

Know to say NO



Bro. JASON



KNOW
to say
NO

A Challenge for a Holy Living

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*Dedicated to youth
who are struggling to
lead a blameless and
holy life.*

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Epilogue

Prologue

I was travelling by train from Tirunelveli to Bhopal. It was early in the morning. The train was about to reach Bhopal. The Lord burdened my heart regarding the struggles a young Christian faces in this corrupt world. I also remembered my own struggles and how God was gracious enough to deal with them. The Lord burdened my heart to document the lessons that I learnt as a young, new believer in Christ. But my initial reaction was – *“Lord! Me! To write on moral life! That’s impossible. Lord! Please find someone else to do the job. I am not in any way worthy or eligible to write.”* Days went by. I tried to avoid the subject and forget that day. But the thought came back to me again and again till I could no more resist. Then I told the Lord, *“Ok! Lord I will write. But only please cover me with your grace till the end of my life.”*

And so came the book.

-Jason

Introduction

The War has begun. The target is the Christian. The area of attack is his personal purity. The enemy targets the personal lives of God's people. The enemy has mounted his bows and arrows and has aimed at God's dear children, yes, even small children. For some, living a holy life is no more practical. And for others it is outdated. Still others argue that we live in an entirely different world- the world which is scientifically advanced and tech-savvy. In this development-delusion, immorality is the norm, believers are derided and people preaching morality are a rare commodity. And so morality is redefined with sentences like- *'Everybody does it'; 'We cannot live like that' and 'A pinch of porn is ok.'*

In the previous generations, in order to defile yourself, you need to go to a cinema theatre to watch an adult movie; you need to go to a questionable shop to buy a questionable book; you need to go to questionable places to develop questionable relationships. All these things you can do only in front of a reasonable number of people. So even if you are tempted, there was a high probability of restraint because of the shame-factor (*What will people think of me?*). Now, with the advent of high speed Internet technology and mobile telephony, all the above said things have crept inside our houses, right inside our pockets. The concept of the shame-factor no more holds good. You can do all the above said things in your private chamber and put a different face in front of the people.

So what has this advancement in technology and the so called development brought about? It has gifted us a Shameless Spirituality and a Diluted Morality. It has made Sin very cheap and easily available. It has resulted in Christians loaded with guilt, new bondages of sin and complexity in relationships. But Sin doesn't come alone. It comes with a host of other problems and heartaches. We see an increase in the number of divorces and people with perverted sexual patterns; the sacred institution of the family is derided and questioned and ultimately a hopeless young generation left without any beacon to guide them.

It is about this age that the Bible says that wickedness will increase and people will become lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God(Mat 24:12, 2Tim 3:4). Almost none of us doubt that we are living in the last days. On the one hand we see an increase in wickedness but on the other hand we see God, the Holy Spirit at work. On one side we see the unrighteous prosper and on the other side we see the Gospel being preached to the unreached nations. On the one hand we see a young generation deeply submerged in sin refusing to repent and on the other hand we see God preparing a people for Himself. I think this is what was written about two thousand years ago.

Rev 22:11- "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

For those of us who struggle to lead a pure and blameless life in this adulterous generation this book has a message. I am penning these words not with a holier-than-thou attitude, but rather with humble reverence and fear. Ever since I became a serious believer at the age of 13, I have tried to lead a good and moral life though not always successful. Growing up in a generation which

first encountered the advent of the Internet, the struggle was not an ordinary one. The thoughts in this book are a direct result of a heart which longed for a pure life. I struggled to understand certain things as an infant believer but they became clearer as I grew up. A few other things I learnt by hard and painful experiences. I have penned both these things in this book.

One last request for the reader before you flip through the pages- I know that every time a young life benefits from the contents of this book, Satan will try to attack me and my family. So say a word of prayer for me, for my wife, Bercy and son Ephraim. Thank you.

1 Cor 9:27- "But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified".

One Life



*“There is one life and one chance
One God and one Commitment
One marriage and one eternity
So beware of the fowler
Who with his bait has slain
Many beautiful and precious lives
And is still waiting for you and me
Let’s stand on God’s grace and love
And hold Him tight
Till He takes us ashore”*

-D.J

A typical love Story

Chris was a college goer doing his second year MBA. He was a good Christian and a worship leader. It was at this time he met Priyanka in a prayer meeting. Her simplicity and sincerity attracted him. He was mesmerized by her looks and could not sleep. But he did not have the guts to propose to her. He was dying for her. He was *'in love.'* Finally he mustered courage and proposed to her. To his surprise she did not respond immediately. But as the old saying goes, 'Silence equals compliance'. And so 'love' blossomed between the two young Christian people. As Chris was in the final year, he tried hard for a well-paying job, so that he could quickly settle down with his beloved. As everything turned out favourably for him, they got married and settled down.

Love At first sight

Though Chris' story is a typical successful love story, many times in reality things may not work in our favour. And life is not that simple as it seems. We shall discuss this in depth.

Song of Solomon 4:9 - *"You have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes."*

In the above quoted verse, we find something about the captivating glance of a lover. During the pre-teen and teen years, 'glances' and 'looks' play a vital part in each of our body-chemistry. We are sometimes captivated by 'those' captivating eyes. We even try

to mischievously steal a second look. Before keeping this fact in the light of the Scripture (of what God says regarding this) we need to truly admit ‘those feelings’ and ‘those glances and looks’ which are quite real in our life.

Is **love at first sight** really true love? Are marriages consummated by this phenomenon, the most successful or most terrifying? These are the questions that need to be answered in the light of the Word of God. We can notice that today most of the movies are based on the love-at-first-sight themes which make us think that it is real love.

When you are impressed by the first look or glance of a person, you may try to see that person again. You may notice that person’s face coming up again and again in your mind. And if you nurture those feelings, you may find yourselves slowly falling for that person. And if that person happens to be in the vicinity, then chances are that you might try to meet that person intentionally.

“Yes brother what’s wrong with that? Everybody does it.”- You may argue with me. Please have patience with me as to what I am going to say. ***I am not going to say that pre-marriage romantic love is evil and is worthy of hell. Also I am not going to recommend that for the next generations.*** Please read on.

Infatuation

‘A foolish passion’- this is what Oxford Dictionary tells about the English word Infatuation. And it is closely related to the love-at-first-sight phenomenon. The Bible gives the meaning of true love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as follows:

*“Love is patient and kind; Love does not envy or boast;
it is not arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way;*

*it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice at wrongdoing,
but rejoices with truth. Love bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

The present day love-story does not have any of the above Biblical characteristics; rather, we find just the opposite. The lover's characteristics are for everyone to see.

*“A lover is never patient;
he is restless till his wishes are fulfilled.
A lover feels floods of jealousy when his or her lover is
close with other people.
A lover is sometimes arrogant and rude.
A lover always insists on his own way.
They becomes easily irritable and resentful.
They rejoice at the wrongdoings
(sometimes done to parents)
They are sad when love-life fails
They cannot bear the failure of love-life,
They cannot believe in people after that bitter experience
They cannot hope and becomes pessimistic
And cannot endure anything.”*

Though the above poem is a bit of an exaggeration, still I believe that there are a few things to ponder here.

The Build-Up

Let us see how this feeling of infatuation is nurtured.

1. You feel this inner pull towards that person (Oh! that awkward feeling!).
2. You cannot stand a glance by that person (You may be obsessed with things - bangles, purses, glasses, bikes, watches etc.).
3. You start thinking about that person (You cannot stop thinking about him or her).
4. You start dreaming about that person (If she or he had a casual talk then there is a movie in your mind).

5. You try to talk to that person (If you are in school or college, you will ask for books & notes).
6. You will try to create a link with that person (Find out the phone number, email id, FB account).
7. You will try to impress that person and will try to propose(The final phase).

Though the above sequence is generally common, there might be some exceptions. And there are many expressions of this romantic love-poem, music, places and so on and so forth which make this experience thrilling and exciting in the beginning.

The Fun Factor

Many young people take this as fun in life. They have the fun-philosophy, - "Life is for enjoyment. Enjoy your life when you are young."

I don't believe in this nor does the Bible teach us so.

The Bible sarcastically warns us in Ecclesiastes 11:9 - "*Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.*"

Also the Bible teaches us to submit to the will of the Father.

Psalm 37:5 *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*

The main goal of our life is not a fun-filled one; it should rather be committing one's life in the hands of the Father. Then he will add all the fun in your life. You seek the face of the Lord and try to do His will in your life. Then all the happiness and joys will be yours (John 10:10). But if we try to take our life in our hands, then we are open to risk from all directions. You cannot treat relationship as fun. A ship can have only one captain. A pen can be

written by only one person at a time. Similarly our life can have only one master. No one can serve two masters (Luke 16:13). Love-at-first-sight comes along with a lot of other problems. So tread carefully.

Why Can It Fail?

I want to list some of the reasons for questioning these feelings of infatuation and love-at-first-sight phenomenon.

God's Will or Mine

We are living in the last days of human history. And the history is on a downward spiral. The Bible says that in the last days people will become lovers of themselves (2 Tim 3:2). In other words people will become more self-centered, individualistic and more obsessed with themselves. There is no place for **'God's will'** in their lives. They want their wish to be God's will. They treat God as a servant. They go to him when they have a need. But Jesus wants to be King and Lord of our life. ***If God rules, no one else can rule.*** Flesh and the world have no connection with Him. At such a time as this, how much more careful we should be in pleasing God, our Father, than be pleasing our 'Foolish Passions.'

Three Important Decisions

As I have said earlier the feelings of infatuation can strike at any time. It may strike during your school days and college days which are very important phases of your life. When I became a missionary at the age of 21, an elderly brother told me of the three important decisions that I will take in my life. I thank God for that brother. I believe it is an all-time truth for all young people.

1. The Decision of Academics
2. The Decision of Career
3. The Decision of Marriage

The Decision of Academics is the decision that you need to take regarding your education-in which stream you are joining - Engineering or Management or Medicine or Banking or Business or Theology. Some people decide this very early in their lives because of parental influence. But as you mature and experience the world for yourself, you will have to decide the stream according to your taste, your character and your interest.

The Decision of Career is the decision that you need to take regarding your place of work and type of work within the particular stream. Once you have chosen a particular stream you need to decide on the further course of action depending upon your interests and your life purpose.

The Decision of Marriage is the decision that you need to take regarding the person with whom you will be spending the rest of your life.

These three decisions follow a sequence. You have to think one at a time. If you are in school or college (Age13-21), you need to focus on Academics. If you are in a job (Age 21-25), you need to focus on your Career. If you had taken these two decisions wisely, then you will be in a position to deal with the matter of marriage. If you are thinking of love and marriage at the tender age of 13 or 15, you are going to end your life miserably. Wait for your time. What are you going to do after marriage? You are going to spend your whole life with the person whom you will marry. Why waste your academics and career?

Unreasonable Expectations

If your marriage is built on the so called '*infatuation*' or '*foolish passion*,' it will begin to show its colour after marriage. You would have written romantic poems about your lover in the peak for your relationship

before marriage. But after marriage, it is not always possible to write poems every week (though it is possible to write rarely!). You would have given much importance to looks and external beauty before marriage. But after marriage, as the ageing process sets in, you cannot expect your spouse to remain beautiful. There will always be someone more beautiful than your spouse. All these things together with several other things will put your marriage under undue pressure. So it is better to be careful.

Failing to see Reality

The foolish passion fails to see reality because it is foolish. You may be attracted (pull) towards a girl who appears in a TV show. You may be attracted towards a girl of different nationality (love knows no boundaries-Don't misinterpret this!). Or you may be infatuated by a woman older than you and one who is married. Or you may be infatuated by a girl of much younger age when you yourself are married. The feelings of infatuation are really foolish and they can come at any age and to any person (because it knows no boundaries!).

Try encouraging those feelings and you end up as a laughing stock – a real fool. You should not always trust your feelings. You need to see the reality. The Bible admonishes us to be sober-minded and vigilant (1 Pet 5:8).

Breakups

Another important side-effect of this tangle is the breakdown and the heartache that may be experienced when the relationship fails. When the feeling of infatuation is encouraged and turned into a full blown relationship or affair, then it is hard to break. But when it does break, it is very painful. ***Relationship is complex.*** It has to be treated with utmost carefulness. If it breaks,

it is like a glass vessel shattered into a thousand pieces. Or like a beautiful rose trampled and crushed. What I am trying to convey is that, it would be really hard to come out of that experience. ***It would take God's hand to mend broken relationships.*** Yes, my dear, only God can mend a broken life. If your life is already broken, take the pieces that are left (you might have lost many things) and put them in God's hand. There is always a future for you. Our God is a God of new things (Meditate Isaiah 42:9, Phil 3:13). He will bring in new things in your life. Don't worry.

People who have this bitter experience in life may develop a negative attitude towards life. They will not be in a position to trust anyone. Even if they get married they would not be in a position to enjoy the bliss of marriage and child bearing. So better beware.

Relationships are complex because human beings are complex. According to the latest scientific discovery, the information contained in one DNA strand of one single cell will come to around 1000 volumes of books. Such is the complexity of human life. In order to have a healthy relational life, we need to have a good relationship with God our Father. He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for you and me to die on the cross, as a penalty for our sins. He rose again from death on the third day and He lives even today and He longs for you and me. Though He is God, He loves us and speaks to us. God wants us to have the best of this life and also Eternal Life. He has revealed His will and His plan for us in His Holy Word, The Bible. You may be of any caste, creed or nationality, but God loves you and longs to have a loving relationship with you. In order to have a healthy relationship with everyone, we need to have a healthy relationship with God the Father. A man of God said like this: *'Every man's heart has a God-shaped hole.'*

Love is the centre of all Relationships. Humans are always in need of love. You and I need to be loved. Of all the needs of human beings, the Need to be loved is central. We cannot survive in this world without being loved. There is no hope without love. The Bible tells us in I Corinthians 13:13 that faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The Greatest Human Need in this world is love. God knew this and he ordained the institution of

Marriage which is basically a love-relationship. As we grow from childhood to adulthood, God, in His mercy, has granted various other relationships for us to enjoy and cherish. But as I told you already, in order to enjoy all these relationships, we need to have a loving relationship with the One who created them. If that is not the case, you will fail ultimately in life.

Let us see some of the wonderful love-relationships that God has ordained and how God is sufficient in each one of them.

Mother's Love

When a baby (or a human being) is born into this world, it experiences the wonderful love of a Mother. The love of a Mother is the first love a child experiences in this world. The baby enjoys being cuddled by the tender comfort of a mother. The love of a mother is simply too wonderful. Though the pain that a mother undergoes during child birth is very great, still the sight of a crying baby makes her forget all the pain that she endured. When her baby is born, she always sees it, admires it and loves it. Even as the baby grows and becomes an adult, the Mother's love is consistent. She always defends; she will not let any harm happen to her baby. The Mother-instinct is found in nature as well. The God of nature expresses His longing for His children through the tender love of a mother.

God says in His Holy Word,

Isaiah 49:15 - *"Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."*

Can a mother forget her crying baby and not have compassion on him? An ideal mother never forgets. The mother cries when her child cries and that is the heart of the mother. But there is a possibility that God brings out

here. ***Even the mother's love may fail!*** He knows the fallibility of frail humans. Even in that possibility, God says that He will not forget you. What a great privilege! What a tender love!

Thank God if you are gifted with a wonderful mother, but remember that God loves you more than your mother. He has promised that He will not forget you. He is always thinking of you. He is always there for you. He can never forget you. Such a love is too wonderful for us to comprehend. Even if you have not tasted the love of a mother, you can taste the love of God who loves you more than your mother. If you have a difficult mother, then don't blame the past and curse yourself. There is a God who loves you more than your mother. Come closer to Him. Speak to Him. His heart is longing for you. ***He cries when you cry.*** Don't feel that you are all alone in this world. The God who gave His Son to die for you is longingly waiting for you.

Father's Love

In the institution of the Family, God has graciously gifted the relationship of a father. The father's love is a love that provides; a love that protects; a love that corrects; a love that supports; a love that is less emotional but more intense. This is the love of a father. But you and I may not have a perfect father here on earth.

Note the following verses:

Psalms 68:5 - *"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation."*

Psalms 103:13- *"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him."*

Matthew 6:9 - *"Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*

In all the above verses, we see that, God basically revealed Himself to us as our father. When we believe in Him, He gives us the right to become His children(John 1:12). And again in Rom 8:15, we see that he has given us the spirit of sonship to cry to God as Abba, Father. What a great privilege to call the God of the universe as our Father! I may not have enjoyed a blissful relationship with a mother or a father in this world but, God is enough for me. He loved me so much that He died for me. He is sufficient for me.

Psalms 27:10 -*“ Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.”(NIV)*

Friend’s Love

Proverbs 17:17 -*“A friend loves at all times..”*

Proverbs 18:24- *“..there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*

God has also given us the wonderful bliss of friends. He understands that the path that we are to take in this earth is a hard one. He knows that we cannot travel alone. Praise God for all the good friends that we have. The Bible verses quoted above tell us that a friend loves at all times. Yes, as we grow from childhood to adulthood, there comes in everyone’s life a time, when we feel that our parents simply don’t understand us. When parents don’t spend quality time with their children and when their expectations become unrealistic, the teen-aged child does not open up to his parents. Also in homes where there is incessant misunderstanding between father and mother, home literally becomes hell. In such cases, we turn to our friends who can understand us and accept us without expecting anything from us. Oh! What a joy to be among such friends! We even find solace in talking to them and spending time with them. Thank God for them. And we need to cherish such relationships. But life has its own dimensions. Many a time, the good

friends whose company we enjoy don't stay near us. We are separated because of studies and of life settlements. ***Good friends seldom stay in one place at a time.*** Even if they stay, it is only for a short time. The demands of this life separate us and we long for those good old days when we cherished the friendship.

But there is a friend who always sticks with us. He always understands us. He knows more about us. He is there for us always defending us and protecting us. Yes dear! His name is Jesus. He said that He would call us his friends. John 15:15 says *...I have called you friends.* The Bible says that God talked with Moses face to face, as a friend (Exo 33:11). Again the Bible calls Abraham as God's friend (Isa 41:8).

We can speak to Him, we can tell Him our troubles, we can tell Him our problems - both small and big. Yes! He is sufficient for us. There is no one who can understand us like Jesus. Praise God for your friends in life. ***But let Jesus be your Best Friend ever!***

Lover's Love

Song of Solomon 8:6-*"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord."*

Love between a man and a woman is the ultimate requirement for the divine institution of Marriage. The Bible considers marital love between a husband and wife as holy. Passionate love between spouses is described in the Biblical book of Song of Solomon. When a child reaches adolescence, he or she longs for a companion of the opposite sex. The inner mutual attraction is normal for every individual. A person who has no regard for the Lord and who is not concerned about Divine Will in his life can take this inner urge and use it as he likes. But you as a child of God, have to wait. You have to wait for God.

You cannot be attracted to persons who are not believers and who have no regard for the Lord. Satan knows this inner urge and may use somebody as a bait to destroy your future and life. You should never yoke with an unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14). Even if he/she is a believer you need to seek God's will. You can argue that he or she likes going to Church and so on and so forth. The fact that you start arguing itself shows that you have not committed it to God's will. You want your will to happen and you also want God to bless you. The Bible says that no one can serve two masters (Luke 16:13). You have to decide. God will never force Himself on you.

Three Levels in Relationships

Level 1 is where you just communicate in 'Hi' s and 'Bye' s.

This stage in relationship is just a casual one. There is no emotional involvement. The relationship exists for the sake of it. Just because of studying together, working together and being neighbours, we need to communicate at this level. As such there is no harm in this kind of relationship either for a boy or a girl. People may be class-mates, batch-mates or college-mates. But they are not friends or lovers at this stage.

Ex: Alex to Ramya- How is the day?
Ramya to Alex – Fine.

Level 2 is where you just communicate personally, knowing about each other.

This is the level wherein we start to build friendship with each other. There are various factors that bring two individuals on the same platform- a shared interest, a shared liking, a shared dislike, working in the same team, playing together, travelling together etc. As we start to work together for a long period of time, slowly we notice the likes and dislikes of an individual and start

to know each other better. It may be a man or a woman. Even at this level there is less harm and if maintained properly it will be a healthy one.

Alex to Priya- Today the lecture seemed a bit boring,ya!

Priya to Alex – Ya! I too could not understand what he said.

Level 3 is where you communicate about your emotions, feelings and your secrets.

When we start to spend too much time with one particular individual whom we like; who seems to be more compassionate and who seems to care for us, then the relationship will start to have an emotional edge. Sometimes people may term this as close friendship. But spiritually speaking , this kind of relationship is not a healthy one. The more we share our emotions, the more we give ourselves to somebody to control us. The more we become involved, the more difficult it will be to break. And if it breaks it will be very hard to build again.

Alex to Priya – You look so sad

Priya to Alex – Yesss. My father doesn't understand me....(sobs).

Alex to Priya – Don't worry(putting his hands around her). You can come to my home anytime if you are uncomfortable in your home.

We all, in our relationships, move from level 1 to level 2 and then to level 3. But level 3 communication may not be a healthy one.

When you cross the line from level 2 to level 3 you are crossing a dangerous mark. It is here you must draw the line. With increase in technology, it is easy to express ourselves through Emails, Cellphones and Facebooks, but in all these things if you learn to draw the line, you are going to win the race with much ease.

Tips for Drawing the Line

1. When you feel you are crossing the mark, then discourage and slowly reduce the conversation (including mail correspondence, SMSing, phone calls and chats in social networks).

2. Avoid the one (opposite gender) with whom you feel inclined to share your feelings. Have less contact. Draw the line. Consult spiritual counsellors.

3. Never encourage touch with the person of the opposite sex. Never !

4. Avoid spending too much time with one particular person.

5. Avoid travelling alone with another person of the opposite sex.

6. Don't succumb to emotional blackmail. Seek the help of parents or seniors.

7. If the other person is too penetrating into your personal life, take drastic action. Ignore the phone calls and mails.

I am already in a relationship. What shall I do now?

Dear, if you are already in relationship then consider the following possibilities.

Is the relationship just like friendship?

Or is it more than friendship- like spending a lot of time together, talking for hours on the phone?

Or have you crossed the moral boundaries?

If it is like friendship...

If it is just like friendship in level 1 and level 2 with the opposite sex, then it is ok. But if you feel that you are tempted in a wrong way or being emotionally pulled towards that person or the other person seems to pry on you, then you need to take the first step.

If you want God's will to happen in your life, commit your life to God and leave the rest in His hands.

If not, close the book you are reading. Go ahead with your plan. *But God will not stop loving you but you will lose God's best in your life.* If you want God's best say the model prayer with me:

"Lord I believe you are the God of the universe. You gave your Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for me who took the penalty of my sins. Now Lord, I confess that I need you. I cannot go on without you. Lord I want to commit my life in your hands. I surrender my will, my desire and my everything. I know you always give me the best. My life is in your hands. Take me. Make me and mould me according to your will. I am available for you. Amen"

If it is more than friendship- without physical involvement

If you are a student in a school or college and if you have started to have a relationship with an emotional edge, you need to plan for a breakup. The more the emotional involvement, the more difficult it will be to break the relationship. So breaking a relationship at this stage is really hard. You have been also emotionally involved and the other person is also emotionally involved. You have to commit your life as I said in the above paragraphs and try for a mutual-breakup. You need God's grace to break your circumstances.

I strongly believe that if you have committed your life and if you want to come out of a relationship, God will bring in situations wherein it will be much easier for you to break. You may go to a distant place to study and the other person himself or herself will get diverted from you. Also seek the help of parents, support groups and spiritual counsellors. God sees the heart that is willing and it is His work to strengthen us. We are weak but He is strong. And He increases the strength of the weak. God will be on your side and you can easily overcome the situation.

If it is more than friendship – involving physical relationship

The Bible forbids such relationship and it is an outright sin against God. If you are committing that Sin, pray to God for mercy. Repent and confess your sin to God. Both of you need this repentance and rededication. If both of you are still not married, and are of the marriageable age (more than 25 years), then you can proceed for Marriage with right guidance from your parents or spiritual counsellors. But if that is not the case- if you are having relationship with a married person or if you think that he or she has used your innocence then you need to plan for break up. Consult a spiritual counsellor and start your life afresh. But don't give up hope. If you are truly repentant God is faithful and just to forgive all your transgressions and unrighteousness. It might take a year or two (or sometimes more) to get back to normal. You need to stand on God's Grace. You need to burn away all the things that remind you of your relationship- gifts, emails, everything which can rekindle the old passions - should be burnt to ashes. Start afresh. Commit your body, soul and spirit to God. God will help you. Say the prayer with me and you can continue in your words:

“Lord I confess that I have sinned. I had (or having) a wrong relationship with_____. I broke your heart. I crucified you again. I led a life which was not worthy of you. I gave my body to sin and offered it as an instrument of unrighteousness. I had been unfaithful to you, to my parents, to my spiritual mentors, to my calling, to my future spouse (or present) and to my future children (or present). Lord! Forgive me. Even though I have messed up my life, still Lord, I know only you can understand me. Lord give me a new start. Forgive all my transgressions with your pure precious blood. Help me Lord not to return to my foolishness. Help me. Lord! Help me.....”

Beware of Her - For Men

I accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour when I was studying seventh grade in my school. Ever since I found it hard to lead a holy life (in every young man's sense). I was struggling a lot in the area of purity. Though God prevented me from outrageous sins, nevertheless I was constantly in danger of getting diverted by the attraction of the opposite sex.

God has a great plan and future for every one of us. And He wants to bless us so that He can bless the world through us. He has got a plan for each and every one of us. But at the same time we need to remember that the devil has his own plans for us- plans to kill us and destroy our future. So we should be aware of his designs and schemes.

One of his schemes is to divert us by bringing some girl or woman in our life so that we would miss God's best in our lives. The institution of marriage was given by God but the devil will try to use the legitimate desire for company and bodily longing and he will take us in the wrong way to the wrong person.

Many things in life can be remade and renewed like houses, businesses, studies etc. But when it comes to emotional and physical relationships, one cannot rebuild and renew as such. It may take a life time. It may take years to build a relationship and still longer to build a broken relationship. So the best scheme that the devil may use against you is to get you introduced and

attached to some distracting, charming personalities. Satan is always in need of attractive women so that he can lead a host of God's men towards destruction. He has learnt from his experience that most men are terribly weak in this area. The Bible too warns us about some base women who used their beauty in a wrong way and for wrong reasons. We shall consider three such women in detail.

Delilah- The Sweet Seductress

Judges 16:4 – *“After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”*

In the above verse we see that Samson loved a woman in the valley of Sorek. I always wonder why Samson would love Philistine women. And this was not the first instance. Delilah was the third Philistine woman in Samson’s life. In the first two instances, though the enemies closed in, he was spared by the Grace of God. But he failed consistently which led to his ultimate disaster. We shall meditate upon the life of Samson and the circumstances that led to his downfall in the perspective of one of the base women of the Bible, Delilah.

Seeking the Wrong Person

Samson’s fall was not sudden. Rather it was gradual. He got from bad to worse. His problem started with his marriage.

Note the verses below:

Judges 14:1,2- *“Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. Then he came up and told his father and mother, “I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife.”*

Samson’s hand had to be against the Philistines. That was his call. That was his life’s purpose. He very well knew that. He knew that the Philistines were enemies of Israel. His call was something great. An angel of God came from Heaven and foretold his birth (Jdg 13:3-5).

But he acted diametrically opposite to his call. It is where the devil works out his schemes. Though the word of God says that these things were brought about by God, it was only the permissible will of God. Though Samson knew that he is called to fight against the Philistines, he wanted to marry a woman from that community. What a tragedy! How many of us have lost our call just because we did not realize that certain things were from the devil. We have sometimes acted directly against the purpose of God in our life. To Samson's eyes, the Philistine women were more beautiful than the Israelite women.

Guidance and Counsel

Judges 14:3 – *“His father and mother said to him, “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she is right in **my eyes.**”*

Before Samson proceeded with this foolish marriage, he was forewarned sufficiently. Samson simply ignored every sound advice. Note the phrase, ‘she is right in my eyes.’ Samson was so concerned about what he saw. He was letting his eyes roam freely. ***He was guided by his eyes.*** Beware of what you see or rather what Satan shows you. The Deceiver showed the forbidden fruit to Eve, and even showed all the Kingdoms to our Lord Jesus Christ. Beware of the fowler! ***We need to keep a check on our eyes lest we lose them like Samson.*** We should join together with Job and say *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? (Job 31:1).*

Also remember what the Bible tells in Proverbs 4:25 – *“Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.”* And again 1 John 2:16 says that the desires of eyes are not from the Father.

Now note the other part of the verse:

Judges 16:3-*"Get her for me"*.

Samson was having a 'must-get' attitude. May be he grew up like that. The concept of independence is being misinterpreted today. ***We are slowly imbibing a culture which tells that joy and success can be achieved only when you get what you want.*** It is totally foolish and rash. Our desires and wants depend on age and maturity. It keeps on changing. We learn by committing mistakes. Sometimes maturity comes with age and at other times it comes by fellowship with mature believers. But the wisdom needed for that maturity can only be given by God and by meditating upon His law. Even ageing and experiences failed to teach the wisest King Solomon, true wisdom. If you take rash decisions thinking that you are acting independently, you are going to pay a heavy price. Especially when it comes to marriage and relationships, it is always good to consult good spiritual counsellors and elders.

You cannot decide things based on your eyes.

Proverbs 31:30- *"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."* If you are enchanted by the charm of girls and women, you are sure going to be deceived. Pray to God to open your eyes.

Let God give you holy eyes that see clearly.

Going for It

Judges 14:1-*"Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines."*

Judges 16:1-*"Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her"*.

Judges 16:4 - *"After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah."*

Note the above verses. In all three instances, Samson went in for trouble. It is one thing when

temptations strike us unexpectedly. But it is another thing when we go for them to places that we already know would lead us to sin, to friends who will definitely lead us in the wrong way and to develop habits that will help forge wrong relationships. When you are careless in these areas, you have no business to blame the devil or God. What you sow, you have to reap (Gal 6:7).

Samson went in for trouble himself. Temptation never came. He was never tempted. He went deliberately. And he paid the price for it. May be he was longing for love. His first marriage was a failure. ***But instead of learning the lesson from his first failure, he went from bad to worse.*** He repeated the same mistake. He goes again to the Philistine territory. Your troubled past is not an excuse for a careless life. Learn from your failures. ***One of the saddest things in life is failure to learn from failures.*** Be not like a mule or a donkey which has no understanding (Ps 32:9). Again the Bible warns us in Proverbs 26:11 – *“Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly”*.



Interlude

New Beginnings

Our God is a God of new beginnings.

Isaiah 43:19 - *"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert"*

Philippians 3:13- *"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead"*

Don't worry about your past failures. Our God is always a God of new beginnings. Though your life might have been shattered to the core, there is nothing impossible for God to do. Don't condemn yourself when God has forgiven and forgotten your past sins. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom 8:1). And again in Romans 8:33 we read- "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies". The devil is called an accuser and he will constantly accuse you about your mistakes and sins and will keep you in the bondage of self-condemnation. When you believe a lie that the devil whispers in your mind, you become a prisoner and start living a condemned life. Never ever believe that lie. God has justified you. The devil has no right over you. You are God's child. You are purchased with a great price. You are not your own. So be encouraged. The Bible says that you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. The Word of God declares you are free; that you are God's child and that you can live life to the full!

Amen! Alleluja!

Motivated by Money

Judges 16:5 - And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, *“Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.”*

Delilah always loves luxury. For money’s sake, she will do anything. All she needs is money and money and plenty of money. She needs money for shopping, spending, showing-off, etc. And she would always need more. Sometimes she dresses seductively just to attract men and at other times she enjoys her beauty herself. She would spend a lot of time in front of the mirror. She knows nothing of God, or calling, or anointing. But she admires Samson not for his physical strength but because she wants to know whether this mighty man can be tamed by her charms and beauty. ***She wanted to know his weakness and play with his strength.***

Dear young reader, beware of such women in life. Beauty does not lie in the exterior. True feminine beauty lies in a spirit of humility, modesty, sweetness and timidity. ***A loud woman is never a modest woman.*** A woman who is a reckless spender on clothes and fashion items is not a wise woman. Beware of Delilahs in your life.

Playing with the Enemy

Judges 16:13 - *“Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound.” And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.”*

Delilah tried to find out the real source of Samson’s strength. And not only that, her job was to hand him over to his enemies. She was the Enemy’s gateway.

When the first plot unfolded, Samson escaped unhurt. By this time Samson should have found out that Delilah was conniving with his enemies. He should have turned against Delilah and should have never returned to her. But rather he came again and played with his enemies. Samson totally lost sight of God's call and anointing. He was anointed and was given this great strength to stand against the Philistines and be a rescuer and Judge of Israel. But now, here on the lap of Delilah he was playing with his enemies. Because he escaped the first few times, he believed that he would escape ultimately. ***But Sin is not to be played with. It has its own consequences. It brings misery, trouble, tears, shame and ultimately death.*** Though in the beginning it may look harmless and may be even entertaining, the sad consequences are there to follow us.

Never think that our sin will only affect us. It's devastations are like the ones caused by an earthquake or flood. It may carry all who come along the way. ***In order to understand the cruel nature of Sin, we need to remember the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Sin crucified Him. It killed him. It is that Sin we are discussing here. It is that Sin we are talking about. For some, sinning is a joke, for others it is a jolly life. But to Father God, it cost His only Son. Do you want to love anything that would crucify Jesus? Do you want to do anything that would kill him again? No! Don't do that.

Deal harshly with Sin. Hate Sin. Run away from Sin. It killed our Lord Jesus Christ. And it would kill us too. Never ever deal softly with Sin! Beloved, never play with Sin. Treat it with utmost seriousness. Don't be charmed by anyone. Not everyone in this world is good. There are some who look good outside but they are wolves inside. Stay away from them.

Delilah's Weapon

Judges 16:15-16 And she said to him, *"How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies."* And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.

Judges 14:17 - *"She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told the riddle to her people."*

Now Delilah used the emotional part to seduce Samson. She perhaps knew Samson's another weakness. **Samson was an emotional fool.** In the previous instance, he gave away the riddle to his wife just because she was in tears (Note the above verse). And now Delilah used her last weapon. The deadly weapon- the weapon of pressing with words of love (so called) and ultimately she won over him. **Samson was betrayed by the bait of false love.** Even Judas tried to use the ultimate symbol of love-kiss as a weapon of betrayal. But Jesus knew him from the beginning. Look at Samson- the Man of God and a Man called by God- a Man of Mighty anointing and valour, surrendering meekly to an ungodly, poisonous beauty. It was he who went to Delilah in spite of the fact that she connived with his enemies. Dear reader, **never trust the tears of Delilah.** Don't be entangled in any love blackmail. Let God open your eyes so that you may see clearly. If you doubt that anyone is misusing your innocence, immediately consult a spiritual counsellor and come out of that relationship. May God help You.

Ecclesiastes 7:26-*"I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her."*

An Eternal Counsel

*“With much seductive speech she persuades him;
with her smooth talk she compels him.
All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter,
or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver;
as a bird rushes into a snare;
he does not know that it will cost him his life.
And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the
words of my mouth.
Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray
into her paths,
for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a
mighty throng.
Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the
chambers of death.”*

(Proverbs 7:21-27)

Hold Thou My Thoughts



*Hold Thou my thoughts, for as I kneel
To worship Thee and pray,
Some vagrant thought, some trifling thing,
Does lead my mind astray.*

*Hold Thou my thoughts, for while mine ear
Would listen to thy Word,
Some sight, some sound, claims eye or ear;
Thy message is unheard.*

*Hold Thou my thoughts, for when I seek
To give my heart to Thee,
A host of Satan's darts drive in
And storm the heart of me.*

*Oh, hold my thoughts, and shield mine eyes
From all distracting things,
And aid my praise, my thoughts, my hearts,
To rise upon Faith's wings!*

-F.B.Stone

Bathseeba- A Beautiful Neighbour

The moral failure that came across David's life casts a dark shadow in his character and integrity. Before meditating upon David's failure, we shall meditate upon the man David himself- his virtues and his goodness.

David was a chosen instrument of God not just to become the King of Israel but through whose seed the future Messianic King would appear. Even Jesus was called the 'Son of David'. God himself called David - a man after my own heart.'(1 Sam 13:14). God was very much pleased with David that He made an eternal covenant with him . He was the one who instituted worship in the tabernacle and prepared everything for the magnificent temple that Solomon, his son later built.

- » But what made David commit such a heinous crime?
- » And what prompted David to sacrifice his trusted general Uriah?
- » David was conscience-stricken when he cut the end garments of Saul but why was his heart hardened to scheme and kill his own man?

We shall meditate in depth as to what were the circumstances that led to the fall of King David.

Harmless Compromises

I believe David's fall was very gradual. He married several other women which was not the guideline given to the Kings of Israel by God(1 Chro 14:3). He even married Abigail when he found that God struck down her husband. Indeed David had a weakness for women.

In our spiritual life too, if we keep making compromises on God's revealed Truths and guidance, we will pay a heavy price one day. A little compromise here and a little compromise there will lead to total collapse. ***If you are leading a life of petty compromises, don't be surprised when such a thing happens to you.***

Jesus said that looking at a woman with lustful eyes amounts to adultery, a Sin worthy of death according to the Bible. Just because nothing happens with your first sinful look, and when you develop a habit out of a sin, be assured of a painful future. When you compromise in this area, slowly your heart will be hardened and you will be emboldened to commit more wilful sins. One will lead to another. And this trap is a place of no return. As you are deceived by Satan's schemes, you become blind to the consequences and move along recklessly.

The Bible clearly says that we will reap what we sow. You cannot reap blessing and joy when you sow impurity.

On the other hand, if you are careful in small things, victory is going to be easy. Saying no when a dire situation arises will become easy. Purity in heart and in eyes is very much more important than purity in action. One will lead to the other. ***Outer purity is an expression of your inward purity.*** Self-examining your thoughts, sights, words and actions everyday will keep your conscience clear and your heart sensitive.

Purity Vs Gifts

David was a mighty man of God. Just because God was very pleased with him and just because God raised him to be the King of Israel, there was no guarantee that he cannot sin or be tempted. We may be used of God mightily but we need to be careful till our last breath. We might have been zealous for the Lord when we

were young, but we need to maintain the same fervour till the end. The Bible says that the end of the matter is better than the beginning(Ecc 7:8). Many of us have started our spiritual life well. God is using us to be His Kingdom builders. But we should not compromise on moral purity. Supposing you start to backslide and are living in Sin, it is better to stop ministering. We cannot be hypocrites before God. We cannot say that God is using my gifts and so I need to minister. We can minister but it should be preceded by confession and deep repentance. In the process we might lose our reputation and people might scorn us. But it is far better than hypocrisy and deception. This was what David did exactly. When he was told by Nathan the Prophet, he repented and confessed openly and wrote a psalm to be sung by the generations to come. That was true repentance!

Misusing God's Flock

David was chosen by God to be a Shepherd over his flock Israel. Though David risked his life in fighting the Lord's battles, still they were God's battles. The people were God's. David was just a representative. He had to give account for every Israelite under his care. He could not use them according to his wish. Though David was a King over a Kingdom like any other Kingdom, he was unique. He was an ambassador for God. But the people put their faith in their leader as their King. This privilege should be carefully used. The same thing can be said in Christian ministries. People will be blessed through our ministries and through our prayers. But there is no obligation on their part to obey us in everything. People might be emotionally attached to us but we should be careful enough to direct them to God. Under such circumstances falling in heinous sins is very easy unless you have established known spiritual boundaries.

1000 Good Works

'Idleness is the Devil's workshop' so goes the saying. The best way to fight impurity in our lives is to be active in what God has given us. As a King, David was supposed to go to war, but look at the following verse:

2 Sam 11:1- *"In the spring of the year, the time when kings go to battle, David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel... but David remained at Jerusalem."*

Doing our God-given duties is the best way to fight temptations. Never encourage slothfulness. Sleep only on prescribed timings(6-8 hours a day is sufficient). Whatever you do, do with all your might (Ecc 9:10). Aim for perfection. Don't be mediocre. There are 1000 different fruits to eat in the Garden of Eden. Why eat the clearly marked forbidden fruit? There are 1000 good works that you can do. Why go for the snare? Decide the good things that you can do. Be a constant learner.

Here are some suggestions:

Learn new software.

Enrol in a language learning class.

Learn music.

Play outdoor games.

Go for a walk.

Write a journal.

Listen to Gospel music.

Enjoy nature.

Read books.

Teach songs to the Children.

Help your Pastor.

Share the Gospel with your friend.

Send a thank you card to the one who helped.

Gift food packets to beggars.

Involve in missions.

Do a small research (like what are the reasons behind suicides in cities).

Go for a small ride on the bicycle.
Clean your cupboard.
Visit sick people
Distribute Gospel tracts
Visit an old age home
Visit an orphanage
And the list goes on.

'Come on! Take up your mat and walk.'

Inviting Trouble

2 Sam 11; 2 - *"... he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful."*

The Bible says that Bathsheba was beautiful. And strangely, she never objected to David's improper treatment. May be Bathsheba admired David. The Bible records no detail of any resistance of hers. She cooperated in this heinous sin. Had she admonished David for his evil desires as did Abigail when David was bent on taking vengeance on Nabal, she would have saved David from committing this grievous sin . She shared in the iniquity of David, thereby incurring guilt and condemnation. God struck the first child born of them. And David's other sons Amnon and Absalom died as a consequence of this Sin. God was very much displeased when David used the enemy's sword to kill Uriah that the judgment was pronounced not only against David but against his whole household.

Note the following verses:

2 Sam 12: 10 - *"Therefore the sword shall never depart from your house...Behold I will raise up evil against you out of your own house."*

What a pronouncement! What a judgement! – The sword shall never depart from your house. David used the sword wrongly once but God put a sword in David's family. God forgave the sin of David and he was spared.

But the sad consequence of his action was to follow. The small child died. Amnon was murdered by Absalom (Both were David's children). And finally Absalom was brutally killed for trying to usurp David's throne. Note how David laments the death of Absalom:

2 Samuel 18:33- *"The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, " O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"*

I believe this is one of the saddest bursts of emotion recorded in the Bible. Would I had died instead of you!- *David knew that Absalom died because of his sin.* A momentary enjoyment resulted in death- death of his handsome son Absalom. At this point of time David lamented that it was better he die than seeing others die as a consequence of his sins. Dear reader, this kind of sins might seem like pleasure and enjoyment for fleeting minutes but the consequences are too drastic to write here. Sin brings Death. Sin brings tears. Sin brings pain. Sin brings disease. Sin brings heartaches. Sin brings guilt. *All sins that men commit, are outside his body. But when a man commits adultery he is committing a sin against his own body (1Cor 6:18).* Never cross your limits! God will protect you and keep you blameless till we appear before Him.

The Bible records another incident involving relationships and immorality. We find this in the first book of the Bible, well before God gave the Ten Commandments through Moses. First we meditated upon Delilah the beautiful seductress who was powerful enough to spoil one ministry and the future. And then we saw about Bathsheba, a beautiful wife who will not resist you. And now we shall see about Potiphar's wife (for we do not know her name) who tries to spoil God's purpose in a young man's life. We saw that Samson went after Delilah and David called for Bathsheba. But Potiphar's wife was readily available for Joseph. He never went after her nor entertained her but it was she who was after him. Samson and David went for it and were overcome. But Joseph overcame the temptation which was strong and luring. Potiphar's wife came after Joseph.

The Bible warns about such women:

Proverbs 5: 8 -10 -*"Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honour to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength and your labours go to the house of a foreigner."*

Prince Charming

Though Joseph was not born of a King, nonetheless he was called to be a King- to be the ruler of Egypt when Egypt ruled the world, a ruler of the world indeed. **He was of king-material.** He had all the qualities of a king. In our spiritual lives too, God has called us to be kings

and Priests to be seated in Heavenly Places(1 Pet 2:9). But just as God has a plan for us, the devil too has a plan for us. He has called us to become slaves- slaves of sin doing his will and wish. But the Bible tells that, “*You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free.*”(John 8:32).

Genesis 39:6, 7 - “*Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.”*”

As an instrument of the devil, Potiphar’s wife lusted after Joseph. If Potiphar’s wife had her way in Joseph’s life, he would have remained a lifelong slave in the Egyptian household. He could have never become the ruler of Egypt which was his calling. Just imagine the situation of Joseph. He was in a strange land. There was no supervision. There was no one to care or correct. He was at the prime of his youth. No doubt he had his own youthful urges. And here was a woman who was willing to give her body. And the woman was none other than his master’s wife. To submit to her would have resulted in a permanent place in Potiphar’s house. The story of Joseph would have been different. He would have lost his legacy. Ephraim and Manasseh – the dominant northern tribes of Israel would have never emerged. And God’s great plan for Israel would have taken a beating. ***How tragic to lose sight of God’s eternal blessings when we face the dilemma of fulfilling a momentary urge!***

Momentary Pleasures

The world gives us momentary pleasures and eternal curses; cheap joys and costly tears; better today and bitter tomorrow. We should never lose sight of God’s plan for our lives. Say to yourselves, “*I am God’s child. God has a great plan and purpose for my life. I cannot compromise. I have to live a life worthy of my calling. So I*

need to run away from everything that hinders my vision of God.” Let this be your prayer everyday.

The Bible warns us this way:

Hebrews 2:16- *“That no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.”*

For Esau, the choice was between a single meal and the inheritance blessings. Let us not fool ourselves. We cannot travel in two boats. We cannot desire sinful pleasures as well as expect blessing from God. ***Only eternity will reveal how much we have lost because of our inordinate lusts and evil desires.*** The Bible commands us to run away from youthful lusts (2 Tim 2:22). Never trust yourself. Never keep yourself in a place or position where you can compromise. No! Run—for the days are evil; Run- even if it is losing your job; Run – for the Lord is coming soon; Run – for you have a great calling : Run – you cannot compromise; Run, Run, Run away from Potiphar’s wife.

Paying the Price

Gene 39:12 - *“He left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.”*

Joseph was willing to risk his master’s wife’s displeasure. He very well knew that not obeying Potiphar’s wife would mean that he would lose his job and the position he enjoyed. **Yes! Joseph stood for God; He stood for his integrity. He stood for faithfulness;** And these are the virtues which are alien to this world. And the world can never accept such steadfast faithfulness. The world accepts people who make compromises. It is full of mediocre Christians. Beloved, be ready to face the heat. A. W. Tozer writes, *“If you are willing to lower the*

temperature of your testimony, the world will turn off the heat it has been applying.”

Joseph was rewarded with prison for his faithfulness. Jesus too was rewarded with the crown of thorns and the cross for fulfilling God’s call. We may or may not be rewarded like Joseph in this adulterous generation, but be assured that your reward is in Heaven.

1 Peter 3:17-*“It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”*

One of the ways the devil works is through deception. The Bible admonishes us to be shrewd as serpents. In our spiritual journey, the devil takes various forms through the people whom we meet in our lives. The first step to escape the snare of the devil is to identify the snare. This is what I have been trying to say. Many a time we fall head-long because of the innocent trust that we have on people. It is one thing to stay positive about everything and everybody, but it is another thing to identify people who cross boundaries, whose intentions are cruel. The Bible calls these people as wicked. And we need to stay away from them. How many precious lives have been wrecked because of bad company! If you are not careful enough, there is the danger of deception.

These are not mere theological presuppositions but are living realities. Not only in history we find people who are deceived and people who deceive others, we can read about them in newspapers, we can find them living near to us and we can see them even among our own relatives. They may be our own relatives or friends or spiritual guides. We shall meditate upon three such persons from the Word of God. Men like Amnon, Shechem and David are the ones we need to be careful. Don't be surprised because of the inclusion of David. Though he was a man after God's own heart, yet that very spirituality can be a trap for someone. The Bible clearly tells us that there will be people'... *who creep into households and capture weak women...*'(2 Tim 3: 6). Don't be that weak woman.

A Lament on Tamar



Oh! Beautiful Tamar! Daughter of David!

You were called to be a Princess;

Why would you trust Amnon?

Is it just because he is your half-brother?

Or because he is sick?

Why even your godly father David failed you?

Where is your strong brother Absalom?

Evil men have schemed against you;

And you were trapped in their nets;

Like a little bird among the death traps;

How come you entered Amnon's personal chambers?

Oh! Beautiful Tamar! Daughter of David!

You lost your position and prestige;

Tears have become your food;

Life crushed and collapsed;

Oh! Desolate woman!

You who sit in ashes and who sit on the floor;

Weeping and wailing;

How has your life taken a sudden turn?

Joy and Happiness is not heard in your tents;

Songs of Gladness are no more heard in your house.

- D.J

Amnon- The Shrewd Schemer

Amnon was King David's son. But he possessed none of David's qualities. He lusted after his own half-sister. He was a schemer and trapped innocent Tamar in his chamber and violated her virginity. And even worse - he hated her after he had relationship with her. Poor Tamar! She became a victim for no fault of hers. She remained a desolate woman for the rest of her life. A study of the circumstances which led to this sad climax will help us to be careful in dealing with men like Amnon in our own lives.

Fleeting Beauty

2 Samuel 13:1- *"Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her."*

Beauty is a gift from God. It should be cherished and guarded by Grace. If Beauty is not guarded carefully, it will be violated, misused and abused by evil men. Tamar was David's daughter. She was a princess. She wore a beautiful robe meant for the virgin daughters of the King (2 Sam 13:18). She was called to be a princess. Her life was meant to be in the palace. But what a pathetic end! Her virginity was violated. She was disgraced. Beloved, your beauty is from God. You may be dark or fair in complexion. Still in God's sight, you are beautiful. It is God who created you. Your hair, your colour, your eyes, your nose, your height and your weight- everything is from God. If you despise any of these things, you are

despising the Creator. Never ever compare your beauty with others. In order that your beauty be guarded and your virginity protected, you need to have the correct perspective of yourselves. Don't try to be somebody else. Be yourself. God has created everyone in a unique fashion. Be thankful for that. Never blame yourself. Be proud of yourself. ***You are the King's daughter. You are called to be a Princess. You are special in His sight.***

Once I was watching a movie being shot in a beautiful hill country. They were shooting a song. Both the hero and heroine were present along with a host of other dancers. As the music was played, they started to dance. Suddenly the Director of the film called for a cut. Then immediately the touch-up crew rushed to the heroine and were giving touch-ups so that not even a drop of sweat was found in the cast. And this was repeated again and again. It reminded me of a Bible verse:

Proverbs 31:30 – *“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”*

Charm is deceitful. Yes beloved, what we see in Movies, Magazines and Televisions are all deceitful. Don't be charmed by such external appearances. It is all a lie. Perfect beauty is not present in this world. The Devil is a liar. And one of his lies is that beauty is everlasting. Don't believe his lie. Be cheerful in your youth. Commit your life in God's hands. Be an instrument in His hands. And also remember that beauty and youthfulness will flee. Your hair will become white and skin will become dull and the knees will bend and the strength will be gone. Never glorify your youth and beauty. Stay in God's mighty hands and He will protect you and guard you.

Unbreakable Boundaries

2 Samuel 13:2 – *“Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.”*

Amnon lusted after the beauty of Tamar. He was obsessed with her. He wanted her badly. But Tamar was out of reach for him. Amnon had no ways and means to reach her. Had she been an ordinary woman, he would have forced her to come. But Tamar was a Princess. She was the daughter of King David. So Amnon was frustrated. God in His gracious providence has kept us safe within unseen spiritual boundaries. We are born to godly parents. Or God has kept us in good spiritual fellowship. Or God has given us parents, good spiritual friends and counsellors. Satan cannot do anything to you when you stay within those spiritual boundaries like parents, home-rules and the Bible. ***The Enticer will entice and lure you away from your spiritual boundary and then he will attack.*** Once you are in his boundary and among his men, it will be literally impossible to escape. Be thankful for your spiritual boundaries. Don't think that those people who sometimes contradict your desires are not your friends. The Bible says that the wounds of a friend can be trusted (Pro 27:6). Never ever cross your spiritual boundaries.

Friendly Enemy

2 Samuel 13:3-5 – *“Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, “O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?” Amnon said to him, “I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.” Jonadab said to him, “Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.’”*

Here we find Jonadab who was vile and crafty. And he was a friend of Amnon. It was an evil combination. Though they were related to Tamar, yet they acted

deceitfully and cunningly. Tamar was ignorant of their vile schemes. ***Having a bad friend is sufficient for the devil to take a foothold in your life.*** There is a saying that goes, 'Tell me who is your friend and I will tell you who you are.' How true! We need to be careful regarding our friends. One of the ways Satan breaks our spiritual boundaries is by making us accept the wrong suggestions of our friends. Have good spiritual friends. If you feel any friend in the recent past has not discouraged you from committing sin, then be careful about him or her. Any good friend will not encourage his or her friend to enter a wrong relationship.

Pray to God to send you good spiritual friends who will be a source of strength to you in times of spiritual conflict and temptations. Break away from all evil influences and friends who always act in a way contrary to the Bible and God. People who lead you astray are not your friends. Make no compromise with them. They are agents of God's enemy. Treat them like your enemies. If not, be assured that they will take your life in a big downward slide. Sometimes even if you repent in later days, it will take years for complete restoration.

Emotional Blackmail

2 Samuel 13:6-8 - *"So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight that I may eat from her hand." Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes."*

Here we see the schemer pretending to be ill. David does not suspect anything in his son. And he

concedes to his request that Tamar should bake cakes in his presence for him to eat from her hand. Tamar too innocently goes to see her sick brother. ***Innocence is not an excuse for putting oneself in danger.*** You need to be shrewd like the serpent, says the Bible. Even in the case of Eve, God just told her not to eat of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. He did not tell her about the presence of the devil. We are just told to obey God and the Bible. It is for our good. One of the lies of Satan is that God forbids enjoyment and good things to his children. God never forbids enjoyment and entertainment. He tells us only to be careful lest we fall into the trap of the schemer and lose our lives. The Holy Bible is the revealed will of God. By reading and meditating on it, you will be able to find the schemes of the devil so that you can stand against him.

Another reason why Tamar trusted Amnon was that he was her half-brother. ***Trusting people just because you are related to him or her is ridiculous.*** At least she should have consulted her brother, Absalom. She went casually. And may be she too was sad because he was sick. Never give in to any kind of emotional blackmail. Some people will make statements like – ‘I cannot live without you. I will die thinking of you. I will kill myself.’ Don’t worry about such statements. Stay away from such a person. He or she is trying to make you feel sorry for that person. Let that person die in his/her sin. Don’t worry. It is not your fault. It was Amnon who lusted after Tamar. And why should Tamar go to Amnon’s house? Tamar is called to be a Princess. Amnon is going to die anyway in his sin. You cannot save Amnon by telling the Gospel. Don’t have a silly burden. There are millions of souls without Christ. Go and tell them about Jesus. Why worry about one person? If you decide to win that soul for Christ, you may have to waste your whole

life, suffer all days and if Grace abounds- you will save one soul in your life time. ***If only you are more careful in your youth, your whole life will be a blessing.***

Last Chance

2 Samuel 13:8-9 - *“So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, “Send out everyone from me.” So everyone went out from him.”*

Amnon now went on to the second stage in his cunning plan. He can do nothing in front of everybody. He needs Tamar to be alone to violate her. And so he refuses to eat. Here we find the last chance given for Tamar. If she was innocent in coming to his brother’s personal chambers, now there is a chance to be aware of something wrong – a kind of a red-signal. This was Tamar’s last chance. She was a grown-up girl. She should have guessed something by now. But sadly she didn’t do anything when Amnon orders everyone out. She should have run outside at this time escaping like a bird from the hunter’s snare. Being alone with a person of the opposite sex is not a sound idea. Never trust anyone, for there is no one who is immune to this temptation. Passions burn suddenly. Never spend time with one person alone, even if that person looked a bit spiritual. Never travel together. Never say excuses. Your last chance is on the way. There is still time left for you to take a stand; to say no; Oh! How Tamar lost her last chance! ***Our God is a God of many chances but He is also the God of the Last Chance.*** There comes in every one of our lives when God gives a last chance. When you play with situations like these, don’t be lethargic when God, in His grace, is patient (doesn’t bring Judgment) immediately. He may

be waiting for your repentance. So don't make light of God's Grace. Repent and return for there is still hope for you.

Utterly Rejected

2 Samuel 13:17 – *“He called the young man who served him and said, “Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her.”*

Once Amnon's lust was fulfilled, he sent her away. When she resisted, he threw her out. This is what lust does. Lust knows no love. ***Lust is full of false promises and false allurements.*** Lust shows its true colour when everything is over. There are lots of men like Amnon in this world. He may hold a powerful position or may be very rich. He may even be your relative. Don't be lured by Amnon's status or power. His heart is evil. May God give you grace to discern Amnons in your life.

If you feel you have been already rejected and cast off, please go through the following passage.

Jesus to the one who is utterly rejected

“My child, I know you have been rejected. Life for you seems to have no meaning. I know your tears and feelings. When you cry my heart cries too. Come to me and I will give you a new hope and a new beginning. The enemy will tell you that there is no hope for you. But there is still hope for you if you commit your life in my hands.

Come to me and I will give you rest and peace. I am longing for you. There is no one who loves you like me. I will heal the deep scars in your heart. Too long you have lived for somebody. Now live for me. Do what I tell you. I will send you to people who have experienced the same heart ache that you had. There are people dying without hope. Come to me and I will make your life a blessing to many. I am waiting for you with open hands.

Come to me...now.”

Rose



*As I walked by the Garden,
I saw a beautiful red rose tossing its head.
So beautiful it was,
cause it blossomed only this morning.
It's petals so tender and soft,
it's colour so bright and lively;
But alas! It grew among the thorns!
A life full of contrast,
Thorns and flowers, Pain and Beauty, Tears and Joy.
What a strange truth to imbibe!
Often times we feel,
A beautiful life blossoming among the thorns,
A sweet life among the sideways,
You may be such one, dear friend.
Is your life full of thorns?
Thorns of rejection; thorns of dejection;
Thorns of hopelessness; thorns of hatred;
Thorns of abuse; thorns of loneliness,
Don't worry. Only Roses are born with thorns.
God has called you to be a Rose.
Rose so sweet; Rose so lovely;
Rose so bright; Rose so pleasant;
You are a Rose.
God loves you and He needs you.*

- D.J

Shechem- The Smooth Tonguer

4b

Gen 34:1- *“Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land.”*

Dinah went for a ride! May be she liked sight-seeing. We all do that, but there are times and places when we should exercise restraint. The land where Jacob stayed was known for its notorious activities. And Dinah should have been cautious or Jacob should have stopped her. But she was on her own. She was like a young bird with new wings ready to fly and explore the world. How many times we fall in the enemy’s trap because of our curiosity! We want to know what’s in it and we defile ourselves. We want to taste the forbidden fruit just for the sake of tasting it. How tragic that we miss God’s Best in order to cater to our curiosity. Here again Dinah’s curiosity lead to one problem after another. There was war. There was bloodshed. The whole household was affected because of one person’s foolish curiosity.

The Wayward Women

Proverbs 7:11- *“She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home.”*

The wayward women’s feet do not stay at home. If you are God’s child, learn to stay at home. I am not saying that you should be devoid of any legitimate

entertainments. But going out without a purpose may cost your very life. "I was just hanging out with my friends," "I was just partying with my friends," "I was just...." – If this is your language, then you need to check your priorities. You might argue with me that all these things can be done only in one particular age. But the Bible tells that what you sow, you will reap. You may occasionally go out with your friends. But that should not become your life.

The Storm Brewing

Gen 34:2-4 – *"When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, 'Get me this girl for my wife.'"*

Shechem saw Dinah and violated her. Dinah did not have a choice. She was alone and vulnerable. Perhaps Shechem did not know the customs of the Hebrews. Perhaps he thought it was ok since he was the prince of the land. He took the upper hand. And he loved her and spoke tenderly to her. He wanted to marry her. We see a similar attitude nowadays. - 'I love her. So what is wrong if I have an intimate relationship with her. Anyway I am going to marry her'. Beloved, remember that in the guise of love you are despising a God-ordained institution called marriage.

Now, up to this point the story seemed to have a happy ending (though the covenant of marriage was absent). Shechem was better than Amnon, but that was not enough. Too many of our young people compare worse with worst. ***Comparing one filth with another filth makes nothing good. Filth is filth.*** We cannot play around and say, He is better than him. We need to

acknowledge the Truth. A person who has no regard for the institution of Marriage can never be a Godly person.

Tender Words

“He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her.”

You can define love as tender. Yes, it is true. I find many young people fall prey to tender words. We fail to see the heart when our ears are deceived with the tender words. ‘There is no one beautiful like you’, ‘You look like an angel’, ‘I cannot live without you’ so on and so forth. We live among people who don’t consider the words that they speak. Don’t be deceived by empty words. Be shrewd like a serpent was the counsel of Jesus.

Social Barriers

Gen 34: 25 – *“ On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males.”*

Maybe no one foresaw such a bloodshed. So many wars have been made in the name of women starting from the mystical Helen of Troy. Even today we read of honour killings in our Country. There are communal clashes between two groups because of a love tangle. So much heartache! So much pain! So much bloodshed! All these things can be avoided.

Let your eyes be opened. May God give you wisdom take wise decisions in your life.

Broken Things



*Five broken loaves beside the sea and thousands fed
As Thy hand, Lord, in breaking, blessed the bread,
Men would the throng in emptiness have sent away
Whose need was met with broken bread that day.*

*A broken vase of priceless worth rich fragrance shed
In ointment poured in worship on Thy head.
A lovely thing all shattered thus,
“What waste,” they thought
But Mary’s deed of love Thy blessing brought.*

*A broken form upon the cross and souls set free.
Thy anguish there has paid the penalty,
Sin’s awful price in riven flesh and pain and blood,
Redemption’s cost, the broken Lamb of God.*

*Oh, break my life if need must be.
No longer mine, I give it Thee.
Oh, break my will; the offering take.
For blessing comes when Thou dost break.*

- Bob Jones, Jr.

Why should you be careful of David- a man after God's own heart? Is he not the most pious king of Israel? Even Jesus was called the, Son of David. Then why should, you, as a woman, be careful of him. Please read on.

Weakness for Women

Though David was anointed by God and was commissioned by God and Samuel to lead Israel in the days to come, he had his own weaknesses (as any man would have). Indeed he had a weakness for women. This was evident in his dealings with the women that he came across in his life. First it was Michal, daughter of Saul. Then it was Abigail. Then it was Bathsheeba.

Though David's heart was faithful to God, he was vulnerable. We can never reach a place in our spiritual life where we cannot sin. Committing sin is always a possibility irrespective of spiritual maturity, theological prowess and a measure of usefulness in God's Kingdom.

God may use a man mightily to build His Kingdom, but that does not insulate him from temptations. He may be fighting with his own weaknesses even when he is used by God. For God always chooses the weak vessels and strengthens them. And so you(as a woman) need to understand that the 'Man after God's own Heart' is nothing but a weak human and is sustained by His grace.

Admiration or Idolization

When God chooses a man, trains him, anoints him and uses him for His Glory, people are blessed and are glad. People may be grateful to a man of God for the contribution that he has made in their spiritual lives. But sometimes it may lead to admiration and slowly to idolization. At this point the believer thinks that his (or her) spiritual guide can never be wrong and can never commit mistakes. This delusion can be fuelled by the 'super-spiritual' mentality of the mentors and spiritual guides. For this reason, we should never attribute to one man all our spiritual growth and blessing.

God will bring in various men and women of God who will be a blessing for us. In my life, I have seen not less than 40 people who have contributed to my personal spiritual growth and maturity till date. And so attributing our every spiritual blessing to one particular individual will rob God of His glory. Beware!

For a woman to idolize a man of God will be a terrible snare. If you idolize a man for his usefulness in God's Kingdom, you are standing on slippery ground. For a man to admire a man would be a different thing but for a woman to admire a man (though with a good intention) does not auger well in such times as these.

Admiration will lead to idolization. And we will be breaking the first commandment of God. ***Anything that replaces God is an idol. Anybody who replaces God is an idol. Beware of spiritual idol worship.*** Stop admiring and start praying for him. Pray that God might keep him safe till the end. Pray for his family and children.

Getting Personal

This is another boundary which we should never cross. (I have dealt in detail in the chapter on relationships). But here I want to add that getting

personal with the 'Spiritual guide' or 'Mentor' is not what the Scriptures teach us. See how Paul admonishes young Titus in dealing with the young women in his congregation- "They (older women) are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children"- (Titus 2:3,4). The older women are to teach the younger women. It is not the business of Titus who is incharge of the ministry. He can guide only the older women. What a timeless counsel! If you, as a woman. feel you need a spiritual counsel, you need to consult a woman counselor or a couple. Never get personal with any man of God. It might become a snare to you and him as well!

Godlessness in the Last Days

2 Tim 3:1-6- "Understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions."

The Word of God clearly states that in the last days there will be people who will have the appearance of godliness.

- » If anybody tells frequently about his spiritual experiences, beware of him!
- » If anybody visits you frequently when you are alone, beware of him!
- » If anybody shows strange interest in you, beware of him!

And the list goes on. If you are not strong in the Word of God, there is a high probability that you will be deceived by someone. Any person or any ministry can be easily discerned by the fruit, says the Word. The fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control should be evident in any man of God or ministry.

If you sense that there is a different kind of spirit in operation like the ones mentioned above – love of self, money, pride, arrogance, abuse...etc., stay away from such men. We are in the last days.

One day I received a phone call from a young boy, 'Brother, I am a good Christian and I am leading a prayer cell in my college. But now and then when I surf the Internet, I watch filthy things. I ask forgiveness from the Lord and run for few more days, but before long I fall back in this sin again. Is there any hope for me? I have tried and tried and have failed? Can you help me?'

I believe this is the cry of not only youngsters but also of many good Christian leaders and ministers today. This sin has been creeping into everyone's life. Ever since high speed Internet was introduced and the smart phone culture is on, people who are being exposed to this sin are increasing day by day. A Christian faces a strong temptation in this area. It is high time that everyone acknowledges that it is not only the problem of young people but of everyone as well.

Let us see how the problem of Pornography can be dealt with.

A War

The very first thing we need to acknowledge is that we are involved in a warfare against the forces of darkness. The Devil tries to attack the mind of believers.

Note what the Bible says, "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be*

full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!(Matt 6:22-23).

As we are approaching the Last Days, the enemy has multiplied his attacks on the believers, young and old alike. And he works through our eyes to get inside our minds. Once he gets the control of the mind and darkens our understanding, then we are deceived. We are not able to hear God's voice. Even ministers at this stage can be deceived. A deceived person will say that, ' I cannot come out of this sin', ' I have to learn to live with that', 'Of course, everybody does it', ' What I am doing is not hurting any one?', ' So God doesn't care', ' This is the thorn in my flesh', 'This is my weakness.' These are the world-views of a person who is under deception. So the first thing that we need to understand is that it is warfare and it wages against our mind and body.

The Effects of Pornography

1) Pornography is devilish and demonic. Every other sin, such as lying and gluttony, is also from the devil. But when we view filthy things through the Internet, we are inviting countless evil spirits right into our homes and families.

2) The more exposure to such things will bring in an unrealistic expectations in family life. The husband/wife may not find satisfaction in marriage. Marriage will not be healthy with pornography. Many marriages are collapsing because of this very reason but sadly the husband or wife may not even be aware of this fact.

3) Viewing is believing. Once the brain starts to view various filthy things on the screen, it will slowly try to enact everything in practical life. Moral sensibilities may be broken leading to severe heartaches.

4) The children in the families may be exposed to such

filthy things at a very tender age leading to psychological imbalances. The child may not grow as a mentally healthy child.

5) Pornography also reduces the functional fruitfulness of brain. The brain refuses to enjoy the normal aspects of life such as nature and beauty.

6) It affects our health and will totally ruin us in the long run.

Why is it so difficult to break?

Viewing porn leads to an addiction similar to drug-addiction like heroine and the like. When we have decided to fight this evil, we need to understand that we are not dealing with an ordinary evil.

Also, our dependence on the Internet is ever increasing and so a total abstinence is becoming increasingly impractical. But it is God who delivers and strengthens us. Sometimes the deliverance can be phenomenal (like instant or miraculous) and at other times, it is gradual. I strongly believe that it is both phenomenal and gradual. We need both the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and also the strengthening work of the Holy Spirit.

Falling or Addiction

I want to make a difference between falling and addiction. I believe both are different but one can lead to the other.

There are three phases from which it can move from 'falling' to 'addiction.'

a) Exposure Phase: It is something like, one day we accidentally stumble upon a filthy site and out of curiosity we did watch that. This exposure cannot amount to addiction. In this stage, we watch out of curiosity.

b) Habitual Phase: But when we start to view a second time, and a third time, we are slowly entering into the habitual phase. In this stage, we watch because we think that we can derive some sort of satisfaction or happiness by watching.

c) Addictive Phase: The habitual phase will lead to a more intensive addictive phase. In this phase we watch because we have to watch. We do not even know why. One easy way to find whether we are addicted or not is that we start to watch it without any interest. It is like, we watch in spite of that fact that we don't like watching it. We go deliberately and watch it though we hate it. This was what Apostle Paul tells in Romans 7:15- *"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."* And again in Romans 7:17-18 *"So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me."* Paul here talks about the stage before the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. The main problem is the sin that resides in us. The sin which we committed out of curiosity has now become the master and we are now its slaves. This is what I call as the addictive stage.

The Way Out

Whether we are in the exposure phase, or habitual phase, or addictive phase, it doesn't matter to God. But our cooperation is needed for God the Holy Spirit so that He can have His way in our life. More cooperation from our part might be needed if we are deep in this sin.

But here is good news, we may have been addicted for so many years, but in the name of Jesus Christ every bondage will be broken.

Even if we have tried and have failed, it does not matter. We can still master it. All things are possible with God. "I can do all things through him who strengthens

me” (Phi 4:13). Many have given up hope that it is not possible. But Jesus Christ has won the Victory in the Cross. He has died for us. He has taken the penalty of our sins. He has broken the power of sin in our lives. So complete victory is possible through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is Sufficient

The first step towards victory is the fact that Jesus Christ is sufficient for us. In Bible, we read about a woman from a place called Samaria. Jesus had a talk with this woman. The woman had five husbands in the past and she was living with a man who was not her husband. Her life was on a roller coaster ride. She was not satisfied with six relationships. And exactly at this point of time, Jesus comes into her life. Look to the statements of Jesus in John 4:13-14: *“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

Beloved, this is the one thing that we need to understand.

The world cannot satisfy us. Watching filthy movies will not satisfy us. Only Jesus can satisfy us. We need to go to Jesus. We need to look to Jesus. We need to walk with Him and talk with Him. Listen to Him and learn from Him. Only a close walk with Jesus can guarantee complete victory. Many a time, young people who have experienced deliverance ask me, “Is it possible that I can be addicted once again?” I tell them that Jesus is our source. If we fail to drink from the waters that He provides, then we will definitely find some other source of waters which does not satisfy.

Standing Together

Ecc 4:9-10 - *“Two are better than one ... For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”*

In order to fight this sin, it is always good to have a spiritual mentor alongside. Do not fight this battle alone. You need to share with some trusted friend of yours. Or you can contact us for counselling and guidance. At any cost, you need to start sharing the struggles that you have. Never be a loner. As you start fighting this battle, you may have initial failures. But you need to go on. Share openly with your trusted friend. That will expose the sin. Pray together and fight together.

Initial Purging

Matt 18:9 - *“If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”*

When you have decided to come out of this sin, you need to take the first steps. The things that cause your eyes to wander should be purged from your life. It may be TV, or magazines, or a cell phone or Internet connection. It can be anything. You need to find your, ‘Triggers’ and eliminate them from your life. Jesus was very particular that we need to treat sin very harshly. Note, I told you ‘anything’. Jesus was very particular that we need to treat Sin very harshly. Note the point Jesus makes. It is possible to live without eyes, but it would be extremely difficult. Jesus here, does not teach us to remove our eyes, but remove anything that causes us to stumble.

There are three levels of abstinence

1) Entirely shutting yourself off from exposure - Not using TV, Internet or smart-phone. This is applicable in case of serious addiction.

2) Using Internet filters and parental-control softwares like k9 Web Protection, qustodio and kaspersky which might block the filth to a large extent.

3) Using Accountability Softwares like - X3watch, Covenant Eyes which will send a report to your trusted friend regarding your browsing habits.

You need to decide what kind of abstinence steps that you need to take. The steps you take will be a measure of how serious you are to come out of this problem. But you have to remember that abstinence is not deliverance from sin. But as the first step, it reduces the chances of occurrences.

Walking in the Light

As you have taken the first step of purging this habit, God the Holy Spirit will start to deal with you in a new and fresh way. This I call as the strengthening work of the Spirit. He will transform your inner being into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. For God the Holy Spirit to have His way in you requires your full hearted cooperation. This is what I mentioned earlier in this chapter that you need both the quickening work of the Spirit and also the strengthening work. Quickening is done instantly but strengthening is done gradually. So it requires the right choices and decisions on your part and rest will be taken care by Him. In order that you be strengthened in your spiritual life, my personal advice would be that,

1) You need to start studying the Word of God and spend time in prayer. Ask God to speak to you and note it down. Start a life of loving fellowship with the Creator God who loves you more than your father or mother or anybody else in this world.

2) You have to enrol in a small group or prayer cell for your spiritual growth. It is in small groups you will find

support and strength. If you don't have one, initiate a small group. We can help you get a group started, if you want.

3) You need to be actively involved in some kind of ministry in your Church or with your small group. It may be becoming a member in the choir, or cleaning the Chairs, or taking class for Children or participating in an Outreach programme. Do something for God.

4) You need to find out your hidden talents and start to nurture them. God has given each and every one talents and gifts. It is our duty to find out and nurture them.

5) Exercise regularly. Try something new. Have a brisk day. This will help you to divert your energies towards more constructive things.

As you take these counsel, and move ahead, I pray that God will strengthen you with all His might and bring the devil under your feet.

Relapse and Recovery

Even after you have been delivered from this sin, there is a chance to fall back into the temptation once again. At this stage, you might feel that you are sinking very deep again. This might be worse than the previous stage. But, you must not forget about the fact that God still loves you and you need to get back. Keep coming back and start over again. Confess your sins and get back to the recovery stage. God will strengthen you.

"I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"

(Phil 1:6).

Basically I am not a youth worker. I am a missionary at heart. I want to see souls won for Christ. But as I travelled across Bharat (India) and witnessed tremendous needs and challenges, I came to a conclusion that we need more committed people to meet all those challenges. Hence God led me to young people. And as we met lot of young people, we tried to encourage them to be soulwinners and challenged them to get involved in Missions. In the process of doing this, we came across questions of various kinds from them. And I believe these are the things which are hindering the present generation to be actively involved in Kingdom business. I am giving those questions and what I have answered them in this chapter. These are to be taken as counsel and can be applied based on individual situations.



GAME OVER

**Is Marriage ritual a necessity?
Is it not just a custom and a formality?**

In the postmodern world that we live in, we are sometimes forced to think that marriage is outdated. But far be it. Because I sometimes wonder what will we replace marriage with. Some have introduced live-in relationships and others same-gender relationships. The Bible calls these things as perverse. Being modern doesn't mean abandoning of our meaningful traditions. Being fashionable doesn't mean everything our forefathers did was foolish.

Sometimes the other way might be true. So, I think a clear understanding of the concept called **Marriage** is necessary for this generation.

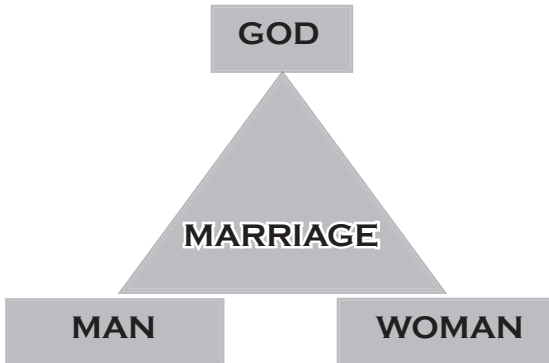
A Tripartite Agreement

We mostly think of marriage as an agreement between man and a woman. But the Bible teaches us that it was God who initiated Marriage.

Genesis 2:18 – *“I will make him a helper fit for him.”*

Genesis 2: 22- *“.. he made into a woman and brought her to the man.”*

The first thing that we need to understand is that the Marriage is not an agreement between two individuals but of three. We should also not forget the fact that it was God who initiated Marriage. If ever our marriage needs to be successful, God should be in the centre of it. Many young people go on in their own way and finally they just need a sanction from God. Some do not even consider it necessary to involve God in this important decision.



A Covenant God Honours

In marriage we make a covenant (or agreement) with our spouse in the Presence of God. It is not just a formality. So when we enter the marriage covenant, it is binding for life. For this reason we use rings, chains in

marriage as a covenant-sign. The covenant should not be broken. When we think of breaking a marriage, we should first of all think that we are breaking what God had initiated. So it involves risk. Today people speak so lightly of breaking a marriage. But think twice before you act. Marriage bed is honourable says the Bible. And Sexual relation between a husband and wife is Holy. So don't take Marriage too lightly.

How to choose my life-partner?



If your life is rooted and anchored in God, you need not worry much about your future life partner. God has already planned it. Only you need to pray that God should lead you to her/him. This doesn't mean that you go out looking for some committed person in every Christian convention. But, it definitely means praying about it; sharing your likes and dislikes to your parents or elders and making sure of what kind of work God has called you to do. Do not be too anxious nor be too lethargic. Do not lean on your own understanding. I recently heard of a good Christian boy who interviewed a girl regarding Bible to make sure that she is a believer. By going to such extremes you might scare away even whom God has planned for you.

Practical Suggestions on Choosing Your Life Partner

1)Pray for your future spouse. Though you may not know them, you can still pray that God should prepare them for you.

2)Never think of marriage until your life is on a sustainable course. (You should have at least decided what is your passion in life and what God wants you to

do. You should also have the financial stability before thinking of marriage.) Once your career line has been chosen and you started to proceed in your life, I think it is the best time for your marriage.

3)It is at this time when you come across this question-Should I choose someone as my life partner or should I accept whom my parents/elders choose for me?

4)You have to personally pray and decide as to which option you need to choose. In some family settings, the parents have a good relationship with the children and so the children are comfortable with the parents' choice. In such cases, children can choose in consultation with the parents.

5)But in homes where parents are emotionally disconnected with the children and when the children are more matured than the parents, it becomes a necessity on the part of children to take the initial steps. You can take the counsel of trusted friends, spiritual leaders and counsellors in this regard. The services of Christian Matrimonial Websites and Marriage bureaus can also be availed. (But get background information from personal acquaintances).

6)Family background, Educational qualifications, Stature and all your likes are valid, but at the same time don't try to expect everything from one person. You have to make compromises in some areas and should not compromise in the basic call and commitment (to Jesus Christ) of the person.

7)If you are new to Christian faith, I pray that God will guide you in each step that you take. My friend introduced me to a Matrimonial Website which is exclusively dedicated for the young people coming to Christ. (www.firstfruitsmatrimony.com)

I am in love with this boy who is a non-believer. I know he is a good boy. I believe that he will one day know the Lord. Is it wrong to marry that person?

The Bible clearly commands us not to be yoked with non-believers (2Cor 6:14). Some have come up with a radical thinking that by marrying a person from other beliefs, we can lead them to eternal life. I have a personal word for them – “All through your life, you may be able to lead that one person to Christ.” Better obey the Bible. So it is better for you to break that relationship and seek God’s will.



Is falling in love Sin?

There has been seldom a youth gathering without this question being asked. I have already written about this in the first chapter, “Love or Infatuation”. ***But here, I want to give my personal opinion and suggestion.***

‘Falling in Love’ – just think of this phrase. It is falling. Can anyone ask whether falling is right or wrong? It is not the matter of right or wrong. It is just a matter of getting hurt. Do you not know that the worldly symbol of romantic love is a “*Bleeding heart pierced by a sharp Arrow?*” What in the world are we going to do after marriage? You are going to spend a whole life with your spouse. Spending precious times of your teenage years in parks, ice-cream parlours and restaurants amounts to wastage of your talents and energies. ***You should be doing something for God.*** Do not idolize romantic love. The movie-world idolizes it. So give your young youthful energies to God. Run for Him!

But if you feel that God is specifically leading you to a person, pray about it, consult with parents and your spiritual counsellors and God will make it to pass. But until marriage it is safe not to be emotionally involved.

Getting Engaged

In Indian context, the time between the Engagement and the Marriage is vital for both the boy and girl. It is in this period, that they can know about each other and prepare themselves for marriage. These are precious moments when both can spend quality time together without any physical involvement. It is also advised for the engaged couple to attend a pre-marital counselling session. It will help them to avoid unreasonable expectation in marriage and prepare themselves for a more realistic married life.

**You seem to talk against love-marriages.
Are not marriages arranged by parents and
elders fail?**

Any marriage can fail because it is made of two imperfect human beings. It takes hard work and God's grace to stay together in relationship until death as God has ordained. The reason I sound so pessimistic is that in today's post-modern society, the word 'love' has many meanings. Many a times, lust is defined as love. I once met a boy in Gujarat who told me that he has loved 18 girls. How is that possible? In a society which does not differentiate between love and lust, we need to be extra-careful. Definitely I am against lust-marriages. By lust-marriages, I mean marriages which are solely built on external beauty and lust.



What about Facebook and whatsapp?

Facebook and whatsapp are nice tools to communicate between our friends and relatives. It may become harmful when we are too much occupied with it. We should know to draw the line. Here are some practical tips to use such tools in the Internet.

- 1) Use for a stipulated time, say 5 -10 Minutes a day.
- 2) Don't try to update your status frequently.
- 3) Your acceptance among your friends should not be based on the number of friends you have.
- 4) Your friends list should be only known personalities – Friends and Relatives – strictly no strangers.
- 5) Don't upload your personal photos. It can be misused.
- 6) Don't share your personal thoughts. Facebook is not your personal diary.
- 7) In Chat rooms, don't spend too much time with one person. Don't get intimate.
- 8) Avoid Video chat except with your immediate family.

My marriage was arranged by my parents. They told that he was a good Christian. But the trouble started immediately once we got married. He never liked me. He did not want any kind of physical relationship with me. Later I found that he was having an affair(homo) with a man. Sometimes he does not come home for days altogether. And I found a lot of sexually-explicit videos relating to torture in his laptop. What shall I do now?

First of all you need to know that your husband is not a believer. Secondly since he is into Internet pornography for a very long time, he might have lost the natural male-female attraction. I want you to go to your home immediately. Tell your parents about the situation. Your husband is in a perverted state and it would need a lot of effort on his part if at all he can come out of this mess. We need to tell him about his sinful habits and lead him to deliverance and only then you can think of a life with him. We need to pray for him. But I strongly recommend you to leave the home for now for your safety.

A word of Caution: Same- Sex Marriages

Same sex marriages are against the Bible and God overthrew the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for this very sin of Sodomy. But there is a lot confusion about the transgender communities and the perverted sexual desires.

I want to share about the LGBT communities. – Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender.

To consider Transgender people along with the other three groups is a devil's tactic to deceive. Transgenders are born with imbalanced sexual orientation. Some are born male but have secretion of more of female sex hormones in them and others are born female but have secretion of more male sex hormones in their bodies which lead to this imbalance. They should be respected and reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand people considering themselves to be attracted towards each other – a woman towards a woman and a man towards a man, is nothing but a perverted sexual pattern introduced by the forces of darkness to destroy the institution of marriage. In the past decades films showing such kind of relationships is on the rise. So be aware. As Christians we need to take a stand in this regard.

I loved a girl and she too responded in a positive way. But suddenly she told that she is going to marry another person. I feel betrayed. Guide me.

I can very well empathize with your feelings of betrayal and hurt. But you need to remember certain things in this context.

1. You may not know the exact situation the girl was in when she took the decision that this relationship(with you) may not work.

2. You may not be so sure that the girl loved you as you have loved her.
3. Further, in the Biblical point of view, she may not be the girl God has for you. It is better that she broke off now.
4. If you still feel that she has betrayed you, then try to forgive her. Don't have feelings of vengeance and jealousy which can lead you astray. Don't go after her and ask for explanations and do not spy on her. This will make the situation more complex.
5. Share your feelings with your close friends and consult a spiritual counsellor.
6. Try something new like learning music, dance or anything quiet different from your routine. Don't lock yourself up or be always lonely.
7. Take off all the memories of the past relationship. Still, you will find the old memories knocking at your door again and again. Don't go for sleeping pills, drugs or alcohol. But be active.
8. Commit your lives in God's hand whose love never fails.
9. Start over again. Breakups can become a positive force if you allow God to work in you. Don't think that it is not possible to start again. With God's strength you can do it. Keep going. Time heals the wounds.

His Banner over Me



*Surrounded by unnumbered Foes,
Against my soul the battle goes!
Though I be weary, sore distressed,
I know that I shall reach my Rest:
I lift my tearful eyes above,
His Banner over me is Love.*

*Its Sword my spirit will not yield,
Though flesh may faint upon the field;
He waves before my fading sight
The branch of palm-the crown of light:
I lift my brightening eyes above,
His Banner over me is Love.*

*My Cloud of battle-dust may dim;
His veil of splendour curtain Him!
And in the midnight of my fear
I may not feel Him standing near:
But, as I lift my eyes above,
His Banner over me is Love.*

-Gerald Massey

Maintaining Victory

When I was in college, I was very much worried about my spiritual life. My desire to lead a holy life seemed impossible. Every time I took a resolution, I found that I could not keep that even for a month. There were endless resolution days – Communion Sundays, Christmas, New Year, Easter and my Birthday. On all these special occasions, I made several commitments to the Lord but failed miserably. I found my spiritual life to be like a roller coaster ride. Some days I was elated and was on the peak and on other days I was dejected and depressed, cursing myself. The joy of victorious living became a distant reality. Will I ever be able to lead a victorious life? What use in praying again and again and asking forgiveness from the Lord? What a wretched man I am? Who shall deliver me? – These were the questions that were constantly ringing in my mind.

Is Victorious Living Possible?

One Sunday, I heard a preacher from abroad preach about Holiness. I was not convinced in my heart because I knew that it was impossible. After the sermon, I went and had a chat with him. I asked him bluntly, '**Is victorious Christian living possible?**' He turned towards me and put his hand on my shoulders and said, 'Young man, if you are aiming for a sinless Christian living, you are going to get terribly disappointed. **Victorious Christian living is not sinless living.**' Those words struck me very hard. Indeed I was aiming for sinless living. I was saved. I was anointed by the Spirit. I was considered a good

person by my Church and friends; yet deep inside me, I was struggling in certain areas. And I didn't know the answers.

Even after that incident, there were some more doubts- Will I continue to live in sin? Wouldn't that make me a hypocrite? Can I say that falling is normal and ask forgiveness from the Lord and continue my ministry and life? Though I was getting some light on this subject, I could grasp the truths only several years later. I want to give all those lessons learnt, in this chapter.

Falling and Continuing in Sin

1 John 1:8- *'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'*

1 John 3:8, 9 – *'Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil...No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.'*

Plain reading of the above texts will render contradictory conclusions. But on careful reading, you will be able to understand the two facets of the same truth.

We are all born in sin. We cannot say that we have no sin. But at the same time, we should not have a **habit** of committing any particular sin. That is the difference that we need to understand. Sometimes in our spiritual life, we may fail and fall. On all those occasions, we need to confess our sins and get back to God. On the other hand, we need to be very careful that we should not get into the **habit** of committing any particular sin. If you have a **habit** of committing a sin, you need deliverance from that sin. You need the power of the Holy Spirit to break into your life and deliver you from the power of sin.

We are His Children

John 1: 12 – *‘To all who did receive Him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.’*

Romans 8: 15- *‘You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’*

When you fail and sin, the devil will tell you that you are not God’s child. He will bring in guilt and condemnation. He will tell you that you cannot pray, you cannot lead a victorious life, you cannot preach and you are not worthy. But remember that we are His children. He is our Father. No sin can break that relationship.

I have a son. I love him and cherish him. Sometimes he commits mistakes and irritates me. But all that doesn’t change his relationship with me. Indeed, even if he goes all against me, the Father-Son relationship cannot be broken. In the same way, we may slip into dirty mire; we may commit the most grievous sin; we may be even rebellious at times but all that and even more can never break the relationship with our Heavenly Father. When we sin against God, we may lose the communion with the Father but the relationship is intact. Our sin hurts Him and pains Him but He lovingly longs for us to come back to Him again. He is patiently waiting for you.

I Shall Rise Again

Micah 7:8 – *‘Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.’*

When the devil tempts you and you fall into grievous sin, confess it and get back to God. The more you delay, the more you will be falling away from the Lord. ***You have no option but to go back to Him. You cannot live without Him.*** And so you need to rise again. The devil who enticed you to commit sin will change His

colour and tell you now that you cannot rise again. But tell him to his face, 'Don't rejoice over me, my enemy. I will rise again. God will strengthen me. He will be my light.' Such faith will make Satan tremble. So, dear child of God, take heart! Rise Again! There is still hope!

How we are defiled?

I want to share with you about the ways in which we are defiled and the means through which we can overcome it.

a) We are defiled by what we hear

Genesis 3:1- *' Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ' Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'*

The devil has no Bible. But he communicates his lies very effectively. Neither Eve had the Bible, but God has given us the written Word. Many times we don't believe the written Word. The devil very effectively communicates his lies through His agents. He also has his false world patterns.

False World Patterns

Romans 12: 2- *' Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.'*

One of the ways the devil communicates his lies is through the false world system. He has set patterns in this world through which he entices God's children to conform to them. Once you conform to that set pattern, it will be difficult to lead a life pleasing to God. In order to fulfil God's will in our life and to lead a holy life, we need to recognize the false world pattern in order to resist it.

Here are some of the examples of the lies of the devil which he communicates through his agents:

- 1) Success is measured by money.
- 2) Being attractive is necessary for success.
- 3) You can do anything as long as it doesn't hurt others.
- 4) Freedom is success.
- 5) Life is only for enjoyment.
- 6) Happiness is the supreme goal in life.

He also has a set of evangelists (world icons and film stars) who proclaim and propagate this false world pattern. It may come through our friends, or films, or as the latest fashion, or through a famous icon whom we admire. We need to be careful about our friends. Are they encouraging you to lead a holy life? Or are they enticing you to conform to the world?

In order to lead a holy life, godly friends are indispensable. Two are better than one says the Bible. Thank God if you have one. Pray for one if you don't have such a friend.



Weapon No:1
The Anti-virus : Word of God

Psalm 119:9 – ‘*How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.*’

The best way to detect the devil's false world patterns and lies is through the indwelling Word of God. The Word of God is like good anti-virus software. When there is an attack of virus in our computer systems, a good anti-virus detects it and neutralizes it. If there is no anti-virus, the system can be easily affected and it slows down. If the problem is not attended to, finally it may crash. A soul without the nourishment from the Word of God also goes through the same process. So be loaded with the Eternal Anti-Virus. Update yourself everyday;

then you will not be corrupted by the latest Trojans and Viruses.

Give sufficient time to meditate upon the Word. Have a diary. Ask God to speak to you. Write down all the impressions of the soul. Let your life be soaked with the Scriptures. ***Leading a victorious life without the Bible is a daydream.*** The devil too knows the Scriptures. Note how he tempts Jesus Christ with Bible verses. He knows to twist the Word of God in order to make it more appealing to our flesh. Remember he twisted God's Word to Eve as well. If you need to take a strong stand against the devil, you should have a deep knowledge of the Word of God. We also read that the Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. In the armour enlisted in Ephesians chapter six, the Word of God is the only offensive weapon. So never underestimate the power of the Scripture.

b) We are defiled by what we say

Genesis 3:2,3 – ‘ **The woman said to the serpent, ‘ we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’**

When the devil enticed Eve by casting a shadow of doubt regarding God's goodness, she willingly responded. An imaginary paraphrase will go like this:

Devil: Eve! Did God ever forbid all the fruits of this beautiful garden?

Eve : Yea! You know! We can eat all the fruits except those from the tree which is in the centre of the garden! He even warned us not to touch that! He warned us of dire consequences if we eat that fruit. He told us that we will die!

Devil: Aha! What a pity that He forbade that fruit! That fruit is more attractive and tasty, you know. It is worthwhile to sacrifice all other thousand types of fruits

in order to eat that one. I don't understand why God is denying you this enjoyment. Life is meant for enjoyment. That is a clear violation of your personal freedom and rights. Indeed, you are not going to die. You will be like the gods. Come on! Don't be naive! Just taste and see.

Though it is an imaginary conversation, there are some valuable truths in it. The enticer, the devil will try to win you over by careful arguments and tempting promises. This will come in our lives through our friends or the false world systems. If you start responding to his enticements, you will start to doubt God's goodness. The devil gives a picture of God who denies us our enjoyment and curtails our freedom. He gives the impression that he is good and God is bad. He makes us believe that God is a tough old man who has a lot of 'Do not's.'

When the devil fires the fiery darts of doubts, fear and wrong suggestions, we should speak in the Bible language. Tell what God's Word says. When we begin to listen to the devil's suggestions and lies, we will become defiled in our spirit and that will result in the sin of the body. Look how the devil enticed David in sinning against God:

1 Chronicles 21:1-2- *'Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.'*

We should be having a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. We need to memorize and let the Word of truth dwell in us. We need to recognize every evil thought and every wrong suggestion by the devil. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:5 - *'We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.'* We need to take every thought captive. We need to measure it in the scale of the Biblical standard and see whether it is from the evil one. We need to make it obey Christ.

Some examples of the devil's suggestions:

- » God cannot forgive your sins – but the TRUTH is 1 John 1:9.
- » You cannot overcome that sin – but the TRUTH is Romans 8:37.
- » Sin is enjoyable – but the TRUTH is Romans 6:23.
- » You have no future – but the TRUTH is Jeremiah 29:11.
- » You don't look nice – but the TRUTH is Genesis 1:27.
- » Nobody loves you – but the TRUTH is Isaiah 54:8.
- » You cannot win again – but the TRUTH is Proverbs 24:16.
- » You are all alone – but the TRUTH is Deuteronomy 31:8.
- » You are a mistake – but the TRUTH is Jeremiah 1:5.

There are no depths that God's love cannot reach. There is no place that God's grace cannot go. If God gave His one and only Son for you, will He not give us all? God's love is immeasurable. God will not and cannot tolerate sin, but mercy triumphs over judgment. So my friend, take heart! Cheer up! God will strengthen you and will bless you! Victory is all yours!



Weapon No:2

The Power : God's Spirit

Romans 8:26- ' *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.*'

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of God will raise a banner against the enemy. The indwelling Holy Spirit will help us in our weakness. He is a helper and he will help us. Be filled with the Holy Spirit and be endowed with the heavenly language. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit should be our everyday goal

and desire. Depend on His leadings and promptings. When you do not know which way you need to go, you will hear a voice guiding you. ***Be a listener of the still small voice.*** He is a counsellor. He will counsel you regarding your relationships, habits and even people. He will also warn you when you are trying to cross the limit. He will convict you of any unconfessed sin. And He will lead you into all Truth. He will expose the lies of the devil so that you experience continuous deliverance.

c) We are defiled by what we see

Genesis 3:6 – **‘When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes...’**

When Eve heard the devil speak and utter words unworthy of God’s love, she entered the final stage before the fall. She saw! When the devil finished his work in Eve’s mind, it was easy for Eve’s eye to lust for the forbidden fruit. Note that the serpent never plucked the fruit and gave it to Eve. When the devil is successful in making us believe in a lie, then it will be second nature for us to sin.

But even at this stage, if Eve would not have looked at the fruit, she would not have plucked it. We need to be careful about what we see. Also we need to be careful about what the devil shows!

See what Jesus says about our eyes,

Matthew 6:22-23 – *‘The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!’*

Again in 1 John 2:16 we read about the desires of the eyes.

The wise king Solomon says that eyes will never be satisfied (Ecc 4:8).

The devil showed Eve the forbidden fruit. He showed Lot's wife the pleasures of Sodom. He showed David a bathing woman. He showed Samson a beautiful Delilah. He showed Judas 30 pieces of silver. He showed Jesus the kingdoms of the earth. What is he showing you?

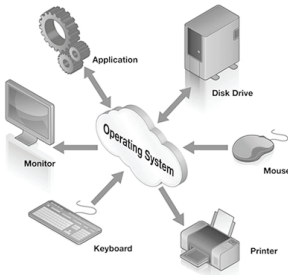
A beautiful man or woman? Riches and glory? Money and power? Gadgets and furniture? Houses and cars? Popularity and influence? Magazines and films? Beware of the enticer! He has centuries of experience with human beings! He knows all our weak areas! Resist him and he will flee. Never let your eyes deceive you. Never be led by your eyes. Resist the devil. He cannot stand against God's Word. He cannot stand against the mountain moving Faith. He cannot stand against the Lord's anointed.

Weapon No:3

***The Operating System
God's Grace***

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

'Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'



What an audacity to be proud of one's weaknesses! Yet that was the case with Apostle Paul. He knew the secrets of victorious living. He depended everyday on God's grace and strength. So be strengthened in His Grace. Never trust your self-will. Depend on God's Grace. It is by His grace we can lead a Holy life. Any number of resolutions will not help. The more you realize your weaknesses, the more will God shower His Grace upon you. God's power is made perfect in our weaknesses. HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT.

d) We are defiled by what we do

Genesis 3:6 – *'She took of its fruit and ate.'*

And the final moment came when Eve plucked the fruit and ate it. We can well infer from the passage that Eve's action was the result of systematic enticement of the devil. Many a time, we recognize the hand of the devil after we commit a sin. But on careful observation, you will find that he has been active from the beginning. The earlier you detect the presence of evil, the easier it will be for you to lead a victorious life.

The Word of God says that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit(1 Cor 6:19). We need to give careful attention to our body. If God should be glorified through our life, our body needs to be maintained in proper balance.

Romans 12:1- *'I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.'*

Paul here urges the Roman believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. We need to present our bodies in the altar so that it can be used for Kingdom purposes. Our legs need to run for God. Our hands need to show the way to wayward sinners. Our mouth needs to speak God's truth. Use your body for the Glory of God. Do Something for God. Be actively involved in any kind of ministry. Let not your legs stay in your house or room. Let not idleness be your brother.



Weapon No:4

The Back-up : God's People

You need to associate yourself with a small group of believers and need to grow in

the Lord. Gather weekly for a time of prayer, fellowship and Bible Study. Have evangelistic outreaches! Plan an outreach program for your school, college, town or company. Pray for God's will in your life. Be focussed. Go forward to demolish the devil's strongholds. When you feel that your spiritual battery is discharging very fast, plan a recharge programme. Plan personal fasting prayer. Spend time alone with the Lord! Read good spiritual books! When you feel you are on a downward slide, share boldly with your group members and raise prayer support for you. This is Victorious Life. It is a continuous battle. It is a fiery war. All hell is against us. We as soldiers need to fight a good fight of faith. We need to go forward. We have God's Word and God's Spirit. What more do we need? Hell trembles at the march of such people. They are God's Elijah's. They go from strength to strength.

And so be of good cheer, my friend! Jesus said that there would be struggles. But the Victor is marching ahead of us. He will shield us against all the schemes of the enemy. He has sufficiently armed us. No need to fear or fall back. We shall go forth in victory. We are called to be overcomers. Yes surely, victory will be yours!

Epilogue

VICTORY VERSES

John 1:12

To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:31

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:33-34

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?

John 8:11

Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Lamentations 3:31-32

The Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love

Hebrews 4:15-16

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Micah 7:8

*Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall,
I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be a light to me .*

Zechariah 4:6-7

*Not by might, nor by power,
but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.
Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel
you shall become a plain*

Mark 10:27

All things are possible with God.

Matthew 11:28-29

*Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.*

Jeremiah 29:11-12

*I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans
for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a
hope.*

For Further Counsel

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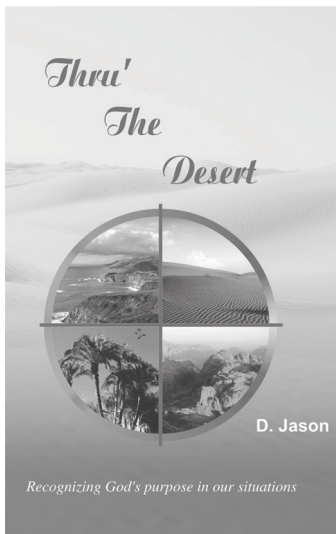
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