

Sexual Integrity

LEADERS & STAFF



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SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Leader's Guide**

How to use "Sexual Integrity" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

Welcome to BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of Leadership Resources at Christianity Today, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS is not just another program. Each theme contains materials on the topic you choose—no tedious program to follow. The materials work when you want, where you want and the way you want them to. They're completely flexible and easy to use.

You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with board members or with other committees or groups of leaders. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS at the beginning of a board meeting or committee meeting:

1. Select a learning tool. In this theme of "Sexual Integrity," you'll find multiple types of handouts from which to choose:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| ◆ Bible study | ◆ case study | ◆ activity |
| ◆ interview | ◆ devotionals | ◆ resources |
| ◆ assessment tools | ◆ how-to articles | ◆ retreat plan |

2. Select a handout. Suppose, for example, you want to consider the topic from a broad perspective. Select "Living in a Modern Corinth" (p. 4–5). Or perhaps you're interested in helping your leaders set guidelines for counseling and ministry with members of the opposite sex. Consult "Setting Ethical Codes" (p. 18).

3. Photocopy the handout. Let's say you selected "Living in a Modern Corinth." Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

4. Prepare for the discussion. We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

5. Lead the discussion. Most handouts can be read within five minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes (except the Bible study and activity, which may take longer). Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

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SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Three Ways to Live**

Biblical examples for being in—but not of—a fallen world

Jonah 3, Esther 2:1–18, Daniel 1

Sex pervades our culture. It sells clothes, cosmetics, boats, books, cars, movies, and music. In our permissive society, God’s good purposes for sex are distorted and misunderstood in myriad ways. Living in a culture of sexual immorality requires wisdom and strength, and a good example. We are blessed that God has given us all that we need.

Getting Started

When did you first realize that Christians had a different sexual standard than society?

Following an Example

Jonah. (Read *Jonah 3:1–4:3*) Jonah was told by God to preach judgment on the people of Assyria—a wicked nation, and one of Israel’s greatest enemies. At this, the prophet was caught in a conundrum; first of all, he would be an enemy in his opponent’s front yard. And second, Jonah knew that if God commanded him to preach, God expected the Assyrians to repent. If the Assyrians repented, they would no longer be the evil empire that the Israelites could justifiably hate.

We are often like Jonah when we approach our culture’s sexual immorality. We don’t like it. We throw stones at it. We preach against it. Like Jonah, we can justify our own pettiness and hatred by covering it over with supposedly righteous anger.

- *What is the proper attitude to hold as we reflect on the depravity of culture when it comes to sex?*

Esther. (Read *Esther 2:1–18*) Esther is often extolled as a kind of folk hero. But, at least at the beginning of her story, her actions are less than heroic.

Consider the times: King Xerxes ruled from 485–465 B.C.—50 years after King Cyrus allowed and urged Jews to return to Palestine. Esther and Mordecai remained in Babylon because life there was easier. Also, think through what it meant for Mordecai and Esther to invest themselves in the “Miss Universe” pageant organized for Xerxes: it arose out of sexually charged male chauvinism, its primary criteria was physical attraction, and it required Esther to cloak her religious and ethnic identity.

Too often, we follow the negative example of Esther. We compromise and assimilate with our culture. Especially in sexual matters, Christians have the same general statistics as the surrounding culture for adultery, cohabiting outside of marriage, and viewing pornography.

- *What are some ways that you feel tempted to acquiesce to the negative examples of sex in our culture? Reflect on the humility and caution that should arise out of the statistics above.*

Daniel. (Read *Daniel 1*) Daniel lived in the time between Jonah and Esther. Though he and his friends were stranded in Babylon, they retained their identity. They lived in the Babylonian world, but were clearly never of it. Daniel stands between the extremes of Esther and Jonah. He had neither Jonah’s surly, haughty ways, nor Esther’s coy, accommodating manner. He had simple clarity and quiet integrity.

- *Look at Daniel chapter 1 again. How do the lessons about integrity and purity carry over into our lives as we try to live with God-honoring sexual integrity?*

—MARK BUCHANAN; adapted from “Living in a Culture of Sexual Immorality.” Originally appeared on our sister site, www.ChristianBibleStudies.com

Discuss

1. What is the difference between imposing morality and calling others to purity?
2. Is there, or should there be, a uniquely Christian cultural lifestyle, complete with clothing styles, dating habits, and marriage practices? Why or why not?
3. How does Daniel’s approach offer the best opportunity for others to see the love and truth of God?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Living in a Modern Corinth***Actively pursuing purity in a sex-saturated world*

1 Thessalonians 4:3–7

*Randy Alcorn has a keen ability to speak pastorally on a variety of topics. He is the author of nearly 30 books, including *The Purity Principle*, and hundreds of articles, which can be found at www.epm.org and www.randyalcorn.blogspot.com/. He spoke with *Building Church Leaders* on the importance of sexual integrity for churches, leaders, and families today.*

How did you begin writing and speaking on the topic of sexual purity?

I remember speaking at a Bible college as a visiting lecturer in the early 1980s. During one week of teaching, I had three different female students approach me and confess that they each were having an affair with a youth pastor or senior pastor in their church. It was like cold water thrown in my face. I think the Lord strategically brought those contacts into my life to help me realize I needed to address this issue.

Now that was in the 1980s, when we didn't yet have the internet. We were in the very early days of renting videos. At that point, I started comparing our culture to ancient Corinth, where you could go out into the streets and supposedly find a thousand priestesses of Aphrodite—prostitutes who would throw themselves at men passing by. Today, with TVs, VCRs, DVDs, especially the internet, and now even cell phones, the immediacy and the amassing of pornography is greater than anything we could have imagined.



Randy Alcorn
“The blessings of purity are so great”

As our culture becomes more sexually charged, why do leaders shy away from the topic of sexual purity?

I think one of the main reasons is that Christian leaders have lowered the bar in their own lives—they feel like hypocrites, and they're desensitized to addressing it in the lives of their people. If a leader is not living a life characterized by sexual purity, how can that person teach others to be pure?

How can leaders keep standards high in their own lives and lead by example?

Leading by example starts in the home. I see the provocative clothing many young Christian women wear and say, “Moms, you are leading your daughters into immorality when you allow them to dress that way.”

How quick are our leaders to change the channel when impurity presents itself on TV? Do we lead by example in our personal lives and with our families? That's where discipleship and setting an example starts.

How can leaders take a strong stand for purity without becoming legalists?

When I talk with pastors on this, I say, “This is not just about right and wrong; this is about smart and stupid; wisdom and foolishness.” We have to help everybody understand that this is not only about the glory of God; it is about our good.

I take what some people would consider drastic measures to keep myself from sexual impurity. After many years of seeing the devastating consequences of immorality in the lives of person after person—including church leaders—I've come to say, “You know what, that could happen to me, too.”

How is sexual integrity about embracing something good?

Sexual purity is so rewarding. It's so satisfying. The joy, the freedom, the satisfaction of being with God and doing the right thing—the blessings of purity are so great. My two daughters guarded their purity and protected themselves, and, as a reward, their marriages have been blessed.

My wife and I once drove along California's Highway 1—along these cliffs next to the Pacific Ocean. It was a windy road. And parts of it did not have guardrails; it was terrifying—cliffs above and below. Think of the image of a guardrail as you drive along a cliff. Imagine you hit the guardrail, got out of your car and realized that you dented a fender. Would you curse the guardrail? No. It saved your life. God has given us guardrails for sexual purity to help keep us from falling. ➤

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Are leaders at special risk of sexual temptation?

A lot of pastors and leaders still don't understand how vulnerable they are. If you don't know your vulnerability, then you'll take unnecessary risks. I remember years ago there was a news story about an international hit list. Paid assassins were being hired to kill world leaders and, in a few cases, were successful. Well, Satan has a hit list. And people in Christian leadership are at the top of it. If they go down, they take others with them.

Another issue is the power that leaders have, especially pastors. Power puts us in a place of influence and we risk an abuse of power. Many years ago I was counseling a woman in our church and, all of a sudden, I realized from something she said that she was attracted to me. But what scared me was this: I enjoyed the fact that she was attracted to me. In that moment I had a decision to make. She wanted to keep meeting. But I immediately had to call off our sessions and tell my wife. Had I convinced myself I wasn't vulnerable, I wouldn't have taken steps to protect myself from temptation.

Many churches target sexual purity discussions at young people. Are they doing justice to the temptations?

No, we have to do a lot more. The battle is much bigger than it used to be because of the nature of our technological Corinth. I think it starts in the home, with parents, pastors, and leaders. We need a model for training the whole church. We need a climate in which we raise the bar together. It's always easier to do it together than by yourself. There needs to be classes, sermon series, Sunday schools and small-group lessons on purity.

How can churches approach sexual integrity in a way that acknowledges the complexity without minimizing the Bible's clarity?

We need to cut to the heart and see that, in and of itself, the issue isn't complex. The complexity comes with the prevalence of the temptation sources and the way they have penetrated our culture and our lives.

But by all means, start early. It is too late to begin thinking about sexual purity when a person is in his or her teenage years. We need to rely on the clarity of Scripture. Finally, we need examples. We need footsteps to follow. We need to hear the stories and give visibility. We will have huge breakthroughs when people tell their stories. We have to do this carefully, but, when people hear stories, then they will get the message.

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Discuss

1. Do we, as leaders, acknowledge our vulnerability to sexual sin?
2. Why is it important to talk about sexual purity in terms of our private lives and the example we set in the home?
3. How have you felt the rewards of sexual purity in your own life? How have you felt the consequences of impurity?

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Precautions in Place

Are you taking the practical steps to reduce the risk of sexual misconduct?

Ephesians 5:3

Sexual integrity is an issue of thoughts, desires, and actions. Precautionary measures can protect church leaders from lustful temptations and actions by removing them from certain situations. These measures can also lower the risk of false accusations, which are capable of devastating a congregation. Below, Richard Hammar sets out several methods for reducing the risk of sexual misconduct and false accusations. Review each method and rate how well your leadership team upholds these precautions.

	well	We do this: adequately	poorly
➤ The “third person” rule. Adopt a policy prohibiting any male leader from counseling privately with an unaccompanied female (that is, opposite sex counseling) unless a third person is present. The third person may be the minister’s or counselor’s spouse, another minister on staff, or a mature and trusted church employee (preferably female).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Women counsel women. Since the vast majority of cases of inappropriate sexual behavior involve male counselors and female counselees, churches can significantly reduce their risk by using women to counsel women.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Windows. Install a window in church offices, making all counseling sessions clearly visible to other staff or leaders. This means that the church should implement a policy limiting such meetings to office hours when others are present and visible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Open doors. Conduct counseling sessions or one-on-one meetings in rooms with an open door, so that others can clearly see everyone in the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Video cameras. Some churches have installed a video camera (without audio) in the offices where counseling and private meetings occur. The video can be transmitted to a monitor in another location in the church where a church employee can observe it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Boundaries. Educate your team, especially your counselors, on the principle of transference, which occurs when a person who is being counseled projects relationships, roles, images, and experience with other people onto the counselor. Transference can be misinterpreted as affection, which can then lead to an inappropriate relationship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Time limits. Limit counseling sessions to 45 minutes and permit no more than five counseling sessions with the same person during a calendar year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—RICHARD HAMMAR; excerpted from our sister publication, CHURCH LAW & TAX REPORT, © Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.ChurchLawToday.com

Discuss

1. What did we score well on? What scores would we like to improve?
2. How can practical steps like these make a difference when approaching the topic of sexual purity?
3. Which principles have you known to be beneficial in your own experience?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**The Real and Untold Cost**

The fallout of sexual sin reaches far and wide.

1 Corinthians 10:12

Randy Alcorn is a prominent speaker and writer. Formerly a pastor who saw several colleagues and parishioners fall into sexual sin, he developed this list for times when sexual temptation creeps up on him. It reviews the consequences of his actions—including their potential impact on his wife and family.

Use this as a personal assessment. Review the list and place a checkmark in each consequence that resonates with you. Where Randy used specific names, cross them out and replace them with people from your own life. At the bottom there is space for you to enter your own ideas for reasons to avoid sexual sin. When your entire team has finished the exercise, answer the questions below as a group.

- Grieving the Lord who redeemed me.
- Dragging his sacred name into the mud.
- One day having to look Jesus, the Righteous Judge, in the face and give an account of my actions.
- Following in the footsteps of these people whose immorality forfeited their ministries and caused me to shudder: (list names)
- Inflicting untold hurt on Nanci, my best friend and loyal wife.
- Losing Nanci's respect and trust.
- Hurting my beloved daughters, Karina and Angie.
- Destroying my example and credibility with my children, and nullifying both present and future efforts to teach them to obey God ("Why listen to a man who betrayed Mom and us?").
- If my blindness should continue or my wife be unable to forgive, perhaps losing my wife and my children forever.
- Causing shame to my family ("Why isn't Daddy a pastor anymore?").
- Losing self-respect.
- Creating a form of guilt awfully hard to shake. Even though God would forgive me, would I forgive myself?
- Forming memories and flashbacks that could plague future intimacy with my wife.
- Wasting years of ministry training and experience for a long time, maybe permanently.
- Forfeiting the effect of years of witnessing to my father and reinforcing his distrust for ministers that has only begun to soften by my example—but that would harden, perhaps permanently, because of my immorality.
- Undermining the faithful example and hard work of other Christians in our community.
- Bringing great pleasure to Satan, the enemy of God and all that is good.
- Heaping judgment and endless difficulty on the person with whom I committed adultery.
- Possibly bearing the physical consequences of such diseases as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, and AIDS; perhaps infecting Nanci.

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- Possibly causing pregnancy, with the personal and financial implications, including a lifelong reminder of my sin.
- Bringing shame and hurt to these fellow pastors and leaders: (list names)
- Causing shame and hurt to these friends, especially those I've led to Christ and discipled: (list names)
- Invoking shame and lifelong embarrassment upon myself.
- _____
- _____
- _____

—RANDY ALCORN; excerpted from our sister publication, LEADERSHIP journal, © 1996 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.LeadershipJournal.net

Discuss

1. Reflect on the first consequence on the list. Why is grieving the Lord an important place to start?
2. How does casting sexual sin in this light change the temptation it brings?
3. Do any of these consequences matter in the heat of temptation? What are some important steps that can help us bring rational thinking into the clouded logic of sexual sin?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Overturning the Myths About Sex**

Is your teaching taking a stand against these false teachings?

Psalm 51:6

Our culture puts forward many lies about sex. Below, a Christian scholar analyzes two of those lies and how they are presented to us, especially on TV. After reading each myth, reflect on whether or not your church teaches the truth in that area. Then, in the space provided, write down one way your church could take on that topic in the next few months.

Myth 1: Sex Is Easy

On TV, people often engage in sex spontaneously, without forethought or verbal communication. Many characters in popular film and TV base attraction and affection on visual signals alone, suggesting that sexuality is a trait separate from relationship, character, or commitment. Similarly, masters of technique are shown as the best sexual partners, while virgins, awkward lovers, or people with sexual dysfunction make for great humor. Even nonsexual things like clothes, food, and music become subjects for sexual innuendoes, joking, and arousal. If sex isn't easy for you, or if you think too hard about sexual choices, something must be comically wrong with you.

The truth is that sex is hard work. Building a relationship that can contain the intimacy, vulnerability, joy, and struggles of sex takes effort. It also takes community, a network of friends, family, and believers who support the lovers in their marriage. Just like other kinds of labor—parenting, working at a job, caring for the ill, or volunteering—working at a marriage is God-blessed, fulfilling, and worthwhile. If a particular act of intercourse is spontaneous and easy, it's because the partners have worked to build a relationship within which such love can be expressed.

- | | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ <i>We teach that God-honoring sex and intimacy come through hard work.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ <i>We could further teach this by...</i> _____ | | | |
-

Myth 2: Sex Is Free

On TV, sex is about pleasure and beauty. Like all things beautiful on TV, the most pleasurable and visually consumable parts of sex are shown, and the rest are neglected.

In a different way (but within the same myth) Christians often perpetuate a white wedding story, as though we were all virgins when we married, and as though none of us have sexually transmitted diseases, past abortions or adoptions, or prior marriages. When we point fingers at presumably worldly people who bear the consequences of sexual sin, we often deepen the shame and silence of friends and family members who carry those consequences in secret. Silence and shame sometimes have more potential to damage a marriage than the sin itself.

The truth is that sex is costly. It requires a willingness to give gifts of trust, vulnerability, intimacy, and honesty to one's spouse. It involves an openness to children, whether through human planning or God's providence. It requires a maturity to bear the other person's burdens—physical or emotional sexual trauma, the memories of sexual partners, sexually transmitted diseases, or side effects of medications, childbirth, or disease.

- | | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ <i>We teach the high cost—and high rewards—of sex.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ <i>We could further teach this by...</i> _____ | | | |
-

When Christians are silent and TV is loud, it's obvious which message will be heard. We evangelicals are doing a good job of telling the truth about God's plan for abstinence for the single and monogamy for the

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married. We must, however, tell more truth. We need to read our culture closely, looking beyond the messages that promote nonmarital sex to the deeper, undergirding lies. Sex is one of God's good gifts. All require hard work, and all are costly in some way. Yet when enjoyed in good stewardship as gifts, they are some of life's great blessings. That's the truth about sex.

—JENELL WILLIAMS PARIS; excerpted from our sister publication, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, © 2001 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.ChristianityToday.com\ct

Discuss

1. Why do many churches stop teaching the truth about sex after high school?
2. What are other myths our culture teaches about sex? What kind of teaching do we offer to counter those myths?
3. How often does our church discuss sexual integrity or sexual purity? Are we doing justice to how “loud” it is in our culture?

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Being Moral Isn't Enough*Before a moral failure comes an ethical lapse.*

1 Corinthians 10:23

The Case I once counseled a pastor of many years' experience. Six months before he came to see me, the husband of a 38-year-old woman from his congregation had died suddenly of a heart attack. The young widow needed grief counseling, so the pastor agreed to see her weekly. The widow (let's call her Carol) found great comfort in the counseling.

One day she brought Don, the pastor, a small gift—an expensive, gold-trimmed pen that had belonged to her husband. “I just want to show my appreciation for all the help you've given me,” she told him. Don was a little surprised, but not wanting to offend Carol, he accepted the gift graciously.

A week later Carol insisted that Don have her husband's new golf clubs. “It's what he would have wanted me to do,” she countered when he at first demurred.

Then she asked whether they could meet twice a week, because she was “getting so much out of the time together.” Without realizing what he was doing, Don acquiesced. Week after week, a few more gifts accompanied Carol, who was becoming increasingly dependent on the time spent with Don.

- What Would You Do?**
- Where can you see Don's actions taking him?
 - How would you advise Don?

What Happened Early one morning, Don woke with a sudden realization: This relationship with Carol is getting unhealthy, and I've been encouraging it! Carol had begun to transfer all her affection and needs from her deceased husband to him. He panicked. *How will I ever get out of this mess?* he thought.

Don experienced firsthand a strange paradox in Christian ministry: we can be supersensitive to sin and immoral behaviors, but we are often oblivious to the need for ethical boundaries. This partially accounts for the fall of upright, spiritual, and well-intentioned leaders. We can be so preoccupied with discerning whether something is sinful that we ignore the trickier question: Is this action a stepping stone to sin, even though it may not be inherently sinful?

—ARCHIBALD HART; excerpted from our sister publication, LEADERSHIP journal, © 1988 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.Leadershipjournal.net

- Discuss**
1. Why is it important to think in terms of ethical boundaries and not only right and wrong?
 2. At what point would you have stepped in and advised Don to act differently?
 3. How does this relate to the passage in which Paul writes, “everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial”?

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Fences Bring Freedom*How boundaries can liberate us.*

Proverbs 6:20–28

Read *My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.*

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life. Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? (Proverbs 6:20–28)

Comprehend We live in the same house that we did when our daughters were small. Now they're grown and we have four grandsons. All those years our daughters were growing up, we never built a fence in our yard. There was no need.

But when we started having grandsons everything changed. I would go out and play ball with my three-year-old grandson, and he would run after the ball. And as he would approach the road that runs past our house, I would yell, "Stop! Don't go to the road!" Whenever we'd play in the yard I would be anxiously watching the children, raising my voices and watching them every second.

Eventually, we had a fence built. When that happened, we stopped needing to watch the children every minute. We could listen to them laugh and we didn't need to raise our voices out of fear. They also realized that they could do more than before—when we had no fence, they couldn't go near the street. Now they know how far they can go (up to the fence) and they know that they can't go farther.

Those kids love the freedom and joy of having boundaries, and their parents and grandparents love it, too. The fence is actually liberating.

The same principle applies to our purity—especially our sexual purity: Build fences. Protect yourself. Protect your children. Protect your family. Protect your church. Then you don't have to always be looking over your shoulder. You can live with the freedom of knowing what the lines are, and you can live with a clean conscience of not having crossed the boundaries.

—RANDY ALCORN

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- Discuss**
1. How have rules and boundaries been a doorway to freedom in your life?
 2. How has God's Word acted in the same way?
 3. What is one boundary that you can construct in your life that will protect you from sexual sin?

Pray Heavenly Father, help us to love your commands and follow them—not as legalists, but as disciples. Help us to discern appropriate boundaries, and give us joy as we live within them. Amen.

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“But I’m an Exception!”

Putting ourselves above the rules opens the door to failure.

1 Peter 5:2–4

Read *Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:2–4)*

Comprehend One evening I stopped by the church to encourage those who were there rehearsing for the spring musical. I didn’t intend to stay long, so I parked my car next to the entrance. After a few minutes, I ran back to my car and drove home.

The next morning I found a note in my office mailbox. It read:

A small thing, but Tuesday night when you came to rehearsal, you parked in the “No Parking” area. A reaction from one of my crew (who did not recognize you until after you got out of the car) was, “There’s another jerk parking in the ‘No Parking’ area!” We try hard not to allow people—even workers—to park anywhere other than the parking lots. I would appreciate your cooperation, too.

It was signed by a member of our maintenance staff.

I’m sorry to report this staff member is no longer with us. He was late coming back for lunch the next day, and we had to let him go. You have to draw the line somewhere...

I’m kidding. Actually he’s still very much with us, and his stock went up in my book because he had the courage to write me about what could have been a slippage in my character.

He was right on the mark. As I drove up that night, I had thought, *I shouldn’t park here, but after all, I am the pastor.* That translates: *I’m an exception to the rules.* But that employee wouldn’t allow me to sneak down the road labeled “I’m an exception.”

I’m not the exception to church rules, nor am I the exception to sexual rules or financial rules or any of God’s rules. As a leader, I am not an exception; I’m to be the example. According to Scripture, I am to live in such a way that I can say, “Follow me. Park where I park. Live as I live.”

That’s why we all need people like my staff member to hold us accountable in even the small matters. Because when we keep the minor matters in line, we don’t stumble over the larger ones.

Just when I was starting to think, *I’m an exception*, somebody on our staff cared enough to say, “Don’t do it, Bill, not even in one small area.” That’s love.

—BILL HYBELS

Excerpted from our sister publication, LEADERSHIP journal, © 1988 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.Leadershipjournal.net

- Discuss**
1. Are you ever tempted to avoid standards and safeguards in your spiritual life? Describe what you’ve experienced.
 2. How can we help each other avoid a mindset that says, “You’re an exception”?
 3. How is this kind of accountability built into our definition of doing ministry together? How can we strengthen the accountability we seek from one another?

Pray Loving Father, keep us from attitudes and actions that set us above the wisdom you teach and the example you put in place. Help us to pursue righteousness and integrity together—in community. As iron sharpens iron, may we sharpen one another, humble one another, and encourage one another to pursue Christian integrity.

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Before the Next Sex Scandal**

How your church and your pastor may prevent the predictable.

by Christianity Today

Stories abound of pastors snared by sexual transgression. The problems transcend theology and ecclesiology. A pervasive culture of sensuality and disregard for communal accountability guarantees that some pastors will struggle with all sorts of sexual temptation. Toss into this mix the internet's availability and anonymity, which have spread the reach of pornography and clandestine sexual encounters. The challenge to help our pastors and leaders resist temptation demands a wise church response. First, we must enact clear and enforceable standards that will guard against temptation. Then, our churches must implement plans for discipline and restoration when possible.

Know the Temptations

Evangelist Billy Graham knew many leaders who succumbed to temptation on the preaching circuit. That's why in 1948, Graham met with his evangelistic team in Modesto, California, and discussed how to protect themselves against smearing the gospel of Christ. They brainstormed the particular temptations faced by traveling evangelists and identified wealth, prestige, slander, and sex.

They fought back by setting rigorous standards: They would not meet, travel, or eat alone with any woman but their wives. The rule created some awkward moments. Graham relented a bit and in 1993 ate with then-First Lady Hillary Clinton at a table in the center of a restaurant. But the rules worked. The so-called Modesto Manifesto protected the men against their ignoble impulses and helped rehabilitate the image of gospel preachers.

Gordon MacDonald, who succumbed to an affair years ago, writes that the increasing demands and stresses of pastoral leadership will trigger even more cases of moral failure. He says pastors must find peer groups and seek mentor couples to monitor their marriages and family lives. Taking preemptive action would do much to protect our pastors, their families, their churches, and the appeal of the gospel.

Understand the Risks

Sadly, even the best preemptive plans will sometimes fail, and many pastors will not submit to such strict rules. LEADERSHIP reports that up to 12 percent of pastors have admitted to "inappropriate physical involvement outside marriage." And 38 percent of pastors said internet pornography tempts them. Only a minority will fall, but the threat is strong enough that our churches must prepare for the worst.

Tragically, unaccountable pastors and leaders are more prone to fall, and uncooperative churches are more likely to mishandle the discipline and restoration process. With God's help, together we can ward off temptation and protect our pastors, churches, and the vulnerable for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

—Excerpted from an editorial in our sister publication, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, © 2006 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.christianitytoday.com/ct

Discuss

1. Does our church foster accountability between spouses and same-sex friends?
2. What kind of cautions should the statistics above create in us?
3. How is the reputation of our church at risk if we're not paying close attention to standards for sexual integrity?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY

Private Sins of Public Ministry

3 church leaders discuss lust's power and how leaders can overcome it.

Philippians 4:8

What guises do sexual temptations take for leaders? How can they be dealt with? To address these questions, LEADERSHIP journal gathered individuals with significant ministry experience and asked them to respond.

LEADERSHIP asked:

- Bud Palmberg, former pastor, Mercer Island Covenant Church near Seattle, Washington.
- Archibald Hart, Senior Professor of Psychology and Dean Emeritus at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.
- Louis McBurney, a psychiatrist and the founder of Marble Retreat, a counseling center for clergy, located on the mountain above Redstone, Colorado.

Leadership: These days, when terms like “Sin” and “Taboo” are used to sell products, is temptation something to take seriously?

Hart: It’s absolutely critical that we assume we all can fall. If anyone thinks he’s strong, I wouldn’t trust him anywhere near a church. I tell my students every man has his price, every woman her price. We need an attitude of humility in recognizing the force we’re dealing with. Out there somewhere is a person who matches that price with the right personality, the right attractiveness, the right characteristics so that, given the right circumstances, each of us is capable of succumbing. None of us is beyond the reach of temptation.

Leadership: Are passions something that happen to us, or are they the product of a conscious choice?

Hart: Erotic passion happens. But the fact that you feel arousal is irrelevant. That’s a conditioned response. It’s going to happen. When you recognize that passion, however, you have the choice: Are you going to encourage it or channel it in some other way?

Too many people are trying to prevent the arousal, the erotic feeling. And that’s not where the battle ought to be.

McBurney: The battle is with this attitude: *I’m experiencing these emotions; therefore I must satisfy them. They’re part of my identity.* Among Christians, the attitude is, *These feelings are from God. Who are you to say otherwise?*

Leadership: What about sexual thoughts—are they particularly harmful?

Hart: The sexuality in our culture is neurotic, always moving toward the obsessional. And sexual fantasy, in my opinion, is dangerous because it leads to obsessional thinking. People become preoccupied with sexual thoughts; they’re unable to let them go once they’ve been gripped by them. You don’t control them; they control you.

Again and again I’ve encountered ministers who are incapable of avoiding pornography; they crave that stimulus. It begins with feeding the mind on sexual fantasies, and it can lead to a distorted sexuality and a desire to pursue something ever more exciting, ever more thrilling.

Palmberg: And the outer limit of fantasy life becomes more and more sick, more and more violent. In the 20 years I was involved in ministry in urban centers, I saw what used to pass for the outer limits of eroticism become available in the corner market.

Hart: Fantasy is the beginning, I think, of perversion. Speaking personally, it’s been a long but steady struggle to limit the amount of fantasy I indulge in. I’m always fighting it, because I know it ultimately robs me of the genuine pleasure I can get out of simple sex—not having to embellish it with novelty or taboo. Our culture is on a kick, always wanting to add some new excitement, some new thrills.

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Leadership: How do you control sexual fantasies or set boundaries?

Hart: Impure thoughts must be redirected. You can't defeat impure thoughts by praying that they'll go away. That will just make you more obsessed with them.

Palmberg: I think in terms of what I call "the principle of displacement." Philippians 4:8 says, "Whatever things are true and honorable and just, pure and lovely and gracious, think on these things." And it doesn't have to be some kind of a great spiritual thought that you have in your mind.

When a fantasy thrusts itself into my consciousness, I can choose to replace it with something good or just—or maybe mentally replay a recent golf game. I don't repress the sexual thought or deny I have it. I simply choose not to spend any time on it.

McBurney: Ever since my adolescence and premarital days, I've had an active fantasy life, and when it persisted into my marriage, one of the things I found helpful was to make sure my wife, Melissa, was always the object of those fantasies. That's a choice I could make rather than allow it to be any other woman. I think that's helped me concentrate on her as the object of my affection and my sexual drive.

Yes, stray fantasies will enter your mind, but thought life is still a matter of volitional control. This fits with what Paul said in Romans 12. "Renewing your mind" involves stopping old, familiar thought patterns and entering into a new course. When thoughts enter, you have two options: allowing the fantasy to proceed and feeding it (which neurologically, strengthens it), or sidetracking it and making other associations.

You always have that choice.

—Excerpted from our sister publication, *LEADERSHIP* journal, © 1988 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.leadershipjournal.net

Discuss

1. What do you think of Archibald Hart's comment, "every man has his price, every woman her price"?
2. What are some principles of displacement that have worked for you?
3. Given the culture we live in—how can we differentiate between sexual thoughts and feelings that are natural, and sexual thoughts and feelings that are lustful?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Taking the Upper Hand**

Victory over temptation begins with reflection, prayer, and boundaries.

Romans 12:2

Given the right circumstances, the best among us is capable of unimaginable sins. The sooner we come to grips with this painful truth, the sooner we can begin the business of overcoming temptation.

Identifying the Danger

Recognizing our propensity for sin is the first step. The apostle Paul warns us of the danger of overconfidence, “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Overconfidence can set us up for a moral failure. The two most common ways are spiritual naiveté and risk taking.

The spiritually naive leader is simply out of touch with his own humanity. Succumbing to a sexual sin is to him inconceivable. When the inevitable temptation comes, it blind-sides him, and the aftermath devastates him. The risk-taker, on the other hand, is an adventurer. He recognizes the possibility of a moral failure, but he believes he can handle it. The risk-taker overestimates his moral resolve. Both share a fatal flaw—overconfidence.

Taking Precautions

As a young pastor, I soon discovered my own feet of clay. For several years, I simply accepted disconcerting and distracting emotions as inevitable—the price of being an effective pastor and counselor. I prayed the temptations would in time fade. But as the years passed, they grew in intensity. I finally concluded that if I didn’t do something quickly, I too might become a casualty of immorality. With that understanding, I implemented a number of guidelines to protect both the counselee and myself.

I also noticed that succumbing to sexual sin is seldom sudden. Rather it is the culmination of a series of small temptations. In his book, *As For Me and My House*, Walter Wangerin, Jr. writes, “When a desire is born in us, we have a choice... We can carefully refuse its existence altogether, since it needs our complicity to exist... Or else we can attend to it, think about it, fantasize it into greater existence—feed it!”

Here are some possible warning signs that temptation is creeping in:

- A growing fascination with this person.
- A heightened sense of anticipation as meetings near.
- A growing desire to confide in the other person, especially about your frustrations and disappointments in marriage.
- An increased sense of responsibility for the other person’s happiness and well-being.
- Emotional distancing from your spouse.

The moment a warning signal is tripped, we must act with ruthless urgency. As Thomas à Kempis pointed out in the *Imitation of Christ*, “The only time to stop temptation is at the first point of recognition. If one begins to argue and engage in a hand-to-hand combat, temptation almost always wins the day.”

—RICHARD EXLEY; excerpted from *Dangers, Toils, and Snares* © 1994 Christianity Today.

Discuss

1. Describe a time when you were tempted because of naivety or carelessness.
2. Reflect on the Thomas à Kempis statement above. Can you relate to his observation?
3. How have you learned that, in Exley’s words, your feet are made of clay?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Setting Ethical Codes**

Clergy and counselors have standards that can apply to all church leaders.

1 Timothy 4:7–8

Ethical principles can be useful as leaders try to determine boundaries and keep themselves from falling into sin. In this article, psychologist Archibald Hart adapts four important codes that have become standard practice in many fields.

The principle of accountability. We can trace the crisis of integrity today not so much to blatant dishonesty as to a tendency toward autonomy and independence. There is a natural tendency in all of us to want to avoid being subject to control by others. Accountability to another, even when you are the top leader of an organization or church, is the only way to safeguard against poor judgment, unconscious motivations, and self-deception. That accountability must be regular, personal, face-to-face, and transparent.

In the realm of sexuality, I advocate an open accountability with one's spouse or peer group. This is particularly important when counseling the opposite sex. Professional counselors hold themselves accountable to another when they sense a risk. By discussing their feelings or their impressions of a client, they force themselves to confront deeper thoughts or intentions. It's amazing how quickly you defuse an attraction or lustful desire when you force yourself to talk about it with someone to whom you feel accountable.

The principle of confidentiality. Pastors and church leaders have a primary obligation to respect the confidentiality of information obtained in the course of their work, ministry, or counseling. They may reveal information to others only with the consent of the person or when there is a clear danger to the person or others. Loose lips and careless practices prove not only destructive to the body, but they also pose a legal risk to churches.

The principle of responsibility. All of us need to maintain the highest standards of conduct and accept the consequences of our actions. This means refusing to perform any duty outside of our training and experience, and readily seeking the cooperation of others when confronted with a problem—or a temptation—we cannot resolve. To avoid those conflicts, sometimes it's necessary to inform others of the nature and direction of our loyalties.

The principle of integrity. Those persons set apart by the church for specific service (and I don't mean just ordained clergy) are expected to be without fault (1 Tim. 3:1–13). This often leads to an unrealistic set of expectations. It is just as well that the work of ministry is covered by much forgiveness!

Churches may tolerate a lot of failure and weakness in leaders, but there has to be a fundamental integrity (wholeness, honesty, uprightness) for effective church leadership. To have integrity means to have the honesty to confront the reasons for failure and to take responsibility for that failure. When people question a leader's integrity, as opposed to his or her sinlessness, there's trouble.

A healthy concern for morality is not enough to maintain a ministry of integrity. Each leader has the responsibility to develop a personal code of ethics tailored to his or her unique set of circumstances. All told, we need great wisdom and a clear code of ethics so as not to become obstacles to the gospel but rather to uphold a ministry of honesty, integrity, and reconciliation.

—ARCHIBALD HART; excerpted from our sister publication, LEADERSHIP journal, © 1988 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.Leadershipjournal.net

Discuss

1. Review the four principles above and explain how each one relates, in some way, to sexual integrity.
2. Do you ever feel that, as a leader, you are subject to unrealistic expectations?
3. Which code are you most interested in seeing developed in your life?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Did Not Finish**

Leaders must avoid this tragic epitaph.

1 Corinthians 6:18

Paul writes about the seriousness of sexual sin saying, “All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.” (1 Cor. 6:18) Reflect on that verse as you approach this activity. Read through the article below and then take time to discuss how each of the four principles the author outlines could be built into the structure of your church’s leadership team. Depending on your group, you may want to split into small groups or same-gender groups for this activity.

When you read the results of a race it’s not unusual to see DNF attached to some entrants’ names. The letters—standing for *did not finish*—indicate those who had to quit. What if the equivalent to a DNF were put by the name of every seminary graduate who is now doing something other than the ministry they once felt called to? It would be an enormous list.

If reasons were affixed, you might read “stress/burnout,” “conflict,” “inadequate people skills,” or many others. And among those, there would be one that would probably catch the eye fastest: “moral failure.” The term arouses natural curiosity and apprehension. It covers a broad spectrum of tragic conduct. Someone has acknowledged an attraction to pornography; another is discovered to have engaged in an improper relationship; still a third is found to have a history of some kind of molestation. Is this list large enough?

Given Jesus’ sweeping definition of adultery (the intents of the heart), I suppose we are all moral failures in one way or another. Some in Christian leadership go beyond the intents of the heart and act out the intentions. Almost every time, an unspeakable heartbreak ripples out into lots of lives. And, beyond that, there is always disillusionment, scorn, and the loss of trust that accompanies such sin. Sins of the flesh are destructive and usually result in a DNF.

In my book *Rebuilding Your Broken World* (Thomas Nelson, 2004), I told the story of a man I met at a conference. I could tell he was trying to create conversation as he asked: “How do you think Satan could blow you out of the water?” I was a younger man at the time and had no quick answer. So I said, “I’m not sure I know, but I am confident that he could never get at me by undermining my personal relationships.” I could hardly have said a more foolish thing. A few years later, I was a potential DNF, and it was reasonable to ask if I would ever “race” again. Why? For a moment I had failed in the one human relationship most important to me.

As the leader’s life grows more intense with greater demands and expectations, I do not believe the so-called moral failures will subside. I fear they will increase, and we will hear of more good leaders with DNF by their names. Just saying this makes me sad.

Perhaps these changes could stem the tide:

1. Let’s stop beating around the bush about moral temptations and talk about them in the same way a commanding officer talks about the dangers of going into battle. The officer does not assume that *anyone* is exempt from taking a bullet. So all are forewarned.
2. Let’s require that every man and woman in Christian leadership belong to a peer-oriented group that creates covenants of behavior, such as no casual dining with a member of the opposite sex, no travel of any kind with a colleague of the opposite sex, no team relationships unless three or more people are involved.
3. Let’s make sure every pastor and spouse has a mentoring couple who keeps an inquiring eye upon family and marital life and steps in if they believe that systems of healthy relationships are breaking down.
4. Let’s be more honest about the high-risk effects of ministry in large churches: what happens to marriages, mental and emotional health, spiritual vitality. We’re doing great in teaching about vision-casting, outreach, management, and leadership. But—I’ll be as blunt as I can—we are failing miserably to help young men and women form the necessary soul-power to undergird those efforts.

SEXUAL INTEGRITY

In our contemporary Christian culture, let's frankly admit the fact that we are—most of us—starved for healthy intimacy at every level and, when we do not experience it, are likely to turn toward the sexual to find it. We need to surface this, find ways to identify the drives and desire, and then talk about how to prevent it.

DNF: did not finish. Among the saddest of all epitaphs for a leader. Moral failure: among the most serious and tragic of the reasons. You'd think we'd talk more about this and what can be done to prevent it.

—GORDON MACDONALD; excerpted from our sister publication, LEADERSHIP journal, © 2006 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.Leadershipjournal.net

Discuss

1. Have you ever known someone who did not finish? Explain.
2. Which of the four steps above does our church currently live out? How has that been a blessing to our leaders and congregation?
3. Which of the four do we not live out? Why not?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Further Exploration***Resources to help your team***BuildingChurchLeaders.com**. Leadership training resources from Christianity Today.

- “Safeguarding Counseling” Church Law & Tax
- “Working with the Opposite Sex” Practical Ministry Skills
- “Integrity” Training Theme & PowerPoint
- “Leadership Foundations” Training Theme & PowerPoint
- “Adultery & Emotional Affairs” Urgent Care
- “Pornography & Sexual Addiction” Urgent Care

LeadershipJournal.net. This website offers practical advice and articles for church leaders.**Covenant Eyes**. An online program to facilitate accountability for Christians as they spend time on the internet; one of many such resources. www.covenanteyes.com**In-Purity Ministries**. An internet-based ministry focused on providing help to people who struggle with pornography and sexual temptation. www.in-purity.org**The Ascent of a Leader** by *Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath*. Performance-based skills aren’t enough; true leadership also requires character. The process for integrating values like integrity, honesty, and selfless service into the fabric of our lives, organizations, and cultures (Jossey-Bass, 1999; ISBN 978-0787947668).**Being Holy, Being Human** by *Jay Kesler*. How can church leaders admit doubts, temptations, and sin without harming their ministries? This book shows how to live with the tension of living with God’s call while expressing and fully enjoying one’s humanity (Word Books, 1988; ISBN 978-0917463174).**Leading with Integrity** by *Fred Smith Sr.* “The greatest defense of the gospel we can give is to personify it, not to argue it” is just one gem from this treasure of experienced wisdom on how to minister authentically (Bethany House, 1999; ISBN 978-1556619717).**Making the Most of Mistakes** by *James D. Berkley*. From bungling a building plan to living in sinful deceit, church leaders share the facts and feelings of making those mistakes, as well as how God uses our stumbling to bring recovery and build character (Word, 1987; ISBN 978-0917463150).**The Purity Principle: God’s Safeguards for Life’s Dangerous Trails** by *Randy Alcorn*. This book explains what Christians can do to experience the freedom of purity. (Multnomah, 2003; ISBN 978-1590521953)**Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World** by *Joshua Harris*. This book offers a straightforward look at lust, temptation, and sex, and it offers a strategy for overcoming the impurity all around us. (Multnomah, 2005; ISBN 978-1590525197)

SEXUAL INTEGRITY**Retreat Plan**

How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of “Sexual Integrity”

BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS expands easily into a retreat format. Here is a sample retreat schedule you may follow for the “Sexual Integrity” theme. The purpose of this retreat is to help leaders focus on the Word of God and determine what it calls them to do in order to build up the church.

Friday Evening

- 8–8:45 P.M. **Opening Session:** Hand out copies of “Living in a Modern Corinth,” the interview with Randy Alcorn on pages 5–6, and allow time for each person to read it. Then form groups of three or four. Have each group discuss the questions at the end of the interview. Reconvene for the last 20 minutes and have the groups share their comments and consider the implications of Randy’s ideas for your church and ministry.
- 9–9:45 P.M. **Bible Study:** Close the evening with “Three Ways to Live,” the Bible study on pages 3–4. Photocopy and pass out the study, or use the handout as your notes.

Saturday Morning

- 9–9:45 A.M. **Devotional:** Set the tone for the day by handing out “But, I’m an Exception” (p. 13). Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page, and have a time of prayer that God would raise up leaders in your church to pursue humility and accountability as the body of Christ.
- 10–11 A.M. **Activity:** Use the activity “Did Not Finish” on pages 20–21 to evaluate whether your church is taking sexual integrity as seriously as it should.
- 11:15–NOON. **Case Study:** Use the case study “Being Moral Isn’t Enough” on page 11. Have each person spend some time alone to quietly read through and respond to the questions on the handout. Then have them read through “Private Sins of Public Ministry” on pages 15–16. For the last 15 minutes, have the group come together to share what God has taught them.
- NOON. **Lunch**

Saturday Afternoon

- 1–2 P.M. **Final Group Session:** Close the retreat with the article “Setting Ethical Codes” on pages 18–19. After everyone has read the article, have them discuss the principles for building ethical codes into their ministry. Go on to the devotional “Fences Bring Freedom” on page 12. Then pray together, asking God to raise up a commitment to integrity and purity in your church and, specifically, on your leadership teams.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.