

MANAGING YOUR MIND
Pure Sex, Pt. 3
January 20-21, 2006

There is a story in your Bible that has a Jerry Springer feel to it. Amnon, the son of King David, is the chief character. According to 2 Samuel 13, Amnon has fallen in lust with his half sister Tamar. He could no more resist her than a deer can refuse corn. His testosterone-driven desire began to dominate his life; Amnon became so obsessed with Tamar that he became ill (2 Sam. 13:2 NLT).

Jonadab didn't help matters. Jonadab was Amnon's friend and ...a very crafty man (2 Sam. 13:3 NKJV). He asked for an explanation of Amnon's sadness. Amnon disclosed his nepotistic desires for Tamar. And Jonadab concocted a plan: *Pretend you are sick. Lie on your bed until your father, King David, comes to check on you and, when he does, make this request. "Have my sister Tamar come and prepare some supper for me here where I can watch her and she can feed me" (2 Sam. 13:5 MSG).*

Amnon likes the plan and executes it. David, never smelling the skunk, sends the half-sister to the scheming brother. Tamar obliges and brings food. Amnon has dismissed his servants, leaving the two alone. He, feigning weakness, asks her to feed him with her own hands. And as she feeds him, he grabs and propositions her:

"Come to bed with me, my darling sister." "No, my brother!" she cried. "Don't be foolish! Don't do this to me! You know what a serious crime it is to do such a thing in Israel.

Where could I go in my shame? And you would be called one of the greatest fools in Israel. Please, just speak to the king about it, and he will let you marry me." But Amnon wouldn't listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her. Then suddenly Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. "Get out of here!" he snarled at her (2 Sam. 13:11-15 NLT).

She begs for mercy; explaining that her dismissal would be worse than the rape. But he is cold-hearted. He calls for a servant to walk her out. Tamar is devastated. She tears her garments, declaring both remorse and impurity. When David learns of the atrocity he does nothing. Absalom, Tamar's full brother, makes up for David's passivity and has Amnon murdered.

What do we do with such a story? One mistake is to regard it as irrelevant. *I would never do such a thing*, a person might scoff. Yet, don't be too sure. Amnon's sin emerged from a common soil: the soil of a mismanaged mind. Whereas Amnon's sin was extreme, his struggle was quite common. He had exchanged truths for lies. Part of my preparation for this message was a great¹ sermon by Kyle Idleman called "What Playboy Wants You to Think." Kyle diagnosis Amnon's mistake correctly. Amnon simply listened to the wrong voice, trusted the wrong authority and paid the ultimate price. Look at the lies Amnon believed and see if they sound familiar.

¹ "What Playboy Wants You to Think. Kyle Idleman The Living Word 920 Blankenbaker Pkwy Louisville, Ky. Tape no. 2756 58- Kyle's outline used with permission.

Lie #1: Sexual Thoughts are Harmless

Where did Amnon's problems begin? In his thoughts. He did not check his imagination or curb his fantasies. He might have justified his imaginings with: *As long as I don't touch her, what harm? As long as it's in my mind, what's the problem?*

Or, in today's world, I can look at the pictures, watch the movies, flirt in the chat rooms, but as long as it's just a magazine, steamy romance novel or television soap opera, no harm is done, right? Wrong.

Today's thoughts are tomorrow's actions. Be careful what you think because your thoughts run your life (Pr. 4:23 NCV).

Today's grudge is tomorrow's outburst.

Today's greed is tomorrow's debt

Today's compromise is tomorrow's embezzlement and, in the case of Amnon:

Today's lust can become tomorrow's rape.

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he (Pr. 23:7 NKJV).

You are what you think. Students of human behavior call this truth: Cognitive Psychology. Archibald Hart, respected psychologist writes: “Research has shown that ones thought life influences every aspect of one’s being. Psychologists understand that if you want to change someone’s behavior, start in their mind.”

When one of our daughters was small, she battled thoughts of fear and dread, leaving her far too anxious for a child. Denalyn and I were convinced that Satan had targeted our daughter so we set out to pray for her, several times a day. I felt led to equip my child with a tool. I urged her to see her thoughts as disposable objects. “When one comes to your mind, grab it, wad it up and throw it away.”

We can do the same. Just because she dresses to lure, you don’t have to look. Just because he flirts, you don’t have to listen. You can’t keep birds from flying over your roof, but you can screen them out of your chimney. Put the two-second rule into effect. I learned this strategy from a Robert Emmitt message. The next time you see more than you should in a picture, on a screen, or in a Victoria’s Secret store window display, give yourself two seconds to re-engage. You have two ticks of the clock to come to your senses and shift your gaze. Guard your thoughts! God has not called us to be dirty minded and full of lust, but to be holy and clean (1 Thess. 4:7 LB).

You will live tomorrow the thoughts you tolerate today.

Use this to your advantage! Want a stronger marriage tomorrow? Ponder the strengths of your mate today. Want to enjoy more faith tomorrow? Meditate on God's word today. Desire a guilt-free future? Then saturate the present in grace. You are what you think. People harvest only what they plant (Gal. 6:7NCV). So select your seeds carefully.

Amnon didn't and paid the price. He believed a second lie:

Lie #2: We can stop when we want to.

Amnon reached the point where the visual had to become physical. He was out of control. He did what he never imagined. Perhaps you've seen the Dateline specials entitled: "To Catch a Predator." A decoy chat room participant lures men to--what they think--will be a sexual encounter with a young girl. In reality, cameramen hide behind walls and police are concealed by the bushes. One man after another walks into this baited trap. And, almost to a man, they shake their heads in self-disgust and say: "I don't know what got into me."

We know what got into them, don't we? Unchecked fantasies. Unbridled imaginations. Their minds went first and feet, second, and they couldn't stop themselves. One man who struggled with pornography described the gravitational pull the store had on him. Once he

got within a certain distance, he was a napkin against a vacuum cleaner. He couldn't get out.

Amnon crossed this line. Once he felt Tamar's touch, smelled her femininity, integrity lost all hold on him.

Don't think it won't lose its hold on you. Don't be fooled! You are not an exception. You are not as strong as you think. You can't stop where you want to stop. You can't play with fire and not get burned. So don't light the match. For lust is a shameful sin, a crime that should be punished. It is a devastating fire that destroys to hell (Job 31:11-12 NLT).

Job accompanies his warning with an example: I made a solemn pact with myself never to undress a girl with my eyes (Job 31:1 MSG).

Steve Cervantes offers practical counsel on this issue. He directs an Oak Hills support group on this topic and urges us to view our thought lives as spiritual offerings. Pledge to give God seven days of pure thoughts. Give up any questionable television or publication. Don't even get near the edge for a week. Give God seven days of purity as an offering to Him. Too much? Then three days, one day, even one hour!

The Bible never tells you to battle sexual sin, struggle against sexual sin...no, our call is to "Run away from sexual sin" (1 Cor. 6:18 NCV).

Here is a helpful hint: running toward God is the easiest way to run from sin. Focus less on, “I won’t think about immorality” and more on “I will think about God.” Meditate on Him. Ponder heaven. Memorize verses. Write Psalms. Listen to Christian music. In running toward God you are running from sin...and the run is much more enjoyable.

Another practical point. Parents, we must help our children in this area. Sexual sin is not a grownup condition. Kids as young as twelve, thirteen years old, feel their self control evaporating. Moms and Dads, we must help our kids. David didn’t. He was naïve, totally oblivious to the struggle of his son and vulnerability of his daughter. Then, once it happened, he did absolutely nothing. David wasn’t thinking.

Sometimes I wonder the same. What are parents thinking when they let their son post naked pictures on his wall? What are parents thinking when they let their daughter go to school dressed like a walking invitation? What are parents thinking when they place no controls on your internet? When they never meet her date or his girlfriend? When they let boyfriend and girlfriend spend the evening home alone? When they import HBO and Showtime into your living room? When they think: “Let them experiment a little- it won’t hurt”?

Parents, you are the only defense between your kid and a hell-funded media campaign. You must do your job. If David had reacted, Amnon's story might have been different. But he didn't, so it wasn't. Amnon believed one other lie.

Lie #3: My friends are always right.

Why in the world did Amnon listen to Jonadab? Who is this guy to have authority over Amnon's life? Imagine the difference if Amnon had pushed the remote on this spam-brain. "I'm not listening to you. Find another sucker homeboy." But Amnon fell for one of Satan's oldest tricks: he trusted a stupid friend.

I brought two apples here today. One is fresh and pure, the other old and rotten. What do you suppose would happen were I to leave these two apples, side by side in a sack? How many of you think the good apple will restore the goodness of the rotten one? If you do, you don't know apples.

Are you rubbing up against a rotten apple? If so, change friends. Don't return e-mails. Spend absolutely no time with this man or woman in public or private. Don't smile back. Don't tease in return. Choose to be boring. Better to be perceived as a dweeb than seduced and forgotten. Get out of the relationship. Find a new job. Joseph did. When Potiphar's wife put the move on him, he turned and ran. Sometimes the only treatment for temptation is a good pair of running shoes.

I don't know how to say this tactfully, so I won't try: Don't listen to stupid friends. When it comes to sexuality, everyone is stupid but God.

Lie # 4: What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas

I'm sure Amnon thought he could contain this act of perversion. He assumed he could keep it a secret and no one would feel the impact or know the difference. Boy, did he learn otherwise. He created a chain-reaction of disgust that ended with his death and ruined his reputation forever.

Did he really think Tamar would be quiet? That Absalom would do nothing? Even Amnon himself reacted with disgust! Did you notice? His deed disgusted him.

...Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her... (2 Sam. 13:15 NLT). His deed turned his love to hate and his stomach to nausea.

Disgust. Humiliation. Death.

Certain sexual sins will never be outlived. Amnon's dad, David, is walking evidence. Though the writer of Psalms, builder of cities and a slayer of Goliath, his is remembered as the seducer of Bathsheba. God forgave his sin, but his sin stained his reputation and contaminated his kids.

He models the story of the Native American who carried the snake up the mountain. The serpent asked if he could ride on the back of the man up the steep incline. The man refused. "You'll bite me." The snake promised otherwise. When they reached the crest he

sank his fangs in the man's skin, saying, "You knew what I was when you picked me up."

We do, too. We know the tricks of Satan. Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death (James 1:14-15 NLT).

Fishermen fish with a tackle box of lures. They go to the water equipped with all types of pseudo-treats. One wiggles like a worm, the other shimmers like a minnow, one dances like a fly on the water. Different appearances, but they have one common feature: each has a hook.

Satan, at this moment, is searching his tackle box for the hook that snags you. Porn didn't work, how about a restless marriage. Didn't work? Ahh, here's one – an overseas business trip... He has more lures than Bass Pro Shop.

But God is on your side. He will help you manage your mind. Just remember:

Sexual Thoughts Can Hurt

Today's curiosity is tomorrow's perversion and humiliation.

You can't stop when you want to.

There is a line of no return. Stay away from it.

Don't listen to stupid friends.

What do they know that God doesn't?

What happens in Vegas follows you the rest of your life.

God is quick to forgive, but slow to remove consequences. A night of folly is a high price for a lifelong consequence.

Manage your mind with care. It's the only one you have.