

Chapter 10



The Bitter Roots of Lust

Bible Character – David – 2 Samuel 11
Symptoms – Effects – Causes – Biblical Cures

The Seriousness of Lustful Thoughts

We are looking at dysfunctional thinking patterns. In this chapter we are dealing with one of the most private of those dysfunctional thoughts, it is **lustful thoughts**.

Over my years of preaching I've found several things that make people get mad at me when I preach, besides the color of my tie, the volume of my voice, and the length of my sermons. Number one is if I preach on tithing, inevitably somebody gets mad. They get furious. Number two, if I preach on the sovereignty of God and salvation, they get upset. The third is if I preach on divorce, they get outraged. Throughout my 50 years of ministry, those three things consistently make people uncomfortable.

This message is probably going to earn a place among them. We are going to talk about some things that are very delicate. We're going to talk about some things that are not talked about in the church, and unfortunately not in our homes either. We can talk about everything else from the pulpit, but you'd better not talk about sex in the church.

A few years ago, I announced to our congregation for several weeks in advance that on a particular Sunday morning we were going to preach about sex. It was an adult only message. Parents were told to be sure their children were in the children or youth ministries area of the church. That message became known as the sex message. It made people mad.

Some years ago I was preaching through the Ten Commandments and I came to the passage that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" At the end of the service, I got tackled by one individual who was so outraged he said, "I'll not come back to church over this. You talked about sex in a worship service and my teens were here."

Hello, parents. How come you haven't been talking to them about sex? They are getting bombarded with it everywhere but in the home. Is it because sex issues are taboo in church? We ignore the issue, but it's all around us. Our whole society is filled with this thing called lust, sensual desires, and outright sex. Even grade-schoolers are being forced to learn about sex. Children are being taught to question their birth gender and even encouraged to have sex surgery at a young age, and the church is silent.

Everywhere we go in our society, there is sex. Sex on billboards, sex in school, sex on TV, sex in movies, sex on the Internet, sex in magazines, sex in newspapers, sex in advertising. You can't escape it. I don't care if you're in kindergarten or a nursing home, it's all around you. Let's not come to church and pretend it doesn't exist, and it's not an issue that affects all of us.

The Situation (biblical character)

The David and Bathsheba Story – 2 Samuel 11-12

Turn in your Bible to our key passage. It's the story of David and Bathsheba. It's found in 2 Samuel 11:1-5. I have not printed the entire story here. I hope you will read it for yourself later. I am highlighting just the first five verses.

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.

² 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, ³ and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. ⁵ The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

⁶ So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

¹⁰ David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

¹¹ Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents,^[a] and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

¹² Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³ At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵ In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

¹⁶ So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. ¹⁷ When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

¹⁸ Joab sent David a full account of the battle. ¹⁹ He instructed the messenger: “When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, ²⁰ the king’s anger may flare up, and he may ask you, ‘Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn’t you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? ²¹ Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth^[b]? Didn’t a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?’ If he asks you this, then say to him, ‘Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.’”

²² The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. ²³ The messenger said to David, “The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. ²⁴ Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king’s men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.”

²⁵ David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Don’t let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.’ Say this to encourage Joab.”

²⁶ When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

Most of us know this story of David. We know who David is. David, the shepherd boy that was chosen to be the King to replace Saul. David, who fought the battle with the giant Goliath when nobody else wanted to. The heroic David, who took the five smooth stones and slung one and hit the giant in the forehead and he dropped dead, and then he took off his head. He was a mighty warrior. Later, he eventually became king. He did wonderful works for the Lord and even wrote Psalms. David was the apple of God's eye. He was a special man of God. He was God’s anointed king. He was the king to which God made promises of the Messiah.

The Story of Lustful Thoughts

David was not above lustful thoughts. David was getting comfortable in his kingdom. Perhaps a little complacent and a little proud of his victories. It was the spring of the year. He should've been out to battle with his men. It was not proper for a king to stay behind and allow his soldiers to go to battle without him. He should have been there, but he wasn't. He stayed behind in the palace to fool around. We know from this passage that it was not an accidental thing that he stayed behind. He didn't accidentally go to his housetop and just happened to see a bathing beauty. I suggest to you that David probably had a habit of doing this. He knew exactly what he was doing. There was a reason he stayed behind. He sent his mighty men away so he could have some privacy, and in the middle of the night, when nobody was looking, he did the unthinkable thing. He went to the rooftop and watched Bathsheba bathe. I don't think for a moment that he just innocently spied her bathing.

The idea was he watched her bathe. He didn't just accidentally wander up to the rooftop. He'd been there before. Bathsheba was very beautiful. And she wasn't a stranger. Uriah's house was right next to the king's palace. Uriah was a high-ranking officer. David knew him well. He was one of those honored men of David's army. David knew the family. He knew Bathsheba's grandfather, Ahithophel. He was one of David's trusted counselors. So, David was familiar with who Bathsheba was. This liaison was not an accident. This was a planned proposition. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I want to suggest to you that maybe even Bathsheba was in on it. We always think that this was accidental. What in the world was Bathsheba doing taking a bath in full view of the palace in the middle of the night when everybody else was sleeping?

I can't help but think that maybe, just maybe, she understood the king was watching. She was a willing participant. She could have said to the messenger to tell the king that her husband was away and it would not be appropriate for a nighttime visit. But she didn't. I suppose she was just as infatuated as he was. Both of them had initial physical attraction for each other. This passage of Scripture doesn't give us the timeline, the chronology, of their entire relationship. But there is a timeline here. I doubt David sent her a note saying, "Come up here tonight. I'm going to treat you to a magnificent dinner and then we're going to bed." It doesn't happen that way. At least that's what I've read.

David and Bathsheba weren't strangers. She was a neighbor. She attended all the palace dinners and parties. Perhaps she had even flirted with David, giving him some coy smile, and batting her eyelashes. Maybe they'd had conversations at those dinner parties. She found him intelligent, handsome, strong, and very clever. David had to woo her. He had to win her. She had to be courted. She had to be romanced. She had to be wooed and then brought to that point of saying, "Oh, King, whatever you want." Then the deed was done. You see, there's an important lesson in David's life for us. That lesson is that no man, and no woman, is so spiritual, so lofty that this can't happen to them.

The Symptoms of Lustful Thoughts

We need to be aware of the fact that sex and lust are realities of human nature and God addressed it as one of those primary issues in the Ten Commandments, not once but twice. I want to highlight two of those commands because God dedicated them to addressing lust and covetousness. God dedicated two commandments of the ten to lustful thoughts. That's how important it is to God.

Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery.”

The King James Version says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” That word “*adultery*” covers a multitude of sins. It is not referring just to divorce and remarriage or having an affair in marriage. God doesn't even mention divorce here. He talks about sexual promiscuity.

Here is a long list of synonyms that are incorporated in that one word “*adultery*.” (There are at least 10 different words used in the New Testament to describe illicit sexual behavior. The label adultery really encompasses everything illicitly sexual. God says you shall not be sexually impure. That includes everything LGBTQ and all. By the way, all LGBTQ sins are covered in the word adultery (sexual sin).

Words such as, fornication/whoremonger (*porneo*), uncleanness, (*akathisia*), coveteousness (*pleonexia*), lasciviousness (*aselegia*), without natural affection (*astorgos*), effeminate (*malakos*), abuses of self (*arsenkoites*), wantonness (*koites*), strange flesh (*opiso sarx*), vile passions/inordinate affections (*atimia pathos*), are all included in the term “adultery.”)

Then, in Exodus 20:17 He concludes the Ten Commandments with a similar command against coveting.

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Let me clarify that. When the Lord says, “*You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.*” He doesn't mean just husbands shouldn't covet, but wives also shouldn't covet their neighbor's husbands. You get it. It goes both ways. I want to emphasize that it goes both ways.

Lust and Covetousness Are Thinking Problems.

They are Stinkin' Thinkin'. It's not a problem of only one gender. Everyone is a sexual human being and is subject to lust and desires. You're made of flesh and blood and you have the old nature in you. It's not just *Every Man's Battle*, it's *Every Woman's Battle* as well.

There is a devil, and he walks around seeking to devour. He puts thoughts into your mind that don't come just from you. They don't come from God either. They come from hell and they're going to bombard your mind no matter who you are, male or female.

I pastored in a college town. We had a lot of college students and over the years and I had counseled many. The number one issue of today's students is pornography and lust. I've kept track of it. I had just as

many girls/women come for counseling, saying they were addicted to pornography, as guys/men that come for the same reason. There's no difference in our society.

There's no difference between Christian and non-Christians. Pornography is an open book on the Internet. You can hardly avoid it. Many a believer has accidentally opened a web page and found it to be embarrassing. But beauty is enticing. Lust is in the human genome. The divorce rate among Christians is the same as for non-Christians. What's the number one cause of divorce? Infidelity. The problems are the same for Christians and non-Christians. The mindset is the same. The temptations are the same.

We live in this culture that is pornographic, not much removed from Sodom and Gomorrah. Scripture says that "*righteous Lot vexed (tormented) his soul with their lifestyle.*" (2 Peter 2:8) We are being squeezed into the mold of western post-Judeo-Christian morality, which is immorality. God wants us to understand that His commands do not change with cultural shifts. God's law is still God's law. Adultery is still adultery.

God says lust is a thinking disorder before it's a physical disorder. Adultery is not just a physical act. It begins as a mental act. It begins always as a thought. There's no adultery that's ever taken place in the world without first being a thought.

First, let's deal with the root of the problem.

The root problem is in our heads, not elsewhere. We need to be careful about that because it's easy to look for a to-do list of things we **should not do**, and forget about the things that **we should not think**.

Someone has said, "We can't stop the birds from flying over our heads, but we can stop them from building a nest in our hair." So it is with temptation. You're going to be tempted. You are going to be tempted by lustful thoughts. Thoughts are going to pass through your mind. That can't be helped. But when we pause on those thoughts, when we meditate on them, when we muse over them, when we use our imaginations, or our cell phones for fantasies, then we've lost the battle, fallen into a trap. That trap opens the doors of hell and allows Satan a place in our lives. Satan doesn't take charge of us when we give in to temptation, but we give him permission to walk in and be present.

I'm going to share with you a short article from *My Heart, Christ's Home* by Robert Munger. If you've never read this little booklet, you need to read it. You can buy it on Amazon or through Christian Book Distributors. It's published by InterVarsity Press. It's been around for many years. Robert Munger said, "Though I've written many books, the only thing I've ever written that people read is this little booklet." It has sold millions of copies worldwide because it's so powerful.

Munger describes inviting Jesus Christ to come into our lives as inviting him into our home. In this little booklet, he goes through every room of our house and describes Jesus coming into that room and what that would mean. As he nears the end of the booklet, he comes to one room that's been left out. It's the hall closet.

Robert meets Jesus in the living room and fellowships with him every day. He invites Jesus into in the kitchen for Jesus to monitor what he brings into his body, brings him into the bedroom so that there is a time to have us mind on the Lord, but the hall closet remains locked. Here it is.

The Hall Closet

One day I found Jesus waiting for me at the front door. An arresting look was in his eye. As I entered, he said to me, "There's a peculiar odor in the house. Something must be dead around here. I think it is in the hall closet."

Indeed, there was a small closet up there on the hall landing, just a few feet square. In that closet behind lock and key I had one or two little personal things I did not want anybody to know about. They were dead and rotting things left over from the old life. Yet I loved them. I wanted them so much for myself I was really afraid to admit they were there. Reluctantly, I went up the stairs with him, and as we mounted, the odor became stronger and stronger. He pointed at the door and said, "It's in there! Some dead thing!"

I had given him access to the study, the dining room, the living room, the recreation room and the bedroom and now he was asking me about a little two-by-four closet. I said to myself, "This is too much! I am not going to give him the key."

"Well," he responded, reading my thoughts, "If you think I am going to stay up here on the second floor with this smell, you are mistaken. I will take my bed out on the back porch or somewhere else." And I saw him start down the stairs. I had to give in. "I'll give you the key,, I said sadly, "but you'll have to open the closet and clean it out. I haven't the strength to do it.

"I know," he said. "Just authorize me to handle that closet and I will." So, with trembling fingers, I passed the key over to him. He took it from my hand, walked over to the door, opened it, entered it, took out the putrefying stuff that was rotting there and threw it all away. Then he cleansed the closet, painted it and fixed it up all in a moment's time. Immediately a fresh, fragrant breeze swept through the house. The whole atmosphere changed. What release and victory to have that dead thing out of my life!

Sometimes we allow dead things that nobody else sees, and nobody else knows about, to live inside our thoughts. Jesus doesn't want to live with your sexual fantasies in your Stinkin' Thinkin' closet. He wants to clean it out.

Grandpa's Basement

I come from a family of eight, five boys, one girl, and two parents. My parents were pretty strict about those things that were right and wrong. They believed in the Ten Commandments. They were good Alliance people and so they taught us to stay away from evil things. My mom was stringent about not looking at immoral pictures. Now, how did I know what an immoral picture was? I was a little boy growing up. Well, my granddad's house had pictures of naked women down in the basement. We were told never to go down to the basement without ever giving us a reason. If you want to send a kid on an errand, and tell him not go downstairs, then forbid it saying, "Don't you dare go downstairs! There are some things down there that are very naughty." Boys will be boys, and curiosity killed the cat. We sneaked down anyway. Grandpa had Playboy calendars on the wall.

Once you have opened your eyes to see something like that, it remains embedded in your memory. So, as children, we were exposed to those infamous women on the wall.

Down by the Riverside

A few years later, we were going down to the river to play as boys do. We would fish and catch frogs and crayfish. We would do some fishing and then we'd hang out exploring the banks of the river looking for treasures. Mom let us do that because we were with other Christian boys. One day we found a secret treasure. It was a pile of old magazines. They were all ripped and mildewed, but that didn't matter to us. One of our friends picked one up and said, "Whoa, guys, look at this!" We gawked, and our eyes nearly popped out. They were Playboy magazines in full and living color!

We couldn't believe our eyes. This was like a treasure chest. So we studied every page. Each one was better than the one before. We drooled. Yes, even little boys do that. We went down to the river day after day for almost an entire week. Then, my younger brother Tommy, who was known to be a tattletale, accompanied us to the river. We had told our brothers before we got there not to let Tommy know what we found or he'd tell on us. We tried to keep Tommy busy hunting crayfish, crabs, or fishing. Then we'd run over behind the bush and look at those pictures.

Low and behold, Tommy came up behind us and asked what we were doing. Before we could hide the magazines, he grabbed one page out of our hands. He looked at it and said, "I'm going to tell mom!" And off he ran down the street. I'm fast, but I couldn't even catch this kid. He got all the way to the house with this magazine in his hand. We were dying. "No Tommy, don't do it. Don't give that to mom!" Too late. He ran into the house and yelled, "Mom, look what Davey, Dickie, and Mikey were looking at down by the river!"

Mom took one look and blew up. "How dare you! If you love Jesus, you would never do such a thing. Wait till your father gets home!" Poor Dad didn't like coming home from work and being told to have sex talks with "your boys." Well, dad didn't have a sex talk with us. He said, "What do you expect? Boys will be boys." We got spankings anyway. We were told to never ever look at naked women. Mom said, "It's bad. You'll go blind. You'll get a disease and shrivel up." Mom had all kinds of things that she'd try to threaten us with.

Most guys have had experiences like that. It's curiosity. It's part of growing up. I don't know what girls go through, but I'm sure they have their wake up moments too.

The point of this is what we see, what we put into our minds, stays in there for the rest of our lives. There's no way to erase it, so we need to be very careful about what we put into our eye-gate, because it will be imprinted in our minds.

I want you to understand this: the matter of lustful thoughts and desires is infecting our churches and our families in such a way that it's destroying people. It's not an affliction just of the young. It's an affliction that touches everyone.

Pastors Fail Too

I've been in the ministry for more than 50 some years. It never fails to sadden and shock me to see people fall because of immorality. Some were people I would never have expected, pastors in ministry who were sidelined because they let in the lustful thoughts and desires. Then they acted them out. I have a colleague in ministry who was 72 years old, a man I honored through the years, a man I emulated. I thought he was one of the most godly men I'd ever known. I worked closely with him. At 72, he left his wife and ran off with his secretary. There's no age limit on lustful desires. It affects the highest and the lowest of men and women.

A New Testament Command

There's another passage I want to show you in **Matthew 5:28**. The Lord Jesus is speaking concerning the command, *“Do not commit adultery.”* He wanted to make clear the extent of the command. So he elaborated on it for us. Matthew 5:27-28.

“You have heard that it was said, do not commit adultery, do not commit sexual acts that are immoral. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Now that's a hard command. There's no wiggle room here, is there? It's our thought-life that God is concerned about. He's concerned about what goes on inside. Yes, adultery and sexual sins are physical acts, but it starts in the mind, in our thoughts.

Once you understand lustful thoughts don't work on a one-way street, you'll understand the command. Women have lustful thoughts and desires, just like men. Remember, Bathsheba was not an innocent bystander who happened to get caught up in the king's intrigues. She knew what she was doing. She was a co-conspirator in the affair.

The Motivation of Desires

There's a difference between the lust that a woman has and the lust that a man has. Let me tell you what the difference is. A woman lusts for an intimate relationship. That's her first desire. The second is to have a romantic relationship. And third is the possibility of a physical encounter.

Her primary motivation, or primary desire, is not for the body. It's not for the conquest. She's not really after the abs or the handsome face. It's for the intimate relationship. Do you know how many starving women there are in the world waiting for a relationship that's intimate and close to a godly man? Men, we need to be extremely careful because women are looking for somebody just like us.

Have you ever been told that? I've been told that many times. “Pastor, I'd love to have a fun husband, just like you.” When I hear that, I run. My wife tells me I have to. My wife serves as my coach. She's my coach because we guys are stupid. We are like the pig being led to the slaughter. We are ignorant of what's happening. It takes a woman to tell us, “Hey, wake up. You know what's going on? That woman is not safe.” There have been several times when my wife has come to me and said, “Dick, I'm really uncomfortable with that woman in your counseling session. She's becoming very dependent on you. I can

see stars in her eyes. I just have an uncomfortable feeling.” Do you know what I do when that happens? I cut it off. It's time to transfer that person to somebody else because it's a dangerous relationship.

I'm not responsible for what that woman's thinking, or what her intents are, but know this: women have lusts too. You may choose to call them desires, but it is the same thing. Whatever you want to call it, it's a desire for an intimate relationship, a deep intimate romantic relationship, beyond just a friendship. We assume Bathsheba was no different. She wanted a relationship with the king. He was handsome, strong, smart, talented and funny.

Most women would love to have a real romance. How do I know that? Go down to Wal-Mart or any bookstore. Count the books that have *Romance* or *Love* in the title. Most novels for women have scantily clad women and bare-chested muscular men on the cover. Go to a Christian bookshelf. You'll find the same thing. Sex sells. Romance and love sell. Why? Because women are longing for romance. They're not after your abs. They're after your lips. They want a romance that's intimate. Last, and maybe not least, they want your body to seal that relationship.

Guys are usually interested in a pretty face and a nice figure, then the romance of conquest, and after that, maybe an intimate relationship. It's not the other way around. Here's how a man lusts. Sex is the thing that turns him on. It makes this world go round. We're under a curse. It's built into our genes. It's a genetic pattern in all of us. That's how procreation happens. Wouldn't it be terrible if men didn't have that drive? Then men would have a lot of muscle cars, but the species would perish. This world would be mighty small.

If you are reading this, blowing it off and saying, “This doesn't affect me. That's not my problem. I don't have lust. I don't have evil thoughts. I don't have any fantasies. I don't have any drive for an intimate relationship or romance, or sex with a beautiful woman.” Then, you're lying or you're dead.

Whoever you are, there's going to be a vulnerable moment for you. You need to be ready for it, because it begins in your thought-life. Sexual acts begin in the mind long before they are played out in real life.

I have been in pastoral ministry for over 50 years. In those years, I have observed and dealt with many issues of divorce. I have found the issues of discontentment, desire for something better and sexual desires to be the greatest peril to marriage.

I have often counseled couples in trouble and most often it is because of an affair, pornography, sexual promiscuity, or other issues involving sex. It is an epidemic in our society and in our churches. Every year there are 4-5 pastors in our district that are removed from ministry because of sexual sins. Rarely are they removed for theological reasons. One national church leader confided in me that of the nearly 100 pastors disciplined in the previous year in our denomination, not one was over theological issues. All were sexual.

I have observed patterns of behavior that lead to affairs. Had the husband and/or the wife been aware of these patterns, perhaps their marriage would have been saved.

Warning Signs

There are warning signs. There are dangers. There are steps people take that little by little lead them to an affair. An affair of the heart always precedes an affair in a bedroom.

Solomon, who failed terribly in the area of sex, warns young men and women to “*Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*” (Proverbs 4:23) Proverbs dedicates whole chapters warning of wayward women and men. The Bible is filled with commands, warnings, and admonitions to avoid sexual sin. But the patterns continue. Lust and the desire to have something better seem to dominate human affections. Men and women have secret desires. Men and women are tempted. Men and women fail.

1 Corinthians 10:6-13 warns us about the most common sins of Israel, idolatry, adultery, and complaining. “*Let him that stands take heed lest he fall.*”

⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

*¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.** ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

Although sexual sin is often the thing that most often causes men and women to fail, it is not the only sin. Exodus 20:14 and Exodus 20:17 are two parts of the same problem of lust. The first is warning us against sexual sin, adultery. The second warns us of its sister companion, covetousness. Covetousness is idolatry, the lust and desire for things.

The Sources of Lust (causes)

A Warning to All

It is important for us to remember that lust is not just about sexual sin. Exodus covers both sexual sin and covetous sin. They are two parts of the same problem. Lustful thoughts are sexual on the one hand and greedy on the other. They are two parts of the same dysfunctional thought.

Both are symptoms of a cheated heart. They are the thoughts and feelings of having been cheated. Both long for something more, usually something better. It is the search for a utopia. It is wanting your personal heaven on earth. It is part of the human condition. We lost the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. We lost paradise and our hearts yearn for that place of perfect fulfillment. It is longing for the perfect. Why do you think so many people marry and divorce 3-4 times or more? They got what they wanted, but found it wasn't enough. It did not satisfy. Lust (desires) can never be satisfied.

Proverbs 30:15-16

“Greed has two daughters named 'Give' and 'Give.' There are three things that are never satisfied, really four that never say, 'I've had enough!': the cemetery, the childless mother, the land that never gets enough rain, and fire that never says, 'I've had enough!'"

There are two New Testament verses that apply to lust (desires) beyond the sexual or romantic. They are 1 John 2:15-16 and James 4:1-3.

John 2:15-16

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

The lust of the flesh is clear. It is the lust after physical and sexual satisfaction. The lust of the eye can be lust after beauty or brawn, or it can be lust and desire for what the eye sees; houses, cars, and money. The third is the pride of ownership. It is the pride of conquest, to be the top dog and king of the mountain.

James 4:1-3

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from **your desires that battle within you**? ² **You desire** but do not have, so you kill. **You covet** but you cannot get what **you want**, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may **spend what you get on your pleasures**.*

Facts Concerning Lust & Desire

First, note that desires battle within every one of us.

No one is exempt. You intensely desire what your flesh wants or your eyes see or your heart imagines. Imagination is a wonderful and a terrible thing.

Second, we can conjure in our minds a utopia for ourselves in which we will be fully satisfied.

The problem is that utopia doesn't exist. It's in the imagination. It is a thought distortion. It is a lie of Satan. Satan tried to tempt Jesus with it. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world at a glance. That's imagination. Jesus didn't fall for it. He knew that a man's *"life did not consist of the abundance of things a man possesses."* (Luke 12:15)

Third, is that our ultimate motivation is to consume (spend) it on our pleasures (our desires).

Ultimately, our lusts and desires are consumer driven. It is a consumer mentality. Again, it's a thought distortion. We cannot have everything our eyes see and our heart desires. We weren't created to have everything we desire in this life. If we did, we would have no desire for heaven.

* * * * *

God has given us fair warning. He has also given us ways of escaping our temptations. *"Let him that stands take heed lest he fall."* In this next segment, I am going to give you the notes from a sermon I preached on the subject, giving you a clear understanding of the gradual steps toward infidelity. It had a powerful effect on many men and women who woke up to the reality that they were sliding down this path.

I call it The Anatomy of an Affair. This little guide has been a revelation to many who were being led to the slaughter. Be forewarned. This is how it happens, with David and Bathsheba, and with you and me.

The command is to guard your eyes and thoughts. Every sin has its root cause, its predecessor, its precursor in thoughts and desires. No one ever had an affair without thinking and fantasizing about it first. David did not accidentally have an affair with Bathsheba. It was a process. It was a slow process of stepping toward sexual sin. No man or woman today accidentally falls into adultery. You don't fall into it like tripping over a log. You descend into it.

An Anatomy of an Affair

(Signs of Other Loves)

Here are the steps that lead up to immoral sexual relationships. Take heed lest you fall. But you don't really fall, you slide.

- ❖ **Physical Attraction** – (secret fantasies) Looking and imagining are at the root of all affairs. The lust of the eyes, the desires of the flesh, and the longing for physical pleasure is strong. It is something that I think will make me fulfilled and satisfied. Dreaming about someone can be very dangerous. But you say, “I have no control over that!” No, but repeated fantasies tell what really goes on in your heart of hearts.
- ❖ **Flirtation** - (secret fishing) Flirting is an innocent schoolyard skill developed early in life. Chasing girls in the playground, hitting girls, tag, or teasing are all flirtations. Later it becomes smiling, flattery, winking, goo-goo eyes, joking, dressing to attract, and just being cute. What are you up to? Be honest with yourself.
- ❖ **Intimacy** – (secret conversations) Private conversations with someone who is not your wife/husband are dangerous. The exchange of personal intimacies is an open door to romance. Having a close friend of the opposite sex is always a dangerous thing. Adulteries usually take place with someone close to you, a neighbor, best friend, close colleague. E-mail intimacies. Cell phone intimacies. Guard your relationships.
- ❖ **Declarations** – (secret romance) Revealing affection for a person, *“I'm really crazy about you. I enjoy being with you. I missed you. I like talking to you. You are really special to me. I wish I had married someone like you. Where were you before I got married?”* Romantic affections always precede adultery. Guard your conversations.
- ❖ **Tender Touches** (secret fondness) A touch can be a powerful thing. To some it is like electricity, sparks, and wind on flames or embers. Promiscuously “leaning,” “hugging,” “caressing,” “physical touches” or “an actual kiss,” are all extremely dangerous liaisons. The song says, “A kiss is just a kiss”—no it isn't. A kiss is a powerful thing. A touch can be like an electric current, a thrill, a turn-on. Guard you touches.
- ❖ **Private Meetings** (secret rendezvous) Seeing someone in secret. Your spouse doesn't know about it, and wouldn't be happy if he/she did. Whether for a business meeting, a cup of coffee, or “Meet me in my room” or “Can you come in for a moment?” These are all dangerous liaisons. All such meetings are private for intimacy.
- ❖ **Sexual Liaison** (secret affair) at this stage one steps over the line that was drawn in the sand of his/her own heart, and gives his/her body over to physical indulgence with the object of his/her desire. Unfortunately, in our present evil age, this can be same sex promiscuity as well as heterosexual.

We have included this in our Appendix so that you can see it on one page. Share it with others.

Sayings (Self-Talk)

Your Own Lustful Thoughts

All lust comes from within. All emotions begin with thoughts. Therefore, we need to search our hearts for the whispers of Satan’s lies that rattle in our brains. What are the lustful thoughts and beliefs that provoke you to immorality? What is it you covet and crave? (Success, money, fame, fortune, house, car, job, education)

Your Desires and Lustful Thoughts

Ten Distorted Thought Patterns

Untruthful Thoughts (lies of Satan)

1. All-or-Nothing (expecting perfection)
2. Overgeneralization (Murphy’s law, pessimism)
3. Mental Filter (gloom and doom)
4. Disqualifying Positives (minimizing good things)
5. Mind Reading (reading people’s thoughts, motives)
6. Fortune Telling (predicting disaster)
7. Magnification (dwelling on small things, blowing them up)
8. Should-itis (demanding fairness, blame and shame)
9. Name Calling / Labeling (derogatory name calling)
10. Personalizing Everything (feeling responsible, pity party)

Conclusion

Be sure to visit the Appendix for exercises and help in overcoming lust. Keep track of your lusts and desires. Be honest with yourself.

The Solution (God's truth)

Flee youthful lusts. Be like Joseph in Egypt, run!

1 Corinthians 6:15–20

¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ **Flee from sexual immorality.** Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Covenant Eyes – Job 31:1-4

¹ I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman. ² For what is our lot from God above, our heritage from the Almighty on high? ³ Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? ⁴ Does he not see my ways and count my every step?

Guard your heart with all diligence. – Proverbs 4:23

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

I would encourage you to read Proverbs chapters 5-7 for the advice Solomon gives young men. It is appropriate for women as well.

Proverbs 5:7-23

⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. ⁸ Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel, ¹⁰ lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich the house of another. ¹¹ At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent. ¹² You will say, “How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! ¹³ I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors. ¹⁴ And I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God’s people.”

¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. ¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? ¹⁷ Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. ¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

²⁰ Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man’s wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman? ²¹ For your ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all your paths. ²² The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast.

²³ For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly.

Stop Here!

Don't read any further until you have digested, applied, and used what you've just read.

Avoid overload. Read only one chapter a week.

Personal Response to Lust and Desire

1. How did this subject make you feel? Sad, confused, upset, depressed, guilty, condemned, enlightened, happy, hopeful, etc.?
2. Was this chapter helpful in identifying some of your own Stinkin' Thinkin'? If so what specifically?
3. What 3 negative thoughts do you need to change? What are they and why are they distortions of truth?
4. What 3 or more biblical truths, verses, or promises do you need to digest and make a firm part of your thoughts and beliefs?

Group Discussion Questions

(This is a very private matter. You may not want to answer it out loud.)

1. Do you ever feel cheated by life? Why?
2. Do you have an unfulfilled cheated heart? Describe the feeling. What do you crave after or wish you had that others have?
3. What do you most often crave, wish for, long after, pine for? Be specific. (Chocolate, vacation, car, house, etc.)
4. What do you secretly covet that someone else has? Who has what you'd like to have? What is it?

Download our helps and tools at go to www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm

**10 Sermons on Stinkin' Thinkin'
365 Promises of God
Exercises & Forms in 8.5x11 PDF format**