

Lust

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body,
that you should obey it in its lusts.*

– Romans 6:12, NKJV

Lust is at the core of all types of sin. Our sin nature is driven by lust. It lusts for power, authority, recognition, sex, and more. James explained to the Church that death is the goal of our innate lustful temptations when he wrote, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:14-15 NASB). Lust always leads to death. For the Christian, that means that the moments we are being lustful cannot be regained. Our lust filled words, thoughts, and deeds not only die a death and have the potential to derail our lives in millions of ways, but these times deprive us of rewards in Heaven as well. We have eternal life positionally forever; however, we participate in our rewardable moments by either choosing to act in holiness or sinfulness.

Lust Lives in All of Us

Genesis 3 records the fall of humankind. Lust for the forbidden fruit triggered the disobedience of Adam and Eve. All the sin around us was birthed from Adam and Eve's lust for what God said they could not have. Because of the fall, covetous and lustful desires of things and people reside in our hearts and stand at the ready to bring about our fall in minute and grandiose ways.

Another way to think of lust is to think about it as "any desire that is not rooted in love."

Lust has very strong draws for each of us, and may manifest itself in personal ways. My lustful weaknesses may not be the ones others struggle with. But speaking broadly, lust is usually in three categories: lust for sex outside of holy marriage between a man and a woman; lust for things; lust for power and prestige.

Lust is always in us, ready to take over. We must not let these lusts take ground in our lives. John also explained that lust resides in our old natures. And he taught that lust is driven in large part by the sense of sight. He wrote, "For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh (appetites), the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16, NKJV). Lust's fuse is lit through our eyes. Our eyes are the vehicle—the go-between—that triggers sin into our lives. Guard your eyes!

Sensual Lust is a Focus of the New Testament

Jess C. Scott said, "The human body is the best work of art." Teenagers, men, and women will lust after each other at some point in their lives. And most of us are familiar with how powerful sexual lust can be. In America, we invented the adage "sex sells," but nothing for humankind is new under the sun. We humans are lust-filled creatures. Our fallen makeup coupled with temptations on the internet and TV 24/7 calls for God's people to remain vigilant for any hint of lust in our lives.

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5,

LUST

“Finally then, brothers and sisters, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received instruction from us about how you must live and please God (as you are in fact living) that you do so more and more. ² For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is God’s will: that you become holy, that you keep away from sexual immorality, ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God.

The Cost of Sensual Lust

God’s word is filled with warning and teaching about sensual lust. The human cost is becoming more and more evident even to non-Christians. Here is an excerpt of an article from a company called Webroot:

The societal costs of pornography are staggering. The financial cost to business productivity in the U.S. alone is estimated at \$16.9 billion annually; but the human toll, particularly among our youth and in our families, is far greater.

According to Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D, psychologist and former Deputy Assistant Health and Human Services Secretary, “two recent reports, one by the American Psychological Association on hyper-sexualized girls, and the other by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy on the pornographic content of phone texting among teenagers, make clear that the digital revolution is being used by younger and younger children to dismantle the barriers that channel sexuality into family life.

Pornography hurts adults, children, couples, families, and society. Among adolescents, pornography hinders the development of a healthy sexuality, and among adults, it distorts sexual attitudes and social realities. In families, pornography use leads to marital dissatisfaction,

infidelity, separation, and divorce.”⁴⁶

Sexual lusts have long-term potential for acute addiction. This is due to the ‘triple A’ influence. Pornography is **accessible**, is **affordable**, and provides a level of **anonymity**).⁴⁷ There are numerous studies on the internet—scientific and otherwise—of the effects that pornography has on the human brain and the addictive power it has over millions.

These truths are not going to change. Lust breeds death. God has limits on our freedoms to protect us from death. We forget the dynamic potential of the sin that always wants more and often.

The Cost of Lust

All lust is sinful and selfish. In love, others are the focus; in lust we are the focus. The cost of unbridled lust has the highest penalties and ruin associated with it. Ask the man whose marriage failed because of his sexual lusts. Ask the woman who has brought her family to financial ruin due to her insatiable lust for more, more, more. Along with family ruin, lustfulness often leads to public embarrassment and shame. Read the following poetic passage from Proverbs with the understanding that the metaphorical language in context represents holy sexual contact and lustful sexual contact.

Proverbs 5:14-16

*“I almost came to complete ruin
in the midst of the whole congregation!”
Drink water from your own cistern
and running water from your own well.
Should your springs be dispersed outside,*

⁴⁶ “Internet Pornography by the Numbers; A Significant Threat to Society,” Webroot, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.webroot.com/us/en/resources/tips-articles/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers>.

⁴⁷ Kirsten Weir, Is Pornography Addictive? (April 2014) accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/04/pornography>.

LUST

your streams of water in the wide plazas?”

We each possess a bottomless pit for the lusts we carry within us (cf. Romans 1:18-32). The deeper we follow lust however, the higher the cost. Lust “is the kind of thing that eats you and leaves you starving.”— Nayyirah Waheed

The Lower Bar

The attitudes toward pornography cause a lowering of the bar in other ways too. Many Christians are now seeing illicit sex outside of marriage as “the consolation you have when you can’t have love.”⁴⁸ However, sex outside of a marriage is no consolation. It’s death masquerading as the next best thing to love, but only God could measure its toll on humankind. “Sex is okay outside of marriage” is a thinly veiled belief to ease the conscience. Christians need to reaffirm God’s divine plan for sex: one man, one woman married for life.

Overcoming Lust

Romans 13:13-14 reads, “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its lusts*” (emphasis mine, NKJV). The passage explains that we should “make no provision for the flesh.” The Greek word for “provision” means to give “forethought” to or to “give care to.” We must act immediately in our thought life if we struggle with lust. We must intentionally drive out lustful thoughts and replace them—again—with thoughts of “... whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy ...” (Philippians 4:8). In other words, lust is driven out of our minds with truth.

One reason we see others and ourselves struggling with lust is because we

⁴⁸ Quote from Gabriel García Márquez, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/51938-sex-is-the-consolation-you-have-when-you-can-t-have>.

THE WAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

allow small amounts of it at first—thinking that, “A little is okay.” It isn’t. By giving in to lust in small ways, we immediately start to feed it; it then begins to occupy more of our thoughts and takes root in our hearts. Lust takes ground very quickly. All “sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay.”⁴⁹

Here are some practical ways to regain lost holiness.

There is no shortcut. The answer to all things spiritual is found in relationship to the God of our faith—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Paul taught the church in Galatia how to overcome the lusts of the flesh: “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:16, NKJV). “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and make your hearts pure, you double-minded” (James 4:8).

1. In cultivating your relationship to God, He will pull you from the lusts that have entangled you.
2. Fast for three days, confess and repent.
3. Go on a weekend spiritual retreat, get serious about holiness anew, and God will equip you for victory.
4. There may be times where one needs to seek out professional counseling due to one’s willingness to lust.
5. Often, accountability is needed. A close friend that will “get in your grill” while holding your confidences may be needed.
6. Start writing prayers to God in a notebook and ask Him for His help.

The only place for lust in the Christian’s life is in the past dealt with by the power of God.

⁴⁹ Ferrar, Steve. As quoted from Sermon Central, <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/23034/sin-takes-you-farther-than-you-want-to-go-by-mark-krieger>.

LUST

Scripture Passages

Matthew 5:28

“But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (NKJV).

Romans 1:24

“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves (NKJV).”

Romans 1:27

“Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (NKJV).

1 Corinthians 10:6

“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” (NKJV).

Questions

- 1) What area(s) of lust do you struggle with the most? Why?

- 2) Are you willing to get accountability in these areas? How will you be held accountable?

- 3) What steps will you take to overcome lust?

THE WAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

4) How can you prevent yourself from struggling with lust?