

**Sinning Like A Christian: #8**

**Smoke, Fire, Ashes: Lust**

**January 24, 2010**

**(Sermon notes are a transcript from the sermon with only minor editing, retaining the conversational style.)**

**INTRO: Stephen Kershner:** A philosophy teacher at SUNY in Fredonia submitted an article to the Evening Observer entitled The Tiger Woods factor: Wednesday, Jan 13, 2010. He writes:

(Recreational sex) *"it is no different than many other activities, such as golf, eating McDonald's fires....An act is wrong only when it wrongs someone or causes great harm."*

I'm assuming he has a doctorate degree. Here is the thing, it dumbfounds me to realize how shallow his view of human sexuality is. I would like to remind Stephen what the study of philosophy is about. *"The discipline comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology."* I do not see much logic or ethics in his article.

The reason why I mentioned Stephen is because he represents a world view that is prevalent in our society today. We are at the end of our series: Sinning Like a Christian: Seven Deadly Sins. The last one on the list is Lust;

**I Corinthians 6: 15-20**

*15 Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! 16 And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." 17 But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. 18 Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

It has often been said that sex is like **nitroglycerin**. It can be used for harm and for good. People both inside and outside the church think Christians make too big a deal of sexual sin. The church is obsessed with sex. The word from the pulpit is always a resounding NO.

An old joke about Moses carrying the commandments down from Mount Sinai. *"Good news and bad news, Moses says.*

*The good news is - we've got them down from forty to ten.*

*The bad news is - adultery is still in.*

It is true that the church has not always done a good job in handling the topic of sex, though it's doing a lot better job. We just have to accept the fact that sexuality is such a huge part of who we are as human beings.

Think about it. Without sexuality cars wouldn't be sold. Life would be boring. Love poems would not be written. Country music would not exist. So much of what we do is centered around our sexuality.

**Martin Luther** said next to Scripture, music is God's greatest gift. I don't know. Music verses sex. Which one would you give up?

**Just briefly, lets look at sexuality from God's perspective.**

Sexuality is one of God's great gift to us. Sexual intercourse is an act that is designed to bond two people together into a one-flesh union. *Two shall become one.* I will submit to you that term *"one-flesh"* we are unable to fully put our arms around the full meaning of that term.

The deepest level of connecting with another person is through the sexual experience. Through that experience two people become united not just physically, but there is an emotional and spiritual dimension, whether people realize it or not.

The term intercourse. (One of the dictionary definitions of intercourse is an exchange especially of thoughts or feelings). One of the main things that recreational sex does is to cheapens the experience of sexual intercourse to just sex.

When you connect yourself to another person sexually, that person is part of you in some way for the rest of your life, whether you are with that person or not. That is why Paul says, if a man connects himself with a prostitute, even if it's a one night stand, he becomes one body with her.

God says, I have given you such a precious gift, when you open that door and open yourself to become sexually involved with another person you are to do it with someone that you are:

1. Deeply committed to and love. Because you are giving a huge part of yourself that is very precious and holy to another person. That is why God begs us, don't give that part of you that is so holy, to some stranger. Some dating relationship that might be here today, but gone tomorrow.

2. That you give that part of yourself away to a person who will treat it with respect for the duration of your life. That is why God wants you to give that part of yourself only in the holy bonds of marriage. Sexual intercourse is a very sacred act. The reason why it is so sacred is because sexual intercourse goes deep to the soul. So much so, that Paul says in this same passage of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 6 that there is a comparison between our human sexual experience to our spiritual connection to God.

This is what Paul says in verse 17,

*But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.*

When someone violates God's design for sex, and goes outside of the boundaries that He set, it is not just painful on the surface, but it is painful to the very core of your being. The scars run deep. When we say all sins are the same, that is a yes and a no. When I steal something, I pay the consequences and it's done with. When I violate God's design for sex, the scars run deep.

Paul says in verse 18 *Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.*

I don't think anyone has said to the elders, *I think Pastor Vince should resign because he has been eating donuts.*

If I was involved with another woman, that would be a whole different story. Sin is a sin. Right? No.

The sexual sins goes deep to the soul. Some of you might be thinking about your past at this moment. Even though the scars of sexual sins may be deep, aren't you glad God's grace and forgiveness runs even deeper. A deeper magic as Aslan would say.

Sex is like nitroglycerin, it can be used either to blow up bridges or heal hearts. Sex can bring two people together on the deepest level that two human beings can connect. It can bring misery, pain, guilt, and shame.

### **Body of Sermon**

You can see why the most precious gift that God has given us, Satan uses that area in our lives the most to bring us down. Here is a dilemma. God created us in such a way for us not to squelched or deny our sexual desires, but to express it in a way that respects our full humanness. That is so hard to do.

God's design is for me to say, *I give of myself freely to you out of a deep love for you.*

Lust says, *It's all about self-gratification - it's all about me and fulfilling my desires. I want my pleasure and I want it now.* God's design is for us to experience the beauty and warmth of married intercourse. That magazine, Cosmo, views sex as cold, clinical, heartless.

Lust is the antithesis of real intimacy. It leaves one with feelings of being used and empty. The fullness of sex is for people to experience intimate union not alienate them.

**Bill Hybels** writes, *Lust is the reduction of a human being, a person made in the image of God, to a body-a think capable of satiating our sexual desires. When we lust we don't care if that person matters to God.*

*We don't care if that person has parents or brothers and sisters that love him or if they have kids, we only care that this person satiates our physical needs.*

Like the sin of gluttony, lust will never satisfy. Food without nourishment doesn't fill the bill, neither does lust.

**Rebecca DeYoung** writes,

*Just as the glutton sees in food only a useful means for filling himself with comfort and pleasure, so the lustful one sees in sex and sexual objects only their usefulness in giving pleasure to himself.*

Like Gluttony, lust desensitizes us to what is healthy and normal. Instead of having one cookie, I have to eat the whole bag. Lust pushes me to experience sex outside the boundaries that God has set in place. It plays with my mind and says, *If you really want sexual ecstasy, you need to experience this type of sexual pleasure.*

If I were to open up that door, it is highly stimulus BUT it becomes quickly boring. The person increases the frequency to a point where it dominates their lives. Now the person becomes a **jaded person**, because what was once shocking and beyond the range of decency, now becomes norm.

The bottom line is that the lustful person gets the sham, a shallow version of sexual pleasure, the physical rush that feels great for a moment but cannot satisfy for more than a moment either.

Studies after studies show that the highest sexual satisfaction are those who are in a faithful, monogamous, marriage, not those whose sex lives are promiscuous.

Why is that so? Because in these marriages the sexual pleaser is the **fruit of love**. That sort of pleasure is unavailable to those who are in it only for the pleasure, and only for their own pleasure. Lust gives you an imitation of happiness, a substitute for the real thing.

When our friend Stephen says, that when two consenting adults engage themselves in recreational sex and it doesn't hurt anyone, my only response is, OH PLEASE.

### **Cost Factor of David's sin with Bathsheba:**

- \* David's selfishness cost Uriah his life.
  - \* It cost Bathsheba the death of her husband and child
  - \* It cost David a painful rupture in his relationship with God
- But the damage did not just stop with those directly involved.  
Uriah was betrayed by the king he served faithfully
- \* David's general, Joab, became complicity in that betrayal.
  - \* His palace servants and his people saw their king willing to sacrifice his obedient subjects to his own selfish desires.
  - \* Trust was broken
  - \* Loyalties undercut
  - \* Relationships at all levels damaged

Do not think for a moment that lust is an innocent thing. It is not just those who are immediately burned by its fire, but lust's smoke can cause damage far and wide.

### **PowerPoint: Eliot Spitzer and his wife admitting his affair.**

Rebecca DeYoung quotes Alan Paton who wrote a book entitled: Too Late the Phalarope

It's about a police officer in South Africa, commits adultery with a young woman late at night in a vacant lot outside of town.

*And how long he stayed there he could not remember, but at least he rose and came out of the vacant ground. And his body and clothes stank with the smell of the weeds, and the stinking was a symbol of his corruption...And he thought again of his children with special agony, for what kind of man would destroy what*

*he had created, hurt what he had loved?...*

*In those last twelve hours the whole world had changed, because of one insensate act. And what madness makes a man pursue something so unspeakable, deaf to the cries of wife and children, and mother and friends, and blind to their danger, to grasp one unspeakable pleasure that brought not joy, ten thousand of which pleasures were not worthy of one of the hairs on his children's head?*

*Such desire could not surely be a desire of the flesh, but some mad desire of a sick and twisted soul.*

*And his terrible knowledge of himself lay in him darkly and heavily, and took away his laughter, and the laughter of his wife, so that the children were the only creatures that laughed in that house. He went to work darkly and heavily, and came back darkly and heavily, and played with the children because that was his habit, but his wife could hear and see that it was not the same.*

**Buechner** comments: *Who is to say who gets hurt and who doesn't get hurt, and how? Maybe be the injuries are all internal. Maybe it will be years before the X-rays show up anything. Maybe the only person who gets hurt is you.*

## **What To Do**

### **1. Be Ruthless and Acknowledge it.**

**PowerPoint:** **Charles Swindoll** says, *Lust is no respecter of persons. It never gives up; it never runs out of ideas. Bolt your front door, and it will rattle at the bedroom window, crawl into the living room through the TV screen, or wink at you out of a magazine in the den.*

**PowerPoint:** **Frederick Buechner** describes sensual lust like this:

*It is the ape that gibbers in our loins. Tame him as we will by day - he rages all the wilder in our dreams by night. Just when we think we're safe from him, he raises up his ugly head and smirks...*

Realize that lust rears its ugly head outside of the sexual areas of our lives. Lust for power, for control, lust for recognition, lust for youthfulness.

### **2. We are called to have chastity of hearts and minds.**

We pride ourselves avoiding certain temptations. I would never be like Eliot Spitzer. God sees the inside of our hearts. Lust thrives in privacy and isolation. Lustful people often feel shame, which then motivates them to keep their struggles hidden from others. But when we hide our sin and deny it, we cannot confess it or deal with it. This means lust's remedy requires community, openness, and accountability. Sheer individual willpower doesn't work.

### **3. Flee temptation of lust.**

Don't sit there and analyze it. Don't try to see how close you can get to the line. Don't flirt with it. Flee! Run! Scripture tells us when confronted with lust we are to run like the dickens.

Of all the sins that Paul mentions, regarding lust he says for us to FLEE....RUN. Don't stand there and think about it, because you get burned every single time.

Verse 18, *Run from sexual sin. Flee*

**Erwin Lutzer** paraphrases it, *Run from temptation without leaving a forward address.*

### **4. Make an Advance commitment to live pure lives.**

The 16<sup>th</sup> century French Theologian **Francois Fenelon** wrote, *We are not master of our own feelings, but we are, but God's grace, masters of our consent.* In other words we can control our desires. We aren't dumb animals. We have the freedom of choice - and when it comes to lust the best time to make that choice is AHEAD OF TIME. In the midst of passion that is not the time to be saying to yourself, *Where do I draw the line again?*

### **5. Put a Spiritual hedge of protection around you.**

**PowerPoint:** Tall hedgerows in France.

Normandy hedgerows dated back to Roman times. They were to mark boundaries and to keep cattle, sheep and other animals in an enclosed area. Typically there was only one entry into the small field enclosed by

the hedgerows, which were irregular in length as well as height and set at odd angles.

It gave the American GIs extreme difficulty in fighting the Germans. There was a feeling of being trapped in a leafy tunnel. Wherever they looked the view was blocked by walls of vegetation.

One historian wrote: "*Undertaking an offensive in the hedgerows was risky, costly, time-consuming, fraught with frustration.*"

Years ago on Focus on the Family, the guest was discussing this aspect of putting a spiritual hedge around me, my wife, and my children.

That is my prayer for you this morning,

*God put a spiritual hedgerow around me. When Satan comes attacking me it will be costly, time-consuming, and fraught with frustration, so that he'll simply give up. Put a spiritual hedgerow around my family.*

You have got to saturate yourself with God's Word. Internalize God's Word in your heart, connect yourself to a spiritual community if you are expecting to put a strong spiritual hedgerow around you to protect you from the Evil One.

**Frederick Buechner -**

*Sex (lust) is sinful to the degree that, instead of drawing you closer to other human beings in their humanness, it unites bodies but leaves the lives inside them hungrier and more alone than before.*

**The purpose of posting this sermon is for personal Bible study and resource material for pastors:**

**Resources:**

- \* Adams, Mark. Redland Baptist. Lust
- \* Rebecca DeYoung: Glittering Vices
- \* William Willimon: Sinning Like A Christian.