

# Matthew 5:27–32

## *Sex, Lust, Marriage, and Adultery*

The Summit Church, SOTM

*MPT: Jesus calls his disciples to a righteousness that reaches the heart, confronting lust and honoring the marriage covenant.*

*MPS: Jesus wants to transform the heart that drives our desires so we can live out God's good design for sex and marriage.*

*UFN: How can I find freedom when my desires pull me away from God's design...and healing where sexual sin has left me wounded?*

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### Go Vote

Real quick, wanted to make sure you're aware of a great resource we've put together at [summitchurch.com/vote](https://summitchurch.com/vote). As followers of Jesus, we're **called to be salt and light** in the world around us, applying God's wisdom in all areas of creation, including politics. So we've put together some resources to help you engage in politics thoughtfully and faithfully...including all the practical stuff you need to know about voting like how to confirm you're registered, where to vote, all that kinda stuff. This is both a **privilege** and a **responsibility**...so let's all get out and vote, okay?

### INTRODUCTION

**SOTM series**, looking at the most important and profound sermon Jesus ever taught:

- Week 1: Bryan showed us that **the blessed life** begins when we come to the end of ourselves and recognize how much we need Jesus.
- Week 2: PJD showed us why **being good on the outside isn't enough**—Jesus cares about what's happening in our **hearts**, not just **what we do**. He used the example of how we might **keep our hands from hurting someone** while **simultaneously murdering them in our hearts with anger**.
- Well, when I looked at the verses I got this week (vv27-32), I quickly realized it was Jesus's teaching on **sex, lust, marriage, and adultery**. And when I saw that's what PJD gave me, I got angry and murdered him in my heart. This is my confession...

So welcome to TSC: this weekend, at all of our locations, we're having the **birds and bees talk together**, alright? You will never see me stick closer to my notes than I will today! For those of you who brought your kids in here without realizing this was the message, if you need to slip out and check them into Summit Kids or Students, now would be a great time—our teams are in the lobby right now ready to help you. **You've got about 90 seconds before your ride home gets a lot more complicated.**

But, see, we need to talk about this. The **world is talking about it** all the time; we're **constantly being bombarded** by it. I mean, you can't **scroll your phone** or watch a **Hardees commercial** w/o somebody trying to sell you something with sex, can you?

- *I just want a bacon cheeseburger...why do I feel like I need to repent now?!* It's absurd.
- Then we come to church and go to SG and nobody wants to talk about it!
- But right here in the SOTM, Jesus brings it up; **he doesn't shy away from sex**, so we're gonna talk about it too...**cuz if the church won't disciple ppl when it comes to sex and marriage, the world certainly will.**

And, listen, if you're not a follower of Jesus, I'm really glad you're here...but the reality is that I don't expect you to agree with everything Jesus says about sex and marriage—some of it might **sound strange** to you or even **offend** you; I get that.

- **My wife and I both** didn't become followers of Jesus until late in college, and our lifestyles certainly reflected that. So this isn't me waving some banner of **prideful religious righteousness** over you as I shame you.

No, this is, for those of us who call Jesus Lord, a reminder that **we live under God's Word; not over it** deciding which parts we'll let dictate our lives and which parts won't. **LORDSHIP** means **he has authority over every single area of our life, including our bodies and sexuality**. Few things in life will test your relationship with God's Word like the topic of **sexuality**.

That's the focus today: **How do we bring our desires under the lordship of Jesus? How can we find freedom and healing in areas where our desires pull us away from God's design, or where sexual sin has left us wounded?**

## Matthew 5:27-32 — WALKTHROUGH

<sup>27</sup>"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' (Jesus is quoting the 7th commandment, and everybody would've been nodding their heads: *Yup. Got it. I'm good...never committed adultery. What's else?*). <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Now, before we jump straight to lust and adultery and all that, **we need to understand the good thing before we can understand what's gone wrong with it. In order to bring our desires under the Lordship of Jesus, we need to first understand God's design for sex.**

### I. Understand What God Designed

So let's back up for a minute and ask **what is sex actually FOR?** Because how you answer that question is gonna shape what you do with your desires. And when we talk about sex, most people approach it with one of three views:

## 1. Sex as Identity

Currently this is our culture's predominant view of sex and sexuality: that **your sexual desires tell you who you really are; they're your ultimate identity**; and **to be true to yourself, you must be free to express those desires**.

While this might seem like completely normal today, historically speaking, it's fairly rare and new. It goes back to philosophers like **Freud** and **Rousseau** who pioneered the idea that *I am most truly myself when I am able to express **outwardly** who I FEEL myself to be **inwardly***. This shifted society's view of sex from an ACTIVITY to an IDENTITY; from something we DO to something that DEFINES WHO WE ARE. The modern version of that is: Follow your heart. Be true to yourself. Do you.

Therefore when somebody (in this case JESUS CHRIST) says, *"You shouldn't act on that desire,"* it can feel like they're saying, *"You shouldn't be allowed to be YOU."* To impose **sexual boundaries** on someone feels like an **attack on their very IDENTITY** rather than a **moral judgment about their BEHAVIOR**.

You might've never picked up **Rousseau** or studied **Freud**, but you've heard **versions of these ideas** in a thousand songs, movies, conversations, and videos. And after a while, they start to *feel normal*, to the point you're like, *"Well, of course that's how sex works."*

Unless we are **looking at God's Word** to see **what God said** about the very thing **God designed**, we will be discipled by this world and end up asking sex to **give us our identity, provide us with fulfillment, and tell us how to live**.

And that might feel, to the people of God, like an obvious "amen," but before we start thinking about everybody *out there*, this gets into the church, too...I hear it ALL THE TIME:

- *"I know I made a promise to my wife, but I've never felt this way about anyone before."*
- *"Surely God doesn't expect me to spend my life unhappy."*
- *"I have these desires and 'needs,' what am I supposed to do?"*

Listen, those feelings can be powerful...but the question is, ***What gets the final say in my life—my desires? Or God's Word?*** Jesus calls us to bring even our deepest desires under his authority and find our identity in HIM, not in our desires. Calling him LORD means trusting that he knows **what to do with** and **what's best for** my desires.

However, some of you approach sex from the entire other end of the spectrum—instead of **identity**, you've come to see **sex as icky**.

## 2. Sex as Icky

How many of you grew up in **purity culture in the church**? If you're unfamiliar with purity culture, it basically sounded like this: *Sex is dirty, gross, and dangerous...so save it for the person you love!* Talk about a confusing wedding present! Imagine spending years hearing that **sex is shameful**, and then being expected to **flip a switch on your wedding night and feeling like your marriage depends on how well you perform**. How confusing is that?!

And, listen, purity culture had a lot of really good intentions—folks wanted to **protect** us, **honor** God, **save sex** for the covenant of marriage. Those are GOOD MOTIVES.

But when sex is viewed this way, the message we actually end up receiving is: ***Your worth is tied to your sexual history.***

- If you've kept the rules, you're **clean**. Congrats, you're a super Christian!
- If you haven't, you're **damaged goods**. And now, because of *your* sin, if you get married, your spouse is now being forced to sleep with every person you've ever slept with. *Ever heard that?*
  - One person learns to **pridefully look down** on everybody else...the other person learns to **shamefully hide**.

And **LADIES**, I know many of you feel this weight specifically, cuz **purity culture was almost exclusively targeted at you**—you were supposed to **guard your own purity AND keep guys from stumbling**. To the point that some of you have even been blamed for what somebody did to you. If that's you, PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE hear me: *someone else's sin against you has not made you dirty or less worthy of love.*

Two ends of spectrum: identity/icky. Gotta learn to see...

## 3. Sex as Invitation

This is how we need to learn to view sex: **Sex is an invitation, within marriage, to express and renew your covenant love with each other before God.**

IDK if you've ever truly thought about this, but SEX WAS GOD'S IDEA. It was right there **in the Garden** that **God invented it and gave it to A+E to enjoy**.

- Like, God didn't create A+E, step away for a minute, came back and was like **"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!"**
- *No, you wanna know how good God is?* Widely regarded as the FIRST DIRECT COMMAND he gave in the Bible was to **be fruitful and multiply!** A COMMAND! *And noooooow some of you are interested in following the Bible, huh?*

So what does sex as an invitation look like? Three words: **mutual, intimate, and pleasurable.**<sup>1</sup>

**First, MUTUAL.** Sex is not something men “need” and women “give.” No, God designed sex for men AND WOMEN—husband AND WIFE—to give and receive and love. BOTH people’s desires, comfort, enjoyment, and pleasure matter.

- If I were to summarize **Tim Keller’s** book *Meaning of Marriage* in one sentence: in marriage, you will experience mutual fulfillment through mutual sacrifice.
- Even *and especially in the bedroom*, you should seek to serve one another, outdo one another in showing honor. Try applying those Bible verses to your sex life and see if it gets better or worse!
- **When sex is truly mutual, the person you’re with should matter more than the experience you’re after.**

**Second, INTIMATE.** I feel like in church we’re embarrassed to say “sex” so we say “intimacy.” *When was the last time you were intimate? Ew.*

What intimacy really means is bringing ALL of you who are into your relationship—yes, your body, but also your hopes, fears, insecurities, the things you’re embarrassed to say out loud....ALL OF IT! That’s intimacy...it’s **vulnerability** that breeds **trust** and **closeness**.

So when you come together physically, you’re saying with your body what you’ve promised with your vows: *I’m giving myself fully, completely, faithfully, and exclusively to you.*

- That’s why God places sex **within the context of COVENANT MARRIAGE:** **one man, one woman, for life.** It’s cuz that **physical giving of ourselves** belongs within the commitment to **give our whole lives to each other**—emotionally, spiritually, socially, economically, legally, and practically.<sup>2</sup>

**Third, PLEASUREABLE.** Listen, I’m not trying to get too graphic here, but pleasure was God’s idea too. He’s the one who put **nerve endings** where he put them (*Let those who have ears hear*...amen?)

- Think about it, God could’ve created babies any way he wanted: **Do this handshake, press the belly button, and BOOP out pops a baby.**
- Instead, he said, *“Nah, I’m a put a smile on their faces...”* Just read Song of Songs—an entire book in your Bible celebrating the desire and delight of husband and wife enjoying one another through sex (most of which is from the WIFE’S POV).
- **When it comes to pleasure, each person in marriage should be MOST concerned not with getting sexual pleasure, but with giving it.** You’re there to **love** each other, **serve** each other, **enjoy** each other...even and especially in this way!

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Sheila Wray Gregoire’s insights here from her book *The Great Sex Rescue*

<sup>2</sup> Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, p. 223.

But watch what happens **when that design gets distorted**: the question shifts from, “*How can I best LOVE you?*” to “*How can I USE you to get what I want?*” And Jesus says **that shift happens in the HEART before it ever shows up in our actions.**

So, the second way we gotta bring our desires under the Lordship of Jesus...

## II. Confront What Lust Distorts (vv27-28)

<sup>27</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

A few textual notes here (not sexual—but TEXTUAL):

1. Notice it’s “looks at a woman.” It’s not “another woman” or “another wife.” Which means this is all just as much for **SINGLE FOLKS** as it is for married folks.
2. Also, this is for **both genders**...this whole looking, lusting, and adultery thing goes both ways.
3. Then notice he says “looks at a woman with lustful intent.” The Greek literally says, “*anyone who looks at a woman in order to lust after her.*”

What Jesus is describing here is looking at another person for the purpose of feeding your inner sensual appetites as a substitute for the covenantal act of sex.

- **C.S. Lewis** put it this way: “*We use a most unfortunate idiom when we say, of a lustful man...that he “wants a woman”. Strictly speaking, a woman is just what he does not want. He wants a pleasure for which a woman happens to be the necessary piece of apparatus. How much he cares about the woman as such may be gauged by his attitude for her five minutes after fruition.*”

Lust is the desire to be **physically one** with someone you are not **personally one** with. It’s making someone else into an **object to use.**

So if lust turns a person into an object to use, what does it look like to HONOR that person instead? Let’s bring this into two places where we can often get this wrong:

FIRST, **noticing someone is attractive isn’t the same thing as lusting after them.** Contrary to what you’ve been told, **the looking isn’t the problem; it’s looking with lustful intent that is**—looking in order to feed a sinful desire.

- Some of you grew up hearing, “**Bounce your eyes!**” But the goal isn’t to go through life **afraid to look someone in the face.** It’s to learn to see a PERSON who is made in God’s image, worthy of respect.

- Which means, if you struggle with that, take responsibility and get help—that's a self-control problem YOU and the Holy Spirit need to deal with. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit...and he can help you learn to see people as **image-bearers to love, instead of reducing them to objects to use or temptations to avoid**. How dehumanizing!

That's what Jesus is teaching: that purity is not just about **outward behavior**, it's about the **HEART**.

- You can follow all the OUTWARD RULES and still be full of lust, pride, and selfishness.
  - You can arrive at your wedding night a virgin and still have a heart that is full of lust.
- When we talk about purity, we've got to mean more than just **"Did you cross the line?"** like it's some **pass/fail test**:
  - *Did you look at porn?*
  - *Did you sleep with your g/f or b/f?*
  - *Did you break the rules?*
- Jesus wants our HEARTS, not just our actions...cuz if he has our hearts, our actions will inevitably change.

The SECOND thing we need to clear up is how some of you were taught, **"Well, you know, men have needs. So, wives, you better meet those needs or he'll go looking somewhere else."**

- Which, FWIW, is also a lie we've been told, cuz there are plenty of couples where the WIFE has a higher sex drive than the husband.

But can we just stop and hear what we're saying? **We've just made a wife responsible for her husband's faithfulness.**

- **HUSBANDS**: If you choose pornography or adultery, **that choice belongs to you and you alone**, regardless of what's happening (or NOT happening) in your marriage bed. You don't get to put that on her, and shame on you if you have.
- Yes, husbands and wives should care about each other's desires (read 1 Corinthians 7). We should talk about sex, listen to each other, and pursue intimacy together. But a marriage vow never gives you permission to **pressure, guilt, or force your spouse into sex**.
- **Your wife is not an object to use for your sexual satisfaction; she is a person you promised to love...not someone responsible for keeping you from sin.**
- **WIVES** (you don't get off the hook that easily), same goes for you: If you're **feeding a fantasy** or **cultivating a relationship** you know is crossing a line, your husband's shortcomings don't excuse it.
- Each of us is responsible for our own faithfulness **to Jesus** and **to our spouse**.

However lust manifests itself in your life, **we can't put our sin on somebody else**. We've gotta ask, *"What am I allowing into my life that keeps feeding these lustful desires?"* And Jesus tells us what to do next...

### III. Cut Off What Feeds Your Sin (vv29-30)

<sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>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.

Man, those are some vivid images and strong words from Jesus. He's saying **whatever it costs you to cut off your sin, it'll cost you more to keep it.**

- **Puritan Thomas Watson:** *What fools are they who for a drop of pleasure, drink a sea of wrath.*

**James 1:14-15** explains this progression: **But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.** Desire (refuse to cut it off)→sin (refuse to cut it off)→death

- We tell ourselves, *"I'm just looking. I'm just imagining. We're just talking. I'm just reading."* But James tells us to look at where that road leads, and Jesus says to cut it off.
  - **Lust is like stepping on an escalator**—all you did was take one step, but it's gonna take you so much farther than that.

Early Church Father **Origen** struggled so much in this area that he took Jesus's words literally (and painfully) and castrated himself.

- PLEASE DON'T DO THAT. That's not what Jesus is telling you to do. You could remove a body part and still have a heart full of lust—that's his whole point here.
- But, at the same time, **don't soften his command just cuz it isn't literal.** Jesus is calling for DECISIVE, RADICAL ACTION: whatever is leading you into sin, get rid of it.

**So what does this look like? How do we fight sexual sin?**

First (we'll use Jesus' language), **CUT IT OFF.** It starts with being specific about what "it" is for you. For a lot of you, "it" is pornography.<sup>3</sup>

- And when I say porn, this ain't just a conversation for men. Don't just think **watching videos**...cuz the fastest growing genre of **BOOKS** is "romance novels" that are **basically porn under the guise of book clubs.** *Just cuz it's in a book instead of on a screen doesn't put it outside of the Lordship of Jesus.*
- Whatever it is for you, we should all be asking the question, ***"Based on what I'm consuming, what is this cultivating in my heart?"***

**Proverbs 4:23, Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.** *What are you feeding your heart?*

<sup>3</sup>In the most recent surveys in the US: 141M watch porn to some degree—½ of which claim Christian. 90M men and 50M women; 18M consume *daily*; Average age of exposure is 12 y/o. 53% of those pre-teens have already seen porn that depicts acts of sexual violence. ; Porn users are **over twice as likely to divorce** and **2-3x more likely to commit a violent act** in romantic relationships.

- If your PHONE is where this keeps happening, change how you use it.
  - Charge it outside of your room.
  - Delete the app. Delete that person's number.
  - Unfollow the account.
  - Use blocking and accountability software like **Covenant Eyes** or **Angel Vid**.
  - **Stop giving yourself easy access to what you're asking God to help you escape!** Maybe you need to do the SMART thing and get a DUMB phone.
- But, again, lust DOESN'T ALWAYS REQUIRE A SCREEN...
  - It can be the **fantasy** you keep replaying in your head.
  - The **flirting** with that co-worker you keep calling "just being friendly cuz, you know, *they just understand me so well.*"
  - The **private texts** or DM's you'd be embarrassed for your spouse to read.
  - Stop staying so late over at her apartment. Stop finding reasons to be alone together. STOP LIVING TOGETHER (*In what world do you live together and are not having sex?!)*
  - **1 Corinthians 6:18, Flee from sexual immorality.**
    - Don't even get in the ring with it. If you do, you'll get knocked out every time.

***What are you holding onto that Jesus is telling you to cut off and throw away?***

Second, **CONFESS IT.**

- First to God: 1 John 1:8-9, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- Then to someone else: James 5:16, **Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.** You need to tell a mature believer you trust, "This is what's happening. This is what I've been hiding. This is where I'm hurting. I need help."
- You will never have victory in this area if you are trying to fight alone.

Lastly, **CLING TO JESUS.**

- Later in 1 Cor 6, Paul reminds believers that **our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit...we were bought with a price.**
- IOW, you belong to Jesus, your body belongs to Jesus, and his Spirit (whose first name is HOLY) lives in you. You are not facing this alone.
- So when sinful desires begin to rise up, bring those to Jesus. Open your Bible. Call to him in prayer. Call the person you've told! Put your phone down and leave the room. Throw the book away.
- And even if you fall or fail *again*, **don't hide again.** Confess, repent, receive his forgiveness, and get help in figuring out how this keeps happening.

- Sometimes that takes a **qualified counselor** to help you figure out—this is where our **G4 Groups** ([summitchurch.com/G4](http://summitchurch.com/G4)) can be a real help to you: **Purity Groups**.

*What do you need to cut off?*

*Who is one person you need to tell?*

*What would tearing it out and throwing it away look like for you today?*

Now watch where Jesus takes this: he's shown us how **lust undermines faithfulness in our hearts**. Now he confronts how people use divorce to justify breaking their promises. And even if you're single, stay with me—Jesus is teaching ALL OF US that faithful love means more than following what we feel.

So what happens when what I *want in a moment* conflicts with what I *promised for a lifetime*?

#### **IV. Let Your Covenant Lead Your Desires (vv31-32)**

<sup>31</sup>"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

Alright, in Jesus' day, the debate over divorce was as hot then as it is today. And the debate was specifically over **what gave a man grounds to divorce his wife**—cuz, in those days, only men could initiate a divorce, which created all sorts of **imbalances** and **inequities**; you can imagine how **vulnerable** it left some women.

So Jesus begins by quoting **Deuteronomy 24:1-4** which basically says if a man "**finds something indecent in his wife**" then he can "**write her a certificate of divorce**."

- The meaning of that phrase ("**something indecent**") is what split the conservative school (which said divorce was only allowable in the case of adultery) from the more liberal school (which said divorce was allowed for *anything indecent*, like, and I quote, "burning the toast at breakfast.")
- To no surprise, the **liberal interpretation was more popular**...so there were men divorcing their wives for all sorts of illegitimate reasons.

And it's here Jesus enters into this debate and makes it abundantly clear where he stands: <sup>32</sup>But 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.

Jesus is saying NO to this “any cause” divorce that was popular. He’s saying, “*I don’t wanna be married to this person anymore*” doesn’t give you permission to break the covenant you made.

That’s why he uses such strong language for adultery: a man couldn’t simply divorce his wife cuz he wanted somebody else and assume the paperwork makes it right before God.

- Jesus prohibits divorce because **it violates God’s original design for marriage: one man, one woman, for life**. He’s protecting God’s original, beautiful design for the sanctity of marriage. Marriage is far more than, “*I’ll stay as long as you keep making me happy.*” NO, You promised to love this person faithfully, even when keeping that promise gets hard.
- As **Bonhoeffer** taught, the **COVENANT** you made at the altar is meant to **sustain your love** through the seasons when your **FEELINGS can’t carry it**.

So, the question everyone is thinking: Is divorce ever permissible?

- YES, there are biblical grounds for divorce—historically there are two: **ADULTERY** and **ABANDONEMENT**.
  - In **Matthew 5:32** and **19:9** Jesus says, “**No divorce, except for adultery.**”
  - In **1 Cor 7** Paul says, “**If your unbelieving spouse abandons you, you have grounds for divorce.**”
    - And, to note, we understand ABUSE as a form of abandonment of the marriage covenant, too. If you’re being abused, getting to safety and seeking help is not a failure to honor your marriage.
- But even with those allowances, **permission to divorce doesn’t mean divorce is always required or should even be the first path**. Where there’s genuine repentance and safety, by the power of the Holy Spirit, restoration may be possible.

Here’s how we view divorce at TSC: **We view it like AMPUTATION.**

- ***What happens if you hurt your leg?*** Doctor, PT, medicine, stretching, maybe surgery, then another surgery, then another opinion. You only amputate if it's the absolute last resort.
- Amputations are **sometimes necessary, but always serious**.
- Divorce isn’t something you should ever *want* to do, but something that in extreme cases you might *have* to do.
- If this is where you find yourself, we wanna help you navigate that. Please don’t try to figure this out alone.

These things are heavy. And if you’re someone who has experienced divorce—whether it was your fault, or their fault, or you desperately wanted to try and make it work but they didn’t—we know it’s painful. And, again, just like for **sexual purity**, we have G4 groups for **DivorceCare** as well:

[summitchurch.com/G4](http://summitchurch.com/G4).

- And, lemme make sure you know this: if someone sinned against you, know that **their sin did not make you dirty**. You do not need to repent for what somebody else did to you. You deserve care and love, and Jesus can give it to you.

If you're here and you're someone who is just **flooded with thoughts and feelings of shame or regret** when it comes to all of this—sex, marriage, divorce—if there's a voice in your head right now saying, *"See, this is why you're unlovable...this is why you don't belong here..."* **That voice does not come from God. That's not how Jesus sees you, and that's not how this church sees you.**

- No matter what your past looks like—**promiscuity, pornography, addiction, sexual immorality, divorce**—no matter how you've wounded others, been wounded, or wounded yourself, **the blood of Jesus speaks a better word over your life**. **Shame** and **confusion** and **disgrace** are never the final page of your story. Nobody is too far gone or too bad or too far away to experience **healing** and **wholeness** in the gospel.

And you wanna know another secret? YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE DEALING WITH THIS STUFF EITHER! I mean, if we're being honest, *who among us is totally free from sexual sin and lust?* NO ONE. We all need Jesus to change us. Cuz that's the thing: no amount of amputation will ever be enough if our hearts don't change. **And the heart is the one thing you can't change on your own**. So if you wanna **defeat** this and have **freedom** from this—if you wanna bring your entire life: thoughts, actions, motives, words, bodies, heart—and bring it all under the Lordship of Jesus, most importantly of all: receive what only Jesus can give.

## CONCLUSION (VAMP)

### V. Receive What Only Jesus Can Give

Listen, you can delete the app, end the relationship, cut off the hand, toss out your eye—and some of you need to do those things TODAY—but at the most fundamental level, we are utterly unable to change the very thing that keeps reaching for all these sinful things: we are unable to change OUR OWN HEARTS.

But, friends, what we can't do ourselves, God promises to do for us—**Ezekiel 36:25-27**, <sup>25</sup>I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup>And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

That's what we need right there: a new **heart**; a new **Spirit** within us. Not just **forgiveness for what we've done**, but **power to begin to live differently**.

- Ever seen a restaurant with a sign that says, *"Under new management"*? If you think about it, that's a pretty honest sign: *We know...it was bad. But please give us another chance.*

- That sign doesn't mean everything inside got fixed overnight. But somebody else is in charge now, and that changes what's happening inside.

That's what Jesus is ultimately talking about today: When you belong to Jesus, your desires don't get to run the place anymore, because Jesus is Lord.

- **Romans 8:1:** "No condemnation" → Some of you have been sentencing yourselves for years. But if you're in Christ, God has already said, "NO condemnation." You may still be living with the **consequences**...but in Christ, you are no longer living under **condemnation**.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17:** "A new creation" → Your sexual sin, your divorce, that horrible decision or season...if you are in Christ, none of that gets to define you anymore because you are HIS.
- **Isaiah 1:18:** "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow" → There is **more grace in him** than there is **sin in you or your past**. Confess, call for mercy, and be cleansed by his blood.

Some of you need to confess **what you've done**.

Some of you need help healing from **what was done to you**.

And some of you...**it's both**.

You may have a long road of healing ahead of you: hard conversations; consequences; healing...but you can walk forward, head held high cuz he's the lifter of your head, knowing that in Christ you are **forgiven, loved, not alone, you can be HEALED and FREE**.

- We cannot change our past. But we can bring our whole selves to the Savior who already knows it, and still calls us to come.

The good news of the gospel is that JESUS MAKES THINGS NEW.

- You can receive his grace and be made new...THE ALTAR IS OPEN to come pray, confess, repent.
- PRAYER TEAMS are here and available to help you do that if you need someone to pray with.

We started by asking how to bring ALL our desires under the lordship of Christ—well this is where it begins: bringing ourselves to him.

## PRAY

- Repentance
- Healing
- Restoration
- Freedom

- Bring ALL to a Father who has open arms, not crossed arms
- Marriages: covenants, faithfulness, sex
- Singles: desire found in Jesus first

## RESOURCES

- The Sermon on the Mount: The Character of a Disciple, Daniel M. Doriani; Holman New Testament Commentary: Mathew, Max Anders & Stuard K. Weber;
- Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 1). Victor Books.
- Green, M. (2001). The message of Matthew: the kingdom of heaven. InterVarsity Press.
- What God Has Joined: What does the Bible really teach about divorce?, *David Instone-Brewer*
- Josh Miller, *Sex, Lust, Marriage, and Divorce*
- Tim Keller, *Love, Lust, and Liberation, Matthew 5:27-30*
- Carl Treuman, *Strange New World*
- *What if we've missed the beauty of sex?*, Ten Minute Bible Talks Devo Bible Study
- CS Lewis, *The Four Loves*
- Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*
- Sheila Wray Gregoire, *The Great Sex Rescue*
- Joby Martin, *Best. Sermon. Ever. - Wk 4: Lust, Divorce and Oaths*
- Josh Howerton, *How Can I Overcome Sexual Brokenness?*