
**A Review of Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace*.
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 176 pp. \$14.99.**

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For six years I had the privilege of working with college students on Michigan State University's campus. The topic of sexual temptation and pornography would inevitably come up as I counseled and discipled young men. I tried to provide the support that was needed. While I saw some fruits of repentance, more often than not I fumbled around with my counsel. I would boldly exhort hardened hearts toward holiness, with little mention of blood-bought grace. Or I'd remind the guilt-ridden of God's lavish grace, without encouraging them toward practical change. My counsel was well-intentioned but sometimes ineffective. All the while I wondered: *How do I connect the dots between gospel grace and the trench warfare of sexual temptation?*

Enter Heath Lambert's recent contribution, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace*. This book is all about "the amazing power of Jesus Christ to free you from pornography" (12). The book begins with a foundational chapter on gospel grace, and then offers eight gospel-shaped strategies for killing sexual sin.

Theology is for the soul. Biblical exegesis is for life change. Lambert understands these truths well. *Finally Free* is thoroughly biblical and grounds its principles in careful exegesis. Lambert lets the Bible speak for itself. Every chapter digs into one or two biblical texts and pulls the reader into God's vision for sexual health and holiness.

That vision begins with the cross of Christ. Christians know forgiveness comes from the Cross. But where do Christians get resources to fight sin? One of the most helpful emphases in this book is that blood-bought grace not only forgives but empowers. Through Christ, God provides resources to cover our shame and enable real

change. "Grace isn't just unmerited favor. Grace is power" (23). How heartening for those enslaved in sexual sin to believe this!

Embracing God's forgiving and transforming grace is just the beginning. Thankfully, Lambert works from the assumption that killing sin, not just managing it, is possible and expected (see Rom 6:1–14; 8:13). The majority of the book is dedicated to exploring *how* the grace of the cross helps Christians put to death sexual sin.

Lambert contends that addressing the heart is essential in the fight for purity. He speaks about the critical role godly sorrow, thanksgiving, and humility play in the war. He shows how greediness is at the heart of sexual immorality: "People are sexually immoral when they are greedy for impure things" (125). He concludes, "only arrogant men look at porn" (108).

More than just a call to impeccable character, Lambert exhorts his readers to intentionally cultivate biblical virtues. Christians can cultivate humility, he explains, when they meditate on our great salvation and our sin, while simultaneously stepping outside ourselves to serve others. Believers can abide in Christ daily by praying the words of Scripture, praying out loud, and singing songs to God. Greed is combatted by nurturing the opposite trait—deep joy in Christ. Humble, thankful, joyful Christians who abide in Christ simply do not look at porn.

Lambert's strategies demonstrate that God's transforming grace touches our hearts and changes our behavior. One chapter urges taking radical measures in our thought life, in our use of time, and in cutting off access to inappropriate materials. Another chapter offers a biblically-informed frame-

work for confessing our sins to others. Another chapter explains Thomas Chalmers' "expulsive power of a new affection," pressing readers to refocus their thoughts and energies on something or someone else (e.g., a spouse).

One practice that many Christians employ in the fight against sexual sin is the "accountability group." Lambert wisely affirms and corrects the typical "accountability group" model. For example, he advises that effective accountability is involved early in the battle. "You will not experience dramatic change in your struggle as long as you use accountability to describe your sins instead of declaring your need for help in the midst of temptation" (49).

Lambert is a true pastor in this book. He not only ministers the Word but shepherds hearts. His tone is gracious, serious, and inspiring. He tells stirring stories of people he has counseled. He ends each chapter with exhortations and questions that force the reader to slow down and reflect. The book also concludes with a helpful appendix for family members and friends of those who struggle with pornography.

I would have liked to see Lambert address women who struggle with sexual sin as well. With the recent craze over *Fifty Shades of Gray* and *Magic Mike* it's safe to say that this isn't just a one-gender issue. Still, the principles in this book do apply to men and women. In fact, they apply to fighting and killing all kinds of sins.

Lambert's work is timely. Ninety percent of kids age 8-16 have viewed porn. Seventy percent of men age 18-34 visit porn sites monthly. One out of every six women struggles with porn addiction. And fifty percent of pastors look at porn regularly.¹ It's tough to read this and not flinch. The Church desperately needs gospel hope and gospel wisdom for this battle.

Lambert's book is a cool drink for those in the barren wilderness of sexual addiction. It is immensely biblical, balanced, practical, and grace-oriented. For those who are lost, hopeless, and frantic because of sexual sin, this book is for you. For all of us, men and women who strive for holiness and want to help others strive too, this book is for you.

I am thrilled to apply its teaching to my own life and to those I have the privilege of counseling.

ENDNOTES

¹"Stats on Porn," *Mars Hill Church*, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://marshill.com/2012/03/05/stats-on-porn>.