

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 2)

The New People of God

Study 3 – The Lustful Heart

Introduction

It is a sad but true fact that we live in a sex-saturated world. True, because today more than ever, we (and our children!) are surrounded by and have easy access to images that range from the alluring to the pornographic. True, because despite decades of arguing for women's rights, women are still objectified and their bodies treated as merchandise in the public domain; women seen as things to be ogled at or used rather than as people to be respected. True, because our so-called enlightenment and freedom has taught us that anything goes, that purity is an outmoded value from a bygone age and that casual sex is OK as long as it is safe (i.e. risk free to the body and without consequence). Sad, because in our sex-saturated society we have all but lost the true meaning and value of God's good gift of sex. Sad, because of the high relational and emotional cost that comes as the price tag for our sexual 'freedom'. Sad, because our own indifference to or worse still indulgence of the sexual values of our age are sowing a destructive harvest for the generation that will follow. Sad, above all, because even within the church of Jesus Christ, purity is under challenge, and many fall prey to the spirit of the age.

What is also true and what Matthew 5:27-30 makes crystal clear is that impurity and sexual immorality are not new problems, either within the world or within the church. The world may be different and more sophisticated, but the heart remains the same. And as Jesus makes absolutely clear the problem of impurity and immorality starts in the heart and it is in the heart that the problem must ultimately be resolved.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:27-30

1. What did God's Law say about adultery? (see Exodus 20:14)

8. What does Jesus mean when he speaks of 'plucking out an eye' or 'cutting of a hand'? What do these phrases teach us about our attitude to lust and sexual immorality?

9. What warning does Jesus give to those who won't take the call to sexual purity seriously?

Read Job 31:1-12

10. What light does this passage cast on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:27-30?

11. What connection does Job draw between our eyes and our hearts?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

12. What reasons does this passage give for the pursuit of sexual purity?

13. What does this passage teach us about our responsibility for sexual purity?

