

27. Simple commands for serious issues

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When people see a husband and wife stay in their marriage for more than 20 years, they say, "Wow!" Having a long lasting marriage became rare due to people's own selfish desires and temptations from the completely immoral society.

You and I cannot turn TV channels without running into some sort of sexually related comments and scenes from sitcoms, shows, and late night programs, including commercials. What does a cheeseburger have to do with a half naked woman in a very suggestive posture? I don't get it.

When the ancient Israelis were so much into the pagan idolatry that included a lot of illicit sexual activities as a part of their idol worship, prophet Jeremiah was prophesying to them as he was prompted by the Spirit of the Lord:

Jeremiah 6:15 *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the Lord.*

Doesn't it describe what we are facing here in America? People aren't even ashamed or blush about the things they do or say.

Here are some horrible statistics: Globally, porn is a \$97 billion industry, according to Kassia Wosick, assistant professor of sociology at New Mexico State University. At present, between \$10 and \$12 billion of that comes from the United States alone. Every 30 minutes, a porno movie is made in the US. There are 68 million daily pornographic search engine requests. That is 25% of total search engine requests. Out of 100 visitors to pornographic sites, 72 of them are male and 28 of them are female. Porn addiction has led to 40% of the sex addicts lose their spouses; 58% suffer considerable financial losses; and 1/3 lose their jobs, because either they use their work computers or do this during their work hours.

Sanctity of marriage was reinterpreted by the US Supreme Court that now gays and lesbians can legally marry. It might be legal in the eyes of the law of the land, but not in the eyes of God. And what He says matters at the end, not the 9 justices of the Supreme Court, because those judges themselves will be judged by the Lord. Our God is the Ultimate Judge of the universe.

With His piercing simplicity, Jesus makes it clear that marriage requires absolute faithfulness and personal relationship requires absolute truthfulness.

A. ADULTERY STARTS NOT IN THE BED, BUT IN THE HEAD

Matthew 5:27-28 *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

Unlike many pastors and Bible teachers who tiptoe around explosive social issues, Jesus walked resolutely through the minefields of marital purity and personal integrity. The shrapnel of dissatisfaction, disharmony, and divorce has struck marriages in every generation with devastating effects.

Jesus is not saying that the act of adultery, and adultery in the heart are the same thing. Jesus' point is that they are both sin, and both prohibited by the command-

ment against adultery. He reveals the source of sin that is a human heart and teaches us that adultery starts in the head, not in the bed only. That means lustful thought equals adultery to God.

We have an enemy spy inside of us who helps the enemy outside of us. This enemy is satan and his cohorts. Who is this spy inside of us? It's our flesh, a.k.a. our carnal desires. We should not allow our flesh to be fed with anymore new filthy materials through our eyes.

Not very long ago, I was talking with a man who was addicted to pornography. He was arguing with me about the definition of adultery. I told him that I don't care what kind or how many different definitions he comes up with, the only definition that matters to me is what Jesus said in these two verses.

Then, many believers would say, "I am doomed. I've committed adulteries because I had lustful thoughts in my heart." No worries, that's where the forgiveness and grace of God come in. If this is your situation, you are earnestly asking the Lord to forgive you for your sins, and He will. But for that man, he was looking for a loophole from the Word of God. He ain't gonna find one. He will not be forgiven until he comes to the Lord with a true surrendered heart.

We may not be able to control passing thoughts or feelings because of our sinful nature and the things we are surrounded by, but we certainly can decide where our hearts and minds will rest. The great reformer Martin Luther said, "We cannot stop a bird flying over our heads. But we can certainly stop it from making a nest on our heads." It is our choice.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

Listen, those who have addiction, whether it is sexual, alcohol, drug, gambling, or whatever, cannot use their addiction as an excuse to continue in your sins. I've heard a man saying, "I cannot help myself. You don't understand what I go through, pastor. My addiction is too strong." I don't buy that story. That person CHOOSES to give in, according to the apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Did Paul say, "No temptation?" or did he say, "No temptation with the exception of yours?" No temptation of any addiction can overtake a person if that person relies on the strength of the Holy Spirit. But many of them would rather make an excuse, because they still want carnal excitements that will lead them to destruction down the road.

B. WHATEVER IT TAKES

Matthew 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

If we know that we are heading into the area where it is booby-trapped with a bomb, what should we do? We should do everything within our power not to get even near there, right? Jesus is using a shocking method to warn us the danger of toying with sins in our lives.

If you have an addiction to pornography from magazines, movies, internet sites, or whatever form or media, you must do the same thing what Jesus tells us to do. Pluck your eyes out, cut your arms. OK, not literally. But do it with the same seriousness.

If you have a subscription of Penthouse, or other porno magazines, cancel the subscription. Forget about the balance of your subscription. God will honor you and bless you for it. Are you stumbling in your walk with Christ because of HBO or other cable channels or going to see 'R' rated movies that show women's nudity? Cancel it, stop going to see those movies. You might say, "OK Preacher, now you are going too far and becoming a legalistic." Am I? Would you go see that movie if Jesus is sitting next to you? I am sure that you will say, "No." If your answer is "No," why would you watch those movies that contain nudity, obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, and mocking your God in the name of freedom of expression, when you have the Holy Spirit who is God Himself living in you? You need to repent from your carnal desires and turn to God.

Ever since Steve Jobs of Apple invented the iPhone in 2007, it opened a brand new gateway to get information fast. We now are in the age of smart phone. I don't believe that Steve Jobs and his software engineers were hoping that people would use their smart phones to get into pornography, but that is how many people use their smart phones to view porno images. Before 2007, before the iPhone came out, before the broadband internet, people with porno addiction had to go to XXX shops to see those filthy things. Now everything is at their fingertips.

Hear me, please. If you are struggling with pornography; you are getting those images through your smart phone, as Jesus said, cut it off. Get a dumb phone that you can only make phone calls and get text messages without porno images. Do something drastic to help yourself walk closer with your Savior and Lord Jesus.

Jesus simply stresses the point that a believer must be willing to sacrifice to be obedient and to please the Father in heaven. This is the one thing many are unwilling to do, and that is why they remain trapped in sin, or never come to Jesus. They never get beyond a vague wish to be better.

Ladies, you are not off the hook. If you are reading romance novels or watching soap operas that are filled with illicit sexual relationships and are replacing your husband with your romantic fantasized man in your head, you need to get away from those books and soap operas. Or if you are flirting with some other man in the way you don't want your husband to know, you are committing adultery in God's eyes. You need to repent and turn to God also. By the way, according to the statistics I quoted at the beginning of this teaching, 28% of women visit porno sites often and 17% of women say that they, too, struggle with pornography addiction.

C. THE ISSUE OF DIVORCE

Matthew 5:31-32 "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

The subject of adultery logically introduces a possible consequence – divorce.

The devil knows that once he destroys the bonding between husband and wife through adultery, the rest is easy. In our social structure, family is the grass root, bottom line basic unit. Every infrastructure of society is hinged on the family unit. It is no wonder why our society is going down the drain, because our families are breaking apart easier than staying together.

We see the word “*sexual immorality*.” The Greek word for this is “*porneia*.” We get our word ‘*pornography*’ from it. This sexual immorality includes illicit sexual intercourse, adultery that is a sexual relationship outside of marriage, fornication that is a sexual relationship before the marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, incest, and, of course, constant and willful viewing of pornography.

What does God think about divorce? Let’s hear it from His own lips.

Malachi 2:16 “For the Lord God of Israel says, “That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

Mark 10:9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Jesus teaches more fully on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19, but here we see the intent of Jesus: getting back to the intent of the law, instead of allowing it to be used as easy permission for divorce.

D. PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Matthew 5:33-37 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

The subject of divorce, naturally, takes us back to our wedding vows, where we promised to stay with our spouse “for better or for worse.” Because we don’t take God’s Word seriously, some of us are willing to go through a divorce in spite of our wedding vows in the presence of God and many witnesses.

This phrase “*do not swear at all*” does not forbid solemn, official oaths, but only oaths made in common speech. Such oath-taking suggests that a person’s normal word cannot be trusted. God’s law says, “Do not lie under oath”; Jesus was telling His followers not to lie under any circumstances.

Honesty should guide every word we speak. Elements of dishonesty permeate all of us, because of sin, our characters are damaged and in need of God’s transforming work in our lives.

Faithfulness and honesty are two of the main character qualities at the foundation of the good life in God’s kingdom. That is why Jesus turned the focus of His Sermon on the Mount to these two critical issues, which continue to touch our lives and communities today.

Adultery and dishonesty poison the church. And a poisonous church poisons the world. Such results might be startling to those of us who do not mind dabbling in

lust or who sometimes cross the line into dishonesty and deception. As members of Christ's body, even our private thoughts and secret deceptions weaken God's people in the world. Our commitment to faithfully follow Christ as individuals will help God's people as a whole.

Before we close this study with the applications, I must say this. If you went through a divorce without a biblical ground and now you are remarried. Ask the Lord to forgive your sin and remain in your current marriage faithfully. The Lord will honor your marriage.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Jesus reveals the source of sin that is a human heart and teaches us that adultery starts in the head, not in the bed only.

2) Let us seek sexual and verbal purity, committing ourselves to Christ's high standard every moment of every day.

3) The power of our sins and the temptations we face reside in the secrecy of our hearts. As soon as we make the intention of our sins and temptations known to someone we trust, they lose their power. This is why having accountability is very important. But our enemy still waits very patiently for next opportune time.

Luke 4:13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.