



abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

This Week's Edition for the sermon on March 4, 2007

this week's core belief

Self-control

"I have power through Christ to control myself."

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Titus 2.11-13

Adapted from **The 30 Core Competencies** *The Christian Life Profile*, Randy Frazee, Zondervan

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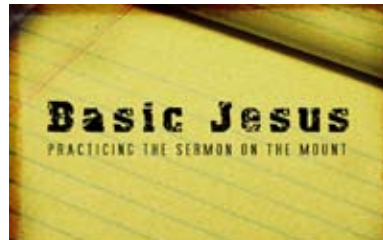
Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Three personal studies per week that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon and include a prayer of the day

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to www.adabible.org>small groups.

See www.adabible.org for [abclinks](http://abclinks.org) archives.



Part Four of a Seven Part Sermon Series

"Sex & Marriage"

It was one of those awkward pastor appointments. A friend of mine had reported that the marriage of a couple in his small group was imploding. The husband had moved out and there was word that he was deeply involved with another woman. My friend hoped a meeting with a pastor would help this runaway husband. Having never met the man, I was reluctant, fearing he would not be responsive to me but I agreed to meet with him.

We met at a quiet deli and had an honest conversation about his recent choices. He told me of his 20 year marriage; how it got off to a poor start, how they held it together as their kids grew up and how the signs of two decades of erosion were painfully evident. As I listened, I felt optimistic about how openly he told his story. I hoped he would be receptive to some encouragement in restoring his marriage. But the tone of the story shifted as he told me about a woman he met.

He said that over a short period of time, he felt a deep, emotional connection to this woman. As he described the emotional growth of their relationship, I felt I had to ask an awkward question, "So, are you physically involved with her?" He said "Yes." I asked him what he thought God's view of this relationship was. He replied, "I know God calls it adultery. He doesn't approve." Again, I was encouraged and I told him how glad I was he had realized his wrongdoing. But I was shocked by his response. "She is what I've always wanted. I can't take the chance of losing what I've found." I told him that he was in open rebellion of God and that God would not bless his new relationship. I warned him of the consequences that would occur to him, his wife, and his kids. I also affirmed that God would be willing to help him repair what he had broken if he would change his heart on this matter. Again he replied, "I can't. I'm just going to hope that God gives me grace." He warmly thanked me for my time and concern and dismissed himself. As he left the table, my eyes filled with tears.

This happened several years ago and is not the first story like this to come to our pastoral staff. I've not heard from him since, but his story remains as a glaring example to me of sin's power to deceive. I don't believe this man set out to commit adultery and abandon his family. I do believe he allowed the difficulties of his life to affect the desires of his heart. He longed for something that God never intended for him to have and when the opportunity arose, he acted on his desires. This desire is what the Bible calls "lust" which is a deep desire for something God wisely forbids.

Jesus addresses the subjects of lust and adultery in the Sermon on the Mount. His words are harsh and hard-hitting. He goes after the heart and exposes the deep longings we have for this type of sin. Because Jesus wants to bring purity to the hearts and minds of His followers, He would call those deep desires *adultery of the heart*.



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personal bible studies

“anyone who looks with lust in his eyes...”

As Jesus continues his teaching, he again refers to the Ten Commandments. In the previous verses, He addressed the sixth commandment pertaining to murder, pointing out that anger is murder in the heart. Many believed they were “righteous” with this commandment because they had never taken another person’s life. But Jesus exposed the anger and hatred that resides in the heart of all people. Angry thoughts and words that come from a bitter heart of contempt is the heart of murder.

In this week’s passage, Jesus takes the same tone and approach with the seventh commandment, “Do not commit adultery.” Again, the religious leaders had a false sense of “righteousness” because they had never physically committed adultery. But Jesus again goes after the mind and heart. God wants us to be sexually pure both in body and mind.

Read Matthew 5.27-30

What is your initial response to these verses? What emotions, thoughts or questions do Jesus’ words evoke within you?

Substitute the word “desire” for the word “lust” in this context. Is lust or desire always wrong? When do our desires become sinful?

Why would Jesus connect “lust” to “adultery”? Are lustful thoughts really that serious? Why or why not?

Jesus illustrates lust in the context of a man desiring a woman who is not his wife. Is this strictly a “guy” problem? Do women get a pass on this? How do men and women struggle differently in this area?

Can lust be an emotional attraction to something rather than sexual? Explain.

THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MINUTE:

“The Old Testament law said that it is wrong for a person to have sex with someone other than his or her spouse. But Jesus said that the desire to have sex with someone other than your spouse is mental adultery and thus sin. Jesus emphasized that if the act is wrong then so is the intention. To be faithful to your spouse (or future spouse) with your body but not your mind is to break the trust so vital to a strong marriage. Jesus is condemning not natural interest in the opposite sex or even healthy sexual desire but the deliberate and repeated filling of one’s mind with fantasies that would be evil if acted out.” *(Life Application Study Bible, page 1412)*

Spend a few minutes examining your heart in this area. Re-read the last sentence of the above quote. Are there places in your life that you are deliberately allowing immoral thoughts or fantasies into your mind?

Today’s Prayer

Confess to God the things, people or activities you desire that you know God never intended for you. Acknowledge that these desires are sinful, and if played out, will lead to evil actions. Thank God for helping you be convicted in that area and thank Him for His forgiveness.

Carefully review the following possible sources of sexual or emotional temptation. Are any of these a major source of mental adultery for you?

- sexually explicit material via internet, movies or magazines
- tv programs or movies that morally compromise your thoughts
- books, magazines or tabloids that are morally compromising
- a person other than your spouse who you are physically and/or emotionally drawn to
- someone other than your spouse who you go out of your way to see or to talk with because you are attracted to him or her
- (fill in the blank) _____

THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MINUTE:

We have the tendency to dream or fantasize scenarios - writing stories in our minds based on our thoughts and desires. But we usually avoid an honest pondering of the consequences that would result should the story come true. The next time your mind drifts to thinking or fantasizing about something or someone you should not, ask yourself, "What if this were to really come true? What would be the consequences if I acted on my thoughts?"

"if your eye causes you to lust..."

Read Matthew 5.27-30

When Jesus said to gouge out your eye if it causes you to lust or to cut off your hand if it causes you to sin, He was, of course, speaking figuratively. If He were speaking literally, our churches would be filled with eyeless and handless people. However, Jesus was still making a radical point. He was saying that we need to be willing to radically sacrifice the things that lead us to mental and physical sexual sin.

Honestly evaluate your greatest point of sexual temptation. Where do you do battle most often for your sexual and emotional purity?

What are you willing to "gouge" or "cut" out of your life to win the battle for personal purity?

Are you willing to do any of the following?

- filter or cancel your internet connection or cable TV
- cut out movies or TV programs that have immoral content
- throw out trashy novels, magazines and tabloids
- change work or social habits to avoid people who you are sexually or emotionally attracted to
- tell a close friend about your areas of struggle so they can keep you accountable to your commitment of purity

Today's Prayer

"God, I need to cut _____ out of my life because it causes me to desire something I should not have or it causes sin in my life. God, this will be hard! I need your help and the help of others to get rid of this. Help me to be honest with _____ (close friend) about my struggle. Work through him/her to help me win the battle for purity.

memoryverse

"But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eyes has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5.28 NLT

Week One

Matthew 6.32b-33

Week Two

Matthew 5.3

Week Three

Matthew 5.23-24



small group discussion

Warning Sensitive Material!

We advise men and women split up for this week's discussion. An honest and open conversation on this subject is more likely to occur.

dive in

"anyone who looks with lust in his eyes..."

The religious leaders had a false sense of "righteousness" because they had never engaged in sexual activity with someone who was not their wife. But Jesus was concerned about the mind and heart. God wants us to be sexually pure both in body and mind.

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Discuss **THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MINUTE** on page 2.

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Honestly, what is your greatest point of sexual temptation? Where is your battleground for sexual and emotional purity?

What are you willing to "gouge" or "cut" out of your life to win the battle for personal purity? Look back at the list of possible sources of temptation on page 3.

Discuss **THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MINUTE** on page 3.

How can this small group help you in the battle for personal and sexual purity?

take
action

Accountability Partner!

Do you have someone in your life who asks you the "tough" questions? Have someone you trust regularly ask you these questions:

Last week did you view any sexually explicit material?

Were you involved with someone other than your spouse where you felt "drawn in" emotionally or were mentally asking, "I wonder if he/she is interested in me?"

Did you just lie to me?

Other Great Resources!

"The Other Woman" is a sermon Pastor Manion preached on March 13, 2005 which you can download at adabile.org. CDs of the sermon are also available at the Ada Resource Center in The Atrium.

"The Crazy Cycle" is a talk by Dr. Emerson Eggerich. He and his wife have written a book called "Love and Respect." The 1-hour CD speaks to women about motivating your man God's way. Copies are available at the ARC as well.

"Real Sex" is a book written by Lauren Winner. She uses a very open approach to discuss sexuality and chastity with single adults.