

Understanding Our Attraction Profile – Dan Hitz

This article is part-two of a two-part series on understanding our temptations. It explains how we can use our sexual temptations as a gauge to point out areas of brokenness in our hearts, and seek the Lord for His answer to our deeper needs. The article was adapted from a workshop Dan taught at a Gender Matters conference presented by Desert Stream Ministries and Union Center Christian Church in Endicott, New York.



In last month's newsletter article, *Praying Beyond Our Temptations*, we looked at using our temptations as a gauge to show us areas in our hearts that needed a touch from the Lord. We learned not to suppress our temptations by squashing them back down in our hearts, but to acknowledge our temptations and submit them to the cross. In that way, we can see the legitimate need in our hearts that we are tempted to solve in an illegitimate way. We open our hearts to Christ to receive a holy answer to our deeper needs. This month we will look at our **attraction profile** and learn how we can use this as another gauge to show us areas in our hearts that need healing. Whenever we pray about these types of issues, we should be careful to pray that the Lord will help us look at these temptations redemptively, in a way that does not increase our temptations. Sometimes we can pray through these areas on our own in contemplative prayer. Other times we need the help of safe, trusted others to walk with us to the cross.

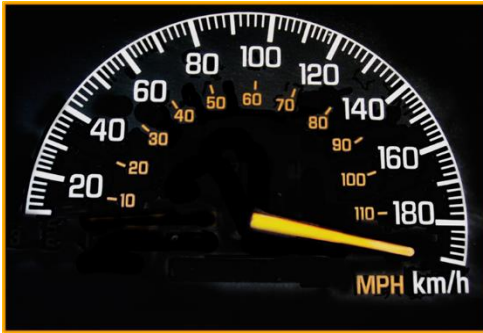
Before we look at the attraction profile, let's make a differentiation between noticing someone is attractive and illicitly lusting after someone. There are cultural norms of attractiveness. God made good looking plants and animals as well as funny looking plants and animals. Likewise, some people are closer to the cultural norm of good looking and some people are not. We will notice this as we go through our day. Many people feel condemned simply because they noticed that someone is attractive. Noticing that someone is attractive is not a sin. Noticing that someone is attractive and lusting after that person is. In life, we interact with people that we find attractive and people that we do not. As we interact, it is important that we bounce our eyes and our thoughts off of lustful things and put them on godly ones. We should not walk around consciously checking people out to determine if we find them attractive or not. The attraction profile principles apply to those times when we notice that someone is attractive and find ourselves lusting or interacting with them in inappropriate ways.

An **attraction profile** consists of the common characteristics – physical, emotional, and behavioral – of the people that we are illicitly drawn to. In her books, *The Broken Image* and *Healing Homosexuality*, Leanne Payne writes about **cannibal compulsion**. She explains that cannibals eat the people that they want the characteristics of, and that our attraction profiles consist of people that we want the characteristics of. This applies both to heterosexual as well as homosexual illicit attractions. Cannibal compulsion can apply in two areas. First, a person may be attracted to others who have characteristics that he will never have and are envious of. Second, a person may be attracted to others with characteristics that he actually does have, but because of emotional brokenness is unable to recognize or accept in himself.



We can use the same principles with our attraction profiles that we use to pray beyond our temptations. Rather than squashing the lustful thoughts back down into our hearts and trying to suppress them, we can acknowledge them and submit them to the cross. We can use those attractions as a gauge to show us what areas of our hearts are broken and seek the Lord for healing. A person who grew up with a dysfunctional relationship with a parent, may find himself lusting after older men or women in an attempt to fill up the void from his mother or father wound. A person who rejects her body image, may find herself lusting after men or women who possess the body that she would like to have. A person who was mercilessly mocked for being underweight may find himself lusting after others with a muscular build. In these cases of lusting after someone who possesses the attributes that we will never have, it is important to acknowledge the pain in our hearts that we are trying to numb with illegitimate actions, bring that pain to the cross, and ask the Lord for His healing in that area. If we discover that we are lusting after older men or women because of a father or mother wound, we can bring that pain to the cross and ask the Lord to fill up that void in our hearts with His presence and provide the nurturing and care that we did not receive from our father or mother. In the case of a person with a negative body image, even in the case of a person with a legitimate physical defect, he can acknowledge the emotional pain of the physical defect in his body and seek the Lord for comfort and acceptance of the body that he does have. The same grace available to the Apostle Paul to accept his thorn in the flesh and be made strong in his weakness is available to all of us. In these examples, we see how we can use the attraction profiles to lead us to the root issues fueling our attractions and receive healing from the Lord.

The same principles apply when our attraction profiles include characteristics that we actually do possess, but are emotionally detached from. A man who may actually be quiet, creative, and insightful may have been shamed by a father who demanded that he “act more like a man” and engage in rugged sports activities. Since his father did not accept his more creative qualities, he may have learned to reject those qualities inside his own heart. Cut off from his true self, he may begin to yearn for these qualities in others. It is important in this type of situation that he identify the characteristics in others that he is drawn to, acknowledge that pain of any perceived shortcomings in his own heart, bring that pain to the cross, and allow the Lord to heal the areas of shame, self-rejection, and other issues that led him to reject his true identity in Christ. As the person becomes more comfortable with his own specific gifts, he will have less need to lust after another in a broken attempt to compensate for his perceived areas of weakness. Furthermore, he will be more able to identify with his specific gifts and use them to bless others in his sphere of influence.



When we find ourselves in an increased time of temptation towards a specific person, we can use those temptations as a gauge by examining our hearts and asking the Lord the following simple questions: 1) What are the specific characteristics of that person that I am drawn to? 2) What are the root issues behind my attractions and how do I feel like that person could solve those issues? 3) What is Your holy solution for the root issues behind my attractions? As we seek the Lord in contemplative prayer, He will give us His answers to the deeper needs in our hearts, the pain in our hearts begins to heal, and our temptations to numb the pain through illicit attractions begin to diminish.

Similar to our attraction profile is our **fantasy profile**. Most people have a typical “script” or storyline in their fantasies. These repetitive themes can be used to understand our root issues of brokenness as they are submitted to the cross. Someone who feels abandoned may fantasize that others are pursuing him for sexual purposes as a means of numbing the pain of rejection. A person who feels an overwhelming sense of failure may fantasize incredible conquests. The steps in recovery are the same as those of the attraction profile. Ask the Lord for His help in identifying the fantasy profile, the deeper issues fueling the storylines, and to provide His holy answer for our legitimate need.

Sometimes the fantasies are actually reruns of past sexual encounters that we have had. Specific encounters from the past can trigger temptations and fantasies in the present because of emotional hooks that are buried in the events. If you find yourself being plagued by strong temptations to revisit specific encounters, you can pray and ask the Lord to show you what the specific emotional hook is in that encounter and remove it with His truth. Many years ago I was repeatedly plagued by a specific sexual encounter I had over 25 years ago. I shared the struggle with my accountability partner who asked if we could pray and invite Jesus’ presence into the memory of the encounter. I was rather disturbed as I told him that there was no way that Jesus would ever go into such a shameful memory of a sinful encounter like that. He prayed and asked Jesus if He was willing to meet me in that area of my heart where the memory was. Much to my surprise, I sensed the Lord’s presence already in the memory. He was not there to shame, but He was there in holiness to cleanse and redeem. We asked the Lord to speak to my heart and show me why this particular encounter was such a powerful temptation for fantasy. The Lord showed me that I was lonely and isolated at that time in my life and that I believed that the other person loved me. We asked the Lord to speak the truth and He said that neither of us loved each other, we were just using each other. As the Lord spoke this simple truth, the stronghold connected to that encounter was broken and I have not struggled with lustful thoughts about that encounter ever since. Some of our past encounters hold negative strongholds that keep us bound to them, bringing them to the Lord in prayer with the help of safe others can help us hear the truth and set us free.



Praying beyond the temptation and understanding our attraction profiles are powerful tools in our journey out of sexual brokenness and into sexual purity. They deepen our relationship with the Father and touch many areas of our hearts that have contributed to our sexual struggles. Sometimes we can pray through these issues on our own. Sometimes we need the help of a trusted Christian brother or sister. If you are in a time of increased temptation and would like help, call Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan at 586.739.5114. We offer individual prayer ministry, professional counseling, and support groups. Reach out today and grow in your relationship with the Lord.