AN UNBREAKABLE HABIT OF PURITY IN A PORNOGRAPHIC WORLD. Sexual immorality and pornography have become the defining issues and obstacles to spiritual growth and ministry on campus.

Flesh (for men) deals fearlessly with lust, sex and pornography in a clear, comprehensive manner and in a way that supports the Campus Ministry’s spiritual Growth Model. Written in a straightforward, gracious and humorous style, Flesh does not stir up guilt but helps the reader to develop an unbreakable habit of purity.

Flesh is divided into three sections: small group discussion material, topical articles, and a month of daily devotionals.

Of all the passages relevant to our battle against lust, nothing exceeds the following verse in importance:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 6:12

The idea is simple enough: don’t let sin set up a kingdom in your life by which it may gain the leverage to become the controlling influence of your behavior. But even with an explanation, the insight of this verse is lost on those new to the Bible. The New Testament has what theologian Gordon Fee calls a symbolic universe—words that carry with them imported meaning. That imported meaning comes from the world of the Old Testament. Certain Old Testament analogies are obvious, says Fee, but many words and phrases contain a meaningful echo for those who have grown up with or been saturated in Old Testament stories. Fee illustrates what he means by relaying a conversation he once had with an Australian. During the conversation, he uttered the phrase “four score and seven years ago,” to which the Australian queried, “What does 84 years have to do with anything?” That phrase from President Abraham Lincoln’s speech is a part of the “symbolic universe” of America. Grammar school children in America memorize the speech. But it is totally lost on outsiders, or at the very least, Australians. In much the same way, when the early Christians heard Romans 6:12, they would have had this understanding based on what they knew from the Old Testament:

In the book of Joshua in the Bible, we are given the account of how God delivered the land he had promised into the hands of the Israelites. While the land was a gift, they still needed to engage in conquering it. (This is the kind of gift I’m tempted to give: “You see that football stadium on your campus? It’s yours. Simply kick out the 80,000 people who attend games there, as well as the football team—a mere formality.”)

Yet they did wait and allowed powerful pockets of the land’s inhabitants to form in unchallenged territory. These pockets became strongholds: unconquered kingdoms within the borders of the Promised Land. Not content to remain little
islands and outposts, they waged terrorist attacks against the Israelites, steadily growing in power until we read, “The Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.”

The Israelites didn’t fully drive out their enemy and allowed strongholds to remain from which their enemy began to reign. The result was that the Israelites were run out of their towns and houses. They found themselves hiding in hills within the land they owned and should have controlled.

The implications for our spiritual growth and our fight against lust should be obvious: when we let lust remain in our lives, it grows in power and influence until it is controlling our life as much or more than God. The battle against lust is “kill or be killed,” “fight or be attacked,” “conquer or be conquered.” Allowing lust to remain, or tolerating its presence, is not one of our options. What Joshua was calling for, and what the passage in Romans is calling for, is a decision to fight. We are to commit ourselves to completely clearing the land, so that there isn’t a trace, “not a hint,” of our enemy, lust.

There are many components that factor in to our victory against lust, but none is as important as the decision to fight, to take full possession of the land (our lives). In reading through the volumes of literature on this topic, we found this major common denominator for those who have seen victory: A clear, memorable decision or resolution to fight, to clear the land completely, to make no compromise nor to allow even a hint of sexual immorality.

This commitment to fight is not a vow that we will never stumble. Every war has its lost battles and casualties. It is, however, a pledge to strive with all of God’s resources and strength, and with all of ours, to the highest possible standard. It is a commitment to perseverance, to never give in and to take whatever actions, no matter how drastic, to gain victory.

In the following passage, Joshua says to the Israelite people:

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.
Joshua 24:15

There is no place in the Christian life for promises we cannot keep, for confidence in our will or for vows of future victory. Scripture, puts forth strong language calling people to decide, choose, or follow. This call is often framed in language that suggests that after the choice is made, nothing will be the same. There is no turning back. Those who have seen victory have made such a decision. The proof of that commitment is not always seen in the daily battle reports but in the tenacity and resolve to keep fighting after the experience of a setback or many setbacks. Commitment, as with love, is measured by its passion and tenacity, its priority to the goal and its duration.

We encourage you to make such a decision to fight and to persevere until the “land” is completely taken. End the truce and make a declaration of war. Such a commitment is in no way affected by a future failure but should only spur us to return to the fight with resolve until victory is attained. On the following page is a sample commitment you can use if you find it helpful.
Section 504 of the Telecommunications Act states that: "Upon request from a cable service subscriber, a cable operator shall, without charge, fully scramble or otherwise fully block the audio and video programming of each channel carrying such programming so that... a subscriber does not receive it." It is your right, and responsibility, to make sure you are not exposed, and therefore tempted, by this programming. It will never seem convenient to take the time to black out these stations, but nothing should be a higher priority than your purity.
But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:15

God never calls us to make promises we cannot keep, to put confidence in our will, or to make vows of future victory. Scripture puts forth, however, a strong impulse or imperative to decide, to follow, to count the cost, to forsake, and to repent. This call is set forth in such a way that implies that after the choice is made, nothing will be the same, and there will be no turning back. Those who have seen victory have usually made such a decision: a decision to fight, not a vow to win. The proof of that commitment is not always seen in the daily battle reports, but in the tenacity and resolve to keep fighting after the experience of a setback, or many setbacks.

We encourage you to make such a decision to fight and to persevere, and in the space below suggest you phrase that decision in your own words.

A DESIRE to FOLLOW, A COMMITMENT to FIGHT

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_______________________________________________________________________________________
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Date: __________________ Signature _______________________________________________________

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