

# Small Group Study Guide

Appropriate Desires

Series: God's Stump Speech

Matthew 5:27-32

From Sunday February 21, 2021

Take a moment to pray for the Lord to still your mind, as well as direct your thoughts, conversation and response to the study.

## Appetizer:

Take a moment to read out loud Matthew 5:27-32

Let's be honest: no one likes to talk about lust. We like to talk about sex, but it gets pretty awkward when we start articulating the good and the bad aspects of our sexual desires.

Even asking for a show of hands as to whether you have experienced sexual desire or not might shut down your small group quickly.

However, we are all sexual beings, and Jesus addresses sexuality early on in his stump speech.

**Question:** Why is our society so obsessed with sexuality?

Question: Why do you think Jesus dealt with adultery so early on in his sermon?

## Main Course:

In Matthew 5:27-32 Jesus does to adultery what he did to murder: he addressed the roots of the problem. In the same way that he heightened the consequences of anger to the level of murder, he heightened the consequences of lustful glances to the level of adultery.

**Discussion:** Adultery, in Jesus' day, was punishable by death. Why would Jesus' statement be so shocking?

In the sermon this past week, it was suggested that Jesus was directly addressing "the male gaze." Why would Jesus have to single out males in the society he was in? Is the male gaze still as prevalent in our society today? Can this passage speak to women as well? How?

If we consider the big picture of the passage, it looks like Jesus is continuing to hammer home the idea of the value of a person in His kingdom. In this particular passage, we can surmise that:

**In God's country, people are not treated as a commodity for our pleasure.**

**Question:** What are the most prominent ways we treat sex as a commodity in our society today?

Jeff attached the verses on adultery and appropriate desire with the passage on divorce. He suggested that men were taking advantage of the grace found in Moses' law in order to get divorced for trifle reasons. Divorce was rampant, and Jesus wanted to address this. In other words, whether it's men leering at women or men casting their women aside, they were treating them like disposable goods rather than people made in the image of God.

**Discussion:** We live in a society where many people have experienced divorce. In fact, many Christians have experienced divorce. Many Christian movements look at this passage to help formulate policies of divorce of their members or pastors, suggesting that Jesus has narrowed the permissibility of divorce down to only sexual immorality.

**Is Jesus shutting the door on divorce being permissible except in extreme cases or is he making a point that the grace that God has given humanity when it comes to divorce can be abused? In other words, what is the main point of the passage?**

## Dessert:

In a hyper-sexual world it is difficult to determine the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate desires.

How can we foster friendships with members of the opposite sex without objectifying them or without entertaining inappropriate desires? Is it possible?

What are some practical ways that we can prioritize love over lust?

Jesus offers both an invitation and a challenge when it comes to his platform and policies. How do we balance the challenge of Jesus with the grace of Jesus when it comes to our sexual desires?

Take a moment of reflection with the group. With heads bowed, take a moment to rest in God's presence. Have the leader express a desire for God to speak in the midst of the quiet space. In the midst of the silence, ask the group, with some moments of silence between each question:

**What is God revealing to you about your sexual desires?**

**In what areas of your life have you objectified others?**

**What is God inviting you to commit to in the week ahead?**

After a couple more seconds of silence, pray for the group, for God's provision and for the power of the Holy Spirit to give boldness to represent Jesus well.