

## *Appendix 2*

### **What Do I Do with My Struggle? Practical Ideas for Victory**

Whether you are married or single, your sexual appetite will be influenced by what you choose to think about. We've made the point that reading erotica, watching sexually explicit movies, or fantasizing about some "superman" will spoil your healthy longings for intimacy. But how do you stop? Here are a few practical tips to help you in your journey.

**Identify the triggers** that make you vulnerable. When are you most sexually tempted? When you feel lonely? bored? hurt? anxious? Do you notice any predictable patterns? If so, find healthy ways to meet these longings. We know one single mom who noticed that when the darkness of night fell—her trigger—she was prone to romantic fantasy and so made the decision to set her alarm and get up early each day so she'd be too tired to do anything but sleep when night came. If you are single and the longing for physical touch is a trigger, schedule a regular massage. If stress seems to be your trigger, go for a run, which can be effective at offering your brain some of the same chemicals to reduce stress that sex would.

**Limit your access** to sources of temptation. Do the practical things like putting a filter on your computer and getting

rid of books or movies that get your mind going in the wrong direction. Break off any relationship that is built on lust or causes you to want what God hasn't given you.

**Set up accountability.** One of the most difficult things to do may be to admit to someone else that you are struggling. When you take this step and ask a godly friend or mentor to keep you accountable, you have taken a giant step in winning the battle.

**Change Your Appetite.** Crystal Renaud, a single woman and founder of [dirtygirlsministries.com](http://dirtygirlsministries.com), coaches women who want to overcome an addiction to porn or erotica. One of her clients, Charlotte, could not be aroused with her husband unless she first used erotica. They needed to restore a healthy appetite to this woman. This required her to fast for a time from sex *entirely* and to focus on her friendship with her husband (read: *intimacy*). While we would not recommend such a fast to many married women, Charlotte's dependence on erotica had dismantled her ability to be ultimately aroused and fulfilled by her husband. During this season, Charlotte was in regular counseling and had a phone number to call when she felt tempted to use erotica. On a more positive note, she was assigned to spend focused time enjoying conversation and friendship with her husband who was supporting her in this period of abstinence.

At the end of the fast, they set a special date and reserved a hotel room. That night, for the first time in her life, she was orgasmic with her husband—free from any fantasy—and now she is able to do that on a regular basis. Erotica prom-

ised her more but left her unsatisfied. A healthier pathway to her desires delivered just what she needed to be satisfied.

This ability to have your sexual appetite balanced through fasting is also key for singles. Fasting as a single woman means refusing to ignite your sexual appetites with counterfeits that only leave you craving more. Not what you wanted to hear? We promised you we'd tell you the hard truth. Don't think it's any easier to manage the challenges as a married woman. Here's how Paul speaks that hard truth for all of us:

I do . . . tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.  
(1 Corinthians 7:8–9 THE MESSAGE)

His one outlet for sexual tension remains marriage. Period. (And isn't it fitting that he is quick to remind those seeking that outlet that it's full of difficulties as well?)

**Build intimacy** in core relationships. Genesis 2:18 says, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Based on this verse, the Christian world often jumps to the conclusion that singleness is *not* good. But the verse doesn't say it's not good for man to be sexually abstinent or unmarried. It says it's not good for him to be *alone*. Your desire for sex is not just a drive

for a physical release but a force meant to propel you to seek intimacy. The authors of *Authentic Human Sexuality* describe sexual desire in the context of a drive to community:

Deeply embedded within each one of us is a divine longing for wholeness that sends us reaching beyond ourselves and to God and others. Sexual desire helps us recognize our incompleteness as human beings and causes us to seek the other to find a fuller meaning in life . . . Authentic sexuality urges us towards a rich sharing of our lives.<sup>34</sup>

How are you *sharing your life*? Here are some suggestions:

#### As a Single

Through healthy relationships with coworkers, lunch dates with friends, small groups, and a life fueled with purpose in charitable works, you may find that you enjoy a great deal of emotional intimacy that's so necessary to fulfilled living. And living in intimacy now is great practice for living in intimacy with your life partner. Here are some ideas for you:

Get out your fine china and start hosting dinner parties!

Schedule weekly accountability meetings with an older, wiser woman.

Learn something new with a good friend. Tennis. Horseback riding. Oil painting. The process of exposing yourself to risk and learning is intimate!

Dare to tell a very trustworthy friend some of your deepest, most treasured secrets this week. Invite her in to your inner thought life.

### In Marriage

Have a date night. It can be nearly impossible to fit your friendship into the to-do list and fast pace of family life and home ownership.

Make a “bucket list” together. Every year, work together to knock one or two items off the list.

Find a local nonprofit you can work at together. It can be anything—a short-term missions trip, working in the church nursery, or serving Thanksgiving dinner to the needy.

Take up a new hobby together. Be creative. Take an Asian cooking class, join a gym together, or learn to paint landscapes. Research shows that couples who do new things together have greater long-term satisfaction in their marriage.

Authentic intimacy requires community but does not always require sex. God created you to function in community whether single or married. This is what makes your human sexuality so drastically different from the physical urges and fertile expression of the rest of the animal world.

No woman has ever died from not having sex or from the lack of great sex in marriage. But you cannot live as God intended without deep connection.