

Buy a Box of Bandages

March 5 2023



Jesus reserved some of his sharpest criticisms for the Pharisees, the extremely religious people of his time. Even the rabbis described seven different kinds of Pharisees. One of them was called the “bruised and bleeding Pharisee.” This poor man had trouble dealing with the temptations that were all around him. When he saw a beautiful woman, he would shut his eyes and, consequently, he was always tripping over things and walking into walls, hence “bruised and bleeding.”

It’s easy to identify with this poor fellow. Temptations seem to be all around us and it’s hard to know how to deal with them. Jesus didn’t make it any easier on us when he said, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman

lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell,” (Matthew 5:28-30).

Let me make four suggestions. First, be careful how you dress and how you behave. It is one thing to be attractive and it is quite another to cause other people to sin!

Second, even if you are careful, temptation is bound to come. Have you ever been surprised by the results of an innocent internet search? Just remember Martin Luther’s observation. “You may not be able to stop a bird from landing in your head but you can keep them from building a nest!”

Third, remember the adage: “nature abhors a vacuum.” If you want to get a handle on your thoughts, you must think about something else. Just try not thinking about poisonous snakes. How are you doing? It seems all I can do is think about rattlesnakes crawling out of the canyon and into my garage until I substitute a different thought - like thinking about chocolate!

Fourth, keep it in context!

It is wrong to treat people as things and that’s exactly what lust does. It is the desire to use someone. But if you put a person “in context” - she is someone’s wife, daughter, sister (or he is someone’s brother, husband, son) - that helps counteract the sin. Paul gave Timothy just this advice. “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity,” (1 Timothy 5:1, 2).

Of course, you could just try closing your eyes, but then you better invest in a box of bandages.

A small, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'Jh'.

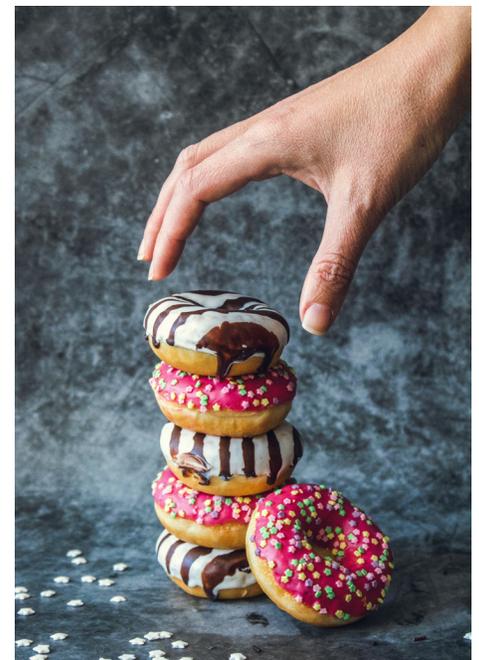


Photo by Tjiana Drndarski