Man: Imagine you're in the bank, the teller in the next window is young, vivacious, and beautiful. When you see her, do you yawn, try to avoid looking like you're looking, crane your neck, or drool?

[musical transition "Standin' on the Corner"]

Man: I think I'd try to avoid looking like I'm looking.

Man: I've done all of the above – yes, I would avoid trying to look.

[musical transition "Standin' on the Corner"]

Man: I'd say it's a natural reaction. I mean, you can't look away from the person, but if you look from the chin up, it's a whole lot easier.

[musical transition "Standin' on the Corner"]

Man: You know, again, I'm a man, I'm going to be affected by those kinds of things, and I will be until I'm dead. Sometimes I curse myself for that, but, simply put, that's the way it's going to be.

Man: I just have to admit it, whenever there's flesh that's flashed in front of me or a pretty woman walks by, my eyes catch that, they recognize that fact, or what it is that I'm seeing. It's what I do next that's the most important thing, and I avert my eyes, and – that's happening all the time. I'm sure I speak for most men – it's everywhere. You can't buy a stick of gum at the grocery store without being surrounded by it or whatever. I find myself looking down at my shoes all the time, as I'm walking along.

[musical transition "Standin' on the Corner"]

Bob: And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. They were just being honest, weren't they?
Dennis: I think they were.

Bob: I noticed most of them didn't qualify what they would do if their wife was with them as compared to what they would do if they were alone. Like, maybe they'd have a different response?

Dennis: Like, maybe they wouldn't drool.

Barbara: I should hope not.

Dennis: You know, interestingly enough, I've been in two different Bible studies in the last couple of weeks with men and, Bob, you were in one of them. I was leading a group of men talking about the subject of temptation, and I asked the men and the group what has been your besetting temptation? What has been the greatest lure of your life that you have found you have struggled against in terms of the current of your flesh, and you've had to go to God with repeatedly to ask for help and strength and occasionally have to confess it as sin. And, let's see, I count them all up – almost 20 men in the two Bible studies – 100 percent said that the sin that they dealt with was lust.

Bob: And I think it's the universal. Fred Stoker wrote a book called "Every Man's Battle," and the temptation to lust is every man's battle.

Dennis: And it's not just pornography, it's just existing in this culture that is a very – well, it's a suggestive culture. It's not a modest culture at all.

Well, we've got some help today. Shaunti Feldhahn joins us again this week for help in understanding how your husband thinks, and for you singles who are listening, this ought to be very instructive for single men and women as you think about the opposite sex. Shaunti, welcome back to FamilyLife Today.

Shaunti: Great to be with you.

Bob: We also have your wife Barbara who is joining us this week as we talk about how men think, and you had a chance to spend some time meditating on these same thoughts as you were helping to write the book, "Rekindling the Romance," and counseling wives about the uniquenesses of their husbands.

Barbara: That's right I did. I'm glad to be here today, Bob.

Dennis: Shaunti is a bestselling author, newspaper columnist for The Atlanta Journal Constitution. She has a weekly column there for women on women's issues and popular culture issues that are going on in our nation. She and her husband Jeff live in the Atlanta area, and she's written a book called "For Women Only."
Shaunti, you talk about this issue of men dealing with the visual stimuli, and you say that men have a visual rolodex, is that right?

Shaunti: Yes, that's actually the way my husband described it when I was trying to get this. I just didn't understand what men meant when they said they're visual. Again, it's really no surprise to most women that men are created visual, but we don't know what that means. The way that all these men that I interviewed described it as it means two things. It means that it's really hard for them, they can't not notice a woman with an attractive figure. They simply can't not notice a woman with an attractive figure.

The second thing that it means is that they have this, what my husband calls a "visual rolodex," that image of that woman that they just noticed is burned in their brain and could rise up at any time in their mind without warning – the next day or really anytime for the rest of their life and, as my husband said, you know, "I have a visual rolodex of these images stretching back to my teen years." Every man has this.

Dennis: And when you encountered this conversation with your husband Jeff, he kind of threw it back to you and said you should think of your favorite movie stars?

Shaunti: Yes, he was trying to describe this to me – when I was explaining what this revelation was and this idea of these images popping up in your head, and I didn't get this. He said, "You know what? I bet, really, you do understand this, and we're just using different words to describe this," or something.

"So let me explain it to you this way," he said, "Okay, now, remember that move we saw last week with Tom Cruise?" "Yes." "Okay, you think he's an attractive man, correct?" "Okay." And he said, "Okay, now, how many times the next day after we've seen one of his movies will an image of Tom Cruise with his shirt off or something, just sort of rise up in the back of your head. How many times has that happened the next day?" "Never."

And he kind of said, "No, I must not be explaining myself correctly. You're just sitting at your desk, you're working on the computer, you're not thinking of anything sensual at all. You're working on one of your columns, and an image of Tom Cruise, a picture, with his shirt off, or something you as well in that movie flashes across the screen of your mind. How many times has that happened the next day?" "Never."

And he – originally, he told our home group, he thought I was just embarrassed to admit that I had pictures of Tom Cruise in my head. And finally when he told the story to our home group and saw all the women shake their heads and say, "Never," right along with me, he realized how different we are created, and that helped me get it across to all the women in this book, because we don't
recognize – think about it – if a man can't not notice a woman with an attractive figure, and if that image gets burned in his brain and could rise up at any time and assault him without warning, involuntarily, this culture is a minefield for the men in our lives.

Bob: Well, now, wait, you do – you notice Tom Cruise when he's on the screen, right?

Shaunti: Yeah, I mean, I look at – "Yeah, okay, God did good there." He's an attractive man, but that's about it.

Bob: Well, we see things in popular cultural today, though, where women are gathered around with other women, and they see some guy who is out doing a construction job, right, and the women are going "Hohoho, look at him," is that just Hollywood fabrication or are there some women who act that way?

Shaunti: Well, here is the difference – is that, for us, just like for men and women, okay, we all will notice somebody who is attractive of the opposite sex. It's not that we don't notice that somebody is attractive. What's different about it is that, for us, we don't have this thing that gets burned into our brains – most of us, now, I should say, by the way, that about 20 percent of women are visual in this way, so they'll automatically understand this – but for the rest of us, what's different is that we don't have that thing get burned into our brains. That just sort of – we're minding our own business at any time in the future, and the picture rises in the back of our men's minds, we don't understand this. So that's the difference. That construction worker – that hubba-hubba construction worker – he's not going to come back and bother us the next day when we really don't want him in our minds.

Dennis: I happen to know that Barbara is very visual, because she's an artist. Have you been thinking about the construction worker recently?

[laughter]

Bob: Or Tom Cruise or anybody?

Barbara: Are you worried about that?

Dennis: Not really, but I never thought to ask you the question before.

Barbara: The answer is no. I am very visual, and I do notice beautiful things and beautiful people, but I've never had a stray image of a man that I might think is handsome every go across my mind.

Bob: So you wouldn't go, "Boy, he's a good-looking guy," and then you walk away from that, and that's it?
Barbara: That's it, yes.

Bob: Memory erased, gone, right?

Barbara: Yes, it was just an observation. It was never burned in there to stay permanent.

Dennis: Well, you know, Bob, when we wrote our book, "Rekindling the Romance," we began the book with a story about a mythical couple by the name of Angela and Brian, who took a magic potion that caused them to trade their emotional sets. Where, all of a sudden, he stopped noticing the opposite sex, and she noticed …

Barbara: She started noticing the opposite sex.

Bob: There's that scene in there where she looks at the UPS guy …

Barbara: And notices his legs.

Bob: That they're very muscular legs and keeps thinking about him the rest of the day.

Barbara: She keeps looking at it, and he's saying, "What are you doing?"

Bob: And you're saying that's not a typical pattern for a woman?

Shaunti: No.

Barbara: Correct, it is not.

Shaunti: And the guys that I interviewed for this book, and surveyed, they don't understand that we don't understand this. They think that we're built this way, too, and so this is why it's really important, I think, for us to get this so that we can be supportive, because this culture is really difficult for the men.

Dennis: It is, and it seems to me that some women understand it, because they dress in a provocative way to burn the image in our brains.

Shaunti: Aha! But here is the thing that the men don't get and, again, I'm speaking not just to you, Dennis, with that question, but to all the men out there listening, is that, honestly, because the women don't get this, they don't realize that's what the men are thinking. The men are thinking, "She's advertising. She's trying to get me to dishonor my wife." The woman is just thinking, "He thinks I'm cute," that's it. She's not, in her mind, because we don't experience
reality the same way, she is not trying to do— in most cases— trying to do any of that.

Here is an example that one man told me. He was shocked when his relatively conservative daughter wanted to dress in a tight little outfit because she was going to be seeing a guy she really thought was cute, and he went to me and said, "What is she thinking?" And I said, "Okay, what she's thinking is 'He thinks I'm cute,' and the dad said, 'Cute has nothing to do with it. He's picturing her naked.'" And I said, "That is what she doesn't understand." And that is what most women out there dressing like that do not understand. They are not trying to tempt the men to picture them in that way. They don't realize that that is, in fact, what's happening.

Bob: They are hoping that the man will think, "I'm cute." Yes, she does want that.

Shaunti: But one guy said cute is not a category that we have.

Barbara: That's probably true. That just reminds me of the struggle we had raising our girls. We have four daughters, and with all of them, it was a difficult lesson to teach, and it's not because our girls wanted to be immodest, it's not because they were trying to attract boys for the wrong reason. They wanted to be cute, and they wanted to dress in things that they thought were cute, and it took many, many, many lessons and conversations, and it was very important that Dennis was involved in this, because coming just from me, they thought I was crazy, but when he would say what you just said to them, it made them pause and go, "Oh, maybe that is true."

But that just underscores why it's difficult for girls growing up in this culture to understand that, because it is so foreign for us to think that way. So they're dressing the way they're dressing because they think it's cute, and they do want boys to notice them and to notice that they're attractive, but that's as far as their thinking goes.

Dennis: These broadcasts are basically aimed at helping wives understand their husbands, but I want men to hear me on this. This is why, guys, we need to show up and help our daughters pick out their prom dresses …

Barbara: Absolutely, and their shorts, and their bathing suits …

Dennis: … and need to ask that they bring them home and model them for us and then give them a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down.

Barbara: And explain why something isn't appropriate, because the girls don't get it.
Shaunti: We think, we women, and I think our teenage daughters think that modesty is for our sakes. I mean, really, I think that's in our minds as, "Well, they're just being a prude." And the reason is that we think that modesty is structured to help us. What we don't realize is and know, modesty is structured by God to help the men in the world, because they get these images burned in their brain.

Bob: Okay, so let's take a wife who is listening, and she hears you say, "Okay, my husband has got a visual rolodex, and he can't not notice." Okay, so now what do I do with that? I realize that's an issue, so how should that impact our relationship?

Shaunti: Well, one of the things that I found that men said over and over and over was that what they felt like they needed was their wife to be a safe place for them to share their struggles and for her to recognize that temptation is not sin. The involuntary part of this, the way that they're wired to have these images rise up in their heads, that's involuntary. They can't do anything about it.

The question is, what do they do with that? I think one of the quotes that you played earlier was the choice, then, becomes the issue of sin or not. And for a wife to recognize that involuntary part is just the temptation, and that is a wonderful role for her to be able to play – to be supportive rather than condemning.

So many men have said, "You know, I need your sympathy with this and not your criticism." And, also, really, they sort of feel like, "If she doesn't understand this, there is no way they're going to share this struggle with their wives, because they know it will risk hurting her feelings, because she's going to think it's about them, and it's not about them.

Bob: Well, but doesn't it bother you a little bit if Jeff comes home and says, "Well, I'll tell you, I saw this one woman today, man, it's back on the visual rolodex" and – I mean – you can't just automatically go, "Well, sweetheart, I'm sure sympathetic for you."

[laughter]

Dennis: Bob, have you seen some woman recently? You were describing that a little too …

Shaunti: First of all, my husband and I, thankfully, we've been going through this the last few years since I've been doing the research for these books, and he knows about how far he can go in describing his struggles, but the key really becomes us not getting so defensive and recognizing this is just the way they're wired. It doesn't have anything to do with me, but what I can do is to help be a supportive place where he can come home, feel free to say, "You know, I am
really struggling with this today, I don't know why," and pray for him. Or be supportive in some of the things that we watch on television or in the movies.

I have had so many men say, "I really wish my wife understood this, because she keeps wanting me to go to these chick flicks with her, and I don't have anything against chick flicks. She thinks that I would just rather see something blown up and, okay, maybe I would rather see something blown up," he said, "But I'm perfectly willing to go, but I just don't want to have images of Reese Witherspoon in a tight outfit in my head for the next two months." And that's really — when we don't understand that, we're really not being supportive.

Bob: But, Barbara, aren't there some women who think, "You know, if my husband would grow in godliness, he would not struggle like this. The problem is basic spiritual immaturity, and if he would just be a more godly man, this would all go away."

Barbara: Well, I do think there are women who think that way, and I think what we're saying today is it's the way God has wired men. It is not an issue of maturity, it's an issue of design by the Creator. So the other thing that I think, in addition to what Shaunti just said, that women need to understand is that not only do they need to understand the way their husbands are wired with the rolodex, but they need to understand that they need to supply some of those pictures in the rolodex.

Shaunti: Absolutely.

Barbara: They need to be attractive, and when they're responsive to their husbands, which we talked about on an earlier broadcast, that gives her husband some of those images that he can — he can go to those. Those are okay.

Shaunti: He can before the Lord — yes, exactly.

Barbara: He can go to that image of you, his wife, and that is acceptable to God, but he cannot go to the image of the woman he saw at the bank. That's not acceptable.

So part of our responsibility is to be responsive to him so that he has images of you, his wife, that he can dwell on and be right before the Lord.

Shaunti: One of the things, actually, that I learned and put in the book and, again, it is a very sensitive subject, is that, for a man, this is one of the reasons why he needs to see his wife being willing to make the effort, just the effort, to take care of herself for him. And it doesn't matter whether she is — she could, as one man said, "You know, my wife is 115 pounds, and she's very petite, but if she doesn't look like she's making the effort to take care of herself for me, and she slouches around in sweats all day and doesn't do her hair or her makeup and
doesn't have – you know, go exercise or have any energy to go out and do things together, you know, then I feel like she's not making an effort to do something that's important to me.

Barbara: It's like you said in your book – the husbands really do love the wives. I mean, my husband really loves me, he doesn't just love my body, and sometimes that takes some self-talk – I need to remind myself he loves me, it's not all about my body.

Dennis: That's exactly right, and I want to brag on Barbara at this point.

Shaunti: Deservedly so.

Dennis: Really, she's not perfect and doesn't do everything perfectly, but I honestly wonder, if I started counting up the number of times when she, in my opinion, looked frumpy in 32 years. I don't think I could count up 10 times.

Barbara: Well, I have tried to look good when you come home, and there have been times when I haven't, and there have been times when I've been chased around the house by kids all day, and I just couldn't even find the energy to go upstairs and run a brush through my hair. But most of the time I did try to at least kind of check myself in the mirror before he walked in the door.

Dennis: And it was noticeable on those days.

Barbara: When I did that?

Dennis: Yes. I want to make two very important points here. First, we're talking about a process of temptation. It is not sin for a man to look. James, chapter 1, talks about when a man is tempted, he is carried away by his own lust, and lust gives birth to sin. There is an act of the will where that opportunity to look manifests itself and more, and a man knows what that is. I don't need to explain that here on our broadcast.

But the second thing that we've hit on today that I don't feel like we exploited like we should have – and Shaunti, you said it – the safety of our wives to be able to share when we are being tempted, and in 32 years of marriage, I don't know how many times I have shared with Barbara, you know, "I'm really struggling with this right now. I need you to pray for me, I need you to know this," and I don't think on a single occasion I ever felt like she felt betrayed. I don't think she ever felt demeaned, and she certainly didn't make me feel like a dirty old man for being tempted. And that's the strength of the marriage relationship, it's the way God designed it. He designed it for two to walk together and to be agreed and to pull one another up when one falls down and to add strength to one another's lives.
Bob: And the reason Barbara has been able to do that for you is because she understands some of the things that Shaunti talks about in her book. She understands you, she understands what's going on in your heart and in your mind. She has become a student of you as her husband, and understands men, in general, and that's what this book helps all women get a handle on.

The book is called "For Women Only," and we've got it in our FamilyLife Resource Center. You can go to our website, FamilyLife.com, and if you click on the right side of the screen where it says "Today's Broadcast," that will take you to an area of the site where there is more information not only about Shaunti's book, "For Women Only," but also Dr. Robert Lewis's book called "The New Eve," and Shaunti has written the foreword in that book.

If any of our listeners are interested in getting copies of both books, we'll be happy to send along at no additional cost the CD audio of our conversation this week about the book, "For Women Only." So, again, all the details are on our website at FamilyLife.com. You can also call us to order these resources at 1-800-FLTODAY. 1-800-358-6329, that's 1-800-F-as-in-family, L-as-in-life, and then the word TODAY, and someone on our team will make arrangements to get the resources you need sent out to you.

I think most of our listeners are aware that FamilyLife Today is a listener-supported program, which means that folks just like you who make donations to the ministry of FamilyLife Today make it possible for us to continue on the air on this station and on other stations all across the country.

During the month of May, we have a unique opportunity for every donation we received from a listener to be doubled up to a total of $635,000. We've had some friends of the ministry who have agreed to double those donations as an extra incentive to get our FamilyLife listeners to either go to our website, FamilyLife.com, or to call 1-800-FLTODAY and make a donation over the phone. They've done that because they know that summertime is coming, and that's a time when donations to a ministry like ours typically dip a little bit, and so they're hoping, and we're hoping that with this extra additional incentive, many of our listeners will make a special gift during the month of May and, again, it's whatever amount you can afford, whether it's $25 or $50 or $100 or $1,000 – they'll match it, dollar-for-dollar, and we're hoping we'll be able to take full advantage of this special matching gift opportunity.

So would you consider making a donation online at FamilyLife.com or by calling 1-800-FLTODAY? We appreciate your financial support, and we appreciate you helping us take advantage of this special matching gift opportunity.

Now, tomorrow we want to talk about how important it is for a man to hear from his wife that she believes in him, that she affirms him, that she loves him, that
she’s proud of him. We’ll talk about why that’s so important tomorrow, and I hope you can be back with us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We’ll see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas – help for today; hope for tomorrow.

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