



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THE BEST QUESTION EVER IN A SEXUALIZED WORLD

APRIL 19, 2015

MAIN POINT

Walking in wisdom requires submitting to God's design for sex and acknowledging the root of our sexual immorality.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

Leader: Before this week's lesson, you, as the leader of your group, will want to read over the questions and determine whether to split the women and men in your group up to answer some or all of these questions. Use your best discernment as you consider the spiritual maturity level of your group and how your growth group members would be best served in discussing this important but sensitive topic. Also, if you have any feedback from this session or need guidance in navigating the topic of sex and sexual immorality, don't hesitate to contact Pastor Michael.

1. Think about some of the most popular TV shows over the past few decades (Grey's Anatomy, Friends, Seinfeld, Cheers, etc.). What attitude do the characters in these shows tend to have about sex?

2. What were most people's attitudes like about sex when you were in high school? How does that compare with most people's attitudes about sex today? How do these attitudes compare with how God would have us view sex?

Leader: We live in an incredibly sexualized world in which TV, movies, and books promote a very casual attitude toward sex. As a result, many people think of sex primarily in terms of personal pleasure. However, God created sex to be enjoyed in a specific context—the context of marriage between a man and a woman. God also created sex for specific purposes: to deepen the marital bond between husband and wife and for the purpose of procreation (Gen. 2:18-25). While we might think the casual attitudes about sex depicted on TV today are a product of the sexual revolution, sexual immorality has long been a deeply ingrained problem in the hearts of people. In ancient Corinth, people were so casual about sex that they would often sleep with cult prostitutes in pagan temples as a means of worshipping false gods. In response Paul challenged the church at Corinth to reject such attitudes about sex and instead look to God for wisdom in how they should use their bodies and minds. Paul informed them that the Christian's body is a temple for the Holy Spirit and called them to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Today, we will look to Jesus for wisdom on sex by considering His teaching on the root of sexual immorality. If we hope to embrace God's wisdom on sex, we must first acknowledge the root of sexual immorality.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:27-30.

3. How do you define lust? How have people's opinions of lust changed throughout the years, both individually and as a society?

Leader: The Greek word translated lust refers to a strong desire or an intense longing. The word was used only a few times in the New Testament to describe a positive longing. Most of the time, the word denoted a negative desire. The word lust can also be translated as "cravings of the flesh" or "desire for something forbidden." In today's passage, Jesus drew the connection between lustful thoughts and the Seventh Commandment, "Do not commit adultery." God's intent for the command against adultery went far beyond the literal breaking of the marriage bond. It included the heart attitude that underlies all sexual misbehavior.

4. How did Jesus interpret the commandment not to commit adultery? How did Jesus' wisdom differ from the teaching of the Pharisees? How did Jesus' reinterpretation raise expectations for His followers?

5. What do these verses teach us is the root of sexual sin? Why did Jesus say, "has already committed adultery with her in his heart" and not "commits adultery with her"? What does this teaching reveal about the human heart?

Leader: Jesus intensified the law by looking at the heart of the Seventh Commandment and exhorting His listeners not to lust. The act of lusting that Jesus is talking about is not the inadvertent, accidental glance. Rather, it is the purposeful, repeated, engaged looking. By using the past tense and saying that the person has already committed adultery, Jesus focuses on the heart of the person that is bent by sin. The heart of a person who commits physical adultery is the same heart of a person who looks lustfully as Jesus describes.

6. What was Jesus getting at by challenging His followers to gouge out their eyes and cut off their hands in the fight against lust? What are ways you ought to be vigilant in, in order to avoid sin, as you go about your daily life?

7. What would it look like for you to incorporate Christ's wisdom with regard to how you respond to sexual temptation?

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Leader: Jesus emphasized His point by telling them to put out the right eye or cut off the right hand if it leads to sin. Using classic Jewish teaching techniques, Jesus demonstrated that nothing is too precious to eliminate from our lives if it causes us to lust. Self-mutilation and amputation are not effective ways to overcome sin. After all, sin arises from a corrupt heart rather than flesh and bone. Jesus here uses hyperbole (intentional exaggeration for the sake of making a point) and allegory (in which the eye represents a lustful perspective and the hand represents an immoral deed) in order to convey a vital requirement of discipleship. Disciples should put a stop to thoughts and behaviors that contribute to sexual immorality.

[HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 5:16-24.](#)

8. What would it look like for you to begin walking by the Spirit with regard to sex?

9. What decisions do you need to make with the Holy Spirit's guidance in order to guard your heart from sexual immorality? What are some practical ways you could cultivate patience and self control in your heart?

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. What lies about sex are you confronted with most often? What would it look like for us to look past these lies and instead look to God for wisdom with regard to both how we understand sex and how we respond to sexual temptation?

11. What are some practical ways that we as a growth group might encourage and support each other in our individual fights against sin? What role does personal accountability play when it comes to sexual purity?

Leader: Challenge your group members to seek out accountability if they find themselves constantly giving into sexual temptation. Often times it is not enough to share your general struggles in your growth group—you need someone with which you can be completely honest about your struggles and failures. If you are losing the battle against sexual sin, remember that God has given you brothers and sisters in Christ who care about you and want to help you. Seek out a mature brother or sister in Christ from our group and share your heart with them. They will not condemn you but rather support, encourage, challenge, and pray for you.

12. What are some practical ways we can guard ourselves against sexual immorality? What are some practical ways we can guard our families against

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sexual immorality?

PRAYER

Close your time in prayer by asking God to help you be vigilant and aware of the temptation and lusts of the world. Pray that God would keep your group far from lust and that you would rely on the power of the Spirit to fight against lust. Pray for the people in our church and in our community who are struggling with sexual sins—that they would find freedom in Christ.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How has your perspective on sex and sexual temptation changed since this week's study? What do you need to do this week to be prepared to do battle against sexual temptation?
 - Are you taking sin as seriously as Jesus does? What are things in your life that you need to remove because they lead you to sin?
- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- The challenge to memorize Matthew 5:27-28.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

MATTHEW 5:27-30

Jesus drew the command concerning adultery directly from the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:14). Again, however, we are led to assume that the pharisaical interpretation of adultery was the actual physical act. Jesus expanded our understanding of adultery to include a lustful attitude toward a spouse who is not one's own. Also, as He did with murder, Jesus acknowledged the higher court of heaven (5:29-30) as the court we should be mindful of, since the thoughts of our hearts are difficult for a human court to judge.

Jesus moves on from the Sixth to the Seventh Commandment (Ex. 20:14). "Adultery" usually referred to sexual relations by a married person with a partner other than his or her spouse, but verse 28 makes clear that Jesus is not limiting His commandments to married people but speaking of sexual sin in general. The grammar of verse 28a leads to two possible translations. Jesus could be speaking of one who "looks at a woman with the intention of committing adultery" or to one who "looks at a woman for the purpose of getting her to lust after him." Either way, He refers to one who continues to look rather than just casting a passing glance, and in either case the mere viewing or mental imagining of a naked body is not under consideration.

Instead Jesus is condemning lustful thoughts and actions—those involving an actual desire to

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have sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse. Yet despite the danger of overapplying this verse, an even greater danger is that of underapplying it. Adultery among Christians today is a scandal, yet it almost never occurs without precipitation. Christians must recognize those thoughts and actions which, long before any overt sexual sin, make the possibility of giving in to temptation more likely, and they must take dramatic action to avoid them.

As in verses 23-26, Jesus illustrates this decisive action with two metaphorical illustrations (vv. 29-30). Eyes and hands are primary offenders in sexual sin, but verses 29-30 may be applied more broadly as well. Literal self-mutilation is not Christ's objective. It is quite possible to be blind or crippled and still lust. Rather, as is characteristic of Jesus' figurative and hyperbolic style, He commands us to take drastic measures to avoid temptations to sexual sin—to remove from ourselves anyone or anything that could lead us into scandal ("causes you to sin"). The "right" eye and hand refer to those viewed in antiquity as more valuable. Again, eternal judgment appears as the punishment for those who fail to heed Jesus' words. Jesus urged His students to pay the lesser costs that may be required to halt an adulterous heart early on, rather than allow the sin to develop fully and incur the final judgment of God. Because Jesus repeated this pattern twice, we may take from it another underlying principle: It costs less to address the root of a sin early on than to carry the weight of the consequences of the sin fully developed as well as the weight of judgment before God. The earlier sin is dealt with, the better.