

David And Missing Sexual Hedges

2 Samuel 11:1-27, part 1

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-7-2013

Introduction – George McDonald

True story: Jeremy Bassett told about a time a few years ago when his 5-year-old niece, Olivia, was part of a nativity play at their Christian school. And actually, the funny part involved her best friend, Claire. Claire was playing the Virgin Mary, and Olivia was an angel. Before the show, a five-year-old boy dressed in a sheep's outfit was going around the dressing room with great pride, saying, "I'm a sheep, what are you?" When he got up to Claire, she said that she was the Virgin Mary. The young boy looked a bit crestfallen, and must have realized that he was up against a pretty important character. But he collected himself and said, "It's hard being a sheep, you know." And five-year-old Claire responded with equal pride, "But it's also hard being a virgin, you know."

And she was right. Even though she was talking about playing the part of the Virgin Mary, the Bible *does* say that it is hard. That's why the Bible never calls us to simply fight such temptation. It calls us to flee. Paul even admonished pastor Timothy, "**Flee also youthful lusts.**" Usually you flee an enemy because you know that you are going to lose the battle if you don't flee. There are some battles where a tactical retreat is by far the best option. I think most of our young people do a pretty good job of trying to stay as far away from falling into temptation as they can. They know the dangers. And today I won't be speaking so much to them as I will be to you married folk. The principles of this passage obviously apply to all of us (men, women, and children), but it is critically important to realize that the Scripture's admonitions to guard ourselves against sexual temptation are not just for singles.

In fact, Satan has the *easiest* time with those who think they have no problem in that department. It's an area that I am not tempted in personally, but I know what the Scripture says – "**Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.**" Even though I think I can stand by God's grace, I am still taking heed. And that word, "take heed," means literally to watch out. Even married people must protect their hearts, minds, eyes, emotions, and bodies as well.

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I. Human hedges that David broke down

A. *Letting down your guard after major successes (2 Sam. 7-10)*

And let me start with a modern story of adultery. Gordon MacDonald was the former president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and he was also the pastor of a church. He writes that he had been asked by a close friend what his most vulnerable points for temptation were, and if there were any ways in which he thought that Satan could take him down. After thinking a bit he responded:

All sorts of ways, I suppose; but I know there's one way he *wouldn't* get me. "What's that?" He'd never get me in the area of my personal relationships. That's one place where I have no doubt that I'm as strong as you can get. A few years after that conversation my world broke wide open. A chain of seemingly innocent choices became destructive, and it was my fault. Choice by choice by choice, each easier to make, each becoming gradually darker. And then my world broke -- in the very area I had predicted I was safe -- and my world had to be rebuilt.¹

And he goes on in his book to quote from *My Utmost for His Highest*, saying, "An unguarded strength is actually a double weakness." And I want you to consider that quote from Oswald Chambers this morning because I think this first point is critical - "An unguarded strength is actually a double weakness."

I'll mainly be addressing the men this Sunday and the women next Sunday, Lord willing, because the women tend to be tempted in a different way, even though anyone can benefit from the principles in this sermon. But I started with the story of MacDonald's adultery because he was a model man, with a model marriage, was a model father, had a model ministry, and had written books on family life, and yet he fell into adultery. And the reasons were really no mystery. They are the same reasons that David fell into adultery in this chapter. They are common to human nature. And if these reasons are in your life, you could fall just as easily if you do not establish hedges in your marriage, or what Scripture speaks of as guarding your marriage. David actually tore down some hedges in his marriage because he didn't think that he was vulnerable.

The first hedge that he tore down in his pride was that he no longer had his guard up. What happens to a boxer who no longer has his guard up? He gets punched in the head, right? So far we have seen that David has been

¹ Gordon MacDonald, (Grand Rapids: Thomas Nelson, 2003 edition), *Rebuilding Your Broken World*, pp. 39-40.

for the most part on a spiritual high. And beyond that, the Lord blessed him with success on every level. He was fabulously wealthy, yet spiritual enough to give away most of his wealth. Everything was going for him. The Lord was prospering his ministry. He was a respected man. And his first problem was that he let down his guard after major successes. He was forgetting a Christian maxim of life that "There, but for the grace of God, go I." We all need the Gospel daily. And in surveys all across America, this has been a repeated pattern. It's when people feel invincible and they let down their guard that they are the most vulnerable.

But there is a tendency for us to not think that this could be an issue. Even among non-Christians, married men for the most part do not consider adultery to even be a remote possibility. A Gallup poll showed that only 5% of married men in America would consider adultery and 11% of unmarried men. That's a pretty low figure in our adulterous generation. I guarantee you that there is far more adultery than 5% of married men or 11% of unmarried – far more. The poll went on to say that 67% of married men didn't think it was even theoretically possible that it could happen. That's naiveté. 95% said that they wouldn't drop their spouse for a trophy wife even if they were wildly wealthy or successful.² And yet far, far more than that have fallen for far, far less. They have let down their guard. They don't see the reason why they need to be careful.

Over the past twenty years, I have known pastors who have told me to my face that I am being legalistic when I have set hedges in my life (such as not counseling a woman alone) in order to protect from false accusation as well as from temptation. And not surprisingly, several of those pastors have fallen into adultery since then - some with a secretary, and some with counselees. And the statistics were bad even 26 years ago when I first pastured a church. The 1988 survey of nearly 1000 Protestant clergy by Christianity Today's clergy magazine, *Leadership*, found that 12% of those 1000 pastors admitted that they had already committed adultery. 12%!

Why am I emphasizing this first point? It is because nobody thinks it will happen to them. They are happily married. They've got great kids. They've got it made. They think, "Why would I do a stupid thing like that? I'm not even remotely being tempted right now." But you can be as strong as David was in the last few chapters and as close to God as George MacDonald was, and still fall if you let down your guard and don't cling close to Christ.

² 1992 poll commissioned by *Self* magazine and conducted by Gallup, as quoted in *U.S.A Today*, May 26, p. D1.

Satan's not going to quit fighting. It's just a fact of life. And this first point is a point that so many of my friends have argued with me over. They don't believe it. I always worry if this first point is present and you are no longer on guard. 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns us, "**let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**" If you ignore that verse, you are already vulnerable, no matter how strong you might feel.

B. Failing to take seriously socially acceptable sins (3:2-5; 5:13-16)

The second point is a failure to take socially acceptable sins very seriously. Let me explain. Chapter 3:2-5 mentions five more wives that David took after he became king, and chapter 5:13-16 mentions more wives and concubines. We are repulsed by the idea of multiple wives and concubines, but back in those days, even though it was a sin, it was not illegal, and it was culturally acceptable. In fact, kings were expected to do so, even though Deuteronomy 17:17 explicitly forbids kings from doing what David did. People just did not think that much about it. It was a culturally acceptable sin. It was probably on the same level as gossip, gluttony, unkind words, anxiety, and pride today. We recognize them as sins and yet tend to ignore them.

Some people question whether polygamy really was a sin. It was. It was a clear violation of Deuteronomy 17:17, which says, "**Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away...**" That's what had been happening to David. His heart had been subtly turning away from dependence on God's grace even during his time of success. But back to the point, that text says it was a sin. And Jesus says that Genesis 2:24 clearly mandated monogamy – the two becoming one. David Stern points out that the Hebrew word for betrothal (*kiddishin*) means to be sanctified or separate from all others. This means that when a man betroths a wife, he is promising to be forever separate from all other women and devoted only to her. That's what *Kiddishin* means. And there are many other evidences that polygamy has always been a sin.

But here's the point. When we let down our guard on the "respectable sins," we harden our hearts to some degree. And when our hearts become hardened, we grieve the Spirit. And when we grieve the Spirit, He no longer bothers to convict us. And when he no longer convicts us, even the socially *unacceptable* sins begin to have a greater attraction. It's a downward slide.

But there is more to it than that. When we give in on any sin, there tends to be a feeding of the fires of our besetting sins. I think this is perhaps the most significant aspect of this point. Steve Gallagher, the president of

Pure Life Ministries, is a man who overcame unbelievable pornography addictions and other sexual addictions and has a ministry that has helped many others to overcome them as well. But he testifies to the fact that he can be sailing along with no temptations whatsoever, but if he gives in on gluttony (such as overeating cookies) he weirdly finds the strength of the old sexual temptations beginning to rise up again. And there are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the roots of every sin or so entangled with each other in our hearts that they tend to impact each other and feed each other. The second reason is that if you measure your righteousness by what others think, you can start to justify other sins the way culture justifies them. That was certainly the case with David. Each of the sins in this chapter were sins that kings routinely got away with.

C. Shirking your responsibilities – driven by feelings (11:1)

Third, he was shirking his responsibilities. Verse 1 says,

2Samuel 11:1 It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

Though not all commentators agree, the way this is worded seems to be a rebuke to David. It is God Himself who says that it was the time when kings go out to battle... *but* David remained at Jerusalem. It was a time for battle, not a time for remaining. And so I agree with Walter Chantry and with others that this was a shirking of responsibilities that directly fed into his sin.

And when we find ourselves habitually shirking our responsibilities, it is a danger signal. The reason it tends to feed the problem, is that we usually shirk responsibilities because we don't *feel* like doing them. Our feelings drive our behavior. And when feelings consistently drive our behavior, Satan gets ready to put bait on the hook. He sees a fish that wants to be caught. That draws his attention.

And there are many ways in which we can be driven by our feelings. At the risk of getting somebody angry, let me go from preaching to meddling and suggest a few: hitting the snooze button repeatedly is not a good habit to develop. And I'm not saying that if you are in the habit of using the snooze button that you are going to fall into adultery. No, not at all. I am just saying that breaking this habit could be a hedge; it could be one of many actions to train your body that you plan and don't give in to feelings; you plan and follow through on your plans. When people are prone

to the sin of pornography, I usually recommend that they highly structure their lives so that they plan their downtime, and their recreation, and their snacks, and their exercise, and then they try to make a habit of following through on all responsibilities that have been planned. It's just an aspect of the Dominion Mandate - the mandate in Genesis 1 to take dominion over all things. If you don't take dominion of things, things tend to take dominion of you. And if you really need more sleep every night, you should just plant to get the extra sleep needed the night before, and instead of hitting the snooze button three times, try setting the alarm for thirty minutes later. And I don't want you to get legalistic on this, but if you struggle with pornography, that is probably one of dozens of things that need to be shored up. Becoming very disciplined is a hedge. It's not an infallible hedge, but it is helpful.

D. "Vegging out" (11:2a)

The fourth way in which David was set up for a fall was that he was vegging out. The first part of verse 2 does not clearly convey that, because it says, "**Then it happened one evening...**" But the Hebrew indicates that it was between noon and evening, and Keil and Delitsch in their commentary point out that it happened "after taking his mid-day rest." So one Bible version has, "after noon," a paraphrase has, "after his midday rest," three other translations have, "late one afternoon." That's the way the ESV has it. It was somewhere between noon and evening.

So what was going on here? It's not just a 20 minute midday nap and then off to work again. It appears that David has nothing to do. He's bored. He has taken a nap, and he's tired of lying in bed, so now he is lounging around with nothing to do. We call it vegging. When you come home from work, plop down in an easy chair and start flipping the channels with no idea where you are going or what you are going to watch, you'll probably end up wasting your time on something unimportant, but you are much more likely to run across something accidentally like David did with Bathsheba. It's just another example of letting something else structure your life (in this case, whatever TV program happens to capture your imagination) instead of you structuring your TV watching. And you might wonder, "What in the world is the connection between this and David's temptation?" It's this: almost every counselor of addicts (whether drug addict, porn addict, or some other form of addict) will tell you that vegging gives those addicts more opportunities for lust to be lured. Many former porn addicts have testified that they don't dare start vegging, because the beginnings of lust start rising when they do that. It may not have that impact on everyone, but rather than vegging, it's

probably better to carefully plan your rests, your pleasures, and your other activities. And again, it's not any one of these things, but the amalgamation of all of these things that gave Satan a foot in the door.

E. Acting out of boredom (11:2b)

Verse 2 goes on to say, “**David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house.**” He obviously has nothing better to do with his time. So here it is, midafternoon, and he is bored. If you are bored and looking for something to happen, don’t let Satan get wind of it, or he may try to *make* something exciting happen. The old saying, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop” shows that others have seen this problem long before me. I think Chuck Swindoll is absolutely right when he says, “Our greatest battles don’t usually come when we’re working hard; they come when we have some leisure, when we’ve got time on our hands, when we’re bored.” I don’t know how many times I have heard in counseling that it was boredom that led to some particular sin. There is no excuse for a Christian to be bored. You can fill your time with planned out activities, including rest and recreation, but if you are called to be a dominion creature, you are called to have your day mapped out – not to be bored. When Satan sees people who are routinely bored, he gets the bait and the hook out to see if he can catch a fish. It's one of the clues that demons are looking for.

F. Undisciplined eyes (11:2c)

The next problem was undisciplined eyes. Verse 2 goes on to say, “**And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.**” I’ve counted the number of times that the Bible uses the word “very,” and its only 280 times, and those times are to emphasize how amazing something is. The Bible uses that word sparingly. So when God says that she was very beautiful to behold, He was indicating that she was the proverbial “knockout” woman with a fabulous figure and probably the face, eyes, lips, and hair to go along with it. If God Himself describes her as “**very beautiful to behold,**” then we can’t fault David for thinking so too. He’s just agreeing with God, right? There is nothing wrong with appreciating beauty. So that’s not where I fault David. Faulting people for appreciating beauty is what the Muslims do – get all beautiful women out of sight. That’s not Biblical.

What we can fault David for was the *lingering nature* of his look, and the first word in the Hebrew indicates that this was more than a simple glance. The first word “saw” can be translated as “to inspect.” What an appropriate word to use. And just to give you a little feel for the meaning of

this term, the same word was used frequently of prophets or seers who are taking in everything that God is revealing to them. Well, he was taking in everything that this woman was revealing to him. And we will look at what was going on in Bathsheba next week, but I think most women know when you men just notice something and move on with no sinful issue, or when you are inspecting something. It's a different kind of look. I've had to talk to men from time to time and mention to them, "Do you notice the way your eyes rove over a woman's body and you seem to be inspecting her?" A lot of times they are oblivious. They are horrified that I have even noticed, and they are very receptive to receiving the homework that I give them for learning how discipline their eyes. You *can* discipline your eyes. But it's become such a habit for some of these men that they don't know that they are doing it. I talked to one pastor who didn't really believe that he was doing it, but after I mentioned it, he began noticing that he was indeed doing that. And it just floored him. He was embarrassed. And you can feel free to talk to me if you ever see my eyes inspecting a woman. Drew Anderson had that happen to him. And he has said this publically, so he doesn't mind that I repeat this. But he said,

While my wife and I were shopping at a mall kiosk, a shapely young woman in a short, form-fitting dress strolled by. My eyes followed her.

Without looking up from the item she was examining, my wife asked, "Was it worth the trouble you're in?"

And he should be in trouble. Why? Because he is breaking down a hedge of protection over his marriage. Each of these points is a hedge that David had torn down (perhaps) unwittingly. And we are not talking here about appreciating beauty. It is obvious from the Scripture that both the Bible and godly men appreciate the beauty of women. That's not the issue. But when that subtly turns into inspecting the goods of every attractive woman, you've got problems. And like Job, who said, "**I have made a covenant with my eyes,**" we men need to make a covenant with our eyes to begin to be more conscious of where our eyes are at at any given time of day. And I can give you advice on how to do that. I can't claim that I have always been perfect at it, but it has been a lifelong hedge that I have sought to keep in place. And like Job I want to set a guard before my eyes even into my old age.

But the bottom line is that the eye gate is a male's main problem. It's one of the reasons why pornography is such an issue for men, and why I

recommend that people use Covenant Eyes to be accountable in this area of the eye gate. Do not downplay this point. It's an important one.

G. Curiosity – investigating things that are best left alone (11:3)

Now of course, the moment your eyes go from noticing to “inspection mode” or “taking in the revelation mode” (however you want to translate that word), a switch gets turned on inside your heart. It may not seem like lust initially, even though 1 John does call it the lust of the eyes, which is different from the lust of the flesh. You can have lust of the eyes without the lust of the flesh yet arising. And so, just to communicate clearly, I'm going to call this lust of the eyes curiosity. And men *can* convince themselves that it *is* simply curiosity. He will click on a link, wondering, “What is that about?” when there is really no need to know. Why are you curious? Verse 3:

2Samuel 11:3 So David sent and inquired about the woman...

He's asking questions about her. He wants to find out about her. He's curious about her. “What's so bad about asking a few questions? I mean, she is a neighbor, and I need to know who my neighbors are.” But curiosity gets more men into trouble than you can shake a stick at. And it may seem initially to be such an innocent thing – “Hey, I'm a curious guy. I like to know things.” But you've all heard the expression, “Curiosity killed the cat.” You were wondering where that cat illustration would fit in, right? Curiosity killed the cat. But we need to kill at least *some* curiosity - not all curiosity, but at least the sinful kind that amounts to the lust of the eyes.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 says something very, very interesting. And by the way, this can be describing a good thing or a bad thing, depending on the context. It says, “**The eye never has enough of seeing.**” (NIV) You need to understand that principle men. Because of the lust of the eyes, one lingering look is never going to satisfy the curiosity. That's why porn, once started, always leads a man deeper, and deeper, and deeper into looking. Scripture says, “The eye never has enough of seeing.” And by the way, you women need to be aware of this principle as well so that you don't cause men to stumble and get the process started. Women need to dress modestly. and some women know how to go just far enough so that no one will get on their case, but they dress with this curiosity of man in view. They like to play with the edges of propriety. But let's turn the principle around to the righteous side of that verse - you women need to allow your husbands to look at you. And you think, “What's to look at? They've already seen me a million times.” No. God says, “The eye never has enough of seeing.” God designed

it that way. We are never going to get tired of seeing God's glory in heaven. And both Song of Solomon and Proverbs says that we men should never get tired of taking in the revelation of the beauty of our wives. But I'm not supposed to be preaching to you today, am I? We are preaching at the men who need to make sure that they are looking at what God has authorized them to look at.

Men, if your eyes tend to take in every woman on the sidewalk when you are driving, and your eyes tend to take in every billboard, every lingerie sign in the department store, there is a cure. It takes some work to discipline your eyes to not look at every interesting sight, like a Ferrari, an odd shaped tree, a huge pile of leaves. And you don't do these exercises of restraining your eyes because it is a sin to look at a Ferrari or a pile of leaves, but you do it so that you can have daily practice in disciplining your eyes. And you will find it initially to be much, much harder than you think. Let me give you an example: you are driving along and notice a Ferrari parked on the side of the road up ahead, and you want to practice discipline of your eyes. So you deliberately leave it in the periphery of your vision and you focus your eyes on the road alone. You are testing your eyes to see if you can ever say "No" to curiosity. But you notice that even though that Ferrari is in the periphery of your vision it has suddenly become the center of your consciousness, and it is driving you crazy. You are dying to see what that Ferrari looks like, but you show great self-discipline and you pass the Ferrari without looking. And then you catch yourself looking at in the rear view mirror after you have passed. OK, you have failed that test. Not a sin, but a failure to be able to discipline your eyes. Even with Ferraris, the eye never has enough of seeing.

So you can start the discipline of your eyes by working on issues that aren't even necessarily sinful, but you are taming your curiosity. You are teaching your eyes discipline so that when the temptation to undress a woman with your eyes comes along, you don't go there because your eyes have finally been disciplined. Of course, the illustration of the Ferrari shows that you have to discipline your mind as well, and we won't get into that because it's not in the text here. But other texts speak of the incredible power of meditation on Scripture to transform this whole process. And I wish it was in the text, because I could preach on it. But you'll have to ask me another time, "How do I discipline my mind through meditation?" But back to our text, David should have said "No," to his curiosity about what this woman looked like when he got his first glance on the roof. I'm not going to take a second look to see what is happening, even though this is extremely unusual and I am curious. And then he should have said "No" to

his curiosity about who this woman was. Grace can tame the principle of our eyes that is described in Ecclesiastes 1:8. And it gets easier and easier the more you practice it. I believe that's what Job meant when he made a covenant with his eyes not to gaze on a young woman. He was first of all recognizing the black hole of curiosity that is there, and had learned to say "No!" to it. Not all curiosity is legitimate. Like Eve's curiosity with the forbidden fruit, it was a curiosity he should have quickly slammed the door shut on, and said "No!"

H. Failing to remind yourself of God's guaranteed laws of harvest and that sin always hurts (12:1ff)

The last hedge that David tore down under Roman numeral I (the hedges under his control), was a failure to remind himself of God's guaranteed laws of harvest and the fact that this harvest always hurts. If you drill into your consciousness that sexual sin is a seed planted that follows the laws of harvest in Galatians 6, it will really help. I won't go over all the laws of harvest, but let me mention one: You will always reap a multiplied increase of whatever you sow. You sow one little seed, but you are going to reap a whole lot more than one little seed. You are going to find your spiritual lawn absolutely full of dandelions in a very quick amount of time. You are going to be thinking, "Where did these all come from?" And when you sow sexual sins, you not only reap more sexual sins, you reap incredible pain as well. How many people have lost a marriage, their children, their house, and faced great pain because of one indiscretion? It all starts by sowing individual dandelion seeds like David did.

II. Providential hedges that David ignored

A. A servant's caution (11:3b)

Now, let's quickly look at some hedges that God kindly put in the way of David's sin, that David just went ahead and crawled over. Look at the second part of verse 3:

And *someone* said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

That servant knows what is going on in David's mind, but he is trying to caution David diplomatically by asking a rhetorical question. He is basically saying, "Hey, this woman is married. She's off limits." But he does it very diplomatically.

B. A friend's integrity (11:3b with whole chapter)

The second caution that David should have heeded was that she was his friend's wife. This is no anonymous woman. He is about to hurt a friend. The fact that she was married to Uriah should have been a hedge.

C. The presence of witnesses (11:3-4)

And the third providential hedge that should have kept David from sinning was the presence of witnesses. In verse 4 he sends messengers to get her. I find it surprising that David was willing to take that kind of a risk. If this got out, it could be horrible – even if he claimed that he was only talking with her; that he was only curious. So there were three ways in which God was graciously putting the brakes on, or putting hedges in the way of David's sin. Yet David climbed right over those hedges and did it anyway.

III. Ignoring the dangerous downhill “mystery of iniquity”***A. The progress of lust (11:1-4)***

And all of this illustrates the irrational nature of sin. Roman numeral III deals with the downhill slide into sin that Scripture calls the mystery of iniquity. And it is a mystery. It is strange in so many ways. When you look at the risk-reward ratio of sinful pleasure to disastrous consequences, it doesn't make sense that anyone would choose sin. It really doesn't. But they choose it anyway. The lust of the flesh is a *spiritual* issue – it is more than biology. Here's how Richard Exley explains it in the magazine, *Homemade*.

Lust is not the result of an overactive sex drive; it is not a biological phenomenon or the by-product of our glands. If it were, then it could be satisfied with a sexual experience, like a glass of water quenches thirst or a good meal satisfies appetite. But the more we attempt to appease our lust, the more demanding it becomes. There is simply not enough erotica in the world to satisfy lust's insatiable appetite. When we deny our lustful obsessions, we are not repressing a legitimate drive. We are putting to death an aberration. Lust is to the gift of sex what cancer is to a normal cell. Therefore, we deny it, not in order to become sexless saints, but in order to be fully alive to God, which includes the full and uninhibited expression of our sexual being within the God-given context of marriage.³

And I think he hits the nail on the head for how lust works. Study Romans 1 sometime and you will see how once you give in to sin, this downward slide becomes worse and worse. Nothing but grace can reverse it. Let me quickly apply Romans 1, verses 21 through the end of the chapter, to

³ Richard Exley, quoted in *Homemade*, vol. 13, #9, September, 1989.

the subject we are looking at today. In Romans 1, verse 21 it speaks to sexuality that no longer glorifies God (and by the way, sexuality can glorify God – but he is talking about those who no longer do). What’s the very next thing that happens when you are not consciously glorifying God in your sexuality? Verse 21 says that such a person begins to become unthankful for the gift that God has given and instead indulges in “vain imaginations” (as the King James so aptly translates it). Perhaps the man is unthankful to God for how his wife is endowed, and so he imagines something different in his encounters. Those imaginations don’t even need pornography to become unhinged from reality. Paul says that they can start purely in the head. But when you give in to vain imaginations, they make you more and more dissatisfied with reality; with what God has given to you. The people Paul describes in that chapter are imagining a wife that could not exist and would no exist if she could. And this leads to foolish desires in the next verse, which if not crucified grow into idolatry in verse 23. And believe me, sexuality can become an idolatrous monster that demands absolute worship. Sexual idolatry is pervasive in America. Then Paul says that their idolatrous pursuit of pleasure begins to consume them and they are given over to those desires. They can’t get them out of their mind. It consumes them. And when that goes on long enough, verse 24 says that they can begin to find what used to be repulsive to now very desirable. And when those filthy lusts are acted upon they find that the black hole sucks them in deeper and they can only find satisfaction as there is more and more dishonor. And what I understand is that most porn is unbelievably dishonoring to the wife, so that word “dishonor” nails it on the head. This leads to a virtual worship of creation in verse 25, and more and more unnatural sex in verse 26, until finally they find homosexuality to be erotic in verses 27 and following. Just do your own study of that chapter and you will see when you once start the slide into compromise in sexuality, it is an irresistible downhill slide unless it is arrested by God’s grace and by your willingness to put on the whole armor of God and to fight.

Steve Gallagher was a man who perfectly illustrated Romans 1. He started with foolish imaginations, which led him to want to read soft porn, which over time became dissatisfying and led him to hard porn, then doing things that he would have despised himself for doing not too many years before, until he ended up in homosexuality – something he used to hate. David wasn’t there yet, obviously. But he had started down this downhill slide with his polygamy, and then his concubines (what's with that?!), and now these consuming desires for the illicit. That ought to scare us out of

even starting on that road.

B. Straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel (11:4)

In verse 4 we have a hint of how twisted the mind can become on issues of right and wrong. **“Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house.”** It appears that David wouldn’t have gone through with the act if she had not yet been ritually cleansed from her impurity. So he must have asked her. He wanted to be upright ceremonially. He couldn’t bring himself to violate that ceremonial law. It says, “...he lay with her, *for* she was cleansed.” What a ridiculous reason! He was straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

And such rationalizations are common with those who are on this downhill slide. They can think of themselves as being quite upright. They can legalistically follow all of the ceremonial laws, so to speak. They know how to get outraged over the sins of others (just like David does in chapter 12). They are scrupulous in their righteous behavior in certain areas of their lives, all the while living in gross sin. It’s called self-deception. And it’s all a part of this wonderful package deal that Satan tries to sell to us.

C. Our flesh does not want sin to be uncovered (11:5ff)

And we will look more at verses 5 and following in the future, but we see in those verses that our flesh does not want sin to be uncovered. David desperately tries to cover his tracks by getting Uriah to sleep with his wife. When that doesn’t work the first night, he tries to get him drunk and hopefully in bed with his wife the next night. When that doesn’t work, he tries to get Uriah killed. David wouldn’t have dreamed of doing those other sins, but once he fell into the first one, the inherent desire to hide sin (just like Adam and Eve did) made the fall into the other sins happen so easily, like dominoes hitting each other in succession.

D. Sin always leads to deceit (11:6ff)

Point D says that sin always leads to deceit. Bernie Zilbergeld says, Adultery is almost certainly going to make a dent in trust and intimacy, and in many cases I’ve known, it has destroyed them altogether. A woman who is conducting a secret affair *has to become deliberately deceitful*...like a CIA agent or spy. She can’t just come home and spill forth the events of her day. She’s got to think, What can I safely talk about, and what have I got to keep to myself? So even when the infidelity isn’t discovered, it changes who you are. A person goes

from being a candid, open human being to a secretive, hidden one.⁴

But covering up our sins is itself the height of foolishness. It's part of this mystery of iniquity. Somehow we convince ourselves that covering our sins is better for everyone involved. It is absolute stupidity when you look at it with a long-term spiritual vision. And yet it is so hard to admit to others that we have sinned and to take the consequences. But he eventually discovers in Psalm 51 that it would have been far, far easier to confess his sins right away than to try to cover them. Cover up always complicates. The computer program, Covenant Eyes, recognizes this dynamic and prevents you from even getting to that place.

E. Be sure your sins will find you out (2 Sam. 12)

Last point - keep reminding yourself that we eventually get caught – if not by man, certainly by God. But I don't think the servants were stupid. They knew something was going on. Most people know how to count to nine, and when David takes Bathsheba as wife and has a baby in record time, they probably suspect what has happened. *Joab* certainly knew what happened. In fact, David can no longer oppose Joab. Joab's got the goods in David. Joab has information that will blackmail David if he ever tries to get rid of Joab again. "Hey, David, if you try to get rid of me, we are both going down." I think that was why Joab was willing to go along with it. David couldn't oppose Joab's murder when he himself was guilty. But in chapter 12, despite the cover up, he got caught.

In Numbers 32:23, God says, "**Be sure your sins will find you out.**" And they found David out. How would you like your sins plastered on the front page of the newspapers? That's bad enough. But David had his sins recounted in detail in the Bible, where it would never be forgotten, and people have read about that for thousands of years. He had no idea of how found out he would be. Our sins may not become as visible. But they will surely be just as embarrassing. And it is the firm realization of that that can become one of the hedges preventing sin.

Conclusion

I hope by now that you are seeing each of these points as ways that we can keep ourselves from stumbling into the mess that David and later George MacDonald stumbled into. While trusting God's promise in Jude,

⁴ Bernie Zilbergeld, *Homemade*, November, 1989.

that He is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless before His presence, let us be committed to at least:

Never let down your guard

Start confessing and working on your socially acceptable sins

Start seriously handling your responsibilities

If you are going to veg out, at least plan for it. But it is usually better to never let any aspect of creation take dominion over you. Don't just let things happen. Take dominion of creation.

Fifth, turn boredom into slots of time that you can serve God. And if you don't know how, I can give you a bunch of ideas. In fact, I recommend that people always have a list of fun things and work things that you can do if you have extra time. So don't get bored, get planning.

Sixth, start training your eyes to be disciplined. Just realize that this is the biggest gate that Satan uses to get into the city of our soul to conquer it.

Seventh, don't be ruled by curiosity. While curiosity can be a God-given motivation for dominion, make sure it is always on a leash. It's a hunt dog that will run wild if it is not well disciplined. Know where it is going. Hold curiosity always in check to make sure that it glorifies God. But it too must be disciplined.

Eighth, remind yourself of God's guaranteed laws of harvest. That alone ought to scare you into not climbing hedges.

Tenth, thank God for the hedges He has providentially erected and try not to climb over those hedges.

And finally, don't ignore the fact that lust has a power to drag you into darkness and self-deceit if you ever feed that monster. The more you feed it, the more strength it gains. Starve. Crucify it. Mortify the flesh. And if you don't know how, talk to me, or read John Owen's book, *On the Mortification of Sin*.

God can preserve you from stumbling, but he requires you to take steps of faith. And if you have already fallen into sin and made a big mess of things, I want to end with the last law of harvest. And that is that you can't do anything about last year's harvest (other than confessing it, putting it under the blood). But you can certainly start working to change your life and have a good harvest for this coming year. And it will be my prayer that God would give you glorious success. Amen.

David And Missing Sexual Hedges 2 Samuel 11:1-27, part 1

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-7-2013

Introduction – George McDonald

- I. Human hedges that David broke down
 - A. Letting down your guard after major successes (2 Sam. 7-10)
 - B. Failing to take seriously socially acceptable sins (3:2-5; 5:13-16)
 - C. Shirking your responsibilities - driven by feelings (11:1)
 - D. “Vegging out” (11:2a)
 - E. Acting out of boredom (11:2b)
 - F. Undisciplined eyes (11:2c)
 - G. Curiosity – investigating things that are best left alone (11:3)
 - H. Failing to remind yourself of God’s guaranteed laws of harvest and that sin always hurts (12:1ff)
- II. Providential hedges that David ignored
 - A. A servant’s caution (11:3b)
 - B. A friend’s integrity (11:3b with whole chapter)
 - C. The presence of witnesses (11:3-4)
- III. Ignoring the dangerous downhill “mystery of iniquity”
 - A. The progress of lust (11:1-4)
 - B. Straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel (11:4)
 - C. Our flesh does not want sin to be uncovered (11:5ff)
 - D. Sin always leads to deceit (11:6ff)
 - E. Be sure your sins will find you out (2 Sam. 12)

Conclusion

(see over for Business Travel Plan for men)



Business Travel Plan for Avoiding Sexual Temptation

- Begin praying for purity days before the trip.
- If possible do not ride in a car alone with someone of the opposite sex.
- Do not confide in someone of the opposite sex about any struggles in your marriage, nor listen to someone else tell you about their own struggles in their marriage.
- When traveling, avoid the newsstand; bring your own magazine or newspaper.
- Avoid staying in hotels with in room porn / adult movies.
- Make reservations in hotels with a workout room.
- As soon as you enter the room pray Psalm 101 and commit your stay to God; repeat every morning.
- Bring and set out a picture of your spouse and children.
- Exercise every day.
- Call your spouse every evening.
- Ask your spouse to pray for you before you leave and during your stay.
- Maintain a routine. Discipline yourself to get up early each morning. Don't just lie in bed.
- Have a time with the Lord (Bible reading and prayer) every day for at least 20 minutes.
- Go to bed by 11:30 p.m. at the latest.
- Bring at least one interesting book to read, both business related and personal related.
- If back at hotel prior to dinner, get a meal at a restaurant or take out. May watch TV **only** while eating, then work, read, or exercise till bedtime.
- If back at hotel after dinner do work till finished.
- Ask spouse to specifically ask you as to whether you followed your plan and avoided sin. Have them specifically ask you if you failed in any area, and have them ask if you lied.
- Meet only in public places if absolutely necessary to meet with someone of the opposite sex.