

Adultery and Lust

Overcoming Bad Passions—part 3

July 20, 2014; Matt. 5:27-30

Series review: Following the Beatitudes, Jesus illustrates ways we pursue bad passions that lead us in bad directions with bad consequences. (1) Following our emotions instead of God's word (2) Anger. (3) Adultery and lust.

DAY 1: Adultery

Matthew 5:27 You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery."

1. Adultery is usually thought of as an act of unfaithfulness in marriage that happens when one marriage partner voluntarily engages in sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse.
2. Have you had an experience with adultery, either directly or indirectly? What effects did that have on you?

Malachi 2:13 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

3. The people of God complained because God quit paying attention to their prayers.

*Malachi 2:14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have **broken faith with her**, though she is **your partner**, the wife of **your marriage covenant**.*

4. What three things does God put His finger on?

5. If you have been affected by someone's adultery, jot down **how** you have been effected:

- a. Trust-
- b. Faithfulness-
- c. Being true to your word-
- d. Betrayal-
- e. Rejection-
- f. Replacement-
- g. Shame-

6. Adultery doesn't just tear apart a marriage. It tears apart a person, a family, a church, a community, an extended family, and friends. What struck you most from today's devotion?

DAY 2: What is lust?

1. Last week we saw how the religious leaders “dumbed down” the command against murder, thinking that if they did not commit homicide they had obeyed the command, “You shall not murder.” Jesus said the command against murder was not limited to homicide. You could murder with ridicule and anger. Something inside a person “dies.”

Matthew 5:27 You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery."

2. Everyone conveniently assumed that if they did not commit the *act* of adultery, then they had obeyed this command. Just like Jesus did with the command regarding murder, He drops another bombshell.

He expounds the real definition of adultery.

Mat. 5:28 ...anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

3. What thoughts go through your mind as you read Jesus' meaning of the 7th Command?

4. The question becomes, what is lust? The Greek word Jesus uses is "epithumia." It means desire or lust. It can be used in a good way for legitimate desires, or for sinful desires. What do you learn about "lust" from the following verses? (I've underlined the pertinent phrasing).

Gal. 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Ephesians 2:3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

5. Sinful nature, cravings, desires, thoughts, deceived, enslaved, passions, corrupted, deceitful. Which of these dangers about lust strike you the most?

DAY 3: Why is lust equated with adultery?

1. Today we'll do a case study.

Proverbs 7:1 My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. ² Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. ³ Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your kinsman;

⁵ they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words.

2. How is someone to guard themselves against the temptations to adultery?

Prov. 7:7 I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment. ⁸ He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house ⁹ at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.

3. What do we learn about this man? What is he called? What mistakes is he making?

Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. ¹¹ (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; ¹² now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.) ¹³ She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: ¹⁴ "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. ¹⁵ So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you!

¹⁶ I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. ¹⁷ I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloe and cinnamon. ¹⁸ Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love! ¹⁹ My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. ²⁰ He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon."

4. What strikes you about the adulteress? What are her tactics? What are her hooks that get him?

5. Solomon adds his own post mortem for us...

Prov. 7:21 With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk.

6. It wasn't her stunning looks or her body that got him. What was it that got him?

7. Solomon provides the aftermath, the inevitable consequences that eventually follow.

²² All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose ²³ till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life. ²⁴ Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. ²⁵ Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. ²⁶ Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. ²⁷ Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.

8. Adultery doesn't "just happen." A long series of moral battles were lost along the way. What strikes you most from today's case study?

DAY 4: Putting the brakes on lust

1. About 500 years ago, the great theologian Martin Luther said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." He was illustrating that temptation is like birds flying overhead. Lust and adultery are birds building a nest on your head. You can't do anything about the former; you can do a lot about the latter!

2. Men and women are warned that when you take an overnight business trip, be very careful about the time you spend with someone of the opposite sex when you're at the hotel, out for dinner, etc. That is good advice, but Jesus says, "You're not thinking deeply enough. If your lines of defense are only drawn there, you become an easy target."

Matthew 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

3. Jesus is not teaching that we should literally gouge out our eyes. He is using hyperbole. Hyperbole makes an exaggerated statement to drive home an important point with seriousness or urgency.

4. He draws the lines of defense waaaaaaay before you are present with someone. Where does He tell you to draw the first line of defense?

5. Parents put "filters" on their kids' computers, phones, and the internet. That's a smart thing to do. Jesus is telling us to do the same thing! Put filters over your eyes.

What are some ways you could do that?

a. With TV?

b. With movies?

c. When you're talking with someone of the opposite sex?

d. With you computer or "smart" phone?

Matthew 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

6. What line of defense does He call us to make? _____

7. Think about social settings you are in. What physical/touch boundaries should you set for yourself?

8. What lines do you not want to cross? (Hint: it is wise to set your boundary lines as far away from trouble as possible!)

DAY 5: Making the lust to adultery connection

Matthew 15:19 ***For out of the heart*** come ***evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality...***

1. Adultery doesn't occur "out there." Its origins are in your heart.

2. **Thoughts** are not "innocent" because they "don't hurt anyone." Here is some culprit-thinking that leads us in wrong directions:

- Thinking about someone more than other friends
- Visualizing someone with admiration or affection (allowing those thoughts to linger)
- "I wonder ..." (what it would be like to be his wife? Her husband? Live with her?)
- Idealizing the person (you see their strengths; you barely notice their weaknesses)
- Imagining: running scenes with the other person through our "mental video." You imagine the two of you at a restaurant for dinner, or taking a walk together.

3. We often assume this kind of stuff is harmless because "nothing happened." Are the things on that list "harmless?" If they are harmful, why?

4. **Actions**: We create greater temptation when we don't set boundaries on our **actions**. We add wood to the fires of temptation by these actions:

- Dropping by/ seeking them out
- Linger in their presence, or lingering in a conversation...
- Impressing—guys
- "Inviting"/attracting—ladies
- Deeper, personal sharing
- Complaining about a spouse
- Sympathetic listening

5. **Feelings**: the deepest drivers of lust are **emotional**.

- Emotionally gratifying, "Someone understands me." "I'm accepted."
- Emotionally dependent. "He listens to me."
- Emotionally entangled. "When I'm around her I feel alive."

6. People on the verge of affairs tell me, "Oh, Seth, there's nothing wrong. I haven't done anything *sexually* with her." That is a naive fallacy. Men and women are sexual creatures by *nature*. Something sexual can happen between people who have never been in bed with each other. The sexual transference is done with eyes that linger or adore, or a smile that lasts "too long" or an "innocent" touch that could be taken as an invitation. We are sexual *people* before we are sexual *bodies*. We may think that as believers we are walking the path of obedience because we haven't done anything "sexual" when in reality we haven't been obedient at all!

7. What's your biggest take away from this week's devotionals on adultery and lust?