

LIFEGROUP NOTES: MATTHEW 5:27-32

As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.

Preparing for God's Word

1. How is lust regarded in our society? Why? With what effect?

Read Mt 5:27-32

2. According to Jesus, how might we show that we have an adulterous heart even if we avoid physical, technical adultery?
3. Why is abusing God's good gift of sex so serious that Jesus warns us of hell? What does abusing sex in these ways reveal of our attitude to other people? And what does it say about our attitude to God?
4. If sexual sin begins in the mind, what steps can we take to deal with these issues in our thought life (5:29-30)? What sacrificial steps are you taking to avoid sexual sin? Are there some additional steps that you need to take?
5. Jesus' words on divorce in vv.31-32 may raise lots of questions in our minds, but those questions may not be what He is addressing here (we would need to study other passages for the answers). The big point, in this context, is that if we divorce our partner without adequate grounds – especially if our goal is to marry someone we now prefer – our actions are tantamount to adultery even if we seek to hide behind legal niceties. It's all part of Jesus' message that there's more than one way to have an adulterous heart. So sticking with that key message: what can married people do to protect their hearts from wandering?
6. Sex in its God-given context – marriage – is a wonderful gift of God. But the temptations to abuse this gift are many, and nearly everyone faces them. How can we help one another to honour God in this area of our lives? Is there anyone with whom you can share your struggles, and find encouragement? How might you find a suitable accountability partner?
7. Finally, note that Jesus' stern words are aimed at the self-righteous. For broken people who know they have sinned sexually, Jesus has nothing but kindness, forgiveness and grace, even while He reminds them to turn from the sin that has brought them so much hurt (see, for example, John 8:1-11). Have you learned to receive this grace from Jesus when you need it? And are you learning to share grace and kindness with those who have hurt others – and themselves – through sexual sin? How can we help each other to grow in compassion and grace?

Responding in Prayer

Thank God for His mercy given to us in Christ. Pray that we may be a community of wisdom, love and grace where we support one another in living lives of sexual purity. Pray that those who struggle, and those who have failed, may find love, courage and hope among us. And pray that we will experience God's good laws not as a burden, but as joyful freedom.

Eddie Larkman, February 2017