

**SSG Monthly****June 2005**

# *Like Fighting a Fire*

It's been a while since you've heard from me. This is the first of what I hope will be a number of articles to come about living holy, pure, and victorious lives with Christ's help.

I continue to learn so much as I meet all kinds of people around the Midwest, and as I continue to battle for my own purity every day.

In the last few months I've gained a new perspective on fighting the battle for purity, which applies to any sinful struggle. This new perspective doesn't negate any of the principles I shared in *Sex and the Single Guy*, which was finished about six months ago and released in February 2005. Rather, it brings new light to how all of those principles fit together. Here it goes.

Suppose your house is on fire. What would you do? You might scream, run for a fire extinguisher, or book it out of there. If the fire were bad enough, you would probably call 911 and alert the fire department.

After you've called the fire department, what would happen next? The firefighters would show up and start hosing down that fire. But before they ever started to put out your fire, they would spend months learning what causes fires, what feeds them and makes them spread, and how to extinguish them in all sorts of different situations. After all of that preparation, they are ready to attack this particular fire that threatens to engulf your home in flames.

So they go to work at putting out the fire. They don't hesitate for a second, because they know they're either putting out the fire or the fire is consuming the house—there is no neutral moment. They pour whatever it takes into that fire to put it out, even if it means thinking creatively for different ways to combat the fire, or enlisting others to help them. Each one knows that one firefighter cannot fight a great fire alone.

The firefighters are not yet finished once the apparent flames are gone. There are still two major steps to take—discover what caused the fire, and strategize how to prevent a similar fire in the future. Discovering the fire's cause may be the most difficult and dangerous step. The fire team must go deep into the charred house and find the pilot light that started the whole thing. It may be hidden in a most unlikely spot. And just finding it won't necessarily prevent all future fires from starting, but they will have a good idea about where to look and how to put similar pilot lights out before they erupt into devastating flames.

This is the essence of fighting the battle for purity, or for combating any similar sin that threatens our joy, our relationships with God and with others, and our effective service to

the Lord. The first step is to realize that we have a problem—that the fire, or the sin, exists—and that it will only get worse if we don't do something about it (see Revelation 3:19.) [1] We have to prepare our hearts to fight temptation by memorizing and studying Scripture that we can draw up at a moment's notice (see Psalm 119:11 [2].) and we have to be weary of what we're doing to fuel the flames of our temptation (see Psalm 101:3 [3].) These two areas are ones God is really working on in me right now. It's so easy to fall into the trap of routine, shallow devotions, and not truly hunger after God and commit Scripture to memory. As Joshua Harris said in *Not Even a Hint*, we cannot reason our way out of temptation. We must fight it like Jesus did in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11.) Also, I've found that I need to be careful about what I allow my eyes to see and ears to hear not simply because of some legalistic rule I need to follow, but because the battle is so much easier to fight when I do! It's so easy to just watch whatever TV or movies our friends chose to watch, but when we allow ourselves to be bombarded with sexual images and situations that trivialize and even glorify lust and its lifestyle, it weakens our defenses. We're just shooting ourselves in the foot and making the battle that much harder to **fight! The two best tests I've learned in choosing what media to allow myself are these: Can I recommend it to someone younger who looks up to me? Can I honestly thank God for it in its entirety?**

The final steps are all just as important: we fight lust relentlessly (see Romans 8:13b [4].) we think of creative strategies to help us where we are most tempted (see 1 Corinthians 10:13b [5].) and we enlist others to help us and hold us accountable because we cannot win our battle alone (see Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 [6].) We must also peel back other hurts and other sins we've hidden away to find what may be contributing to this in the first place—this is the pilot light. As I wrote in Chapter 14: A Deeper Pain, this means discovering what past hurts, regret, or current loneliness and other pain we may be escaping from through sexual release. The best way to do this is in the context of a loving, supportive relationship with a godly older person we trust.

Every illustration breaks down, including this one, but it illustrates that winning our battle for purity requires several simultaneous approaches. We cannot just prepare for the battle and not have strategies to fight the temptation when it comes. We cannot just dig into the deeper issues of our heart and not take practical steps in the meantime to kill the specific sinful practices that are killing us. Some people would argue that we need only focus on one of these steps or the other, but each of them is critical to have total victory. You wouldn't sit down with an alcoholic and talk about what deep issues of the heart are causing his alcoholism *at* a bar with a twelve pack of beer in front of him. You would help him out of the situation that causes him to be tempted, and you would talk about how he might be fully healed.

So that's my encouragement for you: assess whether you're taking each of these critical steps to win your battle for purity and holiness, strategize what additional steps you need to take, and share them with a trusted friend who will hold you accountable. Then watch as you start winning more and more daily battles, and praise God for the victory He's given us over sin!

- Joseph Knable

*NOTE: There is a lot more written about the issues mentioned in this article in Sex and the Single Guy , as well as the excellent books I recommend below.*

SSG Passage for June 05: Psalm 32:2, 5, & 11

- ❖ Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him... Therefore I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'—and you forgave the guilt of my sin... Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Recommended Readings for June 05:

- ❖ For Guys and Girls: *Not Even a Hint: Guarding Your Heart Against Lust* by Joshua Harris
- ❖ For Girls: *And the Bride Wore White: Seven Secrets to Sexual Purity* by Dannah Gresh and *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men* by Shaunti Feldman

Share Your Story!

This is what I have been learning this month. What about you? What's your story regarding sexual purity? If you have a story to share or feedback from reading the book, please go to [www.josephknable.com](http://www.josephknable.com) and click on "Contact" and then "Share Your Story." I hope to hear from you!

[www.josephknable.com](http://www.josephknable.com)

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[1] Revelation 3:19: Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

[2] Psalm 119:11: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

[3] Psalm 101:3: I will set before my eyes no vile thing.

[4] Romans 8:13b: If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

[5] 1 Corinthians 10:13b: When you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

[6] Ecclesiastes 4:9a, 10a: Two are better than one... If one falls down, his friend can help him up.