



FATAL ATTRACTION

INTRO

Flutter. Flutter.

ZAP!!!!!!

Silence. The bug is dead.

Insect light traps—those glowing blue bulbs suspended over picnic tables on sticky summer evenings—are very good at catching their prey. A curious bug, attracted by the irresistible glow of the ultraviolet light, will find himself fluttering toward it, until—ZAP!—he comes to an unfortunate—and rather crispy—end. The attraction proves fatal.

Sin works in a similar way. As humans, we are attracted by sin. We move toward it, curious, just wanting to get a little taste, and — ZAP!! — we are caught in a dangerous, if not deadly, trap. Pride, greed, gluttony, lust, sloth, wrath, envy... All of these are traps laid by the enemy, who waits for us to get just a little too close. And once we are caught, it can be very difficult to find our way to freedom.

King David, who spent a good part of his youth fleeing the traps of King Saul, wrote the following prayer to God: “Free me from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth” (**Psalm 31:4-5**). David knew that in order to survive, he needed to commit his body and soul to God. Only God could keep him safe from the forces of evil that pursued him, and ultimately set him free.

When we draw near to the God of truth, we move away from Satan's traps and the lies he tells us. The closer we move toward God's light, the less we are attracted by sin. Jesus has loosened the traps so that we can fly free — and live forever.

Pride

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and when you are looking down, you can’t see what’s above you.”

— C.S. Lewis

Day 1

1. Name a character from a movie, TV show, book, or comic book that was brought down because of his pride (for example, Lex Luthor, Voldemort, Sauron). How did pride lead to his or her destruction?
2. Can you think of relationships in your life that have been hurt by your pride?
3. The dictionary defines pride as an “unduly high opinion of oneself.” Why is pride destructive? (Check all that apply)
 - We are not supposed to have positive self esteem.
 - It keeps us from loving others as we love ourselves.
 - It is wrong to take pride in our accomplishments.
 - It keeps us from recognizing our need for God.
4. Read **Proverbs 16:18**. Then write the verse in your own words:
5. Pride is dangerous because its nature is one of separation. It makes us think we are better than other people—that we are above them. Why is this so harmful to our relationships? (Check all that apply)
 - It can lead to competition and envy, which divides.
 - Others will be intimidated and not feel free to approach us in friendship.
 - It prevents us from seeing the strengths of others.
 - It makes us too popular for our own good.
 - It goes against God’s instructions to consider others better than ourselves (**Philippians 2:3**).
 - Other: _____
6. Why is pride dangerous to your relationship with God?
7. Often, people that appear to be proud are really just unsure of themselves. How can you keep your relationships from being hurt by pride and the need to impress everyone?

Day 2

1. Do you ever feel like you know more than your teachers, parents, and other authority figures? What are some of the thoughts that go through your mind along these lines?

2. We are born with a tendency toward pride. It is a human trait. And our pride is often insulted when we have to take orders. Read **Genesis 3:1-7**. Eve was tempted in the Garden. Which of the following statements appealed to Eve's pride?

- You will live forever.
- You will be the most beautiful creature on Earth.
- You will be perfect.
- You will be like God.
- All of the above.

3. How was pride the sin that Eve committed? (Check all that apply)

- She wanted to be like God so she could decide for herself what was best for her.
- She wanted to be like God so she would be wise.
- She wanted to tell Adam what to do.
- She trusted her own desires more than she trusted God and His plan for her.
- Other: _____

4. How does **Proverbs 16:18** apply to Adam and Eve?

5. Pride is one of the chief obstacles in our relationship with God. Look at **Genesis 3:8-9**. How did their sin, which resulted from pride, change their relationship with God?

6. Pride prevents us from recognizing the sin in our lives and the areas where we need God desperately. How has pride affected your relationship with God?

- It hasn't affected it at all.
- It has caused me to hide from Him so I can live the way I want.
- Sometimes it makes me think I know what's best for me—that I don't need Him.
- It causes me to question whether God's Word really applies to me.
- It makes me think I can do everything on my own.
- Other: _____

7. The tricky thing about pride is that it is something we have to fight our whole lives. Just when you think you don't struggle with pride, you're probably struggling with it the most. How can you become more aware of how pride operates in your life?

8. How can listening to God help you avoid pride?

Making It Personal

This week, think about the authority figures in your life. How can you show them respect (even if you don't always agree with them)? What are some of the positive things they bring to your life — things you may have overlooked because of pride?

Pray that God will show you the areas of pride in your life that are separating you from others.

Greed

"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

— Philippians 4:12b-13

Day 1

1. How would you complete the following sentence?

If I only had _____, I would be really happy.

Do you really believe that, or does it sound totally humorous to you? Why do you think we often want more than we have?

2. It's easy to let material things become too important, and to fall into the trap of believing that just one more thing stands between us and true happiness. The truth is that material possessions can actually get in the way of the things that are really important in life. Think about it: How satisfied are you with your life right now?

Very satisfied—I have all I need.

Pretty satisfied—there are things I want, but I know I don't really need them.

So-so—I struggle with a desire for more stuff.

Dissatisfied—I am not even sure why.

3. From time to time we all get sucked into the gimme trap—"Gimme this, gimme that." Another word for the "gimmies" is greed. God has a lot to say about the greed trap. Read the parable in **Luke 12:13-21**. Where did the rich man go wrong?

He built bigger barns when he should have expanded his old ones.

He failed to realize that his crops would spoil.

He assumed he would live forever.

He hoarded his crops for himself rather than using them to bless others.

4. What did Jesus mean when He said that "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions"?

5. If that is true, what does a person's life consist of instead?

6. How would you rewrite this story to give it a happy ending?

7. If God told you that this was your last night on earth, what would you do?

8. How can you become "rich toward God" today?

Day 2

1. If you had a year's salary to spend on one extravagant gift, what would you buy and for whom?

2. Believe it or not, the best cure for greed is its exact opposite: generosity. Like dumping water on a fire, becoming a generous person squelches those feelings of greed. As you learn to become a generous person, you will also become a more joyous person. Read [Proverbs 11:24-25](#). What lesson(s) do you find there?

- To give is to gain.
- It is wise to hoard your resources.
- When you bless others, you yourself are blessed.
- Saving always leads to security.

3. Does one have to have a lot of money to live a generous life? Why or why not?

4. You don't have to have much, or want much, to be greedy. In fact, you can be very poor and still be greedy. Just holding tightly to what you do have is a form of greed. What keeps you from sharing what you have with others?

- Fear of not getting things back
- Fear of things getting broken or damaged
- Concern over not having enough for myself
- Selfishness
- Not wanting to embarrass others by exposing their need
- Other: _____

5. What are some benefits you have discovered from sharing?

Do they outweigh the costs?

6. In [Deuteronomy 14:22-29](#), Moses delivers God's instructions regarding tithing, or setting aside a portion of your earnings to help provide for others. After reading over this passage, what responsibility do we have for the less fortunate in our society?

7. Another cure for the "gimmees" is gratitude. List the blessings God has given you—things that might be considered luxuries in other parts of the world:

Making It Personal

An early church father, St. Augustine, wrote: "God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full—there's nowhere for him to put it." What possession are you holding onto right now that you need to let go of and give to God?

Greed

If you did that, what could take its place in your heart? Ask God to help you find your treasure in Him, not in the things of this world.



NOTES

Gluttony

Day 1

1. Describe a time when you had too much of a good thing—too much sugar, too much TV, too much Playstation—OR too little, and you were really roughing it.

Overall, was it a positive or a negative experience?

2. Gluttony is the sin of taking in more and more, until it isn't good for us — whether it's food, drink, the Internet, television, shopping, or anything else that we indulge in to excess. Why do you think we sometimes go overboard with the things we crave?

3. Do you think indulging in something usually brings satisfaction? Why or why not?

4. Read **Proverbs 23:19-21**. What lesson(s) do you find in this passage?

- Gluttony is bad for your digestive system.
- You can be a glutton, but only on major holidays.
- Gluttony leads to failure.
- Be careful with your friendships.

5. How might gluttony make you poor? *(Check all that apply)*

- It can cost you your time, your money, your health, and even your friendships.
- It can cost you your education and/or job by distracting you and affecting your performance.
- You will become spiritually poor by focusing on yourself.
- All of the above
- Other: _____

6. According to Jesus in **Matthew 4:4**, what do we need to fill us up, besides food?

7. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your appetite for God?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not hungry I could use a snack I can't get enough!

Day 2

1. Gluttony has been defined as “demanding more pleasure from something than it was made for.” What makes this destructive?

- It wastes food.
- It causes us to seek our ultimate satisfaction from lesser things than God.
- We should not enjoy the things God created.
- It shows bad manners.

“God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him.”

— John Piper

- 2. When our physical bodies experience cravings, it usually means we need something—like vitamins, water, or rest. The problem is, we don't always feed those needs properly. (Vitamin C does not stand for Chocolate, but nice try.) List a few of your common cravings in the left-hand column below (remember, it doesn't have to be food). In the right-hand column, write down the need that's most likely behind that craving.

What I want (crave):

What I need:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- 3. We also experience spiritual cravings for things like peace and joy, which come from our need for God. What are you craving in your relationship with God right now?

- 4. Sometimes, we get our physical and spiritual cravings confused. For example, we'll crave a Snickers Bar when we're feeling sad, or 10 hours of reality TV when we're feeling lonely. When this happens, we tend to overindulge because those things won't ever fill us up—not the way God can.

Take a look at **Psalm 42**. To what does the writer compare his longing for God?

- A priest who wants to go to God's temple
- A thirsty deer looking for a stream
- A poor man searching for treasure
- A soldier fighting for victory

- 5. What key question does the writer of **Psalm 42** ask that helps pinpoint the real problem (v. 5, 11)?

- 6. Do you usually pause to ask yourself what's really going on inside before you indulge your cravings?
 Yes No Sometimes

How might doing this help you avoid the trap of gluttony?

- 7. According to Jesus in **Matthew 5:6**, what should we crave?

Making It Personal

This week, pay more attention to how—and how often—you indulge your appetites. Are you seeking more pleasure out of something than it was meant for?

Ask God to redirect your hunger so that you will long for His truth and guidance more than anything else. Ask for His help in telling the difference between a physical and a spiritual craving, and in finding healthy ways to satisfy those needs.

Lust

Day 1

1. Sometimes it seems impossible that anyone could stay pure in the world we live in. Temptation surrounds us at school, on TV, on the Internet, in music, and at the movies. Trying to remain pure is like trying to stay clean while wearing white gloves and eating a ketchup Popsicle. So why is purity so important?

2. What do you think it means to be pure? What would a pure middle school student look like?

3. Read **Psalm 119:9**. Because all sin starts in our hearts and minds, it is especially important that we guard them. One way to keep your mind pure is to fill it with things that are wholesome.

Read **Philippians 4:8** and fill in the blanks below:

*"Finally, brothers, whatever is _____, whatever is _____,
whatever is _____, whatever is _____, whatever is _____,
_____ — if anything is _____ or _____ — think about such things."*

4. How does this list compare with the things that bombard your mind daily, and the topics of conversation among your friends?

5. How could you change that intentionally, to think more about wholesome things?

6. How is your choice of friends critical to keeping your mind pure?

Day 2

1. What new gadget have you purchased or received recently that required you to read the owner's manual? How did it help you?

2. God always wants what is best for us. More than that, He knows what is best for us. He made us. He gave us all the desires that we have — physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. The law that He set out for us in scripture is a kind of owner's manual. God is saying, "If you want a fulfilling life, live this way. This is what you were made for."

God's laws about sex are an important chapter in that owner's manual. Read the Message version of **1 Corinthians 6:16-20** (printed on the next page). What does it mean to you that your body is a sacred place where God's spirit lives, a place created for worship?

3. God is the one who designed these bodies of ours. Sex is not a dirty word — sex was God's idea. God made us, male and female, to enjoy physical and emotional intimacy in the context of marriage. Read [Genesis 2:24-25](#).

Why do you think Adam and Eve felt no shame?

4. How do you think your friends view sex and marriage?

5. "Lust" is defined as "an excessive desire for something" — anything. What are some of the things that people lust for other than sex? List a few of them here:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6. Lust clearly does not belong in the sacred space of your heart. Does knowing that your body is God's temple affect the way you think and make decisions, or the standards that you set for your thought life and your relationships with the opposite sex? Why or why not?

7. Twice in His life, Jesus cleared the Temple in Jerusalem of things that prevented people from getting to the heart of worship ([John 2:13-25](#), [Matthew 21:12-17](#)). What kinds of things would He need to clear out in order for your temple to glorify Him?

Making It Personal

Have you talked to God about your struggles with your thoughts, asking Him to help you?

When we allow bad thoughts to take the wheel, we set ourselves up for a head-on collision with sin, heartache, and stupid mistakes. As you pray, think about the direction your life is headed.

Ask God to steer your desires toward Him, and to help you honor your body as His temple. He knows every struggle you are facing — and He is there to help you ([Hebrews 4:14-16](#)).

"There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one." There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body."

— [1 Corinthians 6:16-20](#) (The Message)

Sloth

Day 1

1. Have you ever been on vacation and not been able to go to sleep because you didn't want to miss out on anything? That's how life should be for us! There's no telling what exciting opportunities await us from one day to the next.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" ([John 10:10b](#)). What are some of the dreams you have for your life?

"If you want your dreams to come true, don't oversleep."

— Anonymous

2. Unfortunately, sloth — better known as laziness — is the sin that often gets in the way of those dreams. It's an easy trap to fall into because all you have to do is, well... nothing. Where do you see evidence of slothfulness in your life?

- Major oversleeping
- Procrastination
- Lack of motivation
- Skipping homework
- Not using my gifts/talents
- Other: _____

3. Read the parable of the talents in [Matthew 25:14-30](#) and fill in the chart below.

	What he received:	What he earned:	Master's response:
Servant #1			
Servant #2			
Servant #3			

4. Why was the master upset with the lazy servant? (Check all that apply)

- The servant didn't even deposit the money in the bank, where it would've grown.
- The servant tried to make money but failed.
- The servant spent the money on himself.
- The servant wasted an opportunity by doing nothing.

5. How is sloth different from God's character, as seen in [Psalm 121:1-4](#)?

6. Why do you think God dislikes sloth so much?

Day 2

1. God created us to have an active role in building His kingdom, not to be spectators on the sidelines. Look at the positive example He has given us in nature in [Proverbs 6:6-11](#). What inspiration can we find in a little ant?

2. True or false? Resting = sloth

Why or why not? (Hint: read [Exodus 20:8-11](#).)

3. Share a time when you overcame being tired or lazy and really pulled through and completed something worthwhile.

4. Now share a time when you sensed God telling you to rest and refocus. How did He use that time to refresh you?

5. The Apostle Paul gives us an important pep talk in [Hebrews 12:1-2](#), where he compares the Christian life to running a race. Read it and fill in the blanks below:

"Therefore, since we are _____ by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us _____ everything that _____ and the sin that so easily _____, and let us _____ the race marked out for us."

6. Who are the witnesses in your life that are cheering you on?

7. What does a runner do to keep going even when he/she's tired?

8. How can you apply those practices to your life as a Christian?

Making It Personal

When we are suited up and ready to go, there's no telling where the race will lead. Wouldn't you rather be part of the adventure than sleep through it? Pray that God would give you the energy and endurance to chase down the good things He has planned for you.

Wrath

Day 1

1. Have you ever destroyed something out of frustration or anger? Did it feel good at the time? How about later?

2. Which of the following statements is true? (Hint: Read [Psalm 4:4](#).)

- It is wrong to become angry.
- Jesus never experienced anger, so neither should we.
- Anger itself is not sinful; what we do with that anger can be sinful.
- Anger never leads to sin.

3. How do you usually deal with your anger?

- Pray
- Go for a walk or run
- Break or punch something
- Shout
- Stomp
- Pout
- Other: _____

4. What is a healthy way to cool off?

5. When anger reaches super-hot temperatures, it can be described as wrath. Wrath, as you can imagine, is a dangerous emotion. Anyone who gets too close is likely to get burned! According to [Proverbs 30:33](#), what results from this kind of anger?

6. What is the opposite of wrath? And what is an example of this emotion?

7. As sinners, we deserve God's full wrath for our disobedience ([Romans 1:18](#)). According to [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#), what does God give us instead?

- Judgment
- Approval
- A lecture
- Salvation

8. If wrath is a fire, God's grace is a giant fire extinguisher. The Bible instructs us to forgive one another as God forgave us, which doesn't leave room for revenge. Read [Psalm 4:4](#) and [James 1:19-20](#). What do these verses show you about how could you deal with your anger in a more constructive way?

*"The LORD is
compassionate
and gracious,
slow to anger,
abounding
in love."*

— Psalm 103:8

Day 2

1. Read the following verses and write down one thing that each verse teaches you about anger, patience, or self-control:

- **Proverbs 15:1:**
- **Proverbs 29:11:**
- **Ecclesiastes 7:9:**

2. What message do you think the Holy Spirit is trying to get through to you, personally, through these verses?

3. Oftentimes we hold onto anger as a way of punishing others. The sad thing is that, in the end, the only person we are really hurting is ourselves. Take a look at one of the many examples of the Pharisees' wrath for Jesus in **Mark 3:1-6**. Why were they watching Jesus so carefully?

4. What did their anger keep them from seeing? How did it hurt them in the end?

5. How did Jesus respond to their wrath in **Luke 23:34**?

6. Aristotle, a very wise man who lived long ago, once said, "Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way—that is not within everyone's power and that is not easy." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

7. As believers, how can we be examples to the world by the way we handle ourselves and our anger?

Making It Personal

Close your time with a prayer asking God to help you be slow to anger, like He is. Be bold! Dare to ask that sometime this week He would give you an opportunity to put what you've learned to use.

"Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of better confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you." — Frederick Buechner

Envy

Day 1

When was your last sick day? Did it take much convincing for your parents to let you stay home? What makes you feel better when you're under the weather?

Envy is its own kind of sickness. Have you ever heard the expression, "green with envy"? In ancient Greece, people believed that when you were jealous, your body produced too much of a greenish liquid called bile that would actually tint your skin green. Of course, this is more fiction than fact, but the Bible does tell us that envy is as destructive as a disease.

*"Love is patient,
love is kind. It
does not envy, it
does not boast,
it is not proud."*

— 1 Corinthians 13:4

1. Read **Proverbs 14:30** (NIV) and fill in the blanks below:

"A heart at _____ gives _____ to the body, but envy _____ the _____."

2. Envy is the unhappy feeling that comes because something good is happening to someone else. What "good things" are usually the objects of your envy? (Be honest!)

3. Do you think it's possible to love and envy someone at the same time? Yes No

Why or why not?

4. When you think about it, envy is basically greed taken to a new level. Greed is wanting something for yourself; envy is not wanting someone else to have it. It is as old as the scriptures themselves. Look at **Genesis 25:19-28**. What was the brothers' relationship like, even before they were born?

Best friends forever Competitive Distant

5. Now read **Genesis 25:29-34**. As the oldest, Esau would have inherited the family fortune, which included the blessing God had given to Abraham and his descendants. What deal did the brothers make about the birthright? (Check all that apply)

Jacob took advantage of his brother's impulsive nature and made a quick trade.
 Jacob agreed to serve his older brother out of respect for him.
 Esau decided that Jacob deserved the birthright and graciously gave it to him.
 Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a hot meal.

6. You may know the rest of this story from **Genesis 27**. Jacob and his mother, Rebekah, tricked Isaac into giving Jacob his blessing by dressing him up as his older brother. How did Esau respond in **Genesis 27:34-38**?

7. How do you think you would have responded?

8. According to **Genesis 27:41**, how did Esau feel about his brother, and what made Esau's attitude sinful?

Envy is a common struggle between siblings and friends. It often comes from the belief that there aren't enough good things to go around. Remember that you never have to compete for God's love. He wants us to be so convinced of His goodness to us that we are overjoyed with His goodness to others.

Day 2

An old Cherokee chief was teaching his grandson about life: "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil — he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, self-doubt, and ego. The other is good — he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. This same fight is going on inside you — and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old chief simply replied, "The one we feed."

As we wrap up this series, think about the fight going on inside you. In the first column below, list your fatal attractions. In the middle column, list the positive qualities God can build in you to help overcome those struggles. In the far right-hand column, list one way you can feed each of those positive qualities so they will grow stronger in you. (See example.)

"Evil Wolf"	"Good Wolf"	Feeding Instructions:
pride	humility	show respect to my parents

Making It Personal

Sometimes, it feels like Satan is laying a trap for us at every turn. Certain sins always seem to get us down, no matter how hard we try. Defeat is another trap Satan uses to convince us that we will never be free from our struggles.

The good news of Jesus is that He sets us free. **Romans 8:1-2** says:

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (NLT)

Remember that God's life-giving Spirit is at work in you. You don't have to be afraid to bring all of your struggles to God. He wants to set you free. Thank Him for that today.





NOTES

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