

The Sermon: Teachings From Jesus Christ  
Part 5: Love and Lust  
March 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Welcome:** We're spending the first part of our year walking through the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7.

*The central message of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus looking at us in the eyes, and saying... "This is how you must live...on your own, you'll never do it...but in and through me you can!"*

Now, one thing I love about the Sermon on the Mount is that regardless of whether you like what Jesus says or not, and whether you agree with him or not, you've got to admit that Jesus is relevant. In these short three chapters, Jesus talks about relational issues like peacemaking, justice, conflict and reconciliation, love and marriage. He addresses everyday physical needs such as food, water, shelter, and clothing. He talks about how we spend our money and how we care for the poor. Jesus teaches us what it means to pray and fast; he talks about heaven and hell! And very few people will say, "those things don't matter!"

**No, our primary challenge with Jesus' words isn't that they don't connect with us, it's that when His words get into our lives, they create conflict and struggle!**

So...as we get to our text, I want to remind you that Jesus is like a skilled surgeon who, at times, is going to cut deep into our lives to address our sickness in order to heal us. And when he does this, there is going to be discomfort! But hear me...that discomfort...or pain (discipline) is evidence that God is working in us to bring about our joy and wholeness! When we understand this...we won't run from God when His words become hard. We'll run to Him...

**Look with me at Matthew chapter 5, starting in verse 27!**

*"You have heard the commandment that says 'you must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5:27-28*

**So...if this is your first week with us, what a great week to see what Harbor is all about!**

No doubt, many people (some of us) will listen to Jesus' words and say something like, ***"I knew it...when it comes to sex the Bible has a primitive and prohibitive perspective."***

If you read this text and this is all you know about what the Bible says about sex, and all you hear is that 'if you lust, you're going to hell,' you'll walk away! Many people do because they believe that Christianity has a very low, prudish view of sex, and

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they find that unattractive! But if you look deeper, you'll find the Bible's view of sex is incredibly attractive!

If you want to understand what Jesus is saying about sexual love and lust, you must understand what the rest of the Bible says about sex! So...let me take you to a few places that show us God's vision for sex.

**Narrative:** In Genesis 1, God created male and female...and the text says, *"God saw that it was good!"*

In Genesis 2, God presented Eve to Adam for the first time. Now, keep in mind that up to this point, Adam had only laid his eyes on giraffes, elephants, crocodiles...all wonderful and breathtaking creatures...but they were missing something that could satisfy Adam's longing for companionship and intimacy. Notice what the text says when Adam laid his eyes on Eve...

*"At last! This one is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man'...Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame."* Genesis 2:23, 25

He sees Eve and bursts out in a love song over her naked body in the presence of God! And then...the text says, 'they were joined together and united into one.' That is sexual language! And God affirms it!

The first pages of Scripture hold a high view of sexual love...

**In 1 Corinthians 7**, the Apostle Paul instructs husbands and wives to joyfully tend to one another's sexual desires.

**The Song of Songs** is an extended love song that follows the story of a young man and woman from attraction and engagement to the wedding and honeymoon. It is a story of rapturous love, passionate arousal, and mutually satisfying sex!

**An Old Testament scholar, Tremper Longman points out how incredible this Song is...**

*"The role of the woman throughout the Song [of Songs] is truly astounding, especially in light of its ancient origins. It is the woman, not the man, who is the dominant voice throughout the poems that make up the Song. She is the one who seeks, pursues, initiates. (In chapter 5) she boldly exclaims her physical attraction. "His abdomen is like a polished ivory tusk, decorated with sapphires..." Most English translations hesitate in this verse. The Hebrew is quite erotic, and most translators cannot bring themselves to bring out the*

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*obvious meaning... This is a prelude to their lovemaking. There is no shy, shamed, mechanical movement under the sheets. Rather, the two stand before each other, aroused, feeling no shame, but only joy in each other's sexuality.'*  
Tremper Longman

The Bible is filled with a barefaced celebration and rejoicing in sexual love. God gives us an elevated view of sex as an extraordinary gift to a man and woman who have committed their whole selves (physically, mentally, economically, spiritually) to one another in marriage. And it is within that permanent and exclusive relationship that sex becomes a powerful, God-created way to enjoy and maintain and deepen your union together.

Now...if this is true, then Jesus can't be diminishing the biblical view of sex. If anything...he must be elevating its sacredness by saying, *"It is not enough to simply stay out of bed with someone who isn't your spouse...if you look at a person with lust, you've already committed adultery in your heart."*

**What does Jesus mean by 'looking at someone with lust'?**

**Lust** – In verse 28, Jesus doesn't use the word for 'sexual desire.' He's not saying that 'sexual desire is wrong,' or that we should 'squelch all of our sexual passions.'

**The word "Lust" means, an impersonal or inordinate desire.**

**Let me suggest this definition for Lust:** *"Lust is longing for something that isn't mine and pretending that it is..."*

**Marriage:** Contrast lust with marriage! Fourteen years ago when Beth and I looked each other in the eyes and said, 'whether we're dirt poor living in the back room of your parent's house or rolling in it with five children,' whether we're healthy or sitting in the Emergency Room (which happened to us a few days later on our honeymoon), whether we're old or young, beautiful and fit or sagging in the middle...till death do us part, we're in this together!

And in that moment...we committed our whole selves to one another, so I can long for Beth. I can have desire conversation, connection, intimacy without pretending that she is mine because she is mine and I'm hers too!

**Lust is nothing like married desire and longing! Lust is a lot like greed.**  
**Consider Greed for a moment...**

**Greed:** Is there anything wrong with making money? No, but greed is the desire to have money simply to acquire things for me! Greed is always looking to take, never to give!

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**Lust** is the longing to get something (an experience, feeling, or validation) from someone who doesn't belong to me! It is always motivated by the desire to take, never to give...

**Greed** turns money, which is nice to have, into something that I must have to be happy! If you're greedy, it doesn't matter how much money you make, you always want more! And a greedy person will do anything to get more of it...they'll work long hours to the neglect of more important things, they'll cheat, they'll even trample over others.

**Lust turns sex into something that I must have to be happy!** But here's the catch. The more a person looks to sex to make them happy, the less satisfying it becomes, and the more sexual encounters they will seek in order to be happy! So...instead of sex being an expression of intimacy and oneness and joyful self-donation, sex becomes the pursuit of a thrill, a feeling, climax, and the person (on the computer screen or lying in the bed) becomes simply a means to that end!

**Greed:** People who are greedy fantasize about what they'll do when they finally get more money! I'll buy this, take that trip, retire...and they'll spend hours and energy dreaming about it.

**Lust:** Lust leads people to pretend that another person belongs to them, and to fantasize about what they will do with that person if given the opportunity! **And given the opportunity and right conditions, lust in the heart will inevitably move outward in our lives!**

Jesus is saying that if we look at sex in such a greedy, selfish, addictive, fantasy-filled way, it will have an overwhelmingly harmful and even destructive effect in our lives and in the lives of those around us! **"That can't be!!"**

**Lowell Mills:** In the heart of Lowell, there are a series of underground canals and waterways that were once used to power the textile mills (much like this one). The early founders of the mills understood that when channeled properly, the force of a river could be harnessed for tremendous good. Thus, Lowell became the heart of the American Industrial Revolution. But when those same waters become unharnessed and escaped their boundaries, they had the power and force to crush anything and anyone in their path.

Sex holds tremendous power and potential for connection and creation, for joy, and discovery, and growth. But unharnessed and undirected, sex has the power to crush us, leaving us lonely, insecure, empty, wounded.

**Let me give you a couple of examples of how lust causes us to take sex (which is very good) and pursue it in selfish and harmful ways!**

**Pornography** (and masturbation associated with porn) is the ultimate focus on self. With pornography, you get it when you want it...how you want it...for the price you're willing to pay! Is it addictive? Yes. Is it selfish? Yes. Does it lead to unhealthy fantasizing? Yes. It's the exact opposite of what the Bible says sex should be.

*Premarital Sex in America* is a book recently published that discusses *the heterosexual decisions and relationships of unmarried Americans between the ages of 18 and 23*. In it, the authors discuss the widespread effects of pornography from a scientific point of view.

They debunk the myth many people believe that using pornography won't affect your relationships...that it's a private thing. On the contrary...they say, pornography affects everyone's relationships. **For example...**

People who use pornography have crushingly unrealistic expectations regarding physical appearance and sexual performance (what a partner must look like and how he or she must perform).

As a result, men are becoming increasingly dissatisfied in their relationships and are less willing to commit to marriage. **Men are finding that sex in reality doesn't match their sexual fantasy...and this is keeping men from experiencing God-designed, sexual intimacy!**

Women are being pressured more and more to compare their appearances to the images and style of the fashion and beauty industry, which tells women how they must look and feel to be sexy and desirable! This places an unrealistic and unbearable amount of pressure on women to look and perform a certain way.

**Let me suggest another way that lust leads us to pursue sex in harmful ways, and this will most likely be startling for some of us...but follow me for a moment!**

We live in a society in which it's considered normal to give our body to someone without giving them our whole self; to have sex, but to hold on to our independence and life in the process.

**The authors of Pre-Marital sex in America** mention that the vast majority of people who have sex outside marriage when asked, "*why do you do it*" say, "*to keep*

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*the relationship going.* You adjust to me, you satisfy me, or I'm out of here...I'll look for an upgrade."

What they're saying is that the majority of people who have sex outside of marriage are placing the weight of their relationship on sex itself. **And the authors conclude** that the reason why a large percentage of those who live together before marriage don't have vibrant, lasting marriages is because their relationship began with a focus on self.

To pursue sex outside of marriage is to long for what isn't mine while pretending that it is. It lacks integrity, because it is the act of becoming physically naked and vulnerable with someone without giving that person your whole life.

**So...what do we do if we find that Jesus is speaking to us? If we see that there is lust in our lives? Where do we begin? Keep reading...**

*"So if your eye – even your good eye – causes you to lust, 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. And if your hand – even your stronger hand – causes you to sin, 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 be thrown into hell." Matthew 5:29-30*

**First...let's acknowledge that Jesus isn't speaking literally. One early church father, Origen, read this text and took it to heart literally...castrated himself. So the church leaders got together and said, "That's not ok. Jesus was using extreme language and examples to make a point!**

**What is Jesus saying?**

**Hell (Gehena)** – In verse 30, Jesus talks about hell (*better to gouge out your eye or cut off your hand than to be thrown into hell.*) The word hell, 'is the word *Gehena*.' ***Gehena*** was a place outside Jerusalem where the city's rotting, decaying garbage was taken to be burned. It was rank and repulsive, no one went near it! Jesus is using this word to describe an aspect of hell!

He's showing us that unless we learn to honor sex...it's mysteriousness, awesomeness, uniqueness, and sacredness, things are going to fall apart and decay and catch on fire!

Fire is awesome within boundaries, but outside the boundaries, it destroys! If we ignore God's vision for sex and the boundaries He places around sex, it will lead to destruction.

**The truth is that for some of us, this is a very personal issue, isn't it? We know that there are very few things that cause deep-seated pain and insecurity or a sense of shame, despair, or loneliness than when lust runs rampant in our lives, or when we give ourselves to someone so deeply, so intimately, and so completely...and they break a promise, they go away...**

If that is true of your story (as it is very true of mine), please hear me! Jesus loves you far too much to leave you where you are! He has a greater vision for your life!

**In John 4, Jesus approaches a woman at a well in Samaria**, and strikes up a conversation with her about eternal life. Do you remember this? He says, 'if you knew the gift I have for you, you would ask me and I would give you water so you would never thirst again. So, she replies, 'sir, give me this water.' Jesus said to her, 'go get your husband.' To which she responds...I don't have a husband, and Jesus says, that's right, you've had five husbands and the man you're living with isn't your husband.

**This is odd...Jesus talks to her about eternal life, and then turns to her romantic and sex life. Why?**

Here is a woman who has lived the majority of her life lying in the arms of men, looking for a man's affection and approval to satisfy the longings of her heart!

**Jesus says to her, "You're drinking water that will not satisfy! And if you continue to draw that water, you'll continue to thirst."**

But, Jesus says, *"If you drink the water I can give you, you will never thirst again!"* The kind of affection and love you've been looking for is one that only I can give you."

**Our culture makes a lot of promises when it comes to sex...**

**Ladies** – the culture tells you that if you're beautiful and desireable...if you perform well, you'll be someone!

**Men** – The culture tells you that if you can satisfy a beautiful woman...if you have a rapturous sex life, that you're a man! That's how to be filled!

**Every one of those lies will eventually leave you empty! Only Jesus can satisfy the deepest longings of your heart!**

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**Gospel (Bridegroom) Of all the images that God could use to describe His relationship with His people...to show his love and loyalty to us...he uses the image of a bridegroom!**

**Israel (God with his people). Jesus (Revelation 21).**

In spite of our unfaithfulness to Him. In spite of the reality that Jesus' words sink into the crevices of our heart and sting.

**God says, "I will be your bridegroom." And He is a bridegroom unlike any bridegroom we've ever known.**

*Jesus walked into hell to save us from it!*

*Jesus was emptied of everything good to make us whole!*

*He became ugly to make you beautiful!*

*Jesus was rejected so that we could be embraced!*

And when you come to Jesus and place the trust of your heart in Him, He embraces you...forgives you completely, and changes your heart! He gives you a whole new set of desires to love Him and to follow Him...and a power to walk in obedience to Him!

**How can we be freed from lust? How do we allow God to shape in us a purity of heart...of faithfulness, love, loyalty of mind and body?**

**Let me suggest three things!**

**Application #1** – Jesus Christ must become the bridegroom of your heart!

**Ken Korkow:** When I was dating Beth, my friend asked, 'Does she love Jesus more than you?' (At the time I didn't understand what he was saying).

Now...I see that if Beth doesn't love Jesus more than she loves me, she'll never be satisfied...and if I don't love Jesus more than her, I'll never be satisfied. I'll look to her to give me what only God can give me...

*Even the best marriage won't completely satisfy.*

*Even the most beautiful man/woman can't fill your heart!*

If Jesus isn't our main spouse...that offers us freedom and acceptance and a deep awareness of being loved, we will constantly make others into something that only Christ can be.

### **Application #2 – Avoid places of temptation**

**Jesus uses extreme language here to communicate how urgent it is that we move!** 'Gouge out your eye,' 'cut off your hand?' He's saying that we are to deal drastically with sin. We must not flirt with it or excuse it. We are to hate it, crush it, and dig it out.

*"So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things in this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming." Colossians 3:5,6*

To put it to death...ask yourself, *"What feeds lust in my life?" "What continues to give it life and breath?" Is it a location, a place I go? Is it something I'm allowing into my mind? Is it a person, a guy or girl, who wants me to give them my body without a whole-life commitment?"*

**Lust feeds off of darkness...privacy...secrecy. The more you hide it, the darker and deeper it will become.**

Be honest about those things and be willing to take drastic measures to get them out of your life. Jesus says that it's better to be maimed (for those things to be cut out of your life), then to hold on them, and be riddled with lust!

**Repentance...We repent not to earn Jesus' forgiveness! We repent because He's already forgiven us! And He's good!**

**Application #3 – Community** –*Guys tend to get together and talk about sports, work, and beer...rarely the real things of life like love and marriage or work or faith...or sin. Seek out friendships with one another so that you can become real and transparent and have people who are going to encourage you!*

**Do you have a person in your life that you have invited into this area? Someone who can ask you honest questions about being a godly man or woman? Who is it?**

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Finally, set your heart on the gospel over and over again...until the beauty and goodness of Christ captures your heart! When we see how awful our sin is...but how wonderful and good Jesus is...and we embrace Him, our heart will be free!

**Pray**