

7 Ways to Stop the Adultery Epidemic

It happened again. For the third time in six months, the pastor of a large church in my hometown of Orlando, Fla., has resigned from his pulpit because of adultery. I'm sad. I'm sick. I'm sorry for the pastors, and sorrier for the congregations that are having to deal with the fallout caused by bad choices.

I'm also cringing because an increasingly hostile public sees these train wrecks as evidence that Christians are hypocrites who preach one thing and live another. We stand for biblical marriage between one man and one woman, but in many cases those marriages are failing. No wonder the gay community hates our flimsy platitudes.

Why are we witnessing this epidemic of moral failure? Many factors could be cited (easy access to pornography, sex-saturated entertainment, the devil and his demons, etc.)—but I don't think we need a list of excuses today. I'm tired of excuses. The devil does not make us do this. It is totally possible for Christian men and women to live in holiness today. The power of His grace is not affected by social trends or hell's attacks.

Maybe we've made this too complicated. Let's go back to some basic ways we can stay pure:

1. Practice regular "fire drills." Paul told Timothy to "flee" from youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22). But you can't flee a burning building if you don't know where the exits are. If you don't map out your plan of escape, you won't run when you are confronted with a lustful glance, an X-rated website or a brazen proposition. When faced with temptation, don't play with it, talk to it, stroke it, analyze it or revisit it in an

hour. Just bolt for the door!

2. Don't live in isolation. Many people are vulnerable to moral compromise because they spend so much time alone. God designed us to live in community. If King David had not left his brothers on the battlefield and returned home, he would not have seen Bathsheba skinny-dipping on the roof. You are less likely to succumb to temptation if you are surrounded by family or Christian friends.

3. Stay faithful in spiritual disciplines. Nothing makes the heart colder than a lack of quiet time with God. Charles Spurgeon said, "Prayer will make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off praying." If you have spent time with Jesus in the morning, you are not going to invite Delilah to cut your hair off that evening. If you are too busy with your work to pray and read the Bible, you are already headed for a spiritual train wreck.

4. Be ruthless with temptation. Today's wimpish Christian culture encourages us to be soft toward sin. Yet the apostle Paul used athletic imagery when he taught about the strenuous effort of resisting sin. He wrote, "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27, NASB). If you can't resist looking at a pornographic website, you are a spiritual baby. If you can't run when Potiphar's wife turns on her charm, you need to get your jellyfish spine in shape. Grow up and quit making excuses for your weak morals.

5. Confess your sins regularly. Last weekend during a men's conference in Philadelphia, one brave brother shared openly how he had been molested as a child—and how the trauma of abuse led him into a pattern of fornication. After he shared his weakness, dozens of men felt the freedom to come to the altar and confess their sexual sins. Transparency is the path to sexual purity. You cannot expect to be pure if your inner life is a cesspool of ugly secrets. Tell somebody. Get the

monkey off your back.

6. Keep the home fires burning. I've met many Christian men who struggle with all kinds of sexual temptation. But after talking with them, I learn that they have no regular intimacy with their wives. The apostle Paul taught that husbands and wives have an equal responsibility to fulfill each other sexually (1 Cor. 7:3). If the fires have gone out in your marriage, find a counselor or enroll in a marriage course in your church. God can rekindle romance and repair your communication breakdown before your chilly marriage freezes beyond repair.

7. Get regular spiritual checkups. Adults are supposed to see a doctor annually to prevent heart ailments, cancer and other problems. Yet many of us never open our lives to input from pastors or mentors. (And many pastors have no one to examine them!) Learn to ask for prayer and counsel. Share your struggles and weaknesses. If you detect a weak spot in your armor, don't wait until the devil blows you out of the water to ask someone for help.

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