

Fantasy Island 2: From Innocent to Indecent

Welcome to Fantasy Island.

Fantasy is big business; however, it's not all bad. It's not wrong to have dreams or aspirations or to say, "Man, I wish I could do that." But when it crosses the line into destruction, that's when we have to stop and pause.

You know this as well as I do. You don't have to find it—it will find you. If you are a man, you will have a relationship with fantasy. That doesn't make you bad; it just depends on what kind of fantasy it is.

One of the top search terms on is *porn*. I'm encouraged by that. Guys know they are struggling with sexual fantasy. How could we not be within our sexualized culture? We're finding that guys are taking on that battle, and that is encouraging for the future of our families and our culture.

Jesus addresses the idea of sexual fantasy right on the nose. When He was talking to a group of guys, He said, "You have heard, 'Don't commit adultery,' but I say if you lust after a woman in your heart, you have already committed adultery" (see Matt. 5:27-28).

Jesus always brought the discussion from the outward behavior to the inward life.

God made us with emotions and dreams, with aspirations and longings. These aren't bad. What *is* bad is when we choose to fulfill these longings and aspirations in unhealthy ways through fantasy. It's important, as a man—whether you are a father, want to reach other men or are just growing yourself—to know what your fantasy is, what it does and what it says about you.

Our fantasy life reveals a lot about us. We have to understand fantasy—its power and its ability to impact you, your family, your lives, your relationships and your thinking. We are not going to take on fantasy from the surface level. If you look at it from the surface level and the behaviors connected to fantasy, then you are not really dealing with it at the root. Fantasy and the whole destructive part of it don't exist at the surface level at which you see it expressed.

Consider a guy who is sucking down Internet porn. The issue is not the symptom of him viewing porn. The issue is the underlying reason for why he's diving into it. That's why we are examining the issue of fantasy from what it tells us about our reality.

When the demands of reality hit a man's life, it puts pressure on his character. When pressure hits a man's character, we see what he is made of. That is actually a phrase we use in a man's world: "Let's see what he's made of."

When you grow as a man, you get more responsibility, more sacrifices and more tension. You have more relationships you have to manage, and that's where the boy or the man comes out. When the pressures and demands of being a man come, one approach is to face them. You embrace those realities and grow through them. The other option is to start looking for avenues to escape your reality because the reality is just too hard.

This is where fantasy comes in. You start looking for an alternative to your reality—a relief and an escape. It's just kind of hard and doesn't feel so comfortable over there. The reason it doesn't feel comfortable is because you don't have the character inside you to meet the demand of the pressure. The bottom line of fantasy is wanting out of your reality, and the source of wanting out of your reality is the discontentment, dissatisfaction or desire to replace your reality with fantasy.

On a practical level, here's what that means: If you can't have a real relationship with a real woman through real interaction and real dialogue and real courtship, or if you can't find significance in your work reality, then as men we just don't feel so great.

If we can't win a real woman, we will be tempted to pursue a relationship with fantasy. If we can't find real intimacy after we go through the honeymoon phase of our marriage, we'll be tempted to find an easy false connection with pixelated women.

If you can't find real significance in the reality of your work, then you'll be tempted to go into the fantasy world to take on some kind of false significance or false power. Shoot a gun for hours on end. Kill the enemies in Fantasyland, and feel that sense of accomplishment and power. Run your fantasy sports team to conquer the league. That's how it works.

First, know that your reality is God's glory. He lives and operates in truth and reality. You will not find God in the world of fantasy because it is unreality. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Second, your reality is your pathway to maturity. Growth requires character. Character requires pressure, where you leave boyhood behind and forge ahead to manhood.

Third, your reality is the path to authenticity and spiritual integrity. Why is reality the path to authenticity and integrity? Fantasy is synthetic. Reality is authentic. It's the difference between real and unreal.

To sum it all up, the discussion of fantasy revolves around contending with reality. You can do two things with reality: 1) You can embrace it, grow with it and let God use it, or 2) You can compartmentalize it.

It's sort of like the slogan, "What happens in Vegas stays in

Vegas.” The core of that campaign tells you to compartmentalize your reality. Escape, and what happens here stays here. Culture concurs.

But just in case you don’t know, we can’t escape reality. You can try to abandon reality and pursue an affair, drop your family and think that the grass is greener over there, but your reality will always chase you. It will hunt you down. You cannot run from it. There are many, many testimonies to prove that.

Fantasy is an island because it separates you—from reality, from God’s glory, from maturity, authenticity and spiritual integrity. I don’t know if you look at fantasy in that way, but do you know who has a big stake in your fantasy? Satan. He won’t tell you the truth. Culture isn’t going to tell you the truth. Your flesh and impulses are not going to tell you the truth.

God’s Word is going to tell you the truth. Get connected with other like-minded men and pursue His reality for your life.

This article is the first in a series titled Fantasy Island, Part 2, where Saddleback Church’s Kenny Luck takes a closer look at the emotional aspects of fantasy. In this series, Luck also will discuss God’s will for men like you who want to grow in maturity, truth and reality rather than in Satan’s plan to replace your reality with his fantasy, escapism and unreality.

Kenny Luck is the founder of Every Man Ministries and the men’s pastor at Saddleback Church. His 20th book, *Sleeping Giant: No Movement of God Without Men of God*, is the proven blueprint for men’s ministries and was recently released through B&H Publishing. Watch and read more of Kenny’s teaching at [. Follow Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter \(@everymm\) and YouTube.](#)