

*New Life Ministries and
Every Man's Battle present*

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to be different

**Preparing Your Son For
Every Man's Battle
4-Week Bible Study**

Week One: *We Dared to Talk*

Week Two: *We Dared to Prepare Our Eyes*

Week Three: *We Dared to Bounce Our Eyes*

Week Four: *We Dared to Have Self-Control*

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Preparing Your Son For Every Man's Battle 4-Week Bible Study

Our culture is so sexually saturated through advertising, movies, fashion and what's available on the web, that kids are seeing, learning, and experiencing more sexually and at an earlier age than ever before. It's sad that there is a need for a book such as *Preparing Your Son for Every Man's Battle*, but there is. And this study is for those boys in the 8 to 12 year old age range. You may think that keeping your young boy's mind innocent for as long as you can is important and therefore a study such as this is unnecessary. But unless you're on an island somewhere thousands of miles away from civilization, with no media of any sort, you're somewhat in a state of denial and should face up to the fact that if your son or young man in your life hasn't been confronted with some sexually explicit material or situations, he will be soon, and it's better for him to learn about some God-centered basics from you to help him prepare for the over-sexualized world we live in.

This study is a four-week study. It's designed for you and your son to go through one reading per day, and answer a question at the end of each study. Once a week, if you don't get to go through this study each day with your son, review the previous six-days worth of reading material and talk about that material and the answers to the daily questions. Let us know how it goes. For more information, check out WeDared.com. And if we can help you along the way or when your study is over, call us at (800) NEW-LIFE (639-5433).

Week One: *We Dared to Talk*

1. Attraction to Girls Is Natural.

The desire to look at the female body is a God-given attraction. It's natural as you grow older to want to hang around girls, and it's natural for you to find a girl's beauty tugging at your eyes for attention. The temptation, however, is to fulfill these desires and attractions in a wrong way and to go beyond what God designed to be natural and normal. God wants us to see girls as precious, children of God. What our culture tells us is that girls and young women are an extremely interesting collection of body parts that were made for our viewing pleasure. It's important for you to recognize the difference and view things God's way. You know when you're thinking about her mostly as a pair of breasts walking by, or a beautiful pair of legs and little else. As you grow older, you might be tempted to respond inappropriately with your natural desire and attraction to girls. Not only can our behavior be wrong, but it's just as wrong to stare lustfully at a girl and fantasize in your mind. Neither practice is where God wants our mind and behavior to go.

How do guys minimize looking lustfully at girls?

2. Sex Is Exhilarating.

There's nothing in the world like experiencing sexual intimacy. But God intended for this to happen within the confines of marriage. If you experience sexual intimacy prematurely (before marriage) you'll be drawn to it over and over. You'll be treading in dangerous waters and you don't want to go there. God's plan of purity is for you to experience that when you are married.

What are some of the dangers of pre-marital sex?

3. Sex Is a Slippery Slope.

If you don't drive a stake into the ground and declare, "*This is as far as I go, and I won't go any further,*" then you'll lose your footing on the slippery slope of sex. You'll be told and tempted to make sweeping rationalizations for your behavior outside of God's plan, like:

- "*It's okay because I really love her. I know I'm going to marry her anyway.*"
- "*Why wait until marriage? Everyone says it's okay.*"
- "*Sex isn't wrong for everyone. Religious people are just scared by what's natural.*"

The non-Christians in our world have sold this thinking to too many Christians. If you feel a bit uncomfortable with these thoughts, that's good. You should, because they are wrong and outside God's plan for you and sex. It's amazing how you can justify your actions to yourself and to God. These rationalizations allow your conscience to gradually become accustomed to what the world says that opposes what God says.

What is the stake you should drive in the ground related to sex?

4. God Has Standards of Sexual Behavior for His Children.

God takes sexual standards seriously, and He wants you to listen to Him on this matter. Since He's interested in your purity, maybe you need to get just as interested. Clearly, premarital intercourse is outside His standards. Where are the boundaries of behaviors that could lead to sex? We'll get to the details later, but first I want to tell you that God has already driven His own stake into the ground: "*Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or*

coarse joking, which are out of place.” (Ephesians 5:3-4)

That, my friend, is quite a stake. Not even a hint? Hmm. Do you and your friends, Christian or not, act like that? Unfortunately, Christian teens and young men look and act like their non-Christian peers, sharing their tastes in popular music, dirty jokes, and attitudes about premarital sex. Kristin, a teenager, told us, *“Our youth group is filled with kids faking their Christian walk. They’re actually taking drugs, drinking, partying, and having sex. If you want to walk purely, it’s easier to hang around with the non-Christians at school than to hang around with the Christians at church. I say that because school friends know where I stand, and they say, ‘That’s cool—I can accept that.’ The Christian kids mock me. They laugh and ask, ‘Why be so straight? Get a life!’ They pressure my values at every turn.”*

I’m not pointing a finger at teenagers. Young adults in their late twenties are no different from Christian teens. Linda, a single career woman, says her adult singles group at church has *“players”*—men and women who send signals that they’re ready to play in the bedroom. Married couples also disregard God’s standards. There isn’t a day in which I (Steve Arterburn) don’t take a call on my daily radio talk show from a husband or wife asking how he or she can recover from an adulterous affair or a partner’s sexual addiction.

What are God’s standards concerning your sexuality?

5. God’s Love Is Not Based Upon Your Ability to Meet His Standards.

God’s love for you is unconditional; it never changes. Before you were formed in the womb, He loved you. You’re the apple of His eye. His love for you has no limits, and His love for you never wanes. If you masturbate, that fact doesn’t lessen your value to Him. If you do something inappropriate with a girl, God doesn’t regret having sent His Son to die for you. This is true for all of us. Even if you visit porn sites on the web, He still loves you. When you continue to ignore Him, He will continue to pursue you, aching to reach you before it’s too late and your heart is too hardened to sense his pursuit. Bottom line is, there’s nothing you can do to make God love you less (or more).

How have you been trying to earn God’s love?

6. Rules Are Part of a Vibrant Relationship with Christ.

I recall how the Holy Spirit whispered to me, *“This practice can’t be tolerated anymore in your life. You are Christ’s now, and He loves you.”* The implication was that my continued interest in sex and sexual activity would hurt my intimacy with Christ. When you break His standards, the Lord doesn’t reject you, but you can’t be as close to Him as you’d like, or as He’d like you to be.

I (Fred Stoeker) prayed to God one day in my office about my sexual obsession, and I sensed God telling me, *“No more!”* in regard to my sexual exploits. I felt as though I’d taken a punch in the gut. By the grace of God, I didn’t say, *“Hey, what’s the deal? You’re taking my freedom away! You’re killing me!”* Instead, I said, *“You got it, Father!”* A new life in me was moving me His way. I had a desire to be closer to Him. And in order to get closer to Him, I had to put some distance between me and those women in my life.

When I got close to God, what He said about interpersonal relationships started to make sense. I quickly found that God’s rules weren’t just sets of arbitrary, kill-joy regulations. Instead, His rules set me free to live fully and to avoid dangerous traps. For instance, after I moved back to Iowa, I continued to maintain a phone relationship with one of my girlfriends back in California, the one I was most serious about. My friends and family fully expected us to marry someday since we’d been an item for three years. Then at church I heard the pastor say that Christians shouldn’t be unequally yoked with nonbelievers. Since I was a Christian, and she wasn’t, this news presented a problem. My reaction? You got it, Father.

I called her and explained the verse in the Bible about being unequally yoked. *“I really need you to explore this and to seek God,”* I said, *“or I don’t know how we can keep our relationship going.”* *“Okay, I’ll read my Bible for thirty days, and*

we'll see," she promised. A month later, I heard from her, right on cue. "I've done what I promised," she said. "But I just can't buy this stuff at all." "I'm sorry to hear that," I responded. Then I quietly said that we should go separate ways. God's rule freed me to break off the relationship and allowed Him to find someone better suited to be my wife. Less than a year later, God introduced me to Brenda, and my life has never been the same.

What's the difference between trying to earn God's love, versus sensing God's love, when you follow His rules concerning your sexuality?

Week Two: *We Dared* to Prepare Our Eyes

1. *The Eyes Have It.*

As you approach puberty, nothing will abort a smooth landing more quickly than pornography. Even if your interest in girls is pretty low, looking at images of undressed women can grab your eyes and heart and mess up your life. So whether your interest in girls is high or low, you need to listen closely to what we have to say about your male eyes.

Why are the eyes so difficult to control? Because we are guys, and we're made that way—we are visually stimulated. It's the way we're built. Because you're male, there are natural tendencies within you that make you very interested in looking at the female body. It's this part of maleness that I want to address because it relates to how you may struggle with the lust of the eyes. Perhaps—depending on your age, of course—you aren't aware that your eyes give you the ability to sin just about any time you want. All it takes is a long, lingering look at the clothed, partially clothed, or unclothed female body, and you can receive a jolt of excitement that is really sexual pleasure.

If you've already seen pornography, you understand the pull of the female body through the eyes. When you stare too long at a girl's body, you begin thinking sexual thoughts and what it would be like to see her without clothes and that sort of stuff. That's what we call lusting. When you lust, you are sinning. Remember, we're talking about long, long looks, not glances. It's not a sin to look at a girl. It's a sin to lust after her.

Describe the difference between being tempted to look at a female versus sinfully looking at a female?

2. *Why Do We Have These Tendencies, Guys? (Part 1)*

Remember, guys are turned on by female nudity or partial nudity, so there's this desire to do more than glance or have a short look. We are so attracted to the female body that it doesn't matter if we know her or not. You can get turned on from a photograph of a nude stranger or just by staring at the tight sweater of one of your classmates at school. It doesn't take much to flip the visual ignition switch when it comes to viewing the female anatomy. Girls seldom understand this because they aren't visually stimulated like you are.

Do girls get turned on when they see the guys' swim team walking around in their bright blue Speedos—the ones with the telltale bulge? I hate to burst anyone's bubble, but the answer is a resounding no! The ignition switch for girls is tied to touch and relationship—much more than the guy's body. It's just the opposite for us. We like to look at breasts, legs, and skin. You've got it tough walking the halls between classes. Given what the sight of partial nudity and nudity does to the pleasure center of your brain, and given the fact that it's pretty easy to see a lot of skin and tight tops when you're at school these days, it's no wonder that your eyes and mind resist control. (It would help if your female friends would dress more modestly, wouldn't it?) That's why God gave us an unusual command when it comes to sexual sin and lust of the eyes: *“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”* (1 Corinthians 6:18) This is an unusual command from Scripture because this particular sin is unique.

Do you believe guarding your eyes will lower sexual temptation? If so, how do you think it helps?

3. *Why Do We Have These Tendencies, Guys? (Part 2)*

The apostle Paul said sexual sin is different from other sins, which is what I (Fred Stoeker) told Jasen back when he was eleven. *“Jasen, it's hard to describe the effects of pornography, but it is like taking drugs,”* I said that evening. *“You know how your teachers warn you about drugs?”* Jasen nodded his assent. He had heard talk about drugs in his classroom, so he understood the comparison. *“When we look at women without clothes on, there is a chemical reaction that happens in our brains that is much like the reaction the brain has to taking cocaine. There were studies showing this way back when*

I was in college. I'll never forget watching some of my rich Stanford friends blow thousands and thousands of dollars on cocaine in just a few days over spring break. They just couldn't get enough." "Wow," said my son. "You got that right, Jace. But listen. I've never done cocaine, but I have viewed pornography, and once I did, I was hooked and wanted to see more and more, just like those guys with their drugs. It was a brutal habit to break, son, and I just don't want you to make the same mistake that I did."

Do you believe that looking at a female sinfully can eventually lead to an addiction? How would that happen?

4. Why Do We Have These Tendencies, Guys? (Part 3)

Why is looking at pornography such a hard habit to break? It's because guys receive a chemical high from looking at pictures of naked women. A hormone called epinephrine is secreted into the bloodstream when your eyes lock onto images of naked women and your mind goes where it shouldn't go. Pleasure chemicals bathe the brain, and because it feels good, you want to come back for another look. It's just like a drug addict wanting another hit of his favorite drug. Jesus understood all this because He created us. That's why he said: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:27-28)

For married men, lustfully thinking of another woman is the same as committing physical adultery, according to Jesus. That's true for you, too. If you look lustfully at a girl, then in Jesus' eyes, that's the same as having sex with her. Looking at a woman and thinking about sex really is the same as doing it when you think about it. The strong wash of chemical pleasure when you lust with your eyes is similar to experiencing the real thing with a girl.

When the apostle Paul said that those who sexually sin actually sin against their own bodies, he was referring to how your body craves more and more when it sins by lusting after women's bodies. The eyes have it—they keep searching and hunting and lurking for more. They want to see more naked women.

Lusting with the eyes is different than other sin in that you can't walk away from your eyes and the seductive, sexual images are all around you. That's the main difference between this sin and other sin—the ability to sin is right inside you, embedded in your eyes and mind.

Here's the way it works: You don't actually need a date with Lisa to get sexually excited about her. You can steal some looks and get some real pleasure from where you are sitting in class. This is why the lust of the eyes is so dangerous to your purity. The ability of the male eyes and mind to draw sexual pleasure from almost any female body explains why sexual sin is so common. Your buddies might say, *"Look, women are a good part of God's creation! God wouldn't have made them beautiful if He didn't want us to feast on their beauty."* But just because God made someone beautiful doesn't mean He wants you to take a taste of her or stare at her rear end. God made the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden very beautiful, but He asked both Adam and Eve not to eat it. And He's asked you not to lust after girls.

In what ways are we tempted to justify looking at a female sinfully?

5. Game Plan.

So you're probably wondering what you can do to keep your eyes from parking on Tara's well-proportioned chest or Tammy's cute legs and behind. Well, you're going to have to figure out a way to control where your eyes look and how your thoughts process those images coming into your brain. While it's true that you can't walk away from your eyes, you can train them to straighten up and fly right. I'm not going to lie to you, though, and this is the hard part—training your eyes to behave themselves and look away when something inappropriate appears does not come naturally.

For instance, you shouldn't fix your eyes on a girl's body when you think nobody is looking. You should look away because it's the right thing to do. But now you also understand the chemical high that comes from staring at girls and

lusting after them. That goes for sexy magazines and websites, too. With these, you cannot only turn your eyes away, but you must also walk away, leave, depart—whatever. After all, odds are that sooner or later someone's going to say, "Hey, guys, check out this magazine my big brother gave me." What would you do if one of your friends said he had a great magazine in his locker that he wanted you to see? And you knew he wasn't talking about *Time Magazine*, but probably some skin magazine. What would you do? You must decide right now because you will be asked to have a look sometime before you graduate from high school.

What would you do in this situation? What would you feel and how would you handle that?

6. Game Plan. (Part 2)

Jasen already had decided to not look at porn when his friends gave him an opportunity to take a look. He knew what he wanted to do when and if that happened. He didn't have to experience the addictive draw to know he wanted no part of that. When he was offered to take a look at a pornographic magazine he said, "No thanks, guys," and kept on walking to his next class. He walked away because he did not want to sin against God by looking at it. "I kept right on walking, just like you said I should," he told me. "That's great, Jasen. I'm really proud of you for doing that." I was really impressed.

You can make your dad proud as well, and you can make God proud, too, by turning your back on a magazine or website that you know you should not look at. You can choose to think like God's man. Your heavenly Father is calling you to act like a mature man by saying no, even this early in your life. When He calls us to "*Be perfect ... as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" (Matthew 5:48), He's asking you to rise above your natural tendencies—the impure eyes and the fanciful mind. God is calling you to rise up by the power of His indwelling presence and walk away when you're asked to view pornography.

Back in Old Testament days, Joab commanded the troops of Israel. Once, before an important battle, he addressed the troops by saying, "*Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people.*" (2 Samuel 10:12, KJV). Joab meant, "*We know God's plan for us. Let's rise up as men and set our hearts and minds to get it done!*" You can do the same and flee sexual immorality when it comes your way. It can be done. You have great role models from the Bible who led godly lives despite great temptations. And you have the power of the Holy Spirit living in you.

Who are the role models in your life? (People living now, or people of history or Biblical times.)

Week Three: *We Dared to Bounce Our Eyes*

1. Manly Eyes.

I know what you're probably thinking after reading the last chapter: How does God want me to look at girls? When does a glance turn into a stare? How do I deal with my eyes and mind and body? For answers, let's look at how a guy named Job handled the same set of questions a long, long time ago. Job, you see, was a great role model for sexual purity. His story unfolds in the Old Testament, where in the first chapter of the book that bears his name, we see God bragging about Job to Satan: "*Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.*" (Job 1:8)

Was God proud of Job? You bet! He applauded His servant's faithfulness in words of highest praise. If you walk in purity, blameless and upright, He'll speak just as proudly of you. You can learn from Job. How did Job stay so sexually pure? In Job 31:1 we see Job making this startling revelation: "*I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.*"

A covenant with his eyes! You mean he made a promise with his eyes to not gaze upon a young woman? Is that possible? Can it be true? It was true, and he must have been successful, or God wouldn't have called him blameless and upright.

How do you want God to think about you?

2. Making Your Covenant With Your Eyes.

When I (Fred Stoeker) first gave serious consideration to Job's example, I thought upon his words for several days. My mind first turned to the word covenant. What was that? I learned that a covenant is an agreement between God and man. We promise to do something, and God promises to do His part. So how would I go about making an agreement with God? If I did make a promise to God not to stare at women's bodies, could I be counted on to keep my word?

Day after day my mind returned to this covenant concept, trying to intellectually grasp it. Then it happened. I remember the moment—the exact spot on Merle Hay Road in Des Moines—when everything broke loose. Minutes before I had failed God with my eyes for the thirty millionth time, staring and lusting at a pretty female jogger as I drove past her. Boy, did I take a good look at her glistening body, so shapely in her jogging outfit. As soon as I passed by and she was a distant figure in my rearview mirror, my heart churned in guilt, pain, and sorrow. Driving down Merle Hay Road, I gripped the wheel, and through clenched teeth I yelled out, "*That's it! I'm through with this! I'm making a covenant with my eyes. I don't care what it takes, and I don't care if I die trying. It stops here. It stops here!*" That's when the Lord gave me a concept that I call bouncing the eyes.

If you've already been bouncing your eyes, share how it's been going. If you haven't, what does the idea of bouncing your eyes make you feel? Does it sound helpful?

3. Bouncing the Eyes.

You probably agree with me that your eyes are built to look toward the sexual and not away from it. That's how your eyes were made. But like Job, you need to train your eyes to immediately bounce away when they come upon a sexy image—much like the way you jerk your hand away from a hot stove. Here's what you want to do: When your eyes look toward a female's body parts, they must bounce away immediately. But why must the bounce be immediate? Because that's the fastest way. That keeps a glance just a glance. You don't want that glance to linger one millisecond longer. Granted, a glance is different from staring open-mouthed until drool pools at your feet, but a lingering glance can be more than enough "*eye juice*" to give you that little chemical high, that little pop. In our experience, bouncing away immediately is clean and easy for the mind to understand and doesn't give it any wiggle room.

Why do we (as men) need to bounce our eyes away from a woman immediately?

4. Bouncing the Eyes. (Part 2)

But girls are all around me! How am I going to do that without living in a cave? Obviously, you can't live in a cave. You see girls every day. You probably talk with them and laugh with them, especially the pretty ones. This is not only natural; it is very normal. But for a Christian young person, it is not normal to stare at their bodies like some slobbering dog.

The apostle Paul says we are to treat all girls as we would treat our own sisters. This truth is the key to looking at girls the right way: *"Treat ... younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."* (1 Timothy 5:1-2) But the apostle Peter takes it one step further. He also wrote to women here in this next verse, and it is very instructional for us as well: *"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful."* (1 Peter 3:3-5)

God wants girls to concentrate on their inner beauty, not their outer beauty. If He wants girls to concentrate on their inner beauty, what do you suppose God wants us guys to concentrate on in the girls around us? Answer: their inner beauty. But this won't happen naturally. That's why God pointed it out in Scripture ... you'll have to choose to do this. Left to nature, our eyes will naturally look for the girl's outer beauty. We care more how she looks than how nice she is.

You needn't feel guilty about this, because that's how we're made. Still, you do have to understand how you are made and adjust your habits accordingly if you expect to please God in the way you approach His daughters. He looks at the heart and the inner beauty of His girls, and He wants us to do the same. Though I (Steve Arterburn) was a Christian, I didn't even try to do this when I was young, and it really messed up my life. Almost every day when I was in high school, I would review the naked pictures "filed" in my brain, which I had collected by looking at pornography. It wasn't long before I got a little tired of the same old pictures, so I added some to the collection. They were easy to find in certain magazines. The more magazines I looked at, and the more I added to my mental collection, the more it felt like women weren't real people to me. I didn't see them as fully human; they were just something to give me physical pleasure. All I was concerned about was their physical features. Psychologists call this the objectification of women. When you do that, you feel free to treat them any way you want.

If God created us as men to be visually stimulated with our eyes, why is it a sin to look at a woman and not bounce our eyes away?

5. Bouncing the Eyes. (Part 3)

If you look at pornography and begin thinking of women and girls as objects made solely for your pleasure (objectify women) it means when you start dating you won't respect a girl the way you should. You'll see her as just something to give you physical pleasure, and you'll want to use her body for yourself with no concern about how she feels. That's no way to treat a sister. Remember, that's what happened to me (Fred Stoeker), too. Though I had vowed to treat girls well and to save sex until marriage, in the end I was treating them as my own personal toys. I was not thinking normally about girls from God's point of view at all.

When I finally committed my life to Christ, it was years before I relearned how to look at women properly. But you don't have to let that happen to you. If you treat girls purely the way you would your own sister, and if you don't allow your eyes to run freely over their bodies, you'll have the proper view of girls and treat them with respect.

Garrett told us this story: *"My eyes used to roam over every girl I saw. Honestly, I'd never really guarded my eyes before or even thought about it. I watched any movies I wanted, and I looked way too long at the girls at school, but I really didn't think those things affected my life. But after my mom read your book (Every Man's Battle) and told me about it, I began to wonder. So I paid more attention to my eyes over the next day or so, and I found that they were collecting more sexual*

gratification than I'd thought. I started bouncing my eyes, and since I've stopped doing the old "up-downs" with my eyes, it's really changed the way I look at my girlfriend, Tracy. I really did start seeing more of what was inside her heart instead of what was outside. In fact, I began seeing all girls this way."

Garrett now has a healthy, godly view of women because he began looking at them as sisters. Another friend named Patrick said it another way: *"I like to look at girls from the inside out and from the neck up."* Garrett and Patrick are both paying attention to what their eyes are doing. Are you paying attention to what your eyes are doing? Garrett said he used to watch any movie he wanted. What about you? Hollywood releases sexy teen movies regularly, and they're filled with sexual innuendo, girls taking their tops off, simulated sex acts, and tons of racy behavior. They know that if they get you excited and you start talking about the movie at school, your friends will buy tickets to see the movie too. Movie producers don't care about your purity. They only care about making movies. Everyone knows that PG-13 movies can be all about sex and that R-rated films show nude couples having sex, but you also have to watch out for certain PG movies these days.

I've seen a PG-rated movie sport a long close-up of a Playboy-style foldout. There are PG-rated movies that have no nudity, but have plenty of sensual joking that is way out of bounds. The jokes get you thinking about sex when you shouldn't and get you thinking that sex is a big joke and okay to play around with.

There are ways you can begin to protect yourself. You can find out what the movie's all about and what the sexual content is by going online and typing in *"Christian movie reviews"* into your Google search engine. Holly McClure at *crosswalk.com* will tell you what's in the movie. Focus on the Family's *Plugged In* will give you the straight scoop, as will *Screenit.com*. Or you can ask your parents to subscribe to a Christian movie review magazine, such as *Movie Guide* or *Preview Family Movie*.

Remember that you can't make an informed decision until you're informed. You've got a decision to make. You can't watch the same films your school chums watch and expect to stay sexually pure. Does this mean that you have to give up going to the movies or transfer to an academy for aspiring monks? Of course not. Still, you do have to discern what is right to see.

Do you want sexual purity and deeper intimacy with God, or do you want to be one of the gang, squeezing in purity only when it's convenient? Sometimes you don't have a choice about what's playing. On-screen sexualized content can even be found in your classroom. Teachers sometimes show a movie as a reward, and blam!—there's the teen couple getting each other hot and bothered. You can't watch a football game without being hit on by those beer commercials featuring a bunch of bikini beauties and guys making sly, suggestive comments.

Whenever that sexy stuff comes on the screen, you should bounce your eyes away. If you're in the classroom, look to the floor or to the blackboard. If you're at home watching an NFL game and one of those sexy commercials comes on, use the remote control and zap it. When you're armed with a remote, you can do anything! (If your father hogs the clicker, as dads love to do, have him zap the beer-and-bikini commercials for both of you.) Or you can simply look down or bounce your eyes.

American culture is continuing to decline on TV, cable, and movies. What movies or shows can you list as an example of being sexually stimulating?

6. Bouncing the Eyes. (Part 4)

My (Fred Stoeker's) eleven-year-old, Michael, is into watching college and NFL football, but he immediately looks away to the floor whenever a sexy beer commercial pops up. He began doing this before I'd talked to him even once about it. He's simply picked it up from seeing how Jasen and I react when that stuff comes on the tube. If you are with a group of guys, you don't have to make a big deal out of it. Just look away. You can tell when it's time to look back at the screen by the change in music accompanying the commercial.

You know, all these sexy images in the media aren't normal. There was a time when they couldn't show unclothed women in a movie, but then Hollywood chipped away at that standard. There was a time when television shows and

commercials couldn't be as sexually suggestive as they are today. But bit by bit the standards changed. So what you're exposed to isn't normal, but don't worry. You can still stay pure and normal if you follow God's plan. God says it is normal for a Christian teen to make a covenant with his eyes (*Job 31:1*) and not to lust after girls. It is normal that you don't have even a hint of sexual immorality in your life (*Ephesians 5:3*). It is normal that your conversations do not contain a trace of coarse language or filthy jokes (*Ephesians 5:4*). It is normal that you don't leer at breasts and let out a low whistle when you see pretty girls walking down the street. It is normal to avoid sexy movies. Don't you want to be normal in God's eyes? So don't listen to what others say—listen to what God says.

You may feel awkward, or even embarrassed, when you start to bounce your eyes because the guys around you probably won't be. It's ok to feel this way, and talk about it with your parents. What feelings do you have about bouncing your eyes?

Week Four: *We Dared* to Have Self-Control

1. Self-Control.

You can win your battle for sexual purity, but your choices will play a big role in the fight. Either you can choose to be sexually pure, or you can choose not to be. It's that simple.

Will you choose to control your roaming eyes? What choices will you make with the rest of your body? *"I've been a Christian since the age of nine,"* said Ryan, *"and I've been sexually active since I was twelve. Now I'm in my late twenties, and I'm on the Internet constantly viewing the worst kinds of pornography. Though I'm a Christian, it's always two steps backward and one step forward due to my sexual sin. I regret the things I do but then go right back to them."*

Ryan is bound, bogged down by his own choices—choices he made at your age. You are young, but your choices today will be just as crucial to your purity and your future. You probably aren't used to having so much riding on your decisions. Up until now, your parents have made most of the decisions about what you see or do. It has been their good choices that have protected your life and spiritual growth.

But God has begun to make an independent man out of you, a young man who can read and hear His Word and do it. With independence comes the temptation to lust with the eyes and to listen to your friends more than to God—in short, the temptation to hear His Word and not do it. Your choices will determine whether you move into real manhood.

There is a law of sowing and reaping, a natural law as strong as the law of gravity. The word sowing means to plant seeds, and the word reaping means to harvest the crop that grew from those seeds. Even your kid brother knows that if you want to grow sweet corn, you don't plant tomato seeds. You need to plant corn seed if you expect to see cornstalks rising in your backyard. This is true of all life. So watch what you sow—it's what you'll reap.

What are three choices you can make right now to start fighting for sexual purity?

2. Self-Control. (Part 2)

Michael Jordan used to work on his basketball game year-round—shooting, dribbling, lifting weights, and watching videos of himself and his opponents, often eight hours a day. Self-control and discipline were the seeds that he chose to plant in his life and career, and his great skills on the basketball court were the predictable harvest he reaped.

Of course, the law of reaping and sowing works both ways. Laura came home from the high-school weight room one time chuckling at what she'd just seen. It seems that some of the most gifted athletes in her school—those with dreams of college scholarships —weren't that interested in pumping iron. *"Dad, those guys crack me up,"* she said. *"They hung out in the weight room for more than hour, telling jokes and taking water breaks even though they barely did any weightlifting at all."* Without making an effort to plant seeds of self-control, these young athletes will harvest little strength. It's guaranteed. The price they pay for their lack of discipline in the weight room shows up in their physical condition—that's how muscles work.

The same is true of sexual purity and manhood. If you fail to plant self-control in your eyes, you will pay the price at harvest time. It's guaranteed. Let's return to Garrett's story for a minute: *"My eyes used to roam over every girl I saw. I watched any movie I wanted, and I looked way too long at the girls at school, but I really didn't think those things affected my life."*

It didn't matter that Garrett really didn't think those things affected his life. They still did, because he has the same pleasure center as any other guy, and his eyes work like any other guy's. Planting very few seeds of discipline in his life, Garrett harvested a predictable, dismal crop of struggles with sexual sin. Then, reversing course, Garrett heavily planted seeds of both self-control and discipline: *"I started bouncing my eyes, and since I've stopped doing the old 'up-downs' with my eyes, it's really changed the way I look at my girlfriend, Tracy. I really did start seeing more of what was inside her heart instead of what was outside. In fact, I began seeing all girls this way."*

This strong bumper crop was predictable too. Good harvests come from good seeds. It's built right into creation. Sometimes we think that our poor crop is a direct punishment from God. But God isn't looking for a chance to nail us. When we sin sexually, God doesn't jump from his throne in a rage and bellow, "*Okay, now you've done it! I'm going to give you an addiction you'll never squirm out of!*" No, many times He doesn't do anything to punish us at all. Instead, He allows the natural laws of sowing and reaping to do their work.

When problems crop up for us, they usually grew naturally from our own choices. God's will for us is sexual purity, no question. He told us that clearly: "*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

But while He's very interested in His own will regarding sexual immorality, He's even more interested in what our will is. Why? Because our will and our choices regarding sexual sin reveal our love for Him. Would it really be love if we didn't have a choice?

How can God's love strengthen you in your choices for sexual purity?

3. Self-Control. (Part 3)

I can assure you that our love for God means everything: "*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.*" (John 14:21)

Our obedience puts a smile on God's face and a song in His heart, and that should be worth more than anything we possess. God has a deep hunger to see our love for Him displayed in our sexual purity. Knowing this should make good choices easier.

Though you are called to make the right choices, only God can author holiness in a young man's life. Christ died and won the victory for you and me, breaking the power of sin in our lives and giving us the ability to choose well: "*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*" (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Christ's new life is placed in us at salvation, and this life works unceasingly toward holiness. When that new life is placed in us, growth and wisdom appear immediately, without effort on our part. Let me explain how this can happen. When I (Fred Stoeker) was at Stanford University, I memorized the dates my favorite pornographic magazines would arrive each month at the campus drugstore so that I could be among the first to buy them. Deep down, however, I knew looking at these pictures wasn't right, and I didn't particularly like how they dominated my life. The trouble was that I was hooked. I loved looking at these pictures, and I knew no way to stop.

About a year after graduating from Stanford, I was working in the San Francisco Bay Area when the Lord grabbed my attention around sundown one fine spring evening. I realized that I needed to repent for the sins I had committed and turn my life around. As the sun dipped below the horizon, I prayed and gave my life and my future to Him. A few weeks later, I was offered a job back in Iowa, and I jumped at the fresh start. On my cross-country drive home to Iowa, something happened that showed me how Christ had moved into my life and begun cleaning house.

It happened when I stopped in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to visit a couple of Stanford buddies. The father of one of my friends owned a ranch just outside Steamboat, so I was looking forward to grabbing a few days of relaxation as I passed through. When I arrived, I needed to make a pit stop, so I headed straight for the bathroom. When I opened the door, I found the walls papered with Playboy centerfolds. As I surveyed the landscape, I was instantly repulsed. The feelings of revulsion shocked me. Why would I be shocked at seeing Playboy centerfolds? After all, we're talking about the guy who'd memorized the dates when porn magazines hit the local drugstore.

I'd never been repulsed by a centerfold in my life—just the opposite, in fact. But my newfound revulsion demonstrated that Christ was already at work in me. It is through God's power that we have been saved, and it is through His power that we are free to live holy lives. God, through Christ, fulfilled His responsibility to help us with our sexual purity at Calvary. But the Lord didn't stop there. He continues to fulfill His responsibility by sending the Holy Spirit, who guides us into truth and relentlessly points us toward Christ.

With God's training, the Holy Spirit cultivates His fruit in our lives: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,*

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:22-24)

Describe how you see the Holy Spirit helping you in your fight for purity?

4. Self-Control. (Part 4)

If you submit to the Spirit’s work, self-control will grow in your life, and you’ll crucify the passions that lead to sexual sin. Believe me, you will be tempted to ignore your responsibility in this battle for sexual purity. But you must never forget that you yourself have a role in crucifying these passions. God asks you to “. . . *not let sin reign in your mortal body*” (Romans 6:12).

God asks you to: “*Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him*” (2 Peter 3:14). God asks you to purify yourself from everything that contaminates your body and spirit. God asks you to find perfect holiness in your life out of reverence for Him (see 2 Corinthians 7:1). Finally, God asks you to: “*Flee from sexual immorality*” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

You have every right to feel encouraged! You have help in this battle. God will help you, and the law of sowing and reaping can work in your favor. Show your love for God by being God’s man. Begin by planting good choices today so that you can reap sexual purity tomorrow.

What part do you have to play in fighting sexual temptation?

5. Self-Control. (Part 5)

One example of the Spirit’s work today is that you’re looking at this and talking about this today, and God is using this study to train and guide you. With God’s training, the Holy Spirit cultivates His fruit in your life: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*” (Galatians 5:22-24) Each fruit is important, but be extra-aware of self-control as you work to establish yourself as a man of sexual purity.

Describe how you see the Holy Spirit helping you in your fight for purity?

6. Self-Control. (Part 6)

Notice that in Galatians 5:22-24, Paul, the author of this letter, refers to fruit in the singular. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are a package deal. If God’s Spirit is truly living in you, you’ll be strengthened by each of these traits in your life. It’s a growing and maturing process, but it involves each of these character-building traits. As it relates to training your eyes and resisting peer pressure, self-control is key. But so is each of the other traits (fruit) listed in this verse.

In considering the fruit of the spirit, “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”, memorize Ephesians 5:22. It will strengthen you as you allow the Holy Spirit to take residence in and control your life and behavior.

For more information, or if you’d like to start a weDARED group with some friends or in your church, check out WeDared.com or call or email Paul Scott at 800-NEW-LIFE or pscott@newlife.com.