

Session 2

Mental Integrity

It all starts in the mind

Goals for growth:

- Understand the origin of temptation.
- Realize that God isn't the one who tempts you.
- Commit to controlling your thought life before it controls you.

Thoughts flood our minds every day. What we do with them determines who we become.

Extramarital affairs don't just happen overnight. (Ask any man who's been through one.) Instead, they brew in a man's mind for weeks and months, even years. When thoughts are allowed to linger on a person or object for any length of time, desire naturally follows. If we choose to long for God, that's a good thing. Choosing to lust for sex proves deadly.

In this session you will see that sexual temptation always starts with a thought. The mind is a very powerful thing. Someone once said. "Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny."

What you think about is important.

KEY VERSES

¹³ *When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. James 1:13-14*

¹³ *No temptation^[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted^[b] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, ^[c] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

11 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 washing. 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 that he will be struck down and die.'
2 Samuel 11:1-15

CONNECT WITH THE WORD

1. Do you ever blame God for your struggles with temptation? Why or why not?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Scripture is clear that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear and will help us escape it, but why do you think God allows temptation into our lives at all?
3. How does lust "carry away" and "entice"? Describe a time when you experienced this.
4. How have your thoughts contributed to sexual sin?
5. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-15. What havoc did a stray thought cause King David?
6. Where did his spiral into sin begin?
7. What should David have done between verses 2 and 3 that he didn't do?

REVIEW

Consider your personal time management. What things most tempt you to waste time?

Describe a past temptation you faced. What steps did you take (or wish you had) to avoid wandering down the wrong path?

VIDEO TEACHING

All of your actions begin with _____ intentions.

Your mind is _____ target.

Your mind will make the _____ in your life.

We must _____ our minds aggressively.

VIDEO FEEDBACK

Kenny discusses the relationship between our thought lives and our actions. Why do you think he places so much emphasis on a man's thoughts?

2 Corinthians 10:5 tell us to take every thought captive. In which parts of your thought life do you do this successfully? Explain.

CONNECT WITH THE GROUP

It all started with an innocent conversation at work. Chris, a married business man, never thought he would end up in a year long affair with a woman he thought was just an acquaintance. But on a business trip to Las Vegas, she and Chris danced and then kissed and what started as a harmless conversation led to a string of lies, liaisons, and more pain and hurt than God ever intended a marriage to endure.

Satan wants us to believe that we can flirt with, get emotionally attached to, and even touch someone other than our spouse and still not violate our marriage covenant. It all seems so innocent.

BUT IT'S ALL SO WRONG!

Thankfully for Chris, years of brokenness, counselling, forgiveness, and the rebuilding of trust led to the restoration of his marriage and family. He never wants to experience that pain again. He shared, "It was like having to start all over again. I had to go back to square one. The pleasure wasn't worth the pain."

Consider this warning from Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker in *Every Man's Battle*:

For males, impurity of the eyes is sexual foreplay.

That's right. Just like stroking an inner thigh or rubbing a breast. Because foreplay is any sexual action that naturally takes us down the road to intercourse. Foreplay ignites passions, rocketing us by stages until we go all the way...

If you're married, you may be asking, *What does all this have to do with me? My foreplay happens only with my wife.*

Are you sure? Impurity of the eyes provides definite sexual gratification. Isn't that foreplay? When you see a hot movie scene, is there a twitch below your belt? What are you thinking when you're on the beach and suddenly meet a jaw-dropping beauty in a thong bikini? You gasp while Mission Control drones, "We have ignition!" You have her in bed on the spot, though only in your mind. Or you file away the image and fantasize about her later.

1. Imagine yourself as Chris's best friend. How would you have counselled him at each stage of his fall into sin?
2. Do you agree with Chris's assessment that the pleasure he found in the affair wasn't worth all the pain? Why or why not?

While there can be pleasure in sin for a short season, in the end it will always cost more than a God's man should be willing to pay.

3. Respond to the concept of visual foreplay. Do you agree or disagree with the author's warning?

4. Read Proverbs 7:6-23 and Hebrews 4:15 aloud. Is temptation a sin? Explain.

It's good to remember that even Jesus was tempted, yet did not sin. He modelled how to have our thought lives under control.

5. With what arguments or excuses do we tend to rationalise our wrong responses to sexual temptation?
6. When do you think men are most vulnerable to sexual sin?
7. What steps can we take to deal effectively with sexual temptation before it leads to sin?
8. What can we do this week as a group to help one another in our struggles with sexual temptation?

WRAP

Unfortunately, sexual temptation is a constant threat to our well-being. Like a dangerously sharp rock submerged beneath the surface of the water, lust can potentially rip a huge gash in our hulls and cause us to sink to the bottom should we refuse to steer away from it. The frightening thing is that many men believe themselves immune to the kind of disaster sexual compromise can bring. "It's just a thought. I'm not hurting anyone." But God's man must see temptation as the threat that it is and follow God's plan for overcoming it.

Remember these key thoughts from this week's study:

- Temptation begins in our thoughts.
- The Enemy plans temptation for evil; God uses it for good.
- You must control your thought life or it will control you.