



Lust of the Eyes
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week, we are concluding our series, “How to Wreck Your Life in 3 Easy Steps.” Most of us don’t need any pointers on how to wreck our lives – we do a pretty good job of that all by ourselves, so this series is looking at what is behind the sins and the temptations we struggle with. If we don’t acknowledge them and confront them, they have the potential to wreak havoc with our futures. This week we are looking at lust of the eyes. We can recognize and appreciate something without it creating in us the need to possess it - we need to be careful that admiring something doesn’t become something else - something called lust.

1 John 2:16 For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world.

Exodus 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

Genesis When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.

OBSERVATION

After being baptized in the Jordan River the same Spirit that met Him there immediately led Jesus into the desert where He faced the devil’s temptations. This is a warning for us: When we experience a spiritual moment, we can expect Satan to attack us. He absolutely doesn’t want us to enjoy the presence of God. The model that Satan used to tempt Jesus in the desert is the same model he uses on us. He was tempted in every way that we are, but resisted Satan’s temptations in every instance.

QUESTION: When have you experienced a wonderful spiritual event and then felt Satan trying to undermine the joy of it?

Numerous characters in the Bible have fallen because of their lusting eyes: Eve, for example, thought she could be wise like God if she disobeyed Him and ate the apple that was so pleasing to her eyes; Achan¹ wrecked his whole family by taking spoils of war for himself which was specifically forbidden by God; David looked upon Bathsheba² as she bathed on the roof next door. The consequences for each were disastrous. David’s family was wrecked because he gave in to temptation. Yet he stands as an icon of faithfulness and was completely redeemed by God.

QUESTION: What other people in the Bible can you think of who wrecked their lives because of lust of the eyes?

¹ Joshua 7

² 2 Samuel 11:2

QUESTION: What is it about David's life that gives you hope?

APPLICATION

Lust is an intense, unregulated desire to possess or consume someone or something. Lust of the eyes, or possessions, are those things we are jealous of when someone else has them and we don't. But the irony is that those things are not satisfying for long. Our natural healthy desires like food, shelter, and rest are mostly satisfied when we attain them, but corrupt, lustful desires are never satisfied. We will always be hungry for more. Consider your iPhone 5. How long did that last before you slept in line overnight to buy the 7 or the 10? If we want to wreck our lives, always lusting after more is definitely a good step in that direction.

QUESTION: When have you envied someone else's life, family, possessions or home?

Why do we covet in the first place? Is it because we legitimately are missing something we desperately need to survive, or is it simply that we feel entitled to more than we have? Why is the unfailing, indwelling, all-sufficient presence of the living God not enough? John Ortberg, author of Soul Keeping, says, "The default of the sinful human race is entitlement, the belief that this gift or that experience God placed in my path is rightfully mine. I am owed. Here is the deal: The more you think you're entitled to, the less you will be grateful. The bigger the sense of entitlement, the smaller the sense of gratitude."

QUESTION: Under what circumstances do you feel entitled?

We could argue that a lack of gratitude is far more offensive to God than we want to admit. Deriving benefit from this world without gratitude is like stealing from God. We either take credit for the good things we have or we deny that God has given us anything good because we are always comparing ourselves to those who have more. Envy says, "I need more, I deserve more, everyone has more than I do."

QUESTION: What would you think of someone who, no matter what you gave them was never satisfied and, in fact, claimed that what you gave them they earned themselves?

Can we really do anything apart from God's provision? God gave us the mental acumen required to do our jobs; the strength to perform tasks; the planet and the air necessary for us to breathe while completing our work. The practice of gratitude is the antidote to envy. But, it takes work. It's like scheduling daily devotions or setting up prayer closets where we meet with Jesus every morning. These are joyful habits. Gratitude that transforms must acknowledge that every good thing comes from God.

QUESTION: What are you taking for granted every day that could become a holy instrument for God's purposes in your life if you embraced it with gratitude?

QUESTION: What is already in your life that you would really miss if it were gone?

Gratitude says, "There is already too much goodness in my life. God doesn't owe me anything. Yet every good thing He adds to my life I receive as a precious gift from Him!" Here is the bottom line: Lust of the eyes leads to separation from God while the practice of gratitude leads us more deeply into the Holy presence of God and actually deepens our own experience of contentment.

QUESTION: What would it take for you to be contented with your life?

Finally, we need to sit in the experience of feeling grateful: Steeping ourselves in the feeling of gratitude becomes a part of us. The longer we sit in it, the more God's Spirit will use it to draw our souls into joy, peace and contentment. So, now that we have recognized the gift we are grateful for - the Giver of the gift - and the feeling of being grateful, let's apply what we have learned and draw closer to Jesus as we spend time with Him and express gratitude for what He has given us.

QUESTION: What tops your list of the things you are grateful for?

QUESTION: How much time do you spend each week expressing gratitude for God's blessings?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, instill in us a spirit of gratitude for all You have provided, for our protection from temptation, for Your grace, and for our hope of heaven with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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QUESTION: What other people in the Bible can you think of who wrecked their lives because of lust of the eyes?

QUESTION: What is it about David's life that gives you hope?

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