

Samson: How to Bring a Strong Man Down

Judges 13 - 16

Introduction:

Last week I told you the tragic story of a friend who accidentally sexted his 12-year-old daughter instead of the woman with whom he was beginning to have a flirtatious fling. I remember sitting in the cab of his truck in my driveway as my friend wondered how it ever got to this point. He never intended for this to happen. This isn't the kind of husband and father he was. Over and over again he kept asking questions that began with two words: why and how.

A husband and father of two, as well as the Sunday School Superintendent of his Virginia church breaks into his sister's house in the middle of the night and sneaks into his young niece's bedroom. Fortunately, he is caught before anything happens.

A Christian lady had taught children's Sunday School and ran her own daycare for years is suddenly forced to shut down her business. Meanwhile, her husband, an elder in his Illinois church quietly steps down. Even though his name is nominated every year, he is never again put before the congregation for confirmation.

There is no real mystery to what lies behind each of these incidents. They all have something in common. I knew each of them personally and ministered to them. I could tell you a dozen more stories just like them. They each kept something hidden behind their Sunday morning smiles. Each one of them had a porn habit that spilled over from fantasy to real world consequences. They had an addiction they could not control.

We need to talk about something that's extremely uncomfortable. It's something that never used to be talked about in the church, but now, I'm afraid, we have to talk about it. I want to talk about the dangers of sexual addiction and the crack cocaine of sexual addiction— the pervasiveness and accessibility of porn.

I'm talking to the men this morning. Statistics show that 50 to 57 percent of us guys, of Christian guys have indulged in porn this last month. So, yes, I'm talking to the men in this room.

I'm talking to the women this morning. While porn is consumed by men in much greater amounts, the women are starting to catch up. The younger you go the more equally males and females consume porn. However, even if you never look at porn it can affect you. It is devastating to the wives who are married to porn addicts. They can't compete with the unrealistic expectations. They feel degraded when their husband want them to act out what they see on

screen. They feel unlovable when their husband cannot perform with them because his brain has been rewired to respond only to masturbation and visual images.

I'm talking to you teen guys this morning because you are growing up in a world where anything and everything is available at the touch of a finger. I remember when I was about in the 6th grade, I was playing in the woods out behind my house. I found a toolbox stashed in a hollow tree. It was someone's stash of Hustler magazines. I wish I'd never found that toolbox. I wish I'd never opened those pages. Those images have forever been seared into my brain. I remember years later when the church I preached at got our first computer with a modem and AOL access. I remember the first unsolicited image that arrived in my inbox. It too is burned in my brain. It gives a whole new meaning to "You Got Mail." I knew at that moment that everything had changed.

Those Hustlers are like Readers Digest compared to what any 14 year old can pull up on their phone in the privacy of their bedroom. The average age of first exposure is dropping so fast, that sociologists are having a hard time getting a reading. A few years ago, it was 12, then 11. Now, according to the Novus Project, it's as young as 8. I can't imagine growing up with that kind of pressure being thrown at you. How do you find purity in that kind of minefield? How do you have a healthy view of sexuality, and how do you keep your sexual drive within the guardrails God has provided. Some of you are already hooked. Some of you already have a view of girls and sexuality that is so unrealistic and unhealthy. Some of you will irreparably damage your sexual psyche and identity before you are even fully developed. It breaks my heart because I know sex can be so much better than anything this trash will lead you to.

I'm talking to the teen girls. You are growing up in the era of the hypersexualized female. Our culture is leading girls in two different directions on this. On the one hand this is the metoo age and you are told you are to be treated with equality, dignity, and respect. You are told this, but then expected to dress and behave in ways that are anything but respectable. You are expected to be an object of pleasure and an object of sexual enjoyment. You are being forced to compete with an impossible standard and a sexual image that is not real. And growing numbers of you are happily going along for the ride. You are putting your bodies on display and behaving ways that you don't even know contributes to your own misery and destruction. So many of you are destroying your marriages before you even start. Others are creating issues and baggage that will take you years, decades to sort through and get over, and even then intimacy will never be what

it could have been.

Why are we talking about this now? Sexual addiction is nothing new. Long before the internet with its anonymous and free access to the depths of hell, there were those caught in sexual sin. King Solomon, likely a sex addict himself, wrote in Ecclesiastes, “*there is nothing new under the sun.*” This is certainly true, and in Judges 13-16 we get an excellent look at the dangers of sexual addiction.

It is there we read of the last judge of Israel, Samson. Though the book of Judges devotes more space to his career than any other judge, Samson was the least successful of them all. He never delivered Israel from the Philistines. Other Judges gave Israel 40 years or 80 years of peace, but Samson, despite the number of blows he lands against the Philistines, he never drives them out of Israel’s territory.

Samson was a man chosen by God before he was ever conceived. He was set apart from birth for a special purpose.”

2 A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. 3 The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. 4 Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. 5 You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

The end of chapter 13 tells us that as Samson grew the LORD blessed him and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir in him. The Lord blessed him with supernatural strength. Samson is as close to a real life superhero as there ever has been. He rips apart a lion with his bare hands. He takes on 30 Philistines and defeats them. Another time he killed 1,000 Philistines with only the jawbone of a donkey.

How could a man with such a high calling and powerful endowment from God, do so little with it? How could a man with such physical strength, be made so powerless? It is because Samson could never learned to deal with sexual temptation. Samson was likely a sexual addict. One writer says, “Samson... strangled a lion, but he could not strangle his own desires. He burst the fetters of his foes; but not the cords of his own lusts.” Mighty Samson had a weakness, an Achilles heel. He lusted after nearly every attractive woman he saw. First he took for himself a Philistine woman from Timnah, then a prostitute from Gaza, and finally the woman who would prove to be his ultimate downfall, Delilah. His story illustrates the typical cycle of addiction that

ensnares many today, even some of us here this morning.

As we look at Samson's downward slide into the pit of sexual sin, we should look for the warning signs of sexual sin in our own lives. Each one of these steps is a red flag. If one of these red flag applies to your own life, you must move quickly to stop this cycle before it develops into full-fledged addiction. If two or three of these flags go up in your life, immediate and drastic action is needed before you are consumed in sexual sin. If four or more of these are true of you, not only is immediate and drastic action called for, but you almost certainly need to pull in some outside help. Please listen closely as we go through these, to see if God's Spirit is speaking to you this morning.

I. Fantasy

The first step in the cycle is Fantasy. Sexual addiction almost always begins with fantasizing. Sexual fantasy provides a temporary, but pleasurable escape from reality and a narcotic like release from stress. It is highly visual in nature. That is why pornography is such big business. It feeds the fantasy.

Samson was a man whose heart was ruled by what his eyes saw. In chapter 14 of Judges Samson goes down to the town of Timnah and a Philistine woman catches his eye.

Judg 14:1-2

14:1 Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. 2 When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife,"

Notice that he never met her. He never talked to her. He knew absolutely nothing about her. He only saw her. This was a bad case of "Hello, I love you won't you tell me your name." He just liked what he saw. He was so consumed by his sensual desire for her that he demanded his parents get her for him as a wife. He made this request in spite of the fact that God had forbidden intermarriage between Israel and her neighbors. His parents objected, but he insisted. His rationale? The end of vs. 3 literally translated says, "*Get her for me. She looks right in my eyes.*" It was lust at first sight. She looked good to him. He saw her...and he kept seeing her in his mind, replaying her image over and over again, and wanting her more with each "rerun."

Sexual fantasy is an escape. We fantasize to alleviate stress or as a substitute for meeting legitimate needs in legitimate ways. Fantasy promises everything and asks nothing of him. "There's nothing wrong with imagining," some might argue, but fantasizing on the object of our lust only leads further and further downward into the spiral of addiction. It begins with the

occasional daydream, but soon becomes a preoccupation. A person at this stage will rearrange schedules, back out on commitments, make excuses, and engage in all sorts of deception just to find opportunities to fantasize. They will go to great lengths to feed their fantasy. Soon their fantasies become an obsession. Fantasizing is the gateway drug that leads to a deep and dark abyss.

This was a problem for Samson. It is even more of a problem for us. You see the drug of illicit fantasy has been mixed with the poison of pornography. Samson didn't have the temptation or the ease and anonymity of the Internet. He never received junk email from www.philistinehoneys.com to entice him. David didn't have digital cable in the palace where he could wake up late at night and be tempted by something on HBO or Skinamax. Solomon wasn't constantly bombarded by nearly every commercial using sex to sell. As pastor Bill Perkins says, "If you think you can't fall into sexual sin, then you're godlier than David, stronger than Samson, and wiser than Solomon." These guys weren't facing what you face.

30% of all data transferred across the internet is porn. Porn sites get more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined. Just one of the larger porn sites generates 6 times the traffic as does Hulu.

The porn industry's net worth is about \$97 billion. That's enough to feed 4.8 billion people every day for a year. Every year Hollywood releases about 600 movies and makes \$10 billion in profits. The porn industry makes 13,000 films and a \$15 billion profit, more than Major League baseball the NFL, and NBA combined. A new porn movie is produced every 39 minutes. All this to support "harmless," "innocent" fantasy.

Let me address this myth of porn is just harmless fantasy. First of all. Porn affects your brain. It is as addictive as crack cocaine, and your brain responds the same way. It takes ever increasing amounts of stronger stuff to achieve the same results. Porn use literally rewires the brain. Marriage counselors are speaking of the increasing amounts of couples seeking help because the husband can no longer function with his wife. The only way he can work is if he is actively viewing porn at that moment.

Do you know who's helping to lead the charge on this? It's a growing number of young men, thousands of them, who have grown up on internet porn who are experiencing erectile dysfunction and other sexual and intimacy issues in their mid 20s. They discovered that they had no desire to be with their wives or girlfriends, that they preferred the fantasy to real thing. Even

the world is waking up to the problem, but here's the thing, they don't really have the answer. They don't know the key to good sex. You will never find the answer to good sex on the pages of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* or *Cosmopolitan*. We have the answer.

Secondly, porn affects relationships. It doesn't stop when you exit from the browser. You will look at your spouse differently. You will look at your girlfriend or boyfriend differently. Porn makes men less satisfied with their partner's physical appearance, sexual performance, and level of affection. It disconnects you emotionally. It kills intimacy. It changes your tastes, your preferences, and your desires. I remember the first time a girl told me that her partner couldn't have sex with her unless her boyfriend had a magazine opened next to her. He even kept a stack of porn next to their bed. Did you know that 56% of all divorce cases involve "one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites." The damage is real.

Thirdly, porn affects the world. It drives the demand for sex trafficking. Porn is to trafficking as cigarettes are to cancer. It contributes toward negative attitudes and abusive behavior toward women. Often the lines between trafficking and porn are blurry if non-existent. Women are pressured into the industry. Once in, these girls are often at the mercy of their producers and agents. They are forced to do degrading things, often against their will. They turn to drugs and alcohol just to cope. Listen to this headline from earlier this year. "Fifth young porn star dies: Drugs, despair, suicide factors in death." People will say these actresses can make hundreds of dollars for shooting a video. What they don't tell you is if they refuse a particular scene, are late, or miss a scene for any reason, they aren't paid, or are forced to pay their agents. Sometimes these girls actually lose money shooting porn.

It turns out the fantasy is really a nightmare.

II. Ritualization

The second red flag in the downward spiral is ritualization. Most addicts develop certain rituals that accompany their particular addiction. With Samson we see such a repeated pattern of behavior. Samson apparently "cruised" strange places looking for foreign or forbidden women. In chapter 14, Samson went to Philistine territory and happens to see a woman. All he does is see her, but he is so consumed with desire that he demands she becomes his wife. As it turns out, though, this is not an isolated incident in Samson's life. In 16:1 We see Samson again trolling for women in a Philistine city.

Judg 16:1

One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her.

This is repeated again in just a few verses when Samson falls in love with Delilah, another Philistine.

All three of the women he got involved with were forbidden to him in one way or another. Not only were they pagan women, forbidden by the Law of Moses, but his relations with two of them were outside of marriage. Samson went looking for such forbidden fruit. It enticed and excited him. He showed no interest toward any women that would have been appropriate prospects. Although he was just looking, this was his first step in a ritual whose eventual goal was sexual gratification.

Do you have any immoral sexual habits you can't stop? Do you have patterns of sexual behavior you must repeat? Are you obsessed with certain activities? Do they seem to control you? If the answer to these questions is yes, then don't wait any longer. Get help now. It will not get better by itself. You cannot defeat it on your own. It will only get worse.

We will conclude our study of Samson next week. There was simply no way to pack all of this into one sermon. But as we hit the pause button this morning, I want you to know there is hope, there is help and there is healing. God can forgive this like he can anything else. He can cleanse you. He can cleanse your heart and mind. He can restore you. He can restore your relationship.

I know this isn't the kind of sermon where you want to come forward in front of everyone and say, "This is me." "This is my struggle." But I also understand that many times, if not most, you can't overcome this on your own. There are some resources listed in your bulletin. I urge you to get help, talk to someone open up about this before this problem blows up into something more serious. It brought down a man like Samson. It can bring you down.

If you have a godly friend in the church you can talk to. Do so. You can come talk to me. If you want to call me, text me, or email me this week, and just say, "Dan, we need to talk." Let me promise you. You will find grace, encouragement and compassion. I know the struggle is real. I understand it. I've dealt with it. Don't do it alone. We'll get you the help you need.