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Believe God Loves You

Many of us don't know and understand the love God has for us, so it's hard for us to be completely dependent on Him. First John 4:16 says, "And we have known and believed the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (NKJV).

We know God loves us because He tells us so. And, we know by His actions. He sent His only Son to suffer and die in order to take away our sins and provide us with eternal life so we could be with Him forever.

Many of us intellectually know that God loves us. But do we really believe He loves us? Do we claim all that He has for us?

Knowing and believing are two separate things. If we believe God loves us, we have no cause to worry about anything. He is the only one who will never let us down. There is no one like Him.

Many times we feel we don't deserve God's love, but it's not about what we do to earn His love. It's about what He did for us—He gave.

What matters to God is that we learn to accept His love as freely given to us. God's love makes it possible for us to work through any situation that comes our way.

Overweight Kids and Media

- ✘ **Take these steps to combat child obesity and curb appetites for unhealthy media consumption**

As a mother, I want the best for my kids. I will do just about anything to help them become the man or woman they were designed to be. However, in today's crazy world of diets and excess, it's no easy task to raise children who eat right and feel good about their bodies.

The fact that more than one-third of America's kids struggle with their weight is an indication our country is facing an epidemic of obesity. As a parent, you play a vital role in keeping your kids from becoming statistics of this growing national crisis.

Though the fight against childhood obesity has to be tackled on many fronts, there's one you can begin to influence right now: Limit the amount of time your child spends in front of screens.

Technology powerfully influences our children and prevents them from getting enough physical exercise. Television, computers, video games, and hand-held electronic games all vie for our children's time and attention. Time once spent outside and running around the neighborhood or in imaginative play is now spent in front of media screens. Consequently, we need to pay attention to what messages are being sent through advertisements.

I have a television, and my children do watch it. I'm not a parent who has thrown out the TV and banned all electronics. Media can be used to entertain and educate our children in wonderful ways.

However, media can become problematic when consumed in excess and when advertisements aren't discussed. Young children have

a hard time understanding that ads are not instructions about what to eat.

Equally troubling is the reality that many children are unsupervised when it comes to discerning what is appropriate for their age group. Young children should not be responsible for sifting through the messages they are being fed. That is the responsibility of the parents. The quality and content of both the TV shows and the Internet Web sites children frequent should be familiar to parents.

Take these steps to combat child obesity and curb appetites for unhealthy media consumption:

Be a positive media role model. If your children see you plop down in front of the television night after night, they will learn to do the same. Turn it off and engage in some other activity with your family.

Set time limits on playing video games. In a recent study that looked at environmental factors and obesity, video game playing was associated with childhood obesity. By limiting the time your children play video games, you open up time for other physical activity to occur.

Aim for two hours or less per day of all screen media for your children. One thing that will help you enforce this limit is to take the television and video-game system out of your child's bedroom and put them in a room where you can monitor their use.

Help your children avoid the unhealthy food ads. Fast-forward past them or click them off the screen. Advertisers target kids with all types of media, even books, and try to influence them to buy unhealthy products that contribute to weight gain. Viewing these food ads encourages overeating and eating unhealthy foods.

Encourage interactive play with other children. This not only

gets kids up and moving but also improves their social skills and peer relationships. Screens can be isolating.

The point of all these recommendations is to encourage you to take control of your children's media environment and help them develop healthy habits and discernment. For some of you this will mean getting control over your own media habits as well.

If you would like further information about how to raise healthy children despite what is happening in our culture, read my new book, *Overweight Kids*. I'm convinced the battle of the bulge can be won!

Our children are the greatest legacy we have. Their well-being should be important to us. Let's make it possible for them to grow in confidence and live long, healthy lives.

Resist Lust's Temptation

Month after month, one particular article on my website receives an unusually high number of hits: "Overcoming Sexual Temptation." Many Christians, such as the reader quoted below, find sexual temptation a difficult struggle and walk in constant condemnation.

"I have failed God many times in the area of sexual lust. I find myself thinking about impure thoughts. I confess my sin, ask forgiveness and repent. I do OK for a few days but find myself back where I started. I feel out of control. How can I break this cycle?"

Here are the steps:

1. Stop sexual thoughts. Think on things that are pure, as the

Scriptures command (see Phil. 4:8). You can control where your thoughts go by making a mental choice to focus on something nonsexual.

2. Remove sources of sexual temptation. Identify the things in your life that are contributing to the problem. Then remove them as sources of temptation. Areas to check include:

Movies: Avoid ones that encourage lust and erotica. They make it impossible for you to “flee from temptation.”

Television: It may be time to rethink channel and program choices.

Magazines: The visual images can be arousing. The stories and suggestions often encourage lust.

Books: Reading steamy romance novels won't help you focus your thoughts on what is pure and virtuous.

Peer group: What values are reinforced? How explicit and graphic is the talk? Is being a virgin considered weird? Are your friends committing adultery?

Family: Some families don't model appropriate sexual behavior, limit sexual exposure or have good sexual boundaries. Know what's right and what isn't.

Computer: The Internet gives easy access to pornography. Put on parental controls or a filter system or unsubscribe if you can't seem to resist.

Alcohol: More illicit sex happens under the influence of alcohol because inhibitions are removed. Don't indulge.

Job environment: Resist pressure to be part of the group, go to bars and engage in sexual talk. And watch those opposite-sex friendships. Many affairs begin with an understanding, sympathetic, listening co-worker.

3. Purpose in your heart to follow God's Word. Don't be ruled by passion. No matter what you feel, act with your brain and not your emotions.

4. Don't put yourself in tempting places. In the same way that a recovered alcoholic would shun going into a bar, you must avoid going to places that make resistance tough (for example, X-rated movies, strip joints, bars). When Satan tempted Eve, she engaged him in conversation instead of telling him to go crawl somewhere else. We all know the outcome of her choice!

5. Resist with the Word. When Satan came to Jesus, His defense was to speak the Word. Satan did not argue with Scripture; he left.

6. Don't lie to yourself. Many Christians think they can handle a lot more sexually explicit material than they can. We aren't aware of the subtle influence it has and the desensitization that takes place as a result of regular exposure.

7. Keep your walk with the Lord strong. Develop an intimate relationship with your heavenly Father. Difficult times come when we get out of fellowship with God. He doesn't leave us; we stop relating to Him. It is imperative that we stay connected.

8. If you fall, don't live in condemnation. Recognize your mistake, ask God to forgive you and turn from sin. True repentance involves a turning from the behavior. I have worked with a number of people who repent but go right back to the behavior because they haven't made necessary changes, aren't ready to give up the immediate gratification that accompanies lust or don't exercise their spiritual authority over sin.

Finally, if you still have difficulty, speak to a therapist or minister. There could be a spiritual, emotional or psychological root that requires more intense work. Getting free from lust is not impossible, but it will require

significant changes in your thought life and behavior.

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Antidote for Depression

When we praise, we use a powerful weapon against the enemy.

Don't Be Obsessed!

Many of us are too worried about our weight, our wrinkles, our thinning hair or our sagging chins. Move away from the mirror and make peace with your body.

Desperate Housewives...Desperately Wrong

The characters on this popular TV show are no models for us. These dysfunctional women need a dose of spiritual reality!

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY in the neighborhood, but this isn't Mr. Roger's neighborhood. As the streetlights darken, the neighbors on Wisteria Lane settle into their perfect-looking houses with well-manicured lawns, but behind closed doors, life is not what it appears to be.

Ever since the suicide of neighbor Mary Alice, the residents of Wisteria Lane have come out of their dysfunctional closets. And an estimated 25 million viewers tune in weekly to watch their dramas unfold and their not-so-perfect lives unravel. It is a neighborhood of quiet desperation where delicious secrets are revealed, gossip reigns supreme, jealousy and envy chip away at relationships, and even murder takes place.

Friends With Benefits

"Friends with benefits" flies in the face of the faith conviction that sex is reserved for marriage.