

Spiritual Poisons, part 7  
December 11, 2016



Today, we wrap up this series of sermons on spiritual poisons. I hope this series has benefited each of you in some way. Jesus commands that we turn away from. To do this we must learn what kinds of things are sins. This series has concerned the secret sins, heart sins, that lead us to many other sins.

We do not all struggle with the same sins. But we all struggle with sin. We must be ever learning to overcome sin in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This last sermon concerns a sin that is flooding the world. Even if you have never personally struggled with this sin, it has affected your life. It is, or will, affect the lives of your children and grandchildren. That is because this sin is bringing negative changes to our whole culture, not just individuals. We are all being changed by this sin. And if Christian parents are not vigilant in educating themselves and their children to both recognize and resist it, it may do irreparable harm your families.

I want to introduce this sin by looking at a prime example of it in the Bible. The story concerns King David of Israel. Please look with me at 2 Samuel 11.

**2 Samuel 11:1-2 (NIV)** 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. 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...

David did not care about this woman. He did not care if she were married. He did not care that she was someone's daughter, someone's sister, someone's mother. He did not care about her name, her character, her personality, her likes or dislikes. He did not care about her religion. He did not care about her health.

David did not care about her as a person. He did not see a person. All he saw was an attractive female body. He saw her only as an object to fulfill his sexual fantasy. David lusted after her body, but not her.

He did not love this woman. He did not like this woman. He did not respect her. He did not see her as a person, only as an object. David only cared about what David was feeling in his loins. He forgot his wives and children. He forgot his responsibilities. He forgot God. He forgot everything but what he wanted at the moment. David lusted... not for a person, but for a living object of flesh.

Now I believe, since David had the Spirit of God, that the Spirit spoke to David, just as He speaks to Christians. But David ignored the Spirit. He did not want to think about God right then. In that moment and those feelings, He did not care about honoring God with his thoughts... or his body. He only wanted what he wanted. He pushed aside any thoughts of God, any thoughts of right and wrong, and thoughts of holy or sin.

That is how all Christians struggle with lust. The Holy Spirit whispers that this is wrong, turn away, and we make a choice to do so... or not.

Drew Anderson sent the following story into Reader's Digest magazine. "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?"

Drew made a choice to keep looking after that first glance. We are all faced with such choices every day. David made a choice too. David chose not to turn away from watching the woman after he first noticed her. Instead, he watched. He thought. He felt. He lusted. Then...

**2 Samuel 11:3-5 (NIV)** ...David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her... Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

At this point David panics. His sin will be found out now unless he can devise a plan for her husband to be fooled. So he sends for her husband, who is off fighting the war. He comes back with a report of how things are going. David hears him and sends him off telling him to go home for the night. But he doesn't. Since his comrades are off fighting, he does not go home, but stays the night with the other soldiers who are guarding the palace. David's plan failed.

So David has Uriah stay an extra night and invites him to dinner and gives him much wine, thinking he will go home that night to be with his wife. But again, he does not. So the next day David sends him back to the war carrying instructions to the general from David. David has instructed the general to get closer to the wall than usual, close enough for the arrows shot from the wall of the enemy city, to kill some of the Israelite soldiers. And to make sure Uriah is one of those men. The general does this.

**2 Samuel 11:17 (NIV)** 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.

David's plan succeeds. Uriah is killed, as are several other innocent men. David has become an adulterer and a murderer, all because of lust.

### **lust = intense desire, often of a sexual nature**

The word lust can be used of things other than a desire for sexual pleasure. But it is always used in the Bible as a sin, whatever its object. And most of the time it is used in the Bible for sexual lust. That sin is this. **Lust for someone else as a sexual object is sin.**

This sin is rampant in America today. American culture today, in so many ways, encourages lust.

But there is an antidote. The antidote for sexual lust is presented to us all through the New Testament. **The antidote for lust is love.** Jesus says,

**John 15:17 (NIV)** This is my command: Love each other.

Love is different from lust. Lust is different from love.

**Lust is self-centered.**

**Love is other-centered.**

**Lust sacrifices another for selfish ends.**

**Love sacrifices self to meet another's need.**

**Lust takes. Lust thinks, "What can she do for me?"**

**Love gives, asking, "What can I do for her?"**

When you genuinely care about another person, you don't think about how that person can serve your desires. Instead, you think about how God might use you to help meet that other person's needs. Jesus came to serve our needs. He did what only He could do to meet our greatest need. He did not think of Himself. If He thought of Himself, He would have run from the cross.

Lust is self-centered. Love is other-centered.

American popular culture encourages sexual lust. And it is changing the way Americans think about sex, about their bodies, and about relationships. Lust is having detrimental effects upon the self-image of more and more people. This is not just a Christian or religious point of view. Social scientists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, both faith-based and secular are encountering the fallout from the sexual revolution that continues unabated in America. Let me give two examples.

I'll give several examples of secular authorities discovering the truth about lust in America. In 2008, the American Psychological Association released a report called The "Sexualization of Girls." **Sexualization occurs when "individuals are regarded as sex objects and evaluated in terms of their physical characteristics and sexiness."** The report made a case that the onslaught of sexualized images in media and pop culture has created a mental health crisis, evidenced by the increased levels of depression, low self-esteem and eating disorders in young girls.

Shadia Duske is a licensed psychotherapist in Denver. She wrote an article for Ms. Magazine. I'm not encouraging you to read Ms. Magazine. But it is evidence that even such magazines as this are discovering the truth about how lust is affecting people. Ms. Duske writes, "As a psychotherapist, I meet hundreds of women who struggle with their body image or sexuality. These struggles show up as depression, anxiety, eating disorders,... obsessive-compulsive disorders, reproductive concerns, parenting issues, or relationship crises. I've also encountered increasing numbers of men dealing with relationship issues..." All of this are the effects of sexualization.

Sexualized advertising is everywhere, in both men's and women's magazines, newspapers, TV shows, movies, commercials, and music videos. Even worse, it is stretching into fashions, toys, and cartoons for children. Lust is used to sell everything from perfume to cars to hamburgers.

By some estimates, age eighteen our children have witnessed more than 70,000 sexualized images. These images promote the idea that women exist to satisfy the sexual desires of men. This causes women to emulate what they are seeing in the

images, leading them to think of themselves as an object instead of as a person. This can lead to eating disorders, depression and sexual dysfunction.

Ms. Duske goes on to write, "But men also suffer emotionally and physically from hypersexualized images, as they, too are portrayed as less than human... Many men are starving for real human connection, but are only being taught to satiate their hunger in empty and unfulfilling ways."

The images on broadcast TV are becoming more R-rated all the time and increases the acceptance and desire for X-rated materials.

Lust has led to increasing use of pornography. Pornography is not a drug, but **The brain reacts to pornography exactly like it reacts to an addictive drug**. Upon experiencing the pleasure of stimulation or pleasure, the brain signals a release of dopamine, a chemical released by nerve cells. Dopamine creates a reward circuit in the brain. This circuit registers the experience or drug that caused the release of dopamine to be labeled as significant or important. Dopamine changes the brain on a cellular level, commanding the brain to "do it again," so that more dopamine will be released. This explains why intense experiences can be just as addictive as drugs.

Lust and pornography are not harmless. They are destroying people from the inside out. It affects men most. But it is finding an increasing market among women, and they are being affected negatively too.

Men are finding that addiction to pornography does not disappear when they fall in love and commit to marriage. Rather, pornography becomes a destructive force they bring into that marriage. Much of pornography depicts hate and violence towards women. And much also promotes the false idea that women are neutral or accepting of this.

Pornography makes other relationships boring in comparison. There is a shortage of men on many college campuses. The ration nationwide is 76 men to 100 women. And women, in order to have a boyfriend, are giving in to sex and settling for relationships with guys they would not normally consider dating material.

When I was a teenager, pornography was mild by today's standards. And even at that, it was relatively hard to come by. You wouldn't go into a store and try to buy one. My friends and I found part of one in the woods one day.

Today it is readily available,... for free,... in secret,... by anyone with an internet connection. And not only are teens viewing it, but children as young as 8 are coming into contact with it, usually by a friend.

What is happening to many men in their 20's from a habitual diet of pornography is that they are becoming so changed that they can only respond sexually to pornography, and not to real women.

Parents, you need to start reading such articles as I have been reading this week. It will find it disturbing. But it is important. We will not be able to stem the tide of lust in America. But we can learn how to protect ourselves, our children, and their future families.

If you struggle with lust, and maybe with pornography, there is no easy answer to repent of this sin. It is changing you physically as well as spiritually. But if you want to faithfully serve God, it is possible. The eventual antidote is for the Holy Spirit to develop in you the love of God for all people. But it will be a long, hard struggle even so. I have recommendations for you this morning.

### **How do we battle lust in ourselves?**

**1. Admit how difficult it is.** As I said, it changes the brain. You need supernatural help to overcome this.

**2. Pray for God to deliver you.**

**3. Get rid of any porn you have.** Get software to block it from your computers. Give someone else administrative control.

**4. Memorize scripture to warn and guide you.**

**1 Corinthians 6:18 (NIV)** Flee from sexual immorality.

(Romans 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

**5. Make yourself accountable to someone else.** One man, who often traveled on business trips, knew that inappropriate movies would be available on the TV in his hotel rooms. So he asked a friend to check up on him when he returned home. Knowing his friend was going to ask him how he spent the evenings in his hotel room helped him say no to the inappropriate shows and movies.

Men need other men to be accountable to each other in this and other areas of sin.

**6. Change the channel when inappropriate shows or movies come on.**

**7. When others speak it, walk away and pray.** Refuse to listen to or laugh at the dirty stories and jokes.

**8. When you encounter those dressed immodestly, look the other way and recite the Bible verses you have memorized.**

**9. Don't accept the lies.**

Lie: It is only physical. Yes, it affects the brain, but eventually the emotions.

Lie: It doesn't harm anyone. Science has disproven that.

Lie: God made me this way, so surely He wants me to have this pleasure. Not outside of marriage.

Lust is destroying America. Is lust destroying you? This and all other sins you struggle with will destroy you unless you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord.