

On Adultery and Lust

WARM-UP

- Describe one quality that you find attractive in others. Why do you find it admirable?
- What is one rule that you found difficult to follow in school? Why?
- Name a married couple whom you look up to. Why do you look up to them? Describe a situation that illustrates this.

WORD

²⁷*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'* ²⁸*But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* **MATTHEW 5:27,28**

(Read also **MATTHEW 5:29-32.**)

Our culture today has tried to downplay the concept of adultery, and sex is now often used as a way to get people's attention or to boost self-confidence. However, we must understand that Jesus' perspective is completely different from our own standards—even from those of the teachers of the Law in His time. In this lesson, we will learn how Jesus redefined the Law, particularly in the areas of adultery, lust, and divorce.

²⁸“But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. . . . ³¹It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” **MATTHEW 5:28,31,32**

The teachers of the Law emphasized that as long as one was not committing an actual act of adultery, they were not guilty of it. However, Jesus brought this standard up a notch—even lustful intent toward someone is considered a sin. This also applied to the concept of divorce. In Jesus’ time, men were able to divorce their wives on a whim. However, Jesus stated that if a married man and woman divorced for any reason but sexual immorality, they were committing adultery as well.

Jesus redefined the standard on adultery and divorce because God values the sanctity of the marriage covenant (Genesis 2:24). Ultimately, lust and divorce are issues of the heart, and deal with motivation—why we do what we do. As His followers, we must not yield to what culture dictates, or give in to what our hearts crave. Each of us must be vigilant in guarding our hearts, so that we may honor God with our lives. How have your standards of morality changed now that you are in Christ?

2 A Radical Response

29"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. *30*"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." **MATTHEW 5:29,30**

Jesus did not literally mean for His disciples to cut off their own limbs to keep from sinning. Rather, He was emphasizing the importance of taking drastic steps to keep one's purity, and remain exclusively devoted to one's spouse. Our response to Jesus' standard should not be about merely following and adhering to rules and regulations, but about understanding that those rules deal with heart issues. As we come to a greater understanding of His new standard, Jesus literally means for us to take drastic action to keep ourselves from sin. How can we say "no" to sin, even in the present age? (Titus 2:11,12)

APPLICATION

- King David wrote in Psalm 51:10, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* What does it mean to have a *clean heart*? How can you live life with a clean heart daily? Identify one step you can take starting today.
- Does your life reflect Jesus' standard of purity? How can you grow in your relationship with Jesus, and put His words into practice daily?
- Are there areas in your life that are particularly vulnerable to lust? What will you do about it? Do you believe that you can overcome this by faith, and are you willing to ask for help from a trusted friend?

PRAYER

- Thank God for a new standard He has made known through Jesus Christ. Thank God for His mercy and grace in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you, and to align your heart with the Word.
- Pray that you would adhere to Jesus' standard of purity in your thoughts and deeds. Ask God for the grace to do so. Pray for the courage to be accountable to one another.
- Pray that following God's standard faithfully will open doors for you to preach the gospel to your family members and friends. Pray for the opportunity to introduce others to Christ through His work in your life.

NOTES



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