



Every Man's Battle: Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time (The Every Man Series)

By Stephen Arterburn, Fred Stoeker

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The challenge every man faces...the fight every man can win!

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Millions have found *Every Man's Battle* the single greatest resource for overcoming the struggle and remaining strong in the face of temptation. With extensive updates for a new generation, this phenomenal bestseller shares the stories of dozens who have escaped the trap of sexual immorality and presents a practical, detailed plan for any man who desires sexual integrity.

Includes a comprehensive workbook and a special section for women, designed to help them understand and support the men they love.

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Editorial Review

Review

"There is no more common enemy of true manhood than the diversion or the perversion of our sexual capacities. I welcome every contribution to the arsenal of resistance."

-Jack W. Hayford, Litt.D., pastor of The Church on the Way and president of The King's Seminary

"The vulnerable, honest, and insightful pages of this book reveal what every man must know."

-Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott, authors of Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts

"Clear, practical principles for sexual purity...a call for courage, commitment, and self-discipline."

-Dr. John C. Maxwell, founder of The INJOY Group

"Read with an open heart, Every Man's Battle may save your marriage and your witness."

***-Dr. Gary Rosberg, president of America's Family Coaches
author of Guard Your Heart and The Five Love Needs of Men and Women***

About the Author

Stephen Arterburn is coauthor of the best-selling Every Man series from WaterBrook Press. He is founder and chairman of New Life Clinics, host of the daily *New Life Live!* national radio program, creator of the Women of Faith Conferences, a nationally known speaker and licensed minister, and the author of more than forty books. He lives in Laguna Beach, California.

Fred Stoeker is coauthor of the best-selling Every Man Series. He is founder and chairman of Living True Ministries and a conference speaker who has counseled hundreds of men and married couples. Fred and his wife, Brenda, live near Des Moines, Iowa, with their four children.

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Our Stories

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity" (Ephesians 5:3).

If there's a single Bible verse that captures God's standard for sexual purity, this is it. And it compels this question: In relation to God's standard, is there even a hint of sexual impurity in your life?

For both of us, the answer to that question was yes.

FROM STEVE: COLLISION

In 1983 my wife, Sandy, and I celebrated our first anniversary. One sunsplashed Southern California morning that year, feeling good about life and our future, I hopped in our 1973 Mercedes 450SL—the car of my dreams, white with a black top. I'd owned it for just two months. I was tooling northbound through Malibu on my way to Oxnard, where I'd been asked to testify in a court hearing about whether a hospital should add an addiction treatment center. I always loved driving along the PCH, as locals called the Pacific Coast Highway. These four lanes of blacktop hugged the golden coastline and provided a close-up view of L.A.'s beach culture. With the top down and the wind blowing in my face, I found that summer morning a good day to be alive. I never intentionally set out to be girl-watching that day, but I spotted her about two hundred yards ahead and to the left. She was jogging toward me along the coastal sidewalk. From my sheepskin-covered leather seat, I found the view outstanding, even by California's high standards. My eyes locked on to this goddesslike blonde, rivulets of sweat cascading down her tanned body as she ran at a purposeful pace. Her jogging outfit, if it could be called that in those days before sports bras and spandex, was actually a skimpy bikini. As she approached on my left, two tiny triangles of tie-dyed fabric struggled to contain her ample bosom.

I can't tell you what her face looked like; nothing above the neckline registered with me that morning. My eyes feasted on this banquet of glistening flesh as she passed on my left, and they continued to follow her lithe figure as she continued jogging southbound. Simply by lustful instinct, as if mesmerized by her gait, I turned my head further and further, craning my neck to capture every possible moment for my mental video camera.

Then *blam!*

I might still be marveling at this remarkable specimen of female athleticism if my Mercedes hadn't plowed into a Chevelle that had come to a complete stop in my lane. Fortunately, I was traveling only fifteen miles per hour in the stop-and-go traffic, but the mini-collision crumpled my front bumper and crinkled the hood. And the fellow I smacked into didn't appreciate the considerable damage to his rear end. I got out of the car—embarrassed, humiliated, saturated with guilt, and unable to offer a satisfying explanation. No way would I tell this guy, "Well, if you'd seen what I saw, you'd understand."

TEN MORE YEARS IN THE DARKNESS

Nor could I tell the truth to my beautiful wife, Sandy. That evening, I put my best spin on the morning's unfortunate event in Malibu. "You see, Sandy it was stop-and-go, and I was reaching down to change the radio channel, and the next thing I knew I rammed into a Chevy. Lucky no one was hurt."

Actually, my young marriage was hurt—because I was cheating Sandy out of my full devotion, though I didn't know it at the time. Nor was I aware that although I'd vowed to commit my life to Sandy, I hadn't totally committed my eyes to her. I continued in the darkness for another ten years before realizing I needed to make dramatic changes in the way I looked at women.

FROM FRED: WALL OF SEPARATION

It happened every Sunday morning during our church worship service. I'd look around and see other men with their eyes closed, freely and intensely worshiping the God of the universe. Myself? I sensed only a wall of separation between the Lord and me.

I just wasn't right with God. As a new Christian, I imagined I just didn't know God well enough yet. But nothing changed as time passed. When I mentioned to my wife, Brenda, that I felt vaguely unworthy of Him, she wasn't the least bit surprised.

"Well, of course!" she exclaimed. "You've never felt worthy to your own father. Every preacher I've known says that a man's relationship with his father tremendously impacts his relationship with his heavenly Father."

"You could be right," I allowed.

I hoped it was that simple. I mulled it over as I recalled my days of youth.

WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU?

My father, handsome and tough, was a national wrestling champion in college and a bulldog in business. Aching to be like him, I began wrestling in junior high. But the best wrestlers are natural-born killers, and I didn't have a wrestler's heart. My dad was coaching wrestling at the time at the high school in our small town of Alburnett, Iowa. Though I was still in junior high, he wanted me to wrestle with the older guys, so he brought me to the high-school workouts.

One afternoon we were practicing escapes, and my partner was in the down position. While grappling on the mat, he suddenly needed to blow his nose. He straightened up, pulled his T-shirt to his nose, and violently emptied the contents onto the front of his shirt. We quickly returned to wrestling. As the up man, I was supposed to keep a tight grip on him. Reaching around his belly, my hand slid into his slimy T-shirt.

Sickened, I

let him go.

Dad, seeing him escape so easily, dressed me down. "What kind of a man are you?" he roared. Staring hard at the mat, I realized that if I had a wrestler's heart, I would have cranked down tightly and ridden out my opponent, maybe grinding his face into the mat in retaliation. But I hadn't. I still wanted to please Dad, so I tried other sports. At one baseball game, after striking out, I remember hanging my head on the way back to the dugout. "Get your head up!" he hollered for all to hear. I was mortified. Then he wrote me a long letter detailing my every mistake.

Years later, after I'd married Brenda, my father felt she had too much control in our marriage. "Real men take charge of their households," he said.

THE MONSTER

Now, as Brenda and I discussed my relationship with my dad, she suggested I might need counseling. "It surely couldn't hurt," she said. So I read some books and counseled with my pastor, and my feelings toward Dad improved. But I continued to feel that distance from God during the Sunday morning worship services. The true reason for that distance slowly dawned on me: There was a hint of sexual immorality in my life. There was a monster lurking about, and it surfaced each Sunday morning when I settled in my comfy La-Z-Boy and opened the Sunday morning newspaper. I would quickly find the department-store inserts and begin paging through the colored newsprint filled with models posing in bras and panties. Always smiling. Always available. I loved lingering over each ad insert. *It's wrong*, I admitted, *but it's such a small thing*. It was a far cry from *Playboy*, I told myself. I peered through the panties, fantasizing. Occasionally, a model reminded me of a girl I once knew, and my mind rekindled the memories of our times together. I rather enjoyed my Sunday mornings with the newspaper. As I examined myself more closely, I found I had more than a hint of sexual immorality. Even my sense of humor reflected it. Sometimes a person's innocent phrase—even from our pastor—struck me with a double sexual meaning. I would chuckle, but I felt uneasy. *Why do these double entendres come to my mind so easily? Should a Christian mind create them so nimbly?* I remembered that the Bible said that such things shouldn't even be mentioned among the saints. *I'm worse...I even laugh at them!* And my eyes? They were ravenous heat-seekers searching the horizon, locking on any target with sensual heat. Young mothers leaning over in shorts to pull children out of car seats. Soloists with silky shirts. Summer dresses with décolletage.

My mind, too, ran wherever it willed. This had begun in my childhood, when I found *Playboy* magazines under Dad's bed. He also subscribed to *From Sex to Sexy*, a publication filled with jokes and comic strips with sexual themes. When Dad divorced Mom and moved to his "bachelor's pad," he hung a giant velvet nude in his living room, overlooking us as we played cards on my Sunday afternoon visits. Dad gave me a list of chores around his place when I was there. Once I came across a nude photo of his mistress. On another

occasion I found an eight-inch ceramic dildo, which he obviously used in his kinky “sex games.”

HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

All this sexual stuff churned deep inside me, destroying a purity that wouldn’t return for many years. Settling into college, I soon found myself drowning in pornography. I actually memorized the dates when my favorite soft-core porn magazines arrived at the local drugstore. I especially loved the “Girls Next Door” section of *Gallery* magazine, featuring pictures of nude girls taken by their boyfriends and submitted to the magazine. Far from home and without any Christian underpinnings, I descended by small steps into a sexual pit. The first time I had sexual intercourse, it was with a girl I *knew* I would marry. The next time, it was with a girl I *thought* I would marry. The time after that, it was with a good friend that I *might* learn to love. Then it was with a female I barely knew who simply wanted to see what sex was like. Eventually, I had sex with anyone at any time.

After five years in California, I found myself with four “steady” girlfriends simultaneously. I was sleeping with three of them and was essentially engaged to marry two of them. None knew of the others. (These days, in my class for premarital couples, I often ask the women what they would think of a man with two fiancées. My favorite response: “He’s a hopeless pig!” And I *was* hopeless, living in a pigsty.)

Why do I share all this? First, so you’ll know that I understand what it’s like to be sexually ensnared in a deep pit. Second, I want to provide you with hope. As you’ll soon see, God worked with me and lifted me out of that pit. If there’s even a hint of sexual immorality in your life, He will work with you as well.

FORM FRED: KNOWING WHO TO CALL

Despite the deepening pit I occupied in my single days, I didn’t notice anything wrong with my life. Oh, sure, I attended church sporadically, and from time to time the pastor’s words penetrated my heart. But who was he? Besides, I loved my girlfriends. *No one’s getting hurt*, I reasoned. My dad had eventually remarried, and when I visited back home in Iowa, my stepmother occasionally dragged me across the river to the Moline Gospel Temple in Moline, Illinois. The gospel was clearly preached, but to me the whole scene was clearly ludicrous. I often laughed cynically. *Those people are crazy!*

After graduating from Stanford University with an honors degree in sociology, I decided to take a job in the San Francisco area as an investment advisor. One spring day in May, I stayed late at the office. Everyone else had gone home, leaving me alone with some troubling thoughts. I swiveled my chair around and propped my feet on the credenza to gaze into a typically grand California sunset.

That evening, as the sun dipped beneath the horizon, I suddenly saw in full clarity what I had become. What I saw was hopelessly ugly. Where once I was blind, now I could see. Instantly, I saw my deep, deep need for a Savior. Because of the Moline Gospel Temple, I knew Whom to call upon.

My prayer that day was born out of the simplicity of a certain heart: “Lord, I’m ready to work with You if You’re ready to work with me.” I stood up and walked out of the office, not yet fully realizing what I’d just done. But God knew, and it seemed as if all heaven moved into my life. Within two weeks I had a job back in Iowa and a new life ahead of me. And *no* girlfriends!

FEELING GOOD

Back in Iowa, I began attending a marriage class led by Joel Budd, the associate pastor of my new church. It wasn’t long before I realized that I knew nothing about treating women properly. Perhaps it was because my mom and dad were divorced, and I never saw a loving relationship modeled at home. More likely, however, it was because of my own selfishness and sexual sin. Everything I knew about women came from one-night stands and casual dating relationships.

I didn't date during that year under Joel's teaching. I might have been the only man in history to attend a married couples' class for a whole year without even having so much as a single date! But just before the twelvemonth mark, I prayed this simple prayer: "Lord, I've been in this class for a year and have learned a lot about women, but I'm not sure I've ever seen these things in real life. I've never really known any Christian girls. Please show me a woman who embodies these godly characteristics." I wasn't asking for a date, girlfriend, or spouse. I just wanted to see these teachings in practice, in real life, that I might understand them better. God did far more than that. One week later, He introduced me to my future wife, Brenda, and we fell in love.

Out of our commitment to Christ, Brenda and I decided to stay pure before marriage. She was a virgin—and I wished I were. We did kiss, however, and whoa! Our lip smacking was wonderful! It was my first experience of something I would later discover far more deeply: the physically gratifying payoff that comes from obedience to God's sexual standards.

In a song made popular during my senior year in college, the singer mourned about trying to remember how it used to feel when a kiss was something special. The lyrics from the song resonated sadly with me because, at that point in my life, a kiss meant nothing to me. It was a joyless prerequisite on the path to intercourse. Something was deeply wrong. But now, having cut way back, in my experience with Brenda the simple kiss became thrilling again. To an old sex-hog like me, this was totally unexpected.

As God continued to work in my life, Brenda and I married, honeymooned in Colorado, then settled into a new apartment building on the edge of a cornfield in a Des Moines suburb. *Is this heaven?* I surely thought so. Time passed, and at first, I was feeling good. While I was once engaged to two women at the same time, I was now happily married to one woman. While I once drowned in pornography, since my wedding day I hadn't purchased a pornographic magazine. Given my track record, this was remarkable.

STOPPING SHORT

I threw myself into my sales career and my leadership roles at church. Then I became a dad. I relished it all, and my Christian image shined brighter and brighter.

By worldly standards, I was doing great. Just one little problem. By God's standard of sexual purity, I wasn't even close to living His vision for marriage. Clearly I'd taken steps toward purity, but I was learning that God's standards were higher than I'd ever imagined and that my Father had higher hopes for me than I had dreamed. It soon became clear that I'd stopped far short of holiness. There were the ad inserts, the double entendres, the heat-seeking eyes. My mind continued to daydream and fantasize over old girlfriends. These were more than a hint of sexual immorality.

I was paying the price, and the bills were piling up. First, I could never look God in the eye. I could never fully worship Him. Because I dreamed of being with other women, and rather enjoyed mentally recalling past sexual conquests, I knew I was a hypocrite, and I continued feeling distant from God.

People around me disagreed, saying, "Oh, come on! Nobody can control their eyes and mind, for heaven's sakes! God loves you! It must be something else." But I knew differently. My prayer life was feeble. Once my son was very sick and had to be rushed to the emergency room. Did I rush into prayer? No, I could only rush others to pray for me. "Have you called our pastor to pray?" I asked Brenda. "Have you called Ron? Have you called Red to pray?" I had no faith in my own prayers because of my sin.

My faith was weak in other ways as well. As a full-commission salesperson, if I lost a number of deals in a row to the competition, I could never be sure if those setbacks weren't somehow caused by my sin. I had no peace. *I was paying a price for my sin.*

My marriage was suffering as well. Because of my sin, I couldn't commit 100 percent to Brenda out of fear that she might dump me later. That cost Brenda in closeness. But that's not all. Brenda told me she was experiencing frightening dreams in which she was being chased by Satan. Was my immorality causing spiritual protection to be taken away from her? *My wife was paying a price.*

At church, I was an empty suit. I came to church desperately needing ministry and forgiveness. I never

arrived ready to minister to others. Of course my prayers were no more effective in God's house than anywhere else. *My church was paying a price.*

I remember listening to one sermon in which the pastor talked about "generational sin"—patterns of sin passed from father to son (Exodus 34:7). Sitting in my pew, I recalled that my grandfather had run off from his wife in the middle of the Great Depression, leaving her with six kids to raise. My father left his family to pursue multiple sexual affairs. That same pattern had been passed to me, proven by my own multiple affairs in college. Though saved, I now found that I still didn't have this purity issue settled in my life, and I was scared by the thought of passing this pattern on to my kids. *My children could be paying a price.*

I finally made the connection between my sexual immorality and my distance from God. I was paying hefty fines in every area of my life. Having eliminated the visible adulteries and pornography, I looked pure on the outside to everyone else. But to God, I'd stopped short. I'd merely found a middle ground, somewhere between paganism and obedience to God's standard.

DESPERATION

God desired more for me. He had freed me from the pit, but I'd stopped moving toward Him. Having seen the prices I paid and my distance from God, I decided it was time to move closer. I expected the journey to be easy. After all, I had decided to eliminate pornography and affairs, and they were gone. I figured I could stop the rest of this sexual junk just as easily. But I couldn't. Every week I said I wouldn't look at those ad inserts, but every Sunday morning the striking photos compelled me. Every week I'd vow to avoid watching R-rated "sexy" movies when I traveled, but every week I'd fail, sweating out tough battles and always losing. Every time I gazed at some glistening jogger, I'd promise to never do it again. But I always did. What I'd done was simply trade the pornography of *Playboy* and *Gallery* for the pornography of ad inserts and other magazine ads. The affairs? I'd simply traded the physical liaisons for mental affairs and daydreams—affairs of the eyes and heart. The sin remained because I'd never really *changed*, never rejected sexual sin, never escaped sexual slavery. I'd merely exchanged masters.

A couple of months slipped by, then a couple of years. The distance from God grew wider, the bills stacked higher, and my impurity still ruled me. My faith waned further with each failure. Each desperate loss caused more desperation. While I could always say no, I could never *mean* no. Something was gripping me, something relentless, something mean. Like Steve, I eventually found total freedom. Since then, both Steve and I have had the chance to talk to men ensnared in sensual pits. Trapped and desperate to be free, their stories grip the heart. Now that you've heard my story, maybe you'll relate to the men in these next few pages as well.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Bennett:

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