

***Holy People,  
Spirited Living:  
Pure, Not Lusting***

**Matthew 5:1-12, 27-30  
1 Cor 6:12-20**

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In 1999, local fishermen discovered that tuna were running near Cape Cod. You didn't have to be a professional to catch them; just a sharp hook and some bait. Rumor had it that Japanese buyers were willing to pay \$50,000 for a large blue-fin. As a result, many ignored Coast Guard warnings and headed out to sea in small, unequipped boats.

On September 23, the Christi Anne, a 19-foot boat, capsized while doing battle with a tuna. That same day, the 27-foot boat Basic Instinct suffered the same fate, while Official Business, a 28-footer, was swamped after it hooked onto a 600-pound tuna. The tuna simply pulled it underwater.

These fishermen underestimated the power of the fish they were trying to catch.

Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham* (Zondervan, 2005), pp. 59-60;

Today I want to talk about something much more powerful in the lives of millions of ordinary Canadians - **much** more powerful than any 600 lb tuna. It is a force that God created at the beginning of time, one created very, very good. But one that has, like so much else in creation, become twisted by sin.

I'm speaking of the attractive pull, the magnetic lure and sexual attraction between man and woman. This pull is God's gift for the bonding of the marriage covenant.

In the context of commitment, of trust, of given and shared love, the sexual bond joins woman and man, as one, on the deepest possible of levels. And, like with the rest of what He had created, God looked at sex and "saw that it was very good."

Sin has distorted that deep attraction in deadly ways. Today, as we conclude our summer series on the seven deadly sins, we're faced with the sin of sex removed from the context of marriage; removed from the context of commitment; removed from the context of devotion and care.

Stripped of those things, we are left with **lust**.

One of the seven deadly sins.

And we're going to contrast that to the blessing which Jesus speaks into the lives of his disciples, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*"

It's **lust** of the flesh

vs **purity** of heart.

As old fashioned and as plain as that.

And deeply, deeply important to our spiritual survival.

In 1 Cor 6 Paul declares "...but I will not be dominated by anything." (v12)

I don't think we're too far off the mark in saying that sexuality is one force that dominates our culture. Everything from toothpaste to cars is sold with sex appeal. That three letter word is almost a "must have" on the cover of grocery store tabloids. And what used to be reserved for late night television seems to show up in prime time without any shame.

Ours is a sexually obsessed culture.

And we pass it off with words like "love" and "making love".

But it isn't.

It is, very basically, lust.

Friends - don't be deceived.

And don't allow it to dominate your life.

Instead, strive to be dominated by a desire for purity in the eyes of God.

One of the dangerous deceptions floating around our culture today is that our bodies are simply a matter of flesh and blood;

that what we do with it carries consequences only for today.

that what you do with your body has no consequence for your soul.

The Bible, from first page to last, never condones such a view. Instead, the Scripture views humanity as a body/soul unit, one whole person.

The soul is important.

So is the body - eternally important.

Both are important to God. As is how we care for them.

What we do with our bodies affects the health of our soul. And what we do to our soul can definitely affect the health of our body. Including sexual activity. The Bible reminds us that it is an act that is not just “out there.” It is not without consequences.

When you allow yourself to get involved sexually outside of the covenant bond of marriage, you are committing a temple violation - a violation against the very space that God's Holy Spirit wants to inhabit. In some deep and mysterious way, says 1 Corinthians 6, your body is a “member of Christ himself.” (v.15)

Violate the boundaries of intimacy that the Creator put in place, and it is a direct violation against Christ himself.

The sex act is, in a very real way, a deep act, a **spiritual** act. Involving a very sacred vessel - your body.

Your sexuality - very powerful, and very **spiritual**.

Honour it as such.

Protect it as such.

And don't let the thoughtless, dangerous and even deadly lies that float around our culture tell you differently.

Like the misguided attitude within today's dating culture that feels it necessary to include sex as an almost expected part of the routine;

part of courting;

turning God's plan and blue print on its ear – to the pain and detriment of everyone involved.

Believers, don't buy the lie, either, that tries to convince you that sex is a simple act, and has no lasting consequences; a recreational activity on the level of, say, a round of golf or a swim at the beach.

If you have suffered the pain of rape or sexual abuse you know what a horrible load of garbage that statement is.

Sexual indiscretion has had devastating, life-changing consequences on countless lives. That's why I am so grateful for the powerful, healing ministry of the *Survivors' Support Ministry Of Eastern Ontario*.

The deadly sin of lust - acting out on erotic desires without any thought for the consequences.

Don't believe that it is love. It isn't.

Girls, when some guy tries to tell you to go all the way with him because he loves you, don't fall for it. Guys, don't pass out such a cheap line.

That's not love.

That's lust. And there's nothing pure, nothing godly, about it.

It never builds. It only tears down. And it only takes - never gives.

Only looks after self, not the other.

How different from that which it so vainly tries to counterfeit - love.

For while lust takes, love gives.

What is true, pure, godly love?

It is the **commitment** to put the needs of the one you love **first**.

It is the same attitude that Jesus has towards his people,

the attitude that brought Him to earth to win our salvation.

It is the willingness to sacrifice your own rights for the sake of your beloved.

It is the determination to look for the well-being of the other person.

It desires the very best for the other person.

The Bible's word for that is *agape*.  
That is love in its purest form. Holy love. Christ-imitating love.

*Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.*

Cultivate purity by practicing that kind of love.

Hear the Word of God:

"The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." (1 Cor 6:13)

Too often people become sexually active, even promiscuous, because they're trying to fill up an empty spot inside themselves, a restless spot. They try to quiet it and fill it with the physical rush of the sex act.

Friends, it won't work.

We CANNOT fill the empty spot inside, the restless spot, with a physical rush of any sort. Inner restlessness or disquiet is best soothed by a deepened relationship with the Lord. Not violating His will.

Trying to fill the inner emptiness, the longing for intimacy, with sexual activity only makes the emptiness **worse**, and the loneliness deeper.

Oprah Winfrey interviewed several individuals with sex addictions in February 2006. During one interview, Oprah spoke with a woman named Amy. Amy said, "It's not about sex with me. It's about the intimacy, or being close to someone, or feeling needed... I'm trying to think [of the] men that I've slept with, and I honestly can't remember—just 70 to 75, probably somewhere around there.

"I'm tired of being alone. I don't want to be this way. I want to feel good enough within myself to not feel like I need to do this. I want to change. I want things to be better."

Sex Talk," drudgereport.com

"Oprah's

Acts of lust never complete you, never fill or fulfill you.  
They leave you empty, or worse.

It can kill your life. Did you ever notice how it seems to be one of the Devil's favorite weapons to take down a major leader in society, and also in the Church?

Destroying them.

Destroying their work.

Yes - Lust is deadly.

According to The National Center For Missing and Exploited Children, reported incidents of sexual exploitation have risen dramatically in the last five years. In 1998, the Center received 4,573 reports. In 2003 the number of incidents rose to 81,987.

Van Morris, Mt. Washington, Kentucky; source: "Child Exploitation Reports Soar" USA Today (2-27-04)

N2H2, an Internet content filtering company, reports that Internet sites dealing with pornographic material are multiplying exponentially.

The number of porn sites in 1998: 71,831

In 2003: 1.3 million

"IT Figures," www.pe.ag.org (6-27-04)

I believe those two trends are related.  
Lust is a deadly sin.

Friends -

Hear again the beatitude of Jesus:

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

Witness the testimony of one brother in the Lord, NBA Miami Heat basketball star A. C. Green, whose faith and moral stand has been no secret to his teammates. "They respect me and are curious about how I [remain abstinent]. They've asked me privately and thrown questions at me in the locker room."

He told *Sports Illustrated* that he's not immune from sexual temptation. But he maintains his integrity with the help of fellow believers who keep him accountable and focussed on his godly commitment to purity. "I promised God this, and I'm not going to break it."

His actions don't go unnoticed. One of his teammates told the Miami Herald, "You would think of Green as a goody-two-shoes, but to see [his convictions] up close, you realize that's the way you're supposed to live."

Because of his open faith and pure living, Green has had the thrill of leading a teammate to Christ. He's also helped teammates work through specific issues in their lives.

Bonne Steffen, "A. C. Green: Standing Tall," Christian Reader (Jan/Feb 2002), pp.18-25

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.  
Others, too, will come to see God through them and their integrity! And **they** will be blessed!

Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Here's the blunt challenge - Bring home flowers, not a disease.

Recognize that you will stand out as a true odd-ball in our lust-driven society, but stand out, and stall tall for Jesus.

Challenge yourself to the standard of Scripture.  
Challenge each other to that same standard!

Parents, challenge your kids to that standard.  
The standard of purity, for Jesus' sake.

And be careful, please be careful about what your kids are exposed to in the media - it is **SO** powerful. It shapes them unconsciously. And stows into their mind the great lie that sex is fun with little risk, and few consequences; fun and expected; fun that demands no commitment.

Watch what your kids take in.  
Because for them, too - blessed are the pure in heart.

And for yourself - Take Jesus at his literal word when it comes to combatting lust.

If you get into situations that prove to get out of control, **don't** let yourself get into such situations!

One person shared with me how he put an internet porn filter on his computer, the sort that parents can put on their computer to block the flow of filth from their children. It required a password. He randomly entered some keystrokes, copied and pasted it to his clipboard, and re-entered that same sequence in the "confirm password" box. To this day he has no idea what the keying sequence is. And now he is protected from his own urges that sneak up once in a while. This brother is practising Matthew 5:27-30! Awesome!

Share your struggle with another believer, who can hold you accountable and walk with you.

Watch where you allow yourself to be alone with people of the opposite gender.

Combat the evil with doing good. Cultivate agape love - Focus on deliberately giving of yourself in a way that really is noticeable, to others.

And, don't forget about the body-soul connection. Remind yourself of it again and again. Purity in your body affects the purity of your soul. Purity in your body **will** affect your ability to pray, to sense the presence of God, to feel the peace that he promises to believers. There's a direct connection.

And as we honour God with our bodies, our souls will be strengthened.  
And our communion with Him deepened.  
And our lives enriched.

*For, blessed are the pure in heart. For they WILL see God.*