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.

“Yo, yo, come here little man. You look pretty hip. How would you like to read a tasty little article on sex? Everyone’s read it, except you.”

With that, I hope I have lured you into our topic: temptation. And, I mean temptation with a capital “T,” not a small “t.” I’m talking about the ever-present temptation of sex, sexy women, and sexy images, to which the words of James are quite applicable:

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

James 1:13-15

Satan is not to blame for every tempting thought or desire that wafts through our minds. Rather, they come from our own over-heated lusts, and bloated sex drives, and never, no-never, come from God. On a strictly pragmatic basis, Satan is not limitless in his resources. Unlike God, he cannot be everywhere—or does he need to be. For daily enticements to sexual immorality, we do a pretty good job ourselves—thank you very much.

In Ephesians 6:11, we’re told to “put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” The Greek word for schemes is noemata, from the root word noema, which means “mind or thought.” Interestingly, it is the root of our word noose (As in, “String that cowboy up!”). The word illustrates that Satan’s schemes are well conceived and aimed at our minds. As it relates to our temptation, his efforts are usually confined to the most strategic times, and the most strategic methods. Satan never shoots blanks, and a person actively engaged, or passively resigned, to a life of sexual impurity doesn’t require a personal trainer.

Timing
For those pursuing sexual purity (usually a small target audience), what you will notice is a clearly demonic dimension to your enticement to sex and pornography at critical junctures—strategic leverage points. One of those junctures is the initial trap or lure that got us involved in the first place: a magazine found on the roadside; a girl in grade school without morals; exposure to an explicit sexual movie; a childhood molestation—this is the recreation of Satan, and there is nothing “accidental” about them. They are highly leveraged moments of engagement.

The child pornographer known as the “Porn Piper” (called such after the children’s fairy tale character, the Pied Piper) was recently caught and arrested. His ingenious method or strategy for exposing young children to pornography was to establish pornographic websites with names like “bobthebiulder.com” (The misspelled “i” before the “u” was intentional, as a child might misspell...
it). This is the ingenuity of the enemy. Once people are hooked, his work is pretty much done and he’s moved on to the next victim.

But for you, that’s all water under the bridge, or sewage, as the case may be. You are at a different juncture: a man now trying to live in sexual purity. This is another strategic point. As such, you can expect the return of a demonic component—temptation with a capital “T.” Once you break free and establish a track record of purity, you will not be likely to return. This would be unthinkable to the enemy.

The apostle Paul speaks of such capital “T” temptation in Ephesians 6:13-14:

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

In the Bible’s Old Testament, we find the book of Nehemiah. The subject of the book, Nehemiah, is charged with the task of rebuilding the destroyed wall of Jerusalem. If you read the story, you will notice that besides the general difficulty of the task, there is a spiritual attack waged through Satan’s puppet, Sanballet. Read the story and note when the attacks occur: at the onset of the project, halfway through, and right near the end. These are the natural times of stress, exertion and fatigue on any project, and Satan exploits that to his advantage.

**STRATEGIC WEAKNESS**

Besides the natural fatigue from the tenacity of fighting at the beginning, middle, and end, Satan will also look to attack when you are physically, emotionally or mentally at risk. You may have had a really bleak day, or stressful events, lack of sleep, the break-up of a relationship, or a bad hair day, etc. Because of your weakness, you will probably not be feeling close to God, and because of your susceptibility you have an excuse, “God, you should have known I couldn’t handle this today.” That’s what your flesh has been looking for—that’s what Satan has been watching for—an excuse. As any United States president will attest, nothing removes responsibility like “plausible deniability.”

**CONDITIONING**

So, to your natural fracture points have been added stress points. But, being a man of conviction, you are still not that easy of a target. You’re too sober and you’d need a drink to loosen up. During these times of spiritual attack, you will often notice that Satan uses something to physically incline or dispose you to lust. It could be a graphic dream the night before or a conversation you overheard. For whatever reason, your bubbling body chemistry is beginning to overflow its banks and flood in the direction of lust. Like giving someone a drink in order to seduce him or her, Satan does not overlook the physiological edge.

**PERSONAL WEAKNESS**

Last, we all have personal weaknesses and liabilities. We have things that specifically tempt us. We have lies we are more prone to believe or, rationalizations we are most inclined to hide behind. These, too, will be exploited.

Somehow, in some way, amidst these pressures, an opportunity will arise. You will have to make a choice to stand firm. So, having looked at the method of temptation, let’s look at the way by which we stand firm.

**A MEANS OF ESCAPE**

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

1 Corinthians. 10:13

The promise of a means of escape carries some logical implications. If the all-knowing ruler of the
universe is providing us an exit strategy, he must know something that we don’t. He must know a temptation is coming that is beyond our capacity to resist. Armed with a superior I.Q., you generally don’t want to second-guess God. To decline the escape windows is really putting you—in the military vernacular—in harm’s way.

These “days of evil” are dead-end streets. Through the day, God will provide exit ramps to get off the highway—a chance to get out of your room, a phone call, whatever. You will be tempted to avoid the exit. I don’t know why, but you just will. But, you must get off the highway (That reminds me of an AC/DC song that I will not sing for you.). You’ll sense when “the day” is upon you. By faith, you need to be looking for those exits.

**OPEN THE WINDOWS. TAKE THE DOOR OFF ITS HINGES**

I got a call some years ago from a friend who was having one of those days. He was home alone, tired, and in one of those moods where he felt pre-disposed physically to lust. When I picked up the phone, he told me his situation and said, “I haven’t done anything wrong, I just have a bad feeling about where this day seems headed and I wanted to bring someone into it.” That’s a good call on his part. In Romans 13:14 it says, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” These circumstances get our minds scheming. The best way to resist is to bring someone else into our thoughts.

In “Education of a Bodybuilder,” Arnold Schwarzenegger tells the story of his “puny, girly-man” calves which were apparently tiny in proportion to the rest of his lumpy frame. After trying to hide this deficiency, he took an opposite tack. He cut off all his workout clothes at the knees so everyone could see his sickly calve muscles. It forced him to do something about them.

When the evil day is upon you, fling open the shutters of your life. Let everyone see your calves before your mind conceives a plan to pursue lust. Once the plan is hatched, it’s hard to stop. Let someone know that you are beginning to hatch a plan. Use the power of the Christian community to help you resist.

**GET BACK ON THE PROGRAM**

In pursuit of holiness, you may fail a capital “T” temptation. You don’t have to. You shouldn’t, but you might. The devil is a cowboy. Give him an inch of rope and he’ll turn it into a lasso. Success is not simply about winning. It’s about knowing how to lose. You just got sucker-punched and are lying on the canvas. A strong part of you will want to stay there, thinking, “Well, seeing as I’ve already blown it, I might as well go the whole nine yards and get back on my feet tomorrow.” But—and this is critical—you must get up immediately. If you don’t, you will find it harder and harder to get back up. You must receive God’s forgiveness. What good is it then when in your greatest struggle, you cannot receive mercy? Ask yourself: When else do you really need it, but at that moment?

So, receive God’s forgiveness. Acknowledge your opponent, “Hey, that was good shot, Satan.” Rub your chin where he punched you. Spit out the blood, and get the heck back on your feet and don’t follow failure with another failure. One failure is an anomaly in a life of purity. Two failures can re-establish a powerful habit.

This is not easy. Having filled your mind with lustful thoughts, the next week will be difficult. But, don’t act out. After a week, you might think you have gotten far enough away, but don’t ease up. Satan will look to re-engage you after a period of time, not while you still loath what you did. You must re-establish your track record of purity and that will usually take about three weeks to a month.
“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting”

Proverbs 31:30