



**Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture**

**SERMON TEXT:** Matthew 5:27-30

**KEY POINT(S):** A true disciple is one who honors God’s design for human sexuality.

**FOR LEADERS**

- The Sex Talk.** As a church, we preach through the bible book by book, line by line, and verse by verse, which means never “skipping over” the more difficult conversations. Obviously, when the Bible presents us with more sensitive or challenging concepts to work through, we (as leaders) should take care to be mindful of where people within our Communities are coming from. Be careful that you do not accidentally assume that everyone is in the same place as you, whether good or bad. With a topic like lust, we’re presented with two challenges: 1.) This will be excruciatingly uncomfortable for Communities which have not yet been together to build up enough trust to navigate this, 2.) It is very likely that there are folks struggling in many of the areas Ryan mentioned in the sermon. Be careful that you do not put someone “on the spot,” or you may never see them in your Community again! Engage the topic of lust genuinely, but in gentleness, and (depending on the level of transparency in your group) navigate these topics with care.*

**GETTING STARTED**

**[1] Icebreaker** – “Name something in your life that you ABSOLUTELY need to have, only to find out it wasn’t really as fulfilling as you thought.”

**[2] Communities Video** - Watch this week’s Communities video!

**[3]** What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

**OUR SEXUALIZED CULTURE**

In the sermon this week, Pastor Ryan explained how our culture has drifted quite far from God’s original design for sex and sexuality.

**[1]** In our post-modern American culture, where are the lines typically drawn between what is sexually permissible and what is not?

**[2]** Do you personally feel that there are inconsistencies in how our culture views sex? Why or why not?

***Leaders:** Some examples of this might include the clash between the “#MeToo movement and the promiscuousness of the sexual revolution, the de-valuing of marriage over the detrimental effects of single motherhood and an attempt to value the dignity of women in culture in the face of a wildly ubiquitous porn industry.*

**[3]** What does our culture think the Christian view of sex and marriage is? In what ways do you feel they’re right or wrong?

**[4]** In what way have sexual scandals within the Church damaged it’s witness to Christ? Where have you seen or felt these damages in your own experience with Christianity?

**[5]** In your opinion, what is the best way for the Church to counter the idea that Christians are judgmental and hypocritical when it comes to sexual ethics?

Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

GOD'S DESIGN

Ask a Volunteer to read Genesis 2:18-25

- [6]** According to what we read in this passage, what is God's design for human sexuality? How does this challenge the popular opinion of our culture today?
- [7]** Without naming names, where have you seen lives impacted by people who chose not to honor God's design for sexuality, but honor their own preference?
- [8]** [Genesis 2:25] says that the man and his wife were "naked and unashamed." This is a stunning depiction of the relational harmony that existed before we fell into sin. What does this teach us about intimacy, and how is this intimacy compromised when we go outside of God's design for sex?
- [9]** In the sermon, Ryan said that going outside of God's design for sex is like saying, "I want your body, but I don't want you." What do you think he meant by this, and do you agree or disagree with this sentiment? Explain.
- [10]** What does true restoration look like for someone who is failing or has failed in areas of sexual intimacy?

*Leaders: Sex (or any blessing from God for that matter) can become a brutal curse if it's taken outside of God's design and twisted or distorted by sin. Ryan was hinting at this when he said "I want your body but not you." It's like saying we want the pleasure of sex, but we don't want the commitment, or self-sacrifice, or ACTS of love and devotion and care that come with it. It twists God's design for intimacy and instead creates gaping holes in our soles that bring a fleeting, momentary happiness. It's much the same for pornography. God's design is for a husband and wife, where sex is not the point of being together, but rather a bi-product of a loving relationship. True restoration means repentance. First, it means coming to terms with the reality of our sin and confessing it both to God, and then to one another for accountability. Then, it means turning from it entirely, and cutting off any and all ties.*

"BUT I SAY TO YOU..."

When Jesus commands us to do something, we should do it, because He's God. He's the Creator. We don't need to understand the reasons behind God's motives or commandments in order to bear fruit with them, we can simply trust them because God is good (Think about the Garden of Eden, for example.) However, more often than not, God doesn't just simply command something, but also gives us the reason *why*. In our passage this week, Jesus doesn't just instruct us to obey God's design for sexuality, but also explains why it will lead to us flourishing in it.

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:27-30.

- [11]** Consider what Jesus says in the first two verses...do you think He's being too strict here? Why or why not?
- [12]** In what way does avoiding lust help us more than avoiding sexual adultery?
- [13]** What does it look like, practically, for a person to honor God by "tearing out an eye" or "cutting off a hand?" What are some of your own practices or boundaries that you hold to help you in these areas?
- [14]** How does obedience to Christ in this area lead to flourishing? How does ignoring it lead to death? Explain.

**Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture**

**[15]** One major tool that God gives us to defeat lust in our lives is one another. Who in your life has access to every part of your life for the purposes of loving you and keeping you accountable and walking in the light?

*Leaders: Help people understand what Ryan explained in the sermon. By saying “tear out your eye” and “cut off your hand” Jesus is using metaphor (but a rather strong metaphor) to explain the importance of removing sin from our lives. To put this in a practical sense...if we are struggling with watching pornography on our computers or phones...one solution would be to remove our access from the device. Putting time limits, access limits to our devices, or moving the computer into a more public area of the house (den or living room) for instance would be practical steps to cut off our abilities to sin. Many folks use accountability software on our devices, which send reports to an accountability partner about our viewing history, for example.*

*These things are not hard and fast rules, but they are certainly good suggestions! Each of us has our own struggles, and the best way to deal with them may look different for each of us, but one thing holds true and that’s what Jesus tells us in this passage – CUT OFF OUR ABILITY TO SIN!! For many, this might actually look like not going to a certain cafe, or gym at certain times. For others, this means setting viewing limits on TV or phones, and still for others it means not having access to certain apps. The only one that can truly define what it is that we need is ourselves...and that’s the hardest part, because it means being honest about our sin.*

---

**PRAYER**

---

This week we’re going to split up into smaller groups to close out our time together in prayer. Split your Community either into one group of men and another for women (or into micro groups of 2-3 if your group is already gender-specific) and have them pray through these two items to close out your time together:

**[1]** What is one area of your life where you feel like you could use prayer in regard to honoring God’s design for sexual purity.

**[2]** What steps are you taking, practically, to honor God in this area of your life?