

PORNOGRAPHY

FIGHTING
FOR
PURITY

31-DAY DEVOTIONALS FOR LIFE

DEEPAK REJU

For the individual who suffers under the tyranny of pornography, Deepak Reju serves you well by providing you with hope and help in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He walks alongside you throughout the month, enabling you to grow in your understanding of yourself, your circumstances, and God. Through daily reading and reflection questions, Deepak provides you with the necessary insight and practical application to break pornography's hold, helping you to better glorify God in your daily living.

—**Kevin Carson**, Pastor, Sunrise Baptist Church, Ozark, Missouri; Biblical Counseling Professor and Department Chair, Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

There are a number of books that tell you what to do if you want to kick your porn habit. *Pornography: Fighting for Purity* is different. It doesn't leave you to get on with it yourself; instead, it walks with you through the process. Day by day, over thirty-one days, it will lead you away from porn and back to Christ. This is not a self-help book that demands more effort before inevitably leading to more failure. The book is filled with gospel grace and therefore with gospel hope. I warmly encourage you to read it. Better still, read it with a mature Christian.

—**Tim Chester**, Pastor, Grace Church, Boroughbridge, UK; author, *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free*

Here is medicine in the form of meditations; a weapon in the shape of a thirty-one-day devotional. Begin each day, for a month, with Deepak reading you and teaching you from Scripture. Plain-spoken, searching, practical, humble, and hopeful—this could be just what you've been looking for in your struggle for something better than fantasy.

—**Mark Dever**, Senior Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.; President, 9Marks

Anyone knows that, in order to conquer any sin, we must attack that problem at its core—intentionally and deliberately. An old Valley of Vision prayer says that “if we would have any sin subdued, we must not only labor to overcome it . . . but must invite Christ to abide in its place.” In *Pornography: Fighting for Purity*, Deepak Reju has helped men, in a very practical way, to do this very thing!

—**John Freeman**, Founder, Harvest USA; Author, *Hide or Seek: When Men Get Real with God About Sex*

Deepak Reju frankly and pastorally addresses one of the most pervasive, most lethal, and least acknowledged assaults on Christian discipleship today. Since shame and self-condemnation cannot free those who are enslaved to lust in its various easily accessible forms, Reju’s month of meditations fortifies those who are committed to fight for purity by focusing our hearts’ eyes on Christ in all his beauty, mercy, and power.

—**Dennis E. Johnson**, Professor of Practical Theology, Westminster Seminary California

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31-DAY DEVOTIONALS FOR LIFE

A Series

DEEPAK REJU

Series Editor

- Addictive Habits: Changing for Good*, by David R. Dunham
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Pornography: Fighting for Purity, by Deepak Reju

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Tips for Reading This Devotional

EARLY IN OUR MARRIAGE, my wife and I lived on the top floor of a town house, in a small one-bedroom apartment. Whenever it rained, leaks in the roof would drip through the ceiling and onto our floors. I remember placing buckets in different parts of the apartment and watching the water slowly drip, one drop at a time. I put large buckets out and thought, *It'll take a while to fill them.* The water built up over time, and often I was surprised at how quickly those buckets filled up, overflowing if I didn't pay close enough attention.

This devotional is just like rain filling up a bucket. It's slow, and it builds over time. Just a few verses every day. Drip. Drip. Drip. Just a few drops of Scripture daily to satiate your parched soul.

We start with Scripture. God's Word is powerful. In fact, it's the most powerful force in the entire universe.¹ It turns the hearts of kings, brings comfort to the lowly, and gives spiritual sight to the blind. It transforms lives and turns them upside down. We know that the Bible is God's very own words, so we read and study it to know God himself.

Our study of Scripture is practical. Theology should change how we live. It's crucial to connect the Word with your struggles. Often, as you read this devotional, you'll see the word *you* because I speak directly to you, the reader. Each reading contains reflection questions and a practical suggestion. You'll get much more from this experience if you answer the questions and do the practical exercises. Don't skip them. Do them for the sake of your own soul.

Our study of Scripture is worshipful. Fundamentally, any struggle with pornography and masturbation is a worship problem.

We've lost our orientation toward the One who should rule our lives, and we need to turn back to him. The Word points us to Christ, who rescues us from our plight and reorients our life. The goal of your time in God's Word should always be worship. As you grow in your affections for Christ, the King, you put to death your affections for pornography and masturbation. The power of a greater affection for Christ can transform your soul. Adore Christ. Love him. Cherish him. Praise him. Honor him. Give your whole life to him. Don't hold anything back.

If you find this devotional helpful (and I trust that you will!), reread it in different seasons of your life. Work through it this coming month, and then come back to it a year from now, to remind yourself how to do battle with sexual sin.

This devotional is *not* meant to be a comprehensive guide to fighting pornography and masturbation. Good volumes are already written for that purpose. Buy them and make good use of them. You'll see several resources listed at the end of the book.

That's enough for now. Let's begin.

Deepak Reju

Introduction

Your Need

A man named Jairus, who was the ruler of a synagogue, came to Jesus and fell at his feet. He was desperate, for his only daughter was sick and dying. He wanted Jesus to come because he knew that, if Jesus laid his hands on her, “she will live” (Matt. 9:18).

Not long after that, a sick woman came to Jesus. She had been bleeding for twelve years, and she had spent her living on physicians. Twelve years of medical assistance amounted to nothing (Luke 8:43). Immersed in a crowd, she pressed through to see Jesus and touch his garment. He had the power to change everything.

Some days later, a father came to Jesus, begging him to look at his only child. The boy was possessed by an evil spirit, convulsing and foaming at the mouth (Luke 9:38–39). The father had gone to Jesus’s disciples, but they had failed to expel the spirit. He was coming to Jesus as his only hope.

Read the gospels, and you will see that they keep coming. Needy people—distressed, despairing, beyond hope, and looking to Jesus. They are looking for a Rescuer, Healer, and Redeemer.

You are not unlike them. If you opened this book, it’s because you need Jesus just like they did. You are struggling with pornography and masturbation, and you need help. If this is true, then welcome. Jesus is waiting for you.

Your Problem

Ed Welch speaks of *voluntary slavery* to describe your plight.¹ This helpfully captures your problem in two words: you’ve *voluntarily* chosen sexual sin so often that it now *enslaves* you. A wise

friend told me, “What you open yourself up to will eventually control your heart.”

Lust is desire that is disordered and out of control.² Your heart is probably attached to the wrong things, so a vital part of your battle against lust will be to reorient your affections to the right things—not self-fulfillment, but glorifying God; not sex, but purity; not images on a screen, but real people; not guilty pleasures, but joy in heaven.

The chief means of fighting your disordered desires is a growing affection for Christ. Fight fire with fire—fight the sin of lust with a greater love for Christ.³

But there is more to the problem. Guilt, shame, self-condemnation, lies, self-justification, confusion, emotional distance from God and others, little time in the Word, doubt, pride—all these factors combine with your disordered affections to put you in a terrible place. It’s a hot, complicated mess.

The Bible clearly condemns sexual sin (1 Cor. 5:9–10; 6:9–10; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5). You know it’s wrong, but you feel trapped, and you need a pathway out. What are you to do about it?

Your Anchor

The natural human tendency is to seek a way out by depending on yourself. *I made this mess, so I’ll fix it.* You read books, go to church, implement monitoring software, and find accountability. While these are all fine things to do, they are not enough if you profess Christ. Fix-it strategies put the full weight and responsibility on your shoulders, and as you will find out, that’s not a sustainable plan. It might help you temporarily, but it won’t get you to the finish line.

This is where Christ enters in. He offers you an invitation.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I

am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:28–30 NIV)

You are tired and weary from the ongoing battle with pornography and masturbation, so Jesus offers you rest. He can be an anchor in this storm, if you repent of your sins and turn to him in faith.

The seed from which all Christianity springs is this good news: *Christ died for sinners*. To survive this battle against pornography, you've got to build your whole life on this truth. Either Christ is worth everything or he is worth nothing at all. There is no middle ground. Lukewarm faith is not faith. Jesus gave his life, conquering sin and death, so that you might have life in him. Will you give your entire life—everything you have—to him?

If you are not a follower of Christ, or if you are not sure whether you are, know that giving your life to Christ is the most important thing you could ever do. Trusting in Jesus is not a religious crutch. It's a personal relationship with the Son of God who came to earth to rescue you from your rebellion against God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The conversation about fighting pornography begins and ends with Christ.

Your Goal

The goal of the Christian life is to run the race and make it to the finish line. With God's help, a true believer will persevere to the end.

In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul writes, "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God

in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13–14). As a runner runs, he’s no longer concerned with where he came from.⁴ Every muscle in his body is straining forward to what lies ahead. His eyes are focused on a goal: the finish line. He sprints to the end in order to earn the prize (1 Cor. 9:24). This runner’s prize is God’s calling him heavenward. So also you need to be like this runner—not dwelling on the past, but future-minded. Forget what’s behind you; keep your eyes set on heaven.

What’s your goal in life? Does it at all resemble the apostle Paul’s future-oriented living? Or are you feeling stuck in your sin? Enduring through the difficulties of this life includes fighting sexual sin and living a life of purity. But that’s not a one-day battle or a battle for one season. You’ll need to fight this battle for the rest of your life.

Having living examples helps. I know godly, mature men who faithfully serve their churches, but who years ago struggled deeply with pornography. Do you know what I notice about them? Consistently, what I see in these men is *a growing affection for and commitment to Christ*. Sustained gospel contact, day in and day out, is the normal rhythm of their lives. The gospel is the air they breathe as they pore over the Word and beg God for mercy. It’s their union with Christ, not their own efforts, that keeps them living by faith.

Faith in Christ doesn’t leave these men passive or irresponsible; it leads them to greater obedience. Consistently, what I see in these men is *vigilance for the rest of their lives*. A white-knuckling approach—in which you fight sin solely by your own strength—won’t get you very far. These men’s vigilance is the fruit of a genuine faith. Years removed from the problem, these godly men still maintain transparency with close friends, have accountability software on all their electronic devices, and continue to fight for holy living. Does that surprise you? It shouldn’t. In fact, it’s a mark of their maturity. They understand the importance of never letting down their guard, because they know how sin can ruin

their lives. They are well prepared—with the Word, the Spirit dwelling in them, a good church community, a sober perspective about their sin, and great joy in Christ—to run the race to the very end.

What about you? What would it take for you to follow in their example?

DAY 1

The War for Your Soul

*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles
to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage
war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11)*

IF YOU'VE PICKED up this book, it's probably because you are in the middle of a war. It's the *devil's* war—and his weapons are anger, hatred, lying, selfishness, deceit, confusion, unbelief, and idolatry. And, in your case, pornography. Over the course of time, you look at the forbidden—click, click, click. And you feel drawn back, as if a magnetic pull were dragging you in. You hate it but want more. You feel ashamed and struggle to find God's forgiveness. Your desires run amok. You get further enslaved. It becomes *the* preeminent battle for you.

The battleground of a Christian war is your heart. There are no terrorists chopping off heads and claiming another country's sovereign territory. There is no double agent undermining your homeland. *This is a war for your soul.* And, like most wars, it is fought to be won or lost. There is no peacekeeping treaty. God is jealous for your heart, and he is not going to concede this territory to the devil (Jer. 31:33).

Peter asked the Christians of his day to refrain from the selfish passions of their sinful nature. Surrounded by the *ungodly* practices and customs of unbelievers, the Christians were to live as sojourners or exiles. They didn't belong, and so their lifestyle was supposed to look different. The same goes for you—this world is not your home, and the practices of this world, such as the destructive habits of pornography and masturbation, should be foreign to you as a Christian. But, alas, *they are not.*

What is the purpose of a war? To destroy the enemy. The

selfish passions of your flesh are waging war—literally *to destroy* your soul. Scary, isn't it? The war raging inside you is between the Holy Spirit and your sinful flesh. You stare at a computer screen, with a tantalizing image staring back at you, and your flesh rages: "I want more." "Yes, this feels good." "Just a little bit longer." "Forget the truth, for a moment, and enjoy this." "God will forgive me." Click, click, click—you take in more. But with each click, with each stare, with each selfish desire that is fed, the flesh wars against your soul and you sear your conscience with your sin.

Depressing, isn't it? But there is hope. The fact that you picked up this book shows that the battle is not lost. You're still in the fight, and God stands alongside you, claiming to be the victor of your soul. Remember, the Scriptures say, "[God] yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us" (James 4:5). God is jealous for you. He put his Spirit in you, and he is eager to see your spirit worship him for all eternity.

Welcome to the war for your soul. This is your call to arms, and a reminder that God stands alongside you, arm-to-arm, in the fight (2 Tim. 4:16–18). Sound the trumpet, and let's begin.

Reflect: Have you given up? If so, does it give you any hope that God "yearns jealously" for you? Remember: you are not alone. God has not given up on you.

Reflect: Because Christ died for you, you don't have to give up.

Act: Write a few sentences about what it would mean for you to be an exile or sojourner in this world.

DAY 2

What Is Your True Identity?

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom. 8:15–16)

WHO ARE YOU? Are you a husband or wife, a son or daughter? Are you a friend? Are you an employee or a student? Are you a church member? Are you a parent, a brother or sister, or a neighbor? Are you a city or country dweller? Are you a sinner, saint, or sufferer? What words most describe you? What labels fit you best? Take a moment and write a few descriptors for yourself in the margin.

I often look into the face of someone struggling with pornography and ask, “How much does this sin define you?” *Do you see yourself fundamentally as a porn struggler or as a child of God?* Which one defines you? When you wake up, what do you think about first: the images that you viewed last night, or Christ’s love for you? When you walk to work, what defines you: your sense of shame, or your sense of being an adopted child of God?

Your battle with porn puts it at the forefront of your heart and mind, so you over-identify with the sin. The selfish desires of your flesh define you *too much*. Confusion, doubts, shame, or self-hate push your Christian identity into the background.

Many years ago, a wise friend said to me, “Be who you are.” If you trust in Christ, you are a child of God—whether you sense that or not. Live as if it is true, because it is.

Who you are in Christ is your truest, deepest, and most fundamental identity. Slow down and reflect on that sentence. Do you really believe it’s true? What is stopping you from believing it fully? If

you trust in Christ and are fighting to repent, you are a child of God. Remember that Spirit-driven sense of being a Christian, and begin to live like it is true . . . because *it is true*. Live as if you are forgiven and cleansed by Christ's blood, because that is who you are.

The apostle Paul told the Christians at Rome that those who yield to the Spirit are sons and daughters of God. If you learn to walk according to the Spirit, you will no longer be a slave to your sins. Does that sound impossible? You don't have to be a slave to pornography. Do you *really* believe that? Can that *really* be true? God's Spirit in you bears witness with your spirit that you really are a child of God. They work together to cry out, "Abba! Father!"

So who are you? If you wrote, "I'm a child of God," you're off to a good start. If you didn't, don't be scared. Even now, you can yield to the Spirit (Rom. 8:14), ground yourself in God's Word (Ps. 1:2), and cling to God's people (Prov. 18:24). They will help you to "be who you are": a child of God.

Reflect: How much does your sexual sin define you? Does it over-define you? If so, ask God for mercy (Ps. 130:2) and confess your sin to him (Prov. 28:13–14).

Reflect: Ask God to grant you hope *in Christ*.

Act: Find a committed, mature Christian and ask this person about his or her identity. When the answer comes, "I'm a Christian," press further and ask, "How do you know?" Then ask for help with how you can grow in your own Spirit-driven sense of being a child of God. Look at Scripture together and pray together about your identity in Christ.

DAY 3

Walking by the Spirit

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal. 5:25)

WHO IS IN charge of your life? Are you following the desires of your flesh and the pressures of this world? Or are you being led by the Spirit?

Living by faith through the Spirit and putting your sin to death are two sides of the same coin. But one drives the other. As you live according to the Spirit's strength and direction, God gives you the power to put to death the sinful desires of your flesh.

When you were born again, the Holy Spirit took up residence in you. He gives you life. So we "live by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Since we live by the Spirit, we need to follow his lead. Walking by the Spirit, as the verse goes on to instruct us, pictures walking in a row or marching in a line. Think about a soldier marching in step as his sergeant barks out orders. The cadence of the sergeant's orders bellow out ("Step . . . step . . . step . . . step . . . step . . . step"), and the soldier's every step is in accordance with his directions. The soldier stays in the formation, and all he needs to do is obey the sergeant's instructions. The NIV appropriately translates this as "Let us keep *in step* with the Spirit."¹ The Spirit leads, and all you need to do is follow his lead.

But you don't do this by yourself. The apostle Paul is not barking out orders to you while watching from a safe, smug distance. He is marching in the same formation. Paul says, "Let *us* walk by the Spirit." He includes himself. You're not alone. In fact, in this line is a host of other believers fighting the same battle and marching in step with you.

We can walk in obedience if we let the Spirit lead. Do you believe that that's true? Or have you given in to your sinful nature so often

that you've given up hope? Consistent victory over the flesh is possible, but it comes only from the Spirit's lead. "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Who is setting the agenda for your life—your sinful flesh, or the Spirit? Be honest. When you wake up in the morning, how self-reliant are you? Do you walk into the day with your game plan, your desires, your dreams, your goals, your expectations, and your schemes charting the course? Or do you turn to God and say, "Lord God, I need your help"; "Holy Spirit, come and lead the way"; "I can't do this on my own—only you can"? When's the last time these phrases came out of your mouth? Do you pray these kinds of prayers in humility, pleading for the Spirit to direct your life?

Don't wait any longer. Give up your own schemes and follow the Spirit's lead in your life. You can't defeat this problem through your own power; it can only be done through the Holy Spirit's strength.

Reflect: What goals, dreams, hopes, and agendas do you need to give up right now in order to let the Spirit take control of your life?

Act: Don't let another moment pass without turning to God and asking for the Spirit's help. Pray now, with humility, begging God to set the agenda for your life. Commit to following the Spirit's lead. Write out a prayer below asking for God's help.