

Genesis 34 Misdirected Passions

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There are a lot of good things in life that lose their value when you put them in the wrong place or use them in the wrong way.

Ice cream for example, is good, but you can't have it for breakfast. I know that might be shocking news to some of you, but it's true. There's nothing wrong with ice cream, it can, and should, be enjoyed sometimes as a treat, but it doesn't have the necessary nutrients to give you a good, solid foundation for health or the energy you need throughout the day.

Or what about a fire? Fire is good, we have a fireplace in our house and we love to use it in the winter. My wife and I will sit by it at night after the boys have gone to bed and enjoy the warmth and sense of relaxation that the fire provides. It can even be used as a tool – last winter during one of the big storms, the transformer that serves our neighborhood blew out and we lost all electricity to the house which meant we also lost heat because there was nothing to pump the heat throughout the house. It was 56 degrees inside and we were thankful to have a fireplace. We used it keep the kids warm and even to boil some water for coffee and oatmeal. That fire helped our family.

But all you have to do is take that very same fire and move it 2' forward, out of the fireplace and onto the living room floor and suddenly you have something that could destroy our family instead of blessing us.

Think about rivers – all that rushing water is great when it's pouring over a hydroelectric dam and generating electricity, or when you're out water skiing or fishing, but if you live in Minot, ND and the river is overrunning it's banks and flooding your town, it's not such a good thing anymore.

This morning we're going to see something similar in Genesis – we're going to watch as three men desire good things but pursue them in the wrong way and wind up causing a terrible amount of disgrace and death – all because they tried to take something good and use it in the wrong way.

[1](#) Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. [2](#) And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. [3](#) His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. [4](#) So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

Dinah, coming from a house full of guys is interested in getting a little female companionship – she’s out trying to make friends. She’s estimated to be in her mid-late teens here – definitely of marriageable age, but not looking for that today.

When along comes the prince – at some point as she is out walking around she catches his eye – “who’s the new hottie?” he asks himself? He goes and checks her out, turns out she’s not from around here, which instantly makes her exotic. Remember when you were in school and some new kid came, the fact they were from somewhere different often seemed cool - one of the coolest guys in our high school had moved to Southern California from Iowa.

Anyway, he sees her and is strongly attracted to her, and somehow gets her either forcibly or willingly to come with him and at some point he rapes her. He either loses control of himself or never had any in the first place and he takes an experience that was meant to be pleasant and turns it into the most unpleasant thing imaginable. He takes an experience, which is intended to be shared only between a man and a woman who are committed to one another in marriage, and uses it for his own selfish enjoyment.

The Bible says he “lay” with her – and if you remember, when we looked at chapter 30 we noted this phrase is **never** used to describe an intimate sexual encounter between a husband and wife in Genesis. For those relationships, typically the phrase “he *knew* her” is used.

To ‘lay with’ someone refers only to the actual act of intercourse. But sex is meant to be more than just an act, it is meant to have spiritual and emotions dimensions as well, which is why the term to ‘*know*’ is used – it means literally to ‘know’ but it refers to a depth and uniqueness of knowledge of your spouse that isn’t shared by anyone else.

That knowledge is also very pleasant to acquire. But, now think about this with me. When we discussed creation in the opening chapters of Genesis, one of things we pointed out is the blessing of beauty and pleasure. Things do not have to be either beautiful or enjoyable, *but they are*.

Food does not have to taste good – the only reason we need to eat is because we need calories. We could get that from the grass just like cows, God could have given us four stomachs and we could chew cud. Or we could just take some kind of tasteless pill each day and be done. But God didn’t do that – He gave us the ability to distinguish between sweet and salty, bitter and spicy and we like it. But once again, *there is no reason for you to like it* or to have such variety – it is a blessing from God.

Similarly, sex can produce children, but it doesn’t every time, even when that’s your goal. But it also produces pleasure. That pleasure though is meant to be enjoyed only between one man and one woman “‘til death do they part.” It is *the most intimate act of your life* and God created it to be enjoyed with only **one** other person, to bless and strengthen your

marriage, to bond you together in a wonderful way. Sex is a great thing, a gift from God, but it must be kept in its right place, which is, inside the bounds of marriage.

In the typical marriage vows which you've heard so many times, the man promises to his almost-wife, in front of God and his friends and family to take her "as [his] lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do [they] part."

It is only in the midst of that kind of commitment that the truest and deepest intimacy and union of sexual intercourse can be found. When you have given yourself completely, unselfishly to another human being and know they have given themselves to you in the same way, *then* you can be completely open and vulnerable before them.

Unfortunately, that's not what Shechem was after – he just wanted, passionately wanted, some self-satisfaction.

Instead of cherishing her, he defiled her **because** he placed his desires above her best interests. KJV- defiled her; NIV, NKJV – violated her; NLT – raped her; NASB – lay with her by force; ESV – humiliated her; older English translations – humbled her.

"But wait!" you say, doesn't it say he loved her, that he was strongly attracted to her, and that he spoke kindly to her. Yes, it does, but the problem was, he wasn't loving her in the right way. He isn't saying "I want to sacrifice myself for you, I want to lead you, I want to serve you, I want to help you" he was saying, "I want to have you around because you're hot" or because you make me feel good.

His fire was burning for her, but it was burning in the middle of the living room and burning down the house, his river was raging for her, but it was running through the middle of town and ruining lives.

Look - just because you want something, even something good, doesn't mean you can go about getting it however you want. Shechem let his desire for this good thing bring **harm**, *not love*, to someone else. His passion overcame his propriety.

And here is where we need to say a word apologetically as well – not in the sense of being sorry, but in the theological sense where apologetics means providing a reason, or a defense for the faith.

Let me ask you the question – was it right or wrong for Shechem to force himself on Dinah?

Well, that depends on whose perspective you take – for Shechem it seemed right, but what about for Dinah? So, who was right? If this was a democracy, you only have two voters and they're casting different ballots – so who wins? Well, Shechem won because he was strong enough to get what he wanted.

We live in a day and age where people are encouraged all the time to do what they want, if it feels good, do it. Now, some try to modify that and say, if it feels good, and doesn't hurt anyone else, do it. *But why do you have to add that modifier?* What if, like Shechem, you can't get what you want without hurting someone else? Why should you be restrained? Can't I just follow my heart and let the strong survive?

That's the advice I heard just last week at the gym, two guys were talking about a particular situation in one of their lives and the other told him, "well, you know, your heart will let you know what to do." That sounds good at first, but *what was Shechem's heart telling him to do?* Following your heart can be a dangerous thing, the Bible says "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Unless your heart has been redeemed by Christ and made new, and unless it is constantly being washed and renewed by Him, *your heart will lead you astray*. It was the desire of the heart that led Adam and Eve into the first sin, they weren't forced to do it, they wanted to do it. Instead of following after God, they followed after the desires of their heart.

Today we continue to sever that tie with God, no longer allowing Him to tell us what is right and wrong, we listen instead to our hearts and our loins in a 100MPH sprint toward pleasure. Unfortunately, when everyone is pursuing their own passions, a collision is unavoidable - sooner or later two desires are going to conflict and someone is going to get hurt. We see it with Dinah here and we will soon see it on an even larger scale.

[5](#) And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. [6](#) Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. [7](#) And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. [8](#) But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. [9](#) And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. [10](#) So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

[11](#) Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. [12](#) Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

[13](#) But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. [14](#) And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us.

[15](#) But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised, [16](#) then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. [17](#) But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

[18](#) And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. [19](#) So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He *was* more honorable than all the household of his father.

[20](#) And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: [21](#) "These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. [22](#) Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. [23](#) *Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us." [24](#) And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

[25](#) Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. [26](#) And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. [27](#) The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. [28](#) They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what *was* in the city and what *was* in the field, [29](#) and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that *was* in the houses.

[30](#) Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

[31](#) But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

Dinah's brothers, like Shechem, have very strong desires. And their desire is for a good thing – they want to defend their sister and see justice brought on the one who has abused her. *But*, they go about getting what they want in the wrong way. Once again, what could be a useful fire is burning in the wrong place and causing damage instead of bringing blessing.

And, like Shechem, they are going about it all wrong. Instead of pursuing justice, they take it into their own hands and use a blasphemous tool to do it.

Circumcision was given to Abraham and his descendants as a sign that they were in a covenant relationship with God, that they were His special, chosen people and Jacob's boys used it as a weapon to weaken a city and attack it. It would be like Christians using baptism as a pretense for drowning people.

The boys make no mention of God, they just say "if you're not circumcised, it would be a reproach to us." And when Shechem and his dad go back home and explain to everyone why they should do it, they aren't told "we're being offered a relationship with the only One and True living God" they say, if we do this, we can marry into all their stuff. Their eyes are only fixed on getting material things... and then disaster strikes.

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I think it is interesting to note that Shechem, who overpowered Dinah while pursuing his passion, is now overwhelmed by her brothers who are pursuing their own passion for revenge. But, that's the way things go when you live in a land where everyone just does what is right in their own eyes, when there is nothing outside of the individual telling them what is right and wrong. As we said earlier, sooner or later my desires are going to clash with yours and whichever one of us is stronger is going to walk away with what we want.

Shechem, Simeon, and Levi all had misguided passions. They desired good things but pursued them in the wrong ways.

As I was studying this week I got to thinking about that word 'passion.' What does it mean? And why is it used to speak about Christ and His work on the cross?

So, I looked up passion in a dictionary of etymology (OK, I'm a nerd, I love learning) it's a dictionary that traces the origins of words and shows how they have evolved over time. I discovered passion came into the English language from French and into French from Latin. According to my dictionary "the Latin 'passio' was chiefly a word of Christian theology referring especially to the suffering of Christ" and this was also "the earliest meaning in Old French and Middle English." It didn't take on the meaning of a strong desire for several centuries and it wasn't until Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* in the 1200s that it was first associated with any sexual meaning.

So, when we talk about the Passion of Christ, we aren't describing what Christ did based on what we feel, originally we used this word to describe how what we feel is like what Christ did. That our desires and actions are that intense.

But here is the difference – Jesus desired the good of others, not just His own good. His passion caused Him difficulty, cost Him effort and pain, and brought blessing, not disgrace to us. His was a pure form of love, a love directed and empowered by the Father. This is the kind of love and passion we need to have, not one that blindly pursues whatever our hearts desire.

So my challenge to you this morning is to let God direct you, submit yourself and your passions to Him, pursue the things He wants you to pursue in the way He wants them to be pursued. Use the gift of fire, but keep it in the fireplace.

And also, through the gift of His passionate act of love on the Cross, receive His forgiveness for the pain you have caused others and receive His healing of the pain that others have caused you. We're not going to stop hurting each other until we all submit our desires to Him, only then, by everyone facing in the same direction and moving toward His kingdom, will we ever stop slamming into each other.