



The craving for a Toll House cookie (loaded with chocolate chunks) is similar to the craving for romantic euphoria. And with good reason: chocolate is brimming with a substance called phenylethylamine (PEA). Scientific research indicates that when we are drawn to the opposite sex, the exact amphetamine-like chemical in chocolate is rapidly triggered in the brain.

This tiny molecule initiates a swift chain of gossip-like information along nerve cells. A whirl of exhilaration ensues, lifting a simple magnetism onto another plane: infatuation. Though often dismissed as a teenage phenomenon, infatuation actually plays an important role in courtship—it's the first step toward bona fide attraction and contributes to building a reliable, intimate partnership. No wonder God created PEA. Marriage is surrender, commitment, compromise, and work; if it weren't for the stupor of romance, why would anyone want to get "hitched"!

Yet, there is also a serious downside to this chemical. Moral failure almost always begins with it. We should, therefore, heed its effect as a warning.

DO WOMEN REALLY STRUGGLE WITH LUST?

A women's magazine published a questionnaire on intimate experiences, and tucked in among questions on marriage, childbearing, and self-esteem was this one: "Have you ever been tempted to have an affair?" Of the women polled, 47% admitted they had been tempted—an extraordinary proportion, considering it was more than those indicating problems with moodiness (39%) or depression (34%). Incidentally, 93% of those responding expressed having belief in God.

FIGHTING TEMPTATION

Years ago, I was the only female speaker at a week-long convention. A friendship began to grow between me and one of the well-known speakers. I'd tell

him about my wonderful family and he'd do likewise. I found him warm and engaging as we talked about our years in the ministry.

As the week wore on, I looked forward to ending the day in more conversation and companionship with this interesting man. Though we were never alone, I'd gone from seeing him merely as a friend to having an intense mental suggestion: *Wouldn't it be wonderful to spend more time with him?*

Apparently, I had allowed my guard to drop, and my biology responded with infatuation. Late one evening, thoughts of him lingered, and my battle intensified. In desperation, I paced. I collapsed onto my bed and pounded the mattress, praying, "God, I can't possibly face tomorrow's ministry like this. Temptation has me so distracted. I'm shocked by it—and ashamed of my own feelings. I'm happily married. I'm in ministry. The sweet pleasure of these romantic feelings frightens me. You know I cannot change my emotions. My only hope is in Your grace." On and on I wrestled in prayer until I finally fell asleep.

I awoke refreshed, strengthened, . . . and 90% delivered. The Lord had poured out His grace and mercy upon me, but left a small "scar" to keep me alert. God wanted me to live out His righteousness in a self-controlled manner. Before I left my room, I made some decisions based on faith and facts rather than feelings.

That day, I got busy getting to know the other speakers, which reduced conversations with this "chocolate chip cookie." If thoughts leaped to forbidden fruit, I'd deliberately concentrate on God-pleasing thoughts. ([Philippians 4:8](#))

THE PATH OF INFATUATION

Since infatuation has an intoxicating grip on imaginations and choices, let's familiarize ourselves with the path: When a man begins to hold a woman's interest, the PEA-attacked female yearns for another encounter. Unstoppable thoughts intrude with a power all their own, and the vulnerable one begins to see the object of her affections through very tinted lenses—everything about him appears marvelous.

Sadly, the victim is afflicted with perpetual dread that she might not get what she wants . . . him! Emotional seasickness develops as she vacillates between high expectation and nail-biting uncertainty!

After my experience—and after hearing an inordinate number of similar stories in a brief period—I wrote *Feelings Women Rarely Share*, in which I identify three determinants for how people can deal with sexual temptation:

Spiritual maturity. When we have Christ as our first love, we are less prone to fall into sin.

Self-understanding. We are less likely to stray into immorality if we are cognizant of our vulnerabilities. Asking questions like, Am I drawn to appearance? intelligence? personality? wealth? fame? can help us anticipate "red flag" situations.

Good training. Since knowledge about temptation is not intuitive, it is wise to learn the physiological dynamics and spiritual antidotes for sexual attraction.

Through my near-failure, God taught me lifelong lessons about spiritual warfare and my own susceptibility. You may be thinking, "*Never! I have a good marriage and strong moral standards.*" That's a good defense but no guarantee against immorality.

King Solomon warns us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" ([Proverbs 4:23](#) NLT). And the apostle Paul admonishes avoiding "even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . ." ([Ephesians 5:3](#)). I add my voice to theirs and say, "Pick up your feet and flee immorality!"

—*Judy Reamer*