

Week 5 - Safeguarding Against Sexual Seduction

The next five days we will discover how we can safeguard our lives against sexual temptations. By taking godly measures, we can become victorious over any attempts to flirt with seduction. I can't believe we have already made it to this portion of the study. It has been such a joy serving you. I hope the journey has been worth your while. One of my hopes in writing this study was that you would feel like we were personally doing it together. Since this subject was such a sensitive topic, I felt women would be apprehensive about doing it together in person. Because of that, I wanted you to feel as if you and I were doing it together. There is something about sisters coming together before the Lord to study His Word that is so precious to me. Since I knew we would not be together in person, I wanted it to be as close to that as possible. I want you to know I have been praying for you long before you stumbled upon this study. I have believed God to bring exactly who He would want this study to be revealed to. I want you to know how precious you are to the Lord. He loves you so much. NO matter what you have done in your life or where you have been, nothing has EVER changed His love for you. Before we get started today, I want to share a poem I wrote as I was meditating on the Father's amazing love for His daughters. Will you allow me to share it with you?

*A touch of your mercy, an embrace of your grace
You are the lifter of my face.
How is it you love a sinner such as me?
You sent your son to die and that set me free.
I have hurt you at times and done many a wrong,
I can't believe you call me a joyful song,
Trading beauty for ashes, and my trash for your treasure,
I honor you, for it is my pleasure.
Shine your glory on this child's face,
From upon your throne in the heavenly place.
My Lord, my God you set my heart on fire,
You are my one and only desire.*

Sisters, you have a God that loves you beyond anything you could ever fathom. Bask in His love today. Trust that no matter what your feelings tell you, you are a joyful song to your Abba Father! May He become your heart's one desire.

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Day 1 - Guarding our Temple

I titled this section “Guarding our temples” because I believe scripture tells us our bodies our temples of the Holy Spirit.

Please read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”*

What do you think God means when He calls our bodies a “temple of the Holy Spirit?”

I don't know about you but I have not always honored God with my body. I am not just talking about dishonoring God through sexual sin. I know that the way I have dressed at times has not always glorified God. It has probably been offensive to some and a stumbling block to others in my past. If our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit, we need to learn how to guard them against sexual seduction to avoid falling into sexual sin. Since this study is primarily about guarding our sexuality, I want to talk about some ways we can guard against sexual seduction. We have discussed in the earlier chapters how ungodly thoughts can steer us down the wrong path. We have also how Satan will use “seducing spirits” to entice us into any level of sexual sin. We are now approaching the part in our study where we need to learn how to safeguard ourselves against seduction. In order to guard our temples, I believe we need to be aware of what we allow to come near them. When I think about guarding something, I think about how I safeguard my house each night before bedtime. At night, I make sure every door is locked. I turn on the alarm so that if an intruder were to approach my house and break in, it would sound off. This is what it is going to look like to safeguard our minds against seductions. Remember, sexual seduction is not just physical. It can be mental and emotional as well. Just as we protect our home by checking each door, we will need to make sure every door that could potentially be opened in our minds to sexual temptation are kept shut and locked. Next, we need to make sure our internal alarms (the Holy Spirit) are activated. We need to have someone guarding our minds that will alert us when something ungodly approaches it.

We must become keenly aware of temptations that are trying to invade us through our thoughts. One thing I like to remember that helps me keep check of what I'm taking in is I ask myself: “Does this feed the spirit or feed the flesh?” As we studied earlier, we need to consider what we choose to entertain our minds with. Is it potentially harmful to us or is it encouraging our walk with the Lord? Consider the following:

- Consider what kind of music you are listening to. Are you listening to songs that arouse emotional feelings about someone other than your husband, remind us of old sexual memories from our pasts, or take us back to a past time we would rather forget? Or are we listening to uplifting music that encourages us spiritually? I don't know about you, but in this battle to remain sexually pure I don't want to listen to something that will work against me. I don't want to allow anything into my mind that opens the door to seduction. Some music has a way of reminding me of things I would like to forget. It has a way of creeping in through a cracked door if I'm not careful. I am not saying that all secular music is harmful either. We just need to be aware of certain types of music that may trigger ungodly thoughts.

- Are you entertaining your minds with sexually graphic material through movies, books or pornography?
- Are you feeding your mind ungodly thoughts through romance novels? Romance novels allow you to mentally think about people having sex. It glorifies sex outside of your marriage. It arouses women sexually and then leads them to compare their sex lives to that of the characters in the book. On the flip side, are you reading a good Christian magazine or book? There are so many great Christian books that feed the spirit. I love to read books by Joyce Meyer, Jennifer Kennedy Dean and Beth Moore.
- Are you going into chat rooms where you engage in conversations with other men? Are you getting in touch with old boyfriends via the internet that would lead to inappropriate conversations?
- What kind of movies are you watching? Do they provoke thoughts of relationships outside of marriage? Do they allow you to make comparisons of your husband to the male hero in the movie? Do they stimulate you sexually when a steamy sex scene is on? Please understand that I am not saying you should only watch “The Ten Commandments” on the weekends!! There are plenty of movies that are not based on Christ that are perfectly healthy to watch. Just be aware of anything you may be watching that triggers your buttons in the flesh.

In Beth Moore’s *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* she states, “Seduction is a form of oppression, of course, but its very sly scheme intended to catch us off guard, pitched with mind boggling velocity from a direction we were not expecting. Seduction means the demonic trickery of a professional liar. If you’ll allow me to put it this way, seduction is Satan at his best. He’s looking for the trickiest means of getting inside our walls and I doubt he considers anything a greater accomplishment than the broken wall of a devout believer.” How do we keep him from getting in our walls? The only way that we can keep him from coming in is by knowing what we allow to enter our minds and not opening the door to seduction. It also means recognizing where we have broken down walls in our lives. We need to position the Holy Spirit to be our “guard” over our minds. We need to have Him alert us when we are opening a door to seduction.

I would encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit where you may be allowing unhealthy things to enter your mind through an open doorway that compromises your God-given sexuality. Ask him to show you any area where there are broken walls that need repairing by the “restorer of places long devastated” (see Isaiah 61:4). Anytime you entertain thoughts of emotional or physical encounters with a man other than your husband, you compromise your sexuality. The compromise comes when you entertain those thoughts leaving you vulnerable to seduction in real life.

1 Corinthians 10:23 says, “*Everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial.*”

What do you think that scripture means? _____

What are some things that you are doing now or have done in the past that were permissible but not beneficial?

Basically it is saying that God has given us free will. He has allowed us to make our own choices in life. If He is saying everything is permissible it means we can do whatever we choose. However, not everything we choose is going to be good for us.

For instance, you have the choice when you log onto the internet to visit pornographic websites. It is permissible but it is not beneficial. Everything we watch or read is permissible, but that does not mean that it is all healthy for us. If we are to honor the Lord with our bodies, we need to do everything we can to safeguard them against seduction. As we learned, the battle begins in our minds. God is faithful to give us gentle reminders when we are opening a door to sexual compromise when we ask Him to. I would like to remind you that temptations are not sin. We all face temptations. It's what you do with the temptation that gives birth to sin. When tempting thoughts pop into your mind, you have not sinned. If you entertain those thoughts, it becomes sinful. I have found that by paying close attention to what I'm allowing into my mind, the battle becomes much easier. When I stopped watching particular movies, and listening to particular secular music, I found that compromising thoughts became less and less frequent. When we fail to cut off every tie that links us to any kind of sexual compromise, we leave a crack in the door for seduction to slip through. Those ties can be to old relationships we never cut soul ties with (I will explain soul ties later), watching unhealthy TV programs, movies, and reading material.

I want to share something with you that came to me while I was driving today. I was thinking about how the enemy uses seduction as a tool to drag you into many kinds of evil practices. He uses it to lure you into the love of money, sexual sin, witchcraft, drugs, and the like. I was telling the Lord how concerned I was that the body of Christ is not recognizing it when it comes their way. The enemy masks himself quite well, in fact, the Word says Satan masquerades as an angel of light (see 2 Corinthians 11:14). I was asking the Lord how I could convey to you what it looks like and what the enemy will say to you in his crafty attempts to take you captive. I want to share with you what came to me:

*My name is Seduction, and I stand waiting at your door.
If you open it and embrace me, you will be left longing for more.
My desire is to overtake you with my sly, lustful ways,
I plan to have you fooled by my charm for many days.
I make promises to captivate you like no other has ever done,
And I tell you that if you follow me we can have lots of fun.
My words will be like music so pleasant to your ears,
They will surely leave your heart longing for more to hear.
I say I can take you places you've always dreamed to go,
And I will offer you the world when I put on my show.
When I have tempted you to come and leave everything behind,
It is then that I will reveal myself and have you loosing your mind.
I was really your enemy all along,
Masked as who could do no wrong.*

*I am leaving you now, see you later, goodbye.
Thanks for buying into my big seductive lie.*

Ladies, do you think you could recognize seduction if it were knocking at your front door? He will appear as the finest of salesmen around. I can promise you that the product he wants you to buy will destroy you in the end. Let's close today by asking God to show us when any form of seduction attempts to poison us.

Heavenly Father,

We don't always recognize when we might be playing with fire. Help us to become aware when seduction's flames seek to devour us in a fiery pit. Give us wisdom to know when we are about to open a door that needs to remain shut. We need your Holy Spirit now more than ever to give us eyes to see the truth. Thank you Lord. Amen.

Day 2 - Soul Ties

Have you ever heard of the term “soul ties”? I’m not going to spend a lot of time talking about them, but I think it’s important to be aware of what they are, how they affect us and what to do about them. Let me start by asking you the following questions:

1. Do you ever find yourself thinking off and on about an old boyfriend you had long ago?
2. Do you ever find yourself thinking about sexual encounters you had before marriage with an old flame?
3. Do you ever find yourself wondering what it would be like to see an old boyfriend again? Does that excite something in you when you think about it?

Many women I have interviewed admitted to thinking about old flames and fantasizing what it would be like to see that person again. Sometimes, they feel a longing inside of them to get back in touch with them again. I believe a lot of what causes that is due to soul ties that were formed and never broken.

A soul tie is exactly what it sounds like. It’s a tie from one person’s soul to another. The soul is said to be made up of the mind, will and emotions. An example of a soul tie with someone might be a relationship where you have related on a “soul” level. For example, if you have had a relationship with someone of the opposite sex where you shared your hopes, dreams, hurts and disappointments, you related to each other on a “soul” level.

There are godly and ungodly soul ties. To see what a godly soul tie looks like see 1 Samuel 18:1-4. The relationship between David and Jonathan was a godly soul tie. There are ungodly soul ties of many kinds. The one I am focusing on is one that involves a soul tie that becomes sexual at any level.

If you are one that thinks often about an old flame, check to see if there was any level of sexuality involved. Even if you were not physical, maybe there were sexual thoughts about the other person. Perhaps you shared your hopes and dreams with each other. If you are single and are dating someone, I’m not saying you cannot share your dreams with him. However, if you are sexually active with him at any level, you have formed a soul tie with him. Anytime a relationship outside of marriage has any level of sexual activity, an ungodly soul tie is formed. At some level or another, a piece of your soul is chipped away every time you make a soul tie sexually or emotionally with another man. These days, most girls have many soul-tied relationships before they ever make it to the altar. God meant for us to have sexual soul ties only in the confines of marriage. When you give any piece of your sexuality away to ungodly relationships, you lose a part of yourself that was only meant to be given to the marriage partner. Some of us have formed so many of these ties before we get to marriage, that once we do marry we feel we don’t have much to give away to our husband. A part of us is missing and we don’t even know why.

In Beth Moore’s *Praying God’s Word*, she talks about the scriptures in 1 Corinthians 6:13-16. In her book she says, “These scriptures tell us that when we engage in any realm of sexual intimacy with someone besides our marriage partner, we are tying ourselves to them.” She goes on to say, “A soul

tie to anyone besides our spouse is outside the will of God and becomes an open target for the continuing, destroying schemes of the devil.”

Do you have any soul ties that are binding you today? Would you take a moment and to ask God if there are any past relationships that you may have formed unhealthy soul ties with?

Many times in an extramarital relationship the two people not only share their dreams with each other but they discuss all the hurts and disappointments they have with their spouses. The two have shared intimate things together on a soul level. When ungodly soul ties are formed, Satan has legal rights to wreak havoc on you. Sometimes he does so by tormenting you with overwhelming temptations to sin sexually. Understand, not all temptations feel terrible. The sexual temptations can feel good, but what is tormenting it fighting off the temptation to sin! So, what are we to do about ungodly soul ties we have formed?

It has been my experience that we are to break soul ties through prayer. First of all, we can ask in Jesus’ name to break any soul tie we made with another man that was not our husband. We can pray for God to give us back any part of our souls we gave away and we can also pray that we give back any part we took from the other person. There is power in spoken words through prayer. Satan loses his grip on a soul-tied relationship when the name of Jesus is applied. When we do this, it doesn’t mean that you will never think of that person again. Satan will still try to tempt you with thoughts of him. You can pray a simple prayer like this:

Father God, in the name of Jesus, I ask you to break every soul tie I made with _____. I pray that any part of me that I gave away to _____ would be returned and restored to me. I also ask that any part of _____’s soul that he gave to me I give back in full right now in Jesus’ name. Thank you that everything I gave away is being restored to me right now and everything I received from his soul is being returned right now. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Say this prayer for each person you formed a soul tie with.

My women’s minister once told me that, “God can restructure the ungodly soul tie into an investment of prayer.” She believes that when Satan tempts us to think of that other person from the past, we can take that as an opportunity to turn it into a prayer.

For example, I always like to pray God’s Word over people. When a thought of someone I had a soul tie with pops in my head, I might pray, “Father, I pray that (their name) would come to know the unfailing love of the Father. I pray that he may come to know your truth and that truth would set him free in any area where he may believe a lie. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen”. Breaking soul ties is just one more way to protect your sexuality from seduction. There is a lot of literature available on soul ties. If you are interested in reading about it in depth, I encourage you to do a search on the web.

Day 3 - Drawing the Line

It has taken me many years to understand the importance of boundaries, particularly when it comes to my sexuality. In guarding our bodies against sexual seduction, have you ever thought about ways to integrate boundaries for your thoughts, words, and actions? If we are going to become women with a godly sexuality, we are going to need to set boundaries in these areas.

Let's start with setting boundaries for our thought lives. Have you ever seen a dog that lives in a fenceless yard that has the shocking system? If the dog crosses the invisible boundary lines he will feel a slight shock. Just like that, we need to feel a slight prick in our hearts when our thoughts are out of line. Whether our thoughts are sexual or emotional about another man, we need to become aware of them and replace them with God's thoughts. It might be that instead of thinking lustfully about another man, you can send prayer up for him. I believe that the first thing we need to do is to ask God to give us a nudge when our thoughts get out of line with His. Since our thoughts are where the battle begins, we have got to place Jesus in authority over our thought lives. We need to be keenly aware when something ungodly is entering.

Another area we need to look at setting boundaries for is our words. What are we talking about with the opposite sex? Are we saying things that seem harmless on the outside but inside we are really trying to flatter them? Are we saying things to build them up and make them feel good? There is a difference between saying kind things to another man other than your husband and saying things that you know are inappropriate. For instance, it would be inappropriate to tell another woman's husband how attractive he is, or what a wonderful husband and father he is. He does not need to hear that from you. Most women that say these kinds of things are really trying to get his attention away from his wife and onto her. She is trying to make herself look better than his wife. Her motives are wrong.

One way to set a boundary here is when you are thinking about giving a compliment to another man ask yourself what your motives are for telling him. Are you trying to build yourself up to look better than his wife? Are you trying to gain his approval? Are you trying to seduce him into bed with you? That man may not have heard a compliment in a long time and if you are the first one to give him one, what might that say to him? Another question to ask yourself when you are talking to another man is "If I tell him this, how will he receive it?" I don't ever want to say something that will give another man the impression I'm coming onto him, other than my husband. I think it's important to begin to set boundaries over our words and ask God to help us convey messages appropriately. Always remember to ask yourself your motive for giving another man a compliment.

Our actions are another area to consider when learning how to place boundaries in our lives. When I'm thinking about actions, I'm mostly considering the choice of clothes we are wearing, what kind of body communication we are sending, and the kinds of places are we planting ourselves.

When considering our clothing, are we wearing things that are too revealing? Are we wearing things that might cause another man to stumble with lust? If so, write out a commitment to change the way you are dressing and write some practical solutions.

Think about this for a moment. Men are visually stimulated by a woman's body. If we are aware of that, are we dressing in outfits that might make it easy for him to sin with his eyes? Some might say that it's their issue to deal with; however, if we are to love our brothers, I don't think that would be acting in love. Causing another to stumble is not pleasing to God and not acting in love.

One important thing I do when I get dressed in the morning is ask myself, "Is this going to potentially cause a man to stumble?" If I'm not sure, I go and ask my husband. If I am still unsure, I choose to not wear it. I would rather err on the side of safe than not. I'm not saying we need to dress in muumuus and cover every area of skin. You can dress hip without compromising your sexuality or cause another man to stumble.

Along with boundaries, we need to be watchful of not being alone with another man in a room, if possible, for a long length of time. If you have to car pool in a car for some distance to work, ride with a female. Unless it's completely necessary, women have no business emailing or calling another man outside of work unless there is a pure motive and reason for calling. Talking on the phone when it's not necessary to the opposite sex can become a breeding ground for seduction. I have experienced times when I began harmlessly talking on the phone to a male and after time, it began to open doors to temptations that could have been avoided. We need to be aware of boundaries not only for our sakes, but for others as well. We never know how someone else might receive what we say or do, so it's important to watch our words and actions.

Have you found yourself in a situation where you were texting or emailing a man when everything inside of you was shouting not to? If you proceeded to do it anyway, why do you think you did?

Building boundaries is a healthy way to ensure that we don't cross lines of sexual compromise and it safeguards us as well.

Boy, after all this heavy discussion, I need a break! I think I might just mosey on up to the ice cream store and dive into something yummy! Go have some fun and I will see you back tomorrow!

Day 4 - Breaking the Chains

I would just like to take a moment to speak to those of you who have huge regrets over any area where you may have compromised your sexuality. If you have never struggled with shame over any level of sexual sin in your life, maybe today's lesson will help you help someone else who has.

This portion of the study is one I am all too familiar with. I have struggled for most of my life holding on to shame. Shame became another one of my best companions. We went everywhere together. You could say shame was my buddy. I had lived for so long with it that I didn't know it was a possible to live without it. To be honest with you, I can hardly remember life without it. I am just coming to a place in my life where I occasionally still have to make the choice to not carry it with me. It has been quite a struggle! I have been bound for so long, I tend to want to go back to what is familiar. Isn't that the nature of our flesh, to go back to the muck?

A lie I battled for a long time was that some of the choices I had made in my past were just not forgivable. God has since exposed that lie, and what freedom it has brought! If you are hanging onto any level of shame from any act of sexual sin from your past and feel what you did is either "unforgivable" or you feel you will forever be shamed for it, that is a lie. No matter what you have done, premarital or extramarital, there is NOTHING that God cannot forgive you for or set you free from. As a matter of fact, he desires to forgive you and deliver you from it.

Why do you think we find it so hard to forgive ourselves?

Please take a moment to read Psalm 32:1. "*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*"

The word *transgressions* here in the original Hebrew language is *pesha*. *Pesha* means, "rebellion". I have found that during times I was rebellious, I willfully chose to do it. I chose to follow through with it. Basically, this scripture is telling us that God forgives us of those sins that we thought about ahead of time, and willfully chose to do them! Let this scripture soak into your deepest regrets. When we ask for His forgiveness, He is faithful to forgive us of those that we planned to do knowing it was wrong. How does that speak to you today?

Do I think this scripture gives us permission to go ahead and commit heinous acts of sin? By no means do I mean so!

I have been walking in freedom from shame for several seasons now, but I was recently tempted to pick it up and give it a piggy back ride! A situation arose where I had heard some things through the grapevine that reminded me of my worst season of sin. Sometimes when I am reminded of it, I still

feel tremendous pain. I believe it's okay to feel pain at times because it reminds us of where we never want to go again. However, when the pain leads us to feeling "shameful", we have chosen to own it and we were never meant to. I realized that when I was tempted to own the shame from the comments I heard, I had victory because I was able to recognize it as bait from the enemy before I chose to receive it. In that moment I had a choice: I could rebuke it and choose not to receive it, or I could pick it up and carry it with me. It is sort of like being offered a coat to wear that has the label "shame". You can choose to put it on and wear it around, or, accept what Jesus did for you on the cross and not wear it. I chose the latter.

Do you have lingering guilt and shame from any level of sexual sin premarital or extramarital? There are several reasons why guilt and shame can linger. Let me ask a few straightforward questions.

1. Have you asked God to forgive you for it? Have you received His forgiveness?
2. Have you repented from that? That means you turned away from that sin and are in agreement with God about the sin.
3. Have you forgiven yourself?
4. Have you asked God to deliver you from everything that attaches you to the event that led to feelings of shame?

When it comes to areas where I have compromised my sexuality, I have struggled so much in my past over forgiving myself and begging for God's forgiveness that I am passionate about conveying to you that all you need to know is that God forgives you (the first time you ask!) and wants you to live a life free of shame. He wants you to forgive yourself as well. I want to ask you one question. If you are one like me that used to run to the throne of grace and ask forgiveness for the same sin over and over, why are you continuing to look back at what God has already forgotten? Why are you asking forgiveness for something God has already forgiven you of and forgotten?

Take a moment to journal your thoughts. I can just see Him now as you run back for the hundredth time to ask for forgiveness. He is saying, "My child, what on earth are you talking about? The first time you asked me to forgive you of that I threw it as far as the east is from the west! In fact, I don't even remember which sin I forgave of you. Believe me when I tell you that I remember your sin no more."

I can remember walking through the steps of repentance and forgiveness yet I still found that thoughts of guilt and shame would come at me. Shame is defined in Webster's online dictionary as, "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt."

In Beth Moore's *Praying God's Word*, she says, "In the life of a believer, guilt experienced before repentance is the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Guilt experienced after repentance is the condemnation of the evil one." Shame is Satan's game. He is called the "accuser of the brethren." If he can throw guilt at you over something you have done and you receive it, it turns into shame. I feel there are countless numbers of women who are caught in a vicious cycle of guilt and shame. The guilty thoughts run through their minds and they meditate on them. Before long their feelings become involved and they are overwhelmed with shame. Girls, feelings can sometimes be our worst enemy. When our feelings are not in balance we usually cannot trust them. I can tell you there was a period of time after I asked for forgiveness that I didn't "feel" forgiven. God wants me to walk in truth. Feelings are not always true. If I am going to walk in truth then I have to walk in what I know

is truth rather than what my heart might be feeling. I have to trust that my feelings will catch up with the truth eventually.

One time I was “feeling” like there was no way God could do anything good with me or my life because I had made such a mess of it. My counselor said to begin to “act” as if you are forgiven even if you don’t feel you are and the feelings will come later. The truth is that I was forgiven the moment I asked for forgiveness. Just because I didn’t feel like I was, didn’t mean my feelings should override the truth. I chose to act as if I was feeling forgiven and she was right. The feelings caught up later. I do feel forgiven now, but it took some time for me to soak the truth into my soul. Sometimes when we receive truth we have to walk it out for a time in order for our feelings to change. You may not feel like your sins are forgivable, but if you have repented and asked for forgiveness, begin to act upon the truth. God does not lie. He is the Father of Truth. If He tells you that you are forgiven that is true!

Describe how you sometimes let your feelings get in the way of truth.

Beth Moore also states in *Praying God’s Word* that, “Never in all of scripture does Christ resist the repentant sinner. He resisted the proud and self-righteous religious but never the humble and repentant. Indeed, forgiveness is why he came.”

I know many women who have been caught in the trap of the enemy’s seduction of sexual sin. They are either still battling the shame of giving themselves away in an ungodly relationship that was years ago or they were caught in the trap of adultery and are still tortured mentally with shameful thoughts about it. They have been forgiven by God but still believe they are a terrible person. They have not forgiven themselves.

Ladies, we have got to get to a place where we realize that God is all about forgiveness and Satan is all about reminding you of your past! We need to rise up and remind Satan of his past when he tries reminding us of ours!

Isaiah 43:18 says, *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”*

What does this scripture tell us to do with the former things and our past? Why is this important?

Okay ladies, this is an easy prescription. All we have to do is CHOOSE to forget them and to not dwell on them. When one of my past sins pops in my head, this is how I apply that scripture:

- I choose to not entertain it.
- I make a conscience effort to not dwell on it.
- I speak God’s truth out loud. I might say, “Thank you Lord that you have forgiven me of all of my sins. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. I love you Lord.”
- Then I choose to think about something totally different.

I came to a place in my life that I was so sick and tired of hearing accusations and condemning words from the enemy that I cried out for God to help. Not only did I hear these accusations in my mind, but I also heard them from those who had unforgiveness towards me. Whenever a shameful subject came up from my past, I would hear the voice of the enemy through certain people saying mean things about me. I began to believe I was what “they” said I was; a horrible person. You see, that is a lie. I am not a horrible person. My actions at times have been horrible, however, I as a created being, am not horrible. That is in direct conflict with what God says about me. I believe the Holy Spirit within wanted to use that situation to begin teaching me that I was not who the enemy said I was, and I was not who I believed I was and I was not who “they” said I was. God wanted me to believe I was who He said I was. He allowed me to remain in an environment where I was shamed until I grew immune to it. He taught me how to fight the good fight and win the battle with Him over shame. He used what Satan meant for harm for my good. Hallelujah!

We are going to close today. I am so thankful you have stuck with me this far! We are almost coming to an end. I can't believe it! In our next lesson we will be visiting a graveyard so go ahead and put on your hiking shoes and bring your shovels and plan to dig! I will meet you there in the next lesson. Be blessed, dear one. You are on your way to living a victorious life in Christ Jesus!

Day 5 - Extreme Makeover

I am so glad you are back today. Some of us are in need of an extreme makeover, would you agree? We won't be visiting the plastic surgeon to get the kind of makeover we need today. They can't do the kind of makeover I'm talking about. Sorry ladies, I'm not talking about facelifts, implants, Botox! The kind of makeover we are going to get today will

be a spiritual one. Be sure to grab your shovel and bring any shame you have been toting around. You are going to need to bring it in order to drop it off once and for all. Are you ready to go? We are heading to the graveyard so let's get going.

I would like to continue our topic on shame today. Sisters, we have to choose who we will bow down to. Is it going to be our feelings, other people's opinions, or God? Sometimes we are worshiping our feelings and we don't even know it! Have you ever had a pity party for yourself? That is an act of worship. You are bowing down to your feelings instead of God. Have you ever rehearsed over and over words of "death" someone spoke into your life? That is the worship of another person's opinion.

I had such a shame-based identity that developed at a very young age that I began to believe I was not a good person. God came to me and began to change my entire thinking. I believe that is what He wants to do with you as well.

What do you think a life free from shame looks like?

Psalm 3:8 says, *"From the Lord comes deliverance."*

Psalm 34:19 says, *"A righteous man may have troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."*

Are you still troubled over some level of sexual sin from your past? Perhaps you still have not forgiven yourself from an abortion you had years ago. If you are still tortured by shameful thoughts from choices such as these, have you asked God to deliver you from them? I want you to know that He desires to!

Why do you think you find it difficult to get over shameful things from your past?

When it comes to shame, I believe we do one of two things. We choose to wear it as a heavy coat and allow Satan to continue to abuse us with shameful thoughts, or we decide to ignore his shameful accusations, follow truth and desire to be set free from it.

For years, I wore the coat of shame and kept all of the horrible feelings to myself. I can remember confessing the sin to God but I kept the shame hidden inwardly. Even after I revealed my sin to God I still felt I had to wear the coat of shame because I felt I wasn't worthy of forgiveness. I later

came to realize I was being prideful. Who am I not to forgive myself if God can forgive me? In essence what I was saying was that even though God could forgive me I was too big not to. I was acting bigger than my God.

Because of the unforiveness towards myself, I was giving the enemy continual power in my life.

Do you struggle with forgiving yourself? Why do you think it's hard to forgive yourself?

Do you believe that there has been sin in your life that is too big for God to forgive?

Please read 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* What does that say to you about any sin you still carry around with you?

We need to confess our unforgiveness towards ourselves and ask God to forgive us for it! We need to believe as scripture tells us that nothing is too hard for Him! We need to get in agreement with God that His Son's blood that was shed was enough to cover our sins. We need to walk in the truth and trust we are forgiven even when we don't feel like we are. Feelings are not always to be trusted. We need to resist the temptations to receive shame from others and choose to walk in truth. It can be a reality, sisters.

Okay, earlier I told you we would need a large shovel. I hope you remembered to bring it. Pick it up and walk with me to the grave of Lazarus in scripture. While I was studying and researching scriptures trying to understand why women carry such shame from sexual sin, God led me to a scripture that became so real to me I think of it all the time now. Please take the time to read John 11:38-44.

In this chapter, Jesus went to raise Lazarus from the dead. When God called Lazarus to come out of the tomb, He said in verse 43, *"Lazarus, come out!"* It goes on to say in verse 44 that *"the dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, take off the grave clothes and let him go."* When I read that last part I felt the Holy Spirit whisper something like this to me, "My daughter, take off YOUR grave clothes. Why are you still walking around in them? You have died to your old self! I came and set you free from death and you are still choosing to walk around in those dirty old clothes to show everyone you are not worthy! Now, I say to you, take them off!"

When I heard this in my heart, I was stunned. I realized that I had still been wearing those "grave clothes" or filthy rags of shame. Jesus was commanding me to take them off. Are you still wearing grave clothes? Some of you are still walking around with them on. It's time to take them off. Grab your shovels and begin to dig. Some of your holes may need to be bigger than others, that is okay! I would assume mine might be the biggest hole of all in order to hold all of my shameful old grave clothes. After you dig that hole, dump all of your grave clothes in it and bury them. Pack the dirt in

firmly; I don't want any of those old skeletons inhabiting your grave clothes to have any opportunity to get out! Sisters, we were meant to wear garments of praise! Can someone shout "Hallelujah"?!

As I was studying the scriptures, I came to another one that spoke such truth over me. Allow me to share it with you. Please read Colossians 3:12. *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."* What God was saying to me was to take off those old grave clothes and put on the new clothes. Think about when you have on an outfit that gets dirty. When you change into clean clothes you feel better. It's the same thing spiritually.

Ephesians 4:22 says, *"You were taught, with regards to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* God is telling us to take off the old and put on the new. Are you still walking around wearing those grave clothes that stink with shame? As you get ready for the day, which clothes do you pull off the hanger? God is calling you to take them off! His Son's blood was enough for you. You don't have to wear them anymore. They represent death. If you are walking in God's forgiveness you have died to your old self and Jesus has raised you to walk in a new life. My hope is that you took them off and buried them three paragraphs ago! Go ahead and clothe yourself with some new ones and go show them off!

Sisters, we have got to get this one right. We have got to take off those old smelly things and get rid of them for good. God came to set you free so that you would not have to wear them. As a matter of fact, He has already set you free. It's a matter of whether you will receive the freedom He has given you. If you are struggling with unforgiveness towards yourself I would like to invite you to do the following. It may take several days or months. Forgiveness is a choice. It may be something you have to do daily until you feel a change.

- Recognize you are holding yourself hostage to shame through unforgiveness.
- Confess your unforgiveness to God.
- Repent. Choose to say out loud for however long it takes, "I choose to let go of all unforgiveness towards myself over my sin. I choose to forgive myself and receive God's freedom He came to give me."
- Confess each day, "I forgive myself. I love myself and I am worthy because God says I am." As the famous words of Stuart Smalley used to say on Saturday Night Live, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggonit people like me." What he said has a lot of merit to it! I crack myself up sometimes with that one!

He knew you needed a Savior, dear one. He knew every mistake you would ever make and still chose to give His life up for you so that you might be saved and set free from the old law. Don't walk around under the old law; He set you free from that! Hallelujah!