

A man in a white t-shirt, grey shorts, and a backpack is hiking on a dirt path. He is wearing a watch on his left wrist and has a determined expression. The background shows tall grass and a hazy sky.

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Every Single Man's Battle

Staying on the Path of Sexual Purity

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WATERBROOK
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disconnection's danger

Approaching our seaside table with a lovely new acquaintance from church, I (Steve) could hear the gentle lapping of waves on the shoreline as the magnificent amber-hued sunset arched over the Pacific Ocean. *Maybe life's not so bad after all*, I mused as we were seated and handed leather-bound menus by the maître d'.

As we perused the elegant dining choices, my date and I engaged in meaningful small talk, sharing our hopes in raising our children and our dreams of how God would use us in the future. I gazed upon the sun as it dipped toward the horizon and felt swept up in the moment. For the first time in months, the pain of my divorce seemed light-years away, and my future—whatever it would be—looked as bright as that dazzling orb descending in the western sky.

One by one the delicious courses arrived with a flourish...a crisp, deep-fried calamari as the appetizer, followed by a sumptuous spinach salad with raspberry vinaigrette dressing, and then the main course of grilled salmon topped with hollandaise sauce. *Fresh salmon heals every wound*, I chuckled to myself.

Yet just as suddenly, my bite of airy tiramisu screeched to a jarring halt halfway down the hatch as my date purred demurely,

“Steve, please don’t get the wrong impression of me... I’m not all God, motherhood, and apple pie, you know. I love the Bible with a deep passion, but I love the Kama Sutra with another kind of passion all my own,” she said, winking coyly. “I find the positions simply fascinating, and I’ve thrown my whole body and soul into reading my lessons. But what I really need is to get out onto the playing field once in a while for a little practice!”

I nearly spewed my dessert coffee all over the linen-shrouded table. The only practice that was going to take place was me practicing getting out of there. First, I managed to change the subject quickly, and then, a short time later, I smiled softly and mumbled, “I really hate to run, but my food hasn’t settled very well this evening. Would you mind if we called it a night?”

Perhaps you’re scratching your head, wondering, *What’s this Kama Sutra thing?* Well, it’s all about sexual positions from an Eastern perspective, and books on the Kama Sutra have been a pretty hot topic out here on the Left Coast for quite some time. The publisher’s description on Amazon.com calls it this way:

Kama Sutra comes to us from fourth-century India. Written by a holy man, this “love scripture” has become known in the West as a “bible of sex.” As such, *Kama Sutra of Sexual Positions* presents many facets of sexual embrace from many cultures where

the sexual and the sacred together are the weaver of the tapestry of life.

Perhaps *now* you're gasping, *How can a Christian single be equally committed to the Kama Sutra?* I haven't the foggiest idea of how to answer that, but what I *do* know is that as I reentered the Christian single world, I was quite amazed to find two extremely common disconnections out there. My Kama Sutra story is a prime example of the first one—a disconnection from God's ways.

I've met many committed Christian singles whose faith seems to be integrated into their lives, who take a biblical approach to their work, their money, their children, whatever. But when it comes to sex, they've convinced themselves that sex is the exception to every biblical rule. They think like this:

- *God understands my sexuality—He knows my needs.*
- *Sex is just something that naturally happens between two adults who are deeply involved.*
- *I know it is wrong to have sex with a married woman, but when it comes to sex between two singles, I just don't think the Bible is so cut and dried.*
- *Anything short of sexual intercourse is okay.*
- *I know premarital sex is wrong, but so what? God will forgive me—it's under the blood!*
- *God knows that I was married. He knows I'm so used to sex that I just have to have it now.*

Such rationalizations are a deep mystery to me. After all, a *rational* mind—the mind of Christ—is normal for Christians. A rational mind keeps us safely beneath God’s wings of protection and blessing. But a *rationalized* mind seems so jarring and abnormal in a Christian, and it rips a jagged breach in our sexual defense perimeters.

Look, it’s time for some straight talk. As men we have an obvious vulnerability in our sexual makeup, and that’s the ability of our eyes and our mind to draw vivid sexual gratification from the sensuality in the environment around us. To put it bluntly, our eyes and mind are capable of intense foreplay...we can look and lust until our engines run so far into the red zone that we may think we’d better masturbate or we’ll explode. If we want to be sexually pure, we have but one choice—we either defend against such weak spots in our sexuality or we will fall to every whim of the Enemy and our flesh.

I take my defensive game seriously. Why did I change the subject so quickly from the sensuous Kama Sutra and then cut the night off early? The reason is because in that lovely, relaxed atmosphere, with the waves lapping and the stars twinkling overhead, I didn’t want *my* eyes to be reminded how much *her* eyes sparkled as she spoke of her passions.

As a Christian I needed to get away—that’s what real men do. I also needed to stay away. That’s why I didn’t go out with her again. I didn’t want to tempt myself, and I didn’t want thoughts of her or what the Kama Sutra might teach someone running around my mind as that second date approached.

My sexual integrity is important, and I don't apologize for it. Setting and maintaining a good defense is not dead legalism. It's wisdom. It's the mind of Christ at work. How do I know I had the mind of Christ here? Because of the truth of this Scripture:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling
among us. (John 1:14)

Jesus was the Word of God in the flesh and in fullness. Since the Bible says that we are to “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18) and since Jesus was the Word of God in the flesh, we know exactly what He would have done in my position. Just as Jesus said in the face of one temptation, “Man does not live on bread alone” (Matthew 4:4), He would have said in the face of this temptation, “Man does not live on sex alone, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God. So I'll flee.” Jesus always obeyed Scripture, and He always had that rational mind because He was never disconnected from His Father's ways.

But unlike Jesus, men are prone to a disconnection from God's ways. We get bored with the straight life. Said another way, we quickly tire of submitting our rights to Christ. We'd rather have things our own interesting way, especially in regard to our sex lives.

The desire to control our standards and chart our own moral course can be overwhelming because our sexuality is so

tightly tied to our male ego. We give God a say on a few things while retaining our veto power in case the road gets too narrow. No wonder I get e-mails like this so often:

I now see all the reasons why my attempts for “sexual sobriety” have failed. I had said to myself many times, *I’ll give up pornography, but not masturbation*, or, *I’ll give up everything but checking out women*.

Note his exercise of the line-item veto, a veto that allows his sexual defenses to be compromised through a breach that remains in his eyes and mind. It is always the line-item veto that spawns rationalization’s drift from God’s *ways*, and over the long haul, our compromised defenses spawn a distance from God *Himself*.

In *Every Man’s Battle*, I (Fred) described this veil of distance and how it choked my ability to pray and to freely worship God. Steve and I then spent most of the book defining practical defense strategies to create protection against that vulnerability of our eyes and mind in our sexual makeup.

If you are to remain sexually pure as a single man, you must shore up this weakness with everything you’ve got, and you must also avoid any disconnection from God’s ways that opens a breach into your heart. But we have a second huge vulnerability in our sexual makeup that we didn’t cover in *Every Man’s Battle*, and it’s this: the Enemy uses a second form of dis-

connection—a disconnection from people—to open another broad breach in our sexual defenses.

It's quite obvious why Satan wants you to get disconnected from God's ways: once you're off the reservation, he knows that your very own eyes and mind will work against you in this fight for purity.

But why would he want you disconnected from people? He knows this second vulnerability works the same way—if he can keep you disconnected from others, your own sexual makeup plays right into his hands. It's no exaggeration to say that for single men this second form of disconnection is practically as dangerous to your sexual purity as a disconnection from God's ways.

What does this vulnerability look like? By nature, we men get our physical intimacy tanks filled most satisfactorily from what we do just prior to and during intercourse. Essentially, it is our native language of intimacy, the way we naturally long to share it. (Women, on the other hand, share their intimacy in talking, sharing, hugging, and touching. Her sexual triggers, by nature, are more relational.)

If you've ever wondered why we tend to push so hard against the sexual boundaries of our girlfriends when we're dating, it's not because we're godless pigs—it's because we're longing to express our hearts in our own innate language of love.

But that presents a couple of problems. First, we aren't supposed to use this native language anywhere else but within our marital relationship. Even more troubling is that nearly all of

the body's most powerful chemicals are involved in that wash of pleasure chemicals that flood the brain's limbic centers during an orgasm. This means that it's pretty easy for men to confuse the passage of true intimacy with the feelings they experience during premarital sex and even those associated with porn and masturbation. The following e-mail from a reader states this point well:

What do I get with porn? I like how naked women look in the pictures. They look so seductive, so sexy, and they are willing to show you all they've got. They are there to please me, and I don't have to give anything in return. I can take whatever I want, when I want, and how I want through masturbation.

The bottom line is this: the pleasure chemicals involved in porn and masturbation are a seductively powerful substitute for reality. First of all, an orgasm produces a strong sense of manhood in a guy. He feels dominant and strong at the moment of release, even though the sensation is fleeting. Second, he also feels a strong sense of intimate connection with another human being at that moment, even though the experience is over in a flash.

For a lonely and disconnected man, that sense of manhood and intimate connection is an extremely potent draw, which explains why porn and masturbation shine like a pan of fool's gold to his eyes. What a guy can't get through a real sexual

encounter, he believes he can get through looking at porn and ejaculating, because it feels good and provides many of the same feelings as the real thing.

It isn't long before self-stimulation becomes the medicating drug of choice for our pain, and masturbation is far easier to choose over drugs and alcohol because it doesn't just get us high. A real-time orgasm feels like real intimacy, if only for a moment.

Now how does all this play into Satan's hands? Wounds and isolation have always been the open door to this trap, and you surely don't have to be divorced to know what we're talking about. Wounds that form a hole in our heart can launch us toward sexual sin, and our sexual makeup sets us up to fall. My dad wounded me deeply, especially when I was playing quarterback on my high-school football team. On the mornings after our Friday-night games, Dad delivered horrible verbal blitzes about every mistake I had made. After one tirade, I got so nauseous that I took off my cap and vomited into it. This wounded me deeply and left me lonely and aching.

Do you remember the primary way guys give and receive intimacy? That's right, through the acts just prior to and during intercourse. What can give guys that feeling of intimacy, that feeling of love and acceptance? Right again—the always smiling, always available, and always unclothed girls of the Internet. They never reject you, and they always offer you everything they've got while asking nothing in return.

Without that connection with our fathers and that acceptance as men, we are very vulnerable to sexual sin during our

teen years and beyond. Orgasmic relief is the medication of our pain. And once this becomes our crutch in our crippled interpersonal life, we'll drag that crutch right into our adult years. It happens to many of us simply because of our sexual makeup.

The deepest wound my dad ever inflicted on me was his divorce. As I've said, masturbation is a way young men can salve deep insecurity or psychological pain, and nothing delivers a load of pain quite like divorce.

Sexual sin flourishes in the wake of bad or broken family relationships. The splintering effects of divorce (or parental death) shatter our worlds. Teens, rather than feeling accepted and cherished by their parents, feel as though they've been cast aside. They spend their lives searching for love and meaning, when it should have been provided in the home by a loving mother and a loving father.

Patrick Middleton, a good friend and a gifted addictions counselor, recently told me, "I deal with a lot of adult men, and it never fails that the men with the deeper sexual issues also have uninvolved or missing fathers. Their sexual issues are directly and severely impacted by their dad's failures as a father."

Perhaps you've felt the pain in your past family relationships, or perhaps your pain stems from a more recent family disruption through your own divorce, like mine (Steve). The desire to become close to *somebody* can also drive you quickly into the arms of cyberspace or short-term sexual relationships with women. Rather than turn to God, you truly can begin

looking for love in all the wrong places, hoping for something, anything, to take the place of that loss.

Obviously this is where our maleness works against us. Just think about my (Steve's) story for a minute. I didn't want a divorce, but when it happened, my soul was flooded by shame and alienation. Since it seemed to me that my life was basically over, I wanted to crawl into a hole. I was certain I would never get to write books again and that Christians everywhere would reject me. Hurt and wounded, it was tempting to latch on to the first life preserver that floated by, and the false intimacy of porn and masturbation was only a mouse-click away. For any of us, an orgasmic surge of power and virility can seem to be just what the doctor might order for wounds like ours. I determined with God's help that porn and masturbation would not be part of my single life. I know they don't have to be part of yours or any single man's life.

AN INNER FOCUS—AND MORE ISOLATION

By now you should understand that masturbation is an implosion of sexual pleasure that focuses a guy further and further into himself. But the genuine need for interpersonal intimacy simply cannot be met by self-seeking sexual activity. It's like slaking your parched thirst with salt water. A sip can satisfy for a moment, but the eventual results are disastrous. If you masturbate to "fix" your feelings of insecurity and isolation, then

masturbation just adds to your loneliness, because you're not receiving true intimacy when you do the act.

If you asked a woman to explain porn's potent draw to us, she'd cite the sex appeal of limitless free and frisky women to the male eyes and mind. But we know there are more complex factors at work here. Porn provides an instant soothing to emotional stress, and easy access to Internet porn makes it difficult to wean men away from their emotional dependence on it.

Remember, your sexuality is a primary communication line for transmitting and receiving intimacy. When that line goes down, your emotional life shrivels, and the effects upon marriage are disastrous.

Tragically, porn's first major blow does exactly this—decoupling sex entirely from the communication of intimacy. Over time, sexual *intensity* will replace *intimacy* as your primary focus of sex. This is where significant damage to our sexuality begins.

How in the world does this happen? Like a germ using a cell's own DNA to reproduce, porn and masturbation use a man's own hardwiring to destroy itself. It all starts innocently enough, with the eyes feasting naturally on the sexual images, just as they were created to do. The orgasmic chemical responses hit the pleasure centers like a dream—again, just as they were created to do. Then the addictive component develops, which will keep someone coming back for more porn and masturbation. Once that happens, he's hooked, and looking at porn becomes part of his life.

It is here where porn initiates a cataclysmic feedback loop in our hardwiring. Pornography's affect on the brain is Pavlovian, and each orgasm is a huge reinforcer.

Now if your hardwiring is normal, as God created it, at the right time your focus will not be on yourself but on your future wife and her pleasure. Your orgasms will happen with her, and because of that, you will associate your orgasms with your wife: her kiss, her scent, her body. Because of that reinforcement, that is what will turn you on over time and will keep you fascinated with the wife of your youth.

If you open your boundaries to endless transgressions by the harems of cyberspace, however, your sexual proclivities and tastes will go in other directions. That won't be good for you...or your future wife.

Worse, your hardwiring will morph and bring in an unnatural obsession with looking at women rather than interacting with them. It will bring an attitude that objectifies women and rates them by size, shape, and harmony of body parts. And the morphing? The visual side of your sexual hardwiring gets supersized, creating an obsession with visual stimulation (for instance, the bigger the breasts the better) while the transmission-of-intimacy side ("I so love your soul, honey") shrivels away.

Once intensity takes the place of intimacy, and intimacy is then decoupled from sex, the sexual high is the end in itself. As we said, the transmitters get fried, which means the future marriage bed is cooked before you get started. Your souls and

spirits won't be meeting in bed...only the bodies will be connecting. And more often than not, the gentle affection and climactic touch that your wife needs will no longer hold any interest for you. Your attitude will go something like this: *All aboard my one-way express to Sex City! Grab what you can, honey, but I'm the one who counts! Pour the fuel into my engines, and don't you dare tap on the brakes.*

Where your natural hardware would have prompted you to initiate normal intimate connections with your wife, now it will just prod you for another intense orgasmic hit, sometimes with your wife, sometimes with the computer. The computer sex may be intense, but it's always soulless and cold, just like sex might be with your wife. As you both drift to sleep afterward, she's still lonely, and you've gotten nothing but high. *What's intimacy got to do with it?*

Since I (Steve) have reentered the single world, I've met many, many men with almost an aversion to getting involved with women. These guys have essentially received their sex education on the Internet and find no reason—or deeply desired need—to pursue an actual woman. They prefer to stay in their apartments and have sex with themselves within the harems of cyberspace. These guys have been so brainwashed by Internet porn that they're unwilling to go through the struggle, pain, and effort to develop a relationship with a real live woman.

In many ways a kind of porn creep takes over. Jacob, a Christian twentysomething, told us that after watching porn videos for a couple of years, he met a beautiful woman at work.

She was sexually loose and agreed to join him for a weekend of sex at a resort. They acted out what both had viewed in pornography. When it was over, Jacob said, "I felt nothing."

Jacob sought to find the same intensity he'd felt watching the videos, but he didn't find it with a real woman, even in a glorious resort hotel room, because she couldn't take him where his own hands and fantasies could. Porn and masturbation will creep in and take over your sexual makeup, eventually frying everything to a crisp.

Guys depending upon porn, masturbation, and premarital sex *will* have trouble forming healthy relationships with women and with their future wives and, perhaps surprisingly, *will* even have trouble forming a few healthy relationships with guys, because of the deep pools of guilt and shame they're drowning in.

If you're feeling lonely and disconnected, that is a red flag to get up and get moving toward others *today* in order to close that breach in your defenses.