity of learning to control your feelings and not to be controlled by them. They will stimulate you to develop good relationships making friends with people of your own sex and that of the opposite sex as well. It is in enjoying friendships and developing relationships that our life starts to find its purpose and meaning.

Seeing your sexuality as a positive and God-given part of you will help you to be at ease with yourself and to enjoy being yourself. This prepares you to be at ease with others and to enjoy others.

Overcoming Lust

Besides having our bodily rhythm of sexual urges, our sexual feelings can also be actively triggered by our mind. This often happens when we look at or think about sexually stimulating things. Boys usually get stimulated by looking at girls or at pictures of girls (pornography). Girls usually get stimulated within the context of a relationship or by reading about relationships (eg. Romantic books or soap series on TV)

We live in an extremely sexually perverse and stimulating society. All of us are confronted with sexual stimulating images or romantic ideas all the time. If we allow them to fill our mind and to get sexually stimulated by them, we will be controlled by lust. Lust is very demanding and needs to be satisfied. It is often lust, wanting to satisfy your own desires, and not love, the concern for the wellbeing of the other person, which drives people into sexual activity. Lust is a sexual sin, and although masturbation in itself is not a sin, if it is driven by lust, masturbation as well should be viewed as a sin.

Jesus made it clear that even looking at a woman lustfully is the same as committing adultery.

Matthew 5:28 *"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

Job showed us an important key in overcoming the problem of lust. Job 31:1 *"I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl."*

Job apparently learned to control his sexual feelings once he learned to control his eyes. If we let our eyes wander to look at people (or images) lustfully, it will be impossible for our mind to stay pure. Once our mind is full of lust, we will not be able to control our body and need to have a sexual release. Driven by lust people either turn to sexual activity or to masturbation. Often those people look for any available person which often leads to incest. They turn to younger girls or boys in the family to satisfy their sexual desires, taking advantage of their trust and their vulnerability.

1 Thessalonians 4:6 *"and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you."*

Luke 11:34, 35 *"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body is also full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to, then, that the light within you is not darkness."*

If we want to live a pure and holy life which will enable us to live in a good relationship with God and with our fellow human beings, it is essential that we learn to control our sexual feelings.

The good news is that we can do this, and God wants to help us to do so. But it is not something we can do alone. 1 John 1: 7 makes it clear that walking in the light and having fellowship with each other goes together.

Four Tools

The four main tools I would like to advise you to bring your river under control are:

- 1) Make God your ally, not your foe. (Make God your helping friend, don't see him as your enemy.) Be open and honest to God about your sexual feelings and struggles. Don't hide from him when you fail but seek his heart and find healing in his love.

- 2) Make a covenant with your eyes not to look lustfully to a girl or to a boy.
Be very wise in what you look at or read.
- 3) Bring your mind under control. Don't allow yourself to live in sexual fantasies, creating desires you cannot control.
- 4) Start working on building relationships with people who seek to follow the Lord Jesus and who are living a pure life.

Breaking Free

I have written this booklet in the hope that it will help you to live a fulfilling life, free from the damage and the pain that comes from an uncontrolled sexual life.

However, you might be suffering right now in your body, soul or spirit because you have been involved in sinful sexual relationships. I have also written this booklet for you. Hopefully the part on restoration of sexual sin has given you hope. Even if everybody in your life is letting you down; get a hold of God! He will not let you down. He is longing to bring healing to your life.

You might have to make some serious changes in your life though. I hope it is clear to you that you have to stop all sexual relationships outside of marriage. If you are in love with someone, do not damage that person by having sex together before marriage. Even not if both of you are longing for it. Say: "Because I love you, I will not have sex with you (anymore) until we are married." Do not bring yourself into temptation by being alone and kissing each other. Once your feelings are aroused and you are alone together, it is very hard to keep your feelings under control. Love can wait, even for five years. Lust cannot wait, not even five minutes. Love will bring healing and joy. Lust will bring destruction and regret.

In order to have a fulfilling life, we need to be in a meaningful relationship with God. He is the Creator of our life. Personally, I have found it very helpful to read the Bible, especially the New Testament and to pray to God. I discovered that God is a loving Father who wants to help me in all things. That He loves me and forgives me if I ask Him so in the name of Jesus Christ. I found He has created me with a purpose in this life. It brings me tremendous fulfillment and joy to serve Him. Out of my relationship with God I find the strength and inspiration to be a blessing to my wife, to bring joy and fullness to her life. He is also helping me to be a loving father to my son and daughters. The Bible inspires me to live a selfless life instead of a selfish life.

Try to buy a Bible somewhere, study it, pray and discover who God is, and discover yourself. Start living in Love instead of in Lust. Become a blessing to yourself and to others.

Paul Th. Heiligenberg
Siliguri, India, 2001

A Prayer

Maybe you do not know God, or you are not sure of your forgiveness and salvation? If you like you could pray a prayer like this:

“Dear God. I believe you are the creator of life. You have given me life and have created me with a purpose. I long to know You and to live in fellowship with You. I have committed many sins and I know my sins separate me from You. Will You please forgive me my sins. I have heard that you have sent your Son Jesus to die for my sins. I needed to die but You have given your Son so that I may live.

Dear Jesus, please forgive me my sins, wash me with your blood that I may be free from sin. Come Lord Jesus and live in my heart. Be Lord of my life.

Father God, I thank you that through the sacrifice of Jesus I am forgiven, and you have accepted me into your spiritual family. I am your child now, your son/daughter. Thank you, God, for accepting me.

Please guide me by your Spirit and through your Word, the Bible, into a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Help me to live a pure life, to bring my desires under control. Father give me the courage to talk to someone about my sins and my struggles. I need help to overcome them. Help me to walk in the light and not to hide my sins anymore.

Thank you, God, for loving me I know you will not let me down.

In Jesus Name I pray.
Amen.

When you pray to God you can pray anytime, anywhere, in any way you like. Talk to him as you would talk to a loving Father. Be honest to Him and tell him all your sins, fears, dreams, hopes and disappointments. He will speak back to you, through His Word, but also through His Spirit in your thoughts. He also speaks through people and through circumstances.

A. AIDS in Africa

AIDS is becoming an epidemic all over the world, but especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (the countries in Africa south of the Sahara Desert) it is already an incredible disaster. Till the beginning of the year 2000 all over the world, 16.3 million people have died from AIDS, 14.4 million of them in Africa. In 1999 alone 2,6 million people died from AIDS 85% of them in Africa. In 1999 5.6 million people were infected with AIDS (which means: they became HIV positive.) From those 5.6 million, 1 million were children living in Africa. In the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mainly Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, etc) 6000 people die of AIDS every day. At many cemeteries, who are open seven days a week, 24 hours a day, people stand in line to bury their dead.

10.4 million African children have lost their mother or both of their parents due to AIDS. Many are looked after by their relatives, but many, many of them live on the streets as there are no relatives left to look after them or their relatives have no resources to look after them. The younger ones live in orphanages, but the older ones try to make a living on the streets, stealing, begging, forming gangs, etc. and often ending up in prostitution. As they are barely surviving, it is impossible for them to pay for their school-fees and they are growing up uneducated, unable to find a proper job.

In Uganda, in the Rakai district, 32% (75.000 children) of the population under 15 has been orphaned. An old grandmother of 69 had 4 daughters and 9 sons, 11 of them died from AIDS leaving her with 15 grandchildren to look after. This brought her to such a desperate situation that she almost committed suicide with the whole family. In Uganda's Masaka district, where 110.000 of all the 342.000 children are AIDS-orphans, another grandmother of 70 lost all her 11 children to AIDS she now has to look after 35 grandchildren. An entire generation is about to be whipped out by a preventable sexual disease.

The streets and orphanages are full of children who have AIDS themselves. Orphaned or abandoned by their parents as it is too expensive to give medical treatment for AIDS and the child is going to die anyway so they often do not even try to give it the best life they can. Most of them do not get older than 4 years old before they die from some kind of infection.

This are some of the horrible facts of the AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa as reported in the Newsweek Magazine in January 2000. This epidemic is mainly the result of uncontrolled sexual activity. Many of the man have sexual relationships with more than one woman and often visit prostitutes. When AIDS infects a man,

he in his turn infects his wife. The children that are born after that are born with AIDS. Also, many young women have sexual relationships before they marry (special in college times) they get infected by one of their boyfriends and when they marry, they infect their husband and their own children. To make things worse, most people there have a believe that in order to get cured from AIDS you need to have sex with a virgin, in this way many young girls get infected with AIDS. (of course, this is no cure and both the man, and the girl will die from AIDS)

In India (2002) more than 4 million people are infected with AIDS and it is a very realistic expectation that unless people change their uncontrolled sexual life style, India and Nepal will have to go through the same horror as Africa is going through today.

(Resource: Newsweek Magazine January 2000)

According to the Global HIV & AIDS statistics — 2020 fact sheet

32.7 million people have died of AIDS-related illnesses since the start of the epidemic
38 million people were living with HIV in 2019

According to the World Health Organization's Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

More than 1 million people attracted a STIs **every day** worldwide in 2019.

B. Some ideas to turn the tide of this cycle of destruction

The solution to the problem of sexual misuse and abuse is not easy. Even if we could stop the spread of AIDS through condoms, we cannot stop the destruction of our soul and our spirit that comes from sexual misuse. If we want this destruction to stop, we have to start living according to God's plan for creation. If a husband and a wife are living in a mutual satisfying relationship, enjoying love and unity together, they will most likely have no desire to seek sexual relationships anywhere else. If children see that their father and mother are happy with each other, and they understand that within the marriage relationship sex is a good thing; their will patience to wait with sexual activity until they are married, will be much stronger.

If we think back to the example of the river and the flood, we realize that water is a very useful resource if we can bring it under control and channel it in the right way. When we do not maintain the riverbanks, they break and there will be a devastating flood. It works the same way with our sexual feelings. They can be very useful in maintaining pleasure and unity within the marriage relationship, and to have children as well. But if we do not maintain the boundaries well, we will suffer the consequences of a flood in our life. One of the secrets in stopping the destruction of uncontrolled sexual activities will be in building and maintaining successful and satisfying marriages. One of the bigger problems many societies are facing is that most people are not satisfied with their husband or wife, and they do not know how to build a good and strong marriage.

What needs to happen for people to come to a mutually satisfying relationship and to build a society free from sexual destruction?

Some ideas:

- People need education on how to have a fulfilling marriage.
- People need education on how a husband and a wife can improve their communication and meet each other's emotional needs.
- People need education on how a husband and wife can have a satisfying sexual relationship.
- We need to understand and remove the cultural barriers that keep a husband and a wife from having a satisfying marriage relationship.
- The government can also help by keeping very high standards and by severely punishing those people who abuse other people sexually (like rape, incest, prostitution, pornography, etc.)
- People need education on the proper use of birth control methods. So that they will not be afraid to have too many children.

- We need to fight for a society free from unhealthy influences like pornography, erotic movies and magazines, etc.
- Parents need education on how to raise their children into emotional mature adults.
- Parents need to learn to educate their own children on the gift of sex and how it is to be used in a good way.
- People who have already been wounded in their body, soul or spirit, need to receive medical treatment and counseling as well to receive healing and restoration so they can live a fulfilling and happy life again.

This is not easy to implement, but it is possible! If we seek truth, we will find it. If we try to do good, God will help us. I hope that this little booklet will be a step in the direction of a society free from the terror of sexual misconduct.