



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

## First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

### September 14, 2014

### "Facing Temptation" (Facing the Giants Series)

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**W**hat causes arthritis? A drunken man who reeks of liquor rides a subway train and sits next to a priest. The drunken man's tie is pulled out and stained. His face is smeared with red lipstick, and a half-empty bottle of scotch is peering out of his torn coat pocket. He opens his newspaper and begins reading.

After a few minutes the man turns to the priest and asks, "Say Father, what causes arthritis?"

The priest looks at him up and down replies, "My son, it's caused by loose living, being with cheap, wicked women, too much alcohol, contempt for your fellow man, sleeping around with prostitutes and lack of a bath."

The drunk stares at him, mutters in response, "Well, I'll be darned," then returned to his paper.

The priest, thinking about what he had said, feels guilty nudges the man and apologizes. "Hey, look, I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to come on so strong. How long have you had arthritis?"

The drunk answered, "I don't have it, Father. I was just reading here that the Pope does."

What I like about the story is that it reminds us not to judge people too quickly. But there is also the sense that we are all sinners, including, yes,

the Pope whom we love. The fact is all of us are sinners. All of us are not perfect. All of us are tempted.

Our Bible story today continues our sermon series on facing the giants in our lives, and today we tackle temptation. We will look at the life of King David, and the famous story of David and Bathsheba.

*2Sam. 11:1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.*

*2Sam. 11:2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful.*

*2Sam. 11:3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite."*

*2Sam. 11:4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house.*

*2Sam. 11:5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."*

This is the Word of God!

The amazing thing about the Word of God is that it tells it like it is. We read about people's failures, foibles, faults

and all. You know the Bible is not fiction because if it were a legend, the Jewish writers would have made the Jewish people and their leaders all look good.

But as you know, that's not the case. Many people in the Old Testament and New Testament look really bad. They are weak, mess-ups, dense, dumb, doubters, and murderers. One apostle had a thorn in his flesh that he can't get rid of. It's the same guy who talked so long that someone actually fell asleep and fell out of a window of an upper story room and died! (Hopefully not a problem when I preach.)

King David was not depicted as perfect either. He succumbed to temptation. His acting on his covetousness and lust for Bathsheba led to deception, lies, misuse of power, adultery, betrayal of a friend, and eventually murder. Sin will beget sin. There will be a ripple effect.

When we give in to temptation, the sin that results from it will wreck our lives, and not only our lives but also the lives of our loved ones. It's not a matter of WHEN, not IF.

It's WHEN sin wrecks the lives of loved ones, not IF sin wrecks the lives of loved ones.

The trouble is at the beginning of temptation we believe we won't get caught. When we think, "Well, if I do get caught it will only hurt me." But then when we do get caught, we realize it will hurt the ones we love the most too. Satan's lie is that the sin will never come to light. In other words, no one will know about it. But the truth is: it will ALWAYS come to light some day. Always.

There is a lesson about former Baltimore Raven football player Ray Rice. No, not in the way you might think. And don't worry I am not going to harp on Ray Rice or talk about the evils of domestic violence, though domestic violence is never good. I want to say something the media has not said.

In case you have been unaware, last February football player Ray Rice hit and knocked down his then-fiancée in an Atlantic City hotel elevator. We know that because we could see it on the elevator video recording that went public last week. His then-fiancée still chose to marry him even after the incident.

People have been hard on Ray Rice for being violent, and his wife for not being smart in marrying him, but that is not what I want to talk about. If in our conversations this week we have been hard on Ray Rice or on Mrs. Ray Rice for their bad choices, we need to remember that there is a video camera on us all.

It's the one camera that counts. It's the one that God uses and sees. We might forget that there is a live video feed of all of our lives that God sees in real time. How would we like it if the public saw all of the things we have done? Maybe we would be honest about our own sin and be

motivated to get help because we are not hiding it from the One who counts. Any adultery, betrayal, selfish act, click on a porn site is seen by Jesus. Let's remember that as we go through our Bible text today.

The story in our Bible passage gets worse and worse as King David falls into temptation one after another. We smell trouble right away on verse 1: "*In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle...*" (2Sam. 11:1)

Right there is trouble. Idle time. King David has some idle time on his hands. He didn't go out with his army to fight. He stayed home. He had nothing to do.

The petri dish for temptation is when you have nothing to do. Idle time is the neo-natal incubator of a bacteria called sin. There is no project of work that takes up our time, no ministry we are involved in that takes up our creativity or entrepreneurial spirit. Idle time is when we're tempted to venture to places or websites where we're not supposed to be.

King David is on top of his palace. He looks down on the homes nearby, which in that day and age had flat roofs where—like in New York—people would use for eating or hanging out or bathing with a bucket of water, not like our big bathtubs today.

A woman out on one of the rooftops is bathing herself. The Bible puts in the detail that she just had her period so she is cleaning herself. Strange biblical detail, but we will learn later why. The Scripture wanted to make it clear that she was not pregnant.

David sees Bathsheba and lusts after her. At that very moment, he should have walked away but he didn't. He probably stayed and stared

and then he crossed the line. He went from a lustful thought to actually putting it into action by calling for his servants to get Bathsheba and bring her to his palace so he could have sex with her. He knew she couldn't deny him because he was the king, and she would be punished for disobedience.

Later he discovers that Bathsheba is pregnant. So now David goes into a horrible and intricate plan of deception. He calls for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come in from the battlefield. David invites him over for dinner under the pretense of wanting to know how the war is going. He gives him a lot to drink.

He then tells Uriah to go home to his wife hoping that Uriah would have relations with her so that people will think that she got pregnant by her husband. But then it doesn't work because Uriah is an honorable man. He says, "How can I sleep with my wife if my own soldiers who are at war are not with their wives. They are sleeping on the ground so I will not sleep with my wife and I will sleep on the ground tonight too."

Who is this man? It is none other than Uriah the Hittite. Who is that?

Uriah the Hittite is one of David's elite bodyguards called The Mighty Men. As one of the Mighty Men, Uriah would do anything for his king. He has fought for him and defended him. He gave his life for him. He is loyal. He is full of integrity. He is honorable. He is a man of valor. He is close to King David.

But King David decides to kill this man of valor so he can marry Bathsheba. David tells Uriah to go back to battle and give Joab, the general, a letter.

**L**ittle does Uriah know that he is carrying his own death sentence. In that note that Uriah delivers to Joab is an order for Joab to put Uriah on the front lines of battle. When attacked by the enemy, his comrades were to fall back so that Uriah would be shot by arrows and be killed. And that is exactly what happens. Now that Uriah is dead, David then marries Bathsheba.

David was such a good king for Israel up until now. He ruins it by giving in to one temptation, which then led to his breaking four of the 10 commandments: he coveted another man's wife, he committed adultery, he lied, and he killed. One covetous look from the rooftop led to an avalanche of sins.

### **1) What to do when you are tempted:**

When temptation comes know first of all that you are a lot weaker than you think you are.

Howard Hendricks researched the cases of more than 200 pastors who had extra-marital affairs to find a common thread of why they had fallen. Was it because they didn't pray enough or didn't read the Bible enough? Is it because they had too much idle time? He found many reasons, including the ones I just said, but there was one element that every single one of the 200+ pastors surveyed mentioned. They all said: I never thought it would happen to me. Every single one of them said that. They all deceived themselves into thinking that they would never fall to the temptation.

If King David—who had killed Goliath, who had been saved by God time and time again, who was taken from being a shepherd boy to being King, if he who had the spirit of God and who had a long list of answered prayers in his life—could fall, then we, who are even weaker, will all fall too.

Admitting we are all weak is one of the best ways to fight temptation. If you know you have a history of drinking, or that you have genes that give you a predisposition towards getting drunk, or maybe a predisposition towards something else, then admit it and get help.

If you know you have a history of watching porn—as 70% of men and 30% of women have—then admit it and then get help.

When temptation comes, change your location especially if you have idle time. As real estate agents would say, "Location, location, location." Location plays a big role when you are tempted. What do I mean?

Once David knew he was being tempted, he should have changed his location! He should have walked away from that rooftop, thrown a bucket of ice-cold water on his head, and he should have given money to the ALS foundation! He should have fled from the scene, instead of continuing to stare at Bathsheba from the rooftop.

Here's a more specific and contemporary illustration. I once married a couple where the groom had an affair just months after the wedding. Clearly the bride had not read the book *How to Pick A Spouse*. So I called in the husband and asked how the affair happened.

He said, "I was on an out of town trip. I had dinner with a woman, just the two of us."

That was a bad location for him! Dining with a woman other than his wife by themselves out of town.

He said, "I offered to take her up to her hotel room."

Bad decision! Bad location! I wanted to say, "Why did you have to do that? It's not like there are terrorists up there."

He said, "Then she asked me to come into her room to have a drink." Bzzzt! Bad decision! All these are stemming from bad location, location, location.

Turned out this guy also had an affair just prior to the wedding. This guy had boundary issues. Lots of bad location, location, location choices.

If a couple tells me that they don't want to have sex prior to marriage, they shouldn't go to a cabin by themselves, have some wine, and decide to relax and lie down in front of a warm fireplace on a bearskin rug. That's trouble brewing right there because of bad location, location, location.

If porn is easily accessible on your smart phone or iPad or computer, that's a huge problem. You have got to get away from it especially when you have idle time. You think you're doing porn by yourself? You are supporting an industry that demeans and hurts women and children. And remember that God's video camera is on you all the time watching you. So stop. Now. But I know it's hard, so here's help.

Use software like Covenant Eyes, which sends an email to your friends when you look at bad websites. There's also [www.xxxchurch.com](http://www.xxxchurch.com), which helps people addicted to porn.

### **2) What to do if you have fallen into temptation:**

I had mentioned before that if, for example, porn is a temptation to you, watch a TED talk called "The Great Porn Experiment by Gary Wilson."

**G**ary Wilson is the author or producer of the website of [www.yourbrainonporn.com](http://www.yourbrainonporn.com), where you will find concrete helps and perspective on that temptation and see how it is chemical thing in the brain and not just will power.

I don't have the time in this short sermon to talk about all of the temptations we face as it comes to not only sex but also power, money, busyness, adrenalin, food, drinks, etc. But I have three big suggestions of effective ways to fighting temptation.

First a story. A man is walking down a street and falls into a hole. He calls out, "Help! Help! Someone help!"

A doctor walks by, hears the guy, and looks down at the guy in the hole. The doctor writes a prescription, throws it into the hole and walks on.

Then a pastor walks by, hears the guy, and looks down into the hole. He writes a prayer and throws it down into the hole.

The guy in the hole keeps yelling, "Help! Help!" A friend walks by, looks down into the hole, and then jumps down into it. The first guy says, "You idiot! What were you thinking? You are of no help at all!" But his friend wisely says, "I've fallen into this hole before, and I know the way out."

If you really want to get out of the temptation hole,

**a) Find people who have fallen to the same temptation as you so they can help you get out of the hole.**

That is why going to AA meetings is really helpful because it's alcoholics helping other alcoholics. If you want to go to a recovery meeting for people fighting porn, call me or email me, and I will set you up with a counselor like Steve Peich, who

teaches at our church and is effective in helping people with that addiction.

When I get depressed I want to find people who know what depression is like, and ask them, "How do I get out of the hole?"

Not that it is a temptation, but grieving can be overcome. We have care groups that help people with the grieving over the loss of their loved ones, or grieving over their divorce. These care groups are led by facilitators who have gone through these difficult experiences.

And we are starting a new ministry that does help people with bad habits or addictions, so check the bulletin. The ministry is called Celebrate Recovery, and the class is called *Life's Healing Choices*, which covers topics like co-dependency, fear of rejection, fear of abandonment, perfectionism, broken relationships, dependency on alcohol or drugs, pornography, low self-esteem, depression, anger, and/or the impact of abuse.

**b) Use this time to really go deep into why you are tempted.**

What I mean is find a good counselor or therapist who can help you go deep. It's time to find out why we do what we do, and why we fall into bad habits. Our church as a list of therapists we like and trust depending on the area we need help on.

**c) Ask God for help.**

When you pray, don't go for the small things; go for the deep things, the root of the problem. Talk to God about the deep thing and CONFESS it before God and ask Him for wisdom of why you are tempted and how to get out of it.

As my new Catholic friend from Malta, Father Philip Chipcop, who will be speaking at the next HIM

conference says, that when it comes to confession before God be brave, be bold, be brief.

Be brave. It takes courage to admit you are a sinner. Be bold. Hit the sin head-on and confess it. Don't mess around. Say it like it is. All of it. But be brief. You don't need to talk for hours. Get to the point.

In confessional prayer you may find out that God is kind. He is not surprised. He made you. He has watched over you. He already knows so you might as well tell him. But also because He made you, He knows how hard it is in life. He is kind. Don't beat yourself up too much. God knew He created you with the weakness of sin. You don't need to pay the bill on that over and over again.

David committed a horrible sin in killing Uriah and marrying his wife with whom he had sex. God was displeased, according to the Bible. For his penalty, David's son died. For forgiveness to happen a penalty has to be paid for a sin.

But here's the amazing thing. God loves us so much that He paid for our sin. He took the rap. God's son Jesus gave His life to pay the penalty for our sin. That's incredible! With His "Mastercard" He paid the bill so that you have a new visa for life. Accept His forgiveness and turn away from temptation.

One last thing: Can you forgive someone in your life? If you have a hard time doing that, then may I offer this? It maybe that you have not experienced God's wonderful forgiveness in your life. When we really know our own sinfulness, and when we have really cried the tears of appreciation for God forgiving us, then we will find it easier to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

Let's pray.