

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

*a 10 minute daily devotional | week 4*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

*Matthew 5:27-30*

# monday | devotional

My senior year of high school I had my first serious girlfriend. In the spring of that year, just before graduation, I felt a need to confess to her that I had lusted after others. I don't offer this as relationship advice, but something incredible came from the decision. The evening after I had made this confession, I was home in my room and God spoke to my heart. His message was this: While I had wronged my girlfriend, my sins were truly against him. That night I felt the weight of my sin (not just the lust, but all of it) more strongly than I have ever felt it. I also felt something else as strongly as I've ever, God's incredibly amazing grace.

That night I spent hours weeping on my floor because of the conviction that I had done so much evil, but Jesus had suffered the penalty for all of it. In those hours my life was changed forever. I know God can work in a lot of ways, but from my perspective, I wouldn't be a pastor writing this devotional if it wasn't for that night when God made me feel the weight of my sin and his grace.

Ministry wasn't the only byproduct of that night. My love of God was intensified, my passion for praising him grew immensely, and sinful things seemed far less attractive. One of the sins that seemed far less attractive was lust. I'd be lying if I said I never lusted again or that all my desires for lust went away, but I can honestly say that my relationship with lust was changed in those moments when I wept on my floor. Why? Because my heart was changed.

In the past lust would have been almost impossible to quantify, but the advent of internet pornography has given us data. The data is bleak, suggesting that the world has a major lust problem. Look at these stats from [fightthenewdrug.com](http://fightthenewdrug.com) (a great website for help with this issue):

1. 35% of all internet downloads are pornography-related.
2. Pornography sites receive more regular traffic than Netflix, Amazon, & Twitter combined each month.
3. 64% of young people, ages 13–24, actively seek out pornography weekly or more often.
4. In 2016 alone, more than 4,599,000,000 hours of pornography were consumed on the world's largest porn site.

What makes this lust problem even more staggering is that much of culture embraces it as a positive. Data shows us something different:

1. A study of 14- to 19-year-olds found that females who consumed pornographic videos were at a significantly greater likelihood of being victims of sexual harassment or sexual assault.
2. A 2015 meta-analysis of 22 studies from seven countries found that internationally the consumption of pornography was significantly associated with increases in verbal and physical aggression, among males and females alike.
3. People who admit to having extramarital affairs were over 300% more likely to admit consuming porn than those who have never had an affair, according to a 2004 study in *Social Science Quarterly*.

This data is scary. Dr. Gary Brooks, a psychologist who has worked with porn addicts for the last 30 years, gives us more insight, "Any time [a person] spends much time with the usual pornography usage cycle, it can't help but be a depressing, demeaning, self-loathing kind of experience." Pornography usage is not only connected to depression, but also social isolation and mental anxiety.

The data points above are interesting for many reasons, but one is this: Lust is bad for people, but they can't stop doing it. Like any addiction, knowing that something is bad for you is not usually enough incentive to stop. Everyone knows that smoking cigarettes is bad for a person's health, but lots of people still smoke them. Stopping something that makes you feel good takes more than scientific evidence that it is unhealthy. What does it take? It takes a change of heart.

I have a sugar addiction. I know it is bad for me and I'm always trying to stop eating sugar. For a while my wife kept a note on her phone with dates of when I said, "I'm never eating sugar again." In the last year or so I've done much better at reducing my sugar intake. What helped? Definitely not more information about its ill affects on my health. Instead, it was a thought I had when I was putting my daughter to bed one night. My daughter is 3 years old and I am 35. As I lay next to her I was calculating how old I would be if she had children at the same age as me. And then I had a staggering thought, if I don't eat healthier, I may not be able to play with my grandkids. I've been eating much healthier ever since because a desire to play with my grandkids someday is greater than a desire for a cookie (most of the time).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is turning righteousness inside out. He wants us to see that a changed life comes from a changed heart - we can't just try to follow a set of rules, it won't work. How does this apply to lust? Avoiding lust isn't just about trying harder. We avoid lust by trying harder because our hearts have been changed.

What must change about our hearts to cause us to remove lust from our lives? We must desperately desire to faithfully serve Jesus and to treat others with the same sacrificial love he has given us. I had to shed a lot of tears, but I'm grateful God has helped my heart grow in these ways.

Consider this: Am I striving to faithfully serve Jesus and treat people like he would?

## Tuesday | commentary

Below are seven snippets of commentary. After you've read them write a short statement explaining how it helps you better understand Matthew 5:27-30.

"According to Jewish law, adultery referred to sexual intercourse with the wife or the betrothed of a Jew and it was condemned because it was in essence "taking" another man's wife and thus was considered illicit use of that man's property!"

The word for "lust" (*blepo*) is in the present tense. "The idea is that what may have begun as a glance, becomes a gaze!"

William Barclay (on lust), "...if anyone looks at a woman in such a way as deliberately to awaken within himself the forbidden desire for her."

David Guzik, "The act of adultery is far worse than adultery in the heart. Jesus' point is not to say they are the same things, but to say they are both sin, and both prohibited by the command against adultery."

Oswald Chambers, "We cannot think anything without the thought having its consequence."

The word translated "stumble" is *skandalizo* which has its root in a word that "refers to stick in a trap on which the bait is placed and which springs up and shuts the trap at the touch of the careless, unwary animal."

Charles Spurgeon, "Give up the dearest, choicest, and apparently most needful thing, if it leads you into sin."

## wednesday | questions

1. What have you seen lost because of lust?
2. Jesus takes the removal of sin seriously in this passage. How does your treatment of sin compare?
3. What should you remove, or have you removed, from your life to help you avoid sin? What would be, or has been, gained?
4. Share one thought from this passage that you find most meaningful and why.

## thursday | prayer

Take 10 minutes to pray that God will help you overcome sin. Here's a prayer to get you started: "Dear Jesus, I know that every perfect gift, and especially that of chastity, depends on the power of Your providence. Without You a mere creature can do nothing. Therefore, I beg You to defend by Your grace the chastity and purity of my body and soul. And if I have ever imagined or sensed anything that could stain my chastity and purity, blot it out, Supreme Lord of my powers, that I may advance with a pure heart in Your love and service, offering myself on the most pure altar of Your divinity all the days of my life. Amen."

## friday | application

| Remove something from your life that causes temptation. Better yet, remove two things from your life that cause temptation.

## saturday | journaling

Spend 10 minutes recording your thoughts/feelings from your week immersed in Matthew 5:27-30.