

7 Deadly Sins: Cyber Stalking

By Jill A. Williams

Have you ever seen someone you're attracted to on television, in class, at work or at church and thought, "Maaaannnnn... She fiiinnnee as wiinnnee" or "He's not just a snack, but a whole entire meal"? Then somehow you found out what their name is and looked them up on social media... And not only looked up the High School they went/go to, but scanned their timeline alllll the way down - past 2015, past 2012 - 'til the very beginning of their feed. And not just looked at the posts on the feed, but looked up the comments made on their posts, and (for the seasoned few in this category) even undertaken to look up people they know "to better understand who they are"? YOU, my friend, are rolling in the fields of *Cyber Stalking*.

If this pursuit is fuelled by a sexual desire for, and attraction to this person, then we could even term this *Cyber Lust*.

Sin, according to Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, can be committed without even touching another person: "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat 5:28). Our minds and thoughts are so powerful that they can cause us to turn from a state of grace to sin.

Papa, give us a signal

Stalking is the act of intentionally pursuing a target, for the purpose of finding information and collecting evidence of a person's whereabouts and interests (Jill's Dictionary). This process links to lust for one simple reason: you're creating and indulging in what the Bible terms "imagination" (2 Cor 10:5) or intense desires, essentially creating the environment for "a heart that devises wicked schemes" (Prov 6:18). Wicked Schemes? Is it a crime to like someone so much that you want to become fully immersed in their lives? If it's someone you hardly even know, and the other person isn't directly revealing parts of their lives to you, then the answer is probably - yes. Not only is it creepy, but you are 'plotting' and 'scheming' a way to become part of someone's life. You could even be doing so to alter the way that someone perceives and acts towards you through finding out about their personal lives. That sounds like manipulation to me. In James 4:3, it says that when you want something really badly you could end up devising or plotting ways to get it. You could pray amiss; not asking for and trusting the Lord for it.

"A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips" in spiritual terms could be "a moment of letting your spiritual guard down leads to a lifetime of backlash from the enemy". He will constantly throw it back in your face. I once found myself falling into this trap. I liked someone I met and instead of taking it to God, I boarded the cyber stalker's rocket ship - on a completely solo mission. One thing that the enemy kept taunting me with, is that the personality and

lifestyle of the person I stalked greatly appealed to me. These were used as arrows - and 'signals from Papa'- to infiltrate my spiritual armour. I wanted to get to know this person, but every way I tried, failed. In my striving, I ended up praying and hoping amiss, not seeing that what I was doing was wrong. That's when I got hit by a truth bomb from the Lord: "Honey, this aint you, and it's not for you."

I'm learning that when the backlash comes, that I need to talk back to the enemy and say "You have no hold on me, Devil! Jesus already forgave me for all that was and is to come!" If you find yourself getting flustered with slow progress in your journey to recovery, just remember that always checking a person's statuses on WhatsApp, liking all their posts since 1902 and being the first to react to all their memes and posts, isn't going to help you. Just remind yourself that if the battle isn't won by God, then the war isn't over.

The pursuit

Imagination is the creation of images in your mind that can fuel desire and later on, spark action. TD Jakes relayed once that creating an expectation in your mind and projecting that onto others is a way of worshipping an image or idea and, like witches or warlocks, you try to transform someone into something they are not, all for your benefit. We just spoke about this as a form of manipulation. And then it hit me... Don't we also do this for people we term 'heroes' and 'superstars'? Whether stalking happens or not, we form an image of who we expect them to be and ultimately worship that image? Don't get me wrong. Attraction and admiration is from God, but I know that the enemy uses the little things (Song 2:15) to throw you off course. Beware of brewing potions of expectation and conjuring up images all in the name of wanting things to be the way you want. You could be calling upon a host of the devil's minions to reside in your camp. You're possibly pursuing something that isn't real, or something that isn't part of God's reality for you. What God wants for you, is part of his Kingdom. "If it ain't kingdom, I don't want it." (Redefined TV.com)

They say that time is a gift. I have found myself on numerous occasions mindlessly wandering through social media 'til late at night. There is a danger to this: not being intentional about the way you use social media will cause you to fall into traps set up by the enemy. The devil makes sure to study our weaknesses so intensely that he can devise schemes and create opportunities for himself and his minions to infiltrate our spiritual armour. "Everything is Spiritual. You made me spiritual-ly" (Kirk Franklin - Spiritual). You're about to get hit by a truth bomb, brace yourself! God, the One who made the universe and beyond; the One who existed before time began; the One who sits on the Throne of thrones and is the King of kings, is in pursuit of YOU. Whether or not you respond to his promptings is completely up to you. Whatever you decide has no effect on what God decides. He still pursues.

Creeping Online

In every squad (especially with girls) there is that one friend who knows how to do their research. Just give them a name. They'll find who you're looking for. Sometimes this is really helpful and useful, especially if you need to speak to someone about something or if you want to meet someone in person for coffee. Sometimes, looking a person up is purely for keeping tabs on them. Prolonged stalking leads to infatuation. Those who creep and lurk in the streets of Cyber Space could find themselves looking for validation from people they have never met and have no connection to. As is the case with all things in life, intent is vital. The more time and energy you give to bad habits, the more it will consume your heart and mind and eventually your life. Stop creeping in the dark and start walking in the Light.

What do I do now?

Give, Fast, Pray, Confess and Abstain.

Generosity is often the thing we avoid doing because we don't want to be inconvenienced, but it's also the thing that will bring us the most joy. Give your time and your attention to family, friends and even strangers who need a kind act or word. This way, you would be spending less time online and more time with real people.

Fast the way Daniel or Esther did when they prepared to meet the King, or as the prophets Elijah, Jeremiah and Isaiah did when they were seeking counsel from the Lord, or even as Jesus did when he was about to face the devil. Fasting is meant to strengthen you spiritually by making clear to your physical man what your spiritual man needs. What your spiritual man needs right now, is probably a deeper understanding of God's desire to have your full attention, to be with you and to show you love.

Prayer is not about rushing through an Our Father, so you know you did your good deed for the day. You need to talk. Talk out what you really feel with the Lord. Then be willing to listen to the response. It might come to you as a gentle whisper or knowing in your spirit, through a comment from someone throughout the day or even in a song. God hears and answers prayer, so if you are serious about letting go of your stalker-like ways, get with God.

The Bible says to "Confess your sins one to another" (Jas 5:16). This should definitely be done in Confession and prayer, but can also be consolidated through an accountability partner. This person would be a trustworthy mentor that can help you through the temptation and cravings you might face on your journey. It is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Pray and fast with this person, to give your spirit food for the battle that might ensue on this journey.

Abstinence is not only about refraining to do something that would cause you to sin (such as staying online 'til the AM's). It's more about saying YES than saying NO. You might say NO to late-night cyber stalking by saying YES to a good night's rest, or saying NO to social media for a while in order to say YES to some quality prayer time.

So next time you see someone you like, go up to them and let them know. Call them. Text them. Video Chat with them. Use technology to reach out to them, instead of watching them live from a distance. Communicate in order to get to know them, the old-fashioned way.