

WEEK 13 (November 8-14) Sermon on the Mount—"Marriage and Sexual Purity"

(Matthew 5:27-32)

Starting the Conversation

In his teaching on marriage and sexuality, Jesus continues to challenge us to a deeper level of faithfulness and commitment than what might appear on the surface. Jesus reminds us that His disciples cannot blindly follow the desires of the heart. Rather, the disciples of Jesus must guard their hearts and submit their hearts to the truth of God and the formation of the Holy Spirit. Particularly in matters of marriage and sexuality, we must trust in God's plan for the marriage covenant between one man and one woman, and we must surrender our desires and choices to God's design. Regardless of what the world says or the heart wants, God's plan is the BEST plan. It points us to the love of God, it forms us in the holiness of God, and it provides the foundation for exploring unconditional love.

Let's Read Matthew 5:27-30

Leader: In this passage, Jesus again looks past the outward behavior and focuses on what is happening in our hearts. He compares adultery to lust – even looking with lustful intent upon someone is committing adultery. Jesus says it would be better to lose an eye or a hand than to fall into this temptation. Now, His goal is not for everyone to walk around with one eye or one hand, but rather to take this matter so seriously, including what only we know we have thought and done, and flee from sexual sin completely with the Lord's help and strength. Even through radical protective measures.

- What does unconditional love mean? What does it look like from God? What does it look like for one another?
 - Do you truly believe lust in your heart is the same as adultery? Why do you think God sees them as the same?
 - The passage seems almost violent, tearing out eyes and cutting off hands – what does this show us about how God views our sexual sin? Do you hold the same view of sexual sin as God does? (*Consider also His radical forgiveness!*)
 - Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 – How does this passage expand upon the seriousness of honoring God with our bodies? What does this tell us about the importance of keeping to God's plan for marriage and sexual purity?
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Let's Read Matthew 5:31-32 & Matthew 19:1-9

Leader: Divorce was a common practice and debated topic in Jesus' day. Jesus began the conversation in the Sermon on the Mount, and was also questioned about His view by the Pharisees later in His ministry. Jesus advocated for the protection of the marriage covenant, one man and one woman to become one flesh and to not be separated. The only way they are permitted to separate is if the "one flesh" has already been separated through sexual immorality.

- Consider these passages in comparison to the topic of lust Jesus had just discussed in the Sermon on the Mount – what are some things that define the holy standard of marriage Jesus is calling His followers to?
 - The pain and difficulty of adultery is one that doesn't need to be explained – what does His teachings show us about the heart of Jesus towards marriages? What do His teachings show us about how we are to honor marriages?
 - If you are married, what are some practical things you can do to guard your hearts, minds and your marriage? If you are not married, what are some practical things you can do to honor and support the marriages of those around you?
 - Read 1 Corinthians 7:6-9 – Paul here shares how those who are single have a good thing and if they are able to maintain it, that will be good for them. How can you encourage and support those who are single around you?
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Closing—

- We are called to live holy (set apart) lives for Christ – how does your marriage/singleness show Christ to the world?
 - What is one way you can intentionally honor the sanctity of marriage this week? Either your own, a marriage you admire or through how you speak about marriage & sexual purity to others.
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PRAYER

Lord, thank You for Your deep care about every aspect of our hearts, minds, bodies and lives. Thank You for modeling for us how to hold marriage and sexual purity with the utmost honor and respect. Help us live that honor out. In Jesus name, Amen.