

To The Heart of Sexuality

Matthew 5:27-32

WEEK 3



OPEN

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gets to the heart of things. He's not impressed with surface level righteousness, a righteousness that justifies less than ideal behaviour or finds loopholes in the rules. The righteousness He seeks is righteousness that flows from pure hearts, hungering and thirsting for God and His righteousness.

And in just a few verses, He gets to the heart of sexuality. We can claim purity by the rule of the seventh commandment, "Do not commit adultery;" but Jesus gets to the heart of how we view each other – lust or love? And He gets to the heart of marriage by challenging the ways those in His day claimed God's sanction to end an inconvenient marriage. Apart from a few acts that themselves break a marriage, giving a divorce certificate doesn't end a marriage in God's eyes.

God wants us to grow in the same unconditional commitment He has for us. And there's no differences between Him and us that His cross can't reconcile.

SHARE & RECONNECT

- Think of how sexuality is portrayed in movies and TV. What's at the heart of thriving sexuality according to these portrayals?
- What are some core aspects of God's vision for a thriving sexuality?
- How does singleness fit into your vision of thriving sexuality? How does Jesus' singleness fit into your vision of thriving sexuality?

READING

Read Matthew 5:27-32.

- Jesus quotes the seventh commandment: How would you define "adultery"?
- How would you define "lust"?
- Jesus is entering into an ongoing debate about how to interpret Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and proper grounds for divorce. Does He give any? What do you think Jesus means by the last half of verse 32, and a remarriage being adulterous?

REFLECT

Jesus didn't come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.

Pastor Darrell Johnson sums up how Christ calls us back to the fulfilment of God's will for our sexuality: "Your sexuality thrives in the context of unconditional commitment."

- Pastor Paul used the three "Ps" to sum up the biblical vision of sexuality in marriage: Pleasure. Partnership. Procreation.
 - How do these three things guide us to thriving sexuality?
 - What questions do you have about these three? How does this help us think through current cultural debates about sexuality?

Joy Davidman suggests Jesus' words on lust define adultery as "a certain view of women, rather than as a certain act."

- How are we viewing each other, when we look with lust?
- Jesus gives strong statements on what to do. Origen, in the 3rd century, took Jesus at His word, and (as the story goes) got himself castrated. How would you have explained to Origen what Jesus actually meant? What are some practical steps we can take to deal with lust?

Jesus' words on divorce in 5:31-32 are stark in contrast to many rabbis in His day. In Judaism, "the husband's right [to divorce] was regarded as inalienable, and the only question was the ground on which he based his action. The school of Shammai took a hard line and saw the meaning of 'some indecency' (Deut 24:1) as adultery, whereas the school of Hillel allowed a much wider range of interpretation, and, for example, permitted a man to divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner (Mishnah, Git 9.10)" (Leon Morris, *Matthew*, 120).

- In light of Jesus' words, how would you counsel someone contemplating divorce?
- How would you counsel someone who has divorced, or been divorced?

PRAY

- Think of God's grace and forgiveness for us in our sin and failure.
 - Ask God to forgive you for your sexual sin, in thought, word, or deed.
 - Ask for God's grace and love to fill you.
- "We can only conquer pleasure with pleasure." Read Psalm 16:11. Ask God to help fill you with His goodness and love and joy, and to taste and see His goodness in all the good pleasures He's created for us to enjoy, and ultimately, the pleasure of doing His will.
- Pray for God to help us see one another the way He sees us. To see each other with perfect purity (1 Timothy 5:1-2) and real, deep love that values each other for all of who we are.
- Pray for each other to be able to love one another with the love of Christ, whether we're married or single.