

The Body, Soul, and Spirit Battlefronts – Dan Hitz

This article is the second in a series adapted from our new teaching series Escaping the Dungeon of Porn. This series can be taught in men's groups, Sunday school classes and Saturday seminars. If you are interested in hosting an "Escaping the Dungeon of Porn" class at your church, call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole *spirit, soul and body* be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5.23-24 [NIV]

God created us as three-part beings – spirit, soul, and body. In our battle with pornography, we have to fight each front with different weapons. This article will help you recognize some of the challenges that you might face as you are walking away from your addiction to pornography and into the will of God.

The Battle of the Spirit

"It is finished!" Three powerful words spoken by Jesus Christ as He died on the cross. Three powerful words that give us victory in the spirit realm the moment we ask Jesus Christ to be our Savior. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" Our spirit is now alive in Christ who has given us victory over all the demonic forces that come against us. We can take authority in the name of Jesus and stand against the forces of the enemy. It is finished! However, we have exposed our hearts to certain things that have created open doors in our souls – our mind, will, and emotions – where the enemy can harass and deceive us. You'll read more about this in the section on strongholds.



The Battle of the Soul

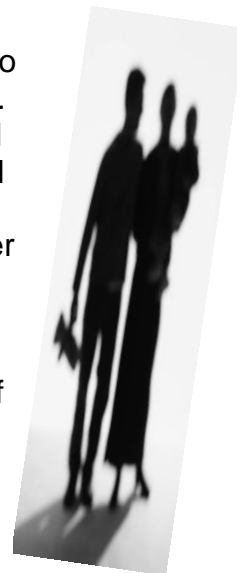
Most Christians know the basics of battling sin in the realm of their wills (part of our soul). We know that when we spend time with the Lord reading our Bibles and in prayer we are stronger to fight the temptations that come. We also know that overcoming sin involves personal boundaries, accountability, and a determination to bounce our eyes and thoughts in the appropriate direction. Knowing is one thing – doing is another. We soon find our wills weak and begin making provisions for our flesh. One reason for this is that we simply like our sin. Another reason is that is just plain old habit. It's what we do when we're bored or we feel emotional pain. Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted and to set at liberty those who are captive. He wants to heal the emotional pain that many of us are trying to medicate through sin.



Our souls are "in process" and being transformed line upon line through sanctification. Romans 12:2 tells us not to be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. When something happens to us that reminds us of a past wound or struggle, our minds may get "triggered" to think and respond out of our old patterns of behavior. We conform to the world. By allowing the Holy Spirit to minister to our hearts and renew our minds, it changes our way of thinking. We no longer see things through the dirty filters of the past; we begin to understand

things with the mind of Christ. We are transformed. Our old wounds are no longer triggered and we see the lies of the enemy for what they are. We no longer feel compelled to self-medicate. If we want to be fully freed from the bondages of pornography and sexual sin, we must have our mind renewed and be willing to deal with our emotional issues or we will be a sexualized version of a dry drunk.

What are some of these emotional issues in our hearts that get triggered? People who struggle with sexual sin have many **strongholds** in their souls that God wants to heal. Strongholds are habit structures of thinking that shape the way we feel, think, act, and react. There are several types of strongholds including unforgiveness, bitterness, and *word curses*. If you've grown up with parents who constantly tell you that "you're dumber than a mule" you'll eventually start to believe them and act the part. No matter how successful you are at work, something inside of you tells you that you just don't make the grade. *Soul ties* are another stronghold that keep our hearts connected to others in an unhealthy way. Because of past sexual or emotional interaction, we may find ourselves battling fantasies of specific people or situations from our former way of life. *Mother and father wounds* are like holes left in our souls because we haven't received the love, instruction and discipline that God intended our parents to give us. We may be adults now, but there's still a part of our hearts that feel like little boys or girls longing for a mother and/or father figure to step into our lives and solve all of our problems. No matter how much love gets poured into us, it just seems to leak out. These are just a few of the strongholds that keep us bound to sin. Fortunately, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to the tearing down of strongholds and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.



How do we deal with issues of the soul and break free from wounds, lies, and strongholds? The first step is to realize that God loves us right where we're at. He is the same God that went looking for Adam after he ate the fruit – the same God who gently restored Peter after Peter denied Him in His time of need. The second step is to confess our sins and repent of our



sinfulness. 1 John 1:9 reads, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive** us our sins and **purify** us from all unrighteousness". Next, we must forgive those who have sinned against us. Unforgiveness keeps us bound to the torment of our past (Matt 18). A male survivor of childhood sexual abuse on our ministry team says that he suffered far more at the hands of the tormentors by his own unforgiveness than he ever did at the hands of his sexual abuser. Forgiveness helps to break the chains of the past. Fourth, we must accept our own responsibility for our sinful reactions to the sins against us. When we were violated, we could have run to the Lord for help. Instead, many of us ran to sin. We have compounded our own problems. Fifth, we must own our pain and bring our past hurts, wounds, and strongholds to Jesus Christ. Time doesn't heal our wounds. The ministry of the Holy Spirit heals our wounds. As we meet the Lord at the foot of the cross and talk to Him about our painful past, He carries our burdens and

heals our wounds. As He increases, our need to medicate our pain through sin decreases. True healing empowers us to live Philippians 3:13-14 and truly forget that which is behind and press on toward the goal that God has for us in Christ. If you recognize strongholds in your life, contact someone who is experienced in prayer ministry or pastoral care and ask him or her to walk with you in this healing process.

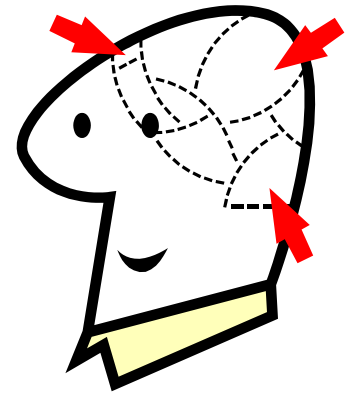
The Battle for the Body



God created us as sexual beings by nature. This includes our bodies as well as our souls. In their book, *Every Man's Battle*, Steve Arterburn and Fred Stoeker explain that "the human male, because of sperm production and other factors, naturally desires a sexual release about every forty-eight to seventy-two hours". Realistically speaking, many married people don't have sexual intimacy with this frequency. If a man resists this desire and keeps his eyes, mind, and hands where they belong, the drive will become less and less. However, if a man feeds his sexual fantasies, desires, and behaviors illicitly, the body will become addicted to the chemical release in the pursuit of sex as well as the orgasm. When men begin to wrestle

with the temptation of sexual sin, their body becomes flooded with adrenaline which raises the heart rate and heightens the senses. Adrenaline continues to flood the body until the sexual act is committed, after which endorphins are released. Endorphins are the feel good hormones that tell your body, "That felt good, do it again!" Our physical bodies don't know the details of our sexual release. They don't know if the orgasm was legitimate or illicit. They simply know that it felt good and they want another one. When a person stops engaging in pornography and masturbation or hypersexuality, their body experiences withdrawals and starts whining. We have to accept that as a part of the recovery process and seek God for the grace to be victorious. In time, the body overcomes the addiction and the whining resides.

It also helps to understand how the brain reacts to continued stimulation. In his video series *Lessons Learned*, Sy Rogers explains how the human brain burns chemical pathways which create "default" settings for our behavior. He notes that the average brain is made up of 80 to 100 billion cells, each of which stores up to 30 times the data found in a typical encyclopedia. Cell to cell impulses happen in 1/1000 of a second allowing us to think at over 1250 words per minute. (We normally speak up to 250 words per minute.) These facts help in the automatic thought processes we experience throughout the day. As we walk into a crowded room, we automatically scan the room to see who is present, how they are dressed, and what they are doing. If it is safe, we continue walking into the room and decide if we will sit by people we know, people we don't know, or people we like. We also navigate to our chair while avoiding obstacles that could trip us up, simultaneously carrying on a deep conversation over our cell phone while we carry our overfilled cup of coffee. This all happens in less than a minute thanks to the default settings created in our brains. This same principle determines our decisions and actions in regards to our sexuality. Whatever a person is viewing while having an orgasm is programmed to be sexually arousing to them in the future. Some men who are addicted to internet porn can become sexually aroused when they see a computer monitor even if it happens to be turned off. Their default settings simply urge them to do what they are accustomed to doing.



How do the chemical reactions in the brain get formed? When an event happens, a neurotransmitter called *acetylcholine* travels from one nerve receptor to another processing information and developing patterns which become default settings. When a similar event happens, our brain follows the same pathway it did in the past. When the addict's wife backs out of the driveway leaving him home alone, his brain urges him to do what he usually does when he has the house to himself – view pornography on the Internet. In this situation, there's no spiritual battlefield. No strongholds or triggers. Just habits and default settings telling him to do what he always does.

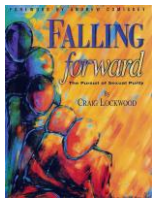
The characteristic of our brains to adopt default settings is meant to make our lives easier; however, when we are addicted to pornography, it often works against us. Even after becoming a Christian, the brain still wants to follow the established default settings. The good news is that as the person recovering from sexual sin makes the conscious decision to interrupt the former settings and establish a new pattern of behavior, a neurotransmitter named GABA (gamma aminobutyric acid) begins to override the former chemical pathways and to establish new default settings. This takes time, determination, the grace of God, and the support of friends. In time, the default setting urges him to pray when he has the house to himself rather than to search the internet.

Fighting the Good Fight of Faith

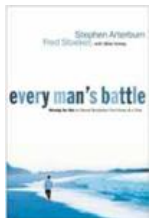
Recognizing the characteristics of all three battlefields helps us to understand our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and the many tools that He has given us in our journey. We need discernment and a well rounded arsenal to confront our addictions. We may be able to walk in victory for a season if we ignore our damaged emotions and white knuckle our way through life, but we won't experience the peace of God unless we meet with Him and allow Him to heal the hurts and wounds in our hearts. We will struggle with sin forever if we concentrate only on tearing down strongholds and fail to seek God for the grace to trust and obey and override our old habits and chemical pathways. Finally, none of this will work if we fail to meet God, spirit to Spirit and unite our hearts with His. We need God in every aspect of our recovery in order to walk in victory.



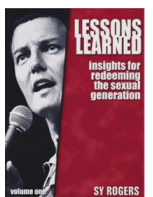
Recommended Resources



Falling Forward, The Pursuit of Sexual Purity, Craig Lockwood, Desert Stream Press, Grandview, MO, 2000.



Every Man's Battle, Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, Water Brook Press, Colorado Springs, CO, 2000.



Lessons Learned, "Renewing the Mind", Sy Rogers, www.wyrogers.com, 2001.

