

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *“Whichever team I says, giddyup to.”*

SERIES: *FATAL - Lust*

SCRIPTURES: *Matthew 5*

SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*

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**Credit to Scott Scruggs series from “Sanctuary”; John Ortberg Sermon; Tony Campolo “Seven Deadly Sins”*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line, at home, tuning to the live stream.

Said last week in our message, that there is something unique about human beings...in all of creation we are made in the “image of God.” We are significant, valuable.

And so we live in the confidence of that reality.

We also recognize that, according to Scripture, something called sin (**SERMON SERIES GRAPHIC**) gets in our way of always acting within our image of God nature. And so we’re talking about these 8 specific way that sin shows up in our lives.

We’ve talked about things likes, sloth, envy, deceit, anger, pride...

This morning we want to talk about lust.

Jesus in the sermon that he preached actually addressed this topic. **Matthew 5**

“You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that ‘anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’”

Jesus is saying “sexual relations” begin with our eyes and our thoughts/imaginings. Lust is the heart condition, intention, the desire for intimacy with someone who is not our spouse and thus leads to and is in fact equal to adultery. It’s wrong. It’s fatal. It’s rampant in our world. More recently names like...

Harvey Weinstein

Jeffery Epstein

Robert Kraft

Come to mind. (I’ll just add by the way, as we’re gonna see this is not just a man’s problem. Women are in the mix as well)

Perhaps the most notable person we think of in our culture, though is **Hugh Hefner**.

It’s actually interesting, I read one time that Lee Strobel interviewed Hugh Hefner at his playboy mansion, a number of years ago talking to him Jesus and faith. Strobel, said that Hefner seemed genuinely interested in much of the conversation. Even said he believed in God. But Hefner added...he had *“a minimal belief in a minimal God, because he wanted minimal interference in his life from God.”*

(Ortberg)

In fact, even the great St. Augustine, renowned theologian claimed that he once prayed these words, **“O Lord, deliver me from lust – but not yet.”** (Campolo)

I kind of thought that pretty well sums up how many of us feel in relation to sexual sins and God’s involvement. We’d rather just not talk too much about it, because we

know we're failing pretty miserably and we'd rather not have to deal with God sticking his nose in our most private lives.

But it's not just the rich, elites, celebrities who have problems with lust. Let me just give you a few stats regarding this problem (these are from a few years ago).

1 in 8 searches on-line is related to "sexually explicit" material.

70% of men visit pornographic sites on a monthly basis (it's probably closer to 90% of men that look at pornography)

1 in 3 people who look at pornography are women.

50% of guys say they have seen nude pics by the time they are 13 years old.

TV Shows, movies, music videos/lyrics are becoming more suggestive each year.

In fact many of the songs on the billboard charts today have music videos that actually include sexually explicit images.

Sexting is becoming common place. (Images or words, conversations with sexual connotations.)

We are fooling ourselves if we think that sexual immorality is just some old church word that we don't need to talk about anymore.

Before we jump into Jesus words on this topic, I just want to preface this topic with two things.

I recognize that in delving into this conversation, there are some people already checking out. "Church sex talks" do not always come across very well.

For one, this is a delicate topic and makes many people uncomfortable, ashamed, embarrassed...truth is, it has since middle-school health class.

Let me just put us all at ease on this one...you need when it comes to lust and really all forms of sexual sin...

1. We're all in this together.

Sometimes people will read or hear Jesus words related to lust (anyone who lusts has already committed adultery) and are ready to give up.

"This must mean followers of Jesus are delivered from lust and no longer think lustful thoughts. But I still have lustful thoughts, therefore I must not really be a follower of Jesus." (Campolo)

So we're just gonna do a mass corporate confession this morning to deliver all us from the shame tied up in this issue. *I saw another pastor do this, and it was just so helpful...So I'm gonna raise my hand first and then I just want invite anyone else who has ever sinned sexually raise hand up on this as well, ever looked at something you shouldn't, ever flirted with someone you shouldn't have, ever indulged in a conversation you shouldn't have, ever withheld sexual intimacy to hurt your spouse, been wounded by feeling unattractive, failed to talk to your kids helpful about sexuality, ever felt like you could use some help from God for some area of sexuality...* (John Ortberg).

Now just kind look around the room for a minute.

If you thought you were walking into a room full of sexually pure, figured out, never had a problem before just look around and know you are in good company. (Put your hands down.)

And you might wonder why that is? It's because churches aren't full of perfect people. They are full of sinners, saved by Christ's amazing love.

You don't need to be ashamed or embarrassed. We're all in this together and anyone who claims otherwise is probably not being completely honest with you.

Second, I want to be really clear on this...

2. Sexual attraction and physical beauty are good things.

God invented them. Don't believe me...all along I've been encouraging you to read through the Gospels, this morning, on this point, I'll encourage you to go and read through the Song of Solomon. If you don't want to read the whole book, just read chapters 7 & 8. It may make you blush just a little bit.

(Now all you people, who never take notes I'm preaching I see you all out there writing that down "Song of Solomon 7 & 8...check!:))

I want to say that because, in just a moment we're going to talk about how this good gift has been abused and mistreated in our world.

But I don't want us to get the wrong idea.

You can correct me if I'm wrong, but there are some ready to check out on this conversation because all too often in churches, without realizing it we send the message that sexual intimacy and beauty, physical attraction are bad and evil or they are shallow and base desires, you should stay away at all costs.

In fact, more recently I've been doing a lot more pre-marriage counseling. And sometimes when I meet with couples I will give them this list (**PUT LIST ON PP**) and I will tell them to rate what is most important in their relationship.

It's always kind of amusing to me because, almost every time I do this, physical attraction/sexual fulfillment are at the bottom of the list. In other words, young couples are telling me it's the least important thing to them.

And I honestly think it's because of how the church has talked about issue. They are thinking, "He's a pastor. Church person. And sexual/physical attraction is shallow and it might even be evil. And so I'll say what really matters to me right now is ???"

So sexual intimacy, physical attraction, God's idea...good things.

Alright, let's talk about lust.

I. What is Lust?

Sadly, as with so many of the good things God created. We human beings have a tendency to use them for our own purposes. Taking God's good gift and using it in ways that God did not intend. In ways that don't reflect the image of God in ourselves or others. Lust is when we misuse sexual intimacy and physical attraction.

And it kind of brings us to this questions...

When does attraction move into the lust category?

Well in one sense we can't really put a definition on it. But Jesus gives us some clues in his passage...

A. "Looking Lustfully"

In the original Greek, the verb "looks" (anyone who looks) is in the present participle tense. Grammatically speaking a present participle verb refers to "a continuing action". In English, usually verbs ending in ING.

The idea is a little bit like... "anyone who looks and goes on looking" or "notices and chooses to keep on noticing"...sometimes we use the word linger. It's when we notice and then allow our minds to wonder.

So, it's not simply "noticing beauty" it's the lingering that gets us into trouble. In addition...the looking is defined as lustful looking...

Means intentionally fostering sexual temptation and fantasy through our imagination with a person who is not your spouse. It's when the notice, becomes a willful choice to continue imagining.

Campolo tells a story about a reprobate man, who is known around his town for sexual perversion. But decided one time to go to church, and the Pastors message was so inspiring he decided to give his life to Jesus. As such, he pledged to leave behind his life of lust and sexual perversion and start a new life of purity.

Several months later he ran into the preacher of that church, who asked him how it was going.

The poor man's head dropped as he confessed, "Pastor, it has been going awful! It's like two teams of horse pullin' away at my soul. One team pullin' in one direction trying to get me to do what God wants and another team of horses pullin in the opposite direction trying to get me to do the lustful things I did before!"

"Well, which team of horses usually wins?" asked the preacher.

The gentleman answered, "Whichever team I says, giddyup to."

Looking lustfully is when we choose to say "giddyup" to the wrong team of horses in our imagination.

Very plainly Jesus is against sexual fantasizing about someone who is not your spouse. When we look at another person, in that way...it's just like adultery.

Ok, so let's just be open about some things.

“Look but don't touch” is exactly what Jesus spoke against. Pornography is wrong.

But let's just take this a step further. It's easy to call out pornography. Allowing images to percolate from commercial ads or magazines or romance novels or television shows. That kind of fantasizing is saying “giddyup to the wrong team”.

The typical response is, well that's art. Calling something art does not justify or excuse “looking lustfully”.

In addition, it's not just in images that we see with our eyes. It's the use of our imagination, lust is tied to our intentions and motivations. Any time we allow our minds to linger on someone who is not our spouse, being with that person, for our sense of fulfillment it is lust. This can happen by watching movies, reading books, paperback or digital, it can happen in conversations that go too long and too deep. Jesus is concerned about our thought life. Sexual fulfillment is reserved for your spouse.

Jesus was pretty clear and pretty serious about this...when we do that we're saying giddyup to the wrong team.

Second...part of the danger with lust is that

B. Lust objectifies other human beings.

One of the things that God has given to each human being is their very own physical body. Whether you prefer the one He gave you or not. It's one of the very first gifts you receive. When another person uses your body against your will, to satisfy their appetites, their body, they violate you and it begins to destroy you and them. People are no longer viewed “in the image of God” but as objects for personal use.

And I know, you've probably heard this idea/concept before (objectifyin), but it's always been sort of a vague concept for me. But one pastor described it like this and this was just really powerful for me to think about...think about it like this...

“When I illicit lustful thoughts about a woman who is not my wife, I have to forget she is somebody’s daughter. I have to forget that she is made in the image of the creator. I have to forget that if another man looked at my daughter that way I’d go ballistic. I have to not think about my wife. I have to not think about my children. I have to not think about my church. I have to not think about God.” Do you see what’s going on in my heart?

That’s objectifying. When I lust, I strip others of their dignity and I have to deny my own humanity. Rather than viewing our spouses and the people around us, as dignified human beings, other people become objects to fill our desires.

And begin doing that in your life and it will ruin your soul, your ability to see other people the way God created them.

Jesus even said, **“the eye is the lamp of the body, if your eyes are healthy your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy your whole body will be full of darkness.”**

Start looking at people the wrong way and it will rot your soul.

C. Lust never fully delivers what it promises.

We said earlier that sexual attraction and physical beauty are good gifts from God. God created you and me to experience sexual intimacy and fulfillment. Lust tries to deliver sexual fulfillment but can't.

I'll just give you one example of this...

One of God's ways for us to experience sexual fulfillment is through **fidelity (faithful commitment, monogamy)** to one other person, your spouse.

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and the two become one flesh.

This is why couples in marriage say wedding vows, pledging faithful commitment to one another. Lust breaks the fidelity rule.

Theologian Scott McKnight just has a fantastic description of what happens physically.

Your brain is wired for both **sexual pleasure** as well as for **sexual fidelity**. (You need both.) Lust can't give you both.

As a result of various forms of contact, your brain releases a neurochemical called dopamine, which basically says to your body "wow this is pleasurable, do that again". This dopamine creates brain pathways then that begin to foster the desire for more sexual interaction with that same person.

In addition, McKnight says, the brain also releases oxytocin and vasopressin which tell a woman that the man is hers and tell a man that the woman is his.

This kind of bonding is created every time a human has any kind of sexual experience. Sexual fulfillment is tied to sexual fidelity.

The feeling of guilt or dirtiness or shame embarrassment...that is so often related to lust or sexual perversions is partly the brain's way of saying, *"I'm confused. You're trying to fulfill the desire but not in fidelity."*

“It may be true that at the moment of sexual satisfaction the person motivated by lust feels transported into a state of bliss; but that brief moment is quickly followed by a sense of emptiness and shame.” (Campolo 37).

Lust never fully delivers on its promise.

Last concept related to lust.

D. Lust is the responsibility of the luster.

It is so easy to blame other people for our tendency to lust. Men blame women. Women blame men.

If a man lusts maybe it's the woman's fault. Maybe she dressed the wrong way. Maybe she did something to entice him. Blame her.

Or I know some women who get upset at other women, because those “other women” dress in such a way that it might cause her husband to lust.

Even in the ancient world, lust was often blamed on women.

One second century writer, Aulus Gellius says it like this: ***“If you should catch your wife in adultery, you may put her to death without a trial; but if you should commit adultery she must not presume to lay a finger on you...”***

Men's lust and sexual sin, blamed on women.

What's so intriguing about Jesus' statement in Matthew 5 is that Jesus says, “lust is the responsibility of the luster.” Look at Jesus' statement... **“Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her in his heart.”**

Jesus puts the responsibility on the men, not the women. Jesus is saying, don't blame her for your lust problem. He says nothing about her dress, he says to the man, don't look lustfully at her.

So men, don't blame someone else for your lust problems. "Well if she wouldn't dress that way..."

At the same time, ladies...keep in mind that was a patriarchal society. Jesus was addressing their specific problem.

Today, we, in modern North America live in a much more egalitarian society where it is much more common for women to also be able to express their own sexual needs and wants. In our world, women also objectify and lust in various forms over men...and Jesus same principle holds true.

Women are responsible for their lust in the same way that men are...no excuses.

That brings us to the final point of our sermon.

II. What do we do about lust?

Well as we've seen with every other message we

A. Turn to Jesus.

Perhaps more than any other sin, lust causes so much pain and shame, humiliation. We like to keep our lust to ourselves, in the dark, at night, when no one is around.

And our concern is that if people really found out about our lustful thoughts, they would turn their backs on us, they would reject us. And this is why we turn to Jesus.

Jesus loves broken sinners.

Remember the story last week, when we were talking about pride. A righteous Pharisee and a broken tax collector come to confess. And the Pharisee said, thank goodness I'm not a sinful, broken, wreck like that tax collector. And the tax collector wouldn't even look up to heaven, as he prayed, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner." Jesus said, I have compassion, I have grace for someone like that.

Remember the story about the woman caught in adultery, the crowds drag her humiliated and broken before Jesus. She was caught in sexual sin. Remember Jesus response in that situation... "Let anyone without sin condemn this woman...and when no one else did Jesus said, neither do I condemn you."

Remember the story about the Prodigal son, who runs away and squanders his wealth on wild living and most certainly sexual sin. What is the Father's response? He waits on his porch every day, looking into the distance and when he sees his lost son returning home...he runs to throw his arms around his son, who was lost but is found!

In our shame, failure, humiliation and in our sexual brokenness more than anyone else...Jesus is waiting on that porch to run and meet us and wrap his arms around us.

Jesus just has such incredible grace in the midst of our failure. So come to Jesus with that shame and humiliation and brokenness and just lay it down before him.

Second, as you come to Jesus I also want to offer just two really practical steps related to sexual sin.

Jesus meets in love and grace, but he also refuses to let us live in sin, he wants to free us from sexual brokenness.

To the woman caught in adultery, he says, “Now go and sin no more.” Sexual sin will ruin your life, it will rot your soul, Jesus does not want that for you.

How can we go and sin no more when it comes to LUST?

B. Accountability.

Lust has such a powerful pull on us. “Lust gives us such pleasure sometimes, that we love to lust more than we love Jesus.” Even John writes about this...

John 3:19 – 20 - Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Find yourself an accountability partner. Someone you know and trust. And just get in the habit of honestly and openly sharing your struggles with that person. It’s human nature that “watched behavior changes.” Most of us will speed until we see a cop car. When we know we are under surveillance, we tend to drive differently.

You need surveillance in this area of your life.

Second,

Jesus says, when it comes to sexual sin you have to be ruthless about eliminating it...Jesus says...

C. Gouge out your eye.

“If your eyes cause you to stumble, gouge ‘em out, if your hand causes you stumble cut it off.” I don’t believe Jesus means those phrases literally or most of us would have lost our eyes and hands a long time ago. But I think he means you have to be really serious about your response to sexual sin.

If you need a security lock on your TV/Ipad/Cell phone/ebooks. And have someone else keep the codes. If you need to have someone check your internet browsing history regularly.

If you need to avoid certain people in your life. If you need to cut off certain conversations or interactions. If you need a new location to work.

You don’t need to be embarrassed by any of those things. Remember we’re all in this together. And Jesus knows all about it anyway, and he has incredible grace. And he wants you to experience life to the fullest, in the way He intended you to.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.”