

## Seven Deadly Sins – Lust Week 3

Past Weeks:

The formation of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Helpful to examine our personal sanctification, focus our attention at capital or root sins, address the long-term nature of our sin struggle.

We don't make war with sin to earn salvation. Rather, God has freed us through Christ to walk in righteousness.

Pride comes when we seek our value from anything beyond what God has given us through grace.

### Lust is a Challenging Subject

#### The Nature of Appropriateness

I'm not sure if our different perspectives on how to address this issue are personality or generational or simply a result of our family of origin and personal experience.

Perhaps you might view this whole discussion as inappropriate to take place in this format. I know many who think we don't address this issue enough. The right balance can be tough to find.

One thing seems clear to me. Status Quo is definitely not helping.

We find ourselves feeling a bit awkward in this conversation. Afraid we will say the wrong thing.

If God talks about it and He does. We should be able to talk about it.

So I apologize upfront if I offend or in any way cause thoughts today which are unhelpful to you or those you love, it is not my intention, actually the exact opposite is my hope. To offer health to our lives in this area.

#### We are Different People in Different Places

Our class today could be divided into two easy to define groups. Married and Single. While this issue has many areas of overlap it also has distinct differences for those in each of these two groups. The church historically has not done well at communicating to the singles among us that they are not lacking anything in their singleness. We often seem to pressure the singles into relationships as a form of maturity and that isn't right. Paul actually says that living in singleness can actually be a great application of Christian maturity. I'll try to be thoughtful to both of these groups this morning as we consider the deadly sin of lust.

Also each of us have an unimaginable number of different circumstances in our lives that have left wounds and scars when it comes to this subject. Abuse, addiction, hurts, struggle, shame. In all likelihood none of us escape from the damage of this sin unscathed. And the damage caused in your lives by lust is not assumed to be equal or compared to others in any way to minimize your personal pain.

Thorough Discussion is not Possible in 60 Minutes

Understanding this subject thoroughly and discussing its nuances adequately takes years not minutes. So today my goal will be as it always is to use these 60 minutes as best as possible to look at the issue as a whole and offer some big picture observations that are rooted in the scriptures.

**What do you think a healthy conversation about sexual purity looks like for a church community?**

Let's Pray!

Sexuality is a Gift from God

Confusion in silence.

In not talking about human sexuality being a good part of God's design we risk people coming to the opposite conclusion.

This is especially true when our only comments on the issue are... Don't do this and don't do that. When guilt becomes our only association with sexuality it can become connected in unhealthy ways. I believe this is especially true for young kids.

God Designed Human Sexuality

Human gender and sexuality were designed by God and part of his creation pre-fall. This means we know that they are good.

According to Scripture sex is intended to...

Join two people together in a covenantal bond of marriage.

Expression of love. Sacred pathway to intimacy.

Paul's encouragement not to deny.

Build a family.

**How does the Bible encourage a positive perspective on sex as a gift?**

**How can we as a church cultivate an environment where sexuality is honored but not idolized?**

## Mankind's Tragic Distortion

Any departure from God's intent that we have sought after truly is tragic. Many who have chosen that will often testify with grief that they have experienced the wreckage that such pursuits create.

*Lust strips sex from the context of marriage, reducing it to the satisfaction of a bodily craving. And the more entrenched the acceptance of lust becomes in our culture, the more depersonalizing and dehumanizing it becomes, often divorcing sex from any kind of meaningful relationship at all.*

*"Hit List" Brian Hedges*

### Lust is Unhealthy Sexual Desire

*On one level, lust is an excessive desire for sexual pleasure: wanting sexual fulfillment too much or pursuing it in ways or relationships forbidden by God. But from another angle, lust is a defective desire, for it wants not too much, but too little. Lust desires sexual pleasure minus the kind of relationship sex was designed for in the first place.*

*"Hit List" Brian Hedges*

When you create a desire you cannot righteously fulfill.

Tom Vasquez

### Our Manifestations of Lust Can Vary

Person to Person (In person, digitally (Facebook, email, whatever))

Flirtation, Objectifying, Any other manner of sexual satisfaction

Person to Digital Person (Still a person)

Our attempt to depersonalize the sin.

An Article – Helping me see the women and men in the porn industry as abuse victims and people in excruciating pain. Drug use is insanely high among those in the pornography industry. Suicide rates are extraordinarily high in the pornography industry. However these people get started it is clear that our consumption of porn is not without cost to others despite the misconception. Women are tricked into "modeling" opportunities only to be tricked.

This is human trafficking.

Personal Fantasy

Imagination is not exempt from this.

## Movies, Books, Real people we fantasize about

This is not a single gender issue.

I would also add that like in many things men and women may just have different expressions of this sin. For instance many women may forgo looking at images in favor of a romantic story which creates a kind of emotional pornography. Sometimes those books are really no different than pornography at all given their descriptions.

But in all actuality the statistics from inside the church tell us that this is a serious issue for men and women alike.

- 64% of self-identified Christian men and 15% of self-identified Christian women view pornography at least once a month (compared to 65% of non-Christian men and 30% of non-Christian women).

Even among our spiritual leaders this issue is rampant.

- 1 in 5 youth pastors and 1 in 7 adult pastors use porn on a regular basis and are currently struggling. That's more than 50,000 U.S. church leaders.
- 43% of senior pastors and youth pastors say they have struggled with pornography in the past.

### Contrary to Our Christlike Identity

1 Corinthians 4:14–5:2

[14] I do not write these things to make you **ashamed**, but to **admonish** you as my beloved children. [15] For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. [16] I urge you, then, be imitators of me. [17] That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. [18] Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. [19] But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. [20] For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. [21] What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? (ESV)

[1] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. [2] And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

Paul was dealing with a church that was tolerating an unrepentant man who was having sex with his mother. Paul outlines clearly that while we may expect such things from those

living outside Christ's church, living in such ways inside the church should not be allowed.

Ephesians 5:1–17

[1] Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. [2] And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[3] But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. [5] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7] Therefore do not become partners with them; [8] for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

[15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (ESV)

**How can we as a church walk in grace filled faithfulness to Paul's encouragement in these passages?**

1 Corinthians 6:9–17

[9] Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

[12] “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. [13] “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for

food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. [14] And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. [15] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! [16] Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” [17] But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (ESV)

Scripture invites us to see sexual immorality as a part of the godless life. We are invited in grace to something so much better. So often in the scripture sexual immorality is listed among the behaviors of the world and in contrast with the people of God.

Remember Paul’s rhetorical question to the Romans? Shall I sin that grace may abound? No you have been set free in Christ from the power of sin, so walk in that freedom. You have been enabled by God’s sacrifice to walk in sexual purity so enjoy that freedom and flee from sexual sin.

#### The Costs

While sexual desire in context of God’s good design can bring you great fulfillment, lust and sexual sin will end up robbing you of God’s best.

##### For All

We make it into an idol. It draws our attention away from God.

The guilt creates relational divide between God and us.

##### For the Single

Sexual imprinting. How I think about sex/what I get from sex.

We need to be protecting that space.

Scars will follow us into future relationships.

##### For the Married

Relational disconnect with spouse. Sex often draws us together without that aspect we can become lazy and unmotivated to build intimacy in other areas. Emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

##### For the Parent

Modeling. You kids are learning by what you say, don’t say and what you do and don’t do. They are paying closer attention than you think. Just because they aren’t doing what you want doesn’t mean they aren’t carefully observing what you do. I can’t tell you how many men can trace their negative sexual patterns back to what they saw modelled by their fathers, I assume the same goes for women.

## A Word on Addiction

Not all sin is addiction. For some lust may be an occasional issue that is then brought back into check by the Spirit's convicting working in us.

Addiction often has very similar motivations as regular sin but it seems to have grown into a place of unmanageableness.

(I don't mean to say it is okay to sin occasionally as long as you can stop when you want, I'm just saying that is probably not addiction. I'm also not saying that addicts are incapable of not sinning but that despite increases and undesirable costs they seem to be out of control giving themselves away in a seemingly uncontrollable way to whatever they are addicted to.)

The first step in a 12 step program is after all to admit we are powerless and our lives have become unmanageable.

There is a lot we can learn from the tools that help others break addiction. Often our choice to sin grows out of something else in our lives that is disordered. Examining our lives and finding that root can be very helpful.

If you are addicted to some form of sexual sin I encourage you to seek help. Connect with CR here or some other recovery ministry that can help you. Consider examining how your behavior has escalated over time and how the costs have also escalated and consider your willingness to pay those costs on that increasing trajectory. When you are able to see you have reached that stage of unmanageableness, seek help.

## Opportunities for Grace

Grace is not just pardon but power. Scripture calls us to flee from sin with the expectation that in Christ we have the power to do so.

We Can Flee From Sin (1 Cor 6:18, 2 Tim 2:22, 1 Thes 4:3)

Piper's A.N.T.H.E.M. (First 2-4 in the moment, 1, 5 and 6 are more long term patterns)

A—Avoid

Avoid, as much as possible and reasonable, the sights and situations that arouse unfitting desire.

N—No

Say no to every lustful thought right away.

T—Turn

Turn the mind forcefully toward Christ as a superior satisfaction. Attack the inferior promises of sin with the superior promises of Christ.

#### H—Hold

Hold the promise and the pleasure of Christ firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out. Hold it! Don't let it go! Keep holding it! How long? As long as it takes. Fight!

#### E—Enjoy

Enjoy a superior satisfaction. Cultivate capacities for pleasure in Christ. Look, and look, and look at the most magnificent Person in the universe until you see him as supremely magnificent and satisfying as he really is.

#### M—Move

Move into a useful activity away from idleness and other vulnerable behaviors.

### Covenant Eyes “Hobbies and Habits” - Lisa Eldred

One helpful mnemonic device for moments of vulnerability is “H.A.L.T.”:

1. Hungry
2. Angry
3. Lonely
4. Tired (or Bored)

#### The Life-Changing Power of Fellowship

##### Reshaping Your Environment to Reshape Your Habits

1. Rearrange your furniture to support your life
2. Replace your decorations
3. Find a safe place for your technology

Out with the old in with the new. (Hobbies)

Accountability (More a person to process and encourage the pursuit of sexual health)

Person – Look to your small group. Someone you'll be honest with.

#### Tools

Software – Covenant Eyes (\$15/mo)

Not going to fix addiction. Fences can be climbed.

We lock our doors. But they can be kicked down.

We need something stronger. A lot stronger.

#### Websites

NCAC – [www.neighborhoodac.org/puritywar](http://www.neighborhoodac.org/puritywar)

Working toward lowering the risk level.

Covenant Eyes - [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)

#### Mini-Books

Life Recovery International – [www.freedomeveryday.org](http://www.freedomeveryday.org)

Study-Guides (Excellent for specific circumstances)

Pure Desire Ministries – [www.puredesire.org](http://www.puredesire.org)

#### Blogs and Podcasts

#### Recovery Groups (CR, Freedom)

NCAC – Celebrate Recovery

#### Online

Life Recovery International (No Cost \$5/wk Donation)

Pure Desire Ministries (\$50-70/mo)

God can heal our wounds.

We are still usable through God's grace. There is not a perfect person among us. We all have wrestled with sin. It is in the wrestling that our identity as believers becomes clear. Don't believe lies from Satan that you are unusable. Don't adopt a "Why bother? I'm damaged goods." view. God is a master at redeeming the broken and utilizing them for the sacred. Hold fast to that hope and flee sexual sin. Hold fast to God's good design for sex.

You are not alone. (We want to help)

I have spoken with numerous men here at Neighborhood Church young and old who are wrestling for purity in this area of their lives. Please don't let secrecy and shame stop you from repentance and health in the strength of community.

We NEED to bring our sin in the light where it can be addressed.

Secrecy and Shame – Enemies of Biblical Repentance