

Dealing with Sexual Temptation

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There are times in life when a split second can make or break the balance of one's days. A decision made in the heat of the battle or the heat of the moment can forever change life's course. Our preparation for these moments makes the difference. If we have properly trained our minds and developed our characters, we are able to make wise decisions and live without regrets (2 Corinthians 7:10).

David's moment of truth came in 2 Samuel 11. On this evening he went for a walk from which, in a sense, he never returned. He began the walk as the most respected saint on the earth--king of God's people, rich, a popular, powerful, and happy man with several wives and many children. He ended it as an adulterer, murderer, liar, and hypocrite.

As was the custom, he walked along the palace roof in the cool of the day. From this vantage point he saw a beautiful woman, Bathsheba, bathing herself. He lusted and sent for her to share his bed. When she later sent a note saying she was pregnant, he tried to hide his sin. His bad decisions blotched his great life. From this story, we learn several valuable lessons about how not to deal with sexual temptation.

David didn't turn his head when he should have.

David saw a woman's exposed body. This was not an unusual occurrence for a man who had several wives. But this woman was not his wife. He could have done what he had likely done in similar situations many times before, simply turn his head and look

in another direction. He could have walked off that roof and gone back to his business or even spent some private time with one of his wives.

But he did not. He kept looking. And enjoying. And thinking. And desiring.

The rest reads like a *National Enquirer* article.

How does this apply to us? American men live “on David’s balcony.” There are exposed women all around them all the time. They cannot drive down the street, work in their yards, or go to work (perhaps even church) without seeing enough flesh to cause impure desires to surface.

Look around you right now. It is likely that you are within range of temptation at this very moment. If you are in a public place, if you let your eyes wander, you likely could see tight jeans, short skirts, plunging necklines, and form-fitting tees and tops.

If you are at the office, a computer mouse is likely within reach of your hand. If so, you are only a few clicks from forbidden territory. In fact, innocent searches often show us more than we wanted to see, and pop-ups peddle porn regardless of how diligent we are in trying to keep them out.

If you are in your home and the television is on, then you are within about three minutes of a commercial with a scantily-clad woman (“sex sells,” you know) or a character in a show speaking innuendo, showing off her body, or worse (perhaps much worse).

What should we do? What lessons should we learn from King David? *First, turn your head!* Jesus said,

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).

We must watch our watching. David “saw” (2 Samuel 11:2) before he “lay with her” (2 Samuel 11:4), which is the natural order. If we can avoid the first, then we will never get to the second. It helps us to watch our watching to remember that God is watching. He sees our efforts to turn our heads--and He knows when we don't (Proverbs 15:3; Psalm 139:1-12; Galatians 5:19-24; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Peter 2:14, 18; 1 John 2:26; 2 Timothy 2:22; Romans 1:27). He likes for us to pray, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10)

One preacher wrote in a bulletin about an elder who said, “I used to have swimming parties at my house, but I stopped when I took time to observe how the men were looking at the women. I wanted no part in this.” The article told of another Christian who said, “Until a few years ago I simply was not convinced there could be anything wrong with public swimming.” What changed his mind? He and his wife went with another couple to the lake. When he saw his friend's wife in her bathing suit, he found himself having impure thoughts that he never had had when she was properly clothed. He spent the rest of the afternoon with his back turned to her to avoid evil thoughts. He said he told himself over and over, “This is what preachers have been trying to tell me, and I didn't believe them.”¹

Second, keep occupied in wholesome activities. When spring rolled around, it was time for kings to go to war, but this year the great warrior king David stayed home. “An idle mind is the devil's workshop” the old-timers told us. David can vouchsafe for it. If

he had been in the battlefield, he would not have been on the palace roof. When are we most likely to be tempted--when we are occupied with a task or when we have an hour to kill? A moving target is harder for the devil to hit!

Bathsheba bathed where David could see her (2 samuel 11:2-3).

The Bible does not indicate whether or not Bathsheba purposely washed in public view. At the least, she was careless about exposing herself. At the most, she knew of the king's walking habits and deliberately placed herself where he might see and desire her in his harem.

Christians must not dress immodestly or act flirtatiously. Some women display themselves in a calculated effort to seduce the opposite sex (Ephesians 4:19). Those who deliberately dress to excite lust are as guilty as those who lust. Other girls are only naive or careless in their attire and actions. But the end result is the same. "What he thinks is his problem" is not the attitude of a Christian. Jesus said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

The Bible shows remarkable insight into human personality when it specifically warns men of mental adultery (Matthew 5:28), and cautions women about dressing immodestly (1 Timothy 2:9). It is equally wrong for women to think lustfully and for men to dress immodestly, but the danger is greater in the way the Bible states them. Experts say (as if it were not common knowledge) that men are more prone to be sexually aroused by what they see than women (nine times more). Let us err on the side of caution when we choose what we will wear to school, church, work, the ballgame, or out. Let us dress to please God, not man.

Adultery is a terrible crime (2 Samuel 11:4-5).

Moses' Seventh Commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

It is repeated in the New Testament (Romans 13:9; James 2:11).

To cover his sin, David tried to deceive Uriah (2 Samuel 11:6-11). This failed, so he got him drunk (2 Samuel 11:12-13; cf. Habakkuk 2:15). David finally stooped to plot the murder of his loyal subject (2 Samuel 11:14-25). He sent Uriah's death warrant by Uriah's own hand and involved Joab in his sin.

Could it happen today? Has a young man ever gone dancing, lusted after his date, given into fornication, conceived a child, hated its mother for causing him such heartache, lied to his friends and family, and coerced her to kill the child with abortion?

Has a husband ever lost his head in lust and conceived an unwanted child or been blackmailed to keep his embarrassing actions quiet? It happens somewhere in America every week. Most Christian adults face a strong temptation at least once in their marriage, sometimes much more often. How many began flirting with a co-worker only to end up with a broken heart and a broken home?

Sin cannot be covered up or swept under the rug (Numbers 32:23; Galatians 6:7; Romans 6:23). Like malignant cancer, it is progressive (cf. Psalm 1:1). Sex sin still begets the same sins David committed: lying, cover-up, hypocrisy and murder (abortion, suicide), and other sins, too (such as child abuse and violence).

We must not underestimate temptation's power or say, "It'll never happen to me." David was a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), and it happened to him. Do you suppose David thought it would happen to him? But then came Bathsheba. If David was not strong enough to watch and still resist, let us take heed lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:11-

12; Romans 15:4). This shows just how quickly a man can fall. In an unguarded moment, the power of sexual sin can ruin a life. Such temptation is no respecter of persons, no respecter of theological labels, and no respecter of leadership positions.

The stakes are high. Broken hearts and broken homes come with high price tags. To escape the eternal heat, prepare for the heat of the moment.
