

## Lust

Too often we approach the Bible fearfully, with this question in mind: "How much would it cramp my lifestyle if I followed the Bible?" We seem to assume that we've already found the happiest way to live. We wonder how much we would have to compromise that to please God.

But are we really perfectly happy? Doesn't our loving Creator know the happiest, the best, the most natural way to live? For example, Jesus spoke these words: "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matthew 5:27-28, NIV)

Seems like a tough standard, doesn't it? But if you've tasted lust, you know that it's like any other addiction. It starts with an offer of pleasant stimulation. So simple. So innocent. But it's progressive. It pulls you in, step by step. It demands more and more, and before you know it, you're on a downhill slide with no power to stop.

The result: shame, humiliation, corrupted thoughts, and a tarnished relationship with the one dearest to you. Unless you find a way to uproot the lust, it will one day bear very bitter fruit.

So what is Jesus saying to us here? "If you want to do yourself one great big favor, don't take that first look." If you've been down that road, you know the wisdom of what He's saying: If you want to be happy with your mate, never allow yourself to be stimulated in any other direction. Even in our sex-soaked culture, that one simple principle applies. It's practical. It works.

Focus all your love - body, mind, and spirit - on that person alone. Devote yourself to pleasing him or her. Reserve for yourself life's greatest sexual pleasure: loving only one person for a lifetime. That is your Creator's precious gift to you. Treasure it. Cherish it. Protect it.

And if you've traded that gift, turn back to Him. Repent and ask for forgiveness and restoration. You'll find Him a God who loves to give second chances. He is glad to heal, renew, and restore. Your Creator has a happier life for you. He really does. Turn to Him. Trust Him.

*Lust is self-centered and longs to take.  
Love is God-centered and longs to give.  
Pursue love.*