



DAILY DEVOTION

Hey, North Ridge Family! Here are this week's Daily Devos. Our hope is that you will process each of these devos according to how you can respond and love on your family and our city.

DAY 1

READ MATTHEW 5:27-30

We are studying the Sermon on the Mount, a verse-by-verse study of Matthew 5-7. In this section of the sermon, Jesus is talking about relationships. He is showing us the ways that we must change our engagement with each other as a result of living in this new kingdom.

Previously Jesus compared anger to murder. Now Jesus is teaching us about lust. He says if you look with sensuality in your heart it's the same as adultery. It is an uncomfortable subject, but we must discuss it because Jesus does. Plus, we as Christians are always yelling at the rest of the world to get their act together regarding sexual sin, but the church doesn't have any better track record than the rest of the world. So, of all the things that Jesus could talk about, He says this is a big deal. Jesus is obviously making the point that what is in your heart matters as much as what you say or do in life.

Why do you think Jesus is so concerned about the condition of your heart?



DAY 2

READ MATTHEW 5:17-20

The Pharisees were relaxing the Law, bringing the rules of the Old Testament down to their reach to make themselves look good. That was not the purpose of the Law. The purpose of the Law was to crush us in order to show us we need a Savior; to push us toward relationship with God, so that we could surrender to Him and enjoy life with Him.

Last week we discussed murder. The actual act of murder was all the pharisees were concerned with. In their teaching, you can be as bitter and angry as you want, as long as you don't actually kill someone. You can be unforgiving. You don't even have to be nice. You can think murderous thoughts as long as you don't actually commit murder. In their minds, God was pleased with that.

The same thing is happening now with lust. The pharisees are again bringing the Law within their reach. The Law says You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:15), but the pharisees read that and think anyone can do anything else that would lead to adultery as long as they avoid actual adultery. We oftentimes read this and think "Just don't sleep with anyone who is not your wife and you are fine." But then Jesus raises the bar. He asks, what does the Law actually mean?

In what areas do we, like the pharisees, distort Jesus' teachings?

DAY 3

READ EXODUS 20:15

"The general understanding in Jewish society was that a woman needed to be chaste before marriage and faithful afterward. A man, however, was free to have sexual liaisons as long as he was discrete and did not involve a married woman, which would infringe on the rights of another man. The people of Jesus' day were very modern in this matter." -- Tokunboh Adeyemo

Wives were seen as possessions. Young men were taught to do whatever they wanted as long as they didn't have sex with another man's wife. Today things are better for women, but this mentality still exists for both men and women. We oftentimes live in a way that says, "Do whatever you like as long as you don't hurt anybody else." Do we think God is happy with that?

Jesus is rejecting that kind of thinking. He is saying that it's not fine with God. God is concerned about anything that is a matter of the heart. That is what Jesus is addressing—that this mentality is not just the act; but what is in your heart. If you look at someone with sensuality in your heart, it's the same as the act of adultery.

How does our culture distort what we believe about sexuality and sexual sin?
How does it become a matter of the heart?

DAY 4

READ MATTHEW 5:27

Anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery. You want to know where the line is? You passed it a long way back. Jesus is not saying that noticing someone is sinful. The noticing of attractive people is not the problem; we were created to notice. It's not the look that is a problem; it's the look back. It's the stare. It's the lingering thoughts playing out different scenarios in our minds. It's an issue that reflects something that is broken in your heart. You're not responsible for the stuff that culture throws at you. You are responsible for clicking on it and dwelling on it. Jesus condemns looking at someone with lustful intent.

The other thing that Jesus is saying is that it is not only a masculine issue. We find in scripture that women struggle with lust, too. Remember Potiphar's wife and Joseph. Women are different than men, but we all are susceptible to this sin.

Look at these pornography stats: approximately 72% of all U.S. men view pornography at least monthly (64% for Christian men), 88% of men (18-30) view pornography before the age of 16, 61% of women (18-30) have viewed pornography before the age of 16, the fastest growing consumer group of pornography is young women, between 2015-2017. We are all created equal and equal in our ability to sin.

How do lustful thoughts and pornography lead to an imprisoned life?
How does they damage our relationships, and our souls?

DAY 5

READ MATTHEW 5:29-30

"Throughout the early centuries of Christianity, when every kind of sexual behavior ever known to the human race was widely practiced throughout ancient Greek and Roman societies, the Christians insisted that sexual activity was to be restricted to the marriage of a man and a woman. The rest of the world, then as now, thought they were mad. The difference, alas, is that today half the church seems to think so, too." -- N.T. Wright

This is radical thinking! Does Jesus really want us to take our eye out? No, He doesn't want us to take our eye out or cut our hand off, but He does want us to be extreme in the avoidance of temptation and sacrificial in our pursuit of purity—an idea in sharp contrast to what the world teaches. You know when you are being tempted, so cut it out, get rid of it, draw boundaries for yourself, make no provision for sexual immorality and crude joking, and run from temptation when it comes. Don't run up to the line and stop. Don't focus on what the world says. Run and keep running.

To Jesus. Turn to Him if you are tempted. He knows and understands. Turn to Him if you have failed. He calls you to confess, to mourn your sin, because, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 6:9). And it is not something we have to do on our own. He calls us to face these heart issues, and to discover and deepen our relationship with Him.

Do you have someone to confess to, to tell your sins, who will walk with you?
Have you considered creating a DNA group- three people of your same gender, committed to meeting weekly to discover, nurture, and act on your relationship with Jesus, together?

Contact brad@northridgenow.org for more information on forming a DNA Group.