

M 2 · W E E K N I N E

Achilles Heel

The fault or flaw that could cause you to fall — and the way out God has already provided. Seven steps to freedom.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What is my Achilles heel?

WEEK NINE

Achilles heel

DEFINITION · ACHILLES HEEL

A fault or flaw that causes — or could cause — something or someone to fail.

If we're honest, we all have an Achilles heel. If all the world's temptation was on a table before us, none of us would be able to walk away without the tentacles of temptation wrapping around us. All of us have — or had — an Achilles heel: drugs, alcohol, food, lust, pornography, pride, greed, anger, unforgiveness, cowardice, gossip...

Everyone has sinned. None of us can boast in his own righteousness. Our righteousness comes through grace from Him and Him alone (**Ephesians 2:8–9**). Since we all have sinned and none of us are immune to temptation, we should all be sober and aware that there is a threat in the world today that is destroying men and families. Today, many men I know are enslaved to sin and believe there is no hope to change. Men, this is not true. There is a way out.

Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Rousseau was talking about the lack of a social contract through governance, but he had no idea how right he was, spiritually. Hallelujah — Jesus has paid the price for all of us to be free; and yet, everywhere, man is in the bondage of sin and what many call "addiction."

Temptation is not addiction. The term "addiction" implies a powerlessness to change. However, if ISIS had a knife to their throat, would they pick up the bottle and drink it? Would they click on the image? Would they light up and smoke it? Would they pop it? We know people aren't powerless, because they can control their sinfulness *sometimes*. We don't often see people lighting up on an airplane because there are fines and other repercussions. They may have a proclivity to nicotine. They may really like it a lot. Are they powerless? I don't believe so.

I personally have struggled with alcohol and other temptations in my life, and I succumbed to them over and over until God set me free. I want that freedom for you — but the first step in your freedom is to admit this:

I'm not powerless. I have a choice.

WEEK NINE

My body, my choice

God has made us caretakers of our earthly body. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and should be cared for as we would care for a physical church building. We wouldn't allow vandals to come in and spray-paint the sanctuary, turn over the pews, and desecrate the altar — so why would we allow ourselves to do the same thing to our own bodies? This isn't about being legalistic; it's about being good stewards of what God has given us charge over.

Many are slaves to sin, transgression, and iniquity. *Sin, transgressions, and iniquities rob us of blessing, separate us from God, and keep us from living our best lives.* **Isaiah 59:2** says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." The Hebrew words for *transgressions* and *iniquities* are deeper, habitual, and willful sins. **Isaiah 53:5** says that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Wounds and bruises are deeper than the surface. Iniquities especially are deeper than common sin, because they are a paradigm of living a law twisted from God's law. Transgressions or wounds may require surgery, but iniquities must be healed from within. The good news is that Jesus was wounded for all of them. He paid the price and has given us the gift of healing.

Sin · Chattah — To miss the mark.

Transgression · Pesha — Willful sin.

Iniquity · Awon — Twisting and perversion of the Law.

WEEK NINE

Jesus won the battle

HEBREWS 4:15 · NIV

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

When Jesus was tempted to turn the stones into bread, His flesh was tempted with very real, physical hunger. He used the Word of God to overcome the temptation. When Jesus was tempted to bow before Satan so that He would be given dominion over all the earth, His soul was tempted — and again, Jesus used the Word of God to overcome the temptation. When Satan tempted Jesus to test God's love for Him by throwing Himself off the temple, His spirit was tempted. Jesus answered the temptation with the Word.

We see the triune being of Jesus being tempted after He had fasted for forty days: body, soul, spirit. Jesus overcame each of them, and He knows how difficult they are. I believe they were very real temptations for Christ, but I also believe that Jesus knew where and when the enemy would attack, and was ready for the attack. Jesus modeled for us how to overcome the enemy: use the Word of God to refute the attack of the enemy. (Interesting point: the enemy waited to attack Jesus when Jesus was likely at one of His weakest moments.)

WEEK NINE

The problem

I don't believe we have a problem with temptation; I believe we have a problem loving God. Remember **John 14:15**: "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*" Putting the emphasis on loving God, we automatically begin to desire to obey Him.

Instead, our viewpoint of God is distorted (which is technically iniquity), and we believe that God's nature isn't loving or caring or merciful or holy or mighty — or any of the wonderful, awesome, and indescribable attributes of God that encompass all that He is. When Moses asked Him what His name is, He simply said, "I AM." He is. Everything you need. Everything you've longed for. If you have a sin problem, I just wish you knew Him the way I know Him. He is better than a best friend. His love and grace and mercy are complete and make me whole. I pray that His love rains down on you so that it can reign in your life.

Part of the common iniquity temptation holds is a pervasive belief that *what God has for us isn't better than what the temptation offers*. I'll pick on those who smoke for a moment. We know people who smoke, yet scientists began studying the correlation between smoking and cancer in the 1920s. The American Cancer Society has a litany of studies proving that cancer is directly correlated to smoking cigarettes. So unless you're over 100 years old and you started smoking when you were around three, you've always known that the first cigarette could lead to habitual smoking, which could lead to health problems, cancer, and even death. Yet young people today still light up their first cigarette — even though the risks are well documented. Why? I believe it's for one of three reasons. I'm not saying that smoking is sinful per se, and I don't believe that it is any more wrong than binge eating, but the behavior is interesting to me because I believe it correlates to how and why Christians knowingly sin. Addressing the reasons we sin can help us address the root of our issues.

- ① Do we believe it's really sin?
- ② We trade our future for the *now*.
- ③ We believe we will escape the consequences.

WEEK NINE

Do we believe it's sin?

I'm going to focus on one particular sin for this lesson, but these principles apply to almost every type of sin of the flesh. Pornography usage has grown to epidemic proportions in the U.S. It is hard to believe that three-fourths of Christian men actively engage in pornography usage, but those are the stark statistics.

CHRISTIAN MEN, AGES 18–30

77% look at pornography at least once per month.

36% view pornography daily.

32% admit to being addicted to pornography.

CHRISTIAN MEN, AGES 31–49

77% looked at pornography at least once in three months while at work.

64% view pornography at least once monthly.

18% admit being addicted to pornography (another 8% think they may be).

MARRIED CHRISTIAN MEN

55% look at pornography at least once monthly.

35% have had an extramarital affair.

318% more likely to have an affair than porn-free couples (couples who watch pornography together).

SOURCES · BARNA GROUP (2018); RELEVANT MAGAZINE, "HOW PORN IS REWIRING THE BRAINS OF A GENERATION."

What do we believe about the sin of lust, pornography, and masturbation? Is looking at pornography wrong? Is masturbation really wrong? What is the harm in it? This is what the Bible says about it. Jesus said this about lust:

MATTHEW 5:28 · NIV

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The Bible provides a clear answer. If you're looking at pornography, there's probably lust nearby. **Romans 13:14** says, "Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." Masturbation requires thoughts that indulge lustful desires. This Scripture answers the question of whether masturbation is right or wrong.

Jordan Peterson says that we know intrinsically that an action is wrong when we hide the behavior. **Proverbs 9:17–18** says, "Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol." It's no mistake that Proverbs — also known as the book of wisdom — dedicates almost three full chapters to sexual sin, and each time states that the fruit of sexual sin is death. We are to judge something by its fruit. *The fruit of pornography leads to neural pathways created in a person's brain that are dangerous and detrimental to the soul.*

WEEK NINE

The future vs. the now

PSALM 65:5 · NIV

*By awesome and wondrous things You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation,
You who are the trust and hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea.*

God is our trust and our hope. He is our inheritance. God has designated for you a good inheritance. The inheritance from God cannot rust or fade or be destroyed by moths (**Matthew 6:19–21**). **Romans 9:13** says that God hated Esau but loved Jacob. Esau despised and sold his birthright to satiate the flesh, while Jacob wrestled with the angel all night. God despises the part of man that will sell his birthright for a bowl of soup, but God blesses those who will wrestle with Him. God has a wonderful gift and future for you. Don't compromise an abundant life for a fleeting temptation of the flesh.

The word *compromise* has two roots: *comp* — which means to give something away for free — and

promise — which means to guarantee or validate something as true and to uphold it. When we compromise to our fleshly urges, we whittle away our promised inheritance.

WEEK NINE

Will we escape the consequences?

Numbers 32:23 says, "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." You cannot hide from God.

His Word is forevermore true and unwavering. Either we believe the Word of God or we don't. When we believe it, we apply it; or we reject it. Ask yourself, "*Do I really believe the Word of God?*" This is the quintessential question. Every believer begins by trusting God for salvation in Jesus Christ and placing Him in the authority position over their life. We cannot call Him Savior unless we call Him Lord. Either He is Lord of your life or someone else is. God will not share lordship with anyone or anything else.

WEEK NINE

Truth

Sexual gratification outside of marriage is sin.

1 PETER 2:11 · NIV

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.

Pornography, lust, and masturbation satiate a hunger while attempting to circumvent the covenant through which sex was given to us from God. These actions objectify women as objects of pleasure, rather than the helpmates of a covenant relationship that God designed them to be for man.

2.2

divorces per thousand couples in America before 1960.

35–50%

today's divorce rate for first marriages — 60% for second marriages, and above 70% after the second.

4×

more likely to be saved: children growing up in a home with a Christian father, compared to those raised by a Christian mother.

SOURCES · CDC.GOV; BARNA GROUP

The enemy hates marriage because it represents the Church. Your mantle as a father, husband, leader, and man is under attack. Many men have compromised themselves through sin, transgression, and iniquity. These only lead to bondage and eventually death. If you, or a man you know, are in bondage, please take these seven steps to freedom.

WEEK NINE

Seven steps to freedom

There is a way out. The enemy will try to convince you that there isn't — but God has already provided the path. These seven steps are how men have walked into freedom before, and how you can too.

STEP 1 · CONFESSION

The enemy will try to make you ashamed of confessing your sin. He knows that keeping it secret means he keeps you in bondage. It is time to break the cycle of recurring sin. You can't white-knuckle your freedom. **James 5:16** says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." The verse doesn't say "could" be healed or "might" be healed. The verse also indicates that the person to whom we confess our sin should be righteous. Now, none of us are righteous — but if you're saved, you are made righteous through the blood of Jesus. We take on His righteousness. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Therefore, your friend who is walking with God is made righteous. We need one another to get through this life. We need accountability brothers.

STEP 2 · ENGAGE IN BATTLE

1 PETER 5:8 · NIV

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Recognize your role as a warrior in the battle against the enemy. God has already defeated the enemy, so the enemy has taken his battle against *you*. Today, men are bombarded with the images of beautiful women. Why? Because the enemy knows that when you succumb to these lusts, he neutralizes you as a warrior in the Kingdom. You have no idea how important you are. You have no idea how powerful you are. The enemy does, and he's trying to take you out of the battle.

If we were all warriors, sitting around a campfire with our swords, spears, and shields, and our enemy had surrounded our camp, we would all be focused on a strategy for victory. We would look one

another in the eye and accept our positions of responsibility. We would do so with a sober mind and a steady hand, knowing that the alternative is death.

- Warriors do not leave their post.
- Warriors don't wreck their families.
- Warriors don't let the enemy into the camp.

STEP 3 · DESIRE YOUR FREEDOM

King David wrote Psalm 51 after Nathan the prophet revealed the weight of his sin to David. Psalm 51 gives us a rubric for repentance. Clearly David had sorrow for his sin and asked for mercy from the only One who can forgive. He asked God to cleanse him and to create a clean heart within him. Afterward, he tells God that he will teach others not to sin, as he himself did. Then he tells God he will worship Him. David outlines the steps for our repentance:

- ① Ask for forgiveness and mercy from God (v. 1).
- ② Ask God to cleanse you from all unrighteousness (vv. 2–5, 10).
- ③ Acknowledge that God has something better for you (vv. 6–9).
- ④ Ask God to turn your sin into a service (vv. 12–13).
- ⑤ Worship God (vv. 14–19).

PSALM 51:1–6 · BSB

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your loving devotion; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. ⁴Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be proved right when You speak and blameless when You judge.

⁵Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. ⁶Surely You desire truth in the inmost being; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

PSALM 51:7–13 · BSB

⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. ⁹Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. ¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You.

PSALM 51:14–19 · BSB

¹⁴*Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness.* ¹⁵*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.*

¹⁶*For You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You take no pleasure in burnt offerings.* ¹⁷*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

¹⁸*In Your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem.* ¹⁹*Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Your altar.*

STEP 4 · GUARD YOUR HEART

Have a battle plan. No great warrior walks into battle without a plan. Your battle plan should include letting someone know that you are in a battle. There is no shame in needing help. *Create barriers of entry to your sin.* Go get a flip phone with no internet access if you need. Put accountability software on your devices; close your social media accounts. Cut off all avenues to your sin that are possible. There is accountability software you can download that will allow someone you trust to see everything you click on or view. Give someone permission to look at your phone and your browser history. Give someone permission to check your accounts for purchases. Armies don't take their enemies for granted when life and death are at stake.

PROVERBS 4:23 · NLT

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

Your battle plan should include creating boundaries for yourself. The Bible says to chop off your hand or gouge out your eye if it causes you to sin (**Matthew 5:30**). That's pretty radical — but it's clear that we should do whatever it takes to keep ourselves from sinning. Billy Graham would have someone check out his hotel room to make sure no woman was hiding in it before he would walk in, because he was aware that the enemy was trying to take him out. He wouldn't even ride alone on an elevator with a woman. I encourage you to share this battle with your wife so that she knows you're willing to get radical in order to keep yourself far from temptation. Why fight a battle tomorrow that we can eliminate today?

STEP 5 · RUN FROM TEMPTATION

Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife (**Genesis 39:11–12**). **James 4:7** says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." It doesn't say to stand and fight temptation. It says to resist, to flee, to *run away*. When you see temptation coming, don't trust in your own strength. Philippians 3 says we should put no confidence in the flesh. Part of winning is understanding your own weakness against sin. Many times, the cycle of sin starts with temptation, but becomes manifest when we place

confidence in our own ability to overcome it.

God has provided a pathway for your freedom — and it's not just silent and solo resistance. You have a choice.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 · NIV

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Did you catch that? A way out doesn't mean the strength to fight — a way out means to *run*. No matter how strong you are, realize that the physically strongest man in the Bible was Samson, and he fell because of sexual sin. No matter how smart you are, the wisest man in the Bible was Solomon, and he fell because of sexual sin. No matter how holy you are, the man after God's own heart was David, and he fell because of sexual sin. These three men should serve as a warning to us that we cannot resist on our own. We must flee from temptation. You aren't going to outwit Satan by yourself.

STEP 6 · DO YOUR PART

In 2 Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat, the king of Israel, was informed that there were several armies assembled and ready to attack. These armies were enormous, and there was no way that Israel could defeat them on their own. Jehoshaphat called for a fast, and the nation fasted. Then they worshipped as they went into battle, and the Lord brought confusion upon the opposing armies so that they killed each other and fled. God defeated the opposing armies before they even stepped on the battlefield.

2 CHRONICLES 20:15 · NIV

He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem. This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'"

God will fight your battle for you — but you must do your part. Put on the whole armor of God and prepare for battle, but know that the battle is His.

STEP 7 · ACCOUNTABILITY

ECCLESIASTES 4:12 · NIV

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

We need each other. We need each other without judgment or the religious spirit of guilt and shame. We need each other to embrace our weaknesses, for where you are weak, another has strength. God will place men in your path that can help you along your journey.

WEEK NINE

We need each other

In August of 2021, I had quite a bout with COVID-19 and almost died. About ten days into it, my friend Kelly called me and said that he felt like the enemy was really going after me. He told me he was going to fast until I was healed — and more than that, he was going to call his small group and have them fast for me as well.

That night I took a turn for the worse. About 2 a.m., my wife reached over and couldn't feel a pulse, but she could tell I was breathing. She called the ambulance. When I got to the hospital, my blood pressure was 55/37. I believe that I'm alive today because my friend Kelly prayed and fasted for me. Men, we need friends like that. We need accountability brothers who will catch us when we stumble and pick us up when we fall.