

## Part 2 – How we got here

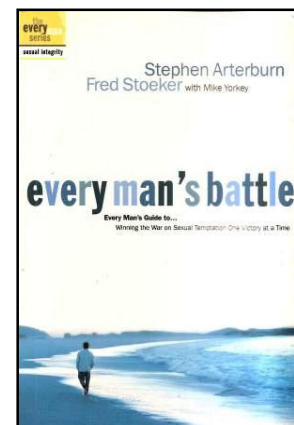
### **Everyman's Battle** by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker

Marriage does not end the battle with sexual attraction of distraction. Marriage does not translate to sexual gratification simply because the desires of two people most likely, if not certain, will not agree.

The approach toward sex or sexual conduct must be taken as a single person – even if you're married; or in other words, another person cannot be the excuse for your ignorance to or disobedience of God's desire for you. Sex can become a god...and obsession – that, as a god, is worshipped and exalted beyond the dictates of your relationship to God and God's desire for you as his child.

As I've read and understand, people are sexual creatures. We cannot deny our sexuality and our natural desires. The real question is whether we are allowing God to change us so that these sexual desires are in control as opposed to controlling us. Marriage cannot and will not be the source of such control; rather, the control must come from within through the changing of your heart, the worship of God.

A common cycle for the man could be the pursuit of sexual purity, but with a prevailing level of temptation and mental conflict. You may pass by the same check-out magazine rack without a second glance, but without notice, lock in to a air-brushed babe to the degree that she is in your bed or you are in her arms. Why is it that this random and unexpected temptation occurs – even to the degree that nothing of the object has changed? I'm not sure except to say that believers are engaged in a spiritual battle and, thus, may be faced with instantaneous, unpredictable, and impulsive temptation.



The cycle can involve some degree of defeatism or self-loathing; as though to chide yourself with the words, "Well, here you go again..." Just when you think you're living pure, the impurity of temptation reveals you're lingering weakness or vulnerability. As a momentary recollection of a Bible figure, King David is a prime example of where marriage and sexual temptation is so indicative of this lingering temptation or weakness. A king makes a serious mistake in adultery, conspires and commits murder, and fails to acknowledge his wrongdoing until confronted by a prophet.

King David should be a lesson to every man: no man is entirely free of temptation – to include the sexual variety. Rather than duping ourselves into thinking that we have singularly won this battle, perhaps we should instead accept the truth that only God can help us through it!

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What I'm suggesting is not that we should accept compromise and defeat; rather, we must acknowledge and accept that temptations are and will be a part of our lives for our physical lifetime. Sexual temptation is one of those that is powerful – both in the moment and the possible consequence when we choose to sin. Working out the faith in moment a victory (over temptation) cannot fool us into believing that no temptations will continue; on the contrary, temptation will be lodged by spiritual forces so as to upstage and attempt to destroy God's work in you.

Remember that God made sex and sexuality; but man has perverted sex and sexuality through his sinful state and corruption. Sex in the marriage is a great design; a celebration of intimacy and trust like no other between two people. But sex in the fallen world is changed to self-gratification and fulfillment of lust – rather than the holiness of physical communion so described in a Christian marriage. Can we entirely rid ourselves of the fallen form of sex or sexuality? Alone or by ourselves, we cannot – for the power to do so comes from the a greater power that is able to fulfill the call for purity in all forms.

Another figure of the Old Testament, Joseph physically skedaddled from a pursuing woman of the household. He fled because he was well prepared for her apparent looks and behavior toward him. His impulse was not without cost – as he was falsely accused of being the aggressor rather than victim. Still, Joseph was obedient to God and thus made the right choice in the instant of her advances.

The events of King David and Joseph are only two examples of the consequences, the costs of our decisions – whether to obey or not. Joseph was obedient, but his obedience was not without the cost of wrongful accusations and imprisonment. King David chose poorly with his decision coupled by a series of more poor choices. Sin begets sin and, when finally revealed, has created a compounded level of destructions or costs. Both people incurred costs in their decision; the primary difference was their obedience to God.

The temptation to choose for our carnal desire – or to seemingly gratify the flesh – is certain; after all, we are flesh! But the supernatural work of God to transform those desires to spiritual obedience is the grace afforded us by Christ. We can be delivered from the poor choices – though the temptation occurs. Our minds are being every transformed into Christ's mind if we are in fellowship with Christ; but the weakness of flesh is the matter that must be understood, accepted, and presented at the Cross in total surrender and submission. As the old spiritual hymn repeats, "Have your own way, Lord; have your own way..."

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Between the natural sex drive of men and the myriad of visual “eye-candy” in the modern day, the conflict of our minds has never had greater potential, it seems....

Our sex-saturated society is not novel to this practice; prior civilizations are noted as being entrenched in obsession with sex from the remnants of art to the recorded history. One difference however is that modern media and information put porn and sex at the fingertips of the already struggling and developing innocent. Yes, porn effects the young folk more than any other age category.

Call it naïve or immaturity, but the combination of inexperience and driven will is a dangerous dual for the young folk. The Web has turned porn into a mega-industry and, at the same time, is enslaving more and more men with the fallacies of fictitious sex and foreplay. The human mind has great capacity but, harnessed by the images and fantasies of porn, is made into a loaf of bread. In other words, porn produces nothing but a continued “fix” for an insatiable and misunderstood motivation of men. Porn is exploiting men as it does women...and the human race.

Maturity can bring some relief; the sense that you understand this passion and, in particular, that it is lust without any realistic and complete fulfillment. What may be seemingly satisfied today is, only tomorrow, a returning desire that may – much to our dread – be more intense! On the one hand is a pride that we are men! But on the other hand is an 800 pound gorilla on our back that is reducing us to a mere man succumbed to the overwhelming odds of a seemingly less intelligent animal from fearsome belief our ability.

The authors ask the question: Do you want to be a man's man or God's man; do you desire to please and be revered by other people or to be pleasing to and revering of God? Your answer or position on this question is fundamental; because if you desire to please men, you cannot please God. Paul (of the New Testament) mentions this dilemma when he says, *If I were trying to please, I wouldn't be pleasing God.*

Even with the right choice, to please God, a man will still struggle with temptation and misunderstanding in matter of sexuality among others. Wisdom comes in our knowledge and fear of God; because as we understand more about God, we understand more about humans. Sexuality and all matters of sex is part of life and our learning of this life; but learning does not sanction experimentation and indulgence beyond God's desire; just because we have the desire does not give license to entertain and indulge in it. Life is not about indulging our every want and whim – even desires of such a natural origin.

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Our sexual desires go deeper than the raw, surface of fleshly desire. Beneath the obvious and visual is the desire for security; to be wanted...needed by another. Sex can be a sign of being wanted – but it can be used to get something else. Women may use sex or sexual appeal to get something else; or in others, as the *means to an end*. Men may and do fall for the belief that *the end* for a woman is to have him thereby satisfying his own desire to be wanted by another on a sexual basis. Quite possibly, this belief is wrong and, in truth, she is using sex for some other desire of her own such as security or affection of other forms. Our sexual desires are complicated by the fact that man and women differ as a rule.

To join in marriage is to begin to understand on a personal level the differences of the two – and to appreciate the attributes of each. A man's intense sexual drive, visually stimulated, may have something to do with survival, the burden and toil of hard work.

Sexual tension can be diverted to hard, physical work where, at the least, the body is driven to absolute fatigue and need for rest. Notwithstanding this drive, modern man must contend with the natural drive in a less than laborious lifestyle. Maybe physical exercise and other physical exertion is a good, positive replacement for the prior hand to the plow. Exercise helps relieve some of the tension, then Just Do It! But another important – even essential – approach is fellowship with God and the commensurate changing of the heart.

One final consideration of sexuality and sex drive is that, in keeping with the desire to be wanted or needed, is coping with pressure and tension in other areas of your life. Masturbation and sexual fantasy is like a drug in that it serves to bring comfort or to ease the pain or stress of a circumstance. Sexual obsessing and voyeurism is like a narcotic or drug; it medicates us and momentarily removes us from reality or an uncomfortable, painful circumstance.

This track toward such distractions is not solely to placate our physical urges but, much deeper, is to bring us comfort or to dull our senses. If you struggle with believing yourself to be man, you may indulge to try to affirm your masculinity. If you do think you're attractive and nobody desires or wants you, the fantasies offered through porn can elevate you to some false sense of being desired and wanted...in your mind. Your mind plays tricks on your heart and fools you through the vices – one of which is the quest for sexual fulfillment or, to the point, peace and self-assurance. The problem is that you're looking in the wrong places and choosing the wrong methods. As with any drug, porn will merely mask the real needs of the human soul; that is, the need to be loved unconditionally. And where do you find that, but God...