

LOVE PERSONS, MT.5:27-32

Ten Step Program #7

◆**Intro:** According to the 1992 National Health and Social Life Survey, of adults aged 18 to 59, those in intact marriages who worship weekly were most likely to say greatly enjoy their physically intimate relationship. Almost 92 percent of adults who worship weekly reported the highest levels of enjoyment, compared to only about 85 percent who never worship, and only 41% of those unmarried and holding loose views of morality. Here's something else interesting. While the media paints church attenders as prudish and as thinking that sex is dirty, it is those women who are the most religious who report the most satisfaction. Psychologist Kevin Leman concludes that this all just means that your private life actually begins... in church! Are you surprised?

◆Someone has joked, "Why does the average women care more about how she looks than what she knows?" **Answer:** Because she knows the average man can see better than he can think. This is actually more than a joke. It is scientifically accurate. When a man sees a beautiful woman the ventral tegumental area of the brain releases dopamine to the prefrontal cortex, the reasoning part of the brain, and actually slows the decision making ability of the brain. I guess that means the more beautiful she is, the dumber he gets. Now it is also true that the woman experiences the power of attraction. It's not as simple perhaps because the female brain is different, more complex.

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Here's a comparison of the male and female brain function

[show picture: knobs].

◆ Lets read our text for the day...

◆ Wow. At first reading it's clear that Jesus teaches that sexual sin is the stuff that leads to a life of hell (bear in mind that we needn't wait for death to experience pieces of hell)! (v29)

Sounds like Jesus see our sexual lives as serious business, wouldn't you say? Could it be that he already knew the beautiful things about marriage and fidelity that our social sciences would **discover** 2000 years later? Let's consider a few thoughts arising from Jesus' teaching.

◆ **1. Sexual sin is serious because it damages my spiritual soul.**

◆ *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul." 1 Peter 2:11, NIV. (not, "which can get you sick or diseased")*

◆ Why would God, when singling out just 10 memorable steps for all humankind to follow in order to live full, satisfying, God-praising lives –include one on sexual fidelity. Isn't it, as we are so often told, the most basic and natural instinct to engage in? "Does not every species have both distinct male and female counterparts that are instinctively attracted and join to procreate (a scientific norm)? So why shouldn't human offspring experiment with such natural things?" it is asked. Grocery store magazines

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recommend adultery to their readers as fun, healthy, and life-enhancing, like buying a new shade of lipstick or vacationing in the Caribbean. But God is telling us that it is the opposite that is true. We're going to look at why.

◆The thing we need to understand is that persons are more than mere animals. Every human person has a spirit, a moral being made in the image of God himself. You are a spiritual being. So is the person next to you. So are the people in the photographs on the internet. So is your girlfriend. She is not just a creature. She is a soul! For animals mating goes little beyond instinct. But for humans the *same* act can produce a sense of peace and fulfillment, or a deep sense of shame, and guilt depending on the context and who their partner is. Dr. Frank Pittman, expert on sexuality and marriage, author of a book on infidelity, reports that in 37 years of practice as a therapist he has encountered only 2 cases of first marriages ending in divorce in which adultery was not involved. No person wants to be taken lightly. Even “cheaters” don’t want to be cheated on. To humans, sex too is by definition more than physical. It represents commitment or the lack thereof. Trust or the lack thereof. It is an act that we feel in our spirit saying this person is dedicated to me, this person is dependable for me, attached to me -or not.

◆To God it's also more than physical. The Bible says, “What God has joined together...” It is clear from scripture that the mystery of marriage involves something God does *to* us. Even to people

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who don't recognize him! The bible distinguishes between holy and unholy sex. Holy sex is that which takes place between a husband and a wife in fulfillment of their marital relationship. Unholy sex is everything else.

◆ *"Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life." Proverbs 6:25, 26, NIV.*

◆ "Life" here is nephesh, "soul".

◆ So in summary so far, the reason adultery is such a hot button prohibition, and conversely, why Loving Persons is such a serious positive and healthy command is because, *people and sexual activity are spiritual and sacred in nature.* Physical human love is designed by God for the context of spiritual human love. Only there can it be harnessed for beauty. That's what we mean then in calling this commandment the "Love Persons" step.

◆ Lust on the other hand, is never about caring for the other person. It's purely about me and my getting. And adultery is by definition not-caring about that sacredness of the other marriage partner.

◆ **2. What is the command to love whole persons, and therefor reserve all sex for holy marriage, NOT saying?**

◆ A. The Heidelberg puts it in Q **109...**

◆ *Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery? A. We are temples of the Holy*

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Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy. That is why God forbids all unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires, and whatever may incite someone to them.

◆ So Ed **Sheeran's** hit single and a ton of rap, and a good portion of county fit in there. That High School girl's low blouse fits the category of the seventh commandment even if she hasn't noticed. According to Jesus these all stem from the same sin-root.

◆ Someone will reason, well if lust is adultery of the heart, and all of these things are part of that sin, then I'm already a sexual sinner, I may as well do the real thing too. Don't listen to this unholy reasoning! It's like saying "I'm already bleeding. I might as well go ahead and cut myself some more with this here razor." Don't be a fool. Get a bandage! If you've cut yourself on any of these, go to Jesus for healing. He wants to heal you! Confess it and agree with him and he will forgive and start the cleansing process! (1John:9)

◆ Jesus is not teaching that lust and adultery are the same thing. He is teaching that they have the same sin-root. Both come from the same sinful heart. Both lead to the same damage, but are not equally damaging. If another man dreams about your wife that would indicate his need for God's cleansing. However it may have little affect on you. But if he sleeps with your wife that is going to affect you, and your kids, and the stability of homes in

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American culture, and the degree to which later adult children can conceive of trustworthiness in others, or even their longterm surety that they are really lovable –that’s where actual infidelity and divorce takes families. Nobody wins when a marriage dissolves.

- ◆ There’s all kinds of other fallout from sexual sin: children burdened by divided homes and custody, divided attention, added family tensions, embarrassment, shame, not to mention more than 1 million sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are acquired every day worldwide.
- ◆ So lets not justify an affair as no more destructive than the thought of an affair. The Bible does not teach that all sins are equal, only that any sin equally disqualifies us and makes us culpable before the holiness of God.
- ◆ B. There is another misconception. That part about chopping of your hand, or gouging out your eye (v29-30) –what's that about? Some people think that the material/physical world is lesser than the spiritual, that God is anti-physical pleasure, and that to be godly we must be anti-physical pleasure. That physically pleasing things are automatically evil or sinful. Hold the phone! Jesus is also not teaching the inferiority of physical life or the ungodliness of delight. Whose idea was sex in the first place? Is not God the inventor? “Yeah God!”

◆ *“Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving doe, a graceful deer.*

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Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?" Proverbs 5:18-20, NLT.

◆ God made the human body. God designed our senses and the reality of pleasure. The Psalmist says that there are a thousand pleasures at the right hand of God! (Ps.16) In his sermon on the Mount, when Jesus mentions giving up your eye rather than lust, he is not teaching us to hurt our bodies for the sake of holiness. Hurting your body may keep you from *participating* in a given sin, but he knows it doesn't keep your heart from *wanting* to, which has the same root. Jesus is using exaggeration to remind us how utterly sacred marriage is. Now if marriage is sacred, it is certainly beautiful and pleasurable!

◆ C. What we're dealing with in the Love-Persons command is a wide range of things that keep us from genuine, committed, godly and satisfying relationships. Relationships that treat people as whole, sacred, spiritual persons. Any form of sexual sin is treating a person (even myself) like a mere body, not a sacred person made in the image of God! You are not a mere body. You are a sacred person.

◆ Maybe you avoid relating with a **difficult spouse** by fantasizing about somebody else in inappropriate ways. This is God's call to you to buckle down and work toward loving whole persons. Quit merely enduring such a lesser life.

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- ◆ Maybe you are keenly aware of the fact that we live in a society that idolizes sexual appeal, in which beauty means power. And so you are too attached to the need to appear desirable yourself. So **you're putting it out there**. You are way more sacred than that.
- ◆ Maybe you find yourself **flirting** inappropriately to kind of prove to yourself that you've got something worth wanting. (And you do, and you are! God wants you to know this.) But there is a better way.
- ◆ Maybe you struggle with sexual **addictions** that arose from deep loneliness and insignificance, or abuse when younger.
- ◆ Maybe you struggle with **homosexual** feelings, or gender confusion.
- ◆ Listen closely. These are all very real feelings, and very painful struggles, and often unfairly thrown upon us. Yet none of these is essentially different. In every setting, those who want to follow God can find themselves also desiring and feeling things that God says are not his good will. All of them are equally temptations to find wholeness outside God's protective boundaries.
- ◆ D. Please bear in mind that feelings and desires are never the basis for truth and righteousness. We should note too that marriage in itself does not solve the problems of temptations, attractions to others, or preclude us from lust or adultery. These things are spiritual choices married and unmarried people have to

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make repeatedly throughout life. So again, all of humanity is in the same boat when we face God's seventh word of life. The command to genuinely love whole persons as God designed us is something we shall all need the power of God in our lives to fulfill.

◆ Remember this very important thing: in whatever fashion you find yourself drawn beyond the holy limitations of God's design... know that God desires to bless you, to heal you, and forgive you. That is why he sent his son. He does not despise you, and he is able to restore you. Run to him. Run from every form of unholy sexuality because every form except holy sex is ultimately destructive. Each of us is open to believing God in faith on this, or rejecting his wisdom.

◆ *HC108: What does the seventh commandment teach us? That God condemns all unchastity, and that therefore we should thoroughly detest it and live decent and chaste lives, within or outside of the holy state of marriage.*

◆ **Conclusion:** By now you are surely aware that on the internet there are literally billions of people exposing themselves for all the world to see. What does that tell us? 1) That the human person is desperately in need of being loved in whole, and holy ways. That we all want to be desired and appreciated as a valuable person, not just a body. Sexual attraction is arguably the most powerful impulse we know, so it's easy to look there to fill the emptiness inside. 2) It just isn't working for us! A little porn is never enough. Another affair, another husband, or

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whatever it is -doesn't fill our emptiness. The ache and the longing are always just around the corner. But listen, there is an answer to our ache. We were, everyone of us, meant to be loved by God himself. And we are.

◆ *Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son. Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! Eph 1:4-7 msg*