

## The Power of Sexual Temptation

What does it take to bring down a King? The answer is as alarming as it is disturbing. Enter one of the saddest moments in Israel's history and learn a lesson. It began with a familiar scenario. "One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her" (II Samuel 11:2-3a).

The sight of a beautiful woman has a special power to hold men captive. I've witnessed this more than once. The atmosphere changes when a good looking lady enters a room full of men. This will always be the case and it's not entirely wrong. God designed a natural attraction between the sexes. It exists among all humans and is arguably essential to our survival. Yet what is natural is easily perverted in the hearts and hands of fallen people. Attraction becomes lust and leads to sexual immorality. People get hurt.

There are many temptations in the world but few things hold as much sway over a man's heart as the sight of a beautiful woman. All the enemies of Israel could not combine to control David's life like what he innocently observed from the roof top. But was it innocent? Is it possible that David should have been somewhere else? Prior to these verses, we read, "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem" (II Samuel 11:1).

Along with being in the wrong place, it is possible that David knew in advance what he could see from the roof. Whatever the factors, men will always be drawn by the sight of beautiful women. The fact that the woman was bathing occasioned a more captivating lust in David's heart.

Scripture emphasizes sight as the igniting source of temptation. Consider four examples:

1. Eve was drawn to the forbidden fruit after "*she saw* that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes and also *desirable* for gaining wisdom, *she took some* and ate it" (Genesis 3:6).
2. When a man named Achan hindered Israel down by giving into temptation, his confession exposed the common path of temptation "When *I saw* in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, *I coveted* them *and took* them." (Joshua 7:20-21).
3. David *saw* the beautiful woman, sent and *inquired about her* and finally sent messengers and *took her* (II Samuel 11).
4. Jesus emphasized the power of sight to cultivate a heart for evil when he said, "...I say to you that everyone who *looks at* a woman *with lust for* her *has already committed* adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28).

What can we learn from this pattern? Consider Job's example when he said, "I made a *covenant with my eyes* not to look lustfully at a girl (Job 31:1). If sight is the source, deal with it at that point. On the theme of sexual temptation, Jesus spoke in radical terms when he admonished, "...if your right eye offends you, pluck it out" (Matthew 5:29). Although not intended literally, Jesus teaches us to deal decisively with the source of evil.

Clearly, this is *the* battle for all men. The power of lust is real and difficult to overcome. The Christian apologist Josh McDowell once said, "Show me a man who can control sexual passion and I'll show you someone who can control every other area of his life." Dealing with sexual temptation is a daily battle for men and most women do not understand the intensity of it. Wives must guard their husbands and be the source of their sexual fulfillment. This must be intentional on their part and a primary way of loving the man God put in their lives. Couples must view sexual frustration as a threat to their marriages. Prolonged sexual abstinence must not be permitted in a marriage. Scripture identifies it as an opportunity for the evil one (see: I Corinthians 7:3-5).

We must realize that this battle cannot be won without strong support and consistent discipline of the mind. A good place to start is to maintain daily time with God in Scripture and prayer. Memorization of scripture also fortifies the soul against temptation. An added help comes from consistently placing yourselves in transparent Christian fellowship. But none of this is a magical formula to protect one from feeling tempted. And feeling temptation is not wrong; acting on it is the problem.

A proverb just for men admonishes, "Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings." (Proverbs 31:3). King David could not take back that moment of temptation and sin. Gratefully, he found forgiveness with God but great damage resulted from his "moment" of passion.

**Verses to guide us to victory:**

### **Ephesians 5:3-5**

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

### **1Thessalonians 4:3-5**

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body *n* in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ..."

**Hebrews 13:4**

“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

**Proverbs 6:32**

“But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.”

**Proverbs 28:13,14**

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.”

**Psalm 32:1-2,5**

“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’— and you forgave the guilt of my sin”

**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.”

**Romans 13:14**

“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

**1 Peter 2:11-12**

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”