

Bad Girls of the Bible

Potiphar's Wife: Desire Running Wild

(Part 1)

Intro: Bad girls of cinema: We're going to take a quick quiz to see if you can identify some of the bad girls from movies? (Show slides) Cruella de Vil / Ursula / Wicked witch of the West / White Witch from Chronicles of Narnia / Hollywood has created many bad girl characters over the years. But Hollywood isn't the only place they're found. Bad girls are found in the pages of Scripture. God didn't just record the victorious examples of people who overcame and triumphed. He also recorded the behavior of those who resisted God, rejected God, and failed miserably. Some of the most notorious characters are women.

Why would God record the good and the bad behavior of people?

I Cor. 10:10-12 "And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed... These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall." (NLT)

The answer is that we learn from both. Sometimes we need to see the negative examples in Scripture to realize that doing the wrong thing really isn't worth it. There are consequences for rejecting God...consequences for disobedience. Obedience brings blessing, but disobedience hinders blessing.

- Today we begin a new series about the "Bad Girls of the Bible". Over the next few weeks you are going to get to know 6 Bad Girls from Scripture and the lessons we can learn from their less than perfect examples.

Summarize Story: Gen 39 (Joseph being sold as a slave at 17)

- Most people focus on Joseph in this story. Today, we're going to learn 3 life lessons by looking at Potiphar's wife. One of the earliest bad girls of the bible.

I. Wrong Desires Can Result From A Lack Of Fulfillment

Gen. 39:6-7 So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat! Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

A. Prosperity doesn't lead to internal fulfillment

1. Here Potiphar's wife had her every need provided for. She and her husband were wealthy and her husband had a prominent position in Egypt as captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard. With Joseph in charge, there was literally nothing to do or worry about! The only stress for Potiphar was deciding what to eat!
2. Pretty soon this lack of fulfillment and purpose began to erode their marriage. I'm sure Potiphar was gone for long periods of time. Now you have a bored, lonely, unfulfilled wife at home with nothing to do.

3. There have been many studies done that prove the fact that prosperity does not automatically bring a greater life satisfaction level. Internal fulfillment can never come from external pleasures (money / possessions / status / prosperity)
4. If Potiphar's wife was a fulfilled woman, she would have never propositioned her Hebrew slave. There was serious lack of fulfillment going on in her life that took her down the road of temptation.
5. Her behavior was not normal in this culture. It was dangerous and risky behavior for a wife to commit adultery, even in Egyptian culture. Some women were executed for adultery. Lack of fulfillment can be dangerous. WHY?

B. Lack of fulfillment can make us vulnerable to temptation.

1. When we are not happy, (feeling unfulfilled) we gravitate towards things we believe will. Often, we are tempted by these wrong desires with their promise of fulfillment.
2. How often do we fall into the same mindset thinking that if we had more of something or a different something we would be happier? This thinking opens up the door to temptation. It's the lack of fulfillment not the lack of money or prosperity that takes us down the road of being tempted by wrong desires.
 - (Tiger Woods is an extreme yet classic example of this – He had everything!)
3. Even with Tiger Woods, a lack of fulfillment makes you vulnerable to temptation.

The Bible warns us about believing external things bring fulfillment.

1 Tim. 6:9-10 "But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." (NLT) These verses warn people about the temptation that comes from the "love of money". (The belief that more money will fulfill me.)

4. When we feel unfulfilled, we want to gravitate towards something that will fill the void. There is a vacuum internally that desperately wants to be filled and we often start pursuing wrong desires.

- This is why marital fulfillment is so important. Keeping your marriage healthy.

1 Cor. 7:5 "Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (NLT)

- We can make our marriages vulnerable by a lack of fulfillment sexually / emotionally / relationally / If there is a void...it's vulnerable.
 5. When we are unfulfilled in areas of our lives we expose ourselves to our fleshly desires and Satan's temptations. We make ourselves more vulnerable and exposed than we need to be.
 6. Everyone has wrong desires from time to time. It's just part of our fallen humanity. But is your continual lack of fulfillment setting you up for failure in the future?

These feelings of being unfulfilled are warning to us from God that something needs to change. If we don't listen to these feelings, we risk the wrong desires getting worse.

II. Wrong Desires Left Unchecked Are Progressive

Gen. 39:10 "She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her..." (NLT)

A. Entertaining our wrong desires makes them more intense

1. Just look at what Potiphar's wife did. She looked at Joseph with desire / propositioned Joseph / tempted him every day / and then orchestrated a detailed plan to have her wrong desires fulfilled. See the progression? See the growing intensity?
2. Her progression follows the pattern that Scripture warns us about in James *James 1:14-15 "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is **allowed to grow**, it gives birth to death."* (NLT) See the progression of our desires if they are left unchecked?
3. If we do not check our wrong desires, we will manufacture a way to have them fulfilled. There is a progressive pattern to wrong desires / wrong thinking. As the desires become more intense, we begin to intentionally make plans to have them fulfilled.
4. This isn't just true with alcoholics and drug addiction. Our bitterness can be progressive / our materialism - greed / pride / our lust / unforgiveness and hatred. Wrong desires are never static. We either choose to diminish them or they progress!
- It's like the little leak in the dam that seems insignificant at the time. It grows! (explain)
 5. Wrong desires are like a fire. The more you stoke the fire the bigger it becomes. You have to keep providing fuel for the fire. The more we expose ourselves to people / activities / images / locations / thoughts / that fuel the wrong desire, the more progressive our wrong desires become.
- It begins with an experimental look at an adult chat room, and you find it a bit exciting reading what others are saying. Then you decide to write something yourself to see what would happen. Someone writes you back. The anonymity of it all fuels the desire to continue. Pretty soon you're writing more and more getting more graphic with time. The desire builds. Eventually a secret encounter is arranged.
- Or, maybe it was just a chance encounter at the restaurant. You were alone. She was alone. The two of you seemed to hit it off, laughed, and before you knew it, cell #'s were exchanged. Pretty soon you're texting daily. Eventually you arrange another lunch. Eventually, you go to great measures to arrange even more. (Progressive!)
 6. Are there some wrong desires you have been entertaining where you see the progressive nature? Now is the time to make some drastic changes before it's too late. WHY?

B. Entertaining our wrong desires will make us feel like slaves

1. I can't even begin to tell you how many people over the years have told me they couldn't help themselves. But this is the result of never stopping the wrong desires from progressing in our lives. They will control us if we let them. They will feel overpowering.

Rom. 6:16 "Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living." (NLT)

2. The more we continue to give into our wrong desires the more enslaved we become to them. We are slaves to whatever we obey. If you obey your wrong desires, you will become a slave to them! Let me illustrate.
- Get a volunteer. Take a spool of thread and tie it around the person's wrists. (The thread of desire) Now ask them to break it. No problem. What's the big deal? Now wrap it 20-30 times. Enslaved!
3. Wrong desires left unchecked will be progressive and will enslave your life. Many of you know exactly what I'm describing. You're living it! You've given in so many times to certain desires you're wondering if freedom is even possible.
 4. When we give in to our wrong desires, they create destructive behaviors and attitudes that enslave us. It's not just the desires that are enslaving, it is also the behaviors that accompany them.
 5. This is why giving in to our wrong desires can result in your bitterness enslaving you / your greed / your lust / your negative attitude / your dishonesty / alcohol and drugs. Whatever we obey, we will be enslaved by.
 6. Is freedom even possible? Absolutely! Jesus came to set the prisoners free! But before we focus on our freedom, there is one more piece of bad news from the story.

III. Wrong Desires Left To Progress Damage Others

Gen. 39:16-18 "She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me," she said, "But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!" (NLT)

A. Wrong desires never care about the other person

1. When we entertain wrong desires, it's all about self. At the very heart they are an attempt at fulfilling our own selfishness. It is a self-centered journey.
2. She didn't care about Joseph. Now that he refused her again, she wanted to hurt him / she wanted to see him punished for rejecting her advances. She lied and had him thrown into prison hoping he would rot there. (A woman scorned)
3. This is the tragedy of our wrong desires when they are allowed to progress. They keep us from truly loving the people around us. The self-centered nature of wrong desires hinders our ability to care for one another.
4. If left unchecked, they progress to a point where we no longer genuinely care about

the needs of the people closest to us; we only care about having our wrong desires fulfilled.

5. The result is that this creates a relational blindness that keeps us from seeing the damage we do to our relationships.

B. Wrong desires result in wounding others

1. If we continue to pursue our wrong desires and see them frustrated or exposed, we can even become malicious towards whoever represents the blocking of this goal. Sometimes unintentionally...sometimes it's intentional like in the story.
2. The progressive and enslaving nature of wrong desires blind us from the pain our actions cause to those around us...even to those we say we love the most.
3. This is how a spouse can say, "I love you, but I'm still going to have this affair / end the marriage / continue drinking / be a workaholic / still going to take prescription drugs to make me feel better. "I love you, but I'm still going to pursue having my wrong desires fulfilled in a way that hurts you!"
4. Wrong desires can't love...they can only wound. They destroy people / families / churches and communities. If our wrong desires are allowed to progress, what we have to look forward to is damaging the people around us.
5. This is where we believe the lie that says, "What I do is my business and my behavior has no effect on other people."
6. If you truly believe this, please listen. The reality of your belief is this: You are living in a way that is wounding everyone around you and in the process, you are slowly destroying your own life as well. This path doesn't lead to fulfillment. It's a path that only leads to heartache.

How do we stay off this path? How do we not progress down the same course Potiphar's wife traveled? If you see that there are some desires beginning to run wild in your life / some that need to be reigned in / or maybe you feel enslaved to them. Let me leave you with some hope of freedom. I leave you with 4 action steps.

- Realize that wrong desires are part of our humanity and part of living in a fallen world (This doesn't make you a bad person. Not sin, just temptation)
- Believe that God truly cares about your desires (*Ps. 37:4 "Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires." (NLT)*)
- Learn to find your fulfillment in your relationship with Jesus. *John 10:10 "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." (NLT)* Jesus gives us the promise of fulfillment. Isn't this promise worth exploring?
 - Some of you have never taken Jesus up on His offer of relationship.
 - Some of you have embraced relationship, but you've never experienced His promise of fulfillment. Will you embrace this journey to discover it?

- Stop living in a way that is making you vulnerable to wrong desires. (If your marriage needs work, make it a priority. If your friends don't honor your values, change friends. If having lunch with your co-worker is creating wrong thoughts, quit having lunch!) Make the necessary changes! Starve the wrong desire instead of feeding it!

You can either have the desires of your flesh run wild in your life or you can have the blessings of God run wild in your life. Which do you prefer?