



THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE
SERMON *on THE* **MOUNT**
SESSION 4: EVERY INFERNO BEGINS
WITH A SINGLE SPARK



LifeGroups
Do Life Together

New Hope Church

THE JOURNEY THROUGH SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

SESSION FOUR: EVERY INFERNO BEGINS WITH A SINGLE SPARK

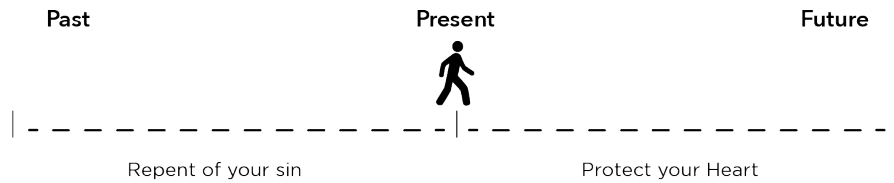
MATTHEW 5:27-30

FOLLOW ALONG

1. The Pharisees thought sin was an _____.

2. Jesus knew that sin is an _____.

3. Jesus knows: _____ → _____ → _____



INTRODUCTION:

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:27-30

How is marriage commonly portrayed in the media and in the entertainment industry? Is God's plan for marriage impossible to attain in today's world?

Have you known couples that you were sure would stand the test of time, but they didn't? Were there signs that you missed, but were able to see afterwards?

How do we recognize when we are headed that way in our own relationships? What are the signals, and what can we do to head that off?

Knowing that Jesus says that it starts with lust in our hearts, how do we ensure that we remain pure? Can that be done in today's culture?

What changes can you make in your reading, watching, and even in your dress attire, to insulate your heart and your marriage, from lust, immorality, and ultimately divorce?

Going Deeper

Adultery is not confined to a physical act, but an affection of the heart. Jesus commands us to confront this sin at the root by His grace and power.

Martin Luther said of sexual temptation, "We can't do anything about the birds flying over our head, but we can prevent them building a nest in our hair."

What is your interpretation of Martin Luther's metaphor about preventing birds from building a nest in our hair with regards to sexual temptation? And how does this concept relate to the current cultural landscape?

Can you explain the concept of lust? How has the perception and societal views towards lust evolved over time?

The Greek term for lust conveys the idea of a powerful desire or intense craving. Although there are a few instances in the New Testament where it is used to describe a positive aspiration, more commonly, it refers to a negative aspiration. The term can also be translated as "fleshly desires" or "longing for the prohibited." In today's scripture, Jesus links lustful thoughts to the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." God's intention behind the commandment against adultery encompasses more than just breaking the marital bond, it encompasses the underlying heart attitude that fuels all forms of sexual misconduct.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:27-30

How did Jesus interpret the commandment not to commit adultery? How did this differ from the teaching of the Pharisees?

How did Jesus' reinterpretation set higher standards for those who followed Him?

What is the underlying cause of sexual sin according to these biblical passages?

Why did Jesus state that a person "has already committed adultery with her in his heart," instead of saying "commits adultery with her"? What does this reveal about the nature of the human heart?

In this text, Jesus amplified the 7th Commandment by delving into its core meaning and urging His listeners to avoid lustful desires. The lusting referred to here is not just an unintentional or chance glimpse, but rather a deliberate, recurring, and focused gaze. By using the past tense and stating that the person has already committed adultery, Jesus underscores the sinful nature of the individual's heart. The heart of someone who engages in physical adultery is identical to the heart of someone who looks lustfully, as Jesus explained.

APPLICATION

Help your LifeGroup identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

As followers of Christ, it is our duty to live and behave in a manner that mirrors His character. We are also expected to set a positive example for others to follow. Thankfully, the Scripture provides us with numerous practical methods to enhance our spiritual growth and adhere to God's expectations, particularly when it comes to sexual purity.

What steps can you take to eliminate sinful desires and avoid them in the future? How does Christ offer us the only solution to overcome lust and maintain sexual integrity?

How can we, as a group, support and motivate each other to lead lives of purity and discipline?

PRAYER

Close your LifeGroup time in prayer by seeking God's guidance. Ask Him to help each member remain vigilant and aware of the worldly temptations and desires. Pray that God would protect the group from succumbing to these lusts and empower each person to fight against them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember to pray for those in the church and community who may be struggling with sexual sin and ask that they find freedom and salvation in Jesus Christ.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 5:27-30

Jesus drew the command concerning adultery directly from the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:14). Again, however, we are led to assume that the pharisaical interpretation of adultery was the actual physical act. Jesus expanded our understanding of adultery to include a lustful attitude toward a spouse who is not one's own. Also, as He did with murder, Jesus acknowledged the higher court of heaven (5:29-30) as the court we should be mindful of, since the thoughts of our hearts are difficult for a human court to judge.

Jesus moves on from the Sixth to the Seventh Commandment (Ex. 20:14). "Adultery" usually referred to sexual relations by a married person with a partner other than his or her spouse, but verse 28 makes clear that Jesus is not limiting His commandments to married people but speaking of sexual sin in general. The grammar of verse 28a leads to two possible translations. Jesus could be speaking of one who "looks at a woman with the intention of committing adultery" or to one who "looks at a woman for the purpose of getting her to lust after him." Either way, He refers to one who continues to look rather than just casting a passing glance, and in either case the mere viewing or mental imagining of a naked body is not under consideration.

Instead Jesus is condemning lustful thoughts and actions—those involving an actual desire to have sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse. Yet despite the danger of overapplying this verse, an even greater danger is that of underapplying it. Adultery among Christians today is a scandal, yet it almost never occurs without precipitation. Christians must recognize those thoughts and actions which, long before any overt sexual sin, make the possibility of giving in to temptation more likely, and they must take dramatic action to avoid them.

As in verses 23-26, Jesus illustrates this decisive action with two metaphorical illustrations (vv. 29-30). Eyes and hands are primary offenders in sexual sin, but verses 29-30 may be applied more broadly as well. Literal self-mutilation is not Christ's objective. It is quite possible to be blind or crippled and still lust. Rather, as is characteristic of Jesus' figurative and hyperbolic style, He commands us to take drastic measures to avoid temptations to sexual sin—to remove from ourselves anyone or anything that could lead us into scandal ("causes you to sin"). The "right" eye and hand refer to those viewed in antiquity as more valuable. Again, eternal judgment appears as the punishment for those who fail to heed Jesus' words. Jesus urged His students to pay the lesser costs that may be required to halt an adulterous heart early on, rather than allow the sin to develop fully and incur the final judgment of God. Because Jesus repeated this pattern twice, we may take from it another underlying principle: It costs less to address the root of a sin early on than to carry the weight of the consequences of the sin fully developed as well as the weight of judgment before God. The earlier sin is dealt with, the better.



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