

The Battle of the Brain

Volume 1, Week 3, Lesson 3

Where the battle takes place: In the New Testament, the word “warfare” appears 5 times in the exact same context. It always refers to the battle of the mind. See 2 Corinthians 10:3 -5, James 4:1, and James 1:14.

Sinners against your body: In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul explains that sexual sins are not like any other type of sin. When you sexually sin, you sin against you own body. Based on advances in the field of neuroscience, we now know that when you have a sexual release, your brain is flooded with neurochemicals that are as strong as drugs. So, when you are sexually acting out, you are restricting your brain and setting yourself up for sexual bondage.

James 1:14-15 says, “...but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when full-grown, gives birth to death.” The word “entice” refers to a baited hook. When desire is conceived it gives birth to sin. In the context of sexual bondage, sexually acting out becomes a predetermined, pre-programmed pattern in your soul. James concludes by saying: “And sin, when it’s fully-grown, gives birth to death.” A man in sexual bondage is violating his core beliefs, which results in spiritual death, the death of his relationships, his dreams, and sometimes his body.

Whatever attracts and holds your attention will eventually control the direction of your life. – Paul Cole

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SUMMARY POINTS

- Sexual sin is against your own body because it changes the physical composition of the brain.
- The war is waged in the brain.
- Sexual bondage starts as a moral issue that quickly develops into a brain problem.
- Understanding how God designed the brain is a key to breaking free from sexual bondage and staying pure.

The brain typically weighs three pounds. It makes up 2% of your body mass but uses 20% of your energy. It is composed of over 100 billion neurons. There are more neural connections in the brain than there are stars in our Milky Way galaxy. Recently, science has confirmed that the brain is pliable until death. New neural connections are constantly being made.¹

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¹ Roberts, T. (2009). Seven Pillars of Freedom Workbook. Gresham, OR: Pure Desire Ministries International.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Neurons that fire together, wire together.
- Each time you repeat a thought or an action, you create neurological pathways in the brain, causing these patterns of thought to become subconscious and programmed in your mind.
- These neurological pathways program your thought life and actions, so that they become second nature.

The analytic brain vs. the emotional brain: The prefrontal cortex is where higher reasoning takes place. It is our brain's chief commander and impulse control center. We make moral and ethical decisions with our prefrontal cortex. It isn't fully developed until the age of twenty-five. The limbic system is our survival system and operates on impulse and on a subconscious level. It overpowers the prefrontal cortex during times of fight or flight. The limbic system is the part of the brain where sexual bondage takes place. This is our emotional brain, where emotional memories are stored. So, what happens during times of stress or anger in a sexual addict's brain? The limbic system will overpower the prefrontal cortex.

Your internal pharmacy: The brain produces neurochemicals and hormones that create pleasure, help you bond with others, and forget pain, among other things. These neurochemicals flood the brain during sexual release. God designed us to produce these neurochemicals, but when used outside of His will, they become damaging to us.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that helps control the brain's reward and pleasure centers. Dopamine also helps regulate emotional responses, enabling us to identify rewards and take action toward them. In sexual addiction, dopamine surges into the pleasure circuits, as drugs do, and will cause alteration in gene expression in certain areas of the brain, damaging those areas.

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Tools to Conquer: The Faster Scale.

If we're not present and not aware of how we feel throughout the day, we will find ourselves on the verge of relapse and won't know how we got there. When we learn to live in the present, we will be able to predict a relapse weeks before it happens. The FASTER Scale, developed by Michael Dye, is a powerful tool that will help you identify the behaviors, attitudes and feelings associated with the circumstances that lead to relapse.²

Every letter in the word "FASTER" indicates a level of behaviors, attitudes and feelings that often cover or mask our true emotion of pain and fear. The scale depicts how easily our behaviors progress, on a slippery-slope, ending in relapse. Whether the provocation is neurological or environmental, the pattern of movement toward relapse will become more obvious over time. Developing an awareness of our unique behaviors and patterns will help us avoid relapse, implement an intervention strategy, and maintain restoration.

We start off in Restoration: if you're here, that's great! It means you are accepting life on God's terms with trust, vulnerability and gratitude. This is where we want to live. This is the goal.

Forgetting priorities: Here is where we start to believe that our present circumstances define our life and we begin to move away from trusting God. We fall back into denial, we avoid and blame others, and our priorities start to change. This can lead to:

Anxiety: This is where we become fearful and anxious; our emotions begin to control us. Notice how the further you slide down the FASTER Scale, the more you are limbically or emotionally reactive? This can lead to:

Speeding up: Now you're trying to outrun anxiety, where depression and feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness come to the surface. This can lead to:








² Dye, M. (2012). The Genesis Process: for change groups book 1 and 2 Individual Workbook (4th ed.). Michael Dye.

Ticked off: You're getting an adrenaline high from anger and aggressive behaviors. This can lead to:

Exhausted: The adrenaline is wearing off and you're on the brink of relapse. You are running out of physical or emotional energy. This can lead to:

Relapse: You act out – You've returned to the place you swore to never return.

Each time you relapse, you will have gone through the entire FASTER Scale. Using this tool on a daily basis will help you identify your feelings, based on your behaviors and attitudes, and make the appropriate changes to step-off the FASTER Scale and avoid relapse. Remember, the only way we can change our behaviors is to recognize it, discover where it comes from, and make the necessary transitions to change direction. Utilizing this tool takes time and intention.

R RESTORATION	F FORGETTING PRIORITIES	A ANXIETY	S SPEEDING UP	T TICKED OFF	E EXHAUSTED	R RELAPSE
						
Observations:						

Discussion

Watch DVD 3 of the Conquer Series before answering the following questions:

1. *Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20 NLT)*

What facts can you learn about sexual sin from Paul's words to the Corinthian Christians?

What is your response to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20?

2. Paul Cole said, "Whatever attracts and holds your attention will eventually control the direction of your life." What is one thing in your life that is currently attracting and holding your attention?

3. Tell about a time when your limbic brain (emotional brain) overpowered your prefrontal cortex (moral brain)?

4. What are your thoughts and/or feelings regarding the FASTER Scale and implementing this tool on a daily basis?

Accountability

Last week's 7-Day Mission

1. How successful were you on your Commitment to Change from last week?

2. Were you able to connect with every member in your Conquer Group?

3. How did you do with preparing for battle each night? What aspect was most challenging for you?

7-Day Mission Checklist – Week 3

Note: *The 7-Day Mission provides a concise weekly battle plan built on the key concepts in the DVD Lesson for you to work out in your Conquer Series Study Guide and Journal. Additional exercises mentioned in the Conquer Series are suggestions for you to add on your own.*

- Used the FASTER Scale listed above daily
- Journalled my battles throughout the week
- Called each member in my Conquer Group
- Prepared for battle each night