

Daydream Believer

Remember that movie Hoosiers, in which a small town basketball team wins the state championship in Indiana? In the dramatic conclusion, one of the players gets to sink the shot that wins the game over the highly favored big city school. I think I've watched that movie 20 times. I'd like to be that guy.

Ever catch yourself dreaming of a better life? We wonder what it would be like to have a better paying job with more perks, or what it would have been like to marry the cute girl that sat behind us in homeroom. (What was her name again?) When we play pick-up games of basketball at the gym, we imagine ourselves dunking on Jordan and Shaq.

Our friends at the office fantasize all the time about money, sports and women. So what's the big deal?

True, all guys fantasize sometimes. True, not all fantasies are harmful. They are, however, if we are thinking about money, power, accomplishment or sex in ways that are not consistent with God's laws and plans for our lives.

Looking Inside

In my experience, both personally and clinically, fantasies are usually created in order to fulfill deep longings in our spirit.

While you're dreaming about taking the checkered flag at Daytona or catching the winning pass from Kurt Warner, a need in you is being met. There are elements in all fantasies that seem to correct our self-image and meet our needs for love, nurture and affirmation. Truth is, we fantasize because deep down we are lonely and angry about being lonely.

Many Christian men simply try to turn these thoughts off, to stop fantasizing. But attempting to do so might only frustrate

those very real longings and feelings. If you are feeling lonely already and you turn off your mental escapes, you may find that you get rather angry.

Finding healthy ways to meet our emotional and spiritual desires is a much better way to turn off fantasies. We should first try to understand what our fantasies are trying to teach us before we try to turn them off.

Wanna Be Like Mike?

Take sports fantasies, for example. When I was in high school I longed to be a great basketball player.

I thought that everyone liked basketball players. They always seemed, to me at least, to be popular, to have lots of friends and to get the pretty girls! So I tried hard to be good at it.

But, I had basic problems, not the least of which was being rather slow. Did I say slow? A Saint Bernard could move faster than I could on the court.

My senior year of high school I was cut from the team. Funny, but even right now it's painful to talk about it. What a great fantasy, to be the one who sinks the shot and gets the glory.

Do you have athletic fantasies? Many of us men do, whatever our level of success on or off the field. We all have memories of the locker rooms, the coaches, the opinions of the other boys and our thoughts about what women really want.

In one way, athletic fantasies are about being accepted. My basketball fantasy corrects the rather poor self-image of the teen-ager in high school, me, who longed to fit in and to be desired and affirmed. Are you beginning to see how fantasies work?

Some of us fantasize about money. Whatever our level of financial accomplishment we always seem to want more. The world teaches us that good men make lots of money.

Money is a sign of success. We think that having it will bring us lots of admiration. Think of the objects you fantasize about that would suggest you have money.

For example, do you have a particular car you have fantasized about having? Maybe you're already driving it, hoping for admiration. For me it would be a 1966 red Mustang convertible. (Pardon some drool on my chin.)

Since I was old enough to drive I've thought about that car. I've fantasized about owning one, checked the papers to find one and even considered spending money that could go to more important things. But if I owned one, would people really like me more?

How about houses, yachts, country club memberships or other "big ticket" items? Have you ever spent money on something you couldn't really afford in order to bring you admiration?

Status or having some kind of power is another possible fantasy. What role, job or accomplishment do you dream about? We think, If I were only the CEO of a large company, then I would be OK.

Fantasies can really vary. Maybe status for you is not about a job from which you earn money, but some other accomplishment or achievement that you think would bring you acceptance in the eyes of others.

I once ran for the school board in the town in which I lived. I was partly motivated by a sense of service, but it was also nice to know that enough people liked me enough to vote for me. From that I used to wonder what it might be like to run for Congress.

Congressmen get lots of attention and affirmation. ("Shall I tell the president you'll call him back later, congressman Laaser?" "Yes, please.") I wonder how many of us have pursued our fantasies of success rather than God's calling for our

lives.

The Holy Grail

Of course, there are those ever-present fantasies about sex. Think about how many times per day we men think about that!

There is a normal part of the brain that desires sex, but what do you do with that? How many sexual fantasies have you played out in your mind?

To me, a woman's admiration was always the "Holy Grail." Other boys talked of sexual conquests, of "scoring," and they always seemed to get lots of attention.

When I used to look at pornography, the women there seemed to be smiling and wanting me. I could control that by opening or closing the magazine, turning on the video or clicking onto the Internet.

I really longed to be liked, affirmed and touched lovingly. I fantasized about this elusive thing called female nurture. When my wife occasionally said no to sex, it could send me off fantasizing about women (in my mind) who seemed to really want and desire me.

I've worked with thousands of men who fantasize about all kinds of sexual activity. I've always found that whatever the activity, however perverse or strange it might seem, there is always a deep longing inside that man's heart for love, approval, nurture and healthy touch.

Do you sexually fantasize? Ask yourself what your fantasy is trying to teach you about your longing to be a man, to be worth something, to be important or powerful, to get past your insecurities, and/or to be loved and nurtured. You may even fantasize because you're angry that women, like your wife, don't seem to give you what you need.

Fantasy Inventory

My encouragement to you is to take a fantasy inventory. Write down what you think or dream about a lot. Then ask yourself, what is this fantasy correcting in your life today or your life in the past.

How have you deluded yourself into thinking, If I only had this or that, I would be happy and content.

In the end, you'll find that you can't get enough success, money, power or sex to really satisfy. You will always want more.

In John 4 when Jesus talked to the woman at the well in Samaria, He said that drinking water from that well would only leave her thirsty again. He offered her "living water" so that she would never thirst again.

Fellowship with God, with other guys and with one woman in marriage is the only way to satisfy our inner longings.

All of us need to get a vision in our mind of what that kind of fellowship would be like. We can even use our imagination to help us think about a more positive future in Christ. We might even use the model of other men who seem to have this kind of fellowship. They may not always be successful men (in the eyes of the world), but they will be peaceful men.

Vision is the antidote to fantasy. There are several key differences between fantasy and vision:

****Fantasy is selfish.** Vision is selfless.

****Fantasy leads us into the world's definition of acceptance.**

Vision reminds us of God's acceptance through His grace.

****Fantasy gets us to long for talents and gifts we do not have.** Vision leads us to God's calling on our life and to our true abilities and gifts.

****Fantasy is an image of an idyllic healing of our wounds from the past.** Vision is an image of how our wounds strengthen us for God's work.

****Fantasy offers us a false intimacy.** Vision points us to real intimacy.

****Fantasy tempts us with instant gratification.** Vision promises us eternal peace.

****Fantasy distracts us.** Vision directs us.

Begin to pray for vision and that God will begin to renew your mind like Paul talks about in Romans 12:2. I also suggest that you talk in your men's fellowship about the myths of the world. The greatest enemy of fellowship with God and with others is silence.

If you work hard at understanding the deepest longings of your heart for love and nurture, and if you find what you need in Christ and in one another, you will be amazed at how fast your fantasies will disappear. You won't need them anymore.

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