

The Way of Jesus

Week 16

Kingdom Contentment: How Living in the Kingdom is the Cure for Lust

Key Verse: James 1:13-15 (NLT)

And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

Key Term: Temptation vs Sin (SG, p.66)

Often we have confusion about the difference between temptation (which is not sin) and sin itself. Look at the verses quoted above.

- *Thoughts* are neutral when they don't incline the will to do anything about them. Thought of a wrong act is not a sin.
- *Temptation* is not neutral. It is desire (which can never be satisfied), which, through our thoughts, seeks to pull the will. Temptation makes an inclination to the will. When the will does not yield, there is no sin. Inclination of a wrong act is temptation, but not a sin
- *Sin* is a yielding of the will. It involves action, whether mental or physical, and is the fruit of an evil desire. Intention of a wrong act or the act itself is a sin = "looking upon a woman to lust..." by accepting the thought, dwelling upon it, inviting it, etc.

Reflections on Kingdom Healing for Lust

More Background on the Sermon on the Mount (SG 56,57)

- **Aim** – To help people come to hopeful and realistic terms with their lives here on earth by clarifying, in concrete terms, the nature of the Kingdom into which they are now invited by Jesus' call to repent.
- **Underlying Assumption** – The Kingdom of the Heavens is available to all
- **Questions Dealt With** – Which life is the good life? Who is the truly good person?

Thoughts about Lust (many from Dallas Willard, Private Notes)

"Intimacy is the mutual mingling of souls who are taking each other into themselves into ever increasing depths... We keep hammering the sex button in the hope that a little intimacy might finally dribble out. In vain. For intimacy comes only within the framework of an individualized faithfulness within the Kingdom of God." (DC p.163)

Sex is a primary drive and desire of our humanity, bent and twisted by our fallen nature. As such, it is a place of developing 'your Kingdom,' and brings to bear all the "My Kingdom" possibilities we have been thinking about: disregard for others, contempt, abuse, destruction of souls, etc. Sex is not bad in itself, any more than food or conversation. But as now lived, sex is a major source of evil for those in ministry and those they serve.

Lust begins with thoughts about another's person body, usually in indirect form (fantasy). Jesus' word, *epithumia* (desire) means 'look with the intent to lust'. Much *epithumia* is a "My Kingdom" phenomena built on contempt; you are not thinking of their well being, but your own passions and pleasures. Porn, rape, sexual misconduct and abuse are all built on contempt.

You cannot standoff sexual desire directly. You will get stuck on it. It will obsess you. **The principle of indirection** is critical. We seek to become the kind of person who has a heart marked by real joy and love for others. From this kind of Kingdom heart, purity of life flows. Christ has entered my body. He is the motive and power for our purity.

What to do?

The **discipline of chastity** is less the discipline than the outcome. We have no word for the discipline. Chastity is *"To refrain from sexual acts, thought and desires, as a way of accustoming oneself to freedom from domination from sex."* You need to practice turning away from them sufficiently so that they do not dominate you. So that you no longer get angry or sick if you do not get what you want. We have to turn to other and better things. This is where love comes in. Augustine said, "Love God and do what you will". If I love God I will see a man or a woman in a different way. I won't want to use them.

Temptation always announces itself before it arrives. So we act then. Catch the thought early. Turn the eyes away from visual temptation. The discipline of the eyes. What to do with thoughts: recognize, renounce, replace. There are certain cues that alert you to the possibility of lusting. You then use those cues to love instead of lust. Temptation always comes to us in a process. It does not jump us like a shot out of a pistol. "She'll be coming around the mountain when she comes..." You hear the train before you see the train. Respond early with love. But the fact is we love temptation and titillation. When

people fall into lust or fornication, they have been on the conveyer belt for some time. Jump off early.

Porn. Think!!! What are we doing? Why are we doing it? Accountability can help, but will never transform the heart. You have to understand the dynamics of desire. Porn almost always involves degradation. It destroys women. Why do we “need” this? Sexual addiction needs stronger help. We have to believe that **there is something better than this**, and it is available in the kingdom. It is genuine **love and honor. Genuine will to the good of another person.** Love is not desire. Desire does not usually consider the good of the object of desire.

The best discipline for sexual temptation is **a happy marriage.** Genuine happiness in a marriage **is a Kingdom power.** You still have to be wise. But people are alienated and lonely and are finally dominated. *“Surrounded by people and lonely all the time.”* **Invest in relationships** that they may be good and strong.

If you turn away from sex in marriage for a season so that you can deal with each other on some other basis than sex, you discover that you are more than a sexual being.

Sexual significance of face and eyes. They are the doorway to intimacy. They are the invitation. Looks have many significances. In many marriages, this ceases. You have to have times when you look deeply into someone’s soul and treasure their face. “The lord make his face to shine upon you... lift up his countenance upon you...” = look right at you.

Friendships with the opposite sex: don’t pursue them and don’t run from them. Find your deepest satisfactions at home. Invite your mate into these friendships. If you find yourself looking deep into one another’s eyes, things are not OK.

The practice of the other disciplines is primary in handling sexual temptation. If you ignore all the rest of the desires and just deal with sexual temptation, you will have a hard go of it.

Reflection Question: Summarize the key ideas in the Reflection in your own words.

Bible Study: Kingdom Healing for Lust

1. Look up the following verses, and summarize them in the spaces below.

Reference: Job 31.7-11

Reference: Matt 5.27-28

Reference: Matt 19.3-12

Reference: 1 Thess 4.1-7

Reference: Matt 5.8

2. How would you summarize what we have learned about lust and temptation?

3. What stands out to you about how Kingdom life heals lust?

Spiritual Tool for the Week

The following exercise is to be done this week. Record your experiences in the spaces below.

Spiritual Tool: Repeat last week’s exercise on Sabbath time and keep working on the previous week’s Colossians 3.1-17 memorization

Reflections on your experience

Readings for Next Week:

Read The Divine Conspiracy, Ch. 6, SG pp 67-7.