

How to Avoid the 'Evil Ooze'

This past week, I had the opportunity to spend time in Las Vegas. I was traveling for work. I also realized why they call it Sin City. The moment I walked off the plane, I felt this "evil ooze" fall all over me.

The whole city is only there for the pleasure of men and women. There was "sex" on every billboard, ads for booze and gambling at every turn, and hotels and conventions with scantily clad women everywhere.

As a husband, father and pastor, I have taken pride in "taming" my mind of impure thoughts. But this week in Vegas was an eye-opener—pun intended. I realized, even as close as I felt to God or even that feeling of "I have arrived," I am nowhere close to where God wants me to be. I thank God that the only thing that ran wild this past week was my mind. If I were a weaker man, things could have gotten out of hand.

This is not necessarily a repentance article, but a warning article. I am not bragging or judging, but every day I read the Word, and every day I pray for forgiveness—diligently. And yet I still struggled with impure thoughts on that trip. By the grace of God, I was deep enough in the Word to stave off actions, but I was not deep enough in it to stave off thoughts.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13, NASB).

Vegas is not the only place where the mind can run wild. Work, the mall, restaurants and, yes, even church can run the mind wild too. It's not just men, either; women's minds can run wild just as bad as men's. It's that thought of someone being nicer to you than your husband or someone complimenting you more than your spouse does. It's always that "grass is greener

on the other side” syndrome. We all have it, especially if we don’t prepare our minds.

So, how do we win the battle of the mind? “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Dwelling on God is the first step. It’s not easy to think of evil things when your mind is fixed on God. Daily devotion, prayer and meditation are the most important things you can do.

Another way to stay focused on God is to surround yourself with godly people. I can tell you now that I will never go to Vegas alone again. My wife or a Christian brother will be with me on the next trip.

Don’t let Satan control your thoughts. Focus on God and praise Him, and you will win the battle of the mind.

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

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