

A Pentel Addiction

By Pastor Greg
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2 Samuel 13:1-22

Bunkertown COB

I've a rather embarrassing confession to make this morning. It has to do with a former addiction that held me captive for many years (boy that sure got everyone's attention). Looking back, I think it began my freshman year at Messiah College. I remember standing and staring and fanaticizing. That's when I first noticed my Pentel addiction. In the beginning I thought it harmless. What I didn't know was that later on it would hold me captive.

For those who have been in my office, you'll be familiar with what looks like a cigar box on my desk. Inside there is a collection of pens and pencils. These are my favorites that I've collected over the years. Some are over 30 years old. Some are from Iowa, some were gifts. One is from the Longaberger Basket plant in Ohio, proof to those that doubt I ever took the tour. Some are quite gimmicky; one is quite unusual (I love the flickering lights). And one I'm not sure how I got.

Now for most people, pens and pencils (office supplies in general) are not the things that we associate with addiction. I don't know of any twelve step recovery program for a person who can't wait until the latest refill arrives from Office Mart. But there are some of us who find great joy in holding that brand new shiny pen in our hand for the first time.

I know. Most of you are sitting there thinking I've completely lost it. You used to think I was weird, know you know. But many people are not ready to admit that they battle addiction and lust, and that is why they fail. Still others are not willing to take the necessary steps to free themselves from what holds them captive. Let me read as story about two men, sons of King David, who struggled with addiction and lust.

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22

Absalom and Tamar were the children of David and Maacah (MAY ah kah). Amnon was the son of David and Ahinoam (a HIN oh am). So technically, Tamar was Amnon's half sister. But, according to God's law, she was off limits (See Leviticus 18:11). And don't start thinking that his love was genuine. The Hebrew word here speaks of desire and lust. I also suspect that this wasn't the first girl to consume his

fantasies. I don't believe Amnon suddenly found himself raping his half sister. No, I suspect Amnon began feeding his sexual desires a long time before this event.

Sexual lust is a ravenous beast that is never satisfied. Eventually the act that once brought pleasure will not be enough. There always seems to be a subtle progression for more and more, until a person's sexual appetite leads to destruction. Staring and fanaticizing was no longer enough for Amnon. Now he wanted the real thing.

Absalom was no different. He lusted for power and revenge. For two years he schemed and planned. For two years revenge boiled in that handsome head of his. And apparently no one knew of the dark hatred that poisoned his soul. If you read further into this story you'll find that power over his brother was not enough. Absalom desired power over his father and power over the entire kingdom of Israel.

Anyway, as I read over the tragic story of these two men whose lives ended in tragedy, I saw my own struggle. And I was reminded of some advice the Bible gives us to overcome these things before they destroy our lives.

Jesus tells His disciples that when He goes away, He will send the Helper; the Holy Spirit. And one of the benefits is that the Spirit **"will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."**¹ (John 16:8). In other words, the Holy Spirit pricks our heart when we do things that hinder our growth as Christians. He speaks to us when we are headed down a path that will lead to addiction or destruction. So we are not left to trust in our own strength and wisdom. I can't speak for Amnon here, but it appears he battled with knowing what was right, yet did not have the strength to overcome the lust that held him captive. I can, however, tell you how I won the battle against the Pentel Addiction that held me captive for years. I followed Paul's advice to Timothy. **"Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts."**² (2 Timothy 2:22).

Eventually I began to realize just how tightly my Pentel Addiction held me captive. I would find myself browsing through the latest office supply catalog,

¹*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Jn 16:8). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

lusting over the new shiny pens advertised. I thought nothing of spending \$24.95 on a new pen with the golden brass barrel and the comfort grip. But not long afterwards, I was in the Pen & Pencil aisle at Wal Mart looking at the new products in their attractive, stimulating packages. I tried to imagine what it would be like to hold that pen, which had never been used before (can I call it a “Virgin”?). How would it feel to hold that sleek metal barrel between my fingers? My collection of slightly used pens began to grow. Well, to overcome this addiction, the first thing I did was to stop feeding it. I avoided the things and the places that fed the fires of passion.

The other advice Paul gives is to fill our lives and surround ourselves with the things that strengthen our faith. I find it interesting that Amnon’s counsel came from someone who probably fought the same addiction. John the Apostle warns, **“For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.”**³ (1 John 2:14-15). It’s awfully difficult to overcome addictions when we surround ourselves with the things of this world and spend time with people in love with this world.

As with Amnon and Absalom, their sins led to death. James says **“These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.”**⁴ (James 1:15). Maybe you’re struggling with something that holds you captive. Paul’s advice is to flee! If you have to, disconnect the Television cable. Give your computer to someone for a while. Turn your paycheck over to someone you trust and let them give you an allowance. We are bombarded every day by advertizing that tries to feed our lusts. And those people doing the advertizing don’t care one bit if your addiction destroys your life. They’re not going to stop trying to feed it to us. So flee! Do what you must to shake addictions grip on your life. And start hanging around with people in love with God.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.