



## Part 32: Jesus and Lust

Matthew 5:27-30

Jesus teaches us to fight lust because it's the opposite of love and it destroys relationships.

### I. A Radical Word

Jesus' teaching was shocking in his own culture. How much more so in our modern, secular culture that sees sexual expression as the ultimate right and the way to freedom.

John Mark Comer has pointed out the tectonic shifts in our culture around sexuality since the sexual revolution of the 1960s:

- Sex is disconnected from family and childbearing (oral contraceptives).
- Sex is disconnected from marriage.
- Sex is disconnected from male-female relationships (gay marriage).
- Sex is disconnected from love, emotion or relational commitment of any kind (hookup culture).
- Sex is disconnected from people (young people are having less sex than the last 50 years because of the rise of porn).

“The sexual revolution was the de-stigmatization of non-marital sex and the reduction of sexual relations in general to a kind of hygienic recreation in which anything goes as long as those involved are consenting adults.” – Mary Eberstadt, *Adam & Eve After the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution*

## II. Fighting Lust

Context: Jesus is teaching us what Kingdom righteousness looks like (gift & goal – see sermon on Matt. 5:20). Having received the gift or relationship with God now in His beautiful Kingdom, this is the way Jesus' disciples are to live by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

### A. Jesus Diagnosis

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Matthew 5:27-28

Jesus is quoting the seventh Commandment concerning adultery and is probably also alluding to the tenth Commandment: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

Just as Jesus diagnosed nursing anger as the root of murder, he is diagnosing lust as the root behind adultery. Shockingly Jesus equates lust with the physical act of adultery. Our sexual purity is not defined only by what we do physically with our bodies, but what we allow our minds to pursue.

Jesus uses the verb *epithumeo* = to desire something strongly. It may refer to a desire that is good, but most often it refers to unrighteous desires that lead us to sin (Romans 6:12; 13-14; Galatians 5:16, 24; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Peter 2:18).

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

Jesus also uses the present participle of the verb “to see” = seeing (*blepon*). This is like his warning about anger (*orge*) last week. Jesus is condemning looking at another person with the intent to lust – “looking to lust” = looking with the intent to possess them merely for your sexual gratification.

### B. What Jesus is Not Saying

- Jesus is not condemning natural sexual desire that men and women have for one another. This desire is built into God’s creation as good (Genesis 1-2).
- Jesus is certainly not condemning the sexual desire that husbands and wives have for one another. Sex is God’s good gift to be celebrated in the heterosexual covenant of marriage (Song of Songs).
- Jesus is not condemning the initial look admiring one’s beauty or even the initial impulse to feel sexual desire for another. These are natural responses to the way we are created in God’s image.

Jesus is condemning the intention to keep looking with the intention to lust.

### C. Jesus’ Counsel and Warning

“If your right eye causes you to stumble, 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. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, 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.” Matthew 5:29-30

Jesus is clearly using hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration) to make his point = we are to take decisive action against the habit, thing, or person that is tempting us towards lust. Don't play around with temptation!

“Why didn't I hear more about the cost of living as if sex has no consequences, no meaning? Where was everybody?” – Young counselee to Paula Rinehart, *Sex and the soul of a Woman*

Lust is the opposite of Biblical love. We cannot lust and love at the same time (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Jesus intends to form us into people of genuine, sacrificial love, which requires that our physical desire for another must be mastered by a greater desire to bless and build them up in holy love (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

*“On an individual level, we have to realize that in a society like ours, every choice against promiscuity will feel like suffering more than an inconvenience.” – Jon Tyson*

### **III. Pastoral Counsel (Blessed are the poor in spirit)**

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick...for I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:12-13

- A. Confession and repentance are the gateway into cleansing, healing, and freedom (James 5:16).
- B. Bring your sexual desires to Jesus for him to reorder them according to his way of love (John 7:37-39).
- C. Abide in Jesus daily (John 15:4-5, 7-8).
- D. Find Christian community in which you can be honest and vulnerable, and who will love you enough to call you to stay in the fight against lust (James 5:19-20).
- E. Ruthlessly adjust your habits to minimize temptation (Matthew 5:29-30).

### **Recommended resources:**

1. Covenant Eyes software.
2. *Surfing for God* by Michael Cusick.
3. John Mark Comer sermon: “God & Sexuality” (Bridgetown Community church, Portland).
4. Jon Tyson sermon: “Jesus and Sexual Formation” (Bridgetown Community Church).
5. Practice of Solitude (Greenwood resources: <https://greenwoodcc.com/solitude/>).
6. Pastors @ Greenwood.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What were you taught in your home about sexual desire?
2. What has been your experience in the church with reaching about sexual desire?
3. What is your response to Jesus' teaching here? What questions does it raise for you?
4. What is Jesus specifically condemning here? What is he not condemning? Why is this important?
5. How does Jesus inform us about the way of love? Look at Matthew 22:34-40 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. How does love differ from lust?
6. Are there any practical steps Jesus is calling you to take in this area?