

# CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

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## Sermon on the Mount: Lust & the Life of Love

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you..."*

Without a doubt sexuality is a hot topic on many levels in our society today. As stated in the sermon "our sexuality seems to be connected deeply to our understanding of intimacy and when that cord of connection is mangled, all hell can break loose." Understanding our sexuality in this way moves us to see that it's not simply about superficial satiation, but something deeper. It is furthermore something of great breadth because this is an issue that affects us all. Matthew 5:27-30 brings to light the gravity of lust, the priority of lust, and the freedom from inordinate lust, the ravishing love of God.

Consonant with other sections of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is working to correct the teaching of the religious leaders who have pared down God's truth into a manageable aberration. Such is the nature of the human heart. Narrow the meaning of moral codes so that by the time we're finished playing

God, we're generally good people. But Jesus knows the games all too well and seeks to unveil our true character, white-washed tombs. Jesus not only exposes the darkness of the heart by helping us understand the breadth of lust as a sin, but ultimately enables us to see the connection between lust and idolatry. Idolatry can be defined as anything so central to our lives, that we feel empty if we lose it. That begins to make sense of the fact that marital infidelity is rarely about the sex. Infidelity so often occurs when we look to spouses or others to meet all of our relational needs. When they fail, we often times assume that there is someone out there in the flesh that can meet the longings of our heart. So we strike up the conversation or open our internet browser. When we lose the awe and wonder of what it means to be found in Christ, we pursue an agenda of self and fail to love those closest to us. The priority of lust found in this passage highlights two realities. First, this passage enables us to see that breaking the great

boundary of infidelity begins by breaking smaller boundaries. That is, the repeated conversations or glances. Second, the mortification of lust is advanced when we see it for what it is. Partaking in lust moves us away from the human and into a consumer-product arrangement, a deplorable mutation of relationship. How do we then attain freedom from lust? That can be an extremely complex question that we'll explore more in the Intersect section below, but simply stated we need to recognize two realities. First, we need to understand the true character of God and his ravishing love for us. We do that primarily by hearing from him in both Scripture and in prayer. Second, we experience transformation when His love grips our heart and we come to savor his excellency above the shallow offers of lustful pleasures. May Christ grant us such a vision of himself and fill our hearts with his great love and riches in the week to come. *Amen*

# Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

## Application Questions: Matthew 5:27-30

1. In your opinion why is it that sexuality plays such a significant role in our society, past and present?
2. Why is it instinctive within our hearts to narrow the meaning of our moral codes, whether religious or irreligious, as narrowly as possible? How does that play out in Matthew 5:27-30?
3. Look back on your life and consider what you've thought about God and sex. What was taught to you regarding the relationship between the two? How would you describe an accurate and robust view of God's design of sex?
4. It's been said that marital infidelity is rarely about the sex. Spiritually and emotionally speaking, why is this true?
5. Joe has noticed that an attractive woman recently began working in his division. As she walks by one day Joe tells himself "it's ok to look as long as I don't touch!" Several rows over Sally has been fostering a relationship with a male co-worker where she has been quite vulnerable, something she doesn't have with her husband. Finally she's found a man that will listen! Neither Joe or Sally consider their actions to be a big deal, but what would you say according to this text? (Also consider James 1:14-15).
6. Read Genesis 1:26 in tandem with the Matthew text. What does lust in any form do to yourself and the one for whom you lust? Is this the kind of world that you want to propagate?
7. Knowing that our heart is designed for worship how does God become the key player in our sexual redemption?

"No one breaks commandments 2-10 (including adultery) without first breaking the first commandment: "you shall have no other gods before me."

Martin Luther

## Intersect: Spiritual Dynamics Part I

Addictions are an amazing phenomenon. Full of abilities, we give ourselves over to that which has no ability; alcohol, gambling, eating, theft, and of course sex. Realizing that whole societies and programs have been developed to fight such addictions, it is nonetheless imperative that we understand the spiritual dynamics of these battles. Two errors are often made in fighting addiction. The first is ignoring the spiritual dynamics at work, a failure common to even successful secular programs. Secondly though the church often exhorts people to "just stop doing that because that's what Jesus wants" and thus commits the same error as secular programs, ignoring the spiritual dynamics.

Regarding this fight against addictions and idolatry John Owen once wrote: "Some look upon it as an easy task. But is it for nothing that the Holy Spirit expresses it by mortification, or killing? Certainly this intimates a violent contest. Everything will do its utmost to preserve its life. Let no man think to kill sin with a few gentle strokes. He who has once smitten the serpent, if he does not follow his blow until it is killed, may repent that he ever began the quarrel in the first place; and so will he who undertakes to deal with sin, if he does not pursue it constantly to death; sin will revive, and the man must die."

Owen's words highlight the gravity of our struggle with sin. The seriousness of this contest reveals two powerful realities. On one side of the coin our struggles reveal just how easily we can give ourselves away to the things of this world. We believe that these things will give us life, hope, and fulfillment but we know that's just not the reality. In this way we are being trafficked by the idols of this world. Meditate on that for a moment. Let that sink in. Consider the fact that we are very literally giving ourselves over to that which is powerless to do anything! A website, bottle, or slot machine cannot bear true and lasting fruit in our lives. Yet, there is a significant spiritual aura about these things and that points to the other side of the coin.

The seriousness of this contest also reveals the great importance of the human heart. The heart has always been treasured by God as reflected in Psalm 51:6 "behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart". God is very interested in us loving him "with all our heart" because it is in him alone that we find true life. In contrast, the idols of this world consume our heart, trample, and mangle it. We've all felt the emptiness of giving ourselves away to an addiction only to find that our emotions, time, and energy have been consumed and the only thing left is the shell of our being. God wants more than that for us.

In the coming weeks this column will be dedicated to helping us along the path of freedom. Specifically, we'll look at a four part process in depth that hopefully will assist you on the journey to the New World. Blessings!

