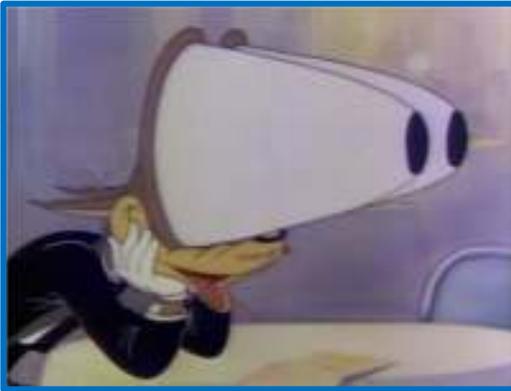


## TAKE AIM, DON'T MISS! DEALING WITH THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

### - GOSPEL SANITY IN A SEX-SATURATED CULTURE -



“... Say you want a revolution?” (Lennon/McCartney)

True or false? The sexual revolution began in the 1960's. According to the infallible Wikipedia, A **revolution** (from the *Latin* *revolutio*, "a turn around") is a fundamental **change** in power or organizational structures that takes place in a relatively short period of time. So, perhaps what we've witnessed since the 60's is not as much a revolution as **DEVOLUTION** from what the cultural consensus was regarding the boundaries of sexual activity. In

terms of approaching something being revolutionary, what has contributed to the promotion of lust in the proliferation of porn on the internet! [You no longer have to buy it from a seedy "adult" bookstore or get it "in a discreet wrapper in the mail"]. Now, the "objectification" of sex (the idea of sex being disconnected from the larger context of life) plus a cultural atmosphere that promotes nothing as being wrong, sexually, except for saying *any* sexual activity is wrong, has us at a place where society and the individuals in society are caught in the vice grip of lust.

The vice of lust is indeed a sin that kills – physically, emotionally, relationally, and sometimes literally! But what IS lust?

\*\* Lust is a **FALLEN, DISORDERED IDOLATROUS** desire that **DISHONORS** its **OBJECT, DISREGARDS** God's **BOUNDARIES** – and ultimately **ENSLAVES** and **DESTROYS**. \*\* (both the one who lusts *and* the one who is lusted after . . . crimes of passion . . . )

Note: In that definition, DESIRE is not wrong! Desire is simply a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen. [EG a desire to work in the dirt with your bare hands", a desire to take a walk in the cool of the evening with your spouse, a desire to get a pizza at Mellow Mushroom, and then a desire to walk it off...] Nothing wrong with DESIRE, but DESIRE, like everything else in this post-**Genesis 3** world is FALLEN and must be REDEEMED!

LUST can be for ANYTHING – \$\$, food, power & praise, and for sex (which is usually what the term lust is connected with).

Consider *1 Thessalonians 4:1-8*

[Lots of counseling ends up being a recounting of lust driven ABUSE of God's gift of sex... Wend / Nanc / Homes / shame, etc., background checks even at LPC. The only way to find freedom from the shackles of guilt / shame over sexual failure and healing from sexual brokenness is through the redemptive work of God in Christ.

Let's situate lust in the Biblical Story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.

Until we understand God's purpose for sex, we may fall into the danger of either DENIGRATING or DESPISING it on the one hand (to declare it as something evil and dirty and something decent people don't do [remember Dick Van Dyke? Dr. Hargess] – a problem in the generation I grew up in) or IDOLIZING or ABUSING it on the other hand.

### **1<sup>st</sup> there's CREATION: God's INTENTION for sex.**

GOD'S perspective on and intention for sex can be summarized in two statements, from *1 Corinthians 6:13...* (cf also *Genesis 1:27-28, 31*)

1. **The body is made BY the Lord; therefore sex is GOOD.**
2. **The body is made FOR the Lord; therefore sex is NOT ULTIMATE.**

Unfortunately, the primary message Christians sometimes send about sex is negative. Still, *sex in the right context* is not sinful. Sex IS God's idea. The body is made by the Lord and marriage was instituted by him as well: sex is good, as designed by God. BUT, the body is also made for the Lord. Therefore, while sex in marriage is good, it is not ultimate. It is a subordinate good, a servant for our good and God's glory.

And subordinate to the ultimate intention of glorifying God are three interrelated purposes for sex:

- **the consummation of the marriage union** (Genesis 2: 24),
- **the procreation of children** (Genesis 1: 28),
- **and the mutual pleasure and of a husband and wife – the Biblical Covenant context of sex** (Proverbs 5: 18– 19; 1 Corinthians 7: 1– 5).
- **But sex is NEVER meant to be SOVEREIGN!** C. S. Lewis, “. . . (physical, sensual desire) is holy when God's hand is on the rein. It goes bad when it becomes a false God (becomes Ultimate) . . . “ AKA being HARMONALLY DRIVEN. When hormones are in the driver's seat, GOD is not! Yet treating sexual satisfaction as *ultimate* is EXACTLY what lust does. It doesn't honor God nor does it honor the other person.

### **2<sup>nd</sup>, there's the FALL: The IDOLATRY of sex.**

Sexual desire is part of being human. Can you have the desire, feel the attraction, and experience the temptation without lusting? Yes, but . . .

In a sentence, lust desires conjugal pleasure **MINUS** the kind of **RELATIONSHIP** that pleasure is **DESIGNED** for in the first place.

Lust strips sex from the context of marriage and reduces it to nothing more than a satisfaction of a bodily craving. The CRAVING becomes SOVEREIGN, and the SATISFACTION of that craving becomes ULTIMATE. Therefore, the CRAVING and the SATISFACTION of that craving both become SUBSTITUTES for GOD Himself!

Where *does* this disordered desire come from? Knowing the SOURCE can help with the CURE!

- **There's the sheer EXUBERANCE of our physical drives.**  
In this case, the remedy is a practical remedy. Apply generous amounts of *Matthew 5:27-30!* [Poison Ivy, stay away from those people, places, and things that draw you in . . . Joseph & Potifer's wife, go for a long run, take a cold shower . . . unsubscribe to that mag., call VS & stop the coupon books, call the cable company, put "safe mode" filters on the internet, if fried chicken is a problem, stay away from Popeye's, Don't buy a box of a dozen doughnuts and leave them open for you to look at . . .

- **There's the Sheer EMPTINESS of LIFE that drives lust.**  
Dorothy Sayers says there is a second reason for lust. "When philosophies are bankrupt and life appears without hope — men and women may turn to lust in sheer boredom and discontent, trying to find in it some stimulus that is not provided by the drab discomfort of their mental and physical surroundings." Folks w/time on their hands often have a problem w/porn.

We see an example of this in Albert Camus' (Ca-MOO's) novel *The Fall*, the story of a man named Cla-men-ce whose slow descent into excessive hedonism left him with a hollow emptiness inside. In one place, Cla-men-ce says, "Because I longed for eternal life, I went to bed with harlots and drank for nights on end. In the morning, to be sure, my mouth was filled with the bitter taste of my mortal state." At its root, lust is an attempt to use sexual to fill the void in one's soul. Lust is the idolatry of sex.

- **There's the nature of ADDICTION that drives lust.**  
Paul says, "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything*" (1 Corinthians 6: 12). In *Titus 3: 3*, Paul reminds us that we were "*once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures.*" Lust is a dominating, enslaving desire.

One reason lust holds people captive is because of how it so easily becomes habitual. Even non-Christian psychologists are beginning to talk about sexual addictions in much the same language used to describe drug and alcohol addictions. Augustine discovered this centuries ago, when he likened his slavery to lust as a chain.

["It was no iron chain imposed by anyone else that fettered me, but the iron of my own will. The enemy had *my power of willing* in his clutches, and from it had forged a chain to bind me. The truth is that *disordered lust springs from a perverted will*; when lust is

*pandered* to, a habit is formed; when habit is *not checked*, it hardens into *compulsion*. These were like interlinking rings forming what I have described as a chain, and my harsh servitude used it to keep me under duress.”

Notice the 4 links in Augustine’s chain.

- It begins with a **DISTORTION** of the will.
- After choosing to **TASTE** the fruit, deeper **DESIRES** follow.
- Desires indulged in over time become **HABIT** forming.
- Soon, the addict seeks a **FIX**, driven not by the freedom of desire, but by the **SLAVERY** of **COMPUSION**.

➤ **The drive of lust ends in DESTRUCTION.**

According to *1 Corinthians 6:18*, sexual sin is a sin against one’s own body. The physical results are really bad, pregnancy out of wedlock (which used to be accompanied with much more shame than it used to be), syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and more.

But just as bad is the destruction of the IDENTITY of the one driven by lust. In lust, two people USE each other, selfishly, to get what they want FROM each other. Sex becomes NOT mutual self-GIVING but mutual self-USING of each other as a means to an end – which is the (very temporary & short-lived) satisfaction of physical urges. And when one is seen as an OBJECT, one is USED as an OBJECT.

[When a lady (mostly) or a man (sometimes) makes their popular main appeal a “sex appeal”, and then complains of being seen as an “object”, they are suffering the results of the persona they themselves created... HOW can a new anchor who does a promotional photo shoot that’s splashed all over the internet speak of the “objectification” of women?]

**3<sup>rd</sup>, there’s REDEMPTION, HOPE, & a STRATEGY for fighting lust.**

- **The HOPE comes from the PAST REDEMPTION we have in Christ! *1 Corinthians 6:9-11*...**

Some people especially need this assurance. Perhaps you know people who are paralyzed by guilt over their past. Maybe someone you know had sex outside of marriage or committed adultery. Perhaps you know those who have cultivated an unhealthy thought life or a sexual addiction. Maybe you are winning the war against lust, but losing occasional battles along the way [Dr. Gleson Archer & Howard Hendricks. . .]. You know the sins. You know the failures. Sometimes you feel that you'll never be free of them. Guilt eats you alive. Satan accuses you (what he does best) But here is good news: if you are in Christ, you have been washed, sanctified, and justified. In CHRIST, you are clean. You've been given a new record. Grace covers not SOME but ALL your sins, ALL your past transgressions!

Whatever your sins may be, there is grace, forgiveness, and pardon for you in Christ. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, the burden of your sin and guilt can be loosed from your shoulders at the cross. You can say, with the old hymn writer,

*Well may the accuser roar*

*Of sins that I have done!*

*I know them all and thousands more,*

*Jehovah knoweth none!*

➤ **The STRATEGY in the present (and future) comes from God's WORD.**

Here's a set of strategies is our war against lust, each one Gospel-driven. It's in the form of an acronym, ANTHEM.

**AVOID** – as much as possible and reasonable, the sights and situations that expose you to temptation. (*2 Timothy 2:22; Romans 13:14*). We can better do this when we remind ourselves that our GREATEST satisfaction is in CHRIST, so why settle for less?

**NO** – You don't have more than a few seconds to say NO to a lustful thought. [Door witnessing issue] "In the name of Jesus, NO!" John Owen said, "Be killing sin, or it will be killing you." *James 4:7*. God ENABLES you by His Spirit to resist!

**TURN** – to the TRUTH that Christ is a superior satisfaction to what LUST is driving you to. You can't fight SOMETHING with NOTHING. Desires are DECEITFUL (*Ephesians 4:22*). Fallen desires LIE to you. Soak your mind with the SUPERIOR promises and pleasures that come ONLY from knowing JESUS! ["The Expulsive Power of a New Affection"]

**HOLD** – Fix your eyes on JESUS (*Hebrews 12:2*), WHO He is, WHAT He has done, WHAT expects from those who truly believe HE is superior to what SIN is promising. The mind is a muscle. Exercise it!

**ENJOY** – What you have in Jesus. Enjoy JESUS! *Psalms 90:14*. Look, look, and keep looking at JESUS until you see just how HE ALONE is better than anything you THINK giving into your lust will give you! And so is His “*Well done . . .*” There’s NOTHING you can do to make Jesus stop loving you, but you CAN disappoint Him! WHY would you WANT to disappoint the person who LOVES you and GAVE HIMSELF for you?

**MOVE** – Move into useful activities. Lust grows FAST in the garden of leisure [I was bored, I started watching porn; playing video death games, etc. ...] An idle mind really IS the devils workshop! *Romans 12:11; 1 Corinthians 15:58*. DO something! DISPLACE deceitful lusts with a PASSION for good deeds!

Look around. Folks are losing the war against lust. But it DOESN’T have to be that way. There is REDEMPTION for the past, and hope for the future, even when it comes to lust!