

The Sermon on the Mount

Adultery In The Heart (Matthew 5:27-30)

INTRODUCTION:

- I. I want to begin this morning by giving you some disturbing, and somewhat startling, statistics.
 - A. These statistics were gathered in 2006 from a wide range of reliable sources.
 1. In the U.S. alone:
 - a. Over \$3,000 is being spent on pornography every SECOND.
 - b. Over 28,000 Internet users are viewing pornography every SECOND.
 - c. A new pornographic video is being created in the United States every 39 MINUTES.
 2. From 2005 to 2006 the SALE and RENTALS of adult videos dropped, while access to adult videos on the Internet INCREASED by 14 percent during that same period.
 3. From 2005 to 2006 access to adult videos through cable TV and Pay Per View increased by 64 percent.

4. There are 4.2 BILLION pornographic Internet websites – 12 percent of all Internet websites.
5. The average age of the FIRST EXPOSURE to Internet pornography is 11 years of age.
6. The largest CONSUMERS of Internet pornography are between the ages 35 to 49.
7. Of those who are between the age of 15 and 17, 80 percent are having MULTIPLE EXPOSURES to hardcore pornography.
8. Of children who are between the ages of 8 and 16, just over 90 percent have viewed pornography online.
9. 40 million adults admit to visiting Internet pornographic websites on a REGULAR basis – 72 percent are men while 28 percent are women.
10. Women are twice as likely as men to choose Internet adult CHAT ROOMS, and 9.4 million women admit to accessing Internet adult websites at least once a month.
11. Of the women who access adult chat rooms or Internet porn sites, 70 percent admit they keep their cyber activities secret from others.
12. And sadly, 47 percent of those who claim to be Christians admit that pornography is a problem in their home.

- B. As shocking as these statistics are, it is the IMPACT pornography has on our society that is MOST troubling.
1. Serial killer Ted Bundy, who tortured and murdered at least 28 women and young girls, said this just prior to his execution in an interview with Christian Psychologist and Author Dr. James Dobson: "I've lived in prison for a long time ... and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence just like me. And without exception every one of them was deeply involved in pornography – deeply influenced by an addiction. There is no question about it. The FBI's own study shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornography."
 2. Dr. Victor B. Cline, a psychologist at the University of Utah with a private practice as a psychotherapist specializing in family marital counseling and sexual addiction, wrote: "In my clinical experience, the major consequence of being addicted to pornography is not the probability or possibility of committing a serious sex crime (though this can and does occur), but rather the disturbance of the fragile bonds of intimate family and marital relationships. This is where the most grievous pain, damage, and sorrow occur. There is repeatedly an interference with or even destruction of healthy love and sexual relationships with long-term bonded partners. If

one asks if porn is responsible or causes any sex crimes, the answer is unequivocally, "Yes," but that is only the tip of the iceberg."

- II. Why am I mentioning all these horrible statistics at the beginning of a lesson taken from the Sermon on the Mount?
 - A. The reason is simply this: Satan has launched the most UNPRECEDENTED ASSAULT on moral purity since the beginning of time – and the most effective weapon in his arsenal is pornography.
 - 1. But sadly, with all the evidence that proves beyond doubt that pornography and sexually explicit material is harmful, people still ignore the warnings and expose themselves to this harm on a regular basis.
 - 2. The feeling of many is that merely VIEWING pornography or sexually explicit movies or videos is not harmful – as long as they don't ACT OUT or CARRY OUT their desires.
 - a. Therefore, they see no harm in exposing themselves or spouse to movies with strong sexual content or nudity.
 - 3. However, for those who believe there is no harm in simply VIEWING these sorts of things, they are not only NAIVE, they're DEAD WRONG.

- B. In the days of Jesus, there were many who ALSO believed that it was not sinful to merely LOOK at a woman and LUST for her (or, for that fact, a woman merely LUSTING after a man) as long as those LUSTFUL DESIRES were never actually carried out.
1. We know the Old Testament Law of Moses openly condemned ALL forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, fornication, rape, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, and sexual immorality with what the Old King James Version calls “strange flesh.”
 2. But what MANY in the days of Jesus failed to understand is that God ALSO CONDEMNED sins such as:
 - a. VOYEURISM – merely LOOKING upon the nakedness or nudity of another (as in the case of Noah’s son Ham, or of David looking upon the nakedness of Bathsheba).
 - b. LUST (as in the case of Potipher’s wife lusting after Joseph, or of Samson lusting after Delilah, or Amnon lusting after Tamar).
 - c. SEXUAL SEDUCTION (as in the case of the men of Israel being sexually seduced by the Moabite women).
- C. However, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that the desires that LEAD to sexual sins are JUST AS SINFUL as the sexual sins themselves.

1. Therefore, Jesus said: **Matthew 5:27-28** – *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*
2. This statement must have SURPRISED many of those hearing Jesus on this occasion.
 - a. The Law of Moses clearly said, *"You shall not commit adultery."* (**Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18**)
 - b. And, as we will see later, the Law of Moses ALSO condemned LUST.
 - c. But NOWHERE did the Law of Moses define LUST as committing ADULTERY IN THE HEART – not until Jesus said it.
- D. Therefore, to understand the relationship between the sin of LUST and ADULTERY in the heart, and to understand the TRUE meaning of this teaching of Jesus, let's turn to the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew chapter 5** and examine this teaching carefully.
 1. Jesus was not just CORRECTING a Jewish misapplication or misunderstanding of the SEVENTH COMMANDMENT, *"You shall not commit adultery,"* He was teaching ALSO something quite revolutionary.

2. While many in the days of Jesus, such as the scribes and Pharisees, emphasized the "LETTER" of the Law, the teaching of Jesus revealed the true "SPIRIT" BEHIND the Law.
3. Furthermore, Jesus was revealing what had been ETERNAL PRINCIPLES from the very BEGINNING of time.
 - a. In other words, Jesus taught ETERNAL PRINCIPLES concerning SEXUAL SINS that would ALSO carry over into the KINGDOM He came to establish – including the sins of LUST and ADULTERY.

BODY:

- I. As we begin looking at the statement of Jesus in **Matthew chapter 5**, we need to first understand what Jesus is actually condemning.
 - A. Some say Jesus is only condemning looking upon a woman to LUST after her.
 1. Various Greek lexicographers define the word LUST as meaning to have a strong desire for, to fantasize in a sexual way, or be filled with lewd thoughts toward another.
 2. Therefore, some say it's not sinful to merely LOOK upon a woman (or for a woman to merely LOOK upon a man) with admiration for their beauty or handsomeness.

- B. However, there is a VERY FINE LINE between merely LOOKING, and looking with ADMIRATION or APPRECIATION at ones beauty or physical appearance.
1. When Jesus said, "*whoever LOOKS at a woman...*" (**Matthew 5:28**), He used a word that expresses a more earnest or INTENSE CONTEMPLATION, such as a LINGERING GAZE.
 - a. It's the same word that is used to describe the way the disciples looked at the Lord as He ascended into heaven (**Acts 1:9**) – a lingering gaze of astonishment or wonder.
 2. So, it's safe to say it's not the LOOK that Jesus warns against here, it's the EARNEST or INTENSE CONTEMPLATION, the LOOK filled with ASTONISHMENT or WONDER, or simply the LINGERING LOOK.
 3. That's when the heart is MOST susceptible to LUST – MOST susceptible to a strong desire for another, MOST susceptible to fantasizing in a sexual way about another, and MOST susceptible to being filled with lewd thoughts toward another – during the LINGERING LOOK.
- C. In his book "*Every Man's Battle*," – a book I think every Christian man could benefit from reading – Christian psychologist Steve Arterburn counsels men who are battling sexual sins to use a technique called

"bouncing the eyes" – to avoid a lingering look by bouncing your eyes OFF the source of enticement.

1. By the way, Steve Arterburn has also co-authored books entitled *"Every Woman's Battle," "Every Young Man's Battle," "Every Young Woman's Battle,"* and a book designed for men and women in the military who are deployed for extended periods of time away from their families called *"Every Soldier's Battle."*

II. So, what are the consequences of LOOKING upon a woman to LUST after her, or of a woman looking upon a man to LUST after him?

A. As we said before, lusting in a sexual way has ALWAYS been condemned by God.

1. Notice that the Law of Moses – specifically the Ten Commandments – condemned coveting a neighbor's wife.
 - a. **Exodus 20:17** – *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."*
 - b. The word COVET here refers to an unlawful desire to have that which belongs to another – and in the case of

COVETING your neighbor's wife, it means to desire her in an unlawful, lustful or sexual way.

2. Even in the days of Job, who lived BEFORE the Law of Moses, it was considered sinful to *"look at a woman to lust for her."*
 - a. **Job 31:1** – Job said, *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"*
 - b. In this passage Job is defending his righteousness, and said he has made an agreement, or a covenant, with his eyes to NOT look upon a young woman – to NOT allow himself to GAZE upon her or allow his eyes to LINGER upon her.
 - c. He knew that to do so would only open his heart to the temptation of lust.
3. So, even the LINGERING LOOK that LEADS to lust has always been sinful – even in the Patriarchal dispensation BEFORE the Law of Moses was given.

B. But Jesus added a NEW dimension when He said, *"whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has ALREADY COMMITTED ADULTERY with her in his HEART."* (**Matthew 5:28**)

1. In a very LITERAL way, Jesus is saying the man who lusts after a woman is ALREADY AN ADULTERER – already guilty of sexual immorality involving someone who is not your wife (or in the case

of women, already guilty of sexual immorality with someone who is not your husband).

a. While the adultery may not have been committed in the FLESH, it has ALREADY been committed in the HEART – IN THE MIND.

b. And given TIME AND OPPORTUNITY, adultery committed in the MIND will eventually be committed in the FLESH.

2. We're simply deceiving ourselves if we think for one moment that we can allow our EYES TO LINGER and our MINDS TO LUST, and not eventually ACT on that lust.

3. To God, there is no difference between the SIN, and the DESIRES that LEAD to the sin – whether anger leading to murder, or lust leading to adultery.

C. Now this statement of Jesus raises an interesting question – one that's often asked by women whose husbands are addicted to pornography.

1. The question is this: Does adultery committed in the HEART of one spouse allow the other spouse a scriptural right to put away their husband or wife for the SIN of adultery?

a. All I can say is, I wish I knew how to answer that question, but I don't.

- b. I know of instances where that's been done. But I honestly don't know whether adultery in the heart is a justification for divorce. I tend to think not.
 - c. However, I'll say this. I don't believe any husband or wife should be required to remain EXPOSED to that sin.
2. While separation is condemned by the apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 7**, except under very specific circumstances, the apostle Paul also commands us to FLEE sexual immorality, to ABSTAIN from every form of evil, and to have NO COMMUNION with darkness, or that which is unholy.
- a. And if sexual immorality, or evil, or darkness, and that which is unholy happens to be in our own home, I would think it would be wise for the Christian to LEAVE until the problem is resolved once and for all.
3. Those who choose to REMAIN are exposing themselves to the temptation to compromise, if not actually exposing themselves to become a PARTICIPANT in the very sin itself.
- a. **2 Peter 2:14** – Peter warns faithful Christians against those who have: *"... eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls."*

- b. I think the faithful Christian would want to AVOID this situation – that is, AVOID running the risk of being enticed by those whose eyes are full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin. That's my OPINION anyway.

III. This brings us to the SOLUTION that Jesus offers those who are fighting the battle of sexual lust.

- A. In the verses that follow – specifically **Matthew 5:29-30** – Jesus uses a figure of speech to show the drastic measures we must take to avoid being condemned to an eternal hell.

- 1. **Matthew 5:29-30** – *"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."*

- 2. I knew a gospel preacher who actually interpreted this LITERALLY – who believed that plucking out your eyes or cutting off your hands MAY BE necessary to keep from sinning.

- a. That's NOT what Jesus is teaching – He's NOT teaching that we need to MUTILATE our physical bodies to keep from

- sinning (that's something only the most extreme ASCETICS would teach).
- b. The problem of sexual sins is not the PHYSICAL EYE or the PHYSICAL HAND, it's the LUSTFUL HEART that the eye or hand feeds.
 - c. Sins of the heart are not cured by EXTERNAL AMPUTATIONS, they are cured by doing away with the EXTERNAL TEMPTATIONS that feed the sins of the heart.
3. Jesus is saying we need to do all within our power to do away with those things that AROUSE sins in the heart – sins that will eventually condemn us to eternal torment.
4. To put it more simply:
- a. If Internet porn is our problem, then do away with the Internet.
 - b. If watching adult videos or sexually explicit movies are a problem, then do away with television and/or get rid of our VCRs and DVD players.
5. That may sound a little extreme, but which would you rather have:
- a. The Internet or a home in heaven?
 - b. Your TV or a home in heaven?
 - c. That should be a no-brainer.

IV. Finally, in closing, let's look at some practical lessons we can learn from this critically important teaching of Jesus.

A. I see THREE VALUABLE LESSONS we can learn here.

1. First, our life doesn't simply consist of the here and now – we are destined for eternity.
 - a. The future holds the possibility of either heaven or of "hell" (Greek word here is GEHENNA, the place of everlasting torment).
 - b. What we do, or do not do, NOW will determine our place in the future – whether we spend eternity in heaven or whether we spend eternity in a place of everlasting torment.
2. Second, NOTHING – no matter how precious or how important it may seem – NOTHING should be allowed to stand between us and a glorious destiny with our Lord in heaven.
 - a. God's goal for us is the *"kingdom of heaven"* in all its eternal glory!
 - b. What on "earth" can be worthy of losing that?
3. And finally, since sin is a very powerful and a very destructive force, it must NEVER be pampered!
 - a. Sin affects the soul in the same way as cancer affects the body – it must be fought aggressively!

- b. When we take only half-way measures, or make half-hearted efforts, we're actually allowing sin to continue to spread and wreck havoc with our souls!
 - c. Radical, aggressive treatment or surgery is what's necessary to treat the "cancer" of sin!
 - d. We need to perform radical, aggressive surgery to cut off those THINGS or those PEOPLE that might lead us to eventually commit sexual sins – even sins of the heart.
- B. The apostle Paul said what we put into our hearts and our minds will eventually determine the kind of person we will be.
- 1. He wrote this to the Philippians:
 - a. **Philippians 4:8** – *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.*
 - 2. If we want to be true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and worthy of praise, then we need to fill our minds with, and meditate on, things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and worthy of praise.
 - 3. There is simply no other way.

CONCLUSION:

- I. The teaching of Jesus in these verses is certainly challenging!
 - A. But it IS possible for us to control our fleshly desires – if it WEREN'T possible, Jesus wouldn't REQUIRE it of those who would be His disciples in the Kingdom.
 1. But we're not alone in fighting this battle.
 - a. **Philippians 2:12-13** – *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*
 - b. **Philippians 4:13** – *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*
 2. And if we fall, we also have this promise.
 - a. **1 John 1:9** – *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
 - B. How is your battle against lust of the flesh going?
 1. Christians battle this desire just as much as people in the world.

2. The only exception is that the Christian has the help of the Lord and the encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ in waging this battle.
- C. Don't fight this battle on your own.
1. Let the Lord cleanse you from all your PAST sins, and give you the strength to overcome all sins you may face in the FUTURE.
 - a. If you've never come to Christ in complete obedience...
 - b. Or if you have obeyed the gospel, but are struggling with this or other sins, then...