

# Dealing Drastically With Sin

## Series on "Sermon On The Mount"

One of the first things Jimmy Carter did when he became President of the United States in 1977, was to call all his senior staff together and talk to them about personal morality. The United States had been through a terrible time with the Watergate scandal. There had been lies, deceit and cover ups that went right to the Oval Office at the White House. People were not sure what to make of this President who wasn't afraid to declare his faith in Christ. This was a man who had said in an interview with Playboy magazine "I've looked on a lot of women with lust. I've committed adultery in my heart many times." The press didn't quite know what to make of that. What Jimmy Carter was doing was referring to the words of Jesus. This is what Jesus said.

***"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."***  
**(Matthew 5:27 – 30 NIV)**

This teaching from Jesus follows on from what we have been looking at in the last couple of weeks. In the scripture before this, we read of Jesus saying that if you have been angry enough to want to kill someone, then you are no different from the person who commits murder. If you have called someone a fool or an idiot, and have assassinated their character, your heart is no different from a person who sticks a knife into someone they don't like. Now Jesus takes it all a step further. If you have deliberately entertained and dwelt on thoughts of sleeping with someone you are not married to, in God's eyes that's the same as having done it. Jesus is not referring to a passing attraction to someone of the opposite sex. He's talking about the deliberate harbouring of desire for an illicit relationship. In a word, lust. And by the way women, this is not just for men. Women can be consumed by lust as well. Women can have just as much a desire for an adulterous relationship as a man can. So Jesus is saying that it's not just the outward act of adultery. It's the lustful desire for a sexual relationship outside of marriage that is sin. Jesus goes beyond the Ten Commandments to the sinful attitudes that cause us to break them.

### **The Pornography Epidemic**

If ever we needed to hear the word of God on this, it's now. Adulterous relationships are happening all around us, and they are happening amongst Christians as well. And so much of this is fueled by the epidemic of internet pornography, which for most of us, is just two clicks of a mouse away. Donna Rice Hughes, is President of "Enough Is Enough", an organization that is trying to make the internet more family friendly. In July 2010 she spoke in Washington, giving the most up to date and accurate figures I could find about the extent of this demonic corruption of the good gift of sex God has given us. Here are the figures she gave in 2010. I need to say that getting accurate figures on this is almost impossible.

**12%**

Percentage of total websites that contain pornography.

**25%**

Percentage of search engine requests related to pornography.

**28,000**

Number of internet users viewing porn, every second.

**75 million**

Average monthly unique visitors to adult websites between 2005 and 2008

**43%**

Percentage of all internet users who view pornographic material online

**75%**

Percentage of people who "accidentally" viewed a pornographic site

**81%**

Percentage of Americans who believe federal laws against internet obscenity should be "vigorously enforced"

**266**

Number of new pornographic websites that appear online, every day

**3,000**

Approximate number of English-language websites that distribute child pornography

**1 in 7**

Number of "youths" who report being solicited for sex online

**11**

Age at which the average child is first exposed to adult material

**7 in 10**

Number of children who've inadvertently viewed online pornography

**1,536**

Number of sites featuring child pornography in 2008, according to the Internet Watch Foundation

**58%**

Percentage of those sites that are housed in the United States

**48%**

Percentage of kindergarten and first grade students who have reported seeing online content that "made them feel uncomfortable," according to a 2008 study by the Rochester Institute of Technology

**34%**

Percentage of teenage girls who've shared photos or physical descriptions of themselves online, compared to 15 percent of teenage boys

**\$89**

Amount spent on internet pornography, every second

**\$13 billion**

Estimated revenue generated by pornography in the U.S. in 2006, including \$2.84 billion from online pornography

**\$97 billion**

Approximate total worldwide revenue generated by pornography annually, as of 2006

### **Dealing With The Cause**

I admire what the "Enough is Enough" organisation is trying to do in cleaning up the internet, but it's not going to deal with the problem of the heart. In Jesus day Jewish men expected married Jewish women to wear head coverings to prevent lust. In some Muslim countries women are expected to wear the burqa or the niqab. Do you think that stops the problem of lust? Jesus placed the responsibility of lust on the person doing the lusting. This is what he said. ***"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."*** (Matthew 5:29 – 30 NIV) Those of you that want to interpret the scriptures literally are going to have a hard job obeying this scripture! In fact if you do gouge your right eye out, or cut your hand off, you will still probably have a lustful heart after you have done it, for you could still see out of the other eye. And even if you lost both eyes, what are you going to do about the lustful pictures you have in your head?

The message Jesus is giving is that we have to deal drastically with the sin of the heart. We need a transformation of the heart from the inside out. A transformation of the heart means seeing women not as sex objects, but as people, created in the image of God. A transformed

heart is not consumed with sexual gratification. A transformed heart is a disciplined heart that takes every thought into captivity. The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians **"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."** (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV) A transformed heart is a heart that has made a choice to dwell on that which brings us closer to Christ. **"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."** (Philippians 4:8 NIV) You and I can choose what we think about. We can choose what we dwell on. We can choose what we read. We can choose what we watch. God will never take the ability to choose away from us.

A few years back, Lyn and I went on a four wheel drive holiday in New Zealand. We followed back country tracks to old gold mines, forded rivers, drove through swamps and drove up the sides of mountains so steep we could hardly see over the front of the truck. One of the places we went was on a track that came out on to a beach. Flowing on to that beach were three rivers, two of which we had to cross. We were following a guide book that had instructions about the track. The guide book said in bold letters "Do not attempt to ford the third river. The bottom is made of quicksand. At the bottom of that river are several vehicles of people who have tried to cross it. Beware of the quicksand!" We crossed the first two rivers without any problem, but as we were driving down this remote beach approaching the third river we hit a patch of soft sand. I could feel the wheels beginning to break through the hard surface of the beach. I already had 4 wheel drive engaged, but I slammed it into reverse and got out of there as fast as I could. I made the choice to get as far away from the danger as I could.

### **Beware The Quicksand!**

Lust is like quicksand. It's sucks us in so quickly. It's addictive. Pornography is addictive. Some studies show that breaking free from an addiction to pornography is as difficult as coming off heroin. This passage of scripture is alerting us to the danger. Jesus is saying to us that we need to take radical and drastic measures to deal with anything that can get a grip on our heart. According to Jesus this sin is so corrosive it can jeopardise our eternal future. We have to deal with it drastically. We have to hate it, crush it, starve it and root it out. If DVD's and movies are corrupting your heart, don't watch them. If magazines are causing your imagination to run riot, don't read them. If pornography on the internet is a powerful magnet for you, install software that blocks you from those sites, and if that doesn't work, gouge out your eye and disconnect from the Internet. Believe it or not, we did manage to live before the days of TV, and the internet.

### **Breaking Free**

Here are some specifics if pornography is getting a grip on your heart.

- **Tell Yourself The Truth**

Acknowledge that this is a spiritual problem that has eternal consequences and requires drastic solutions. This is an addiction you need to break free from. Recognise your vulnerability.

- **Tell Someone Else The Truth**

Do not expect God to cover what you are not willing to uncover. Acknowledge that you need help, and tell someone you trust. Find yourself an accountability partner who will meet with you regularly, pray with you, and ask you the hard questions. **"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed."** (James 5:16 NIV)

- **Take Action**

Most people who are gripped by sin already know what they need to do. They just don't do it. This is the point that Jesus is making when he talks about gouging out eyes and cutting off hands. If your issue is internet pornography, install software on your computer that will block access to suspect websites. There is a programme available you can install that will email a list of every website you visit to your accountability partner. If that doesn't work, stay off the internet altogether until your heart and mind have been completely transformed. It's better to go without TV and the internet than to go to hell.

I've shared this before at Westlake, but I want to give it to you again, for I have found it so helpful.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS**  
**by Portia Nelson**

**Chapter I**

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk  
I fall in.  
I am lost ... I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes me forever to find a way out.

**Chapter II**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place  
but, it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

**Chapter III**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in ... it's a habit.  
my eyes are open  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

**Chapter IV**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

**Chapter V**

I walk down another street.

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