



OVERCOMING SEXUAL SIN & TEMPTATION

As you go through each lesson, look up the Bible verses and answer the questions in the blanks provided. When you are finished with this lesson you and your mentor will meet to discuss your answers and any questions you may have. This is not a pass/fail test, so answer honestly as you understand things. We want you to understand, not just to give the “right” answer.



In the previous lesson we learned that *God* wants us to be obedient to *Him*. Understanding the importance of obedience is a *must* in order that we might have victory over sin and temptation.

Christians are not **sinless**; but as we mature in Christ we will **sin less** as we walk with God.

1. Sin and temptation confront the Christian from three major sources. What are they?
 - A. **I John 2:15-17** _____
 - B. **Galatians 5:16-17** _____
 - C. **I Peter 5:8** _____
2. Read **James 1:13**. Is *God* ever the *source* of sin or temptation?
 Yes No
3. Read **Galatians 3:3**. Can we ever overcome sin and temptation in the strength of the flesh?
 Yes No

4. Read **Galatians 5:19-21**. What kinds of sins is our “flesh” capable of producing?

A.	J.
B.	K.
C.	L.
D.	M.
E.	N.
F.	O.
G.	P.
H.	Q.
I.	Etc...

5. Read **Ephesians 4:22**. What is another term or expression for “the flesh”?

6. Read **Ephesians 4:24**. Because of our new relationship to Jesus Christ and our being born again in Him, what counterpart of “the old man” do we now have?

7. Read **Ephesians 4:22**. What are we to do with “the old man”?

8. Read **Ephesians 4:24**. What are we to do with “the new man”?

Note: This is known as “walking in the Spirit” in **Galatians 5:16-25**.

9. Read **Ephesians 4:23**. What other process of Christian growth is involved?

10. Read **Hebrews 2:18**. What will the Lord Jesus do for us if we call on Him when we are tempted?

Note: *The King James Version uses the word "succour". That word means "to come to one's aid in time of need."*

11. Read **Hebrews 4:14-16**. What should we do when we are severely tempted?

Read carefully **James 1:14-15**. Temptation to sin is *not* sin! But when we yield to temptation and *do* what the temptation suggests, then it becomes *sin*.

As a Christian you need to study carefully **Romans chapters six, seven and eight** to learn the basis of your victory over the flesh. It is not *trying*, but *trusting* the victory you already have *in Christ*. It is not wrestling for victory, but resting in victory. These great truths will bless and enrich your life as you get to know them. Meanwhile, you will find that the harder you try to live the Christian life, the more discouraged you will become until you learn the secret of trusting and resting.

The Bible teaches that Satan (the Devil) was an angel created by God, and that his name originally was Lucifer (**Isaiah 14:12**). After Adam sinned, Adam forfeited his dominion over earth to Satan. He has become "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (**Ephesians 2:2**)

12. Satan, the Devil, has many names. Three of them in particular reveal his relationship to Christians. What is he called?

A. **I Peter 5:8** _____

B. **Revelation 12:10** _____

C. **I Thessalonians 3:5** _____

13. Read **John 8:44**. Name two things which describe Satan.

A. _____

B. _____

14. Read **Acts 26:15-18** and **Colossians 1:12-13**. Does Satan have power (authority) over Christians today?

Yes No

15. Read **Ephesians 4:27**. Is it possible, however, for Satan to do his work in our lives *if* we allow him?

Yes No

Remember: *Satan will do everything he possibly can to get you to return to your sin.*

16. Read **I John 4:4** and **Colossians 2:15**. Who is greater – Christ or Satan?

17. Read **II Corinthians 11:14**. How does Satan often appear?

18. Read **I Peter 5:8**. Name two things we are to “be” in light of Satan’s attacks against us.

A. _____

B. _____

19. Read **James 4:7**. What two things are we to “do” in order that Satan might flee from us?

A. _____

B. _____

20. Read **Ephesians 6:11-13**. What else should we do to enable us to stand against the wiles (strategies) of the devil?

21. Read **Ephesians 6:10-17**. Name the pieces of *The Christian's Armor*.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

F. _____

22. Read **Matthew 4:4, 7, & 10**. What weapon did Jesus use against the Devil each time He was tempted?

23. Read **I John 1:8 & 10**. Can anyone attain to *sinless perfection* in this life?

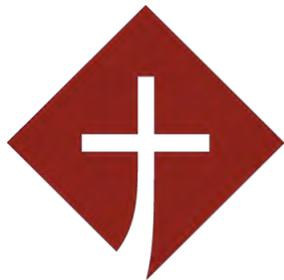
Yes No

24. Read **I John 1:9**. Suppose we do give in to temptation and sin, what should we do then?

25. Read **I Corinthians 10:13**. What has God promised us regarding temptation?

26. What did you learn from this lesson that you did not know?

27. How can you make this a part of your everyday life?



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MEMORIZE THESE VERSES for Lesson Nine

(pick the translation that works best for you)

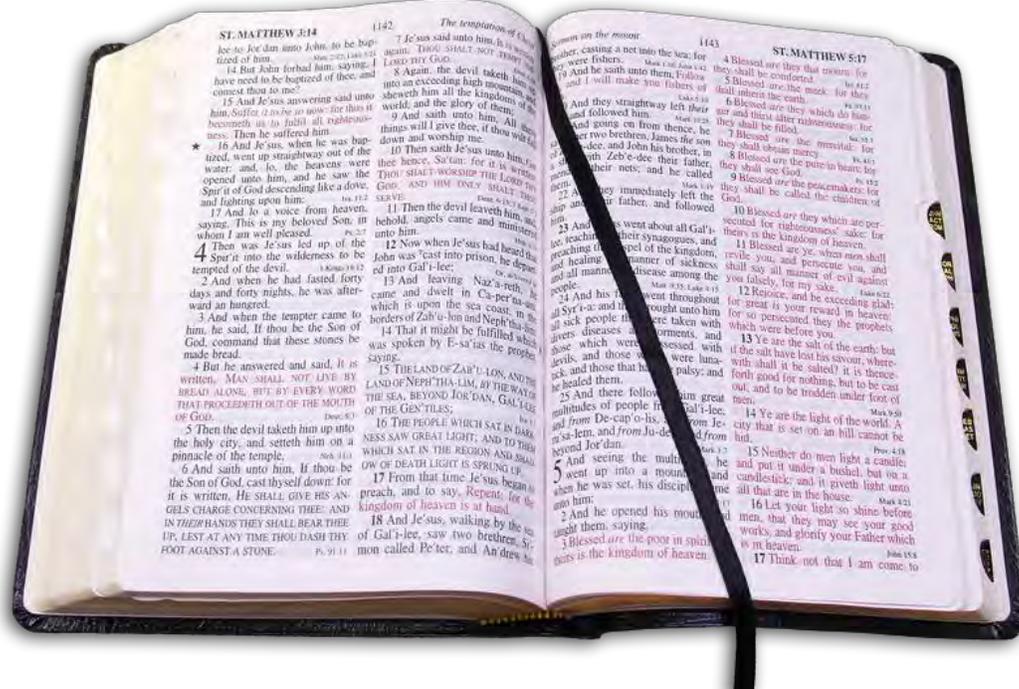
Title to verses: **OVERCOMING SIN & TEMPTATION**

I Corinthians 10:13 (KJV) There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

I Corinthians 10:13 (NASB) No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Ephesians 6:10-11 (KJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10-11 (NASB) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.



ACCOUNTABILITY PAGE

My Name: _____

My Mentor's Name: _____

Date I completed Lesson Nine: _____

My Mentor's Signature: _____

A Pastor's Signature: _____



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Remember:

It's important to be at church whenever you are able, so you can continue to grow in the Lord!

SUNDAYS

9:45 am – Bible Study or Sunday School

10:50 am – Morning Worship Service

Lunch & Mingle

1:30 pm – Afternoon Church Service

WEDNESDAYS

7:00 pm – Midweek Bible Study & Prayer Meeting

Any person (saved or unsaved) can fall into sin by giving in to temptation. All of us are susceptible to Satan's schemes. But we do not have to give into temptation.

Sexual sins are often the most difficult sin to combat because they most-often occur in moments of privacy. In the next few pages in this study we will take a specific look at two common sins that are especially prevalent in today's society: pornography, homosexuality, and the LGBTQ+ agenda.

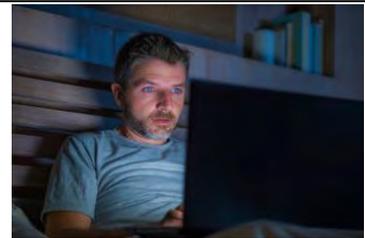
These may be considered as especially heinous sins to Christians, but we must remember that all sin is heinous in the eyes of our holy God. So, while these two sources of temptation may not be your particular "entangling sin" studying this material may help you to understand your own temptations and how to overcome them.

It is possible to gain victory over sin! Prayerfully consider these topics and ask God to enlighten you in ways that you can overcome habits and addictions that hinder you in your walk with God.

What the Bible says about Pornography ¹

- **JOB'S COVENANT**

Although the Bible does not directly address the subject of pornography, it is clear about the subjects of lust and sexual immorality.



Leviticus 27:30-34 (NASB) *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?"* (In other words, Job said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.")

Pornography not only breeds lustful looks, but those who produce it thrive on that lust. It is impossible to do as Job teaches and look at pornography.

- **ADULTERY'S EQUIVALENT**

Many people may look at pornography who would never dream of committing adultery. They justify it by lumping it in with "artistry." They claim to be "just looking to admire the beauty." But Jesus Christ spoke pretty plainly about the matter of lust and acting on that lust. In the Lord's eyes, a lustful heart is an adulterous heart.

¹ Adapted by Dan Pelletier from a pamphlet by the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council

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Matthew 5:27-30 (NASB) *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”*

- **DAVID’S LUST**

II Samuel 11 records King David’s difficulties with lust. He was walking around the roof of the palace, not looking for trouble – then he came upon Bathsheba taking a bath on the roof of her own house next door. His voyeurism led him to commit adultery with her. Then, he had her husband murdered in an attempt to cover up their sin.

David’s “innocent” sin of lust led him to commit greater sins that resulted in consequences that followed him for the rest of his life. You can read about his anguish of soul in **Psalm 51**.

When David came across Bathsheba he was not seeking temptation. Had he looked away there would have been no sin. But that lingering look was the sinful look that led him into great grief and trouble. Do you think that you can avoid the consequences of using pornography? You should consider another passage of Scripture that warns against “secret sins.” Erwin W. Lutzer wrote, “*A secret sin on earth is an open scandal in Heaven.*”

Galatians 6:7-8 (NASB) *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

- **PUT YOUR LUST TO DEATH**

The Bible instructs us how to avoid the temptation of lust in our lives.

Colossians 3:5 (NASB) *...Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.*

We are to take a proactive role in preventing our lusts. What **Colossians 3:5** is saying is, “Put the lust to death.” In fact, lustful passion is compared to idolatry!

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If you had been worshipping an idol, you would throw it away – perhaps even smash it to bits. In a similar fashion, we must remove the temptation to lust from our lives. If there is pornography in your home, get rid of it. If you need to take a break from media or your computer or your cell phone, do it! Do whatever it takes to get the victory over immoral desire.

- **PORNOGRAPHY’S SUBJECTS ARE CONDEMNED IN SCRIPTURE**

Many images portrayed in hard-core pornography are discussed in **Leviticus 18**. In that passage we are commanded not to engage in sexual perversions such as incest, homosexuality, and bestiality.

Leviticus 18:29 (NASB) *...Whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people.*

If you are especially drawn to pornography and sexual sin, you should not be anywhere near it or those who participate in this sinful activity. To allow this type of pornography to exist in your life is to disobey the commandment of the Lord.

- **CONCERN FOR OTHERS**

God’s people have the responsibility to not only purify their own lives from the sin of pornography, but also to protect others from the problems it causes. The Lord Jesus says the second greatest commandment, next to loving Him, is to love others.

Mark 12:30-31 (NASB) *“...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

How can we love our neighbor and allow pornography to destroy their lives? How can we exploit people in this way?! We cannot. We MUST not!

No one is immune to the evils of pornography. Innocent children suffer from the effects of child pornography and molestation. Read what Jesus says about children...

Matthew 18:6-7 (NASB) *“...Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 “Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!”*



LGBTQ+ IS IT A RIGHT?...A WRONG? ²

“Gay rights!” “Lesbian Power!” Homosexuals and other LGBTQ+ individuals have come out of the closet and into the headlines. Once unmentionable, now homosexuality is discussed openly and advocated aggressively as an alternative lifestyle. Those who have adopted this form of sexual gratification demand acceptance and fair treatment as a respected minority – along with minority races, religions, and political movements. They expect not simply a grudging toleration or legalization for homosexual practice, but full civil rights: freedom from restriction, discrimination and adverse publicity in society as well as in civil law.

The pressure for change can weigh heavily on the conscience of concerned Christians. The media barrage us with viewpoints on this hotly-debated, sensitive issue, TV and radio, newspapers and magazines (let alone online Internet resources) – secular and religious, “liberal” and “evangelical” – flood us with opinions, arguments, studies, findings and solutions. Writers in psychology, sociology, law, religion and ethics present their varying (often conflicting) viewpoints. Tempers flare, blind hate and fear, on one hand, and defiant militancy on the other, deafen us with rhetoric. Where should we stand?

The answer is found in pursuing a more basic question: What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Holding to the historic Christian faith, we recognize that

² Adapted by Dan Pelletier (in 2021) from a pamphlet by Presbytery of Southern California – The Orthodox Presbyterian Church © 1978

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the bible is the Word of God Himself, the revelation of our Maker and His pattern for fulfilling human life. When it speaks on a subject, it carries God's authority and conveys God's truth, standing over the relative authorities of human study and thought. In our dilemma we can turn to the Bible with confidence.

- **LGBTQ+ AND THE BIBLE**

Unlike much contemporary writing on homosexuality, the Bible's position is clear. In both Old and New Testaments, God's Word teaches plainly that homosexual desire and practice are sinful in God's sight, even shamefully so.

Romans 1 and Genesis 1&2

Perhaps the most explicit statement is found in the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Church in Rome. In the first chapter, Paul, speaking by God's Spirit as God's mouthpiece, identifies the seriousness of humanity's godlessness as our refusal to honor God as Creator.

***Romans 1:18-23 (NASB)** "...The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."*

This deliberate suppression of God's truth in preference for the lie of ultimate human independence has given rise to foolish speculation and degrading forms of worship – people made to know God groveling before images of "crawling creatures."

In God's justice humanity's deliberate ignorance of God's honor inevitably produces moral insensitivity and ethical decay. God reveals His judgment by "giving them up" to the sinful and self-destructive desires of their own corrupt hearts. A prime symptom of this judgmental abandonment by God is the rise and approval of homosexual desire and practice in society:

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Romans 1:24-27 (NASB) "...Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

When God's restraining hand is lifted, human sinfulness (in some at least) breaks out as an attack on the sexual distinctions which are fundamental to our identity as creatures. When God created humanity at the beginning, He designed them with very specific gender traits.

Genesis 1:27 (NASB) God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female** He created them.

God's provision for the first man's needs was the formation, not of an exact replica, but of a woman whose distinctives complemented and completed the man. The union of male and female is God's pattern for human sexual fulfillment:

Genesis 2:24 (NASB) For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be **joined** to his wife; and they shall become **one flesh**.

Contrary to the claim that homosexual relationships are "natural" or "normal" for some people, the Bible explicitly declares that the quest for sexual fulfillment with persons of one's own sex violates God's norm for human sexuality, and is "unnatural."

Romans 1:26 (NASB) ... God gave them over to **degrading** passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is **unnatural**...

Homosexual acts amount to a denial of God's handiwork in making us male and female, a distortion of the sexual drive away from its true fulfillment in marriage into a way of life which warrants God's severe displeasure.

Other Scripture Passages

These are strong words, but a careful and humble reading of God's Word yields no other conclusion. Consider two Old Testament passages. God's overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's time, for instance, was related to the homosexual excesses of those cities. **(Genesis 18-19)**

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Genesis 19:1-5 (NASB) ...Two angels [who looked like men] came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. 2 And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." 3 Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. 4 Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; 5 and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the **men** who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us **that we may have relations with them.**"

This is the sin for which God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, early in human history, centuries before God gave His law through Moses, His severe sentence on this sin demonstrated its extreme evil.

In the specific laws pertaining this sin in the life of Israel we read:

Leviticus 18:22 (NASB) You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.

This is not an "old-fashioned" strictness that is outdated by the coming of Christ. Paul, the apostle of grace reaffirmed the Law's condemnation of homosexuality not only in Romans, but also elsewhere in his letters. In **I Timothy 1:9-10**, for instance, homosexuals are numbered among the vilest offenders who rebel against God's laws:

I Timothy 1:9-10 (NASB) ...Law is not made for a righteous person, but for **those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching...**

God consistently and unalterably condemns homosexual desire and practice as sin repugnant to His holiness and is therefore rebellious against His creative plan.

- **LGBTQ+ AND THE CHURCH**

How, then, should the Church of Jesus Christ deal with the place of homosexuals within its fellowship? Spokesmen in some major denominations, arguing that Christian love requires acceptance without condemnation or reservation, endorse the reception (and some promote and accept even the ordination) of

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practicing homosexuals who see no need for repentance or change. A church that condemns the homosexual's lifestyle, we are told, cannot hope to have a meaningful outreach to the homosexual with the gospel of God's love in Christ.

But this reasoning ignores two important facts. First, the Church is bound by the charter of her King; and is not free simply to throw aside from His Word whatever may seem inexpedient in our present contest. A church which declares ethical independence from Christ's Word loses its identity as a tool of His gracious rule and saving power.

Second, the love which the church is called to exercise is not modeled on the modern ideal of toleration which leaves its recipient unchanged, but on the redeeming love of God in Christ – a love which brings not only forgiveness, but also life-transformation. Christ's people, then, must show this kind of love for our homosexual "neighbors" in at least these four ways:

1. A Call to Repentance

Practicing homosexuals who are church members must be confronted with God's sentence on this sin and urged to in love to abandon it by the power of God's Spirit. This sin cannot be condoned, excused or ignored any more than any other sin. To leave unrepentant homosexuals in a state of complacency about their sexual lifestyle is not love, but cowardice and cruelty – deliberately shirking our responsibility to seek and to restore a sinning brother, as a good shepherd seeks a lost sheep.

Galatians 6:1-2 (NASB) *Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

Jesus Himself gave instructions to try to restore those who have fallen into sin:

Matthew 18:12-17 (NASB) *"What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? 13 If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. 14 So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.*

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be

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confirmed. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

Avowed and unrepentant homosexuals must not be admitted either to membership or to office in Christ’s Church. Rather, through a bold and loving application of God’s Word, homosexuals must be urged to repent of their sin and to trust in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and transformation.

It’s important to remember that the bible condemns as sin not only homosexual *activity*, but also homosexual *desire*.

Romans 1:24 (NASB) ...God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them...

Unchecked, the “lust of their hearts” descends into even deeper desire for sinful homosexual gratification

Romans 1:26-27 (NASB) God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

According to the Lord Jesus, *heterosexual* desire for someone other than one’s spouse breaks God’s command against adultery and sexual sin.

Matthew 5:28 (NASB) “...I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Much of the current discussion on homosexuality assumes the existence of a “homosexual orientation” in certain persons; and while there is no universal agreement as to the origin of this “orientation,” it is often asserted that it is unchangeable, or virtually so. We are told, then, that the only real alternatives for a person with this “orientation” are either sexual gratification in a homosexual union or a life of sexual repression, frustration, and guilt. We may be glad that God does not leave us with that terrible dilemma, for where He condemns desires or actions as sinful, He also offers hope.

2. The Hope of Deliverance

As redeemed sinners we have seen in our own lives the realism of the Bible description of sin as a cruel and unrelenting slave-master (**Romans 6-7**). But we have also received (and must pass on) the good news that sin’s stranglehold is broken when a person comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

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Romans 8:2-4 (NASB) *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

Those who walk with the Lord can experience liberation from sin's tyrannical power in daily living! This liberation applies not only to sin in general, but also to particular, individual sins.

Paul wrote to Christians in the church at Corinth who were saved from all sorts of sin and immorality that was openly celebrated and practiced in their city. He reminded them that God condemns sin, but that it is possible to be washed and cleaned up for the glory of God through salvation that is found in Jesus Christ!

I Corinthians 6:9-11 (NASB) *...Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 **Such were some of you;** but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*

What a testimony to the transforming grace of God! There is no suggestion that God can rescue people from *some* sins, but not from *others*. Instead, there is hope in Jesus Christ for the homosexual – hope not only of forgiveness, but also for transformation and redirection of long-standing desires and drives by the power of God!

3. Humble Compassion

In approaching and dealing with homosexuals, Christians must abandon the self-righteous attitude which isolates the homosexual into a special category as the worst of sinners. The Bible treats sexual sins seriously, but it does not segregate them into a separate list as unforgivable. While blind hate and fear might move others to shun the homosexual as subhuman, God's grace toward us must humble us and move us to reach out to the homosexual with God's good news.

4. Patient Encouragement

The power of the Spirit in our lives does not guarantee an instant or easy break with every sin. The process of becoming conformed to Christ may be difficult – strewn with struggles and stumblings for the repentant homosexual as well as

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for other Christians who deal with besetting sins. Deliverance for a brother or sister caught in this sin may require much patience, concern, encouragement, and prayer from fellow-members of the body of Christ. Counseling by a pastor who is trained in God's Word will often bring a new perspective on our resources for change in Christ and specific steps in applying God's instructions.

To those who truly repent and trust Christ, the church must give full acceptance and fellowship, realizing that only God's grace grants *any* of us forgiveness and freedom from "*the sin which so easily entangles us*" (**Hebrews 12:1**). Thanks be to God Who gives us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ!

- **LGBTQ+ AND SOCIETY**

Of all the issues raised by the current debates over homosexuality, the thorniest is the question: Is homosexuality a civil right?

On the one hand we face movements to permit (or require) school boards to dismiss teachers who avowedly practice or promote homosexuality. On the other, the "gay rights" movement itself hopes to enlist the power of government in its battle against any form of discrimination – in housing, employment, or adverse publicity – in the private as well as in the public sector. As citizens who have some influence on governmental policies and as "prophets" who must declare God's standards of national as well as personal righteousness, we need to invest careful thought here to cut through the tangle of rhetoric to a biblical solution.

In demanding their "civil rights" homosexuals are not simply claiming that sexual preference is a private matter and calling for the repeal of "blue laws" which have illegalized homosexual practice. The "gay rights" movement "homosexuality as a civil right" constitutes an appeal that the civil government use its legal force to restrict or punish those who would discriminate in housing, jobs, or the media against the "homosexual minority."

The movement sees itself as one of the last oppressed minorities and its experience as parallel to that of the blacks and other minority races – or to that of women. Therefore, the government must use its strong arm to squash, for instance, any attempt by an employer or school board to introduce an applicant's avowed sexual lifestyle as a factor in the hiring decision.

In response to this line of thought the Christian can make the following observations:

On Minorities

Advocates of rights for homosexuals and supporters of the LGBTQ+ agenda blur important distinctions in claiming solidarity with minority races or with women as an oppressed gender. Discrimination on the basis of race (and often on the basis of gender) violated the basic truth that all humanity is created in God's image; and it devalues people for characteristics for which they are not responsible and which they cannot change.

As we have seen, homosexual desire and practice are things for which God holds people responsible and for which He offers the possibility of change. The "minorities" among God numbers homosexuals are those in **I Timothy 1:9-11** (*cited on p. 16*) and it is widely recognized that many of this "minorities" (murders for instance) not only may be discriminated against by individuals, but also may be restricted by law.

On Influence and Models

Advocates of "gay rights" also blur distinctions in claiming that discrimination in educational hiring amounts to condemning practicing homosexuals to joblessness. Virtually every employment decision entails discrimination on the basis of competence, and it is naïve to suggest that the known LGBTQ+ lifestyle of a person in a position of influence such as teaching is irrelevant to his or her (what they call "their") competence as a teacher.

Whether they intend to or not, teachers teach more powerfully by the models they are than by the lectures they deliver, and the influence which they exert extends far beyond their narrow field of instruction. Teachers are not mere mathematical or historical-information-dispensers; they are role models, defining (often more influentially than do parents) what behavior marks acceptable adulthood for young people grappling with their own personhood and sexuality.

The Bible consistently shows that the example of one's life is an expression of one's beliefs. A person's lifestyle can be a **positive** influence...

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7 (NASB) ...Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers...

A person's lifestyle can be a **negative** influence...

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Romans 1:28-32 (NASB) ...Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also **give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

Therefore, even the public schools should be sensitive to the values of the family and of the parents in the moral-education-by-example which teachers inevitably convey.

On the Battle of Religious Principles

The battle of homosexuality and the LGBTQ+ agenda as a civil right is a battle of religious principles. The strongest ground for objecting to the legal endorsement of homosexuality and LGBTQ+ism and the enforcement of its “civil right” is the fact that the Bible condemns it as a mark of a society under God’s judgment. The advocates of such “rights” also have and express a religious conviction – a set of ultimate values which blends elements of humanism, hedonism and pragmatism.

The government can only defend the “rights” claimed by the one group by infringing on the “rights” claimed by the other. (Just as government committed to defending my “right” to life must infringe on someone’s “right” to murder me or abort an unborn baby without punishment.) Plainly a democratic government in a pluralistic society faces a difficult dilemma: Unless it restricts **someone’s** “rights,” it ceases to govern – and anarchy prevails. But whose “rights” should be restricted?

Appeals to the separation of church and state (often used to argue against allowing Christian principles to influence civil law) really miss the point. It is unrealistic to assume that any government or law structure could be religiously neutral. In fact, we **cannot** help but express our deepest values and religious convictions as a people in our laws and courts.

A biblical perspective on the unity of our own human nature and on the universal sweep of God’s authority should warn us against arbitrarily dividing

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our lives into a sacred, private sphere and a secular, public one. If the principles of the Bible do not direct our lawmakers, another system of values – equally religious – will. So then, if governments cannot remain neutral in this battle of faiths, which side should they take?

The answer is given briefly but clearly in Romans.

Romans 13:3-4 (NASB) ...Rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Simply stated, Paul teaches that those who govern must stand on the side of those who do good. If government uses its power to violate the rights of those in the right, it betrays its own divine source of authority.

Romans 13:1b (NASB) ...There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

But we might wonder –who is to determine what “good” and “evil” the government is to act upon? The modern answer is that questions of public morality are determined by a general consensus in society. But after Paul’s indictment of first-century society in **Romans 1** it is hard to imagine his endorsing a morality-by-majority.

Romans 13 might be taken as a blanket endorsement of the ruler’s whim as the standard of public right. Yet it is hard to believe that Paul, whose Master was unjustly crucified under Roman law, could be so blissfully ignorant of the corrupting and blinding effects of political power. The Caesars were, after all, some of the “many lords” who tried to compete – even by force – with the “one Lord Jesus Christ” whom Paul served.

I Corinthians 8:4b-6 (NASB) ...There is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

Paul’s standard for “good” in government, like his standard for “good” in personal life was the abiding principles of God’s Law.

Romans 7:12 (NASB) ...The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

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Romans 13:7-10 (NASB) Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

In the Ten Commandments we read of moral standards:

Exodus 20:14 (NASB) *You shall not commit adultery.*

In the civil laws given to apply the ten Commandments to the life of Israel we learn that this principle protecting the sanctity of marriage condemns not only infidelity, but also incest, bestiality and homosexuality. (see **Leviticus 18:1-23**)

The principle entailed in this guideline is instructive for us, even though we live in another era in terms of culture and of God's redemptive history. In Israel, homosexual practice was viewed not primarily as an ecclesiastical offense requiring exclusion from the worshipping community or an appropriate sacrifice, but rather as an attack on community life itself – a violation of the righteous standards which were to be woven into Israel's societal fabric. Underlying this guideline were the universal principles of (1) man's creation as male and female, (2) the restriction of appropriate sexual gratification to the marriage covenant, and (3) the integrity of the family. As a violation of these universal principles announced by God at creation, homosexuality (and what has become its extended LGBTQ+ agenda) was to be treated not only as a sin, but also as a crime.

Even this lengthy article cannot explore the complexities of specific legislation dealing with homosexuality and the entire LGBTQ+ lifestyle; but we may conclude that in this battle of opposing religious principles Christians need not be embarrassed to urge their government to take its stand firmly with the "good" defined by God's Word. They must do so not for a feeling of personal victory or comfort, but from the conviction that they are acting as preserving "salt" in society. As such, Christians are called upon to assist their government in its God-given task. To do less is to fail in fulfilling part of our Lord's calling on our lives.

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Matthew 5:13 (NASB) *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”*

A government which would use its power to enforce on its citizens influences alien to God’s standards has undercut its own source of authority as a “*minister of God for good*” (**Romans 13:4**). In trying to guide our government away from such a suicidal course we will advance the peace and order of our society at large.

- **TOUGH LOVE**

It would be naïve to think that even when our motives are pure and our intentions are the best, everyone will recognize and appreciate them as such. In a prevailing moral atmosphere of “live and let live,” Christians who dare to stand for biblical principles may well be criticized as harsh, judgmental, and arrogant.

In addressing the issue of homosexuality and these other moral deviations that are becoming accepted by society and in sharing the gospel with individuals who oppose biblical morality Christ’s followers are called to exercise a costly, tough love. Such love is a blend of humility, compassion, and patience with a vivid sensitivity to God’s truth and holiness. Paul shows us the method and the motive we need:

II Timothy 2:24-26 (NASB) *The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

Without self-righteousness or defensiveness Christ’s people must pray, act, and speak so that in our day – as in Paul’s – homosexuals and members of the LGBTQ+ community will find the joy of forgiveness and the satisfaction of release from the dominion of this evil. Then, together we may learn to live for God’s glory and in His grace.

Ephesians 1:6-8a (NASB) *..To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us...*

Now to move on to one final (more positive) topic that should help you in your struggle to Overcome Sin & Temptation -

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THE PASTOR'S SERMONS

A young lady stifled a yawn as her pastor-father announced his text for the morning message. "I've heard this one half a dozen times at least," she thought to herself as she slipped her tablet into her Bible to disguise the fact that she was playing a computer game during the church service.



Many church members, like this young lady, have wrong or immature attitudes about the preaching of God's Word. Even if the pastor *is* your dad and you *have* heard the message five times before, you can still learn something new.

There are several things you can do to ensure that you get all you can from a pastor's message:

- 1. BE EAGER TO LEARN.** Ask God to give you a good attitude. Think of your time spent in church as a treasure hunt. If you listen closely, you will find buried treasure!
- 2. PRAY FOR THE PASTOR.** Ask God to help him deliver a message that will help you and other Christians to live for Him. Pray that he will be able to teach God's Word accurately and in a way that is easy for you and others to understand what God wants you to learn.
- 3. TAKE NOTES.** You don't need to write down everything the preacher says. Make a list of the main points. Write down Bible references that he mentions to illustrate the points. Check the cross-references quietly and without disturbing others who are also trying to listen. As you do that, make sure that you don't miss the next point while you are checking on a minor detail from an earlier point.

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- 4. WRITE DOWN YOUR QUESTIONS.** If you don't understand something the pastor says, make a note of it, and ask him about it later. That will not only help you to get a better understanding; it will also encourage your pastor (who sometimes wonders if anyone is listening).
- 5. MEDITATE ON THE MESSAGE.** Some people think the sermon has ended when the pastor stops speaking. On the contrary, the sermon's work should have only just begun. Don't put it out of your mind as you leave the church service. Keep thinking about the message. Reread your notes throughout the week; and do your best to put into practice the lessons that were taught. Do it while the message is fresh in your mind.
- 6. MAKE IT PERSONAL.** For example, if the pastor talked about forgiveness, be especially aware of people you should forgive. If the pastor's message spoke to you about witnessing or reading your Bible, don't delay! The message will be more beneficial to you and others if you "put feet" to the things you have heard.
- 7. UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR PASTOR IS NOT PERFECT.** He has no doubt studied the Bible more than you, but he is not infallible. Sometimes he may make a mistake in his interpretation of the Scripture or in the way he explains it. Don't be critical in your spirit; but examine what was said in the pulpit by what you read for yourself in the Bible. If you do find a discrepancy which you feel is a real problem, instead of telling others, set up an appointment and talk with the pastor privately to settle your questions.

If you follow these steps you will find yourself getting more than ever from the pastor's sermons. When you make your listening an active participation rather than a passive one you will share in the blessings of a vital church ministry.



HAMILTON SQUARE
BAPTIST CHURCH

THE DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING COURSE

Lesson Schedule

Lesson #1	What Happens When One is “Born Again?”	Salvation
Lesson #2	What to Do When You Fall	Confession of Sin
Lesson #3	What About Baptism?	Baptism
Lesson #4	How to Pray & Why Should I?	Prayer
Lesson #5	Bible Study: Making it Personal	Bible Study
Lesson #6	Obedience Brings Blessing	Obedience
Lesson #7	Church Membership Matters	Membership
Lesson #8	Tithes & Offerings: Bible Principles	Giving
Lesson #9	Overcoming Sexual Sin & Temptation	Victory
Lesson #10	Our Lord’s Commission	Witnessing
Lesson #11	Putting Anger & Bitterness to Rest	Bitterness
Lesson #12	Alcohol & Other Addictive Substances	Addictions
Lesson #13	Music and the Christian	Music
Lesson #14	Social Media, TV, Movies, The Internet & The Future	Media
Lesson # 15	Biblical Separation: The Dangers of Compromise	Separation
Lesson #16	Bloom Where You’re Planted! Staying in the City	City Ministry
Lesson #17	Happiness Forever: The Fruit of Faithfulness	Heaven

If you have questions, ask your mentor to help you.
If he or she can’t help you, they will help you set up an appointment
with a pastor at our church. They are here to help you!