

What about Lust and Sinful Desires?

In the New Testament, the words "lust" and "desire" come from the same Greek word. Translators sometimes use the word "lust," when the "desire" is evil. Regardless of how it is translated, the issue is whether the desire honors God, or simply gratifies the "flesh" or sinful nature.

In this study, most of our focus will be on what the Bible says about sinful *sexual* desires ("lust"). Yet many of the principles will be applicable to other types of desires, as well. We need to remember that *any* desire that doesn't honor God is evil - even if it is an excessive or inappropriate desire for something that is *good*.

PART 1 - Consequences

1. Lust is a sin that has horrible consequences - including *eternal* consequences.
 - A) Read Matthew 5:28. What does it tell us about the seriousness of lust? _____

 - B) A comment about verses 29-30: These verses do not *command* us to cut off "offending" body parts. The key is the word "*if*." If we *did* cut off the "offending" body parts, we would discover that the sinful desires were *still* present. This is because sin is much more deep-rooted and requires a "heart surgery" - a change that only God himself can give us.
2. Though the consequences of lust are evil, we can thank God that its effects on *other* people (those we are sinning against) are not always as severe as with some of the other types of sexual sin.
 - A) This is why, in the Old Testament, some sexual sins (such as *adultery*) required a punishment of *physical* death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22), but there was no such punishment for *lust*. (The *immediate* effect that adultery has on others is greater than the effect that lust has on them.)
 - B) This does not mean that we can condone lust, or call it "less sinful." First, it still *earns* us *eternal* condemnation. Second, it is the "stepping stone" to other, more severe (and more visible) sins.

PART 2 - Conduct

- 1) How much lust is permissible? Ephesians 5:3-7 _____

- 2) How *must* we live? 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 _____

- 3) What about people who *don't* live the way described in the above passage? 1 Peter 4:3-5 _____

- 4) How will we be judged? Hebrews 4:12-13; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 _____

An Example of how to respond to sexual temptation - Genesis 39

- a. What did Potiphar's wife want? _____
- b. What was Joseph's response to Potiphar's wife? _____
- c. Who would Joseph be sinning against, if he had done what Potiphar's wife wanted? _____

- d. How does Joseph's reaction compare to the command we find in 1 Corinthians 6:18? (Note: This command is not limited only to the type of *physical* response we should have. Implied is the response we should have in our *minds and attitudes*, as well.) _____

PART 3 - Responsibility

Every command *against* lusting also implies a responsibility to others who may be encouraging that lust. Yielding to temptation is sin, but being the tempter is also sin. We cannot prevent a person from lusting, if he (or she) is determined to do so, but we *will be held accountable by God, when we encourage that lust, by what we wear, what we say, or what we do.*

What do these passages tell us about doing things that cause others to stumble into sin? Matthew 18:7; Luke 17:3

