



Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Turning Character Fat Into Muscle

By Dr. John P. Splinter

Sex is the greatest single area of spiritual and character battle for most men. A few years ago, PromiseKeepers men were asked about their greatest personal struggles. Sixty-five percent of them said that sexual purity was their #1 struggle. *No other issue even reached double digits.* Can you think of any other area that is more pervasively difficult for more men across the board? Until I hear from you, the statement stands.

I've been a pastor for 35+ years, hold a Masters in Counseling and a Ph.D. in Family Therapy. Over the years of my ministry I have worked extensively with men of many different types ~ professional athletes, professional musicians, businessmen, academicians, politicians, and even other pastors. In my experience, no other issue is more pervasive or more difficult for more men, than managing their sexuality. Some have compared the drive of testosterone to cocaine addiction. Others have prayed that God would completely take away their sex drive so that they could be better husbands.

Numerous studies confirm that the male sex drive is generally not only stronger than the female sex drive, but is generally far more straight forward (no pun intended). Males generally have stronger sex drives, and are generally more direct in achieving their sexual goals. Female sex drive by contrast can be enormously complex and conditional.

Furthermore, the "refractory period" (i.e., the amount of time between orgasms) is generally far shorter in males than in females. A man may have sex in the morning and by mid-afternoon be craving it again. His wife, by contrast, may be thinking, "Sheesh, we just had intercourse three months ago – you mean you want to do it *again*?"

Making things even more difficult for some men, a large percentage of women apparently deal with low sex drive. Richard Sine, M.D.¹, notes research published in the *Obstetrics & Gynecology* journal, finding that "about 40% of women reported some sort of sexual problem -- most commonly low sexual desire -- but only 12% report feeling distressed about it." So for many women, having very little sex drive is normal and for some women, having no sex drive is just fine. Try running that flag past a male garrison....

Adding to the complication of being male, most men's fathers didn't give them very much coaching about sex. The vast majority of fathers never say anything about sex to their sons. Of those few brave fathers who try, many are so inadequate in their attempt that it is perceived by their sons as being halfway between silly and pathetic. The grit needed to personally manage one's own male sexuality is largely a byproduct of a strong father/son relationship, in which Dad

bonds with his son, and then intentionally provides wise and godly male coaching to his son, on a regular and frequent basis, from the time junior is five years old until he leaves home at twenty.

Research has found that there are two things, and possibly only two things, that help a young “emerging man” govern his sexuality. The first is having an involved and loving dad. The second is a genuine, personal and active faith in Christ.

Other than castration, there is no sure-fire, instant, magic-bullet cure to overcoming the enormous challenges of male sexuality. (For the record, we’re not suggesting you sharpen any knives.) But there are ways in which any man can begin to gain control over his sexuality, and use it in ways that enhance character rather than demean him as a man.

It’s about developing habits

You may have heard the story of the American Indian explaining how he controlled himself in the midst of temptation. He said, “It’s like there are two dogs inside me. There’s a black one that leads me to bad things, and a white one that leads me to good things. The one that wins is the one I feed.” Developing habits is like feeding the right dog and starving the other one.

Habit 1: Faith-oriented Goal-Setting

The most important sex organ is not between your legs. It’s between your ears. Virtually nothing goes on between your legs, that hasn’t already passed muster in your brain.² This being so, scripture offers insight for men: *“It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God. God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Thes. 4:3-5, 7 ~ NIV).*

OK, that’s the biblical goal anyway. The bottom line of that goal is to trust that God knows what He’s doing. After that assumption, anyone who has any knowledge of goal-setting knows that once having established the long-range objective, the next step is to break it down into smaller, manageable pieces. Sometimes these smaller pieces may be as tiny as making it through the next five minutes without giving in to sexual thoughts. Here are some thoughts about small steps toward the big goal of what one might call, “character-building sexual habits.”

Habit 2: Break The Day Into Quarters

You may not be able to manage total purity for 24 hours, but you might have better success taking on the time period from 6:a.m. to noon; or from noon to 6:p.m; or from 6:p.m. to midnight. Break the day into quarters, and see if you can pray your way through one quarter at a time ~ not necessarily on your knees, but at least staying in close contact with God ~ keeping the conversation alive.

Furthermore, some men report various quarters of the day as being more difficult. Many find nighttime as the most challenging time to maintain sexual purity. If a man is aware of this difficulty, he can begin to take steps to care for himself and overcome his struggles during that

six-hour time frame. For example, since the chief underlying clinical issue of being hooked on porn is attachment, having evening phone calls from accountability partners who check in and perhaps pray with one can be helpful. If one is married, scheduling a half hour of evening talk-time can be helpful also. So also can scheduling a regular time of personal Bible reading and prayer, to begin to fill the niche formerly filled with pornography.

Habit 3: Put The Onus On God

God actually makes a lot of fantastic promises in scripture. Here are a few:

- Heb 13:5 ~ “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you’; never will I forsake you.”
- James 4:7-8 ~ “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.”
- 1 Peter 5:10-11 ~ “The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

These promises are either true, or they’re religious bunko. There’s no middle ground here. In the male sexual battle, many men have reached a point of hopelessness in which they have cried out to God...