

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®

Tribe

A WARRIOR'S BATTLES

MICHAEL ROSS

and Manfred Koehler



TYNDALE

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

Tribe: A Warrior's Battles

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ISBN-10: 1-58997-188-4

ISBN-13: 978-1-58997-188-2

A Focus on the Family book published by
Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

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Editor: Mick Silva

Cover & interior design: idesignetc.

Cover Photo: Comstock

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 /11 10 09 08 07 06



To our *Breakaway* brothers:

*“If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?
But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door;
it desires to have you, but you must master it.”*

—Genesis 4:7



CONTENTS

Introduction: Wait Training that Works!	1
Week 1— Boy to Man: Understanding the Battle	
Day 1: The Battle Begins » Striving for Freedom from Lust	7
Day 2: Is It Weird to Wait? » Locker-Room Slam	15
Day 3: Six Lies about Sex » Engaged to Be Married	20
Day 4: The Lust Beast » David—A King Defeated by Lust	26
Day 5: That Silent Struggle » Teen Tribal Trekkers and Their Campfire Conversation	30
Day 6: Clearing Up Sexual Confusion » A Teen Guy’s Struggle with Homosexuality	36
Day 7: Guilt-Free Sex God’s Way » The Most Precious Gift—A Love Story	43
Week 2— Pure Adventure	
Day 8: Unplugging Impurity » Punched Out by Porn—Two Stories	50
Day 9: Don’t Buy a Hollywood Lie » When Opposites Don’t Attract	56
Day 10: How Far Is Too Far? » Crossing the Line—Two Stories	62
Day 11: The Warrior She Desires » Jacob—A Home Full of Headaches	67
Day 12: From Rejection to Connection » Michael’s Journey—Waiting Is Worth It	72
Day 13: Making a Pact for Purity » Seven Colorado Guys Celebrate Purity	78
Day 14: Your Father’s Blessing » Starving from Father Hunger	84
Week 3— Seven Strategies for Conquering Lust and Porn	
Day 15: Strategy 1—Reveal Your Secret Struggles » Your Inner Gollum—Destroying “Precious”	93
Day 16: Strategy 2—Shake the Shame » De-Shaming His Identity	98
Day 17: Strategy 3—Embrace Forgiveness » Facing Judgment Day	104
Day 18: Strategy 4—Put on God’s Armor » Suiting Up for Battle	111
Day 19: Strategy 5—Let “Iron Sharpen Iron” » The Soul Slayer’s Wicked Schemes	116
Day 20: Strategy 6—Take Up Your Sword » Modern-Day Warrior: Transformed by the Truth	123
Day 21: Strategy 7—Power Up Through Prayer » Manfred’s Journey—How Prayer Shaped a Boy into a Man	128

Week 4 — Marks of a Battle-Ready Warrior

Day 22: He Hungers for Holiness >> Peter—A Salty Sea Dog	137
Day 23: He Thirsts for Truth >> Paul—Prisoner of Christ	143
Day 24: He Walks with Christlike Humility >> Following Christ's Footsteps	149
Day 25: He Strives to Be a Man of Honor >> Joseph of Nazareth—Redefining Honor	156
Day 26: He Perseveres Under Pressure >> Noah—Following God, Not Man	162
Day 27: He Chooses to Be a Christ-Built Warrior >> Seeking a Prize Greater than Gold	168
Day 28: He Accepts the Sacred Call >> Stephen—Deacon to the Needy	172

Notes	176
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INTRODUCTION:

WAIT TRAINING THAT WORKS!

“God’s Word to you is the same warning He gave to Cain (Genesis 4:7)—master the sin at the door of your life before it brings its inevitable and disastrous consequences. Heed His caution, and you will avoid unnecessary hardship for yourself and others.”¹ —Henry T. Blackaby

Sixteen-year-old Alex of Tampa, Florida, feels defeated. “I’m a Christian,” he told me, “but I get so caught up in the things of the flesh—especially lustful thoughts. I feel as if my faith has lost its fire, and I feel distant from God. What should I do?”

Now listen to the pain—and the hope—of a young man who asked to remain anonymous:

Lust has been a battleground for me. I was first introduced to porn when I found some on my dad’s computer. To be honest, I knew it was wrong, but I still looked at it. Then Satan began attacking my purity. But I serve a powerful God!

We are called to flee from youthful lust (2 Timothy 2:22) and to intensely pursue righteousness! Psalm 119:9 asks the question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” It says, “By living according to your word.” The writer goes on and talks about seeking God with your whole heart. The way we can be pure is not by seeing how close we can get to the line without crossing it, but instead by seeing how close we can get to God.

Each morning, I strive to make Hebrews 12:1-2 my prayer: “Lord, help me throw off the different sins that entangle me and allow me to run toward You with patient endurance.”



Lust is a beast—a sharp-fanged, drooling monster that crouches at your door, waiting to poison your life with its self-centered craving. And I’m convinced that it’s a teen guy’s No. 1 battle. Some Christian boys even feel defeated, abandoned by God, and riddled with guilt for their weaknesses. Yet I’ve met others—countless others—who are winning the war. What’s their secret? How

are many teens able to stand strong, while others are giving up?

The answer is consistent *wait training*. Guys who are victorious have learned to face present and future temptations head-on. They've put into practice a purity game plan that works!

Read this book for 28 days straight and you, too, will learn how to master the sexual struggles that bombard your heart and mind. Here are some key training tips that you'll discover in the days ahead:

Tune in the truth. Too many boys listen to the lie Satan whispers in their ears. You know, the lie that "you're alone in this battle." You'll read dozens of stories from real teens who face the same struggles as you.

Purge any porn. We'll show you how to do the same with any other sexual material that causes you to fall.

Arm yourself with Scripture. God wants to renew your mind and shape your thinking about sex. You'll learn strategies for reading the Bible daily and discovering practical ways of applying Scripture to your life.

Build solid boundaries. Where are your weak areas? The Enemy attacks where guys are most vulnerable, and the easiest targets are the eyes and ears. You'll be challenged to steer clear of television programs, movies, music, Web sites, jokes, or friends who fuel warped messages about sex.

Find a training partner. All you need is a Christian buddy or two to share your commitment to purity. We'll show you what to do.

Consider the "father factor." You're at a stage in your life when you yearn for the affirmation and companionship of an adult male mentor (preferably your father). And when it comes to sexual struggles, fathers can offer wisdom, suggestions, and even more accountability. If your dad isn't in the picture, we'll give you tips for connecting with a trusted male relative, pastor, or youth leader.

Stand with a symbol. Get your hands on a purity cross, necklace, or ring that you can wear all the time to remind you of your commitment. Here's an idea: Go to www.breakawaymag.com and get a *TRIBE* wait training bracelet. It's an ideal companion to this book.



Don't worry, the training tips presented in *TRIBE: A Warrior's Battles* aren't reserved for holiest members of the Spiritually Elite Club. (That would completely exclude every guy who struggles with lust, right?!) Actually, everything presented within these pages is common-sense stuff. Just ask Ben, a high school student from Minot, North Dakota.

Before getting serious about his pledge to purity, Ben admits to having a serious struggle with lust. Visiting the wrong sites on the Internet and watching certain television shows constantly fueled his battle. "Now when I'm tempted, I pray," he says. "The more I focus on God, the easier it is to win my fight for purity.

"Yet the hardest part is my thought life," he continues. "I have to constantly soak up Scripture and battle in prayer to keep lustful thoughts at bay. Some may say, 'But Ben, you're living in a box.' No, I am striving to live a life worthy of my calling in Christ. Jesus of Nazareth did not visit prostitutes for favors or look lustfully at women. No, the Messiah preached sexual purity and went one step further: He *lived* a life of absolute sexual integrity. The day that I am married, I don't want to have any regrets. The battle is tough, but He is tougher."



Okay. So what exactly is this you're getting into? Is this a devotional? Is it a journal? Is it a *journey*? Actually, yes to all of the above!

In each daily entry you'll find:

- **A TRIBAL QUEST**—a faith challenge for the day.
- **A TRIBAL TRUTH**—Scripture that defines a Christian's tribal creed.
- **A TRIBAL FACE**—a true account of a teen like you or a Bible hero who sought after God's heart and earned himself a new identity in God's worldwide tribe.
- **TRIBAL TRAINING**—advice, action points, and thought-provoking questions and strategies for applying God's truth to your life.
- **TRIBAL MARKS**—a place to jot down your own prayers, thoughts, hopes . . . and all the new stuff you've learned.

So, don't hold back! Fulfill what burns in every young man's heart. Dare to trust your Creator and become the warrior He made you to be. Dare to win the battle for purity.

Use this life-changing resource as a way to get connected to God's eternal tribe. Study with a friend or group of guys from church—maybe even your dad (you know, as your own tribal rite-of-passage thing).

Your ultimate journey awaits. Join the adventure of following Christ. And with each quest He gives you, don't be surprised if you find yourself facing—and overcoming—challenges far greater than anything you ever imagined.

Tribe

A WARRIOR'S PURITY CREED

I refuse to put myself in situations where I am tempted to compromise my purity.

I commit to the Job Covenant (Job 31:1). I make a covenant with my eye, to keep my mind pure, and not look lustfully at a girl.

I take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

My body is God's temple. I refuse to defile it in any possible way.

I commit to filling my mind and heart with God's Word in order to stay pure (Psalm 119:9).

I commit to having accountability with a few other men of God.

I choose to memorize at least one verse a day that will teach me and train me to be pure and to live a pure life.

I read my commitments to purity every day.

I ask for the Lord's strength and power.

I ask God to keep me from evil and from temptation.

Every time I am tempted, I run to God as fast as I can.

I listen to and read things that encourage me to go after purity.

I don't view purity as a line, but a lifestyle. Purity is my purpose and my pursuit. Because of Jesus I am free, and I use my freedom to become more like Christ and have a heart of purity (John 10:10).

"A Warrior's Purity Creed" is based on Acts 10:15 and was written by 16-year-old Daniel, a Colorado teen who is winning the battle for purity.

A WARRIOR'S BATTLES

BOY TO MAN: UNDERSTANDING THE BATTLE



WEEK 1 ▶▶▶

SURVIVOR SECRETS

▶▶▶ **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE:** *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. —1 Timothy 4:12*

TRIBAL QUEST

Accept the truth about your sexuality: Most healthy males have powerful desires for sex. (It's nothing to be ashamed of.) But understand that it's a part of your life that you *must* bring under God's control.

EXPLORE THE WORD: Galatians 5:16-26

TRIBAL TRUTH

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. —Galatians 5:16-18

TRIBAL FACE



Josh, 15
Shoreview, Minn.
Striving for Freedom from Lust

Josh sits across the kitchen table from his father, his face strained with sadness. The teen is convinced that God has made a huge mistake with his life.

"I can't stop thinking about sex," he confesses. "It's like, the minute I became a teenager, my brain and my body launched a war against lust. Every day I catch myself having thoughts about girls I know I shouldn't have."

Josh's father nods his head reassuringly and listens.

Josh slumps back in his chair. "But it gets worse."

"You can tell me anything—you do know that, don't you, son?"

Josh looks up and nods. "Of course, but this isn't exactly easy to talk about—especially with my dad."

The teen pauses, trying to muster up courage. Then the words he never imagined telling another soul suddenly roll out of his mouth. “For the past few years, I’ve had some private struggles,” he says. “Stuff I’m ashamed to admit. Stuff like pornography . . . and masturbation.”

Josh glances at his father again, fearing condemnation. But instead his eyes are met with compassion.

“You’re not alone,” his father says. “Many Christian guys share these battles. What sets you apart is your courage to speak up.”

“I’m just sick of struggling,” Josh says, “and I hate what lust is doing to my relationship with God. I really need help.”

Josh then describes three battlegrounds where he has suffered brutal defeat.

BATTLEGROUND 1: Cyberporn

On most weekday nights I don’t even bother to switch on the TV. After glancing at my watch, then making some excuse—like having to do algebra and grammatical structures—I leave the dinner table and race upstairs.

I’ve heard Mom say that she’s so “proud of her grown-up son for behaving responsibly and doing his homework.” But if she knew what I was really up to, her heart would be broken.

Once upstairs, my actions are anything but responsible—and homework is the last thing on my mind. What I once used as a tool for learning has, lately, become a tool for lust. It’s as if cyberporn owns me. And with each click of my mouse, I feel as if I’m being pulled deeper into an evil “web.”

BATTLEGROUND 2: Masturbation

My time on the computer is nearly always cut short by a *tap, tap, tap* on my bedroom door, then a friendly voice: “Shut down and hit the sack,” Mom tells me. Every night she pokes her head into my room to say good night.

At that point, I’m usually scrambling to maintain my cover. I turn

off the monitor, flash a phony smile, and tell an outright lie: “Uhhh—thanks, Mom. Homework’s done, and I’m headin’ to bed.”

When the door shuts behind her, I usually feel like throwing up. *I’m such a hypocrite. I can’t continue this double life.*

But when I click off my light and slide between the sheets, my brain replays the images I’d just looked at. Then I get weak and end up giving into another private struggle: masturbation.

BATTLEGROUND 3: Out-of-Control Thought Life

The next morning, I awaken with a knot in my gut. Despite reading a passage of Scripture and praying, feelings of shame add another layer to a wall that’s growing higher between Jesus and me.

But by midday the guilt fades, and just being smiled at by a pretty girl churns up a bunch of “mental porn shows.” Conversations in the locker room fuel even more messed-up thoughts.

I hear one off-color joke after another—along with crude remarks about sex and body parts. I admit, I even take part in the so-called guy talk.

By the time I arrive home, the ugly lust cycle begins all over again.



Josh looks his father in the eyes. “Dad, I need you to be honest with me,” he states sternly. “Am I normal sexually?”

His father grips his son’s hand and shares a comforting truth: “Believe it or not, I asked this same question when I was a teen, and here’s what my dad told me: ‘The average teen guy thinks about sex one minute out of every five—then spends the other four minutes waiting for the one minute to come around again!’”

For a split second, Josh cracks a smile. Then a worried expression washes over his face again. “But this is messed up, Dad—it can’t be right. Lust causes so much guilt.”

“I didn’t say lust is right,” his father points out. “I’m telling you that your appetite for sex is a *very normal*, God-given thing. It’s your sinful nature that

warps what is good. Yet that ‘voice’ deep inside telling you ‘something’s wrong’ is your conscience . . . and the work of the Holy Spirit.”

Suddenly, Josh’s father begins to smile, and his eyes seem to sparkle with joy. “I’m so proud of you for hearing that voice,” he says. “Too many young men are spiritually deaf. They selfishly focus on what feels good at the moment. But not you! Sensing that something is wrong means that you’ve already taken the first step toward healing. Now you must take the second step—and many more after that.”

Hope replaces the worry on Josh’s face. “I’m ready for change,” he says. “So, what’s next?”

“Prayer,” says his father. “Pour out your heart to God. Thank Him for your sexuality, and tell the Lord you want Him to take control of this part of your life. Explain that you’re sorry for the sins you’ve committed, and ask God to heal your heart and to help you change.”

Josh nods his head.

Then father and son get on their knees and talk to God.



A huge weight of guilt lifted from Josh’s life that day, and the wall he sensed between the Lord and him began to crumble. Yet this young man knows that the battle has just begun. His appetite for sex is stronger than ever, and on occasion, temptation still seems to get the best of him. But Josh isn’t about to give up. He knows that he’s not alone, which helps him to press on in his fight for purity.

Take a look at another guy—**16-year-old Eric of Dallas, Texas**. Here’s how he describes his battles:

I talk to my dad all of the time about my struggles, and he’s very supportive and forgiving. Yet I’ve still messed up a few times and have surfed Internet porn sites and have fallen into my old habits of fantasizing about sex. Each time after I’ve lusted, I feel horrible. I promise God that it won’t happen again. Then a few days later, I end up doing the same things. I feel like the apostle Paul: “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). Sometimes I feel as if I’m in a big hole, and I keep digging in deeper. Yet I’m determined to find freedom from lust.

Why didn’t God make the quest for purity easier for guys? Why didn’t He give you sexual desires on your wedding night—and not a moment before?

Could it be that our Creator wants to take you on a journey into *authentic masculinity*? I think so. I’m convinced that He wants to embrace that weak, self-centered kid you see in the mirror and transform him into a warrior fit to wear His badge: “a workman approved by God” (see 2 Timothy 2:15).

This transformation—like anything worthwhile in life—involves struggle. Just ask Josh and Eric.

No doubt, you yearn for freedom from lust. (That’s why you’re reading this book, right?) In the weeks ahead, we’ll arm you with some powerful ammunition, as well as a realistic battle plan to strengthen you in your fight for sexual purity. Today, we’ll begin with the first crucial steps: (1) cluing into how God wired guys sexually, and (2) striving for self control.

TRIBAL TRAINING

• **Understand the “sex-in-your-head” struggle.** When I sat down to write this book, I counted hundreds of e-mails I’ve received from guys who feel defeated by lust. Like Josh and Eric, most young men feel alone in their struggles and ashamed of their sexual desires. Yet even though they may be hard to believe, accept these truths: (1) “YOU’RE NORMAL!” and (2) your appetite for sex truly is a good, healthy, God-given thing! The Lord doesn’t want you to turn off these desires (as if you could). Instead, He wants to help you control them. How? Keep reading . . .

• **Take an honest look at your sexuality.** In the story above, you read how Josh began to sense that “something’s wrong.” He knew deep inside that God was working on his heart, pointing out behaviors he needed to change. Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart today. Get alone and ponder this question: *Do I sense the Lord revealing habits and behaviors in my life that need His healing touch?*

• **Bring your sexual struggles into the light.** Don’t try to hide from them. (God already knows what you think and do in private, and He understands your struggles better than you do.) Pray and confess your sins and weaknesses to God. Acknowledge before Him your lack of power to control your sexual urges.

• **Ask God to heal your sexuality, making it the awesome thing He intends it to be.** The key to healthy sexuality is outlined in Scripture. Here’s what the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his

own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.” Bottom line: With God’s help, every teen boy must seek self-control over his sexuality. Our Lord requires it, girls have a right to it, and above all, it enables you to develop into the godly man you were created to be.

• **Be sincere with your prayers.** Consider this: We will all give account for our choices. This reality actually terrified Paul and motivated him to strive to please God in everything he did (see 2 Corinthians 5:9-11). Christian author Henry Blackaby has also wrestled with this issue. In his book *Experiencing God*, here’s what he concludes: “God does not force His will upon us. He will ask us to answer for the way we responded to Him. Christians have been pardoned by the sacrifice of Jesus. We are not condemned. But because God is absolutely just, we will be called on to give an account of our actions.”¹

• **Accept God’s forgiveness and stop flogging yourself for your sexual failures.** Persistent guilt and shame will make it difficult to shed sexual problems. (We’ll get more into this topic on Days 16 and 17.)

• **PRAY IT OUT: “Lord, I can’t do this on my own. Free me from the chains of lust. Heal my sexuality, molding me into the godly man You want me to become.”** Pray that He will empower you to avoid temptation to sin by bringing all your sexual thoughts and fantasies under your conscious control. Ask God to remind you when your thoughts need controlling.

▶▶▶ **CONSIDER TAKING TO HEART THIS PRAYER FROM RICHARD FOSTER:**

Lord Jesus Christ, when I read the gospel stories, I am touched by Your healing power. You healed sick bodies to be sure, but You did so much more. You healed the spirit and the deep, inner mind. Most of all, I am touched by Your actions of acceptance that spoke healing into those who lived on the margins of life, shoved aside by the strong and the powerful.

Speak Your healing into me, Lord, body and mind and soul. Most of all, heal my sense of worthlessness. My head tells me that I am of infinite value to You, but my heart cannot believe it. Heal my heart, Jesus, heal my heart. Amen.

TRIBAL MARKS

A KEY POINT I LEARNED TODAY:

HOW I WANT TO GROW:

MY PRAYER LIST:

SURVIVOR SECRETS

▶▶▶ **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE:** *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. —1 Timothy 4:12*

TRIBAL QUEST

Trust that saving sex for marriage is God's perfect plan for your life—despite what your peers may believe.

EXPLORE THE WORD: —Colossians 3:1-10

TRIBAL TRUTH

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

—Colossians 3:5

TRIBAL FACE



Ryan, 16
Amarillo, Texas
Locker-Room Slam

“She’s so hot!” Matt says as he pulls off his practice jersey. He flings it into his locker, then pelts Ryan with a sweaty sock. “And she’s going out with a dweeb like YOU!”

“Unreal,” Chris chimes in. “If I dated her . . . ooohhh, dude. . . .” He falls to the floor, clutching his chest—faking a massive coronary.

Jason grins at Ryan. “So, you’ve been going out with her for a few weeks, huh?! Just what happens when you two are alone—totally alone?”

Ryan shrugs. “You know, stuff. We talk, watch TV . . .”

“And,” Jason presses.

“Eat, study, talk some more . . .”

PLOP! THUD! SMACK!

The guys bomb Ryan with crusted gym clothes. Then Matt launches the ultimate question: “Give us all the details, dude. Has she let you have it yet?”

Ryan looks up and swallows, sirens blazing in his head: *GEEK ALERT*—

COOLNESS ABOUT TO BE CRUSHED.

“Ahhh . . . have what?” he asks nonchalantly (knowing full well which “it” his friend is referring to).

“IT, you idiot,” Matt barks. “Whadda ya think?”

Of course, Ryan had never done it, and he wasn’t going to—until marriage. In his eyes, moving too fast too soon spelled major headaches: pregnancy, sexual diseases, broken hearts. And as a committed Christian, he had an even better reason to wait: It was God’s will for his life.

But the guys. . . . How on earth could he explain that to them?

Ryan looks Matt in the eye. “And I suppose *you* have?!”

Matt bristles. “Course I’ve done it . . . lots of times. What *normal* guy hasn’t?”

Ryan’s stomach knots up. He hates locker-room talk—especially when his reputation is on the line. He doesn’t want to lie, BUT . . .

“Well . . . ahhh . . .” Ryan pauses. “Actually I . . . or I mean we . . . ahhh . . .” (His internal “geek alert” suddenly reaches critical status.)

What do I tell them? he wonders as he frantically searches for the precise words. *How do I stand for what’s right without being laughed at . . . and without looking like a total idiot?*



There’s no escape.

Hang out in the locker room or the halls at school—even some church youth groups—and you hear guys bragging about the so-called good times they have with girls.

Flip on the tube or crack open a magazine and someone’s selling a lie about sex.

Step into some public restrooms and . . . Huh? . . . a strange little box on the wall conveniently offers condoms (that is, if you have some quarters to spare).

All this leads you to believe that waiting is just plain *weird*.

Guess what? Despite the sex-on-credit, play-now-pay-later culture we live in, not everyone is doing it. Lots of teens are saving up for good sex—when it’s *really* safe and *really* right.

Take the thousands who marched in the national capitals of Canada and the United States. Proud of their virginity—and not afraid to admit it—many signed “True Love Waits” cards.

Then more than 210,000 of these cards were displayed in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa as a visual representation of teenagers all over the world who have made a pact for purity.

Yet do you catch yourself relating to Ryan—wondering if you’re the only virgin left on the planet, and even feeling a little weird for waiting? Let’s tune in to the truth and uncover the gutsy commitments God expects from His tribe.

TRIBAL TRAINING

• **Know God’s design for sex.** It’s designed for only one kind of committed relationship: holy matrimony. When a husband and a wife have sexual intercourse, something happens to the two of them, something that changes them at the deepest level. A man and a woman are bound together body and soul. And this bond is never supposed to be separated. (Can you see why divorce is so devastating?)

In other words, sex isn’t just physical, and it’s not a trivial act that feels good for a few seconds and then is over for good. Sex involves a couple’s bodies, minds, and emotions in an activity that is intended to continue for a lifetime.

• **Learn what the Bible says.** Because it does not say the exact words, “Don’t have sex before marriage” in the Bible, some guys try to argue that premarital sex must be okay. Yet the Bible does clearly communicate that premarital sex equals sin.

A number of passages in the Bible tell us that marriage is the right place for sex—and *specifically* state that extramarital alternatives are off-limits for believers. Take a look:

Adultery is wrong—Exodus 20:14

Sex with a prostitute is wrong—1 Corinthians 6:15-17

Impurity is wrong—Colossians 3:5-7

Marriage is a sacred bond—Hebrews 13:4

With verses such as these, is it possible that God would condone sex outside of marriage?

• **Take some advice from a “big brother.”** Check out the following letter. It’s from a guy who has “been there, done that”—and desperately wishes he hadn’t. Eighteen-year-old Sean of Grand Rapids, Michigan, sent it to me, along with a request: “Please print this so other guys can hear the truth, and maybe avoid the mistakes I’ve made.”

I have something important to say to every teen guy out there. I'm an 18-year-old who has always heard Christian views about premarital sex and the consequences of giving in. Unfortunately, I didn't listen. It seems that the whole world is telling us that sex is okay. And it is—strictly within the bonds of marriage. But instead of following God's Word, I tuned in to the world and gave away my virginity.

At the time, I was convinced that having sex was the most wonderful thing in the world. Afterward, it left both the girl and me with heartache. I don't mean simple hurt feelings; I'm talking about utter heartache. Not a day goes by that I don't regret that first sexual touch. Why? Because it gradually led to other things—and eventually to intercourse.

I know that God has forgiven me for my sins, but I can't help asking myself, *Will my future wife forgive me? How am I going to tell her that I gave away a gift that was meant only for her?* And on my wedding night, I'll have pictures of other girls in my head, which is so wrong! To treat women as most of the secular world does is absolute sin.

Fellas, I envy every one of you who doesn't know what sexual intimacy with a girl is like. If you're a virgin, you are so fortunate. I pray that you'll stay pure for marriage and that God will richly bless your marriage bed. And as much as you want sex now, remember that God has the right kind of woman in mind for you. Hold strong and give your future wife the gift of your virginity.

- **PRAY IT OUT: "Lord, I'm committed to purity."** Ask Jesus for the strength to stand strong in the face of pressure. Tell Him you want to save yourself sexually for your future wife.

TRIBAL MARKS

A KEY POINT I LEARNED TODAY:

HOW I WANT TO GROW:

MY PRAYER LIST:

NOTES

Introduction

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Week 1

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