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This writing is intended for Christian men—all males in their early teens to their late years in life who struggle against the flesh—especially sexual lust. It is also appropriate for women in that it will help in understanding what men go through. But what’s more, this writing is real, raw and revealing because it explores the area where the “rubber meets the road,” and where men’s faith interacts with inappropriate thoughts and behavior.



Temptation is defined as an enticement to gratify the desires of our flesh by disobeying God’s word. The sixth commandment states “**You shall not commit adultery.**” (Exodus 20:14). Prior to Jesus walking on earth it was considered OK to “ogle and not touch.” However, the words of Jesus exposed the hidden thoughts of men, revealed God is interested in the attitude of our heart, and set a Godly standard for Christian men when he said “**You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**” Matthew 5:27-28

His words are truth...and we know they are truth deep within our soul, heart and spirit. Because when we lustfully look through our eyes at a woman (men...own up to it) we are imagining adulterous thoughts. For some, lust can be a continuous obstacle to Christian growth, and replaces joy and peace with guilt and shame. But know one thing...guilt and shame are a good thing...because these emotions are intended for those who are born again as spiritual chastisement. This experience will be explained in more detail later.

**“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12**

Satan knows man’s weaknesses and has been actively changing our culture and “acceptable behavior” during the past few decades. For example, I can remember many years ago when porn was only available in out-of-the way “seedy” retail stores. These stores were culturally frowned upon and often faced legal challenges for their existence. Thereafter pornographic publications began to show up in convenience stores—but placed on shelves inaccessible by children and wrapped in protective packaging. Today it’s only a click away—easily accessible to all (including children) due to the successful efforts of principalities, powers, rulers of darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness—thereby significantly increasing the chance of men turning onto a slippery path of destruction and spiritual death.

The influence and impact of easy access to porn has been studied by the Barna Group. Started in 1984, the Barna Group is widely considered to be a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture.

In 2016 the Barna Group began a nationwide study of teenagers, young adults, Americans in general as well as pastors—more than 3,000 interviews in total. Their study revealed a multitude of insightful information. However, one aspect stands out amongst the others—the percentage of Christian males that are considered frequent porn users (or those who seek porn daily, weekly and monthly):

- 41% of Christian males between 13 and 24
- 23% of Christian males 25 years and older

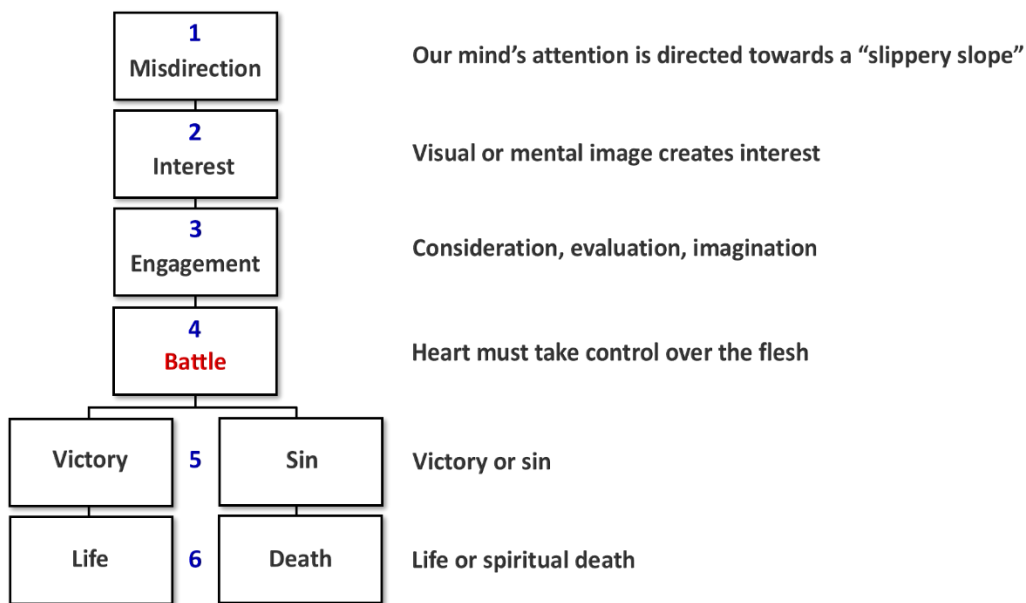
Source: <https://www.barna.com/research/porn-in-the-digital-age-new-research-reveals-10-trends/>

## Temptation = Deceptional Lie

Jesus referred to Satan as “a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” John 8:44

Satan is a master liar. He is capable of making a lie look like truth, and truth look like a lie. What’s more, he can also tell the truth and a lie with the same words—all with the intent of causing spiritual death. By knowing the sinful nature of man—including man’s thought processes and areas of weakness—he creates and positions deceptional “bait” for men’s eyes. His goal is to stimulate our fleshly desires by (1) misdirecting our thoughts, (2) causing us to look, and (3) contemplating lustful behavior. Thereafter, whether or not sin occurs is based upon a free will choice. A Christian male will either spiritually fight off the temptation, or fall victim.

There are 6 separate stages of temptation, which are depicted below.



### Stage 1 Misdirection:

In magic, misdirection is a form of deception in which the performer distracts someone’s attention (without their awareness) to the wrong place so that the magician can perform the “sleight of hand.”

Misdirection comprises the initial stage of temptation—when our attention is distracted from whatever we’re focused on—and is visually directed towards something that does not align with God’s word and His will.

### Stage 2 Interest:

This is when our mind’s attention is increased upon the object of our distraction, our curiosity kicks in, and we want to know more.

### Stage 3 Engagement:

During the engagement stage we are locked in. We mentally contemplate and assess what we’re focused on. Our mind will imagine deriving benefits or pleasure from whatever we’re considering; and our physical body may become aroused.



#### **Stage 4 Battle:**

The first three stages can occur within a fraction of a moment of time—so quickly that it is possible to be spiritually unaware of what’s going on. But those who know the truth...those who have been touched by the grace of God and has been forgiven...will find there is a struggle going on within their heart, soul and spirit. This is when a Christian—who desires Jesus more than fulfilling the desires of their flesh—will realize and recognize their impure thoughts and inappropriate behavioral response.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

When in the midst of struggle a Christian will be given a way of escape. It may consist of:

- A small voice saying “stop now and run.”
- An image in your mind of what to do.
- A feeling deep within your spirit that screams “THIS IS WRONG, STOP LOOKING!”

Immediately obey these instructions. Once you begin to turn away you will be able to gain control over the temptation—and your flesh—through prayer, citing scripture, and remembering the painful consequences from past failures as you distance yourself from the source of temptation.

If the way of escape is not followed...the flesh will continue to gain control over the situation until its desires are fulfilled.

However, it is important to realize...it is by God’s grace...it is by the death of His Son...and it is by your belief in what Jesus did for you on the cross...you are forgiven. But you must admit and confess your sins to God. However, to live life as God intended...you cannot live under His grace and continue to sin.

Every Christian encounter various types of sin in their life; and each Christian must ask themselves the following questions:

- Is the sin worth it?
- What do I want in this life and thereafter?
- Do I desire to be free from the bondage?

Sometimes it’s not easy to make a free will decision and a commitment. However, consider the truth: the emotional, spiritual and eternal rewards far exceed the collateral damage that occurs when living a deceptional lie.

One of two possible results will occur from every temptation: victory and life, or sin and death.

## Stage 5 Victory or Sin

This stage defines two possible paths one may follow based upon the success or failure of the battle in stage 4. One will walk away in victory, the other will fall.

For those who are victorious:

- “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57
- “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

For those who sin:

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” John 3:19-2

## Stage 6 Life or Death

Jesus said “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10

For those who are victorious, recognize God alone is worthy of praise and glory for what was accomplished. Our flesh has a propensity for pride, and desires praise and recognition. However, your ability to overcome that which once controlled you...is because of His mercy, grace, truth and love. Bottom line, we can't do this without Him.

- “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.” Psalm 115:1
- “For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” 1 Corinthians 6:20

Besides...think about it...did you find God...or did He find you?

- For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9
- My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. Proverbs 23:26
- Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

For those who sin, consider the consequences and collateral damage:

- Feeling of darkness and separation from God
- Your emotions (shame, remorse, guilt)
- The questioning of your spirituality and faith
- You know:
  - You missed the opportunity to please God
  - He still loves you...regardless

True changes to man's heart and soul begins with the realization God draws us to Him with love—and not by overbearing dictatorial mandates. Dictatorial mandates may drive compliance, but it will also create a hardened heart. We know what is right and wrong and have been given free will. As such, God desires a man's heart that willingly seeks Him for who He is.

## The Garden

In Genesis chapter 3, the interaction between Satan and Eve in the Garden of Eden provides an excellent example of the 6 stages of temptation. What's more, Satan's method of operation (a masterful use of deception and lies to facilitate the first 3 stages) has not changed throughout time.

[“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Genesis 2:16-17](#)

Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, blissfully living in the presence of God. However, there was only one restriction—to not eat the fruit from one tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

### Stage 1 Misdirection

The serpent asked [“Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”](#) This question caused Eve to stop whatever she was doing and redirect her attention towards the forbidden tree. Satan could have asked the question with specificity (i.e. Did God say you shall not eat of this tree?)—which could have been answered with a yes or no. However, by asking the question that included all trees in the garden, her answer required more thought and explanation—which caused her attention to focus upon the forbidden tree.

[“And the woman said ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”](#)

### Stage 2 Interest

[“Then the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die.”](#) These words provide an example of Satan's ability to deceive. God's word defined the consequences if they disobeyed—they would die (spiritually and not physically). Satan attacked the authority of God's word by saying you will not die (which is both a lie and truth). It is a lie because they would die spiritually. It was also true because they would not physically die. Remember, Jesus called Satan a murderer. Spiritual death is Satan's primary objective, followed by physical death.

Satan then said [“For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”](#) The opening of the eyes and the knowledge of good and evil upon consumption are true. However, the words of “you will be like God” leverages man's sinful desire to be equal to God—which is the same distorted perception that caused Satan to be banished from Heaven.

So, Eve has been misdirected (in stage 1) and now looks at the tree from a different perspective (stage 2). Her interest is increased because there may be potential benefits to be gained.

### Stage 3 Engagement

[“The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise.”](#) Eve was locked in (fully engaged). Her eyes looked closely at the tree as she mentally contemplated the benefits that could be experienced by eating the fruit.

### Stage 4 Battle

There was no battle in Eve's heart, soul and spirit; she did not reflect upon God's single commandment; and there was no consideration of the consequences—which exemplifies our thought processes before we were born again.

### Stage 5 Victory or Sin

“She took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” There was no victory, only sin. They both disobeyed the one and only thing God told them not to do.

### Stage 6 Life or Death

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” Adam and Eve spiritually died. They attempted to hide both their nakedness and themselves from God. This is a common response when we sin—in that we want to run and hide from God, and do not want His presence.

“Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ So, he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’” Be assured God knew what happened and He knew where they were. However, He needed to confront their sin.

“Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’ And the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” Adam and Eve attempted to pass the blame—which provides additional evidence they transitioned from light to darkness—which has been passed down through all generations. This behavior is demonstrated by very young children when they are found by a parent doing something they’ve been instructed not to do. All of us can relate to the following:

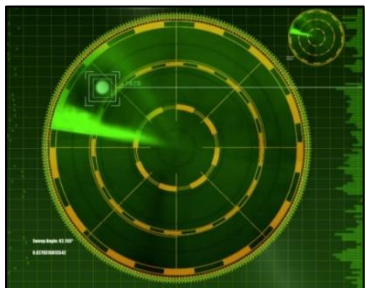
- Mother: Did I tell you not to eat cookies before dinner?
- Child: Yes.
- Mother: Did you eat some cookies? (Cookies are still in the mouth.)
- Child: No.

Our sinful nature is to deflect, pass blame, or lie when we’ve been caught. This is often demonstrated in reality TV shows such as Cops.

- Officer: Is this your purse?
- Man: Yes.
- Officer: Mind if I look inside?
- Man: Well...OK.
- Officer: Are these your drugs?
- Man: No. I don’t know how they got in there!

True repentance can only begin when we take full responsibility and accountability for our mistakes in life.

## Spiritual Radar



A military will use radar as a means to defend against potential attacks. In a similar manner, Christians will use “spiritual radar” to sense something is wrong, inappropriate, or has a potential to quickly turn into temptation. Spiritual radar is a protective and defensive awareness that occurs when a Christian man determines they’re fed up with their sin; they’ve had enough; they’re no longer going to put up with it; the costs are too high and they will no longer tolerate it.

“Head them off at the pass” is an idiom that means to prevent someone from reaching a certain point, to intercept and redirect. It was often portrayed in cowboy westerns as the good guys would jump onto their horses and aggressively ride off to stop the bad guys before they could do harm.

Spiritual radar is comprised of:

- Guarding eyes and ears.
- Actively looking for indicators of “slippery roads” and “risky paths” (‘cause been down them before).
- Willing to take a different route if needed.
- Taking a defensive position to:
  - Eliminate attempts by the enemy to “cross the line.”
  - Minimize the chance of encountering misdirection.



However, spiritual radar:

- Is dependent upon power from the Holy Spirit.
- Is facilitated in knowing in Christ we have weapons to destroy the adversary (prayer, scripture, divine intervention, and support from like-minded Christians).
  - “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13
  - “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6



## Heart Revealing E-Mail

I occasionally receive emails from persons in various parts of the world who visit my website. One person, a Christian male from Nigeria (whom I will refer to as Yabani, not his real name), read Body, Soul, Heart and Spirit, and confided he was struggling with porn. He also mentioned that he is in a serious relationship and considering marriage. The following is my email response.

Hello Yabani ...

Thank you for expressing your open heart. Addiction (any addiction) can harden person's heart, poison the soul, and separate us from the joy and peace of living in God's will.

Yabani...it is important for you to understand you are chosen and blessed by God. The fact that you have experienced guilt, shame, remorse, and pain from your addiction...means the Holy Spirit is actively working in your life.

We know He loves us...we know His will is best for us...and we know we are forgiven...but when we fail...it hurts deeply on the inside. The Holy Spirit uses guilt, shame, remorse, "internal pain," plus the removal of peace and His presence as a means to:

- Chasten (punishment).
- "Write" His laws on our heart.

"For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:6-11

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," then He adds, Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Hebrews 10:16-17

To comprehend the Holy Spirit's influence that is actively working in your life...consider how you would have responded to porn before you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Because you have God's spirit living within you...you have an increasing desire to please God...rather than fulfilling the lusts of your flesh.

Realize...porn is a lie...it is designed to destroy lives and spiritually kill...and is made readily available by Satan. As such, it is important for you to identify and flee from the following:

1. Images that sexually stimulate your flesh.
2. Thoughts that cause you to rationalize that it is OK to watch porn.

Give prayerful thanks for your girlfriend's heart because she also seeks God. My wife and I will soon celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Throughout these years Jesus Christ has been the center of our lives. Our love for each other continues to grow every day as we both seek Him in every aspect of our lives. We pray together, we laugh together, we cry together...and we enjoy each other's presence every moment...because as we seek Him in our

individual lives...we grow together as one. This is what God intended when he designed male and female. God also designed sex between a husband and wife for more than just pleasure, and more than just having children...for it is also a means for a husband and wife to bond together in a spiritual manner that is impossible to describe...but is experienced deep in our soul, heart and spirit.

My brother in Christ...do not allow porn to dilute this experience with your future wife.

*Heavenly Father, I lift up Yabani and his girlfriend to you in prayer. Holy God, in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, I ask that you give each of them spiritual wisdom and understanding. I also ask that you give Yabani spiritual power to overcome his fleshly desires as he seeks more of You in his life...and less of himself. And if it is your will for Yabani and his girlfriend to marry...I ask that you richly bless them in all aspects of their marriage. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding us into His truth. Thank you, God, for chastening us when we sin. Thank you for Your grace, and for Your love, and for Your Son, Jesus Christ...because we are forgiven.*

God Bless You Yabani.



Before I conclude, I'd like to introduce you to a video by C.J. Mahaney called "What Guys Think About Modesty." It is a powerful statement that is real, raw and where the rubber meets the road. Although written for both men and women in the church, it clearly articulates the temptation and struggles Christian men encounter.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=17&v=2n-NWbd3pis&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=17&v=2n-NWbd3pis&feature=emb_logo)

### **Spiritual Learning Exercise**

Read the scripture below then answer the following questions.

**"And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." Matthew 18:9**

Did Jesus mean we should literally gouge out our eyes?

- If yes, how many of us would not be able to read the words on this page?
- If no (which is the correct answer):
  - Why would He make this declaration?
  - What is the spiritual truth and relevance?
  - How should we respond?

**"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." 1 John 2:16-17**

My brother in Christ...I pray you are able to overcome by the power of God's grace; and that your spiritual life grows beyond anything you thought possible. For He alone is worthy.

Give God the Glory!  
Harold D. Thomas