

NEIL T. ANDERSON

WINNING  
THE  
BATTLE  
WITHIN



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## WINNING THE BATTLE WITHIN

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## TROUBLE IN THE GARDEN

*Human sexuality is too noble and beautiful a thing, too profound a form of experience, to turn into a mere technique or physical relief, or a foolish and irrelevant pastime.*

J.V.L. CASSERLEY

I was asked to speak at a community college on the topic of sexuality from a Christian perspective. There were about 25 students in attendance, and all but three were women. One young man had pulled his desk into the corner at the front of the class, and he read a paper while I was talking. If I said anything he didn't agree with, he showed his disapproval with a loud "raspberry." In the question-and-answer session, a woman asked what Christians teach about masturbation. Before I could answer, he said so all could hear, "Well, I do it every day!"

"Congratulations," I said. "Can you stop?" There were no more raspberries or comments from him for the rest of the class. He was the last to leave and remarked on the way out, "Why would I want to stop?" "That is not what I asked you," I said, and I continued by saying, "What you think is freedom, I think is bondage, and you will discover that the moment you try to stop."

The secular world has little knowledge of what God created to be good. Unfortunately, most of what the world hears from the church is what the church is against, and they delight in pointing out our failures to live up to our own prohibitions.



God revealed His plan for the sexual life and health of humanity in the creation account recorded in Genesis 2:18,21-25:

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”...So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God created Adam in His own image and breathed life into him, and Adam became spiritually and physically alive. Something was missing, however. It wasn’t good for Adam to be alone—he needed a suitable helpmate. None of the animals God had created could provide a complementary relationship with him. So God created Eve from Adam’s rib. Male and female He created them. They were sexual beings from the beginning.

The first couple were naked and unashamed. There were no dirty or offensive parts of their body. Intimate sexual relationships were not separate from their relationship with God, and their union was fully consummated in the presence of God. There was no sin, and there was nothing to hide. Adam and Eve had no reason to cover up their nakedness.

Their purpose and responsibility was to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). Sex was intended for procreation as well as pleasure. They didn’t “make” love. Sexual

intercourse and physical touch were the means by which the two could express their love to each other and multiply themselves. They were afforded complete freedom as long as they remained in a dependent relationship with God. They could have lived forever in the presence of God, who provided for all their needs.

### **The Fall and Its Results**

Satan, and a horde of fallen angels, were also present in the universe. The Lord had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or they would die (Genesis 2:17). Satan questioned and twisted God's command and tempted Eve through the same three channels of temptation that exist today, which were the same three channels that Satan used to tempt Jesus: "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16 NASB). Deceived by the craftiness of Satan, Eve defied God and ate the forbidden fruit, and Adam chose to follow in her defiance and ate as well.

Adam and Eve died spiritually, meaning that their intimate relationship with God was severed. Their souls were no longer in union with Him. Later they died physically, which is also a consequence of sin (Romans 5:12). Their perfect life in the Garden was ruined by their choice to sin. Filled with guilt and shame, "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves...and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:7,8).

The fall affected Adam and Eve's life in many ways. First, *it darkened their minds*. Trying to hide from God revealed they had lost a true understanding of who their Creator was, since no one can hide from an omnipresent God. They were darkened in their understanding because they were separated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18). Even today the natural person cannot understand spiritual things, "because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Second, *the fall affected their emotions*. The first emotion expressed by Adam after the fall was fear. When God confronted the pair, Adam

said to Him, “I was *afraid* because I was naked; so I hid” (Genesis 3:10). To this day, anxiety disorders are the number-one mental health

### A STEP OF MATURITY

The tendency of the Western church is to acknowledge the three channels of temptation but not acknowledge the role of Satan the tempter. Consequently, the problem is limited to the influences of this fallen world and the ongoing struggle with the flesh. This provides an inadequate answer for recovery. In the context previous to where the apostle John presents the three channels of temptation, he twice defines young men in the faith as those who “have overcome the evil one” (1 John 2:13,14). According to verse 12, “Little children” in the faith are forgiven. In other words, they have overcome the penalty of sin, whereas young men in the faith have overcome the *power* of sin.

problem of the world, and “fear not” is the most repeated command in Scripture.

Those who live in guilt and shame want to hide and cover up. Fear drives them away from anything that would expose their inner world. Without God’s unconditional love and acceptance, they run from the light or try to discredit its Source. Unable to live up to God’s eternal standards of morality, they face the prospect of continuing to live in guilt and shame, or like Adam, they blame someone else (Genesis 3:12).

Third, *the fall also affected Adam and Eve’s will*. Before they sinned, they could make only one wrong choice: to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was forbidden. Every other choice they could make in the Garden was a good choice. Once Adam and

Eve made that one bad choice, they were confronted every day with many good *and* bad choices—just as we are today. Other than the presence of God in our lives, the responsibility to choose is the greatest power we possess. We can choose to pray or not pray, believe God or not believe Him. We can choose to yield or not yield to a variety of temptations presented to us. Sexual bondage is the result

of wrong choices, or never having the knowledge of what the right choices are.

The entire world is still choosing to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil without the tree of life. The result is intellectual arrogance, pride, self-sufficiency, self-adulation, self-centeredness, self-gratification...self, self, and more self. Self-sufficiency is the greatest enemy to our sufficiency in Christ. Pride is what caused Lucifer to fall, and pride will keep many people from coming to the Light.

### **We Need the Light**

As a result of the fall, we are spiritually dead, helpless, and without any hope of escaping the bondage of sin, outside of the life we can have in Christ. No person living independently of God can live a righteous life or withstand the conviction of His perfect light.

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God (John 3:20-21).

The first step in recovery is to face the truth and acknowledge our sin. We need to come out of the darkness and face the truth in the light. That is the initial thrust of salvation. "He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13 NASB). Many people have told me they want to get out of their addictive behavior because they are tired of living a lie; and sexual sins, abuse, and addictions are the easiest to lie about. The effects of food addictions (overeating, anorexia, or bulimia) are revealed by our physical appearance. Drug or alcohol addiction will affect our behavior and performance, which are noticeable to others.

Those living in sexual bondage, however, display clues less obvious to others, with the exception of doctors who treat sexually transmitted diseases. You can be the president of the United States and be sexually addicted, but if you are chemically addicted, I doubt you could



be the president of anything for very long. Those who are addicted to chemicals are usually sexually addicted as well, but they seldom seek treatment for their sexual addiction unless they are exposed.

### **A Rebel Usurps Authority**

When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan usurped their dominion over the earth and became the god of this world. When Jesus was tempted, Satan offered Him the kingdoms of the world if He would bow down and worship him (Luke 4:6). Jesus didn't dispute Satan's claim to earthly spiritual authority and even referred to him as "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul called Satan "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2 NASB). As a result of Adam and Eve's fall, "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

The good news is that God's plan of redemption was under way immediately upon Satan's wresting authority from Adam and Eve. The Lord cursed the serpent and foretold the downfall of Satan (Genesis 3:14-15), which was accomplished by Christ on the cross. Ultimate authority in heaven and earth belong to Jesus. Satan's days of ruling over the kingdoms of this world are numbered.

Being physical descendants of Adam and Eve, we are all born spiritually dead and live under the dominion of Satan in the kingdom of darkness. But when we receive Christ, we are transferred from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom (see also Philippians 3:20). Satan is still the ruler of this world, but he is no longer *our* ruler. Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives. The deceiver can't do anything about our position in Christ—but if he can get us to believe that our identity and position in Christ aren't true, we will live as though they aren't.

Even as members of Christ's kingdom we are still vulnerable to Satan's accusations, temptations, and deceptions. If we give in to his schemes, Satan can influence our thinking and therefore our behavior. If we remain under his influence long enough and fail to resist him, Satan will gain a measure of control in our lives. Much of his dominance is sexual. However, even if we believe his lies, we will remain

God's children, because we have been bought and purchased by the blood of the Lamb, who will never leave us nor forsake us.

Paul warns us about this spiritual deception in 1 Timothy 4:1; "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." Paying attention to deceiving spirits is what kept Rick, whose story I shared in the introduction, in bondage. Before he became a Christian, he made sinful choices that led to sexual bondage. He hadn't recovered from his sexual abuse, and he chose to be sexually promiscuous. After he gave his life to Christ, the father of lies tempted him to seek gratification of his fleshly desires. The more he tried to satisfy the flesh, the bigger it grew. Only after Rick understood his identity and position in Christ and exercised the spiritual authority that every believer has in Christ was he able to break free of his sexual bondage and the lies that accompany it.

### **The Seeds of Sexual Bondage**

It has been my privilege to help thousands of people find their freedom in Christ. Nearly every one of them has had some kind of sexual problem. The ongoing cosmic battle between God's kingdom and the kingdom of darkness is often manifested in sexual sin, because sex is the means by which the seeds of reproduction are sown in either kingdom.

Christians who respect and obey God's directives in Scripture regarding sexual purity are sowing seeds in the kingdom of God that will reap a harvest of peace and righteousness. People who ignore God's call to sexual purity are sowing seeds in Satan's kingdom and will reap a harvest of pain and heartache. The fruit of the seeds sown in these two kingdoms greatly impacts our world and our family relationships. Adultery and incest destroy ministries and tear up families for generations. Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven.

One of Satan's primary weapons for ruining relationships is sexual impurity. More Christian marriages and ministries are destroyed through sexual misconduct than for any other reason. People who are living in secret sexual bondage have no joy in marriage or ministry,

and cannot grow in their relationship with God. Conversely, believers who pursue a life of moral purity are bearing fruit in the kingdom of God. The result is a positive impact for righteousness on their marriages, children, friends, and co-workers.

The strong link between Satan's kingdom of darkness and sexual bondage was illustrated to me during one of my conferences. David was referred to us by the pastoral staff of the host church. He was a successful businessman who appeared to have everything going for him. However, his wife had just filed suit for divorce because of his addiction to pornography. One of our staff met with him to take him through the Steps to Freedom in Christ.

As we lead people through the Steps, we sometimes discern that they need to renounce any previous involvement in satanic or occult activities, even if they don't remember any. As David renounced making any covenants with Satan, he was shaken to the core when the Lord revealed to him an experience from his past. He recalled a nightmarish encounter in his room at night with a spiritual presence who offered him all the sex and girls he wanted if he would just tell it he loved it. At first David refused, not sure if he was awake or dreaming. Then he gave in and said he loved Satan. Sowing that seed in Satan's kingdom resulted in the sexual bondage that was ruining David's life and marriage. His recovery began when he renounced that decision, took his place in Christ, exercised the authority he has in Christ, and resisted the devil, who fled from him.

If the concept of a spiritual battle is new to you, consider Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:1-4:

We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

## THE ABNORMAL BECOMES THE NORMAL

Mass sexual perversion precipitated the fall of Rome. How close is America coming to a similar demise? Pornography used to be hard to locate, but now every hotel room is a porno parlor—and so is every office at work or room in our homes that has a computer connected to the Internet. Canada and many states are moving rapidly to legalize homosexual “marriages.” Movies and television programs are portraying homosexual individuals and couples as the “liberated” ones who must set straight the “unenlightened.” Anybody standing for traditional sexual morality is considered a bigot or “homophobe.”<sup>1</sup>

This is actually a carefully planned strategy, as explained by Pastor Kevin Shrum in an article written in the November 25, 2007, issue of the Nashville *Tennessean*:

In 1989, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen published a book entitled *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s*. They laid out a plan for normalizing behavior that had previously been viewed as deviant. First, desensitize the citizen to deviancy by making deviancy appear positive. Second, make people feel guilty about their perceived bigotries, often equating homosexual and race bigotry. Third, through the media, display as normal that which had previously been viewed as abnormal.

### God’s Design

Perversion of God’s design for both reproduction and sexual relations is rampant wherever the kingdom of darkness flourishes. In the Old Testament, pagans honored Molech, a detestable Semitic deity, by the fiery sacrifice of their children—their seed—a practice God strictly prohibited (Leviticus 18:21; 20:1-5). There were many other pagan gods in biblical times whose worship involved sexual perversity. Chemosh, the national deity of the Moabites, required the sacrifice of children, and Diana of Ephesus had an explicitly sexual nature. Devotion to *anyone* or *anything* other than our Creator is idolatry, and idolatry always leads to some kind of immoral perversion.

However, the devil has never been able to do more than temporarily stop God's plan for propagating morally pure children of God and filling the earth with them. After the fall, God countered Satan's offensive by presenting a plan for redemption through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Satan was behind Pharaoh's order to kill all the male babies in Egypt when God was raising up Moses to deliver His people (Exodus 1-2).

When Christ was born, Herod issued a decree that all male babies under the age of two were to be killed. The Lord told Joseph about the plot in a dream, and he took Mary and the infant Jesus to Egypt (Matthew 2:7-23). Today, as we watch the heartless aborting of millions of unborn children in the name of "choice," we have to wonder what great deliverance God has in store for His people and ask, "What is Satan trying to hinder this time?"

Unable to prevent the birth of the Messiah, Satan prompted Judas, one of the Lord's own disciples, to betray Him. That devious plan played right into God's hand. The grave could not hold Jesus, and His resurrection sealed Satan's fate forever. Satan is a defeated foe. In spite of today's perversion of sex and reproduction, we have hope. God has a plan, and it will succeed.

The timetable of God's redemptive plan, however, is related to the church, as revealed by Paul in Ephesians 3:8-12:

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration [how God is working out His plan] of the mystery [something previously not revealed] which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places [Satan's hierarchy]. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

During this present age, God is working out His plan through the

church and is making His wisdom known through the church to the kingdom of darkness. Since that is the eternal purpose of God, there are several issues that we as the church need to consider.

First, *God is going to work through the church*, Christ's body. This is one reason why our ministry is church-based, and why I seek to provide resources to support the work of the local church.

Second, *we are in a spiritual battle*, and that is why we are instructed to put on the armor of God, stand firm, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Third, *our ministry is reconciliation*. We must learn how to help God's children remove the barriers to their intimacy with their heavenly Father through genuine repentance and faith in Him. God's children cannot grow or bear fruit if they are living in bondage to sin.

Fourth, *we have to minister in love under the New Covenant of grace*. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Nobody likes to live in bondage. Such people don't need a critic—they need a guide who can show them the way out of their bondage to sin. And that is what the rest of this book is about.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND THOUGHT

1. How would you contrast the “naked and unashamed” sexual experience of Adam and Eve with what we experience today?
2. How did the fall affect Adam and Eve mentally, emotionally, and volitionally (in their wills) and how does that relate to us today?
3. Why do we see the three channels of temptation but fail to see the tempter, or why does the Western church have the tendency to acknowledge our struggle with the world and the flesh but not the devil?

4. How can self-sufficiency keep us in bondage, and how does that relate to self-help efforts that are so common today? Does trying harder work?
5. Why do many people not seek the help they need?
6. What is Satan trying to accomplish by enticing us to sexual sins?
7. What is the strategy to desensitize North American culture to sexual sins? Is it working?
8. What is the “eternal purpose of God,” and how can the church work with God to fulfill that purpose?