

O N E

“You’ve Never Actually Done It”

*The maiden was of beautiful form and
pleasing appearance (Est. 2:7, Rotherham).*

Sex.

This book is about sex.

On the one hand, that gets our attention. We’re interested. But at the same time, it makes us cringe slightly. “Where is this going? Will it be uncomfortable or awkward?”

We wince a bit at the mention of sex because of the blow Adam and Eve suffered in the garden of Eden.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (Gen. 3:6-7).

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they suffered a head-on collision with sin. They didn’t die immediately upon impact but, as God predicted, the injuries would be terminal. They would not recover. Death was inevitable.

The first change to the man and his wife, after they sinned, regarded their eyes—the eyes of both were opened and they saw that they were naked. The initial brunt of the impact was sustained in their sexuality. Although virtually every area of

their being was fractured, no aspect of their personhood was more directly and immediately traumatized. All their descendants up to the present have suffered the same wounding.

One way that brokenness surfaces is in the emotions we feel whenever the topic comes up. Just say sex and something flinches. The whole area of our sexuality is wounded, bruised, and sore to the touch. We feel various levels of embarrassment, shame, guilt, regret, condemnation, accusation, fear, anger, or remorse. Instinctively, we want to cover and hide our brokenness from God and others.

For those of us who truly love the Lord Jesus, we earnestly desire to please Him, especially in our sexuality. Many of us, however, feel like failures. For some, the fight for sexual purity is the foremost battle of our Christian lives, and one in which victories are too few. Tried, failed; tried, failed. We've read books, attended seminars, done small groups, had accountability partners, and yet the failures sometimes persist.

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What I'm about to claim is bold, but I'm persuaded that the vehicle for victory presented in this book has the potential to change things for you like no other tool you've ever employed. Why? Because it's officially sanctioned by the Holy Spirit, with ink, in God's word.

Let me begin by telling the story of my encounter with this powerful biblical tool.

MY STORY

It was December of 2006. In the course of my daily Bible reading, I came to Job 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" Total consecration to Jesus has always been my passionate pursuit, so I used this verse to prayerfully offer myself again to Him.

"Yes, Lord. Yes. I'm saying yes to You once more. I'm signing up for this all over again. My eyes are Yours. My heart is Yours. I'm fiercely resolved to walk in purity before You. I want to see You. Give me this verse."

I took several minutes to pray repeatedly in this manner when the Holy Spirit interrupted and gently whispered to my heart.

“You know you’ve never actually done it.”

I was nailed.

Well, no Lord, I haven’t actually made a *covenant* with my eyes. I mean, that’s serious! That’s like making a *vow* before You. Vows are scary! How could I ever make a covenant in the area of sexuality when it is characterized by so much brokenness and failure?”

But I was busted. I was saying yes to a verse without ever actually saying yes to it. I had made commitments and resolves but had never actually made a *covenant* with my eyes.

So I began to pray over the verse in earnest. “Lord, should I do this?” It grew increasingly clear to me that the Holy Spirit was extending an invitation. He was inviting me into greater consecration in my sexuality.

But I was terrified to make this kind of a vow. Why? Because

I was saying yes to a verse without ever actually saying yes to it.

I understood the seriousness of making a covenant with God. I’ll explain more fully in chapter ten why an eye covenant is so terrifying, but one reason is because it provides no wiggle room for the flesh. A vow doesn’t say, “Here’s what I’ll do if I blow it”; rather, it says, “I promise to never violate this vow, ever.”

That was petrifying!

That’s why I took about a week to pray about it. I needed to discern exactly what the Spirit of God was offering me, and whether I had what it would take to follow through and adhere to the vow. I was counting the cost.

I MADE THE VOW

It dawned on me that the fearful nature of the covenant was actually a gift. The whole point in making a covenant was to intentionally clothe myself in the terror of the Lord. The gravity of knowing I was in covenant with God would help me avert my eyes in a moment of temptation. I knew that if I was wise I would not shun this fear. “The fear of the LORD is

the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10).

After a week of prayer, it became clear that a window of grace was open before me. God was inviting me to a covenant with my eyes, which meant He was offering the grace to keep it. With a trembling heart, I finally decided to do it. I wrote out my vow, entered it in my journal, dated it, and verbalized it in prayer to God.

It was one of the scariest days of my life.

Then I wanted to seal it with an offering (some vows in the Bible were accompanied by an offering or sacrifice to God, e.g. Num. 6:2), and I wanted the offering to be large enough that I would never forget this decision. I couldn't afford to make a vow like this and then forget about it in a moment of temptation. A large offering would help to make it memorable. After receiving my wife's permission, I dug into our savings and sealed the covenant with an offering to the Lord.

Learning to walk under the covenant at first was marked with some awkwardness and uncertainty. I thought of how it might have felt for David to learn warfare in a coat of armor he had never worn before (1 Sam. 17:39). This vow was a new coat for me, and I wasn't sure how to wear it.

I remember one incident, soon after making the covenant, when I was in a hotel room and thought I'd search for an educational channel. I held the TV remote in my hands, and had two fingers poised over the controls. I trembled as I checked out the channels, with my fingers ready to quickly change the channel if the wrong thing came on the screen. I actually held the remote with trembling hands—it was a first-time experience for me. I couldn't afford to stumble upon a channel that would compromise my covenant. I was learning my way with this new garment. How would I do life under this kind of vow? It took time for the new garment to feel comfortable on me.

HOW A VOW HELPS US

The purpose of the vow is to seal our hearts for obedience in moments of vulnerability.

All of us have moments of vulnerability related to temptation. And most of us have an element of curiosity in our personality. When circumstances uniquely line up so that vulnerability happens to coincide with curiosity, we can end up in trouble rather quickly.

You may already know what I mean, but let me explain. Each of us has moments of vulnerability to temptation based upon how we tick as individuals. For some, it’s when we’re sad. For others, it’s when we’re happy. For some, it’s when we’re stressed. For others, it’s when we’re rejuvenated and feel relaxed. When you’re in a place of emotional vulnerability, and then something comes along that piques your curiosity—it’s a set-up for trouble. It’s as though the planets align, and you’re not even aware how susceptible you are to temptation in that moment.

That’s where many of us get tripped up. Under normal circumstances, we would say no; but in a certain convergence of circumstances, we find ourselves doing something we normally wouldn’t do. We begin to look. We keep the TV on the same program, or we click on the link, or we size up the person. We go there. And then the fantasies start. Curiosity, in a time of vulnerability, has bitten.

What we need is a covenant with our eyes—a promise in the presence of God that we’ll never look upon it. The covenant forever removes the option of taking a curiosity check. You no longer have the liberty to stay with a program that you can tell is heading in a sensual direction. You no longer have the freedom to click on a questionable link. Your covenant takes the cross and plunges it through your curiosity.

The covenant has a preservative power. It will keep you, if you honor it. At a time when you might have otherwise been vulnerable and curious, the covenant rises before you, the fear of the Lord grips you, and your eyes turn away from compromise. This is its role—to preserve you in moments of weakness.

Since the day I made my eye covenant, I’ve been profoundly aware of its preserving hold. Its power has carried me. Its terror has gripped me.

What a gift!

GREATER VICTORY AWAITS YOU

Here's my witness: From the day I made a covenant with my eyes, I instantly entered into a higher dimension of victory in the battle for sexual consecration. The difference was immediate and significant, and has endured to the present.

To clarify, I have not yet attained total victory over all temptation. The fight to overcome in our sexuality is never completely over until we're buried six feet underground. We all continue to fight in this war, progressing from strength to strength (Psa. 84:7). But I want to assure you of this: If the Lord leads you to make a covenant with your eyes, you'll enjoy new levels of victory in your walk. Expect the difference to be clear, palpable, measurable, and real.

Are you someone who wants to live in obedience to every part of God's word? If so, I challenge you to look again at Job 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes." The Lord is calling you to unrestrained, wholehearted consecration in your sexuality. Is an eye covenant to be part of that consecration?

I waited for several years to write this book until I had personally proved the power of this covenant. Now that I have some history with God in this area, I declare with sincere conviction that this book may hold a critical key for your personal victory. Please track with me all the way to the end. If you'll stay with me, I'll articulate as clearly as I can one of the most glorious and powerful invitations available to you in the grace of God—a covenant with your eyes.

*Your covenant
takes the cross
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This book isn't a comprehensive guide to every aspect of our sexuality. *It won't answer every question.* Rather, it's focused on one specific topic—a biblical tool designed by God to equip us for purity.

By the way, you will notice that I use *covenant* and *vow* interchangeably throughout this book—because the Bible

does also.¹

Realizing that this subject raises some questions, come with me now as I explain what a covenant is and why it’s so helpful. I hope to answer most objections and provide practical advice for walking it out in the grace of God.

Let’s begin by taking a closer look at the biblical concept of *covenant*.

[For Small Groups]

Dig: Why did Job say he made a covenant with his eyes? What was going on in his life at the time? Study the verse’s context.

Share: Tell the group why you joined this study. What are you hoping for, or asking of God, through this study?

Pray: Ask the Lord to speak to you as you read this book. Express your commitment to His will and your desire to grow in intimacy with Him.

1 The Hebrew for covenant is *bereth* (Strong’s 1285). The Hebrew for vow is *neder* (Strong’s 5088). The Hebrew for oath is *awlaw* (Strong’s 423) and *sheboaw* (Strong’s 7621). The Hebrew for promise is *dawbawr* (Strong’s 1697). While the meaning of each word is unique, there are times when their meanings overlap and become interchangeable, which is common among synonyms. You can see how these words are used interchangeably in the Old Testament by looking at how these Hebrew synonyms occur in Psalm 132:2 and Deuteronomy 23:23 and 29:14. *Promise* and *covenant* are interchangeable in the New Testament in Galatians 3:17 and Hebrews 9:15. As to their unique shades of meaning, covenants (*bereth*) are usually with God and occasionally man; vows (*neder*) are always with God; oaths (*awlaw*, *sheboaw*) are equally with God and man.