

The Battle Plan

A Five Step Approach To Removing Pornography From Your Life

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01

PRAYER & FASTING

In your fight against pornography, prayer
and fasting are two powerful weapons.



You could say that prayer without fasting is like boxing with one hand tied behind your back, and that fasting without prayer is, well, dieting.

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— FINDING TIME —

In your fight against pornography, prayer and fasting are two powerful weapons. Don't say, "I don't have time to pray," for, if we're honest, we always find time for that which we love: social media, television, waiting in line for coffee . . . and sin. From now on, be honest and say "I don't have the love to pray." And then tell our Lord that, and plead with him for that love.

— PRAYER FOR PURITY —

Dear Jesus,

I know that every perfect gift, and especially that of chastity, depends on the power of your providence. Without you a mere creature can do nothing. Therefore, I beg you to defend by your grace the chastity and purity of my body and soul. And if I have ever sensed or imagined anything that could stain my chastity and purity, blot it out, Supreme Lord of my powers, that I may advance with a pure heart in your love and service, offering myself on the most pure altar of your divinity all the days of my life.

Amen — St. Thomas Aquinas

— FASTING —

The vice that often leads to sexual sin is a lack of self-mastery. Fasting from legitimate pleasures, even small ones, builds up that virtue within us. The regular habit of denying us good things gives us the inner strength to avoid bad ones. Put it this way: If we can't say no to a cookie or another slice of pizza, how will we ever say no to the temptation to look at pornography?

You might consider joining E5 men, an online community of thousands of men who fast once a month for their wives (or their future wives). Another idea might be to fast for the men and women we have objectified by using pornography.

— THE SAINTS ON FASTING —

If you are able to fast, you will do well to observe some days beyond what are ordered by the Church, for besides the ordinary effect of fasting in raising the mind, subduing the flesh, confirming goodness, and obtaining a heavenly reward, it is also a great matter to be able to control greediness, and to keep the sensual appetites and the whole body subject to the law of the Spirit.”

- St. Francis de Sales

“Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one’s flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, kindles the true light of chastity.”

- St. Augustine

“Fasting is to reaffirm to oneself what Jesus answered Satan when he tempted him at the end of his 40 days of fasting in the wilderness: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ (Mt 4:4)... Today, especially in affluent societies, it is difficult to grasp the meaning of these Gospel words. Consumerism, instead of satisfying needs, constantly creates new ones, often generating excessive activism. Everything seems necessary and urgent and one risks

not even finding the time to be alone with oneself for a while . . . Penitential fasting is obviously something very different from a therapeutic diet, but in its own way it can be considered therapy for the soul. In fact practiced as a sign of conversion, it helps one in the interior effort of listening to God.”

- St. John Paul the Great



6 Spiritual Weapons to Battle Pornography

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I would like to suggest six spiritual weapons that have great effects in the battle against pornography. Here they are, not in any particular order:

— 1. THE EUCHARIST —

My bishop once told me of a conversation he had with a Protestant minister: “Do you really believe that the Eucharist is Jesus?” Asked the minister, “and not simply a symbol?”

“That’s right,” said my Bishop, “what do you believe?”

“I think it’s just a symbol. But I’ll tell you one thing, if I did believe that, I’d crawl over broken glass daily to receive him.”

That story has always stuck with me. I confess with my lips that the Eucharist is truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, but do I confess that truth with my actions?

Do you?

Fourth century Church Father St. John Chrysostom once wrote that “the Eucharist is a fire that inflames us, that, like lions breathing fire, we may retire from the altar being made terrible to the devil.” Let us take advantage of that!

In addition to receiving the Eucharist at Mass, begin to spend time before our Blessed Lord in Eucharistic adoration. Instead of staring upon the flesh of pornography, begin staring upon the flesh of God that was crucified to redeem you.

As I said before: lack of time is a poor excuse. We always find time for that which we love. You probably found time to waste on social media today.

Mother Teresa once wrote, “Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration.”

— 2. CONFESSION —

Our blessed Lord gave his apostles—the first priests and Bishops of the Catholic Church—the ability to forgive sins (John 20:21-23). That charism still resides with our priests today. In the sacrament of confession, not only are we cleansed of our sins, but we are given the grace to resist those sins in the future.

St. Faustina had this to say about this powerful Sacrament:

Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated. . . . Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God's mercy! You will call out in vain, but it will be too late. (Diary 1448)

Though the Church only requires us to receive this sacrament once a year, many Popes and saints have advised us to go more often. The purpose of frequenting this sacrament isn't to become scrupulous and guilt-ridden, (scrupulosity is not a cross the Lord calls us to carry but a scourge of Satan he commands us to renounce!) but, to turn our eyes away from ourselves and toward him. In doing so we begin to live in the freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

— 3. THE ROSARY —

You'd be hard pressed to find a devotion which, after adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, has been so frequently and persistently advocated by the saints. "Among all the devotions approved by the Church," wrote Pope Pius IX, "none has been so favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary."

Sister Lucia dos Santos (one of three children at Fatima who claimed to have witnessed and conversed with the virgin Mary), for example, wrote,

"The Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us [or] of our families... that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary."

So what is the Rosary? Simply put, and in the words of Blessed John Paul II, it "is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ."

To commit to praying the rosary, perhaps even daily, is to commit to spending fifteen to twenty minutes in quiet contemplation. Often those who use pornography habitually say they experience an inner disquiet that can make contemplation seem almost impossible. The rosary is a practical and beautiful way to reverse that problem, to begin quieting our minds and our passions.

The famous words of one bishop, Hugh Doyle, are appropriate here: “No one can live continually in sin and continue to say the Rosary: either they will give up sin or they will give up the rosary.”

— 4. ST. JOSEPH CORD —

The St. Joseph cord (or cincture), like the one priests wear at Mass, is a sign of chastity, and has been since the Church’s beginning—and before. Old Testament priests wore cinctures, consecrated Virgins and religious wear cinctures, and the wearing of cinctures in honor of a particular Saint is ancient, first spoken of in the life of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine.

The Cord itself is simply a white cord of thread or cotton, knotted in 7 places—one knot for each of the 7 Sorrows of St. Joseph and their related Joys, they being:

7 SORROWS	7 JOYS
The doubt of St. Joseph (Matt. 1:19)	The message of the Angel (Matt. 1:20)
The poverty of Jesus’ birth (Lk. 2:7)	The birth itself (Lk. 2:7)
The circumcision of Jesus (Lk. 2:21)	The holy name of Jesus (Matt. 1:25)
Simeon’s prophecy that many would be lost (Lk. 2:34)	Simeon’s prophecy that many would rise (Lk. 2:34)

The flight into Egypt (Matt. 2:14)	The overthrow of idols (Is. 19:1)
The return from Egypt (Matt. 1:19)	Life with Mary and Jesus (Lk. 2:39)
The loss of the child Jesus (Lk. 2:45)	Finding Jesus in the Temple (Lk. 2:46)

Each day, one is to recite seven Gloria's (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.) while meditating upon the seven sorrows and joys of St. Joseph, and then offer this prayer:

Guardian of virgins, and holy father Joseph, to whose faithful custody Christ Jesus, Innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed; I pray and beseech thee, by these dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, that, being preserved from all uncleanness, I may with spotless mind, pure heart, and chaste body, ever serve Jesus and Mary most chastely all the days of my life.

Amen.

You can purchase a St. Joseph Cord at www.inhisname.com

— 5. SACRED SCRIPTURE —

The Word of God is, as Hebrews 4:12 tells us, “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.” Memorizing Scripture verses that pertain to purity can be of great help in moments of temptation. Here are over twenty Scripture verses for you to look up, reflect upon and memorize:

Purity	Temptation	Sexual Sin	Mercy	Spiritual Warfare
Matt. 5:8 1 Tim. 4:12 Phil. 4:8 Ps. 24:3-4	Jas. 1:14-15 1 Cor. 10:13 2 Tim. 2:22 Ps. 101:3-4 Sir. 7:36	Sir. 23:18 1 Thes. 4:3-8 Mk. 9:47 Ps. 51:1-2	Mk. 2:17 Ps. 51:1-2 Heb. 8:12 Ps. 103:12	1 Pet. 5:8-9 Eph. 6:10-17 Jn. 10:10 Rom. 12:2 Ps. 119:9

— 6. HOLY WATER —

Another spiritual weapon you might use in the fight against pornography is holy water. First let me reiterate my great joy in being Catholic. I love how the Church’s sacramentals validate and reinforce the goodness of material world.

What a comfort it is to do something as simple as dip your finger into holy water and trace the cross of Christ across your body. How is this not something that our Protestant brothers and sisters have adopted (or reinstated)?

In her autobiography St. Teresa of Avila writes of how holy water is great weapon against Satan and his devils.

“From long experience I have learned that there is nothing like holy water to put devils to flight and prevent them from coming back again. They also flee from the Cross, but return; so holy water must have great virtue. . . . One night . . . I thought the devils were stifling me; and when the nuns had sprinkled a great deal of holy water about I saw a huge crowd of them running away as quickly as though they were about to fling themselves down a steep place.”

Let's be honest; if it's good enough for Teresa of Avila...

Learn more at www.theporneffect.com



02

ACCOUNTABILITY

Allow another person to remind you of who
you are and who you desire to be



Accountability means allowing another person to remind you of who you are and who you desire to be.



— THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARING —

This means being transparent with a trusted friend or mentor about your struggles so that they can offer encouragement and support.

— FIND A FRIEND —

Find a friend or mentor you can trust. Ask them to be your accountability partner. Share with this person when you're struggling

and how you're progressing. Remember, no recovering porn user can be an island! As the Bible says, "though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccles. 4:9-12).

— COVENANT EYES —

Stop fighting porn alone. Find courage. Seek a friend who you can share your history, your habits and your situation with, then use Covenant Eyes.

Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability tracks websites you visit on your computers, smart phones, and tablets, and sends them in an easy-to-read report to someone you trust. This makes it easy to talk about the temptations you face online.

Covenant Eyes helps you make wiser choices about your Internet use. Whether for parents or adults. Covenant Eyes helps start a needed conversation.



Interview With Audrey Assad

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“As long as I thought I couldn’t tell anyone, it was virtually impossible for me to experience deliverance.”

MATT: Audrey, on a scale from 1 to stepping on lego barefoot, how much does it hurt you when you hear someone say, “girls don’t struggle with porn. Porn is a guy’s issue.”

AUDREY: It's certainly a little stab to my heart when I overhear something like that, especially when it's spoken from a platform. Whenever I heard this as a teenager it isolated me even more in my battle against pornography addiction, because it reinforced my assumption that I should never tell anyone about it.

I thought that I was the only woman in the world going through it—and this was Satan's greatest foothold in my heart and mind while I was in bondage to pornography.

As long as I thought I couldn't tell anyone, it was virtually impossible for me to experience deliverance.

Hearing things like this from the platform of ministry only reinforced the deception.

MATT: I know you've had the opportunity to share your story of porn addiction and recovery with young women all over the country. What's their reaction?

AUDREY: It's pretty incredible how many girls will share the truth about their addictions with you if you just speak up about yours.

A few years back I spoke at a conference for high school students and shared (briefly) my testimony at a girls' session; and then for the rest of the week girl after girl pulled me aside to share that she was battling pornography addiction.

I probably talked to fifty girls. And their youth leaders were pulling me aside as well—some to share their own struggles

AUDREY: and some telling me about their uncertainty about what to
(cont'd) do with the students who had suddenly been confessing to them. One told me that a girl in her group shared that she'd been compulsively viewing pornography since the age of 8.

It's a lot more common than anyone would like to believe, and the sooner we learn how to address it, the sooner more and more young women can find freedom in community.

MATT: *What three things would you recommend to a woman struggling with porn who may be reading this?*

AUDREY: I'd recommend confession first: whether you're Catholic or Protestant, speaking your sins aloud to someone you trust is the surest way to begin to confront them, and then to walk away from them.

Secondly, accountability: pick several people in your life (probably of your same gender, unless you're choosing your brother or your dad) who know you well and who don't judge you for your sins, but who care enough about you to hold you accountable to what you are attempting to do. A great way to be accountable online is to use Covenant Eyes.

Thirdly, counseling: pornography feeds on what is, deep-down, a good and innocent need—the need for intimacy, for love, and for affection. Most often when someone is addicted to pornography, the foothold of the enemy is to warp and twist those natural, God-given needs and desires. A good counselor can help you unravel the spiritual and emotional reasons those needs and desires are being preyed on, and help you develop healthy ways to meet those needs at your stage in life and in your state in life.



03

GET INFORMED

It's important that we not only feed
our souls, but our minds as well.



Educating yourself on how pornography affects us spiritually, neurologically, and even physically will help convince you to break free from it.



— FEEDING OUR MINDS —

In the battle against pornography, it's important that we not only feed our souls, but our minds. Educating yourself on how pornography affects us spiritually, neurologically, and even physically will help convince you to break free from it.

— KNOW YOURSELF —

In his book, *Treating Pornography Addiction*, Dr. Kevin Skinner lays out what he calls the “pornography highway” or “activation sequence.” It

refers to the stages one goes through from the time he is tempted, to the time he looks at porn. Dr. Skinner says there are seven stages.

It's extremely helpful that you examine each stage in the sequence and honestly reflect upon your own experience. Once you have done this you can then write a deactivation sequence... A game plan.



1. STIMULUS OR TRIGGER

One encounters something which activates the sequence.
(Internet ad, mindlessly searching on Youtube)



2. EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

One has an emotional response (instant excitement, interest or curiosity)



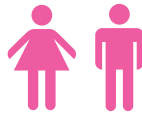
3. THOUGHT

Almost simultaneously with the emotion is a thought. ("What will I see;" "I can look at pornography;" "no one has to know").



4. CHEMICAL RELEASE

When the emotion and thought are entertained, the mind quickly begins to release chemicals into the body in anticipation of what will happen next. These chemicals are released before a person has even seen pornography.



5. BODY LANGUAGE

Once the chemicals are released into the system, the body begins to change. (Heart rate increases; palms may become sweaty or cold; eyes may dilate; tingling in groin and/or erection).



6. THE BATTLE

One still needs to decide if he is going to give in and look at pornography. It's the mind's back up system that allows the person to respond rather than react. Thoughts for and against.

- ▶ Against: my wife would be disappointed, I could lose my job, I have a daughter for goodness sake, I shouldn't be doing this.

- ▶ For: I've been doing this for years, one more time isn't going to matter; I know I'm going to fall eventually. I may as well give in now, repent, and get it over with.)



7. BEHAVIOR

The battle comes to an end when the mind authorizes a specific behavior. Before a person views pornography he must accept that behavior is ok. (I deserve this.) Just one last time. This isn't so bad.

— KNOW THE EFFECTS —

What are the effects on your family, work, life, relationships, God?



1. PORN AND MARRIAGE

"To embrace pornography as a substitute for marital intimacy," writes Bishop Paul Loverde, "is a tacit admission that the spouse is a means to meet biological 'needs' rather than a partner in the communion of human love." The fact is, porn does not compliment sexual intimacy with one's spouse; it competes with it.



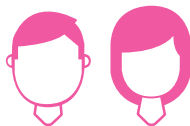
2. PORN AND THE BRAIN

The findings of modern neuroscience are now explaining in scientific language what those of us who have been addicted to anything already knew: The addictive state leaves us in constant craving for a neurochemical cocktail (endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, etc.) that, with compulsive use, effectively re-sets the pleasure thermostat of our brain. The result is that alcoholics need more booze, drug addicts need bigger hits, and porn users need more and harder kinds of sexual stimulation—just to feel “normal.”



3. PORN AND SOCIETY

“There are no studies and no data that indicate a benefit from pornography use” writes psychotherapist Mary Anne Layden, “The society is awash in pornography and so in fact the data are in. If pornography made us healthy, we would be healthy by now.”



4. PORN AND THE PERFORMER

Though the porn industry would have us believe that the life of a porn performer is glamorous, the stats and anecdotal evidence simply does not bear this out. As one psychotherapist who specializes in sexual trauma put it: “The experience I find most common among the

performers is that they have to be drunk, high or dissociated in order to go to work. Their ... terrible work life is often followed by an equally terrible home life. They have an increased risk of sexually transmitted disease (including HIV), domestic violence and have about a 25% chance of making a marriage that lasts as long as 3 years.”



The Hardcore Facts: 10 Pornography Statistics



One of my pet peeves is when people cite statistics without knowing, or caring about knowing, the source; and the soundness of that source.

Below are ten statistics that I found particularly eye-opening. The sources for these quotes can be found at the end of this e-book.

For a comprehensive and up-to-date resource that contains accurate information about the industry, audience, and impacts of pornography, download this free e-book *Pornography Statistics* at www.covenanteyes.com/pornography-facts-and-statistics/

— THE PORN INDUSTRY —

1. According to Websense, in 2004 the number of porn sites went from 88,000 in 2000 to nearly 1.6 million.
2. In 2002, there were 11,300 mainstream hardcore films released, compared to 470 Hollywood features.

— PORN AND THE PERFORMER —

3. One male pornographic performer, Rocco (600 films and 3,000 women), said: “Every professional in the porn-world has herpes, male or female.”
4. Tanya Burleson said, “Guys are punching you in the face. You get ripped. Your insides can come out of you. It’s never ending. You’re viewed as an object — not as a human with a spirit. People do drugs because they can’t deal with the way they’re being treated.”

— PORN AND THE USER —

5. In 2005, a study of 400 Internet users showed a significant correlation between pornography use and loneliness.
6. In 2005, a study of youth between the ages of 10 and 17 concluded that there is a significant relationship between frequent porn use and feelings of loneliness and major depression.

7. In a meta-analysis of 46 studies published from 1962 to 1995, comprising a total sample of 12,323 people, researchers concluded pornographic material puts one at increased risk of:
- ▶ developing sexually deviant tendencies (31% increase in risk)
 - ▶ committing sexual offenses (22% increase in risk)
 - ▶ accepting rape myths (31% increase in risk)

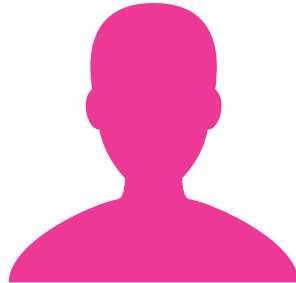
— PORN AND FAMILIES —

8. According to sociologist Jill Manning, the research indicates pornography consumption is associated with the following six trends, among others:
- ▶ Increased marital distress, and risk of separation and divorce
 - ▶ Decreased marital intimacy and sexual satisfaction
 - ▶ Infidelity
 - ▶ Increased appetite for more graphic types of pornography and sexual activity associated with abusive, illegal or unsafe practices
 - ▶ Devaluation of monogamy, marriage and child rearing
 - ▶ An increasing number of people struggling with compulsive and addictive sexual behavior

— PSYCHOLOGICAL CORRELATIONS —

9. Neurologist Serge Stoleru has found that overexposure to erotic stimuli exhausts the sexual responses of normal, healthy young men.
10. According to an article published on *Psychology Today*, over exposure to pornography can lead to erectile dysfunction.

Learn more at www.theporneffect.com



04

COUNSELING

There is nothing dishonorable in taking
action to be a better person



Sometimes the struggle for purity needs professional help, and there are plenty of good Christian counselors out there who are willing and waiting to give it.



The next step I want to suggest is professional counseling.

Sometimes people—men especially—can think that admitting they need counseling is something to be ashamed about. It is not. What would be shameful is realizing at the end of your life how much you and your loved ones suffered because you were too proud to seek healing.

Often counseling is needed to get to the root cause of pornography use. Peter Kleponis, a psychotherapist who specializes in counseling those with a pornography addiction, says “often issues like shame, loneliness, anger, childhood abuse and abandonment, and pure selfishness are the root causes of pornography use.”

“These emotional conflicts,” he says, “need to be resolved for recovery to be lasting. Without this, any sobriety will be a ‘white knuckle’ sobriety, and there will always be a struggle with strong temptations to use pornography. Counseling is also needed to ensure that all other points of the recovery plan are in place and working properly. For married men, marital counseling is needed to heal the deep wounds to their marriage caused by porn use. Wives may also need counseling to help them recover from the trauma caused by their husband’s pornography use.”

How do you know if you may need counseling? Here are five questions to ask yourself. Answering yes to any of them could mean that you would benefit from professional counseling:

1. Do you have a preoccupation with pornography?
2. Have you had repeated unsuccessful attempts to control or stop viewing pornography?
3. Do you use pornography as a reward for hard work, and/or a way to escape problems or negative emotions?
4. Are you risking the loss of a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of the use of porn?

5. Have you been thinking that you might need counseling because of your pornography use?

For more information, visit www.integrityrestored.com



05

PERSEVERANCE

Be patient with yourself, healing won't
take place overnight.



Remember that the wounds you have received didn't come about overnight, and the healing won't take place overnight. It takes time, perseverance, and determination.



"Have patience with all things," urges St. Francis de Sales, "but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections but instantly set about remedying them—every day begin the task anew."

Several years ago, as I stood in line for the sacrament of confession about to confess for the umpteenth time a sin I couldn't seem to quit, I began to fear that God's mercy was running out. I didn't doubt that

God would pardon a person who turned to him after a life of the most heinous sins imaginable. What I did doubt was that he would continue to forgive me. How many times have I said, “I will never do this again,” only to return to that sin like a dog to its vomit (2 Pet. 2:22).

At that moment, by God’s grace no doubt, I was reminded of the incident in the gospel of Matthew when Peter approached our Lord with a question:

“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22).

Now what our Lord did not mean was that Peter was to forgive his brother 490 times and then no more. No, rather, “seventy times seven” signified perfection and consistency. It then occurred to me, if God’s forgiveness is not like that—perfect and consistent—then Jesus was commanding Peter to act in a way that was contrary to the nature of God.

The truth is, God is infinite in all of his attributes. In fearing that God’s mercy was slowly evaporating, I was unintentionally making God in my image. If you have ever been tempted to doubt God’s mercy as I did, or if you’re tempted to do that now, please ingrain the following words from St. Claude de la Colombiere into your brain:

“I glorify You in making known how good you are towards sinners, and that your mercy prevails over all malice, that nothing can destroy it, that no matter how many times or how shamefully we fall, or how criminally, a sinner need not be driven to despair of Your pardon...It is in vain that your enemy and mine sets new traps for me every day.

He will make me lose everything else before the hope
that I have in your mercy.”

Regardless of where you have been or what you have done, be at peace. The same God who forgave Moses the murderer, Rahab the prostitute, David the adulterer, and Peter the denier will forgive you also. All you have to do is seek that forgiveness with a contrite heart. The only sin God will not forgive is the one you will not ask forgiveness for.

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