

## Recommended Books for Cultivating Sexual Purity

The five most helpful non-Scriptural books are marked with an asterisk (\*). Prices from Amazon.

March 5, 2009, Joe Tyrpak

### Scripture

*The Song of Solomon*. This may be the least studied passage on sexuality in the Bible (ironically, it's the most positive on the subject). I would recommend a line-by-line study of this book with evangelical commentators of varying literal interpretive approaches:

- o 2-character chronological Solomon (Estes, Deere in *BKC*, *MacArthurSB*)
- o 2-character non-chronological Solomon (Dillow; Mahaney; Driscoll, *Peasant Princess*)
- o 2-character non-chronological peasant-shepherd (Carr, Gledhill, ESVSB, Sproul in *RSB*)
- o 3-character approach (Provan, Waltke's *OTT*)
- o 2-character anthology (Longman)

As you study the book, try to paraphrase each line and write down as many legitimate applications as you can find. This should build a strong conviction that this whole book should be preached. The scarcity of expositional preaching on the literal meaning of this God-breathed book is sad and detrimental. I know only two pastors who have preached verse-by-verse through it.

### On Cultivating Sexual Purity by Cultivating a Healthy Marriage

Stephen Kendrick & Alex Kendrick, *The Love Dare* [\$8]. As seen in the movie *Fireproof*, this is a very basic 40-day challenge for one spouse to perform specific acts of love for the other. Each day's challenge begins with a 3-4-page devotional on love followed by a simple dare. The dares include (1) saying nothing negative, (2, 10, 15, 28, 29) performing unexpected acts of kindness, (3) buying a gift, (4) making an unexpected phone call, (5) inviting criticism, etc. (13) writing out rules for "fighting," (14) giving up some of *your* time, (16, 29, 30, 38, 39) specifically praying for your spouse, (18) making a special dinner, (25) choosing to forgive, (32) initiating sex, (33) involving in decision-making, (34) giving a specific commendation, (35) finding a marriage mentor, (36-37) and having devotional time together. Days 19-20 are explicitly evangelistic. The book's strong point is its simplicity, helpfulness in sparking creativity, and being connected to a very popular Christ-centered movie.

Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage* [\$10]. You've probably used this book in marriage counseling. It's an inductive fill-in-the-blank discovery of what God has revealed about marriage, roles, communication, finances, sex, child rearing, & family devotions. The application questions are excellent discussion starters for couples. The chapter on sex (Unit 6) works through correcting wrong perspectives of sexuality, dealing with unresolved guilt, dealing with wider marriage problems, and resolving "informational" problems.

\*C. J. Mahaney, *Sex Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know* [\$10]. Encouraging. Convicting. Funny. Local-church-centered. Christ-centered. Although it's not a verse-by-verse commentary, this book provides the simplest, most applicational summary of the Song of Songs. Marital sex can be rightly understood only when God's Christ-centered purpose for marriage is understood. C.J.'s mantra: "Touch her heart and mind *before* you touch her body." This involves knowing your wife, dating her, calling her, writing her, giving gifts to her, enjoying music with her, getting away with her, surprising her, preparing to serve her on the way home from work, frequently communicating with her, creatively and tenderly complimenting her, expressing your feelings about her. His "sex chapter" (73) urges kissing, touching, delightful intercourse, worldly innocence, servant-mindedness – and privacy, variety and realism. Pages 88-90 are worth the whole book. His final chapter, which is an exposition of the "covenant love" in Song 8:5-7, ends at the cross.

Lou Priolo, *The Complete Husband: A Practical Guide to Biblical Husbanding* [\$16]. One of the most helpful (and most convicting) books for men. Priolo encourages the discipline of studying your wife. He also teaches *what* every husband should talk about with his wife, and *how* to talk. He helpfully defines (90) and recommends Bible study on Christ's love for the church. Chapters 6-7 focus on response to sin: replacing bitterness with forgiveness and reacting to sin by overcoming evil with good. He spends time on the time- and attention-consuming discipline of pleasing your wife. He reiterates Jay Adams' seven principles for marital sexuality. The book concludes with chapters on protecting, honoring and leading your wife. With dozens of application lists and suggested projects and conversations, this book is most practical and helpful!

### On Dealing with the Effects of Sexual Sin

\*Mark Driscoll, *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross* [\$14]. In these twelve pastoral letters to various individuals connected with his congregation, Driscoll applies twelve specific facets of Jesus' atonement to specific sinners. On the topic of sexuality, Driscoll applies Jesus' redemption to lust addiction, Jesus' new covenant sacrifice to adultery, Jesus' justification to a child molester, Jesus' expiation to a rape victim, and Jesus' ransom to a man laden with the guilt of a lifetime of sexual sin. Despite Driscoll's reputation for edginess, his opposition to

traditional fundamentalism, and his occasional crassness (which hardly occurs in this book), I have found that few pastors have an applied understanding of the gospel as deep as his.

### On Practical Warfare for Sexual Purity

Randy Alcorn, *The Purity Principle* [\$10]. Quite similar to Harris. I have a friend who's found this very helpful in times of temptation and failure. Alcorn's [online article](#), "Guidelines for Sexual Purity" is also excellent for teaching a healthy perspective on dating and sexuality to teens.

\*Josh Harris, *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World* [\$11]. Comes with individual study guides for both men and women [\$7 each]. **In my opinion, this is the most helpful book on the issue.** Harris teaches how to mentally and actively fight lust, temptation, specific areas of weakness, gender-specific struggles, masturbation, media. His recommended strategies for change evidence personal and pastoral experience: establish accountability relationships, use Scripture to combat Satanic lies (13 examples!), sow to the Spirit (8 suggested ways), and have your primary focus on the Gospel, God's glory, and God's promises.

Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* [\$11]. While the whole book is outstanding, chapters 2-3 deserve particular comment because of their relation to sexuality and marriage. In chapter 2 ("Discipline of Purity") Hughes deals with the prevalence of sexual sin among Christian men, practically expounds David's adultery in 2 Samuel 11-12, and concludes with seven disciplines for purity. Chapter 3 ("Discipline of Marriage") is an exposition of Ephesians 5:25-33 followed by six practical disciplines for cultivating marital love.

\*Kent Hughes, *Set Apart: Calling a Worldly Church to a Godly Life* [\$12]. This book explores the Lot-like disconnect between belief and life in the American evangelical church. Hughes argues (ch. 2) that holiness of life is the only hope for evangelizing the world. He devotes chapters 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 to the theme of sexuality/marriage. In them he urges believers to be set apart from American culture in hedonism (ch. 3), viewing sensuality (ch. 4), sexual conduct (ch. 6), modesty (ch. 7) and marriage (ch. 9). These expositions are outstanding! His last chapter, "The Unending Yes" is fundamental: being set apart from worldliness is not religious moralism, but Christ-centered, Gospel-centered Christianity. This chapter's thesis is beautifully expressed: "The set-apart life is not a dirge but a dance" (145). Or, as foreshadowed in the first chapter: "Setting ourselves apart from the world so that we might reach the world is not so much a series of *noes* as much as it is an immense *yes* to Christ and all that he gives" (22).

Erwin Lutzer, *Winning the Inner War: How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit* [\$10]. Practical, pastoral overview of spiritual warfare. Written for Christians who are familiar with "the cycle:" sin, guilt, resolve, pride, failure. Lutzer opens with three good purposes of God in allowing temptation (to test love, form character, magnify grace) and three critical beliefs for lasting change (God's goodness, my responsibility, 1Cor10:13-hope). He gives *very practical* counsel on how to deal with past sin/guilt; how to think like God about your problem; how to apply Romans 6 to your selfishness; how to be Spirit-controlled; how to daily change your mind, feelings, and will; how to use the church; how to resist the devil; and how to deal with continuing failure.

\*John Piper and Justin Taylor (editors), *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ* [\$11]. This book compiles 11 messages delivered at the 2004 Desiring God National Conference (sermons available [online](#); book available [online](#)). The messages focus on the theology of sexuality, dealing with sexual sins, specific challenges for singles and married couples, and historic Protestant approaches to sexuality. (FYI, ch. 5 is a condensation of pp. 9-104 in Mahaney's *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*, while Carolyn's chapter is identical in each book). Pastor Chris has found Powlison's chapter to be as helpful as anything he's read. He also highly recommends the chapter on singleness.

David Powlison, *Pornography: Slaying the Dragon* [20-page pamphlet, \$3]. Very frank. Powlison "interviews Bob" who was enslaved to pornography, sexual fantasy and masturbation as a Christian teen and dealt with it off-and-on for the next 25 years. "Bob" describes how God brought him to hate his sin (6ff), repent, seek accountability, and see lasting victory (8). "Bob" also describes the unhelpfulness of his previous counseling experience (14ff), the danger of his "Lone Ranger" approach to Christianity (18) and the addictive nature of lust (20). The basic issue in sexual fantasy and adultery is self-worship (15) and a consistent walk with Christ and growth in the whole of Scriptural truth is essential for overcoming (16f).

J. C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men* [\$6]. Available [online](#). Less than 100 pages, this is one of the best counseling books from a century ago (1886). While the book focuses on the whole life of a young man (pride, disrespect, foolishness, irreligion, peer pressure) several pages of chapter 2 focus on sexual purity in particular. He urges a right view of sin, the Gospel, the soul, youth, the Bible, friends, repentance, diligence, fear of God, local church involvement, and prayer. Ryle, in typical grace, profoundly speaks the Gospel for practical life to young men in a way that's profoundly empathetic, convicting, helpful and motivating.

### On Sexual Technique

Ed & Gaye Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Fulfillment in Christian Marriage, 3rd Edition* [\$14].

Douglas Rosenau, *A Celebration of Sex: A Guide to Enjoying God's Gift of Sexual Intimacy* [\$12].