



SESSION 2 — THE TEMPTRESS AND HER TRAPS: STRIVING AGAINST LUST’S SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

In Colossians 3:5-12, Paul teaches us a simple formula that we must keep in mind and put to practice in our daily sanctification (cf. Ephesians 4:17-5:5 and Appendix C):

putting off sin + putting on righteousness = putting sin to death

“Putting off” is a regular command of the New Testament authors (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:5-12; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1). And while “putting off” is not enough to put our sin to death (i.e., it must be accompanied with a “renewed” mind and the “putting on” of righteousness—cf. Ephesians 4:22-24), our sin will not be put to death unless we start by “putting it off.”

Paul applies this formula, most immediately, to issues of lust — “sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (v. 5b; cf. Ephesians 5:3-6). Our “striving to succeed” in the area of lust (i.e., “putting it to death”) must include our daily and ongoing “putting off” of every dimension of lust—mental, visual, verbal, physical. In order to “put to death” the idol of lust, we must say no to, turn away from, and at times humbly confess our lust. When we are tempted, we must “put off” our lust.

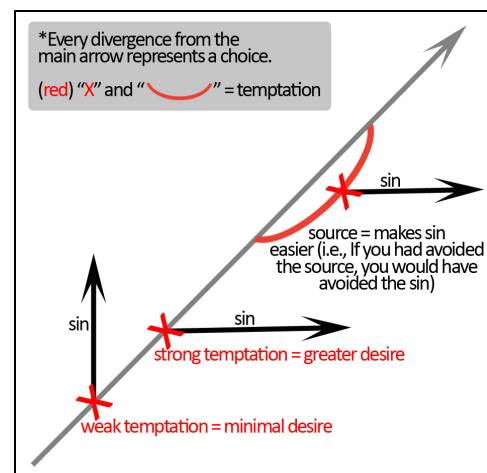
When we study Scripture, however, we discover that there is actually one additional level at which we can begin this struggle against lust. Like several fences concentric surrounding a power plant to ensure its inaccessibility, so the Bible teaches us that there is one more exterior fence that we can put up to protect our hearts from idolatrous lust.

See, the Bible both explicitly (Matthew 5:29-30; Romans 13:14) and implicitly exhorts us to “put off,” not only the sins of lust, but also the sources of lust. Some solicitations to lust come to us along the path of life and are unavoidable. According to James 1:14-15, the strength of

these temptations are based upon the magnitude of our desires in that particular area (e.g., a movie with a homosexual reference would affect a heterosexual and a homosexual differently; a woman dressed inappropriately may affect each of us differently; etc.). However, other temptations are of our own making, as we allow potential sources to be entertained in our lives. We could define a “source” of lust this way: anything that leads your desires toward lustful temptation or that makes it easy to lust. [See picture below.]

It is these sources that we want to focus on in this session and carefully consider in our own lives. It may be that some of these sources need to be “put off,” and in a biblical concept that is often called “Radical Amputation,” that is exactly what the Bible calls for.

Throughout this session, we will consider the words and examples of Job, Joseph, David, Solomon, Jesus, Paul, and others, and we will witness that they struggled against lust at this perimeter—the source—before it ever became a significant temptation. In their own practical pursuit of Christlikeness, these men teach us two key principles relating to “putting off” lust at its source:



- *An attitude* — “Don’t just hate sin; hate the temptation.” → Prayerfully cultivate an emotional aversion to those things that temptingly target your fleshly desires. Pray for a change of desires!
- *An activity* — “Make it hard to sin, and easy to do right.” → From the picture above, if the source hadn’t been chosen, the temptation would have been avoided altogether. The source may be okay and might be able to be enjoyed without sin, but if you are too weak to handle it, practice the spiritual maturity that avoids it altogether.

**TRAPS OF THE TEMPTRESS:
Lust (“she”) tempts us via these sources—**

This is God’s wisdom (i.e., “skillful living”) for all those who would live according to His high standard of purity—that is, “not even a hint” of lust (Ephesians 5:3, NIV)—in a lust-saturated society. This is how Joseph survived lust-filled Egypt, how Paul survived lust-filled Rome, and how we can survive lust-filled America.

And lest we’re tempted to think that applying the attitude and activity of “putting off” to lust’s sources is unnecessary or too external (even legalistic), let’s again hear from God’s Word.

- This is not legalism, for God commands it of us (Romans 13:14). [“provision” = source]
- This is not legalism, for eternal safety depends upon it (Matthew 5:29-30; cf. Ephesians 5:6). [“hand/eye” = source]
- This is not legalism, for godly men exemplify it (Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3). [“eyes” = source]
- This is not legalism, for Satan uses these traps to destroy (Proverbs 7:6-21; 1 Peter 5:8). [several sources are listed]

So, will you target those sources in your life that make you more prone to lustful temptation and that make sin easy? Will you so prioritize your spiritual success before God and with your brothers, that you will sacrifice, not only sin, but also tempting sources, no matter what the cost? See, we just need to get really honest in this session. There are sources of lust in our lives that need to go! And to borrow a line from an ESPN show, we’re not going to let ourselves coddle those sources any more. Instead, we’re going to look ourselves (and our brothers) in the face and say, “C’MON MAN! That has got to go!”

As we turn in our Bibles to Proverbs 7, we are introduced to the “forbidden woman” (v. 5), or we could broaden the idea and say that we are introduced to lust personified (fittingly) as a woman. Indeed, this “temptress” is everywhere, all around us, and she often finds welcome in our own sexually broken hearts. This passage unveils several of her traps, whereby she ensnares, deceives, and eventually destroys undiscerning men. These traps parallel the many sources of lust that we foolishly entertain in our lives today (Harris uses the phrase “lust triggers”). Using this passage, let us discern together these sources of temptation, so that we might “put them off” as we strive to succeed in this area of our spiritual struggle.

1. Immaturity (Proverbs 7:7)

- Those who are the most susceptible to the traps of the temptress are the “simple” who “lack sense.” These characteristics are especially discovered among “youth” and “young men.”
- So, know and obey your Bible — this is wisdom! Cf. Proverbs 2:1-16; 5:1-3; Ephesians 5:15, 17-18 [responding to “shameful” “works of darkness”]
- C’MON MAN! — Grow up! Study your Bible! Commit to church! Listen to your parents! Immaturity is a source of lustful temptation.

2. Location [wrong place] (Proverbs 7:8, 12)

- Some locations are dedicated to or are at least gateways to immorality. The temptress is increasingly public and her locations must be known and avoided.
- When you trivialize those locations, you are pulling a Lot (Genesis 13:10-13; 19:1, 4-8—from the neighboring fields, to inside the city, to leadership for the city, to looking like the wicked), nestling up to those who “will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”
- C’MON MAN! — Avoid that place! Go a different way! Stay away from that area! Don’t go there! Certain locations can be a source of lustful temptation.

3. Nighttime [wrong time] (Proverbs 7:9)

- The temptress loves to allure “in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.” We use several terms that indicate the same is true today—“night life,” “night club,” “red light district.” Furthermore, statistics would likely stagger us with their depiction of the increase of evil as the daylight wanes.

- Theologically, God uses darkness to represent evil and light to represent good (cf. John 3:19-31; Ephesians 5:11-14 [in a context dealing with lust]). Why do you think that is?!
- **Illustration:** Some within our own Single Focus group have fallen time and time again in this and other areas, and the common denominator has been that they are staying out until all hours of the night.
- C'MON MAN! — Go home! Enjoy your family! Go to bed! Get some sleep! Be responsible! Don't stay out late! The nighttime is often a source of lustful temptation.

4. Dress (Proverbs 7:10)

- The temptress has a certain wardrobe, and there is nothing godly about it. She purposefully chooses to dress in such a way as to thrust attention on her physical body and thus cultivate lust. She does so intentionally, selectively choosing those garments, styles, etc. that accentuate the catalyst of lust, which is the physical body. However, others are simply misguided, misinformed, or just not thinking, and they too select a wardrobe that fails to be helpful for men striving to succeed in “not even a hint.”
- Isn't it interesting to note that what God so quickly and carefully covered at the beginning of time—namely, nakedness—mankind is now so quickly and carelessly uncovering. In the Garden of Eden, clothing was given because an effect of sin was that nakedness became shameful (Genesis 3:7, 21). The beauty of nakedness was punished with shame, as a reminder of the destruction of sin. A lack of shame over nakedness demonstrates a lack of sobriety regarding sin.
- Remember that article I shared via GroupMe, entitled, “1 Look, 2 Look, 3 Look, More” (<http://bit.ly/1nadu4K>)? Yes, “be careful, little eyes, where you look!” The temptress has many disciples dressing to arrest your attention and allure your heart. Look away! The first look is unavoidable...the second look is your choice! And, when you can't look away, look up—both in her face, honoring her not using her, and to the Lord, asking Him to “lead you not into temptation but to deliver you from the Evil One.”

- And, don't make matters worse by looking for inappropriate dress. We've all done it—from the celebrity pictures to underwear departments to swimsuit editions to pornographic searches. The “Law of Diminishing Returns” rules on that slippery slope—soon, some skin is not enough, and more is craved. Meanwhile, God's standard is “not-even-a-hint” modesty, both for her clothes and your gaze.
- Are you willing to persevere in looking away from the immodest temptress? Will you endure in fighting against this trap and maintaining a godly gaze? Will you entrust your desires to God, refusing to feed them with inappropriate images?
- C'MON MAN! — Look away or look up! Covenant with your eyes, like Job (Job 31:1)! Honor women don't use them! Treat women as mothers and sisters in all purity (1 Timothy 5:2)! Immodesty is a prevalent source of lustful temptation.

5. Media (2 Peter 2:7-8)

- 2 Peter 2:8 tells us how a real Christian, Lot, could become so desensitized that he willingly offered his virgin daughters to sexual predators (cf. Genesis 19:4-8)—“as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.”
- Movies, TV shows, and music albums today are laden with sensuality (i.e., jokes, innuendos, conversations, etc.), immodesty (i.e., scanty, low cut), immorality (i.e., sex implied; pro-gay, pro-adultery, pro-premarital sex [you find yourself cheering for them]), and nudity. In fact, sometimes just reading the parent guide is a source of temptation.
- Guys, this is a no-brainer! We know what this does to our minds and hearts! So, you have to really consider whether or not you want to follow Jesus on this—He wants you to go without seeing a particular movie, then to see it and deal with the spiritual defeat that follows (Matthew 5:29-30). “What would Jesus do?” is probably a helpful and clarifying question to ask when it comes to many of the things we view.
- **Illustration:** I've had conversations with some within our Single Focus group who have gone to see a particular movie that had

blatant nudity in it. Again, that's a no-brainer! I think we can all agree that we know what that does to each and every one of us—that's so much more than just a source of lust; it is a sin of lust!

- C'MON MAN! — Be careful what you watch! Or, just turn it off! Or, get the TV out of your room! Choose wisely what you listen to! Protect your devices, or get rid of them! Don't sear your conscience! Protect it with purity! The media is an overwhelming source of lustful temptation.
- **Resource:** "Purity Pamphlet"—compelling exhortation to carefully consider your viewing standards (entertainment); practical advice concerning your internet and television protection

6. **Friends (Ephesians 5:6-7, 11)**

- Ephesians 5:6-7, 11 says, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things [the list of lusts in vv. 3-5] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them...Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness." I'm sure that Lot, who paid dearly for his lustfulness (cf. Genesis 19:23-38), wished that he had considered this council.
- *Bad friends* — They "make it easy to sin" like Jonadab in 2 Samuel 13. **Illustration:** Todd's testimony of turning down a July 4th opportunity with some old friends
- *Good friends* — They are believers and "excellent ones" (Psalm 16:3; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14), wise (Proverbs 13:20), faithful and blameless (Psalm 101:6).
- C'MON MAN! — Be careful who you hang around with! Listen to your parents! Chose good friends! Friends have been a sorrowful source of lustful temptation.

7. **Free/Alone Time (Ephesians 5:15-16)**

- Ephesians 5:15-16 says, still in a context dealing with issues of lust, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are

evil." While this passage gives us a positive way of dealing with out time, King David models the opposite in 2 Samuel 11. During the time "when kings go out to battle," he surprisingly "remained at Jerusalem." Then, "late one afternoon" after relaxing on his "couch," temptation reared its ugly head and he was readily and speedily devoured. He wasn't just in the wrong place at the wrong time; he was enjoying some free/alone time. And in the privacy of that downtime, a source of lust was discovered. And from that story, Pastor Phelps recently reminded me in an email, "It's the down-time that destroyed David's integrity and can do the same to us. Be careful!"

- C'MON MAN! — Yes, be careful! Be strategic! Be accountable! Don't be lazy! Don't waste time! Free/alone time has often been an overlooked source of lustful temptation.

8. **Dating (1 Timothy 5:2)**

- Guys, we're supposed to treat young Christian ladies "as sisters, in all purity" (1 Timothy 5:2), and that applies in dating, as well. Back in Proverbs 7, we find that the temptress has dating standards altogether different from what a Spirit-led individual would practice.
 - a. **Physical contact (Proverbs 7:13)** — (1) The key word is "boldness" instead of humility before God; (2) The "Law of Diminishing Returns" certainly applies here, too; (3) Joseph provides a great example for us in Genesis 39:11-12. So, be careful in your physical contact!
 - b. **Hypocritical behavior (Proverbs 7:14-20)** — There is a major disconnect between religious behavior and personal character. So, beware of hypocritical behavior!
 - c. **Sensual speech (Proverbs 7:21)** — Her communication is full of "seductive speech" and "smooth talk," described metaphorically in Proverbs 5:3—"The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil." So, watch out for sensual speech!

- d. ***Sexual agenda (Proverbs 7:16-18)*** — The temptress has one purpose and goal in mind for her relationships—sexual pleasure...and, she does little to mask this desire. Contrariwise, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 reminds us that our primary concern, whether married or single, should be for “devotion to the Lord.” Furthermore, Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches us that in marriage, our goal should be sanctification into spiritual purity and maturity. So, turn away from a sexual agenda!
- C’MON MAN! — Date purely! Lead honorably! Have integrity! Treat her like a sister! Live above reproach!

CONCLUSION

What is at stake in knowing and avoiding these traps?

- Proverbs 7:22-27; cf. 2:18-19; 5:4-6, 8-14, 20-23 — The temptress uses these key sources to lure you into lustful temptation, and therein is only deception and destruction!

What is the solution for knowing and avoiding these traps?

- Proverbs 7:1-5 (2:1-16; 5:1-3) — Study, treasure, and obey God’s Word!

Don’t merely “put off” the sins of lust, put off the sources of lust—those traps the temptress uses to draw you after herself: immaturity, location, nighttime, dress, media, friends, free/alone time, and dating.