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Every Man
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STEPHEN ARTERBURN
FRED STOEKER WITH MIKE YORKEY

WORKBOOK INCLUDED

Every Man's Battle

Winning the War on Sexual Temptation

One Victory at a Time

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WATERBROOK
P R E S S

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Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the authors' added emphasis.

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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from Stephen Arterburn:

To my friend Jim Burns.

You have displayed great love
and been a premier example of sexual integrity.

from Fred Stoeker:

To my heavenly Father

(thank You that You ran to me);

to my wife, Brenda;

and to my friends Dave Johnson and Les Flanders.

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foreword

by Stephen Arterburn

Being part of the Every Man series has been one of the great joys of my life. If I'd written and published only this one series, I would've been completely fulfilled. I owe all this to Fred, who lived out this message long before he was called by God to write about it.

Now, it may sound strange to some, but I believe Fred had one of those rare experiences where God interrupts what we're doing and gives us a new mission. I'm quite confident God spoke to him directly. Fred's coming to me with his manuscript was also part of God's plan, and I'm so glad for it! As a result, my life has been filled with words I could never replace, in the form of e-mails, letters, hugs, crying eyes, and expressions of gratitude. Here are a few comments from the men:

- “Thank you—you've saved my marriage.”
- “I am now the man I always wanted to be, living the life I always wanted to live.”
- “Oh! This feeling of freedom. I feel so clean!”
- “I don't know where I would be today if it were not for this book.”

And from the wives:

- “Thank you for giving the man I married back to me.”
- “We would not still be married if not for this book.”
- “I wish you could see the man my husband has become today.”
- “My man was totally transformed reading your book.”

I've received these kinds of messages every day:

I never go into Christian bookstores, but I was jogging one day and stopped in one. Staring back at me was your book. I was compelled by it. I ran home, got my money, and came back and bought it. It changed everything!

Somebody gave me this book about five years ago, and right before I was about to go back online, there it was looking up at me from the floor. I picked it up and read it through my tears. Our marriage has been healed.

Years ago at New Life, we started an Every Man's Battle Workshop weekend. More than six thousand men have attended since that time. For a few men, it was just a way to get someone off their backs. But for almost all, it's been the start of a whole new life. One of my favorite stories is of a husband who came because his wife demanded it. After the conference he confessed his affair. He was truly repentant and said he would do anything to make it up to her. She asked him to sign over all the property and assets to her—because the name on them wouldn't matter if he was truly finished with his lust and adultery. She asked him to shave his chest, and she asked him to get braces on his teeth. He did all three because he realized his actions had humiliated her and he was willing to do anything to humble himself and win back her heart. I speak with them both regularly, and they are doing well.

I'm so glad *you* have come upon this book. For some reason God has put it in front of you. I'm not just hoping you'll read it; I'm hoping you'll live it. And while I know personally that every marriage can't be saved, I know that every man can reclaim his sexual integrity and every spouse can fully heal. Every man can walk with his head held high—free, honorable, and a man after God's own heart.

It doesn't really matter what you've done; it's no worse than what others have done. And it doesn't matter where you've been; others have been down that path before. What matters is what you are willing to do now and what you will choose to do. You may have thought you were entitled to do the things you did, but now your entitlement is to live clean, renewed, and without even a hint of impurity. I challenge you to join the millions across this country who have reclaimed their integrity, their faith, and their respect. If Fred and I can do it—those who know us would confirm this—you can certainly do it too.

a c k n o w l e d g m e n t s

I would like to thank Greg Johnson, who introduced me to Fred Stoeker. It was a match made in heaven. And my thanks to Fred, who has brought keen judgment and wisdom to men who are not addicted to sex but who want to be strong with sexual integrity. It has been a privilege working with both of them and with Mike Yorkey and his great writing skills.

—*Stephen Arterburn*

I would like to acknowledge several people who had a profound influence on my life. Mr. Campbell, a talented Vietnam vet in a blue-collar high school, managed to breathe a love of writing into the heart of a jock. Pastors John Palmer and Ray Henderson are my heroes. Joyce Henderson deserves a thank-you for her unflagging support. My mother-in-law, Gwen, was my fiercest defender.

To those who shared their stories and read early versions of the manuscript, thank you. Although I cannot share your names for obvious reasons, you know who you are. You were indispensable. My deepest thanks go to my oldest friends: “Uncle Jim,” just remember one thing—you owe me! “Milbie,” my respect for you knows no measure. “Hollywood,” life is still too precious. R. P., you saw this day coming. And to Dan, Brad, Dick, Gary, Pat, R. B., and Buster, you are the most supportive friends a man could hope for.

And finally, many thanks go to my literary agent, Greg Johnson of Alive Communications, who took a chance on me.

—*Fred Stoeker*

This book is often quite explicit in how the coauthors describe past struggles—their own and others’—with sexual purity. For the sake of communicating honestly with readers who face similar struggles, our goal has been to achieve frankness without causing offense...thereby making it easier for men to face up to any uncleanness and to press forward by God’s grace and power into actively sharing His holiness.

Introduction

four men and this book's story

From editor Mike Yorkey:

I suppose it could be said that every book is an author's labor of love, but this book is a labor of God's love for you, the reader. God has heard a cry from men living in a sexually charged culture, and He has responded by bringing together four men in an unlikely fashion. We feel that the story of how this book arrived in your hands bears an important message to your heart.

I first met Fred Stoeker by telephone back in 1995, while I was editor of *Focus on the Family* magazine. Fred had submitted an article he called "The Art of the Hand-Off," describing how he used Dr. James Dobson's book, *Preparing for Adolescence*, to educate his eleven-year-old son, Jasen, about the birds and the bees. Fred's insightful article arrived in the *Focus on the Family* mailbags unsolicited; in other words, his submission was one of nearly a thousand that would-be authors sent our way each year, all hoping his or her article would be selected for publication.

Fred didn't know we had room in the magazine for only a dozen unsolicited articles each year. But as I skimmed through Fred's manuscript, something about his first-person story resonated with me, and within a few months we published it.

Sometime later, after I'd moved with my family to San Diego and begun a full-time writing career, Fred sent me a surprise FedEx package. Inside was a thick manuscript. In a cover letter, Fred mentioned that he'd labored evenings, weekends, and months over it, and that he'd already gone through the heart-stopping experience of showing it to his wife, Brenda. She gave the manuscript a thumbs-up, and now Fred needed the opinion of a professional writer and editor. Since I was the only such person he knew, Fred wondered if I wouldn't mind giving it a quick read.

I sat down with Fred's manuscript and was immediately captured by the subject, one that makes most authors beat around the bush. But here was a guy exposing his life story and the life stories of other men. Ogling women. Dreaming about sexual acts with female acquaintances. Sexualized what-ifs and double entendres. Rampant masturbation.

Fred's writing needed structural work and tightening (not unexpectedly, since this was his first manuscript), but beneath the wordiness lay a treasure-trove of truth that could impact a generation of men toward sexual integrity. As I relayed those thoughts to Fred, he asked me to consider rewriting the manuscript for him.

I said yes after more discussion with Fred and prayer, but this wasn't an easy decision. I had just begun a freelance writing career, and choosing the right projects was critical. It's very difficult for first-time authors such as Fred to find a publisher willing to take them on, and I knew his manuscript might never see the light of a publishing day. We plugged ahead, however, trusting God that if He really wanted this message out, He would provide a publisher. WaterBrook Press was God's answer.

From publisher Dan Rich:

When I read Mike and Fred's manuscript, I was immediately struck by its potential. Here was an example of what we at WaterBrook look for most: books that offer Christians encouragement, support, and challenge by

authors who can communicate “old truths through new eyes” and lead readers to renewed hope and redemption.

The manuscript could stand on its own, but in our planning sessions we agreed its impact could be much greater if we added the voice of an experienced and widely respected counselor. The perfect fit, we decided, was Steve Arterburn. He had authored or coauthored thirty-five books, had founded a chain of mental-health facilities called the New Life Clinics, and was co-host of the national radio program *New Life Live*.

We asked Steve to come on board and were delighted when he said yes. (In the finished book, the separate contributions of Steve and Fred generally have been blended together with a “we” point of view, except where they narrate specific situations from their own experience and background.)

From coauthor Steve Arterburn:

I eagerly accepted the offer to help shape this book because I believe so much in the topic. In my first phone call to Fred after digging into the manuscript, I told him I believed this book could transform more marriages more deeply than nearly any marriage book I could think of.

How can a book on male sexual purity transform marriages? Because I've found that sexual sins are the termites in the walls and foundations of today's marriages. On my call-in *New Life Live* radio broadcasts, it isn't uncommon to receive several calls each week from men desperate for freedom from impure thought lives and ungodly sexual actions. I'm sure many more men would call if they didn't feel so ashamed.

But I can confidently state that the book you now hold, *Every Man's Battle*, has the potential to free you to love your wife in ways you never dreamed possible.

We've changed the names of people in this book and have even changed a few details of their stories to protect their identities. But their stories are real. They're the stories of pastors, worship leaders, deacons, and

elders. They're the stories of white-collar office workers and blue-collar employees. All of them are people who were caught in a terrible snare—just as we once were.

Pursuing sexual integrity, however, is a controversial topic. I've taken heat when I've addressed it on my radio show, and Fred also has received slings and arrows when he's taught or spoken on this subject. We've been ridiculed by the world's sophisticates who find God's standard ridiculous and confining. That's fine with us, because we have a bigger concern—you.

You're in a tough position. You live in a world awash with sensual images available twenty-four hours a day in a variety of mediums: print, television, videos, the Internet—even phones. But God offers you freedom from the slavery of sin through the cross of Christ, and He created your eyes and mind with an ability to be trained and controlled. We simply have to stand up and walk by His power in the right path.

Men need a battle plan, and you'll have one when you finish reading *Every Man's Battle*—a detailed plan for becoming a man of sexual integrity. We've also included a study and discussion guide in the back of the book for your individual use or in a men's group. We believe that *Every Man's Battle* is a great resource for your church's men's retreat.

While Fred and I will be speaking here from the perspective of married men, *Every Man's Battle* isn't just for hitched guys. The principles we describe apply also to the many teens and young adult men who must deal with the issue of sexual integrity while single. Believe us, marriage is no cavalry rescue from sexual temptation, so we've put forth principles to help keep young single men from lusting or developing addictive behavior and to increase their odds of marrying the right person.

While *Every Man's Battle* is directed to men, it can also give women a greater understanding of what men are up against as they battle the age-old problem of the eyes. For that reason, each of the book's six parts concludes

with a section called “The Heart of the Woman,” based on interviews we conducted with women.

From coauthor Fred Stoeker:

Sexual immorality once held me captive, and after being liberated, I wanted to help other men cleanse themselves from this sin.

After teaching on the topic of male sexual purity in Sunday school, I was approached one day by a man who said, “I always thought that since I was a man I would not be able to control my roving eyes. I didn’t know it could be any other way. Now I’m free!” Conversations like that thrilled my heart and confirmed the desire God gave me to help other men out of this quagmire.

As other men approached me and shared their stories of sexual sin, many asked me to write a book. At first, I passed this off as simple complimentary talk. After all, anything I committed to paper had little chance of being published. I’d never written a book before, I wasn’t the host of a national radio show, I didn’t have a Ph.D., I hadn’t studied in seminary.

So why did I start writing a book? Because I felt deeply that if God would grant me such a voice in His kingdom, I could help give even more men some practical steps toward victory and to help set them free to help others.

The following verse inspired me to keep plodding away on this book night after night, month after month:

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions....
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

*Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you. (Psalm 51:1,12-13)*

Get it? God's plan is to set sinners free and then use them to teach others. God has been using me in just that way, and I trust He will use you as well.

Are you anxious to get started? Good...so am I. We need real men around here—men of honor and decency, men with their hands where they belong and their eyes and minds focused on Christ. If roving eyes or sexually impure thoughts or even sexual addictions are issues in your life, Steve and I are hoping you'll do something about it.

Isn't it time?

PART I

where are we?

our stories

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity” (Ephesians 5:3). If there’s a single Bible verse that captures God’s standard for sexual purity, this is it.

And it compels this question: In relation to God’s standard, is there even a hint of sexual impurity in your life?

For both of us, the answer to that question was yes.

FROM STEVE: COLLISION

In 1983 my wife, Sandy, and I celebrated our first anniversary. One sun-splashed Southern California morning that year, feeling good about life and our future, I hopped in our 1973 Mercedes 450SL—the car of my dreams, white with a black top. I’d owned it for just two months.

I was tooling northbound through Malibu on my way to Oxnard, where I’d been asked to testify in a court hearing about whether a hospital should add an addiction treatment center. I always loved driving along the PCH, as locals called the Pacific Coast Highway. These four lanes of blacktop hugged the golden coastline and provided a close-up view of L.A.’s beach culture. With the top down and the wind blowing in my face, I found that summer morning a good day to be alive.

I never intentionally set out to be girl-watching that day, but I spotted her about two hundred yards ahead and to the left. She was jogging toward

me along the coastal sidewalk. From my sheepskin-covered leather seat, I found the view outstanding, even by California's high standards.

My eyes locked on to this goddesslike blonde, rivulets of sweat cascading down her tanned body as she ran at a purposeful pace. Her jogging outfit, if it could be called that in those days before sports bras and spandex, was actually a skimpy bikini. As she approached on my left, two tiny triangles of tie-dyed fabric struggled to contain her ample bosom.

I can't tell you what her face looked like; nothing above the neckline registered with me that morning. My eyes feasted on this banquet of glistening flesh as she passed on my left, and they continued to follow her lithe figure as she continued jogging southbound. Simply by lustful instinct, as if mesmerized by her gait, I turned my head further and further, craning my neck to capture every possible moment for my mental video camera.

Then *blam!*

I might still be marveling at this remarkable specimen of female athleticism if my Mercedes hadn't plowed into a Chevelle that had come to a complete stop in my lane. Fortunately, I was traveling only fifteen miles per hour in the stop-and-go traffic, but the mini-collision crumpled my front bumper and crinkled the hood. And the fellow I smacked into didn't appreciate the considerable damage to his rear end.

I got out of the car—embarrassed, humiliated, saturated with guilt, and unable to offer a satisfying explanation. No way would I tell this guy, “Well, if you'd seen what I saw, you'd understand.”

TEN MORE YEARS IN THE DARKNESS

Nor could I tell the truth to my beautiful wife, Sandy. That evening, I put my best spin on the morning's unfortunate event in Malibu. “You see, Sandy, it was stop-and-go, and I was reaching down to change the radio channel, and the next thing I knew I rammed into a Chevy. Lucky no one was hurt.”

Actually, my young marriage was hurt—because I was cheating Sandy out of my full devotion, though I didn't know it at the time. Nor was I aware that although I'd vowed to commit my life to Sandy, I hadn't totally committed my eyes to her.

I continued in the darkness for another ten years before realizing I needed to make dramatic changes in the way I looked at women.

FROM FRED: WALL OF SEPARATION

It happened every Sunday morning during our church worship service. I'd look around and see other men with their eyes closed, freely and intensely worshipping the God of the universe. Myself? I sensed only a wall of separation between the Lord and me.

I just wasn't right with God. As a new Christian, I imagined I just didn't know God well enough yet. But nothing changed as time passed.

When I mentioned to my wife, Brenda, that I felt vaguely unworthy of Him, she wasn't the least bit surprised.

"Well, of course!" she exclaimed. "You've never felt worthy to your own father. Every preacher I've known says that a man's relationship with his father tremendously impacts his relationship with his heavenly Father."

"You could be right," I allowed.

I hoped it was that simple. I mulled it over as I recalled my days of youth.

WHAT KIND OF A MAN ARE YOU?

My father, handsome and tough, was a national wrestling champion in college and a bulldog in business. Aching to be like him, I began wrestling in junior high. But the best wrestlers are natural-born killers, and I didn't have a wrestler's heart.

My dad was coaching wrestling at the time at the high school in our small town of Alburnett, Iowa. Though I was still in junior high, he wanted me to wrestle with the older guys, so he brought me to the high-school workouts.

One afternoon we were practicing escapes, and my partner was in the down position. While grappling on the mat, he suddenly needed to blow his nose. He straightened up, pulled his T-shirt to his nose, and violently emptied the contents onto the front of his shirt. We quickly returned to wrestling. As the up man, I was supposed to keep a tight grip on him. Reaching around his belly, my hand slid into his slimy T-shirt. Sickened, I let him go.

Dad, seeing him escape so easily, dressed me down. “What kind of a man are you?” he roared. Staring hard at the mat, I realized that if I had a wrestler’s heart, I would have cranked down tightly and ridden out my opponent, maybe grinding his face into the mat in retaliation. But I hadn’t.

I still wanted to please Dad, so I tried other sports. At one baseball game, after striking out, I remember hanging my head on the way back to the dugout. “Get your head up!” he hollered for all to hear. I was mortified. Then he wrote me a long letter detailing my every mistake.

Years later, after I’d married Brenda, my father felt she had too much control in our marriage. “Real men take charge of their households,” he said.

THE MONSTER

Now, as Brenda and I discussed my relationship with my dad, she suggested I might need counseling. “It surely couldn’t hurt,” she said.

So I read some books and counseled with my pastor, and my feelings toward Dad improved. But I continued to feel that distance from God during the Sunday morning worship services.

The true reason for that distance slowly dawned on me: There was a

hint of sexual immorality in my life. There was a monster lurking about, and it surfaced each Sunday morning when I settled in my comfy La-Z-Boy and opened the Sunday morning newspaper. I would quickly find the department-store inserts and begin paging through the colored newsprint filled with models posing in bras and panties. Always smiling. Always available. I loved lingering over each ad insert. *It's wrong*, I admitted, *but it's such a small thing*. It was a far cry from *Playboy*, I told myself.

I peered through the panties, fantasizing. Occasionally, a model reminded me of a girl I once knew, and my mind rekindled the memories of our times together. I rather enjoyed my Sunday mornings with the newspaper.

As I examined myself more closely, I found I had more than a hint of sexual immorality. Even my sense of humor reflected it. Sometimes a person's innocent phrase—even from our pastor—struck me with a double sexual meaning. I would chuckle, but I felt uneasy.

Why do these double entendres come to my mind so easily? Should a Christian mind create them so nimbly?

I remembered that the Bible said that such things shouldn't even be mentioned among the saints. *I'm worse...I even laugh at them!*

And my eyes? They were ravenous heat-seekers searching the horizon, locking on any target with sensual heat. Young mothers leaning over in shorts to pull children out of car seats. Soloists with silky shirts. Summer dresses with décolletage.

My mind, too, ran wherever it willed. This had begun in my childhood, when I found *Playboy* magazines under Dad's bed. He also subscribed to *From Sex to Sexty*, a publication filled with jokes and comic strips with sexual themes. When Dad divorced Mom and moved to his "bachelor's pad," he hung a giant velvet nude in his living room, overlooking us as we played cards on my Sunday afternoon visits.

Dad gave me a list of chores around his place when I was there. Once I

came across a nude photo of his mistress. On another occasion I found an eight-inch ceramic dildo, which he obviously used in his kinky “sex games.”

HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

All this sexual stuff churned deep inside me, destroying a purity that wouldn't return for many years. Settling into college, I soon found myself drowning in pornography. I actually memorized the dates when my favorite soft-core porn magazines arrived at the local drugstore. I especially loved the “Girls Next Door” section of *Gallery* magazine, featuring pictures of nude girls taken by their boyfriends and submitted to the magazine.

Far from home and without any Christian underpinnings, I descended by small steps into a sexual pit. The first time I had sexual intercourse, it was with a girl I *knew* I would marry. The next time, it was with a girl I *thought* I would marry. The time after that, it was with a good friend that I *might* learn to love. Then it was with a female I barely knew who simply wanted to see what sex was like. Eventually, I had sex with anyone at any time.

After five years in California, I found myself with four “steady” girlfriends simultaneously. I was sleeping with three of them and was essentially engaged to marry two of them. None knew of the others. (These days, in my class for premarital couples, I often ask the women what they would think of a man with two fiancées. My favorite response: “He’s a hopeless pig!” And I *was* hopeless, living in a pigsty.)

Why do I share all this?

First, so you'll know that I understand what it's like to be sexually ensnared in a deep pit. Second, I want to provide you with hope. As you'll soon see, God worked with me and lifted me out of that pit.

If there's even a hint of sexual immorality in your life, He will work with you as well.