

consistent time of daily devotions. In other words, their public ministry continued even though their personal walk with Christ had ground to a halt.

The ultimate protection from sexual sin is to live out of the overflow of a vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus. You are only vulnerable when you fail to abide in Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. When you hear “close to home” news of sexual misconduct does it make you fearful that it could happen to you? If yes, is that fear well-founded, and why or why not?
2. The big idea: *It’s not that easy for a Christian to fall into sexual sin.* Do you agree or not, and why?
3. How much have you allowed yourself to be “at risk” for sexual sin? What are the steps you can take to remove that risk? Which of the steps suggested are you already doing, and how do they help?

Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley has helped men and leaders think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to be equipped to have a larger impact on the world.

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A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

An Equipping Newsletter for Men

Number 32

How Easy is Sexual Sin?

Patrick M. Morley

A Christian man logging onto CompuServe stumbled into “CyberSex.” He started flirting with a woman online and, before long, she announced she was travelling to his town on business. “Can we get together?” she asked. Without thinking very clearly he set a date. Fortunately, he came to his senses before it was too late.

During a typical week I personally learn through my work of three or four men who risk – or throw away – a lifetime of investment in a wife, family, and reputation for a few moments of sexual fantasy.

When we read about someone like Frank Gifford cheating on his wife it may or may not shock us. However, we have all been stunned by learning our minister or a close friend has committed sexual sin. When you hear such “close to home” news of sexual misconduct does it make you fearful that it could happen to you? Here are three things you need to know:

1. YOUR SINS WILL FIND YOU OUT

I have devoted my life to mastering one book so that I can show men how it applies to their lives. I love teaching the word of God. Let me use my knowledge of that book to frighten you a bit. A little “holy” fear can be a good thing. If I have learned anything at all from the Bible it is this: *Your sins will find you out.*

You wouldn’t dream of committing sexual sin if you thought you would get caught. You will. Listen to what the Scriptures say,

You may be sure that your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23).

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known (Luke 12:2).

Our sins will find us out sooner rather than later. Why? Because God will not be mocked. If you don’t believe it, ask Frank Gifford.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think God’s reputation is at stake when a Christian commits sexual sin? It’s not. Actually, God’s reputation would be at stake if He didn’t punish such sin.

What do you do if you have a suit of clothes that gets stained? You send it to

the cleaners. It would embarrass you not to get it cleaned. That's exactly what God does.

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You and I are the suit of clothes God wears. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The same God who created 100 billion galaxies that stretch millions of light years deep into space is making us into His dwelling place. He is always with us and will never forsake us (Hebrew 13:5, Matthew 28:20). The point is: Not only will people

come to know our sins, God already knows.

2. IS IT EASY OR DIFFICULT TO FALL INTO SEXUAL TEMPTATION?

It is very easy for a Christian to fall into sexual temptation. Through creation the eye has been made to appreciate beauty. Through the fall the flesh has been made to lust after that beauty.

Any man who says that he doesn't struggle with sexual temptation is lying. Augustine put it this way: "After the fall lust rules." (He would know. He had an illegitimate son by the first of his two mistresses).

We live in a sex-saturated society. Everyday we are bombarded by the availability of sexual explicit materials – whether TV, movies, magazines, books, or the Internet. In today's newspaper the women's underwear ads are equivalent to "girlie" magazines of 25 years ago!

Clothing suggests a sensuality that was taboo not that long ago. The social penalties for sexual sin have all but disappeared – whether lust, premarital sex, cohabitation, or homosexuality.

3. IS IT EASY OR DIFFICULT TO FALL INTO SEXUAL SIN?

How likely is it that a man walking closely with Christ might stroll down a sidewalk, have a woman seduce him, and succumb? Not very.

It's not that easy for a Christian to fall into sexual sin. You have to flirt with sexual sin for a long time before you will fall. You've got to plot and plan it out. You've got to spend a lot of time figuring out how not to get caught. All of this takes an enormous amount of forethought and premeditation. This thought should provide a great deal of comfort to men who truly love Christ.

If you abide in Christ it's just not that easy to stumble into sexual sin. However, if you live on the edge in a secret thought life you are vulnerable. What kind of company do you keep? What kind of thoughts do you meditate upon? Do you have habits that bring you into contact with sexually tempting materials? How vulnerable have you made yourself?

THREE PRACTICAL IDEAS

1. **Trample Your Temptations.** Do you know the difference between men and women when it comes to temptation? Women flee temptation! Men slowly crawl away hoping temptation will overtake them.

1 Corinthians 6:18 says, "Flee from sexual immorality." If you don't want to sin, don't permit habits that bring you into temptation, like watching sexy TV, casual flirting, or spending time "online" with no accountability. Don't put yourself in compromising situations. Don't hire a secretary to whom you feel a physical attraction. Don't stare out the window at your neighbor's wife doing yard work.

2. **Honor Your Wife.** Here's a story borrowed from our new book, *What Husbands Wish Their Wives Knew About Men* (Zondervan, January 1998):

Mike loves God with all his heart. Yet, he made a regular practice of checking out beautiful women. One day he realized what he was doing was sinful against his wife. He made a commitment to stop looking and lusting.

"One day not much later," Mike said, "I was sitting in a restaurant just finishing my meal. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed a very sensual woman walk into the restaurant. I was determined that I was not going to look at her and lust.

"I didn't know what to do, so I prayed and asked God for help. As it happened, there were about three peas left on my plate. I decided to focus on those peas and began to stare real hard.

"I felt like my head was caught in a giant tug-of-war. One force pulled my jaw upward to look at this woman. The other force yanked my eyes back toward those three peas. It was a bare-knuckles brawl between old habit and new commitment. My face was half twisted toward her, but my eyes bulged out to stay glued on those peas.

"Finally, the battle began to subside. A few moments later it was over. I had won. God gave a spiritual victory. I still am tempted to lust, but God has given me the power to have victory every time I ask His help."

One day a few months later, Mike took his wife to lunch. As they waited for the check she said, "Mike, I've noticed you don't look at women anymore. I just wanted to tell you that I appreciate that. Thank you very much."

3. **Cling To Christ.** Emerge Ministries works with pastors who have fallen into sexual sin. Founder Richard Dobbins states that every single one of these pastors have one thing in common. In the days, weeks, and months leading up to their moral failure not one of these men had maintained a

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