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A woman wearing a purple short-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and a black belt with a silver buckle is standing in a field of tall green grass and purple flowers. She is holding a small object in her hands. The background is a soft-focus landscape with more greenery and flowers.

**SHANNON
ETHRIDGE**

A Companion Guide for Personal or Group Study

Every Single Woman's Battle

Guarding Your Heart and Mind Against
Sexual and Emotional Compromise

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**WATERBROOK
P R E S S**

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Names and facts from stories contained in this book have been changed, but the emotional and sexual struggles portrayed are true stories as related to the author through personal interviews, letters, or e-mails.

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whose battle is it?

 At one time I was having extramarital affairs with five different men... Even though I wasn't having sexual intercourse with any of these other men, I was still having an affair with each of them—a mental and/or emotional affair. My fantasies of being Clark Gable's leading lady, memories of my romantic relationship with Ray, and fascination with Tom's wit, Mark's maturity, and Scott's verbal talents affected my marriage in a way just as damaging as a sexual affair would have. 

 When I hear people say that women don't struggle with sexual issues like men do, I cannot help but wonder what planet they are from or what rock they have been hiding under. Perhaps what they really mean is, the *physical* act of sex isn't an overwhelming temptation for women like it is for men.

Men and women struggle in different ways when it comes to sexual integrity. While a man's battle begins

with what he takes in through his eyes, a woman's begins with her heart and her thoughts. A man must guard his eyes to maintain sexual integrity, but because God made women to be emotionally and mentally stimulated, we must closely guard our hearts and minds as well as our bodies if we want to experience God's plan for sexual and emotional fulfillment. A woman's battle is for sexual *and* emotional integrity. 📖👩

📖👩 Paul understood our very human tendency to live in denial, closing our eyes to the things in our lives that may need to change. Change is hard work, and we would rather stay as we are. But this is not how God has called us to live. He wants to help us control our minds and our desires so that we can be more like Him. He wants to help us discover His plan for relational satisfaction. But we can't do this if we insist on keeping our eyes closed to the compromise that robs us of ultimate sexual and emotional fulfillment. 📖👩

👩 PLANTING GOOD SEEDS

(Personally Seeking God's Truth)

1. How important is the Word of God to you? Why?

As you seek to discover God's plan for sexual and emotional fulfillment, plant these good seeds in your heart:

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:8)

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14-15)

2. What, if anything, in these verses feels like a threat or a warning to you? Why do you think you respond to the verses the way you do?

To increase your hope of winning the battle for sexual and emotional integrity, plant this good seed from 1 Corinthians 10:13 in your heart:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to [woman]. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But

when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.


3. What does this promise mean to you?



WEEDING OUT DECEPTION

(Recognizing the Truth)



In some way or another sexual and emotional integrity is a battle that every woman fights. However, many women are fighting this battle with their eyes closed because they don't believe they are even engaged in the battle. Many believe that just because they are not involved in a physical, sexual affair, they don't have a problem with sexual and emotional integrity. As a result, they engage in thoughts and behaviors that compromise their integrity and rob them of true sexual and emotional fulfillment. 

4. Do you agree with the statement that every woman fights the battle for sexual and emotional integrity? On what do you base your opinion?

5. The author warns that it is not wise to think that sexual immorality can't happen to any one of us. How prevalent do you think sexual immorality is among Christian singles?

6. Circle how often you have engaged in any of the following:

Unhealthy Comparisons	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Mental Fantasies	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Emotional Affairs	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Romance Novels	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Soap Operas	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Masturbation	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Inappropriate Internet Activity	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Other Sexual Dysfunction(s)	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always

To determine if you are engaged in the battle for sexual and emotional integrity, answer the following questions adapted from *Every Woman's Battle*.

	Yes/No
Is having a man in your life or finding a husband something that dominates your thoughts?	_____
If you have a man in your life, do you compare him to other men (physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually)?	_____
Do you often obsess over who the “next man” in your life could be?	_____
Do you have sexual secrets that you don't want anyone else to know about?	_____
Do you feel like a nobody if you don't have a love interest in your life? Does a romantic relationship give you a sense of identity?	_____
Do you seem to attract bad or dysfunctional relationships with men?	_____
Do men accuse you of being manipulative or controlling?	_____
Do you feel secretly excited or powerful when you sense that a man finds you attractive?	_____
Is remaining emotionally or physically faithful to one person a challenge for you?	_____
Do you often choose your attire in the morning based on the men you will encounter that day?	_____

- Do you find yourself flirting or using sexual innuendos (even if you do not intend to) when conversing with someone you find attractive? _____
- Do you have to masturbate when you get sexually aroused? _____
- Do you read romance novels because of the fantasies they evoke within you or because they arouse you sexually? _____
- Have you ever used premarital or extramarital relationships to “medicate” your emotional pain? _____
- Is there any area of your sexuality that you would not want your future husband to know about? _____
- Do you use pornography—either alone or with a partner? _____
- Do you have a problem making and maintaining close female friends? _____
- Do you converse with strangers in Internet chat rooms? _____
- Have you ever been unable to concentrate on work, school, or the affairs of your household because of thoughts or feelings you are having about someone else? _____
- Do you think the word *victim* describes you? _____

7. What surprised you about your own answers? What scared you?


8. What particular question(s) hit home for you, and why?



9. Specifically, what effects have these types of activities had on your relationships with men? on your relationship with God? on your self-esteem?



By definition, our sexuality isn't *what we do*.

Even people who are committed to celibacy are sexual beings. Our sexuality is *who we are*, and we were made with a body, mind, heart, and spirit, not just a body. Therefore, sexual integrity is not just about physical chastity. It is about purity in all four aspects of our being (body, mind, heart, and spirit). When

all four aspects line up perfectly, our “tabletop” (our life) reflects balance and integrity... [See illustration on next page.] 



 It’s no laughing matter when one of the “legs” of our sexuality buckles, because then our lives can become slippery slopes leading to discontentment, sexual compromise, self-loathing, and emotional brokenness. When this happens, the blessing that God intended to bring richness and pleasure to our lives feels more like a curse that brings great pain and despair. 

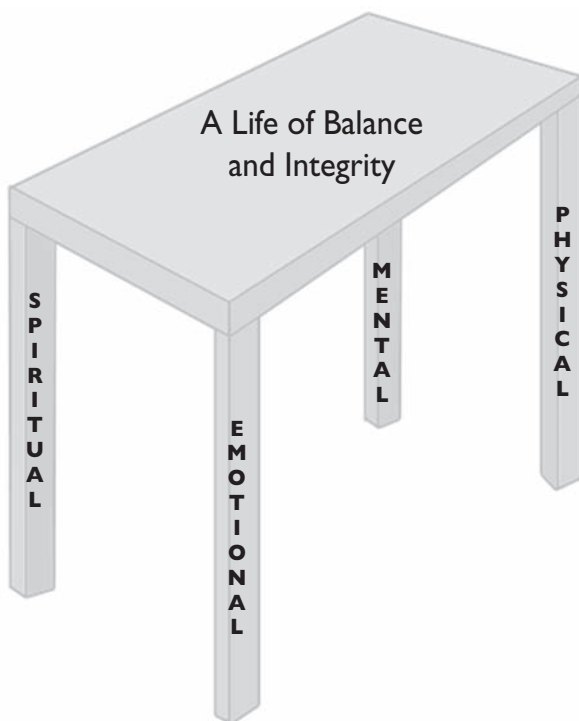
10. In your dating relationships, where have you set “the line” of sexual integrity? How far is it “okay” to go prior to marriage? Where does this belief come from?

11. If you ever crossed that imaginary line, were you able to back up and reestablish your previous standards? How did you do it or fail to do it?

 HARVESTING FULFILLMENT

(Applying the Truth)

 God...wants to help us control our minds and our desires so that we can be more like Him. He wants to help us discover His plan for relational satisfaction. But we can't do this if we insist on keeping our eyes closed to the compromise that robs us of ultimate sexual and emotional fulfillment. 





12. If you were to allow God to control your mind and desires, what would be the result in regard to your love life? your relationship with God? your self-esteem?

✿ GROWING TOGETHER

(Sharing the Truth in Small-Group Discussion)

13. What prompted you to pick up *Every Single Woman's Battle*? What is the main thing you are hoping to gain over the next eight weeks as you read this book? as you participate in this discussion group?

 While a man needs mental, emotional, and spiritual connection, his physical needs tend to be in the driver's seat and his other needs ride along in the back. The reverse is true for women. If there is one particular need that drives us, it is certainly our emotional needs. That's why it's said that men *give love to get sex* and women *give sex to get love*. 

14. Have you ever engaged in any form of sexual activity in order to get the love you were longing for? If so, did you get the desired result? How did the result affirm or challenge your behavior?

15. Obviously women have sexual needs as well as emotional needs. Have you ever felt you should not experience sexual desires? If so, how did that make you feel? Why?

16. What other beliefs about sexuality have shaped your emotions and behaviors around this topic? How do you discern which beliefs are false and which are true?

17. Do you think it is more difficult for men than for women to maintain sexual integrity? Why or why not?

18. Do you think it is more difficult for single women than for married women to maintain sexual integrity? Why or why not?

19. Does discussing the sexual temptations you face with mature, caring adults help you maintain sexual integrity? Why or why not? If not, what would help?



For a Christian woman, sexual and emotional integrity means that her thoughts, words, emotions, and actions all reflect an inner beauty and a sincere love for God, others, and herself. This doesn't mean

she is never tempted to think, say, feel, or do something inappropriate, but that she tries diligently to resist these temptations and stands firm in her convictions. She doesn't use men in an attempt to get her emotional cravings met or entertain sexual or romantic fantasies about men she is not married to.... She doesn't dress to seek male attention, but she doesn't limit herself to a wardrobe of ankle-length muumuus, either. She may dress fashionably and look sharp or may even appear sexy (like beauty, sexy is in the eye of the beholder), but her motivation isn't self-seeking or seductive. She presents herself as an attractive woman because she knows she represents God to others. 📖🕯

20. When is striving to look beautiful a sin and when is it not? How can we best evaluate our own motivations?

21. Share your conclusions about what you see as your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to being a woman of sexual and emotional integrity.



Jehovah Jireh, I trust You for my every need. Please give me wisdom and courage as I seek emotional and sexual integrity. And above all, keep me connected to You—draw me ever closer—so that I may know where my true fulfillment comes from. Amen.