



You're probably reading this because you recognize that you have a problem. Join the club. Every person must come to an understanding that they are sinful before a Holy God and desperately need the blood of Jesus His Son to cleanse us from all sin. However, once a believer, we rejoice in the forgiveness, righteousness, and cleansing power Jesus gives to us. Now we are set free to pursue godliness and purity, but this pursuit is also a battle. And that battle is what brings us here. Sin manifests itself in so many ways, but the ultimate root of all sin stems from a rebellious heart. Some hearts bring forth fruit of bitterness and anger. Others bear fruit of pride and control. But my guess is that you are reading this because your greatest battle is against lust.

First, let me explain a little about what takes place here at Ventura Baptist Church. I know this sheet is long, but please read through it and think about what is being said. I hope that it will be uncomfortable and convicting as well as an encouragement to you. I know it was for me.

*Battle for Purity* is what we use here at our church to help individuals (like you and me) battle the addictions of our flesh and mind - specifically lust. You might be thinking, "Why would *Battle for Purity* work when I have tried dozens of other purity programs, counseling, and have read countless books on the topic?" Well, the answer is easy. *Battle for Purity* offers something that none of those other items can – church discipline. That might scare you a little, but that's okay! Church discipline is God's means of lovingly confronting each of His children. Sometimes that's scary, but it's always grace-filled. The reality is that God uses His church to help you cut off sin, repent, and grow in godliness. Praise the Lord for His church! The church is God's means of grace to help you get to glory.

I know what it is like to give in to lust day after day. It's aggravating, harmful and draining. It hurts the ones we love most. It isolates us and makes us feel guilty and alone. It never delivers on its promise and always leaves us wanting more. And ultimately, it is a slap in the face to a God Who created us for purity and holiness. He loved us so much that even while we were enemies, He sacrificed His Son for us. (Romans 5:8) We know the end result of sin – death (physical & spiritual). No question about it. Embracing lust is like eating a delicious cake in the desert that happens to be poisonous. If we knew the cake was poisonous, we wouldn't eat it. Why then do we give in to lust when it has the same effect - death? (Rom. 8:12-13) The reason we lust is because we don't treasure Christ Himself nor do we delight in what He has done for us. Instead, we treasure the immediate gratification of our flesh because it feels good *now*. If we had to decide between (a) Christ or (b) sinful, sensual pleasure, we are going to choose (b) every time. Why? Because we can feel, experience and enjoy (b) almost instantaneously. We can't always feel, experience or enjoy Christ.

So here is the challenge (and I will admit the greatest challenge of my life) – we must look past our feelings and experiences and put our faith in Christ. Even when we feel like Jesus isn't enough, we must trust Him. He has promised to be more glorious, more wonderful, more pleasurable (Ps. 16:11) than any earthly thing imaginable. So, turn to Him and turn away from your flesh. Something bigger is at stake if we fail to do so - our eternity. Consider this passage:

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. - Hebrews 12:15-17*

Esau sold his inheritance for a single bowl of stew. We say, "That is ludicrous, I would never do that" but what the writer of Hebrews is saying is that we do the same thing every time we hold on to a sinful thought, every time we look at pornography, or check someone out, or masturbate, or commit sexual adultery. We sell the eternal inheritance we have in Christ when we give in to these things. I don't believe a Christian can lose their salvation, but if someone continues down the road of unrepentant, lustful sin we must ask the question, "Are they even a believer?" The scariest part of this passage is that it says that a point in time came when Esau wanted the inheritance back, but was rejected! Although he sought it with tears, he found no chance to repent. That is exactly what addictions (like lust) do to us. They captivate our hearts and make big

promises of pleasure and happiness, all the while dragging us to the grave. How many times have you sat on the edge of your bed literally in tears and anguish because you failed again? Don't continue down that road. A time will come when it will be too late to repent. Instead of selling our inheritance for a fleeting moment of pleasure, let's turn to the Lord and by His power sell the fleeting moment of pleasure for a glorious inheritance.

"So, what do I need to do to change?" This is where *Battle for Purity* comes in. Honestly, it's not a new formula that has never been discovered before. What *Battle for Purity* **is** is a method of accountability and discipline that is going to take work and effort, but will lead you to a freedom in Christ. No one ever won the race by sitting on the sideline doing nothing. You will have to apply yourself and really want it. You will have to be open with others in the church and be ready for godly exhortation, encouragement, strengthening, rebuke, and discipline. In order for us to find greater victory, we need to come to a correct understanding of three important truths - Jesus Christ, His Word, and His Church. Without these, there is no victory!

- **Jesus Christ** - Jesus is the One who conquered sin. Not me. Not you. We will never be able to defeat our sins apart from Him. You've probably tried that already. So have I. It never works. And, even if we *are* able to turn over a new leaf in life and quit past addictions on our own (as some do), what good is it to stop masturbating if we are still going to hell in the end? The *real* reason we should want to stop lust is because Jesus is our LORD, and only Jesus has the power to deliver us from hell. So, look to Him for true victory. (Galatians 5:24)
- **His Word** – The Bible is the greatest physical gift of God to His people. The psalm-writer says in Ps. 119:11 that he has stored up the Word of God in his heart to keep his path from sin. He confesses that delighting in God's Word and memorizing it is a foundational key in killing sin. If this is true, then we should keep God's Word near to our hearts. Read it, study it, and memorize it so that it is truly on your heart.
- **His Church** – The church is the local gathering of believers near you that God has called you to covenant with. If you are not a member of a Christ-centered church, join one and submit to its elders. This is a gift from God to help us grow in holiness and to hold one another accountable. There is no such thing as a rogue Christian. We need one another to grow spiritually and we need the church to fight sin. So, if you are battling sin, ask for help from brothers and sisters around you in your church and repent from doing what you know is wrong. (2 Timothy 2:22)

*Battle for Purity* bookmarks are available and can be helpful for remembering these truths and growing in godliness. The bookmark has 26 passages of Scripture on one side and stages of growth on the other. This plan is a one-year commitment.

1. Commit to meet with a brother-in-Christ every other week for a year.
2. Commit to recite that week's passage to each other from memory.
3. Commit to pray for each other daily.
4. Commit to text or call each other when feeling tempted to sin.
5. Commit to never lie or withhold information regarding sin.
6. Commit to confess to our wives if we have "grossly" sinned (see below).
7. Commit to find another individual after the year is over to start again (multiply).

This plan is geared for a context of one-on-one meetings with other church members. It necessitates a brotherly love and trust where there is vulnerability and also a desire to see Jesus magnified. We are all weak, but Christ's strength is made perfect in weakness. We praise God that he works through His children to care for and disciple one another. The stages of sin on the back of the bookmark are to help gauge where each person is at in their struggles. The goal is to battle so that we keep the fight at "Stage 4" which is "The Mind." Read through these to get a better understanding of each stage. This is where the rubber meets the road. If a believer persists in "gross" sins (ex. - masturbating, pornography, sexual adultery) through this process and does not show signs of repentance after persistent godly confrontation and help (see Matt. 18:15-20), then that person should be brought before the elders. If the sin persists even after this, then it is the decision of the elders to consider church discipline for this individual.

Believer, many times we get to a point where we feel like there is no escape, but that is not true. That is the lie the devil wants us to believe. We have an escape in Christ! (Romans 8:1-2)

Look to Him! Will you join me?