

## How To Defeat Lust In Your Life

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Life As It Was Meant To Be

Matthew 5.27-30

I'm in the midst of a series from the Sermon on the Mount. In the section we are going to look at today, we are going to consider Jesus' warning about what happens when your sexual appetites go off the rails. Specifically, we are going to talk about the danger of lust regarding our eternal relationship with God.

Now, it has become really common for people to believe that personal sexual morality is of very minor significance. Lots of young adults, and indeed older adults, often think that what we do with our bodies and our minds is no big deal. If lust is sin, then it is sin "with a little less." With all the major issues facing the world today – radical Islam, global warming, racial reconciliation, and the lack of health care insurance for millions of Americans – why would anyone spend even a moment talking about who we go to bed with, or Internet pornography? These issues are utterly insignificant compared to global violence and injustice.

But you know, Jesus sees things very differently than contemporary men and women do. Global issues are important. Issues of justice and racial reconciliation and how we are going to get along with Muslims in the world are hugely important. But the reason why they are important is because they deal with people. And the reason why people are important, more important than rocks or trees, is because people have the capacity to be in an eternal relationship with God, or instead to be eternally separated from God. People are not important because we breathe; we are important because long after the time we stop breathing, we have the capacity to live in a love relationship with God forever.

In the text that we are going to look at today, Jesus tells us that this thing that we judge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be a little-less sin, this sin called lust, actually can strike at the heart of what makes a human being good and valuable, living in a faithful, covenant relationship with God and other people. Now, if we are going to be honest, we would have to say that Christians and non-Christians, church-goers and non-church-goers, singles and marrieds alike experience sex and their own sexuality in 21<sup>st</sup> century American as an area that produces great pain, shame, guilt, and a feeling of hopelessness. In many cases, sex has become a place of obsession, addiction, bondage, anxiety and confusion. It is hardly worth saying, yet, we live in a sex-saturated society.

I read an article recently in *US Today* that said that the number of sexual references in prime time TV shows has actually doubled in the last decade. Commentators said they thought that things were bad a decade ago. They had

no idea how bad things could really get. Moms and dads walk a gauntlet of sexually suggestive magazines as they push their kids in a cart through the grocery check-out line. What is amazing to me is that you can still regularly read articles by people who consider themselves to be serious scholars saying that the problem in America is that we are too puritanical. Sex would be perfectly okay if we would just stop hushing it up.

It is the constant theme in the movies. There is a battle between the forces of good, those who want to be freer in their sexuality, and the forces of repression, the principles that conservative pastors and hypocritical parents, who want to restrict the flow of sexual discussion.

How anyone could suggest in our sexually charged society that we don't talk enough about sex is stunning to me. For the last 40 years, the main subject of conversation in America has been sex. Sex is the first word on about 20 different magazines at Barnes and Nobel. There are articles with these titles:

- Earn your Ph.D. in Sex
- Sex So Good Your Neighbors Will Complain
- 240 Sexual Secrets

240, can you imagine anyone having 240 secrets about anything, much less 240 sexual secrets?

- Sex and Horoscopes
- Sex and Food

The great British author, CS Lewis, commented about 60 years ago about how our sexual appetites have gone off the rails saying this:

*You can get a large audience together for a strip-tease act – that is, to watch a girl undress from the stage. Now suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bring a covered plate onto the stage and then slowing lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before the lights went up, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food? And would not anyone who had grown up in a different world think that there was something equally odd about the state of the sexual instinct among us?*

What appetite have we allowed to become so dominant a feature of our culture? It is certainly not our need for friendship or love and it's not our need for clean air or clean water, or affirmation. You don't see magazines suggesting air so pure it will drive your neighbors crazy, or how to get your Ph.D. in clean water studies. Here are 240 secrets about pasta. Yet, we cannot watch a sitcom on TV without being assaulted by jokes about genitals, pornography, homosexual and lesbian innuendos and double-entendres.

If you need further evidence regarding the destructive power of sex, all you need to do is talk with someone with AIDS, a venereal disease, or someone who has been sexually abused. The newspapers regularly report another story of molestation by a priest, teacher, grandparents, or parents. One child in four is now molested. We live in the age of downloaded files of child pornography, phone sex, chat rooms, abortion, and sexual harassment suits. I'm told now that they have video IPODS where you are never more than a click away from pornography that you can carry in your pocket.

As we talk about the subject of lust today, in some ways I feel like the little boy who tried to stop the dikes in Holland from leaking by sticking his finger in the dikes. After a while, we run out of fingers. But in the text that we are going to look at today, Jesus tells us a way to not just stick our fingers into a leaking dike, but rather to drain it off so that we can live lives of sexual health and sanity. I've called today's talk "How To Defeat Lust In Your Life." Let's pray

SLIDE – Matthew 5.27-30

Mt 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'<sup>4</sup>

Mt 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Now, it is important to understand what it is that Jesus is warning us against. Most modern translations miss the critical element of intention in the way they translate the verse. So, we read in the NIV verse 28,

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Mt 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The New Revised Standard Version reads this way:

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Mt. 5.28 Everyone who looks at a woman with lust...

The Old King James Version actually captured the nuance better. It reads:

SLIDE

Mt. 5.28 Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her...

Translating Matthew 5.28 literally, it would read this way:

SLIDE

Mt. 5.28 Everyone who keeps on looking at a woman with the purpose of lusting after her...

What Jesus is dealing with is not the first spark of attraction between a man and woman. If he were simply dealing with a spark of attraction, then every man and woman has committed adultery in their hearts hundreds and thousands of times. Because we are embodied sexual beings, sexual attraction is an inescapable part of our humanity. We are drawn to the beauty and form of other people, particularly people who are appealing to us because of their face or body. We frequently experience sparks of attraction.

What Jesus is dealing with is what do you do from that point of sparking? With one other person, the person we are married to, the spark is appropriately fanned into flame with full sexual communion in the marriage bed. With all other persons that we are not married to, we are called by Jesus not to fan the spark into flames.

The Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, said, "Evil and lustful thoughts may come into our minds, but we do not have to invite them to stay." He went on to say, "I cannot keep a bird from flying over my head, but I can keep a bird from nesting in my hair or biting my nose off."

Jesus is talking about the second look, the leering look, the willful sustained stare that goes beyond appreciation. When we talk about lust, we are not simply talking about appreciating another person. The most basic idea of lust is the desire to possess the other person, to have them. Lust essentially means that I want something and I want it now. It is the desire to please ourselves more than we desire to please God.

Now who do Jesus' words of warning against attempting to possess someone else for self-gratification apply to? Although in this passage Jesus is specifically applying the words to married men, it certainly also applies to unmarried men, married and unmarried women. Clearly lust is not just a male problem. The desire to possess someone else for the sake of self-gratification is a problem for women as well. It takes two to tango. In any act of adultery or premarital sex, indeed, women can be the initiators or the aggressors. Women have roving eyes. Women pursue homosexuality. Women send out sexual signals. Women can be involved in habitual self-stimulation.

You know, female sexuality in America has become increasingly crude in the last decade. Surfing pornographic websites is not an exclusively male sin. In fact, the *NY Times* reported that about a third of the hits on pornographic websites were made by women. Women's magazines like *Cosmopolitan* have

increasingly become manuals for how to pursue your sexual self-interest with a partner of your choice. Marital status is optional and often irrelevant.

You know, Jesus is a non-respecter of persons. A lustful woman is as ugly as a lustful man. And although the text is directed toward the one who looks, it certainly applies to the one who does everything possible to get looks. When you as a man or woman do whatever you can to awaken desire in another person who is not your spouse, when you deliberately dress provocatively along with being unloving to your Christian brother or sister, you are also allowing your sex life to go off the rails.

Lust means desiring to possess someone who is not my spouse. We can do that by a leering look. We can do that by sexual fantasy. We can do that by drawing attention to ourselves. We can do that by getting involved in cyber sex.

How do we defeat lust in our lives? Lust in our lives is guarded by lies. The reason why so many of us have failed in defeating lust is because lust is guarded behind the fortress walls of lies. The apostle Paul says this in 2 Cor. 10.4-5,

#### SLIDE

2Co 10:4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

2Co 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

What are the fortress walls that guard Satan's hooks in our lives? Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 10.5. It is this web of arguments and rationalizations and distorted imaginations that keep us from knowing God truly. You must break through the web of lies if you are ever going to successfully defeat lust in your life.

See, the evil one lures us with lies because, as you know, Satan is the father of all lies. John 8.44,

#### SLIDE

Jn 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

And so there is a steady stream of deception that flows from Satan's lips. He has been using lies and deceits to trap people in sin ever since he used it so successfully to trap Adam and Eve in the Garden. "Eat from the tree; God won't care. There won't be any consequences. It is just a little thing. You won't die."

What are some of the lies that form fortress walls to protect lust? Well, how about this one:

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I don't feel guilty.

Like the old song says, "How can it be wrong when it feels so right?" I think in this regard churches have done people a tremendous disservice by communicating that you will certainly feel shame if you are involved in sexual sin. We don't say that in other areas of life. As a general rule, we recognize that as a result of the fall, even our feelings are distorted. And it is very possible to engage in a sinful act and not feel bad about it. So when it comes to premarital sex, adultery, or pornography the notion that you are going to necessarily feel terrible about it is increasingly false. Your conscience can get so calloused that you don't feel bad about increasing departures from God and his will.

You don't feel guilty. That is not the test. Ripping down that fortress wall requires you to regularly say to yourself:

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What Jesus says about things is the standard, not my feelings.

The whole Bible tells us that we are regularly caught in this deadly cycle of rationalization and self-deception. That's why God, in his mercy, has given us a Bible to assist us out of this downward spiral.

How about this one:

SLIDE

I just want to feel alive.

This is a huge issue, particularly for high achievers, people who are successful in business or the corporate world. You are going at an incredible pace and you discover an increasing vacuum of feeling inside. You just want to feel something. And so you turn to illicit sex. This is where so many young adults are today. They are so jaded. They've done so many things before they were able to handle it or integrate it. Many young adults are just saying, "Help me! I just want to feel alive."

But instead of feeling more alive, the report of almost everyone who repeatedly sins sexually is that you feel more empty and dead inside.

Henry Fairlie was talking about a typical singles bar and describes it as being a desert. Here is what Henry Fairlie says:

## SLIDE

*This is the sin of lust. Just as it dries up human beings, so it dries up human relationships. The atmosphere in a singles bar is of dried up, stale, uninterested, lethargic, mechanical, unfeeling, uninvolved, unrewarding, tedious, boring, let's-get-it-over-with, tomorrowless, dull, empty, self-emptying sex. The word that comes to mind when one thinks of lust is parched. This is a peculiar achievement of lust: to make the flesh seemed parched, to deprive it of all real feeling. The offense of our age is not that it excites sex, but that it withers it, shrivels it to a husk. The reason why lust often turns to perversions is that the flesh itself has ceased to please it.*

This is what Paul is talking about, friends, in Ephesians 4.17-19,

## SLIDE

Eph 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Eph 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Eph 4:19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

Instead of feeling more alive, a person feels more dead. That is why it has been reported that Hugh Hefner years ago stopped being able to have normal sex. As lust shrivels your soul, a person moves up the chain of perversion in order to feel something. It may be bi-sexuality, or homosexuality.

## SLIDE

I just want to feel alive. The truth is yielding to lust will only make you feel emptier and deadier.

Surely, some of you have experienced this in your own persons.

A third lie:

## SLIDE

I am above the rules.

This is an especially dangerous lie for top executives, for people who are used to being catered to. You have a private parking space. You have a private bathroom. You have a whole bunch of different perks. No one ever says "no" to you. And so government officials, top executives, and pastors often adopt the mind-set that rules apply only to ordinary people.

What's the truth?

SLIDE

The rules apply to you and not just to everyone else!

The rules regarding your travel, staying in motels in other cities, the rules regarding working with the opposite sex, the flesh of the top executive is not different than that of the ordinary worker.

Or how about this lie:

SLIDE

We are just good friends.

I have no problem being good friends with someone of the opposite sex. But it is the basic rule of human nature that we human beings move towards the strokes, towards those places and people that give us the greatest understanding, the greatest encouragement. When do you know that you are in danger? When you look forward to meeting someone who is definitely off-limits – a married person at work, someone who doesn't share your faith commitment. You can cross boundaries in a church where we share ministry together on a worship team, or in prayer ministry, or in serving the poor.

When your attention shifts from doing the task to hoping that this other person is there, you may be crossing some invisible line. When a person of the opposite sex, who is not your spouse, becomes a confidante, when you start bearing your heart and your feelings to someone else, that carries the same dynamics that initially might have led you to the attraction with your spouse – a letting down of barriers, focusing upon this other person's needs. Your spouse should by and large be your confidante, or a friend of the same sex, or in a healthy, non-sexually charged relationship.

The truth?

SLIDE

What is your spouse or the Holy Spirit saying to you about this relationship?

Another lie:

SLIDE

I'm not hurting anyone.

The truth?

SLIDE

There are no safe sins.



So often those who are involved in pornography, or sexual activity via the internet lie to themselves and say: I'm not hurting anyone. But sin doesn't work that way. Exposing yourself to sexually explicit images affects how you view sex, relationships, and people. You cannot sin and remain the same. Your sin, even while it is done alone, will inevitably affect loved ones. If you are married, your intimacy with your spouse will decrease because you've found another outlet for your sexual desires. You will have less emotional and conversational intimacy with your spouse. You will be distant. You will be angry. Your cyber sexual activity on the family computer will mean that when your children use the computer there will be sexually explicit sites popping up. For some of you cyber sexual activity may even affect your jobs. It may even cause you to begin acting out.

There are lots of lies and lots of rationalizations. Let me mention one last lie:

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I am in control.

I can handle this. I am in control. Let me share with you a parable from Jeffrey Satinover's book *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. In his book Satinover tells a fable about how we get ensnared, and things take control of our lives. The fable goes this way:

*One day long ago in a Middle Eastern country a white skylark flew in the sky. As she swooped near the earth, she heard a merchant cry out, "Worms, worms, worms for feathers. Delicious worms."*

*The skylark swooped down to find out about these worms. She didn't know that the merchant was the devil. The devil motioned her nearer and said, "Come here, my little friend. Come. See the lovely worms I have. Come and taste the juicy worms."*

*The skylark hopped closer and put up her beak close to the worms.*

*"Two worms for a feather, my friend. Two worms for one."*

*And so the skylark quickly snatched up two of the plumpest worms and swallowed her meal with delight. She pulled out a feather from below her wing – just one small feather and gave it to the merchant. Day after day the skylark returned; always the merchant had wonderful worms to offer – red ones, green ones, fat ones, shiny ones.*

*But one day after eating her fill, the skylark leapt into the air and to her horror she fell to the ground with a thud. She was unable to fly. And then she realized what had happened. From all the delicious worms she had grown fatter and fatter. And as she plucked her feathers out one by one, first her body and then*

*her tail, and finally her very wings, had grown balder and balder. And in perceptively she found herself unable to fly.*

*Then the merchant threw his head back and laughed and laughed. Picking up the little skylark, he threw her in a cage and locked the door. This is the devil's bargain.*

Yes, initially you may be able to maintain control. Initially, you may still be able to fly away. But not forever. I am control of this.

The truth is:

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Sin enslaves.

So, how do we defeat lust in our lives? The radical, uncompromising Jesus is not calling for sin management. The Pharisees, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, taught that so long as you didn't actually join your body to another person's body, you are okay. The Pharisees taught the doctrine of sin management. You limit sin to a corner of your life.

The picture that I always think of when I think of lust is person carrying around nuclear waste in your soul. It's kind of nice, nuclear waste – it glows, there is warmth from it. So long as we keep it sealed up and keep it from leaking, what is wrong with nuclear waste in your soul?

But Jesus says you can't compartmentalize your person. Verses 27-30,

SLIDE

Mt 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'<sup>4</sup>

Mt 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

The eyes, the heart, and the body are connected. What you focus on in your heart will be worked out in your body. Jesus, the radical uncompromising Jesus, is saying, "I am not interested in having you carry around some toxic waste in your soul. I am not interested in your having an obnoxious weed growing in your heart, so long as you keep it trimmed and pruned. I want you to know the

freedom of not having any of this inside. I don't want there to be any blocks between you and God or between you and other people. I want you to be holy as God is holy. God is the standard."

So what he is asking for is total purity. And in this closing section, what I would like to do is use the acronym "purity" to describe how we defeat lust in our lives:

#### SLIDE

P – Put your flesh to death.

Flesh in the Bible, of course, is our lives alienated from God, our lives when we have our backs turned away from God. Our flesh always cries out for us to be gentle, for us to go slow. "You certainly can't go cold-turkey. I'll cut back." Jesus says, "No. I want you to cut it off, not just cut back. It is not enough that you have restrained yourself to the weekends, after work, or only to certain websites. I want all the nuclear waste out of your soul. Cut it off. Gouge it out."

Let me tell you a story. In July 1993 Donald Wyman was clearing land as part of his work for a mining company. In the process a tree rolled onto his shin causing a severe break and pinning Wyman to the ground. He cried for help for an hour, but no one came. He concluded that the only way to save his life would be to cut off his leg. So he made a tourniquet out of a shoe string and tightened it with a wrench. He took his pocket knife and cut through skin, muscle, and bone just below the knee and freed himself from the tree. He crawled thirty yards to a bulldozer and drove a quarter of a mile to his truck. He maneuvered the standard transmission with his good leg and a hand until he reached a farmer's house. With his leg bleeding, he was driven to the hospital where his life was spared.

Jesus understood that people love to live. And just as Donald Wyman cut off his leg to save his life, Jesus commanded that we gouge out our eye to escape the fatal affect of lust. Cut off your hand. Verses 29-30

#### SLIDE

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Why the right hand and right eye? In Jesus' day the right hand and the right eye would have been considered the most precious parts. Jesus is saying, "Whatever

is causing you to sin, however precious that person or thing or habit is to you, cut it off; be ruthless. Be diligent with what you permit to go through your eye and hand.” If certain magazines cause you to lust, don’t buy them. Get rid of them. If certain novels cause you to lust, don’t read them. If certain stores cause you to lust, don’t go there. If certain TV shows cause you to lust, don’t watch them. If certain movies cause you to lust, then leave the theatre. Get rid of your home computer.

You say: Well, I don’t want to be legalistic about this.

We are not being legalistic. I am not giving you a set of rules about what you are allowed and not allowed to watch, what movie you are allowed to go to. Jesus doesn’t do that. He says:

#### SLIDE

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

If you are not led into lust, fine, but stop rationalizing. One way we put our flesh to death is to stop feeding our flesh. That is the secret the apostle Paul tells us about in Romans 13.14,

#### SLIDE

Ro 13:14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

What do I mean by feeding the flesh? I once read a story about a guy in Alaska who had two husky dogs – a light one and a dark one. He took the dogs to different towns and would have them fight each other. People would bet on the dogs. Sometimes the owner would bet on the dark dog and sometimes he would bet on the light dog. Whatever dog he bet on, that dog always won the fight.

Well, this fellow asked the owner, “How do you know which dog to bet on all the time? How come the dog you bet on always wins? How is it that you are always right?”

The owner said, “Well, that’s easy. Whichever dog I’ve been feeding for the past week is the one who is going to win.”

The same thing is true about us. Whatever dog you feed inside yourself is going to win. If you feed lust, then lust will win.

And then,

SLIDE

U – Understanding the role of community.

Frequently people who are struggling with lust in their lives want God to zap them from heaven. You might pray, repent, and make resolutions, and then fall back into the same cycle over and over again. In 1 Thess. 5.14, the apostle Paul says this:

SLIDE

1Th 5:14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

The Greek word for weak is

SLIDE

ASTHENEIA

Astheneia denotes weakness of all kinds, including moral weakness of such a magnitude as to render a person disabled or powerless. This word “weak” is a wonderful description of the struggle of an addict who is impotent, disabled to the point of complete powerlessness over some addiction in their life. In the case I’m describing, it would be a sexual addiction. Paul says that these powerless people, these weak people, are to receive help.

The word “help” according to one of my dictionaries literally means to stand opposite another person and to hold them firmly so that you assist them in having strength to stand. People with strength stand opposite the weak and prevent the weak person from collapsing.

Here at Vineyard Columbus we have groups with dozens and dozens of men who have taken the courageous step of saying I am weak in the area of sex. We also have groups for women and young women where women are saying I am weak in the area of sex. These groups are called Integrity.Men and Integrity.Women. If you want to find out information about them, we have a table in the lobby.

SLIDE

R – Reverence for the Lord

Jesus holds up the fear of God as a great motive to pursue purity. He says in verse 29-30 these words:

## SLIDE

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

You know, lust separates us from God. If we follow the path of sensuality long enough, and if we indulge the flesh long enough, we can end up ultimately completely separated from God.

It is a lie that God doesn't care, or that we can sin and ask forgiveness later. That is a lie. Because sin changes you. And over a period of time, you care less and less about receiving forgiveness. All of us have had this experience of repeatedly sinning in an area and finding ourselves less driven to pursue God's forgiveness than the first time we sinned in that area. There is a lessening in the feeling of guilt. More and more callousness sets in to our conscience. There is an internal dullness the more we sin.

Haven't you found yourself at some point in your life doing what you never thought you would be capable of doing but that you crossed some invisible line of sin and it seemed like the bottom dropped out? One of the most dangerous places for us spiritually is when we stop fearing the Lord, when we no longer have reverence for God.

What do I mean by the fear of the Lord? Some people think that they can predict what God will do if we choose to disobey him. I don't. Some people think that they know God so well that they can predict his response to disobedience. But as I read the scripture, God regularly surprises me. God breaks out of every box I wan to put him in. I could never have predicted what God would do to Moses when Moses struck the rock. Moses was God's beloved son. He served God faithfully for 40 years. I would have predicted that God would have let him off the hook. But the Lord said,

## SLIDE

"Moses, because you disobeyed me, you will never see the Promised Land."

I would never have predicted that Uzzah, who reached out to steady the Ark of the Covenant, would be immediately struck down. I never could have predicted

that David, whom God loved, because of a one-night stand with Bathsheba, and his cover-up, ended up losing the life of his child.

Brothers and sisters, you cannot predict what God will do if you deliberately spit in his face, and neither can I. I have a sneaking suspicion that it might be very serious. And I haven't the time to discuss friends of mine who paid an enormous price for willful disobedience. Purity comes from reverence for the Lord.

#### SLIDE

I – Irrigate your own lawn.

You know, when someone has an affair, they often call it the myth of the greener grass. We look at our lawn and it is brown and has bare patches in it. And then we look across the fence at our neighbor's yard. It is green and lush. Why not just climb over the fence and lie in our neighbor's lawn?

If you are married, one way to protect the purity of your mate is to irrigate your own lawn – affair proof your spouse. I am in no way saying, friend, that anyone has an excuse ever for having an affair or engaging in a lustful lifestyle because of what their spouse did. But I do believe that we can form a wall of protection for our spouse by greening up our own lawns. I want Marlene to say in her heart, "You know, this other guy is better looking than Rich; he is certainly wealthier, but will he love me the way Rich has loved me for over 30 years? Will he encourage me? Will he care for our kids and grandkids the way Rich has? Will he be my greatest cheerleader? Will he ever know me or listen to me the way Rich does?"

Irrigate your own lawn.

#### SLIDE

T – Turn to the Lord and to healthy habits.

I do not want you to walk away from this message beating yourself up. The reality is, friends, that lust is often a counterfeit for deeper, legitimate longings. The twisting of holy desires, a desire to feel alive, a desire to experience intimacy, a desire to be held, to gaze at beauty, to have community, to be affirmed and to overcome loneliness and boredom, a longing to be known, to be held, to be in community exists in the hearts of all single people and all married people. But you know, sometimes we are just too busy to get in touch with what is really going on in us below the surface. We're too busy to enjoy relationship or communication, or transparency with another human being, to gaze at beauty. This creates a vacuum in the soul. Lust comes by way of a false promise. You can have all of these things in your life cheaply and easily.

Healing comes when we slow down enough to say: Lord, what is really going on inside of me? Sometimes we find that we long for connection. Sometimes we find that we are bored, that we don't have enough relationship. Sometimes we

desire to feel understood. We need to discover ways to legitimately have these needs met. And so we pray: Lord, like the Prodigal, make me sensitive to those moments, those seasons when I am just out of touch with you. What I really need is intimacy with you.

Which leads to the last way to defeat lust:

SLIDE

Y – Yield to the Holy Spirit.

You know, we are not just playing defense in rooting out lust. We also play offense. One of the ways we move the ball forward in our lives in terms of purity is to regularly appeal to Jesus.

Let me share with you one of my own spiritual secrets. When I feel some illegitimate feeling, when I find myself being tempted, one of the things that I do in my better moments is I say: Lord, enter this place inside of me. Fill me, satisfy with my own person. Meet this longing inside.

I have found Jesus over and over and over to be faithful. He comes to you, if you ask him to. Yield yourself to the presence of Jesus and you will find that you are able to defeat lust in your life. Let's pray.



## How To Defeat Lust In Your Life

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Rich Nathan

March 4-5, 2006

Life As It Was Meant To Be

Matthew 5.27-30

### I. A Culture Drenched With Lust

### II. The Meaning Of Lust

### III. The Lies That Protect Lust

- A. The Lie: I Don't Feel Guilty  
The Truth: What Jesus Says Is The Standard, Not Your Feelings
- B. The Lie: I Just Want To Feel Alive  
The Truth: Yielding To Lust Will Only Makes You Feel Deader And Empty
- C. The Lie: I Am Above The Rules  
The Truth: The Rules Apply To You and Not Just Everyone Else
- D. The Lie: We Are Just Good Friends  
The Truth: What Is Your Spouse Or the Holy Spirit Saying
- E. The Lie: I Am Not Hurting Anyone  
The Truth: There Are No Safe Sins
- F. The Lie: I Am In Control Of This  
The Truth: Sin Enslaves

### IV. The Way To Defeat Lust

- P – Put Your Sin To Death
- U – Understand Your Need For Community
- R – Reverence For The Lord
- I - Irrigate Your Own Lawn

T – Turn To The Lord And To Healthy Habits

Y – Yield To The Holy Spirit