

“We will be Men of Covenant with God through faith in Jesus Christ. We will live out our faith with Loyalty, Commitment and Passion. We will faithfully Worship, Preach the Gospel, Pray, Read and Obey the Word and **Win the Fight for Sexual Purity**” – Men of Covenant

OPENING PRAYER

Lord we pray that you humble us as men to hear your word on purity. We pray Lord that in hearing this message, men would respond and commit to living out the very first “Men of Covenant” statement that says we will live out our faith in Jesus Christ by “winning the fight for sexual purity”. Lord, if any man is in bondage, we pray that this is the day he begins to break free and starts to live a life focused on you and you alone - Amen

WHY IT MATTERS

Do you want to be closer to God as you mature in your Christian walk? I sure do! But, let's first consider the holy nature of God. A God of unknowable wisdom and unimaginable power. A God that is perfect in every way and completely without sin. Then to consider that he's been that way, every second, of every minute of every day – forever. I struggle to make it a single day without sin. And the thought of a perfect and holy God makes me catch my breath in both fear and reverence. How then do we get closer to such a perfect God? The bible says we cover our sinful nature by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. That faith forgives our sins and grants us “adoption papers” into the kingdom of God ... but then what? Now that we have the “papers”, how do we then begin to “behave more like Gods children and get even closer to God?”.

The Apostle Paul uses the word “Sanctification” to describe the process. He mentions it specifically in 1st Thessalonians 4:3 where interestingly, the subject is purity ... he says **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality”**. Paul's message here is pretty clear. One of the ways we become more Christ-like is by NOT engaging in sexual sin. Listen, if you have already won your battle with sexual purity- praise God. If not, then this message is for you.

SO WHAT IS SEXUAL IMPURITY?

The list of Sexual IMPURITY is long, BUT here are the big ones:

- Your eyes can lust and fantasize (Jesus standard)
- You pleasure your own body (enough said)
- You view inappropriate images or video (not ONLY pornography)
- You commit adultery (sex with someone not your wife)
- You commit fornication (sex before/outside marriage)

These sins can occur occasionally, infrequently or even as one time events. When they manifest as frequent and ongoing sin - it will rob you of intimacy with God and if married, intimacy with your wife.

THE JESUS STANDARD

What's the Biblical standard for purity? As always, let's begin with Jesus. Jesus speaks specifically on the subject of sexual purity in **Matthew 5:28 ... "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** In other words, again – according to Jesus, all men that have looked at a woman and lusted for her have committed adultery. I stand before you today guilty of that sin and it's likely ALL of us are in the same boat. Listen, I don't like being labeled an "adulterer" any more than you all do, but such is the high standard that Jesus has set for the men that follow him. Men like us. And, if you find the adultery comment eye opening, Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 5:29-30, that you'd be better off with one less eye or one less hand than to continue to sexually sin.

IT'S A BIG DEAL

It's not only the words of Jesus that warn us of sexual sin. The bible has over 100 verses that warn us of its dangers. From Paul we hear in **Colossians 3:5 "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry"**. Then in **Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander"**

In just these 2 verses we see sexual immorality listed alongside: murder, evil thoughts and idolatry. If I could pick a group of sins to slot sexual immorality I rather not pick these – it's a rough list, but I think it says something about the seriousness of the issue.

Clearly the extraordinary number of verses in the Bible that discuss sexual immorality demonstrate that sexual sin is a “big deal” to God. The painful truth is that all men have fallen short of the high standard set by Jesus. That shortfall can manifest as occasional sin or can lead to the point of bondage (which is another word for addiction). “Sexual Bondage” is a form of addiction where you: Can't stop sinning, spending too much time involved in it, you may have been caught and/or there were consequences for the sin. Further, you want to quit – have tried many times to quit, but simply can't.

THE PROBLEM

God created us as sexual beings and that gift was designed to be enjoyed between a husband and wife (PERIOD)

BUT Satan has leveraged our sex saturated culture to warp and twist the gift of sex to his advantage by spreading lies that you can have sex with whomever you want, whenever you want and any way that you want to.

The scale of the problem is almost overwhelming. From Facebook to Movies to TV commercials, overtly sexual imagery and messaging is everywhere and in almost everything.

AND the problem starts right here

The United States ranks #1 in pornography consumption worldwide. 40 million Americans access pornography on a regular basis and 200,000 are clinically diagnosed as porn addicts.

Christian men are not immune to this hyper-sexualized culture. Dr. Ted Roberts studies have shown that 60-70% of evangelical men are in sexual bondage of some sort and as much as 50% of Pastors are as well. Worse, though the problem is huge and help is available ... as men we don't like to ask for it

BONDAGE AND GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Being in bondage to sexual sin brings enormous amounts of mental guilt and shame to us as men. However, the spiritual impact of that same sin pains Gods in ways that are hard for us to even comprehend. It GRIEVES the Holy Spirit and dampens His impact within us. We can feel like God is distant. Recurring sin will stall your Christian walk with God.

Let's let John Wesley explain it better than I. In a 1733 message, he used an analogy of friendship to describe what grieving the Holy Spirit is like:

He begins with the friend analogy - "Indeed, a man may be provoked by the wrong of his enemy, but he is properly grieved by the offenses of his friend." (A friend who has wronged you just "hurts more")

He goes on to talk about the Holy Spirit - "The more frequently we offend Him, the more we weaken His influences in our souls". (We start to lose that blessed influence.)

He closes by going back to his friendship analogy - "So a man will forgive his friend a great many imprudences and some willful transgressions. But to find him frequently affronting him, all his kindness will wear off by degrees; and the warmth of his affection, even toward one who had the greatest share of it, will die away, as he cannot but think that such a one does not any longer either desire or deserve to maintain a friendship with him" (We stand to lose God's direction and hand in our life)

MESSAGE TITLE

Men - our "closest friend" here on earth is NOT our fishing buddy or the guys we watch football with on Sunday afternoons. It's actually the Holy Spirit. He lives right inside us. He's there to guide us, to correct us, to sanctify us.

Take a second to recall the day you were saved and how happy you were to be filled with the Holy Spirit in that moment. Now shift your thoughts to the fact that sexual sins use the very same body He resides in.

Sexual impurity GRIEVES the Holy Spirit. The reason it does so is because "It's NOT YOUR body". And that's the title of this message. Your body is NOT your body. Not my words, but straight from the word of God. In case you miss it, he repeats himself several times!

1 Corinthians 6:13 "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body"

1 Corinthians 6:15 "Do you not know that your bodies are members (parts) of Christ himself?"

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are NOT your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies"

AT A PRICE: Just 3 words but oh so powerful as they link YOUR body to the sacrificial act by Jesus on the cross. Know this - God's Son died for your body and soul - and if you're caught in an unending cycle of sexual sin followed by repentance only to then sin again, you ARE grieving the Holy Spirit as you abuse a body, that as a Christian, is not even yours

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

What follows is a personal testimony. It's shared here because it's a message of hope. START TESTIMONY: As always, in his grace and mercy, God offers us a way out of sin. We all know the path that leads away from the bondage of any sin, starts with repentance and prayer – so that's where I started. I told God I wanted out of my sin and I simply couldn't do it on my own. An answer to my prayer revealed itself a week or so later with a specific Christian based program designed to help Men achieve sexual purity called "The Conquer Series" -and it was being taught right here at Patriot Church. It's an amazing 12 week Christian based program where men come together to study, share, heal and eventually claim victory over sexual sin.

First, let me get this question out of the way. The specific area where I was in sexual bondage doesn't matter. What matters is that it WAS sexual

bondage and I needed Jesus to step in supernaturally, grab me by the hand and pull me out. Today, with His help, I'm walking in sexual purity.

Here's the amazing part ... Purity was just ONE of the many victories God gave me. Like so many other commands God gives us, walking in sexual purity is not something he asks simply "because I said so" – it's because there are huge benefits to following his word, and becoming more holy and less worldly.

Let me share some of these blessings:

- I'm closer than I have ever been to God. He's turned my heart toward him in a way I have NEVER experienced before. He's revealed promises he's made for my life and he is steadily delivering on those promises.
- God's also changed me, changed my personality ... to be a better man, a better husband. I'm more patient, more sharing, slower to anger and have higher awareness of my wife and her needs. These are not MY words, I asked my wife to tell me what she sees as different and better and this is what SHE said.
- I've experienced a deeper sexual intimacy with my wife. Focus here on the word "intimacy" and not on sex. This deeper intimacy has replaced an all too often selfish and "all about my needs" attitude that relegated sex to the mechanics of it while missing the intentions of God
- I've discovered and healed the root cause old wounds I had from my past. You see any addiction is nothing more than self-medicating an issue you've never dealt with
- I literally think differently than I did before, having replaced lustful thinking with Gods word, prayer and his promises upon my life
- And, yes, of course, thanks to God and the Conqueror program, I'm walking free of sexual bondage and in sexual purity every day.

These are the blessings and freedom that come when we reject sin. If you are in bondage today and want the same kind of success that I had, then reach out to your Mens group or Pastor for help. Counseling and Christian based programs are available and they work! END TESTIMONY

CALL TO ACTION

So exactly how will we “win the fight for sexual purity” as stated in the very first “Men of Covenant” commitment? Whether you’re in bondage or prone to occasional sin in this area – how can we get better? Let’s start with the bible and see what advice it offers.

Corinthians 6:18 Paul tells us - “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body”. Paul says “get away”!

Matthew Henry, in his early 1700 bible commentary series said this about sexual immorality – we’ll read it in Latin first: “Alia vitia pugnando, sola libido fugiendo vincitur” – Read carefully the English translation “Other vices may be conquered in FIGHT, this ONLY by FLIGHT” In other words, get away from it!

ALL men can be more sexually pure each day by implementing 3 simple principles that align with Paul’s counsel to “get away” OR “flee”:

- Move away: GET NEW INTERESTS (Read/Listen/Watch Christian materials)
 - **Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it”**
 - Help God to help YOU get out of bondage by having new materials/interests at the ready, so when you are tempted – there IS a way out
- Look away: FORM NEW HABITS (Made the current habit “the old one”)
 - **Matthew 6:22-23 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light”**
 - A habit of looking then lusting CAN become your OLD habit! How? Start are new one of looking and then quickly looking away

- Think away: MAKE NEW PATHWAYS (Brain science, grow over old and pave new)
 - **Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things”**
 - There is a tremendous amount of modern brain function research that proves the bible statement of “renewing your mind” is one you can believe in. As you think new thoughts, the old pathways that neurons took in your brain (old, impure thoughts) will “grow over” and soon become “impassable”

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Let's close by going back to the bible to Hebrews 4:15-16 and read an encouraging word for those in bondage to sin.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”

Don't you wonder what it was like for Jesus as a sinless man to be tempted by the devil?

What was it like to Him to be shown an open door to sin? To be invited and encouraged to participate in unholy behavior while “living in” a perfectly holy body? It must have been repulsive to Him simply being present with the devil. We can imagine him getting physically ill from it.

In this encounter, we learn that our Lord rebuked the most powerful force for evil using 3 verses from Deuteronomy 6 and 8. A quick check of the Bible shows that these verses fall under the chapter headings of:

- Love the Lord Your God(D6)
- Don't Forget the Lord (D8)

This then is how we flee sin! We follow His example to win our purity battle

- 1) We love the Lord ... **more than the sin**
- 2) We remember His blessings ... **more sweetly than the momentary pleasures of sexual sin**

What if each of us were to bring our Love of the Lord into our moments of temptation? What if, in that moment, we reminded ourselves of our first love, and who we serve here on earth?

When tempted, what if we remind ourselves that our bodies are not "ours and ours alone" When we bring sexual sin into our bodies we do so alongside the Holy Spirit that lives there too.

When tempted, what if each of us thought of the price Christ paid for our redemption? What if we recalled the blessing that we are actually adopted Sons of the God that made the universe? What if we reminded ourselves that our names are written in God's Book of Life! With all these blessings swirling in our minds, in that moment of temptation, what if we simply remember the choice that our Lord made and make the same one.

Choose the sinless path, the path of freedom

Lord we praise you for the Men that you gave the strength to read this challenging message. Now we pray you give them the boldness to act upon it. May today be the day each of us begins anew in our quest for sexual purity. May we seek to align with the Holy Spirit by understanding that our bodies are NOT ours, but belong to Christ who paid the ultimate price for each of us. May today be the day that any man trapped in bondage seeks to escape with the help of the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the promise of a more holy life - Amen