

# Adultery in the Heart

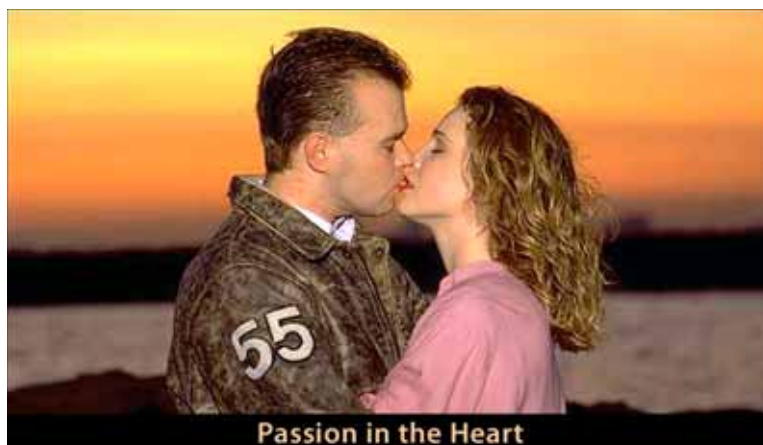
**C**huck Swindoll had been asked to speak in New Orleans at the Super Bowl breakfast in January 1990 by Athletes in Action. He had to change planes en route from Los Angeles to New Orleans. His connecting flight was packed as others were traveling to Super Bowl XXIV also. Pastor Swindoll noticed that the seat behind him was empty - the only one on the plane. He records what happened next.

Only minutes before we backed away from the terminal, one final passenger hurried on board. Her plane had been late in arriving, making it questionable if she could make her New Orleans connection. She did. As she hurried on . . . she immediately broke into a broad smile as her eyes met those of the man sitting next to the seat she would occupy. She didn't simply sit down - she fell into his arms as they kissed, giggled, and embraced for the next ten minutes.

My immediate thought was, "Now there's a happily married couple!" How wrong I was. They were both married . . . but not to each other. Because they sat right behind me, I got the full scoop . . . Their carefully arranged plan was to rendezvous on the plane, then spend the weekend together in New Orleans. Their conversation, mixed with frequent kisses, included . . . comments about the fun they had in front of them, the intimate ecstasy of being together for a couple of nights, along with attending the Super Bowl. Both laughed and joked as they talked about how each other's mate knew nothing of it. I might add here that neither made mention of the possible consequences . . . of depression that was sure to follow, the possibility of unexpected pregnancy . . . Why, of course not! This couple was on fire. Their full focus turned to the delightful time they would have together. They just couldn't talk about anything else.

All the while I'm sitting there in front of them, working on a chapter on sexual temptation, thirty-six inches behind me is a living illustration of lust in action (Swindoll, Chuck. Sanctity of Life. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart. W. Publishing Group. 1998. p. 17-18).

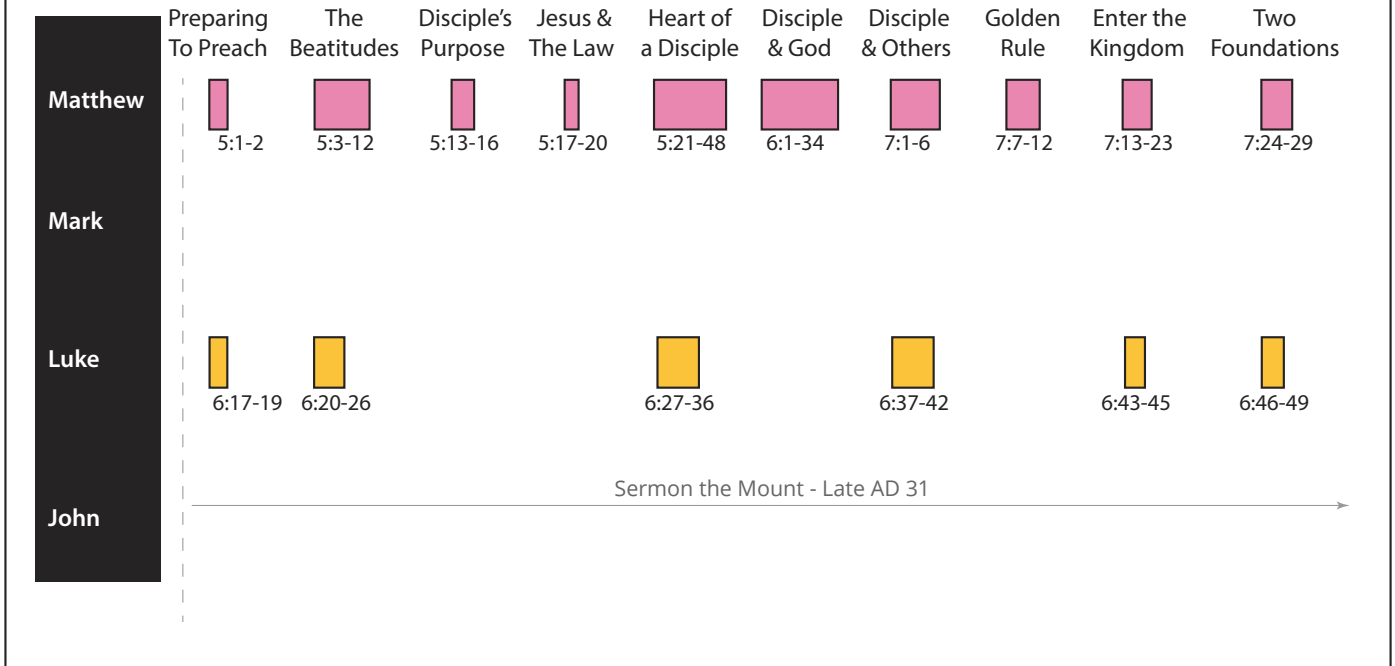
**THE BEGINNING.** The couple had planned for some fun in New Orleans, but they did not know that most likely their relationship would end in emotional pain. Did they know that only three percent of couples involved in extra-marital affairs get married and seventy-five percent of them end in divorce? Those are not very encouraging statistics. Many get divorced in order to marry someone else and do not realize the misery that awaits them.



Few couples plan to have an affair. I have yet to meet someone who admitted that on his/her wedding day he/she wanted to later have an affair. Affairs usually start unexpectedly. The emotions of one husband were fanned into flames of lust when his secretary got too close. When she leaned over, her hair brushed against his face. It was not long after that that they were kissing each other. It was unplanned and unexpected. Emotions, emotions!

# Life and Heart of Jesus

## Sermon on the Mount



**YOU HAVE HEARD.** Jesus' next topic in the Sermon on the Mount is adultery. He has been talking about relationships between different people, and now He moves into the closest of relationships - husband and wife.

It is common for husbands and wives to wonder if someone else might make a better spouse. It is also common for men and women to think about sex with someone else. Some years ago, I had been counseling a husband and wife. After a while, the wife mailed a note to my home. In the note she revealed that she had been dreaming about having a sexual relationship with me. As a result, the counseling sessions with her and her husband ended. She did not realize that dreaming about me was sin and would displease the Lord. She needed to be reminded of Jesus' words,

You have heard that it was said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (NASB) Matt. 5:27-28

to the seventh commandment when He says that one can commit adultery without performing the act - just thinking about it. He used two key Greek words to send this message to His listeners.

The first Greek word He used was BLEPO. This word is translated as "looks" and He uses it in the present tense active participle. This means that Jesus did not just say if a man "looks" at a woman he commits adultery. The tense of the verb reveals that Jesus was referring to someone who was looking and looking at a woman. There is an old song that goes something like this,

Standing on a corner watching all the girls go by  
 Standing on a corner watching all the girls go by  
 Brother you don't know a nicer occupation  
 Matter of fact, neither do I  
 Than standing on a corner watching all the girls  
 Watching all the girls, watching all the girls go by  
 (by Dean Martin)

Jesus quotes Exodus 20:14 and Deut. 5:18 and then adds

But that may not be adultery unless there are thoughts

of having sex. One can watch and imagine what it would be like to love another person. Today, we do not have to stand on the corner and “watch the girls go by.” Any man or woman can sit in front of the television or computer monitor and watch all day. Reportedly, seventy to eighty percent of pornography watchers are involved in some form of self gratification while they are there. They are looking and looking, dreaming, and sinning.

Jesus’ second Greek word was EPITHUMEO. It can be translated as “long for, excited, impulse, and heart set upon.” In our English Bible it is translated as “lust.” Notice the meaning of this word. Lust involves “longing” and “excitement.” It is very accurate. Jesus is talking about someone who is looking and lusting for another person. This does not necessarily have to include sex. It can be a strong emotional attachment. Men are usually sexually attracted and women are often emotionally attracted first with sexual desire coming later. Strong emotional attachment is sin too!

**FROM THE ANCIENTS.** In 2 Samuel 13 we read that a man called Amnon saw a woman - his sister - and lusted after her.

*Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her. Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her. (NASB) 2 Sam. 13:1-2*

If we continue reading the account, we discover that Amnon finally raped his sister over her protest and was later killed as an act of revenge. It all started by “looking” with his eyes and lusting with his heart. He had noticed that she was “beautiful” and his lust is described as “frustration.” The couple on the plane had been looking and lusting. The pattern is the same - in ancient times or in modern times.

**ATTITUDE OF THE PHARISEES.** When Jesus spoke these words, some of the religious leaders of His day were probably angry. Jewish documents tell us that it was the custom of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel to routinely “look at women.” It is even reported that it was the custom of Rabbi Jochanan to sit by a pool of water while women were bath-

ing. When he was asked why he was doing this, he replied, “I am of the seed of Joseph over whom an evil affection cannot rule.” He made excuses for himself. He apparently did not even think about the feelings of the women.

It was acceptable among the religious leaders to look and to lust. They believed that as long as you did not have sexual contact, everything was okay. But Jesus rejected their teaching when He said, “But I say.”

*... but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (NASB) Matt. 5:27-28*

Jesus placed His authority behind these words. He disagreed with the religious leaders. You see God is not concerned just about our actions. He is concerned about our feelings and attitudes. Wrong feelings and attitudes lead to wrong actions (Matt. 15:19).

**THE SOLUTION.** Jesus’ next statement has been badly misunderstood and twisted by both non-Christians and Christians. Here is His next statement,

*If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. (NASB) Matt. 5:29*

If Jesus literally wanted us to pluck out our right eye in order to avoid sin, then we must pluck out our left one also since we see with both eyes. We are not chameleons who can look in different directions at the same time, one eye looking one way while the other is looking a different way. Our eyes look together. Jesus would have told us to pluck out both if He were speaking literally. If He meant to be literal, then every man and most women would eventually be blind.

No, Jesus’ message is that we are to do whatever we must to avoid sin. Jesus’ next statement is just as serious.

*If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell. (NASB) Matt. 5:30*

We miss the importance of this comment unless we realize that the ancients considered the right hand to be more important than the left. Jesus did not warn them to cut off one of their hands. He warned them to be willing to cut off even the most valued parts of their bodies in order to avoid the sin of adultery. He has figuratively called us to be willing to give up the most valued parts of our bodies in order to avoid sin. His message is clear.

**CONCLUSION.** This has been a serious, colorful, and gruesome picture. But the message is clear. Rather than sitting on the corner watching all the girls go by, or watching all the women or men at the movies, on the television or on your computer screen, or peeking a look at someone, Jesus says it is better to cut off parts of your body in order to avoid sin. His message? Flee sin! Do whatever you must in order to flee!

Job said this,

*I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? (NASB) Job 31:1*

Many men should memorize this verse and recite it daily. Women need to also. The Apostle Paul gave us these words of wisdom,

*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (NASB) Gal. 5:24*

*Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (NASB) Col. 3:5*

If we are followers after Jesus, we should be willing to deny ourselves those things that tempt us to sin. Notice the words in the phrases such as “crucified the flesh” and “consider the members of your earthly body as dead.” We need to deny ourselves. That is the command in the next verse.

*And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. (NASB) Mark 8:34*

Have you wondered what might happen if you do not respond positively to the words of Job, the Apostle Paul, and Jesus? The following from Pastor Swindoll summarizes it well.

**The following is an incomplete list of what you have in store after your immorality is found out.**

- Your mate will experience the anguish of betrayal, shame, rejection, heartache and loneliness. No amount of repentance will soften those blows.
- Your mate can never again say that you are a model of fidelity. Suspicion will rob her or him of trust.
- Your escapade(s) will introduce to your life and your mate’s life the very real probability of a sexually transmitted disease.
- The total devastation your sinful actions will bring to your children is immeasurable. Their growth, innocence, trust, and healthy outlook on life will be severely and permanently damaged.
- The heartache you will cause your parents, your family, and your peers is indescribable.
- The embarrassment of facing other Christians, who once appreciated you, respected you, and trusted you will be overwhelming.
- If you are engaged in the Lord’s work, you will suffer immediate loss of your job and the support of those with whom you worked. The dark shadow will accompany you everywhere . . . and forever. Forgiveness won’t erase it.
- Your fall will give others license to do the same.
- The inner peace you enjoyed will be gone.
- You will never be able to erase the fall from your (and others’) mind. This will remain indelibly etched on your life’s record, regardless of your later return to your senses.
- The name of Jesus Christ, whom you once honored, will be tarnished, giving the enemies of the faith further reason to sneer and jeer.

- Charles R. Swindoll, *The Finishing Touch*

The fight for holiness starts in the heart. It is a willingness to flee sin. It is a longing for, a lusting after, a yearning for

righteousness that says, "I sacrifice myself to God in order to be holy." But we cannot do this on our own. We must first confess our sins and call upon the Holy Spirit to fill us with Himself so that we can have victory (Eph. 3:16). Otherwise, our desire will meet with defeat and discouragement. The pattern is a heart desire to change, confession of our sin, and

then a dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Ask that He fill you; and each time that you fall, pick yourself up again and confess and ask again. The victory will come.

The question is, are you willing to deny yourself what you value so greatly?