

Revised and Updated 20th Anniversary Edition

Every Man's Battle

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Sold in the
Series**

**Winning the War on Sexual Temptation
One Victory at a Time**

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WORKBOOK INCLUDED

**Stephen Arterburn
Fred Stoeker**
with Mike Yorkey

Praise for
Every Man's Battle

“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, LITTD, former pastor of the Church on the Way and founder and chancellor of the King's Seminary

“This book will revolutionize the marriage of every man who reads it. Why? Because every man battles sexual temptations, and every marriage grows stronger when these temptations are defeated. 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*

“This timely resource presents clear, practical principles for sexual purity. Arterburn and Stoeker call for courage, commitment, and self-discipline as they lead men into a more successful relationship with God, family, and spouse. This book is truly for every man.”

—DR. JOHN C. MAXWELL, founder of the INJOY Group

“God has used Steve Arterburn countless times to impact my heart and life; I am thankful for him and his investment in *Every Man's Battle*. I am also grateful for Fred Stoeker. Fred pours himself into this book with honesty, vulnerability, and a practical strategy to fight the good fight. He offers biblical truth and hope to anyone with ears to hear how to battle the war of sexual temptation. 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

“Having grown up in a machismo world and getting caught up in gangs before I turned to the Lord in prison, I definitely needed to read *Every Man's Battle* when it came out twenty years ago—and I'm glad I did.”

—CASEY DIAZ, author of *The Shot Caller*

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EVERY MAN'S BATTLE, REVISED AND UPDATED 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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*from Stephen Arterburn
To my friend Jim Burns.
You have displayed great love
and been a premier example of sexual integrity.*



*from Fred Stoeker
To my heavenly Father (thank You that You ran to me);
to my wife, Brenda;
and to my friends Dave Johnson and Les Flanders.*

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This book is often quite explicit in how the coauthors describe past struggles—their own and others’—with sexual purity. For the sake of communicating honestly with readers who face similar struggles, our goal has been to achieve frankness without causing offense, thereby making it easier for men to face up to any uncleanness and press forward by God’s grace and power into actively sharing His holiness.

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A Letter to Wives from Brenda Stoeker

While *Every Man's Battle* is directed primarily to married men, we highly recommend that every wife and serious girlfriend read it as well.

This book gives women a greater understanding of what men are up against as they battle the age-old problem of the eyes, since by nature women are nowhere near as visual in their sexuality and therefore don't understand this male battle from personal experience. That's important, because the truth is that male sexuality can be unsettling—even shocking—to women.

This vast difference in the sexual wiring between men and women often confounds wives. For instance, I once wrote the following in response to a survey that Fred gave me on the topic:

I don't want to sound mean, but because women don't generally experience this sexual sin problem in the same way that men do, it can seem to us that men are uncontrolled perverts who don't think about anything but sex.

Strong words, but straight from this woman's heart. That's just how outrageous these differences can seem to us as wives, and when it comes to a husband's sexual sin, these differences in wiring create a natural tug-of-war in a wife's heart between pity and disgust for his situation, as well as a struggle between mercy and judgment.

What's a wife to do? Because of these differences, I strongly believe nothing is more important than to get educated about male sexuality. Maleness does matter, so we women need to understand it. Maleness isn't toxic or perverted; it's just different. And if we're to get past throwing stones and get on to building sexual relationships that are pleasing to God, we need to be reading and learning, listening and giving. Your husband needs you sexually, and as his wife, you are God's only answer to that need.

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I'll be the first to admit I didn't always have the right attitude toward my husband on this topic. In our early years of marriage, I was stretched deeply by Fred's sexuality—especially by its visual orientation and its regular need for expression. Male sexuality seemed rather shallow and almost weird to me! But before long, I discovered that it really isn't shallow; it's just different. And given the obvious struggle men have with sexual purity when they go without sex, I began to understand why God would tell me, "Your body is not your own" (see 1 Corinthians 7:4). I learned that sex is vital not only to Fred's purity but also to his emotional intimacy with me.

That's not to say that a husband should have sex any time and every time he wants it! I'm simply saying that a husband's sexual purity is not just every man's battle but every *couple's* battle.

In this updated version, Steve and Fred address more recent developments in male sexual behavior, in particular the troubling disinterest of some husbands for sexual intimacy with their wives. Sadly, this puzzling reality is often connected to increasingly vulgar and intense pornography, which can cause the much-publicized erectile dysfunction (ED). Of course, a husband's ED may have a physical cause for which a physician's involvement is required, but the ED also may be the destructive result of the brain's rewiring. These topics are discussed in this edition of *Every Man's Battle*, and some ideas are offered on how to regain appropriate physical intimacy in your marriage.

I urge you to open your heart to the words that follow. Seize the day—for yourself, for your marriage, and for your family.

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Introduction to the Updated and Revised Edition

From Steve Arterburn

When the publisher first called me in 1999 and I agreed to read Fred Stoeker's manuscript, unexpectedly I found myself stirred by a message that would impact the Christian world in amazing ways.

Fred's teaching was different. He did not shame the reader or minimize the problem. Best of all, he laid out a practical, easy-to-understand path to victory over a common plague infecting the character of Christian men everywhere. I was convinced that *Every Man's Battle* could transform more marriages more deeply than nearly any marriage book I could think of, and I wanted to be part of that.

How does a book on male sexual purity do this? Because it directly addresses the sexual sins that are the termites in the walls and foundations of just about every marriage today. On my phone-in *New Life Live!* radio broadcasts, we could easily do a one-hour show on pornography's chains every day of the week. In fact, we get so many calls from men desperate for freedom from impure thought lives and ungodly sexual actions that our screener has to limit those types of calls. I'm sure that even *more* men would phone in if they didn't feel so ashamed.

This is why I can confidently state that the book you now hold in your hands has the potential to free you from sexual sin and allow you to love your wife in ways you never dreamed possible. Why? Because the teaching and principles we share have done just that for millions of readers over the past twenty years. About a year after *Every Man's Battle* was first published in 1999, this book was already a phenomenon. It became the most frequently reordered book in Christian bookstores because an endless line of pastors, men's ministry leaders, and past readers were walking in and buying dozens of copies for their Bible studies, men's-group meetings, friends, and family members.

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Of course, the impact on men's lives was immediate, and the ripple effects healed families, organizations, churches, and communities. A grassroots movement of support groups and study groups formed in church basements and college dorms. Thousands of men attended New Life's Every Man's Battle workshops. In retrospect, I can only shake my head in wonder and gratitude over being part of a project that has changed so many lives.

As of today, Fred and I have written and published six books together: *Every Man's Battle*, *Every Man's Marriage*, *Every Young Man's Battle*, *Preparing Your Son for Every Man's Battle*, *Every Man's Challenge*, and *Every Heart Restored*. The entire Every Man series—which also includes several related books for men and women and a series of workbooks and Bible studies to enhance the understanding of the reader—has sold over three million copies worldwide, and *Every Man's Battle* has been published in twenty-three languages.

So, here we stand, twenty years later, celebrating what God has done and publishing this twentieth-anniversary edition. As you read, remember that we've changed the names of people in this book and have even altered a few details of their stories to protect their identities. But their stories are real. They are stories of men from all walks of life: white-collar office workers and blue-collar employees, as well as pastors, worship leaders, deacons, and elders. All of them are caught in a terrible snare, just as we once were.

You're in a tough position. You live in a world awash with sensual images available twenty-four hours a day in a variety of mediums: print, television, video, the internet, and smartphones. But God offers you freedom from the slavery of sin through the cross of Christ, and He created your eyes and mind with the ability to be trained and controlled. We simply have to stand up and walk by His power on the right path. To do this, we need a battle plan, and you'll have one when you finish reading *Every Man's Battle*—a detailed strategy for becoming a man of sexual integrity.

In this book, Fred and I speak from the perspective of married men, but the principles we describe also apply to the many teens, young-adult men, and divorced men who must deal with the issue of sexual integrity while single. We want to help keep single men of all ages from lusting or developing addictive behavior and instead

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increase their odds of marrying the right women. Without question, the practical defenses we share in this book are just as applicable to singles as to married men.

Every Man's Battle will challenge you in many ways. But in facing and overcoming these hurdles, you will find a route to rewarding sexual integrity.

From Fred Stoeker

So, how did *Every Man's Battle* come about? The answer is simple: sexual immorality once held me captive, and after being liberated, I wanted to help other men get free.

After teaching on the topic of male sexual purity in Sunday school in the late 1980s, I was approached one day by a man who said, "I always thought that since I was a man, I would not be able to control my roving eyes. I didn't know it could be any other way. Now I'm free!" Conversations like that thrilled my heart and confirmed the desire God gave me to help other men out of this quagmire.

As men approached me and shared their stories of sexual sin, many asked me to write a book. At first I passed this off as simple complimentary talk. After all, anything I committed to paper had little chance of being published. I'd never written a book before, I wasn't the host of a national radio show, I didn't have a PhD, and I hadn't gone to seminary.

So, why did I start writing a book? Because I felt deeply that if God would grant me such a voice in His kingdom, I could give even more men some practical steps toward victory and being set free to help others.

The following passage inspired me to keep plodding away on this book night after night, month after month:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin. . . .

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Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you. (Psalm 51:1–2, 12–13)

Get it? God's plan is to set sinners free and wash them up so they can teach others. God has been using me in just that way. Forty years ago, God made me His own and thoroughly cleansed me. Twenty years ago, He sent me out to teach others His ways through the release of *Every Man's Battle*. Today, and with this twentieth-anniversary edition, He continues turning men back to Him. His plan for you remains the same as it's always been for His sons: to purify you and then send you out on a great adventure to liberate others.

And we need you out there. Pornographers have grown more vile and more depraved in the last twenty years, which means the material they produce is more vicious and twisted, inflicting a dramatic deterioration in a guy's ability to even get an erection and perform sexually in the master bedroom. So, in this new edition, we're delivering an all-new part 7 to help explain how your porn and masturbation may have ravaged your sexuality and degraded your ability to share genuine, interpersonal intimacy with your wife, heart to heart—along with steps you can take to turn that situation around.

We've also updated *Every Man's Battle* with some of the critical advances in brain science made over the past two decades, explaining how these discoveries back up our original positions and strengthen your ability to apply the practical steps that we're sharing so that you might win this battle once and for all.

Are you anxious to get started? Good . . . so am I! We need real men today more than ever—men of honor and decency, men with their hands where they belong, men with their eyes and minds focused on Christ. If roving eyes or sexually impure thoughts or even sexual addiction are issues in your life, Steve and I want you to do something about it.

Isn't it time?

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Part I

Where We Are

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Our Stories

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 my life?*

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

From Steve: Collision

On a sun-splashed Southern California morning years ago, I hopped into my Mercedes 450SL, white with a black top. The classic coupe was over ten years old but was still the car of my dreams. I’d owned it for just two months, and on that spectacular morning, with the top down and the wind blowing in my face, I was feeling especially good about life and my future.

I was tooling northbound through Malibu on my way to Oxnard on the PCH, as locals called the Pacific Coast Highway. I’d always loved driving on these four lanes of blacktop that hugged the golden coastline and provided a close-up view of LA’s beach culture.

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

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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 goddess-like 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 Chevy 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 Chevy's 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.”

Sadly, I was the one who didn't fully understand what I had done or what was going on inside me. I continued in that darkness for quite some time before realizing I needed to make dramatic changes in the way I looked at women and the way I was relating to God.

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 worshipping

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the God of the universe. Myself? I sensed only a wall of separation between the Lord and me.

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

"Well, of course you don't!" she exclaimed. "You've never felt worthy of your own father. Every preacher I've known says that a man's relationship with his earthly 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.

My father, handsome and tough, had been a national wrestling champion in college and a bulldog in business. Aching to be like him, I'd joined my middle school wrestling team. But the best wrestlers are natural-born killers, and I soon found that I didn't have a wrestler's heart.

At the time, my dad was coaching wrestling on an interim basis at a small high school in Alburnett, Iowa. Though I was still in middle school, he wanted me to wrestle with the older guys, so he brought me along 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 man are you?" he roared, and then he screamed on and on at me for what seemed like forever. Staring hard at the mat during this onslaught, I realized that if I had a wrestler's heart, I would have cranked down tightly and ridden out my opponent in spite of the snot on my hands, maybe grinding his face into the mat in retaliation. But I hadn't, and after two more hollow, joyless years on the mat, I finally hung up my singlet for good.

I still wanted to prove myself to Dad, of course, so I tried other sports, excelling at football and baseball. But my father never forgave me for quitting wrestling, and

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I couldn't quite prove myself to him as a man no matter how well I played on the gridiron or baseball diamond. And he never let me forget it.

He was verbally relentless. After I struck out in one baseball game, I hung my head on the way back to the dugout. "Get your head up!" he hollered for all to hear. I was mortified. On the car ride home, he ripped me so hard that I threw up into my ball cap. One time after he'd dropped me off at home and returned to his own place across town (he was divorced from my mom at the time), he wrote me a long letter detailing every mistake I'd made that day and dropped it in the mail that night.

And you know what? I never did measure up as a man, at least not in *his* mind. Years later, after I'd married Brenda, my father felt she had too much say in our marriage. "Real men take charge of their households," he said.

The Monster

So 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. Still, I continued to feel that distance from God during the Sunday morning worship services, which revealed that Brenda's hunch was incorrect. My poor relationship with my dad wasn't the main culprit after all.

The true reason for that distance slowly dawned on me over time: there was a hint of sexual immorality in my life. In fact, there was a monster lurking about, and it surfaced each Sunday morning when I settled into my comfy La-Z-Boy and opened the 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. I rationalized to myself, *It's wrong, but it's such a small thing! Besides, it's a far cry from Playboy, right? And haven't I already given that up?*

So every Sabbath, I peered through the panties, fantasizing. Inevitably, I'd masturbate while on the couch. 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.

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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 thought. *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 in shorts leaning over to pull children out of car seats, church soloists with silky shirts, college girls in low-cut summer dresses.

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 *Sex to Sexty*, 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 dildo, which he obviously used in his kinky sex games with his new playmate.

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 at Stanford University, I soon found myself drowning in pornography. I actually memorized the dates when my favorite soft-core porn magazines arrived at the local drugstore so in those pre-internet days I could get my hands on the new pictures as quickly as possible each month. 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 in Iowa and without any Christian underpinnings, I descended by small steps into a sexual pit. The first time I had sexual intercourse, I just *knew*

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it was with a girl 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 before graduating from Stanford. Eventually, I had sex with any girl at any time.

After several 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.

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.

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Paying the Price

From Fred: Knowing Whom to Call

Despite the deepening, reeking sexual pigsty I occupied in my single days living in the Bay Area, I didn't notice anything wrong with my life. I was in college, for heaven's sake! I was only doing what college guys do, right? *Nothing wrong with that.*

Oh, sure, I attended church sporadically, and from time to time the pastor's words penetrated my heart and stirred up a bit of silt and guilt. But who was *he*? Besides, I loved my girlfriends, and they loved me. *No one's getting hurt*, I reasoned.

But God possessed a different line of reasoning, and He intended to be heard on this matter. My dad had eventually remarried, but as he skipped along matrimony's way, he hadn't invited just a new wife into his heart. He'd asked Jesus Christ in, to boot, and now whenever I visited back home in Iowa during college breaks, my dad and stepmother would drag me across the Mississippi River to the Moline Gospel Temple in Moline, Illinois. The gospel was clearly preached there, but to me the whole scene was ludicrous. I often laughed cynically. Those people were crazy!

On the surface, this young, proud intellectual appeared bulletproof to the truth. But beneath it all lay a closely held secret: an extreme, bone-crushing loneliness was devouring my soul.

Lonely? But, Fred, didn't you have four girlfriends?

I know. I was baffled too. I'd always heard that the best way to get to know a girl

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was to sleep with her, but the more girlfriends I added to my life and my bedroom, the more desperate and disconnected I became.

I'd been misinformed. The truth is, having early sex is the quickest way to wreck a budding relationship. So now, like a gerbil on his wheel, I rode a relentless spin to nowhere. Desperation gripped my very soul. God had me right where He wanted me.

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 evening, I stayed late at the office to make a handful of evening telephone calls. When I looked up from my phone a bit later, I noticed that everyone else had gone home, leaving me alone with some troubling thoughts. As I cleaned up my desk before heading home for the night, I glanced out the window and was struck by the lovely burst of colors arching across the dusky sky. Immediately, I swiveled my chair around and propped my feet on the credenza to gaze into a typically grand California sunset.

I still don't know how God did it that evening, but all at once the colors faded from my attention. As the sun dipped beneath the horizon, I suddenly saw in full clarity what I had become, especially in regard to women. While I'd once been blind, now I could see, and what I saw was hopelessly ugly. Instantly, I saw my deep, deep need for a Savior. Gratefully, because of the Moline Gospel Temple, I knew whom to call upon.

My prayer that twilight evening was simple: "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

Once settled in Des Moines, I began attending a marriage class led by Joel Budd, the associate pastor of my new church. You might wonder why a single guy without a girlfriend would ever attend a marriage class. The answer was simple to me: I knew

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full well that if there was anything that God needed to teach me, it was how to treat women properly. So when I visited that church for the first time and saw the list of Sunday school classes, I knew that the one on marriage was for me. Everything I knew about women came from one-night stands and casual dating relationships inundated with my own selfishness and sexual sin. I was determined to change, so I suspected that the marriage class would be the perfect place to learn how men and women were meant to relate.

I didn't date during that year under Joel's teaching, hoping this would also help me reset my approach to women. I might have been the only man in history to attend a married-couples' class for most of a year without even having a single date! But just before the nine-month mark, I prayed this simple prayer: "Lord, I've been in this class for months and learned a lot about the characteristics of godly women, but I'm not sure I've ever seen these qualities in real life. I've never really known any Christian girls. Please show me a woman who embodies these traits."

I wasn't asking for a date, girlfriend, or spouse. I just wanted to see these qualities in real life so that I might understand them better.

God gave me far more than that: one week later He introduced me to Brenda! She was absolutely fascinating to me. I could see in her all the glorious characteristics I'd been learning about during those nine months, and the more I got to know Brenda, the more desperately I desired to be worthy of her and live up to God's standards as a man. It wasn't long until we fell in love and wanted to marry.

Out of our commitment to Christ, Brenda and I decided to stay pure before marriage. She was a virgin, and I wished I was. We did kiss, however, and whoa! Our smooching was wonderful! It was my first experience of something that I'll call the paradox of obedience: the physically gratifying payoff that comes from obedience to God's sexual standards.

In explanation, consider this thought: In a song made popular by Eric Carmen 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. But now with Brenda, having cut the physical things way back to obey God's standards, a simple kiss with her was

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thrilling again. To an old sex hog like me, this was a totally unexpected and pleasant surprise. I was learning how good His ways were for me.

As God continued to work in my life, Brenda and I married, honeymooned in Colorado, and then settled into a new apartment building. Was this heaven? I surely thought so.

I threw myself into my sales career and leadership roles at church. Then I became a dad. I relished it all, and my image as a Christian shined brighter and brighter. By most standards, I was doing great. Just one little problem: by *God's* standard of sexual purity, I wasn't close to living out His vision for marriage.

Sure, while once I was engaged to two women at the same time, now I was happily married to one woman. And while before I was drowning in pornography, now I hadn't purchased a pornographic magazine since before my wedding day. Given my track record, this was remarkable. But did these changes make me sexually pure? Hardly. As God's child, I was to have no hint of sexual immorality in my life. Although I'd certainly taken steps toward purity, 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.

Stopping Short

It soon became clear that I'd stopped far too short of holiness. There were the Sunday-morning ad inserts, of course, and the double entendres and heat-seeking eyes. There were the movies and the masturbation while away on road trips. My mind daydreamed and fantasized over former girlfriends and dwelled too long on the pretty faces and shapes of the women at work. These were more than a hint of sexual immorality. I was paying heavy prices for these fantasies, and the bills were piling up. My intimacy with God was fading.

People around me disagreed with my assessment, saying, "Oh, come on, that can't be the reason you feel distant from God! Those are just little things you're doing, just part of being a guy. Nobody can control their eyes and mind! God loves you. It must be something else." But I knew differently.

As I mentioned earlier, I'd already found it difficult to connect with the Lord in

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worship, but now I couldn't even seem to look Him in the eye in prayer. After all, I kept making these tearful promises to Him that I'd clean up my act, but I kept breaking those vows again and again. I was a hypocrite and a liar. *How could He possibly care to hear from me even one more time in prayer?* I wondered. At the time, I couldn't believe that He did.

My prayer life grew feeble. Once, our son Jasen became very sick and was rushed to the emergency room. Did I rush into prayer? No, I could only rush others to pray. "Have you called our pastor to pray?" I asked Brenda. "Have you called Ron and Red?" I had no faith in my own prayers because of my sin.

At church I was an empty suit. I went to church desperately needing ministry and forgiveness and *never* arrived ready to minister to others. After all, I'd been "preparing" for church by lusting and masturbating over lingerie ads. My prayers were no more effective in God's house than anywhere else.

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 personally paying a heavy spiritual price for my sin.

My marriage was suffering as well. Brenda had come from four generations of passionate lovers of God, and I believed that if she ever found out about these things that I was doing in secret, she'd leave me. Because of my sin, I couldn't commit 100 percent to Brenda, out of fear that if she dumped me, I'd be 100 percent destroyed emotionally. That cost Brenda in closeness.

But that's not all. Sometimes at dawn, when I was in the very act of lusting over those lingerie ads, I'd hear Brenda dashing down the stairs from the master bedroom to find me in the family room. She'd still be gasping in terror and in tears after experiencing yet another frightening nightmare in which she was being chased by Satan. "Fred, where were you?" she'd wail. "I was running down long, dark hallways, and Satan was chasing me and getting closer and closer! I opened every door, looking for you to defend me. Where were you?" Then she'd drop into my chest, sobbing hysterically in panic and dread.

How do you think I felt in those moments? Try *horrible*! I knew my immorality was compromising my spiritual protection over Brenda, allowing the Enemy to pick

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on her in her dreams. (In case you're wondering, Brenda never had another dream like that once I'd gained my victory over sexual sin.)

During those days, my pastor was preaching a series about generational sin—patterns of sin passed from father to son (see 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. My own father left our family to pursue multiple sexual affairs and a pornographic, *Playboy*-inspired lifestyle. That same pattern had been passed on to me, proven by my deep dive into the same foul pornographic pools and my chase after multiple girlfriends.

And now my cherubic firstborn son, Jasen, was toddling over to me endlessly with his happy, drippy grins and shining eyes that gushed, *Daddy, I want to grow up to be just like you!*

Seeing Jasen, I would scream silently, *No, son! Don't grow up to be like me! I can't free myself from this sexual prison. Don't imitate me!* Though saved, I still didn't have this purity issue settled in my life, and I was petrified by the thought of passing this pattern on to my kids.

Perhaps no one else saw it, but I could no longer miss the connection between my sexual immorality and my distance from God. Since I'd already cut out the porn and had no desire for intimacy with anyone but my wife, I looked pretty pure on the outside to others. But to God, I'd merely stopped short at a false finish line in mushy middle ground, resting somewhere between paganism and obedience to God's standard.

Desperation

The Lord desired more for me. He had freed me through salvation, and while I was eternally grateful for that, I was realizing that I had never really taken that good, long bath I needed to get fully clean. In short, I'd stopped moving toward Him, and my sanctification had stalled.

I had expected the journey of purity to be easier than this. I'd figured I could easily get rid of all the sexual junk in my life. But I couldn't. Every week I said I wouldn't look at those ad inserts, but every Sunday morning, the striking photos

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compelled me to lust. Every week I'd vow to avoid watching R-rated "sexy" movies when I traveled on business, but every week I'd fail, sweating out tough battles of temptation and always losing. Every time I gazed at some glistening jogger bouncing by, 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. I wasn't considering physical extramarital affairs, but I was certainly having *mental* affairs and daydreams—affairs of the eyes and heart.

In short, while the pornography was gone, the sin remained. I'd never really escaped the sexual slavery. I'd never truly rejected my visual feasting upon women. I'd merely changed where I went for a meal.

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 led to deeper desolation. While I could always say, "No more," I could never mean it.

Something was gripping me—something relentless, something mean.

Still, against all odds, I eventually found total freedom, just like Steve Arterburn. Since then, both Steve and I have had the chance to talk to countless men hopelessly ensnared in their own sensual pigsties, just as desperate to be free. Now that we've shared our stories, we're going to share a few of theirs in the next chapter, hoping you'll relate to not just their struggles but also their victories over sin and their paths to freedom.

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Addiction? Or Something Else?

Before you experience victory over sexual sin, you're hurting and confused. *Why can't I win this battle?* you snarl in frustration. As the fight wears on and the losses pile higher, you may begin to doubt everything about yourself, perhaps even your salvation. At best, you think that you're deeply flawed; at worst, an evil person. You probably feel very alone, since men rarely speak openly about these things.

But you're not alone. Countless men have fallen into their own sexual pits, as you are about to see.

From Fred: Are You Noticing?

These pitfalls happen easily since there is so much sexual immorality in our society. We get desensitized to it and sometimes don't recognize it for what it is.

One day a fellow named Mike was telling me about renting the video *Forrest Gump*. "Boy, it was great!" he exclaimed. "Tom Hanks was brilliant, which is why he won the Oscar for Best Actor. I laughed and cried all the way through it. I know Brenda and you rent good movies for your kids. You should get this one. It was really clean and wholesome."

"Oh, I can't watch *Forrest Gump* with my kids. In fact, I can't even watch that myself, Mike," I responded.

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Taken aback, Mike asked, “Why? It was a great movie!”

“Well, do you remember that scene at the beginning where Sally Field has sex with the principal to get her son into the ‘right’ school?”

“Uh . . .”

“And how about the bare breasts at the New Year’s party? The nude on-stage guitar performance? And in the end, when Forrest finally ‘got the girl’ in the sex scene and she conceived a child out of wedlock? Sure, in the movie, everything worked out nicely for Forrest anyway. But that normally isn’t how life goes in those situations, so I don’t want to teach that to my kids. I don’t want them to hear all that grunting or see the nudity, either.”

Mike slumped into a chair. “I guess I’ve been watching movies for so long that I didn’t even notice those things.”

How about you? Are you noticing such things, or have you been desensitized too? Think about it. Suppose you drop your kids at Grandma’s for the weekend and decide to access your Netflix account and watch *Forrest Gump* with your wife. You pop some corn, put your arm around her, and click Play. After much laughter and tears, you both agree that *Forrest Gump* was a great movie.

But you got more than entertainment, didn’t you? You remember the grunting and panting between Sally Field and the principal and how when Sally Field next appeared on screen, you briefly looked her up and down and wondered what it might be like to have her under the sheets. You had your arm around your wife while you were thinking it. Then later, after you retired to bed for a “bit of sport,” you replaced your wife’s face and body with Sally Field’s, and you wondered why she couldn’t make you grunt and pant like the principal.

“Come on!” you reply. “This stuff happens all the time.” Could be, but listen to these troubling words from Jesus: “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

In light of this scripture, piddling things like objecting to *Forrest Gump* may not be minor, legalistic meddling. Such subtle influences, added to hundreds of others over time, provide us with more than a hint of sexual immorality. Soon the effect isn’t so subtle and isn’t as fun.

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Struggles All Around

Let us share some other stories with you.

Thad is recovering from drug dependency at a local Christian ministry. “I’ve been trying hard to get my life in order,” he said. “At the drug center, I’ve learned more about myself and my addiction to drugs. I expected that, since that’s why I went there. But I’ve discovered a second, unexpected thing: I have a problem with lust and impurity.

“I want to be free, but I’m becoming frustrated and angry with the church. The Bible says that women should dress modestly, but they don’t. Some women on the worship team wear the latest tight, short skirts. I look at them worshipping God, but what I see are curves and legs. I get frustrated that how women dress can make purity harder for me even though I’m right there in church where I should be.”

Howard, a Sunday school teacher, described a life-twisting event in junior high: “I was walking home with a classmate named Billy. I didn’t really like Billy that much, but I felt sorry for him. He didn’t have many friends, and he was trying so hard to make some. On our way to buy a drink at a convenience store, he told me about something called masturbation. I’d never heard that word, so he explained what it was. He said all the guys had been experimenting with it.

“I couldn’t get what he told me out of my mind, so that night I tried it. Since then, more than fifteen years ago, I haven’t gone more than a week without masturbating!

“I always thought marriage would take the desire away, but it isn’t any better and I’m so ashamed. Not so much by the act itself, but by the things I think about and the movies I watch while doing it. I know it’s adulterous.”

Another guy, named Joe, told us he loves women’s beach volleyball. “At night, I’ve had shockingly vivid dreams of these women,” he confided. “Some have been so exhilarating and so real that I wake up the next morning certain that I’ve been in bed with them. It’s so real that I feel guilt, wondering where my wife is—I’m sure she has left me over this affair—and how I could’ve done such a thing. Finally, as the cobwebs clear, it slowly dawns on me that it was just a dream. But even then, I feel

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uneasy. You want to know why? Because while I know it was just a dream, I'm not at all certain it wasn't some form of adultery."

Wally, a businessman and frequent traveler, told us he absolutely dreads hotels. "I always eat a long, leisurely dinner," he says, "stalling before returning to my room, because I know what's coming. Before too long, I have the TV remote in my hand. I tell myself it'll be for only a minute, but I know I'm lying. I know what I really want. I'm hoping to catch a little sex scene or two as I search the channels. I tell myself that I'll watch for only a while or that I'll stop before I get carried away. Then my motor gets going and I lust for more, sometimes even turning to the X-rated channel.

"The RPMs are going so high that I have to do something or it feels like my engine will blow. So I masturbate. On a few occasions I fight it, but if I do, later on when I turn the lights out, I'm flooded with lustful thoughts and desires. I stare wide eyed at the ceiling. I see nothing, but I literally feel the bombardment, the throbbing desire. I have no way to get to sleep, and it's killing me. So I say, 'Okay, if I masturbate, I'll have peace and I can finally get to sleep.' So I do, and guess what? The guilt is so strong that I still can't get to sleep. I wake up totally exhausted in the morning.

"What's wrong with me? Do other men have this problem? I'm afraid to ask, really. What if this isn't how everyone else is? What would that say about me? Worse, what if this is how everyone else is? What would that say about the guys at my church?"

John wakes up early to watch certain exercise videos on YouTube, though he doesn't care much about fitness. "The truth is," he began, "I feel absolutely compelled to watch, to catch the close-ups of the buttocks, the breasts, and especially the inner thighs, and I lust and lust and lust. I sometimes wonder if the producers doing those close-ups are just trying to hook men into watching their shows.

"Every day I tell myself that this will be the last time. But by next morning, I'm right there at the computer again."

These men are not weirdos. They are your next-door neighbors, your fellow workers, even your in-laws. They are you. They are small-group leaders, ushers, and deacons. Even pastors aren't immune. One young pastor tearfully detailed to us his ministry and his desire to serve God, expressing in a deeply moving way his devotion

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to his call. But his tears turned to wrenching sobs as he spoke of his bondage to pornography and how it hinders his ministry. His spirit is willing, but his flesh is weak.

Spinning in the Cycles

What about you? Maybe it's true that when you and a woman reach a door simultaneously, you wait to let her go first, but not out of honor. You want to follow her up the stairs and look her over. Maybe you've driven your rental car to the parking lot of a local gym between appointments, watching scantily clad women bouncing in and out, fantasizing and lusting—even masturbating—in the car. Maybe you can't stay away from Sixth Avenue, where the prostitutes ply their trade. Not that you'd ever hire one. Or maybe you don't want to sneak a look at porn sites on your smartphone, but when sitting alone in your cubicle, you just can't help yourself.

You're still teaching a children's Sunday school class, still playing guitar for a worship team, still going to the men's group, still supporting your family. You've been faithful to your wife—well, at least you haven't had an actual physical affair. You're getting ahead, living in a nice home with nice cars and nice clothes and a nice future. *People look to me as an example, you reason. I'm okay.*

Yet privately, your conscience dims until you can't quite tell what's right or wrong anymore, watching the latest Hollywood releases without even noticing the sexuality. You're choking in the sexual prison you've made, wondering where the promises of God have gone. You spin in the same sinful cycles year after year.

And nagging you is the worship. The prayer times. The distance. Always the distance from God. Meanwhile, your sexual sin remains so consistent that you can set your watch by it.

Rick, for instance, walks down the hall at break time just to glance through the glass doors of another office where a sexy young administrative assistant answers phones and directs clients. "Every morning at nine thirty, I wave at her and she smiles back," he says wistfully. "She's beautiful, and her clothes—let's just say they really accentuate her best features. I don't know her name, but I'm actually disappointed when she's absent from work."

Similarly, Sid races home by 4 p.m. every summer day. That's when his neighbor

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Angela sunbathes right outside his window. “At four o’clock, she lies out in a bikini, and she doesn’t know I can see her. I can gaze to my heart’s content. She’s so sexy I can hardly stand it, and I masturbate every day when I watch her.”

And what of today, twenty years after *Every Man’s Battle* was first released? Please recall what we wrote in the introduction: pornographers have grown more vile and depraved in the last twenty years, which means the pornography they produce is more vicious and twisted, inflicting a dramatic deterioration in a guy’s ability to even get an erection and perform sexually in the master bedroom.

Because of these changes, the stories we’re hearing these days are even grislier than those we mentioned earlier. Jacob, a Christian twentysomething, told me that after watching porn videos for a couple of years, he met a beautiful woman at work. “She was pretty provocative. I knew she was open to anything, so I took her out of town on a three-day weekend to a nice resort. The room came with a hot tub on the balcony and a giant round bed—the works. I did everything to her I’d ever seen in my porn videos, and she did the same to me. She told me that I was ‘way great,’ but you know something? When the long weekend was over, it really hit me: I hadn’t felt a thing.”

Jacob sought to find the intensity he’d felt watching his sexy videos, but he couldn’t conjure up the same passion with a real woman anymore, even in a glorious resort hotel room, because she couldn’t take him where his hands and fantasies had taken him with porn. In short, porn and masturbation had crept in and taken over his sexual makeup, eventually frying his natural inclinations to a crisp. We see it happening to men at an accelerated pace.

Sure, porn has always been able to push you into bizarre, irresponsible thought patterns about sex with real women. But that now seems quaint when compared to the effects of today’s escalated pornographic themes, which warp and pull at your sexual horizons until you can enjoy pornography in all sorts of different configurations, sometimes involving a couple of men, sometimes a woman with a German shepherd, perhaps with a woman and several guys, or even with a frantic, resistant girl being ravished and forcefully subdued before your eyes. You can find every sort of image you could ever imagine in these videos and even more that you would never have imagined. In fact, it’s become irrefutably clear that the internet doesn’t just *re-*

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veal your sexual tastes but also *creates* them, well outside your consciousness, as you surf from site to site. If anything loses its appeal, you simply bounce up to the next level, which is often more intense and, usually, more violent.

Before long, you're just one more statistic in a brand-new epidemic among twenty- and thirtysomethings called porn-induced erectile dysfunction (PIED). No, you don't have low testosterone, and no, you haven't broken your penis by overusing it for hours at a time while online. Your penis still works fine, as long as you're in front of a computer.

What you've actually "broken" is another sex organ—your brain, which is widely considered the largest sexual organ in a man's body. To be perfectly accurate, of course, you haven't broken it but rewired it. Extensive porn use induces long-term neuroplastic change in the brain that literally alters how sexual pleasure is routed and processed there. That is why you struggle to *get* an erection with your wife, even though she's got what it takes and is forever the love of your life. That's why you struggle to *keep* an erection, even when you've forced her to perform like a porn star for you.

We intend to demystify this entire topic for you. By the time you turn the last page in this book, you will know exactly how the brain gets rewired by your sin, and you'll know exactly how to reverse the effects. Whether you are married or single, you can apply these principles and get back on purity's track.

Let's get started by addressing the most basic question on this battlefield.

The Big Question

Are these men sex addicts? The compelling sexual cravings are certainly strong evidence. Still, let's take a quick historical look at the study of sexual addiction in men to get a better idea of what addiction means for our purposes in this book.

When we published *Every Man's Battle* in 1999, sexual addiction was a fairly new area of human biological science. In fact, the earliest book on the topic had only been released in 1992, *Out of the Shadows* by Patrick Carnes. As I finished writing and editing my *own* manuscript, I picked up a copy of that book at the suggestion of my publisher.

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During those early days, researchers and counselors were simply attempting to get their arms around the range of behaviors involved, and Carnes had helpfully devised a grid of behavioral levels to help arrive at a clinical definition of sexual addiction.

As a matter of fact, Steve and I used his clinical definition as a starting point in the original version of *Every Man's Battle*, and we'll use it again now to mark out the place where most men live when it comes to their compelling sexual cravings.

From Fred: A Thunderbolt

I vividly remember the merciless internal struggles between the consequences of my sin and the pleasures of my sin. Yes, I hated my sin and cursed it at my core, as most Christian men do. Still, it seemed that no matter how painfully that sin ripped across my heart and soul, it could never quite trump the pleasure of the sin, so I couldn't—or wouldn't—stop. My sexual desires owned me lock, stock, and barrel. It's the same with the men whose stories I've just shared. Maybe you're owned too.

But did I qualify as an addict? Many guys ask a similar question.

The answer? Well, that's complicated. Let me explain. When I first read Carnes's description of a four-step addiction cycle—preoccupation, ritualization, compulsive sexual behavior, then despair—I knew I'd lived that pattern. From that perspective, I was certain that what I'd experienced was addiction.

But a thunderbolt hit me when this same writer went on to state a clinical definition of sexual addiction by using his three levels of addictive behavior (keep in mind that this wasn't a Christian book):

Level 1: Behaviors that are regarded as normal, acceptable, or tolerable.

Examples include masturbation, homosexuality, and prostitution.

Level 2: Behaviors that are clearly victimizing and for which legal sanctions are enforced. These are generally seen as nuisance offenses, such as exhibitionism and voyeurism.

Level 3: Behaviors that have grave consequences for the victims and legal consequences for the addicts, such as incest, child molestation, and rape.

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Did you read that list closely? I sure did, and I noticed that the examples of level 1 include not just masturbation, which most men practice at times (to me, masturbation seemed out of place here at level 1, unless you're talking compulsive masturbation, done many times a day), but also homosexuality and prostitution.

It struck me that most men grappling with bad sexual habits never actually reach this first level of addiction. Defining sexual addiction this way may make perfect sense from a clinical point of view in the counseling arena, but my own experience on the battlefield convinced me that these levels didn't apply to the men I knew at church. Sure, viewing pornography and masturbating were rampant among my Christian brothers, but not to a compulsive degree. And homosexuality? Prostitution? In some cases, sure, but not with the vast majority.

So, judging by Carnes's clinical definition of sexual addiction, maybe I wasn't an addict after all. Clearly, you can live out the preoccupation, ritualization, compulsive sexual behavior, and despair of the addiction cycle—like I'd done—without ever moving up to one of these three levels of addictive behavior.

But if I wasn't an addict and the other guys I've mentioned in this chapter weren't addicts, what *were* we?

From Steve: Fractional Addiction

To help answer that question, let's think again about those three levels of addiction as described above. From our Christian perspective, let's insert another level at the bottom of the addiction scale. If we categorized being totally pure and holy as the zero level, most Christian men we know would fall somewhere between level 0 and level 1.

If you're one of the many men living at this level, it probably isn't at all helpful to label you as an addict in the clinical sense or imply that victory will take years of therapy, because it won't. Instead, victory can be measured in weeks and months, as we'll describe later.

Your "addictive" behaviors are not rooted in some deep, dark, shadowy mental maze of crushing emotional pain and past abuse, as they often are with men in levels 1, 2, and 3. Rather, your behaviors are based on pleasure highs. Obviously, because

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of the way we've been created, men receive a chemical high from sexually charged images.

The hormone epinephrine is part of this pleasure chemistry. It's secreted into the bloodstream and locks into the memory whatever sensual stimulus you're viewing at the time of the emotional excitement. In fact, epinephrine can be released merely by using your *mind's* eye. I've counseled men who became emotionally and sexually stimulated just from entertaining thoughts of sexual activity. For instance, a guy dead set on perusing his favorite porn sites is sexually stimulated long before he taps on a certain app to conduct a search. His stimulation begins in his thought process (the mind's eye), which triggers his nervous system, which secretes epinephrine into the bloodstream, which leads him to pick up his smartphone.

Over the past twenty years, brain science has further detailed much of the brain chemistry involved in these addictive patterns that bind us, which is a key reason why we are updating *Every Man's Battle*. We'll share a lot more about that in chapter 6. For right now, it is enough to understand that pleasure chemicals lie at the root of our compulsive sexual behavior.

From my counseling experience, I believe it's often true that those men living at level 1 or higher have deep psychological problems that will take years to work through. But relatively few men live there. Again, our contention is that the vast majority of men stuck in sexual sin are living between level 0 and level 1.

Fred and I call this a fractional addiction, since it represents living at a level that's a fraction between zero and one. When we're fractionally addicted, we surely experience powerful and seemingly irresistible addictive drawings, but we aren't generally compelled to act to salve some pain, at least not in the same intensity as the men at those higher levels of addiction. Instead, we're more compelled by the chemical high and the sexual gratification it brings.

I lived in this area of fractional addiction during my first decade of marriage, as well as earlier in my adolescence and college years. My interest in the female body had been formed when I was around five years old and was visiting my grandfather's machine shop in Ranger, Texas. I loved walking into that old shop filled with lathes and presses, where Grandpa made tools to retrieve broken oil-well pipes. His office

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wall was adorned with nude pinups, and I stared at those voluptuous naked women in awe.

As I grew older, I saw women more as objects than as people who had feelings. Pornography became for me an enticement to forbidden love. Many young women I dated in high school and college were sexually pure and stayed sexually pure while we dated, but I was always manipulating and conniving, going for what was forbidden.

I later tasted the forbidden fruit when I entered the promiscuous period of my life. When I did have premarital sex, it gave me a sense of control and ownership, as if these young women belonged to me. They were objects of my gratification, just like those pictures on the wall of my grandfather's shop.

What I needed to do was train my eyes and mind to behave, just as Fred did. I needed to align my eyes and mind with Scripture and avoid every hint of sexual immorality. But before we get into an action plan for realigning our eyes and minds, we need to talk further about the roots of this sexual bondage.

Why We Live There

While the concept of fractional addiction has been helpful in explaining where most of us Christian men live, it doesn't explain why we live there and in such vast numbers. While it is notoriously difficult, for a number of reasons, to conduct research on porn, the Barna Group found that even 57 percent of pastors and 64 percent of youth pastors admit to struggling with pornography from time to time.*

On the surface, this doesn't make sense. After all, as Christians we've all given our lives to God and have committed to live according to His ways. His standard of sexual purity is part of His ways. Why, then, do nearly all of us live in this state of fractional addiction, when most of us don't want to live there and few of us made a conscious decision to go there in the first place?

Hmmm. Stop right there for a moment and analyze what was just said. We didn't *want* to go there and did not *choose* to go there, yet nearly *all* of us end up there.

* David Kinnaman, *The Porn Phenomenon*, Barna, February 5, 2016, www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon.

That is telling, isn't it? And it can mean only one thing. There must be something *inside* our makeup as men that makes us particularly susceptible to sexual addiction, and there must be something *outside* us in our culture that makes this whole slippery slope so slick.

That something inside you is your makeup as a male, including the ability of the male eye to deliver sexually gratifying pleasure chemicals to the brain when it locks on to the sensual objects in its vicinity. That something outside is a culture that's locked in on making sure that everything around you is crammed full of sensuality to flood your pleasure centers, from the bouncy babe at the beach in her thong bikini to the steamy hot flicks at the Cinépolis movie theaters to the voluptuous, duck-lipped classmate sexting topless selfies straight to your smartphone.

The question of whether or not you officially qualify as an addict is much less important than understanding that these drives are chemically charged and therefore seem impossible to resist. If we are ever going to get free, we must first explore our makeup as men and why our sensual culture is so compelling to us in spite of our love for Christ. Only then will we be able to defend ourselves from sexual addiction, so let's study our male makeup together in the next section.

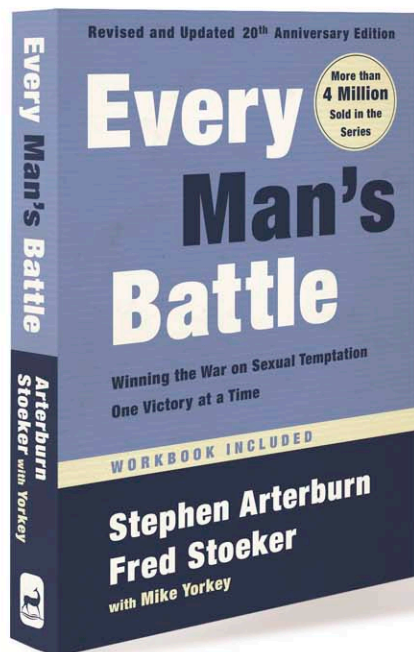
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