

Small Group Questions

Sermon Based Small Groups – March 27, 2011

Adult Education – Woodbury Community Church
Woodbury, Minnesota

Sermon Title: Revolutionary Purity

Sermon Series: The Sermon on the Mount: Living as Citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven

Pray: Each week, we want to take time to lift up one another's prayer concerns. True Christians pray for one another. Take some time at the beginning of your small group time to pray for each other. Be real with each other. If you are hurting, take the risk and share how you are feeling with the group. If you have something that God has blessed you with this week, share it. Give Him the glory for what He is doing in your life. Record the prayer requests in the "Notes" section on the right of this page, and make a commitment to pray for the needs of the people in your group throughout the week.

Opening Question: Our passage this week deals with the sin of adultery. There have been thousands of books written on the subject of healthy marriages. You can go to countless seminars about building a better marriage. There are thousands of licensed marriage and family therapists in the nation. Despite all of this, the latest statistics reveal that one in every two marriages will deal with the pain of adultery. What is the best advice that you have ever been given on the topic of marriage?

Read: Matthew 5:27-30

Discuss: How do you think that the First Century followers of Jesus would have felt as they heard His teaching in these verses? What would have surprised them?

Read: Leviticus 20:10

Discuss: Jewish law taught that the penalty for adultery was death. This law could be enforced in the First Century, but rarely was. Instead many Jewish people opted for a quiet divorce. Based on Leviticus 20:10, how would Jesus' words in Matthew 5:28 impact a godly Jewish person's understanding of the law?

How does Matthew 5:28 make you feel?

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Read: John 8:1-11

Discuss: The story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery may be one of the most beautiful in the entire Bible. At first glance what character qualities and traits strike you about the following people?

- The Teachers of the Law and Pharisees
- The Woman
- The Woman's Lover
- Jesus

Now, based on Jesus' standard for adultery, how do you think that he might deal with your sin?

What practical steps would you give to a person who was trying to defeat the sin of lust in his or her life?

Lust is a sin that begins within. Read the following passages and share with the group what they say about the battle for our minds.

- James 1:15
- Matthew 15:18

Reread: Matthew 5:29-30

Talk about taking radical action! What was the point that Jesus was teaching? Are we really supposed to mortify our bodies?

We need to deal with the root cause of sin in our lives. In his sermon, *Tackling Temptation*, Pastor Aaron Burgess opened with the following story:

Thomas Costain's history, The Three Edwards, describes the life of Raynald III, a fourteenth-century duke in what is now Belgium. Grossly overweight, Raynald was commonly called by his Latin nickname, Crassus, which means "fat." After a violent quarrel, Raynald's younger brother Edward led a successful revolt against

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him. Edward captured Raynald but did not kill him. Instead, he built a room around Raynald in the Nieuwkerk castle and promised him he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room. This would not have been difficult for most people since the room had several windows and a door of near-normal size, and none was locked or barred. The problem was Raynald's size he couldn't fit through the door. To regain his freedom, he needed to lose weight. But Edward knew his older brother, and each day he sent a variety of delicious foods. Every day he wheeled before Raynald on a cart, the tastiest foods. But instead of dieting his way out of prison, Raynald grew fatter from the food. When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he had a ready answer: "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills." Raynald stayed in that room for ten years and wasn't released until after Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined he died within a year, a prisoner of his own appetite.

There are many of us who are like Raynald, trapped by our own sinful desires. We wish we didn't have these desires but often the delicious temptations that are wheeled before us are too hard for our flesh to resist. We each have an appetite for a certain sinful pleasure that whenever we are tempted with it we give in. And it is a cycle of feast and famine. Pleasure then guilt. Perhaps that temptation is gossip, or pornography. Maybe alcohol or drugs. Maybe your irresistible temptation is fatty foods or overspending on your credit card. But whatever it is, you know you lack the willpower to overcome it. The temptation is just too strong.

Well in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus addresses the issue of sin, temptation and how to battle it. It is Jesus' hope that we learn how to tackle temptation and sin. And so in Matthew 5 Jesus talks about the root causes of sin. In this passage Jesus speaks candidly about the issue of adultery. By studying these four verses we can learn some general lessons about how to battle the sinful desires we all have.¹

Discuss: How would you summarize the lessons that Jesus teaches us on how to battle the sinful desires we all have?

For Personal Reflection: The sin of lust has been called every man's battle. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says simply, "Flee from sexual immorality." 2 Timothy 2:22 says, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." And Philippians 4:8 instructs us this way, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

¹ From the sermon *Tackling Temptation*, Aaron Burgess, p. 1.

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What are the things that you need to flee from? What are some things that are presently in your life that you need to cut out of it?

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Homework: The sin of lust has destroyed so many relationships. Take some time this week to read the stories of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife and David and Bathsheba. Compare and contrast the attitudes of Joseph and David. What brought about David's fall and what kept Joseph from falling. If you don't have an accountability partner, commit to finding someone this week who will hold you accountable in all areas of life.

The story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife is found in Genesis 39. The story of David and Bathsheba is found in 1 Samuel 11.

Pray: Ask God to reveal if there are areas in your life that need to be cut out. Commit to sharing those areas with a trusted friend who will hold you accountable to taking action.