




The Thief That Keeps on Taking

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Official Curriculum of 

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A Poor Foundation

Before we were married, we were involved sexually with each other and with other people. When we met we were both virgins and intended to stay that way until we married. We had been taught that sex before marriage was wrong, that it was sin, and initially we had strong boundaries established that we would not cross physically.

As our relationship deepened in intensity, though, and our passion for each other grew, we began crossing those boundaries. At first it was just petting and touching, but eventually we progressed to a full sexual relationship.

The first time we crossed the line, we waited for lightening to strike. We had been told that God would not approve and we waited for His response. When nothing seemed to happen, we decided that perhaps God was not as interested in our relationship as those who told us not to sin were.

Each progressive step of involvement brought another fearful wait to see if this time we had truly crossed the line and God's wrath would now come upon us. Life seemed to go on pretty routinely, though, and eventually we found justification in our own minds for our sexual union.

We became engaged, but before we were married we broke up. As we began dating others we discovered it was very easy now to slip into other physical relationships. We seemed to pick up a new relationship where the old one left off.

Very long story made extremely short—we eventually reunited and got married. Before our wedding we confessed to God and to each other regarding our sexual sins and thought the matter was done and gone.

Trouble Began

Shortly after we married, though, we began to realize our sexual relationship was getting dull. It lacked the excitement and passion we had enjoyed before marriage. We decided that we needed to spice things up a bit, so we began to buy pornographic magazines and rent pornographic videos.

This helped for a while, but we again found ourselves looking for more. We began going to porn theaters and strip clubs, but nothing ever satisfied us for very long. That is how lust works. It cannot be satisfied and so each new attempt at satisfaction brings pleasure initially, but soon grows old and boring.

During the next few years we sank deeper and deeper into pornography, always looking for a greater thrill and something more exciting. Before long adultery was also part of our life. Once your standards have been compromised, new sins come easier.

Thank heaven that in the midst of our sinful life, we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He transformed our lives and, for the first time we began to understand a relationship of love with Him instead of seeing Him as a God of wrath. We left our life of sin and began a new walk with the Lord. Our old ways and life patterns were completely changed through Him.

We noticed, though, that although we were living a completely new and different life, as the years went by there were things that we found hard to overcome. Feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem plagued us. It was hard to be successful and our finances were always in trouble. We prayed and prayed, but we just couldn't get victory in those areas.

One day when we were asking God for answers, we felt He told us that the root of our problem was sexual sin. We initially ignored what we felt He was saying because we hadn't been in sexual sin for years. We prayed again and felt God gave us the same answer. "How can that be, Lord?" we asked Him. "We repented of our sin long ago. How can it be affecting our lives today?" Then He began to share with us one of the most important lessons of our lives.

We share this with you now in hopes that you can recognize the effects of sexual sin early in your life and either never enter into it or come out of it now if you already have. It is like a hideous cancer that eats away at your life long after you have stopped sinning.

Effects of Sexual Sin

2 Timothy 2:22, Paul tells us to “Flee also youthful lusts...” Good advice, but often when we are young it is hard to see beyond tomorrow. What feels good today and doesn’t seem to have any immediate consequences for tomorrow surely can’t be all that bad. Right?

God tells us what will bless our lives and gives us the ability to make choices. He never gives us instructions without letting us know what will happen if we obey and what will happen if we disobey. We didn’t know that when we were young. We thought the only consequence of our sin would be that God would do something terrible to us. When it didn’t happen, we no longer believed there were any consequences.

God clearly tells us, though, in Proverbs 5 to 7, what the effects of sexual sin are in our lives. He leaves no doubt as to what will happen when we enter into sexual sin. The passages are written by a loving father to his child.

Proverbs 5 - 7 [Taken from NKJV, with explanation in brackets from the Amplified Bible]

My son, pay attention to my wisdom [godly wisdom learned by actual and costly experience]; Lend your ear to my understanding that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge [a ready answer to temptation].

This father is giving his son advice, not so he will obey some religious law, but because he loves him and wants his life to go well. He wants his son to learn from the mistakes he has made so he doesn’t have to make the same ones.

For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; You do not know them.

Although these passages warn of the immoral woman, we need to realize that the ultimately sin is the devil's idea and that he can use anything to bring temptation. As you read the rest of these passages, recognize what he uses in your life to tempt you sexually.

This verse is a great description of how sin works. At first it sounds so wonderful All we can think of is the pleasure. The more we dwell on it, the better the pleasure sounds. It pushes out all thoughts of consequences. Soon we simply have to have what we are thinking about.

That is how seduction works. The word for seduction in Hebrew means *smooth*. Seduction is always smooth and easy. It slides over all consequences and slips through all concerns.

Then, after we have sinned, that same voice that tempted us—that told us it would be okay, that assured us there would be no consequences—now that voice chides us telling us what a weakling we are, what a failure. It reminds us of how disappointed God is in us. What was sweet in temptation is bitter and hard in remorse.

Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house [avoid the very scenes of temptation].

You are not going to be able to escape from sexual temptation by hoping or praying. Scripture tells us to run away from it. Paul says **flee**. You cannot continue to entertain sexual fantasies or desires and hope they will just go away. You cannot continue thinking and doing what you are doing and hope God will deliver you. You must make a decision to not think those thoughts and not enter into those activities.

If you have been involved in sexual sin for some time, you are going to need help to do this. Sheer will power will not be enough. You need to be accountable to someone who will help you flee when you need to.

In the next verses, God begins to talk about the effects of sexual sin.

Lest you give your honor to others,

Dishonor is a consequence of sexual sin. First of all, you begin to dishonor yourself. In your heart you feel cheap and unworthy of honor. When others honor you, you think, “If they only knew...”

Secondly, you dishonor the person with whom you are sinning. You do and say things that you would never do and say to someone you greatly honored. That person, in turn, no longer honors you.

Third, eventually when your sin is found out, you are dishonored in your family, your community, your church—wherever you value being honored, you are dishonored.

And your years to the cruel one;

When you are sinning sexually, your days, your years, are filled with mocking and recrimination from the enemy. He laughs at your Christianity. He mocks your prayers. He tells you God is angry with you and that you are going to hell. He says you have done too many things to be forgiven. He tells you God is disappointed in you. He reminds you of how others, those you love, would feel about you if they knew what a terrible person you are. The cruel one owns your years.

Lest aliens (strangers) be filled with your wealth,

Financial troubles always follow sexual sin. It may be an inability to get ahead financially or trouble with credit or the inability to get a good-paying job—whatever the financial problem, it will be one that you just can’t seem to overcome no matter how much you try. Sexual sin robs you of wealth and brings on poverty.

And your labors go to the house of a foreigner;

This consequence goes hand in hand with financial loss. All your labor goes to profit another person, perhaps someone you don’t even know. You can barely make ends meet and every effort you make to change things seems to end in failure. Even when you are a conscientious worker, those for whom you work benefit from your efforts, but you never seem to see a harvest from what you invest.

And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed,

Poor health is another consequence of sexual sin. There are obvious diseases that come from sexual sin such as STD's and Aids, but other physical conditions may also result. Sexual sin saps the life out of a person and often their flesh manifests that inward work of sin.

...I was on the verge of total ruin, in the midst of the assembly and congregation.

A poor reputation is also an effect of sexual sin. Today society tells us that sexual sin is no big deal and those who try to say it is are prejudiced and not up-to-date. The word of God says, though, that sexual sin ruins your reputation. No matter what society says is acceptable, your character is damaged by sexual sin and those character flaws carry into other parts of your life.

Proverbs 6, verses 20 to 23, say:

My son, keep your father's [God-given] command, and do not forsake the law of [God] your mother [taught you]. Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you roam, [the words of your parents' God] will lead you; When you sleep, they will keep you; And when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light;

God again is encouraging us to listen to wisdom, to learn His ways. Parents are to teach their children the truth of the Word of God as a protection in their lives, not as a harsh law that must be obeyed or else. Unfortunately, many parents do not know this is God's plan and many children choose their own way over God's.

Reproofs of instruction are the way of life to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread.

Again remember that although this scripture speaks of the immoral woman, you need to read it keeping in mind whatever the enemy uses to tempt you. Sexual sin destroys your self-worth. A crust of bread is pretty worthless. Few people want to eat it and often it is thrown out for animals to eat or to be carried away as trash. When your self-worth has reached that of a crust of bread, you've pretty much reached bottom.

Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife [will be tortured with evil consequences and just retribution]; whoever touches her shall not be innocent.

You can't play with sexual sin. You can't just glance at a pornographic magazine. You can't read the titles at the pornographic theater and imagine what they are talking about. You can't daydream about things you would like to do or experience sexually. There is no innocent way to handle sexual sin. It is a trap and a snare and when you go near it, it burns you badly.

Did you ever stop to think about the fact that every woman on earth who is not your own wife is someone else's? Every man on earth who is not your husband is someone else's. Whether that person is married or not, until that person is married to *you*, he or she is somebody else's spouse—either potentially or in reality. So whether it is sex before you are married or adultery after you are married, you are sinning with someone who is not your spouse.

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold. He may have to give up all the substance of his house.

Some sins can be justified in the eyes of others. A man who is starving may steal to live. He still has to restore many times over what he took, but people can understand why he did what he did.

Sexual sin, though, has no excuse. People who say they couldn't help themselves are really just justifying the decision they made. Sexual sin cannot be justified.

*Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so **destroys his own soul.***

One of the greatest consequences of sexual sin is that it destroys our soul—our mind, will, and emotions. Today there is a good deal of research and ministry regarding sexual addiction. When people are drug addicts or alcoholics, people expect their decision-making ability to be impaired.

People are not surprised when the drug addict is driven for the fix and the alcoholic is willing to give up all for a drink. It is obvious with those types of addictions that a person's mind, will, and emotions are greatly affected by their habit.

Yet nowhere in scripture do we read that alcohol or drugs *destroy* the soul. Scripture says that sexual sin destroys the soul. Sexual sin not only affects the body, but works deep within the heart of a person to destroy their identity and destiny. Within families sin is passed from generation to generation, getting more depraved with each new generation.

If today you are contemplating entering into an illicit sexual relationship or if, out of curiosity or lust, you are considering some other type of sexual experience—you still have time to say, NO! You still have time to not find yourself some day saying,

“How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!”

You still have time to preserve your soul from destruction and to keep the consequences of sexual sin out of your life. It's as if you are standing on the ledge of a tall building, but you haven't jumped yet. Don't do it!

God's Plan

There are many relationships on earth that involve our spirit and our soul. Most friendships, our relationships with people in our church and community, and our family are good examples of relationships into which we invest spiritually and emotionally.

Yet God created only one relationship for us that involves spirit, soul, *and* body—that is marriage. He designed marriage as a covenant relationship, one that is to last a lifetime. Under that protection of covenant faithfulness, He included physical union.

By His design, marital love is to be fulfilling and pleasurable. God chose to have physical love be a part of a relationship in which both participants have pledged spiritual and emotional faithfulness to each other first. There is no other circumstance in which physical love is intended to be a blessing.

Drink water from your own cistern [of a pure marriage relationship], and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you.

Let your fountain be blessed [with the rewards of fidelity], and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love.

Is It Too Late?

But what if you have already sinned sexually? Is there hope?

Of course there is! In Jesus all things are possible! Without Him nothing can be permanently changed.

1 John 1:9 NKJV says, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” This is the key to being set free, healed, and restored from sexual sin.

First of all, you need to confess that what you are doing and thinking is sin. You cannot excuse your behavior or blame it on things that have happened to you in your life. There may indeed be things in your life that wounded you or propelled you in that direction, but you need to take responsibility for your own sin.

When you ask Jesus to forgive you, you need to receive His forgiveness. No sin is too great for Him. He gave His life to redeem you from any and all sin, no matter what it may be. Do not think that you have sinned beyond His help. Do not think that you cannot receive His forgiveness or that He would refuse to forgive you. Those are all traps of the enemy to keep you in sin.

It doesn't matter if you don't feel worthy to be forgiven or if you don't feel forgiven after you have confessed your sin and asked for His forgiveness. He says He will do it and God is not a liar. Once you have confessed your sin and asked Him to forgive, He forgives you completely.

Scripture says He removes your sin as far away from you as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). The east and the west never meet so your sin has been removed from you permanently. He doesn't hold on to it or judge you by what you did in the past. He paid the price to set you free and He is the only one who can. Trust in His forgiveness.

The next part of that scripture is very important when we are getting set free from sexual sin. Not only does God forgive us, but He also cleanses us from all unrighteousness. That means that all the defilement, shame, debasement, and any other thing that came upon us through the sin is cleaned away from us by the blood of Jesus. Wow! That's quite a promise!

You don't have to live with your past. You don't have to live under the shame of what you have done. Your sins are not only forgiven, but all your shame and defilement are wiped away. Now that's good news.

But just as with forgiveness, you must receive the cleansing of Jesus' blood. You must recognize what He has done for you and not allow the enemy to bring condemnation and shame your way. And, trust us, he will try. Each time he tries to bring up your past, remind him that you are forgiven and cleansed by the One who defeated him totally at the cross. He no longer has a hold on you!

Staying Free

Getting free is one thing and staying free is another. In one single moment Jesus forgives you and sets you free from your past! That part is not a process. It was completed 2000 years ago at Calvary and today you are able to appropriate it in a split second.

Walking free from your sin, however, is going to take time and effort. God will give you the power to do it but you will need others to keep you accountable as you progress. You need a partner or sponsor during this time that understands the struggles you will face and is willing to ask the hard questions and call you into account.

Choose someone who loves you and wants God's best for you and is not afraid to be bold with you. Do not choose someone who is struggling with the same sin as you. There will come a time when you may excuse each other's weakness instead of helping each other to be strong. It is good, though, to have someone who has gone through what you are going through and is now walking in victory because that person will understand what you are facing.

God's Word is your instruction manual and He gives you exact instructions on how to walk free from your sin. Proverbs 5 and 6 both begin with that type of instruction. Learn what God teaches about staying free from sin. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you will be able to bear it."*

God always has a way of escape from sin for you. When you see temptation coming, don't even wait a second—run from it!!

If you have been in sin together with your fiancé(e), you cannot afford to spend time together alone anymore before your wedding. This is a high price to pay but also a consequence of your sin. To be alone together is like taking those coals to your breast that scripture speaks of. You will get burned.

God intended for the attraction between the two of you to be strong. Marital love is the fulfillment of that attraction. God did

not intend for you to fulfill that attraction before marriage. You are going to have to make wise choices from now on.

God's promises to you are worth it!

Start Right Now!

If you want to be free from sexual sin today, it is possible. There is only one way, though. You cannot decide often enough, you cannot commit hard enough, you cannot promise fervently enough to be free. There is only one way, through Jesus, because He is *the way*.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). There is no other way to God except through Jesus. You cannot work your way to Him or earn your way to Him.

When we believe in our hearts and proclaim with our mouths that Jesus is now Lord and Savior of our lives, then we enter into relationship with God and our sins are forgiven (Romans 10:8-10). Jesus paid the price that none of us can ever pay for our sins. He took our sin, our shame, and our defilement to the cross and so we do not have to bear those things in our lives.

If you want to be free of the sin that plagues your life, today is your day of freedom. Pray this pray,

"Jesus, I am caught in a trap and I cannot get free. I cannot do for myself what only You can do. I confess my sin to you and receive You today as my Lord and Savior. I submit my life to You and desire to follow You all the days of my life. I receive Your forgiveness and Your love today. I believe that I am washed clean of sin in my life and I begin today, a new creation in You. Thank You for loving me and receiving me just as I am. Amen."

Date _____

Today is a day to remember! You are now born-again, a child of God! Your old life died today and your new one began in Jesus.

You have a ways to walk yet to be free of old habits, but now you have the power of God working in your life. Share with someone that you know loves Jesus and is following Him that

you have made this commitment. Proclaim it with your mouth so that they can begin praying with you and helping you today.

When temptation comes your way, when you are feeling discouraged, when you don't think you can make it through the next few minutes without giving in, here are some words of God that can give you life and help.

Things To Remember

There is a little children's song that says,

“Be careful little eyes what you see, be careful little ears what you hear...”

That is good advice to us all! Your victory over sexual sin will be made much easier and will happen quicker if you guard your eyes, your ears, and your thoughts.

After being in pornography for many years ourselves, we know that a simple word can create a paragraph in your mind. A simple picture can run an entire video. You must plan ahead and make sure you do not place yourself in situations that will bring temptation to you.

When we repent, we are forgiven, but there are consequences to our sin. A murderer can be totally forgiven of his sin, but he may still have to pay the price for his crime.

Because of sexual sin in your life, you must alter your lifestyle to avoid temptation. There are some things you will never be able to do again and others that you must avoid until you are healed. You know the circumstances that are unique to you. Do not kid yourself that you can handle them. Stay away from temptation!

In our home we have cable TV because we live near the mountains and cannot get local reception. We know, though, that the basic package is all we need. When offers for various movie channels come to us, they may look very inviting and appear to be a great deal, but we know we cannot bring those channels into our home. Late at night there are movies and other shows on those channels that we do not want to have in our home as a temptation.

Not having those channels means we may miss some other really great movies that would be wonderful for the family to enjoy, but we can go to the store and rent those. It is not worth the risk of being tempted with what we know is an area of weakness for us. You know what those things are in your life. Plan ahead.

Pornography

If you have been in pornography, you need to put up barriers and protections that do not make it easy for you to sin. If you travel, hotels will shut off “adult” channels to your room if you ask. Don’t wait until later—ask when you check in. Don’t think you can go to your room alone and not want to just see what is on. Just a quick peek is all it will take and you know it. Just listening and not looking will be just as harmful. Those pictures run in your head without seeing them with your eyes.

Avoid passing pornographic theaters or other places you have frequented. Like old friends they will call you back. Avoid reading the words on the marquee of the theater or in the windows of bookstores that you know will create a story in your mind.

Don’t bring things into your home through television or subscriptions that will tempt you even if they have other wholesome aspects (like the TV channels we mentioned). Ask the Lord to help you find and get rid of anything that is now in your home that could be a source of temptation.

You may need to give up some friendships if they are a link to pornography. If others choose to stay in sin, you cannot keep associating with them and not be tempted.

If you and your spouse have been in pornography together, you are going to need to learn God’s plan for intimacy. Once what is sinful has been removed from your love making, you may find there is nothing left. God’s plan is not based in sin and lust. It will take time to retrain your relationship to discover a depth of intimacy far greater than anything else you have known. This will not happen overnight and you need to be patient as God teaches you His ways. We can guarantee you that the end result is far better than anything the devil ever gave you.

Premarital Sex

If you are coming out of premarital sex, you must make sure you do not spend time alone together before your wedding. This is going to be hard because you want desperately to be alone right now.

If your wedding date is far off (two or more months away) and you are certain God has confirmed this is the person you are to marry, you may want to consider moving the date up. Once you have been sexually active together, it is going to be extremely difficult to go for many months before you are together again. Waiting a long time to marry may be setting yourselves up for failure.

If your parents and/or others who have been helping you to prepare for your marriage agree that the two of you are God's choice for each other, marrying sooner, rather than later, is something you may want to consider.

If you are living together, you need to separate until your wedding. Trying to live in the same place together and not be sexually active is like trying to light a match in a room filled with gas and hoping that nothing will happen. The cost of two apartments or a change in living arrangements is one of the consequences of coming out of sin. If you cannot afford it or if it is not possible to do anything else but live together, then you need to marry now.

God created a man and woman to be attracted to each other in progressively more intimate stages. Once you pass through one stage to another, it is almost impossible to go backward again when you are in close contact with each other.

One of the things you might want to consider during this time before you marry is that you may have skipped some important steps in getting to know each other spiritually and emotionally when you prematurely entered into a physical relationship.

We would recommend a good premarital course, such as ONE for Life, that takes you through important steps on your way to the altar. Accountability is very important right now and you need to have someone you trust to help you be strong as you walk through healing and wholeness before your marriage.

Adultery

Coming out of adultery is going to involve not only your healing but the healing of your spouse, your marriage, and your family as well. You definitely need someone else to help you both through this time of healing. We strongly suggest a Married for

Life class in which your leaders can not only help you heal but can also hold you accountable as you come out of sin.

One of the strongest attractions of an illicit love affair is the fear of getting caught. The intrigue of sneaking around and meeting clandestinely is as much a part of the relationship as the sex. Not only do you need to be accountable regarding your faithfulness to your spouse, you also need to learn to transfer the excitement you found in the other relationship to your covenant relationship.

The first step for both you and your spouse is to begin healing. Before you can deal with other issues, you need to reestablish trust and love. That is going to take time and you need to have another couple walk through this with you.

There are also consequences to the sin of adultery. Because of your infidelity and your weakness in this area, you should no longer meet alone with a member of the opposite sex, no matter how innocent the meeting.

If you are at work and need to meet with a person of the opposite sex, you need to have someone else in the meeting with you or leave the door to your office wide open or meet in a public place. Take precautions to stay free no matter how insignificant you feel the meeting may be. Even if your intentions are honorable you may be setting yourself up for accusation from the other person. Even if you are totally innocent, your marriage may not survive such an accusation.

Do not meet a person of the opposite sex for lunch or dinner alone or go to hotel rooms for meetings. Do not go to the office of a person of the opposite sex without taking the same precautions we stated above.

Do not counsel a member of the opposite sex who is seeking help or answers. Find someone else, possibly your own spouse, who can help that person. Arsonists are not hired as forest rangers for a good reason—they are ill equipped to prevent forest fires! In the same way, you are in no position to help a member of the opposite sex who is seeking answers. If your job requires counseling members of the opposite sex alone, change jobs or find a way to counsel with others present.

If you travel extensively or work in other cities and your spouse cannot accompany you, make sure you travel with a member of the same sex who knows your background and is willing to hold you accountable.

These things may seem like overreactions, but you need to realize you have a big target painted on your life. The enemy knows your flesh better than you do and can construct snares that you might not recognize at first. By always be accountable for your actions with the opposite sex, you will provide safety and protection.

As you learn to guard each other's backs as husband and wife, you will become a powerful team. Do not expect your spouse to become your policeman, though. It is not his or her job to make sure you don't sin again. It is yours!

And if your spouse has been in adultery, do not become his or her policeman. Checking up and demanding answers will not help heal your relationship. You need another couple at first to make sure there is accountability, but when one spouse takes on that role, healing is set back and conflict is certain.

The more your own hearts are healed, the more you will be able to hold each other mutually accountable out of love and concern for each other. That is not what will motivate you immediately after you learn that your spouse has been in adultery, though. Don't take on that role at that point. Let someone else keep your spouse accountable at first as they work with both of you. Your Coaching Couple would be great to do this!

Scriptures that are special to you