

Chapter 4 Keep Your Eyes on the Fire

When you hear the names King David, King Solomon, and Samson, what comes to mind? Mighty men of God, famous men of God, good-looking men of God? All of that is true. But they share one more thing in common: they all fell to the lust of the eyes.

King David was known as a shepherd, an armor-bearer, a poet, a prophet, the ultimate king, a warrior, and a man after God's own heart. King Solomon was known as the wisest, richest, most famous king; he built the temple of the Lord and saw fire come down from heaven. He saw God twice in visions and was so loved by the Lord that God gave him another name—Jedidiah—which means “beloved of Jehovah.” Then there was Samson, one of Israel's most famous judges, the strongest man who ever lived. What happened to these mighty men beloved by God?

King David fell for Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3). King Solomon fell for hundreds of pagan women whom God strictly forbade—he had 1,000 women altogether, including wives and concubines—and he even burned incense to his wives' false gods (1 Kings 11:7–9). Samson fell for Delilah and other pagan women (Judges 16:6).

The quickest way the fire is extinguished in believers' lives is falling to the lust of the eyes.

Remember from the previous chapter that the fuel for the fire is the Word. Every one of these men heard the voice of God and knew the Word of God. King David said, “I have hidden thy Word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119). The point is, they stopped looking to the Word for help; they didn't look to the Word for strength; they stopped obeying the Word of the Lord. And they all paid the consequences for their sin.

David's consequences included the death of three of his children and the rape of his daughter by her half-brother; his own son also lay with his concubines in broad daylight (2 Samuel 12:1–23). For Solomon, one consequence was the division of the kingdom into a northern and a southern kingdom (1 Kings 11:11–13). Samson's consequence was being beaten, mocked by the enemy, and having his eyes gouged out (Judges 16:21).

Even when we repent and receive God's mercy and grace, sometimes our sins still have a negative impact on our lives (2 Samuel 12:12–13). God forgives and forgets the sin, but some consequences do not go away. I want to show you why they all fell into the lust of the eyes by looking at a story Nathan the prophet told King David to illustrate his sin. It is found in 2 Samuel 12:1–10:

"The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan went to him and said, 'There were two men who lived in the same town; one was rich and the other poor. The rich man had many cattle and sheep, while the poor man had only one lamb, which he had bought. He took care of it, and it grew up in his home with his children. He would feed it some of his own food, let it drink from his cup, and hold it in his lap. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

"'One day a visitor arrived at the rich man's home. The rich man didn't want to kill one of his own animals to fix a meal for him; instead, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared a meal for his guest.'

"David became very angry at the rich man and said, 'I swear by the living Lord that the man who did this ought to die! For having done such a cruel thing, he must pay back four times as much as he took.' "'You are that man,' Nathan said to David. 'And this is what the Lord God of Israel says: I made you king of Israel and rescued you from Saul. I gave you his kingdom and his wives; I made you king over Israel and Judah. If this had not been enough, I would have given you twice as much. Why, then, have you disobeyed my commands? Why did you do this evil thing? You had Uriah killed in battle; you let the Ammonites kill him, and then you took his wife! Now, in every generation some of your descendants will die a violent death because you have disobeyed me and have taken Uriah's wife.'"

The "visitor" in the story is the devil. He wants to come to your house to destroy you by making you lazy and leading you to lust. When David fell into the lust of the eyes, he was supposed to be on the battlefield fighting with his soldiers, but he stayed home and saw Bathsheba taking a bath (2 Samuel 11). That sin gave birth to more sin. He had Bathsheba's husband Uriah killed to cover up his sin of a love child and to take Bathsheba as his wife.

When you fall into the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, you "kill Uriah" in your life. What do I mean? Uriah, in Hebrew, means "the fire of Jehovah." When you take your eyes off God's fire and put them where they shouldn't be, you end up killing the fire of God in your life.

Look at the first sin in the garden in Genesis 3:

"The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate it." (Genesis 3:6)

Satan came as a snake and deceived Eve by first getting her to lust with her eyes for the fruit. Then, after she lusted with her eyes, she lusted in the flesh, saying it

would be good to eat. Third, she wanted to be wise like God—the pride of life. Every sin in the world falls into one of these three categories: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. It always starts with the lust of the eyes.

"I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:14–17)

The Word is the key—not only reading it or saying amen to it, but actually holding onto it. Don't let it go; if you do, you'll extinguish the fire in your life. If you hold on, you will overcome the evil one. Let's learn from these mighty men. They fell; let's learn from their mistakes so we won't repeat them. The only way we can overcome where they failed is by listening to the Word of God and to the convicting and leading power of the Holy Spirit.

Here are some verses to meditate on as we seek to remain free from the corrupting power of lustful thoughts:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27–28) "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." (James 4:4)

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." (James 1:13)

"Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes." (Proverbs 6:25)

"My child, pay attention and listen to my wisdom and insight. Then you will know how to behave properly, and your words will show that you have knowledge. The lips of another man's wife may be as sweet as honey and her kisses as smooth as olive oil, but when it is all over, she leaves you nothing but bitterness and pain. She will take you down to the world of the dead; the road she walks is the road to death. She does not stay on the road to life; but wanders off, and does not realize what is happening. Now listen to me, sons, and never forget what I am saying. Keep away from such a woman! Don't even go near her door! If you do, others will gain the respect that you once had, and you will die young at the hands of merciless people. Yes, strangers will take all your wealth, and what you have worked for will belong to someone else. You will lie groaning on your deathbed,

your flesh and muscles being eaten away, and you will say, 'Why would I never learn? Why would I never let anyone correct me? I wouldn't listen to my teachers. I paid no attention to them. And suddenly I found myself publicly disgraced.' Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone. Children that you have by other women will do you no good." (Proverbs 5:1–16)

Satan wants not only to kill the fire in your life by the lust of the eyes but also to have you spend eternity in the fires of hell. What do I mean? "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness ... they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19, 21). The Greek word for "fornication" here is *porneia*—the root of our English word "pornography."

According to a CBS special, at several major hotel chains—Hilton, Marriott, Hyatt, Sheraton, and Holiday Inn—50 percent of guests view adult films on in-room pay-per-view television systems. Fifty percent. Another report notes that hotel adult rentals increase during ministry conventions. That means some pastors are viewing hotel adult movies at a higher rate than the general public. This is one reason fire has been missing in some churches: leaders have fallen to the lust of the eyes. You might say you don't watch dirty movies...

Jesus said:

"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! You would be better off to go into life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the fire that never goes out. If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out and get rid of it. You would be better off to go into life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell." (Matthew 18:8–9)

Even if the movie isn't an adult film—say it's rated R with a racy scene—it can still cause you to lust. Do what Jesus said: cut it out. He didn't mean literally cut off your hand or foot or pluck out your eye. He means if anything is causing you to sin, remove it from your life. Don't set yourself up to fail. If cable is a problem, cut it off. If the Internet is a problem, cut it off or put blocks on it.

I personally don't watch anything over PG-13; sometimes I can't even watch those. You might say that's overdoing it. Ask yourself: How badly do you want the fire of God in your life? I love what Job said:

"I have made a solemn promise never to look with lust at a woman." (Job 31:1 I've made that same covenant with God. I will not lust after a woman because I want the fire of God more than the fire of passion and lust.

You can fight it off by the power of Christ Jesus. In Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus with the same categories as Adam and Eve: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Where the first man, Adam, failed, the second

Adam, Jesus, succeeded (1 Corinthians 15:47). Jesus overcame by quoting Scripture from Deuteronomy 6 and 8. Deuteronomy means “repeat the word.” That’s exactly what Jesus did in every temptation. He openly quoted the Word of God and defeated the enemy—to show us how to overcome temptation.

When I’m tempted, I ask God to help me, and He does. I also quote Scriptures like Romans 6: “I am not a slave to sin anymore,” or Isaiah 54:17: “No weapon formed against you will prosper.” Jesus didn’t “think” Satan away; He openly rebuked him by verbally quoting Scripture. If you do this and ask for His help, He will help you. “God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out” (1 Corinthians 10:13). That way out is Jesus. Also, don’t set yourself up to fail. If you’re tempted by someone or something, don’t put yourself around them and don’t give in or watch it.

Jesus said something that woke me up to keeping my eyes on the fire of God. This Scripture shows that if we set our eyes on the darkness of the world, we will kill the light—the fire—of God in our lives:

“No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.

“Your eye is a lamp that provides light [FIRE] for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light [FIRE]. But when it is bad, your body is filled with darkness. Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.” (Luke 11:33–36, NLT)

Here’s the takeaway: when your eyes are on God—God is good (Mark 10), and Jesus is the Light (John 8:12)—your whole life will be consumed with God’s presence, and the fire of God will be evident in your life for all to see, like a floodlight. Floodlights come on during storms and blackouts—during darkness. You will be used to help people come out of the darkness of the world and to encourage those going through trials when you keep your eyes on the fire and don’t hide anything from God—no dark corners—and allow Him to move in every area of your life.

Just make sure the light (fire) you think you have is not actually darkness. What do light and darkness have in common? Nothing.
If you keep your eyes on the fire, you’ll be something special for God.