

Theme: Lust is a disordered love that excessively craves my own sexual pleasure, desiring it more than true intimacy with God or others.

## I. Intro - No Problem With Lust In America!

- A. Not find a single movie with sex and lust in it - :)
- B. Clearly this is not a problem in modern world
- C. Lust self test - are you human - you flunk (Dr. DeYoung)
- D. What is lust? Is it really a problem? How do we fight it?

## II. The Problem of Lust

- A. Sexual behavior is big part of our call as Christians  
Finally, brothers, we instructed you **how to live in order to please God**, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. <sup>2</sup> For you know what **instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus**. <sup>3</sup> It is **God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality**; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–3
  - 1. As God's children, this is how we live to please God
  - 2. Instructions are by Jesus' authority - not 'just Paul'
  - 3. God's will is for us to be sanctified - holy
  - 4. Sexual behavior is important part of holiness
  - 5. There are always people who say sexual behavior is not part of discipleship but they are wrong; it is an important part of our humanity and our Christianity
- B. Our sexual lives must be characterized by godly control that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup> not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 1Th 4:4–5

- 1. We must control our body, not follow every urge
  - 2. Such sexual self-control is part of holiness
  - 3. Sexual self-control is not just actions but resisting an underlying attitude of passionate lust
  - 4. Those controlled by passionate lust don't know God
  - 5. Digging below behavior to the root vice of lust
- C. We must not involve others in sexual sin and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. 1 Thessalonians 4:6
    - 1. Our sexual immorality is never a "solitary sin"
    - 2. It is not only a sin against God, it is a sin against others - even if they are consenting!
    - 3. We are not to engage in or lead others to sexual sin - by word, attitude, or actual sexual acts
  - D. God will judge sexual immorality as a rejection of Him  
The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. <sup>7</sup> For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. 1 Thess 4:6–8
    - 1. God will punish all people for such sexual sins
    - 2. God calls His children to holy lives of sexual purity
    - 3. To reject this is to reject God Who gives us the HOLY Spirit
  - E. Embracing God's eternal, unchanging standards for sexual conduct is not an option for Christians, but a central part of our call.

### III. The Root Vice of Lust

#### A. Defining lust as a disordered love

Lust is a disordered love that excessively craves my own sexual pleasure, desiring it more than true intimacy with God or others.

##### 1. Lust is an excessive craving regarding sex

###### a. Sex in itself is God's good gift to humanity

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

1. Sex is God's idea, gift, and command to us!
2. This is prior to the fall - so sex is part of God's original creation that is 'very good'
3. Sex is celebrated in Scripture (also Song of Songs)  
May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. <sup>19</sup> A loving doe, a graceful deer — may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Prov 5:18–19

###### b. Lust distorts the gift of sex in one of two ways

1. Sexual desire for the wrong person
  - (a) Anyone other than my legal spouse
  - (b) In Scripture the term porneia precludes all pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, same-sex activity, etc - in thought, word, or deed
2. Sexual desire that desires the right person wrongly
  - (a) Viewing sex with my spouse wrongly
  - (b) Turning them into an object for my gratification

##### 2. Lust is focused on my pleasure rather than intimacy

- a. Sex is confined to legal marriage in Scripture because it is more than a physical act; it is the bonding of two people physically, emotionally, spiritually
- b. Sex is God's gift which is meant to act like 'glue' - forming a permanent bond between two people
- c. This is why Song of Songs 8:4 advises to not awaken love until its proper time
- d. Lust rejects this intimate bonding core of sex, and tries to treat it as simply an act for physical gratification
  1. Indecent Proposal - "I'm just going to give him my body, not my soul."
  2. But they sadly find out this is not possible
- e. This also means that those who give themselves to many people are in essence giving away parts of their soul, and each time this makes it more difficult to truly form an intimate bond with just one person
- f. It is also possible for a spouse to treat sex as merely a means of physical pleasure, avoiding true intimacy - and this is lust, not love

#### B. The misplaced identity of lust

I seek to find my identity in my sexual desires and activity rather than God and His will.

1. This is a major problem in our culture - we are trying to define ourselves by our sexual desires and activities rather than by being the image of God
2. But this is a gross violation of reality and God's will, so it is a futile desire that can never be satisfied
  - a. The problem is that lust is like eczema. The more we scratch it, the more it itches. - Graham Tomlin
  - b. Lust is like the craving for salt of a man whom is dying of thirst. - Frederick Buechner

- c. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. . . . An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula. . . . To get a man's soul and give him nothing in return—that's what really gladdens Our Father (Satan's) heart. - Screwtape Letters

### C. The sinful fruits of lust

1. Lust obviously leads to sinful sexual activity
  - a. Lust leads to sinful sexual fantasies and practices such as pornography
  - b. Lust leads to fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia, etc (Matthew 5:27-30)
  - c. Ultimately, these practices lead to the breakup of families, loss of friendships
2. To get its object, lust will lie, steal - or even kill (David and Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 11)
3. Lust fosters relationship problems
  - a. Lust undermines the natural development of a relationship in its earlier stages
  - b. Lust causes frustration because its demands can never be met - this leads to false disappointment in other people
  - c. Lust that leads to unfaithfulness produces guilt, which undermines open communication and warmth in a relationship
4. Lust undermines humanity - other persons & ours
  - a. Viewing people with lust degrades them in our eyes - they are just a sexual object, not a person

- b. Lust also undermines our own humanity - to successfully separate love and relationship from sex is to become less human.
- c. The story of Amnon and Tamar - he desired her, and then cast her aside like trash (2 Samuel 13)
- d. This is why lust leads to human trafficking - the people cease to be human and are just objects
- e. Lust is a sexual desire that dishonors its object and disregards God. (John Piper)

## IV. Applying the Word

### A. Embrace chastity - Abstinence and faithfulness

1. Lust leads to sinful sexual behavior
2. Chastity is the decision to live sexually holy lives
3. Practices of chastity
  - a. Abstinence - no sexual activity before marriage
  - b. Faithfulness - within marriage; though, word, deed
4. This "negative" step is not enough - but it must begin here. We will never achieve freedom from lust if we do not strive to avoid immoral sexual activity that flows from it

### B. Practice purity - avoidance & accountability

1. We live in a culture that feeds and encourages lust
2. We must make a concerted effort to live in purity
3. Practices to encourage purity
  - a. Avoid - known sources of temptation (places, media, people)

- b. Accountability - person to pray with and confess
- 4. If we do not practice purity in our daily lives, it will be virtually impossible to embrace and practice chastity

### C. Cultivate love

- 1. Love and lust are polar opposites in every way
  - a. Love is the giving of one's entire self, lust the taking of physical pleasure
  - b. Love is about relationship, lust is about self-gratification
  - c. Love is content, lust always craves more
  - d. Love makes us more fully human, lust dehumanizes us and others
- 2. To put off lust we must put on the opposing virtue of love
- 3. Practices to cultivate love
  - a. Community - genuine friendships and fellowship
    - 1. Lust grows in solitary darkness but the light of true friendships causes it to dry and wither
    - 2. Lust views relationships in a sexualized manner; in community we learn to grow in non-sexual relationships
    - 3. Cultivating true emotional intimacy in non-sexual relationships exposes the lies of lust that try to substitute sex for our needs for emotional intimacy
    - 4. Cross-generational relationships are actually very important here

### D. Closing words on the series

- 1. We provided the table of vices, virtues, practices

- 2. It also has the graphic that visually represents this
- 3. Keep it, and continue to ask God to help you cut these root vices and grow in virtue to be more like Jesus

### E. Closing prayer

#### Lust

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

March 25, 2018

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: Lent; sexual sin; holiness; self-control; sin; character; sanctification

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thess 5:23–24

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. <sup>2</sup> For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup> not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; <sup>6</sup> and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. <sup>7</sup> For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8