

Marriage • Parenting • Spiritual Growth • Sexuality • Relationships • Mental Health
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a resource in:

Sexuality

10 Tips For Maintaining Sexual Integrity



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

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1. Get Real

Recognize that sexual temptation is unavoidable in our sex-obsessed culture. Erotic images on billboards, films, television and a thousand other stimulants are bombarding you daily. Being a Christian doesn't exempt you from temptation -- the godliest of men can fall prey to it. So the first step towards maintaining sexual integrity is to get real. Admit to yourself that sexual temptation is a problem that you have to reckon with. Remember John's warning:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."(1 John 1:8)

2. Get Serious

You should know by now that sexual sin ravages everyone connected with it. What you may not know is that every sexual fantasy you entertain, every flirtatious conversation you keep up, or every "second look" you indulge in is the seed for AIDS, adultery, a broken heart, a shattered life. Get serious -- if you're entertaining lust, you're dancing on a cliff. Take concrete action now while you can. Lust when it is conceived, brings forth sin, and sin brings forth death.

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."(James 1:15)

3. Get Ready

If you really believe an earthquake is coming someday, you prepare for it by developing an emergency plan. If you really believe sexual temptation is both common and can become lethal, you'll make an "emergency plan" for it, too. Decide in advance what to do when you're tempted: how to distract yourself, whom to call, and how to escape close calls. Even St. Paul admitted: Like an athlete, I train my body to do what it should, not what it wants to do. Otherwise, I fear that I myself might be declared unfit.

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."(1 Corinthians 9:27)

4. Get Connected

Sexual sin thrives in the dark. If you're caught up in any sexual vice, one thing is certain: the secrecy surrounding your behavior is what strengthens its hold on you. However ashamed you may feel about admitting your problem to another person, the reality is this: you can't overcome this on your own. If you could, wouldn't you have done so by now? Find a trusted, mature Christian friend to confide in. Make that friend a partner in your recovery, and NEVER assume that you've reached a point where you no longer need accountability. Take a hint from James:

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."(James 5:16)

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5. Get Brutal

I believe there's an eleventh commandment somewhere that says, "Thou Shalt Not Kid Thy Self." If you're serious about sexual integrity, you'll distance yourself not only from the particular sexual sin to which you're most prone (fantasizing, pornography, affairs, prostitution), but you'll ALSO distance yourself from any person or thing that entices you towards that sin. Sometimes, even a legitimate activity (certain movies, music or clubs, for example) may be OK for other people to indulge in, but not for you. Get brutally honest about your lifestyle: anything in it that makes you prone to sexual sin has to go. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Corinthians 6:12)

6. Get Help

Sexual sins are often symptomatic of deeper emotional needs that a man is trying to satisfy in all the wrong ways. Repenting of the sin itself is a necessary first step, but recognizing the conflicts or needs that led you into that behavior may be the next step, requiring some specialized care from a Christian professional. Don't hesitate to seek Godly counsel if you're trapped in cycles of ongoing, out-of-control behavior. The answer you need may be more than just "pray and get over it!" King David (who was no stranger to sexual sin, by the way) found refuge in Samuel's wise mentoring. If you're willing to seek professional help for taxes, medical care, or career counseling, surely you'll be willing to do the same to maintain your sexual integrity.

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

7. Get Comfortable

The problem of sexual temptation isn't going anywhere. It's been with us since time immemorial, and no doubt it will plague us until Christ comes. So get comfortable with the idea that you'll need to manage your sexual desires throughout life, always remembering that your sexual integrity is but a part of the general life-long sanctification process all Christians go through. I count myself not to have attained perfection, Paul told the Philippians. I am still not all I should be. So learn to love the process of pressing on, not perfection.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12)

8. Get Love

"I've been looking for love in all the wrong places," an old song laments. The sexual sin you're drawn towards may indeed be a cheap (though intense) substitute for love. You can repent of the sin, but not of the need the sin represents. So get love in your life: friendships, family, spouse, fellow believers. A man who truly loves, and knows he's truly loved, is far less likely to search for what he already has in places he'll never find it. Learn to be intimate and authentic. It's one of the best ways to protect your heart and your integrity. Isaiah asked:

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness [abundant blessings]." (Isaiah 55:2)

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9. Get Grace

It isn't the sinless man who makes it to the end; rather, it's the man who has learned to pick himself up after he stumbles. If your struggle seems relentless, remember this: when you commit yourself to sexual integrity, you commit yourself to a direction, not to perfection. You may stumble along the way -- that's no justification for sin, just a realistic view of life in this fallen world. What determines the success or failure of an imperfect man is his willingness to pick himself up, confess his fault, and continue in the direction to which he committed himself. Remember Paul's approach: forgetting those things that are behind, and pressing on towards the mark of the high calling.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

10. Get a Life

What's your passion? What's your calling? How clear are your goals? And, by the way, do you have any fun? The man who doesn't have a life -- a passion, a sense of meaning, an ability to play as hard as he works -- is a man with an emptiness tailor-made for sexual sin. Life is about more than keeping yourself sexually pure, as important as purity is. It's about knowing who and why you are, where your priorities lie, and where you're headed. If you don't know that much about yourself, you have some serious thinking to do. Commit yourself to developing your life as a good steward of your gifts and opportunities, and make that the context in which you seek to maintain your sexual integrity. Sexual integrity for its own sake is a good thing: sexual integrity for the sake of a higher calling is better. So by all means turn from your sin. But as you do, turn towards a goal-oriented, passionate, meaningful life. That is repentance in its truest, finest sense.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

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