

FLIPPED

"THE FLIPSIDE OF DESIRE" MATTHEW 5:27-30

This Week's Core Competency

Self-Control – I have the power, through Christ, to control myself. Titus 2:11-13 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

Self-control and willpower are not exactly the same. Willpower amounts to *trying hard*, and we all know that no one can be like Jesus by trying hard to be like Jesus. Self-control, on the other hand, amounts to *training wisely*.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explains his understanding of the law and describes his way of life with a view to his disciples following him. He reveals that the commandment, "Do not murder" prohibits not only murder but also anger toward another as well as hateful name-calling. Before hearing what Jesus said, his hearers were quite certain they had kept the sixth commandment; afterward, they were quite certain they hadn't. He also reveals that the commandment, "Do not commit adultery" not only prohibits sex with another man's wife but also the desire for sex with another man's wife. Before hearing what Jesus said, his hearers

A spiritual discipline is any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it.

- John Ortberg

perhaps wondered, "What kind of a man would break the seventh commandment?" Afterward, they perhaps wondered, "What kind of man wouldn't?" Jesus didn't give new commandments; he simply unpacked the implications of old ones. Understood the way Jesus understood them, it's obvious no one can keep these commandments. And trying hard doesn't help because by the time one tries hard, it's generally too late.

It's all very discouraging, or at least, it can be. As Dallas Willard observes, "Jesus' commandments become overwhelmingly burdensome to us. In fact, many Christians cannot even believe he actually intended for us to carry them out. So what is the result? His teachings are treated as a mere ideal, one that we may better ourselves by aiming for but know we are bound to fall glaringly short of.

"It's a familiar story. 'We're only human,' we say, and 'to err is human.' Such pronouncements may be for another age or 'dispensation,' we may think—or possibly they're for when we are in heaven. But they cannot be for us now. Not really. Jesus could not have imposed anything that hard upon us. And besides, we're in a period of grace—we are saved by grace, not by anything we do—so obedience to Christ is actually not necessary. And it is so hard, anyway; it cannot be expected of us, much less enjoyed by us.

"And so we reason. All of our reasonings cannot, however, remove the thought that Jesus calls us to follow him—to follow him now, not after death" (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 2, 3).

If willpower, i.e., trying hard, isn't the answer; what is? Self-control is; self-control, i.e., training wisely, is the answer. While no one can become like

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Jesus by trying hard, what can't be done by trying hard can be done by training wisely. Paul says as much to his protegee, Timothy, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales; rather, train yourself to be godly" (1Ti 4:7). Furthermore, using a sports metaphor, he elaborates on the concept to the Corinthians. "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training," he says. "They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1Co 9:25-27). Paul's training "for godliness" and his training "for the prize" amounts to the same thing as training to be like Jesus.

If you think about it, it makes perfect sense. As Willard says, "No one ever says, 'If you want to be a great athlete, go vault eighteen feet, run the mile under four minutes,' or 'If you want to be a great musician, play the Beethoven violin concerto.' Instead, we advise the young artist or athlete to enter a certain kind of overall life, one involving deep associations with qualified people as well as rigorously scheduled time, diet, and activity for the mind and body" (8). Likewise, if you want to be like Jesus, if you want to obey his commands, you have to enter training.

And what does exactly does that mean? John Ortberg makes it perfectly clear. "It means to arrange your life around certain exercises and experiences that will enable you to do eventually what you are not yet able to do even by trying hard. Training is essential for almost any significant endeavor in life—running a marathon, becoming a surgeon, learning how to play the piano. The need for preparation or training does not stop when it comes to learning the art of forgiveness, joy, or courage. It applies to a vibrant spiritual life just as it does to other activities. Learning to think, feel, and act like Jesus is at least as demanding as learning to run a marathon or play the piano. To follow Jesus means learning to arrange my life around those practices that will enable me to stay connected to him and live more and more like him. In short, this is just another way of defining a spiritual discipline. A spiritual discipline is any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it" (John Ortberg, Laurie Pederson, and Judson Poling, *Pursuing Spiritual Transformation*, 16). Exercising self-control, entering training, practicing spiritual disciplines, they are all related and are all pavers on the pathway to being like Jesus.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 5:27-30

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (NIV(c)1984)

Cf., another translation

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "have heard" in v. 27.
- * Bracket "it was said" in v. 27.
- * Circle "adultery" in v. 27.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 28.
- * Bracket "I tell you" in v. 28.
- * Circle "woman" in v. 28.
- * Underline "looks . . . lustfully" in v. 28.
- * Circle "right eye" in v. 29.
- * Circle "right hand" in v. 30.
- * Box "better" indicating *comparison* in vv. 29, 30.
- * Circle "hell" in vv. 29, 30.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paraphrase the meaning of Jesus' opening words, "You have heard."
2. Identify *who said* what was said.
3. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 28.
4. Verse 28 implies that "anyone" means any "man." Does this verse apply to any "woman" as well? Explain.
5. Is there no difference between lustful *looks* and lustful *acts* if both are violations of the seventh commandment?
6. How can you tell that Jesus is speaking *figuratively* in verses 29, 30?
7. If he's using *hyperbole* (exaggeration) to make a point, what point is he making?
8. What would you say to a person who interprets verses 29, 30 as a warning, to wit disciples who break the seventh commandment run the risk of losing their salvation and going to hell?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what disciples can do to follow Jesus' teaching on adultery.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

A rich young man once came to Jesus to ask what he had to do to get eternal life, and Jesus gave him this simple answer: obey the commandments. When the young man went on to ask which commandments he had in mind, the first two Jesus listed were do not murder and do not commit adultery. Immediately the young man assured him that he had kept them both as well as the others on Jesus' list (Mt 19:16-20). Now, either the young man was lying through his teeth and knew it, or he truly believed that he had never violated either commandment, whether he had or not. Since the context gives no indication that he was lying, we can only conclude that he did not believe he had broken either the sixth or the seventh commandment (Ex 20: 13, 14). He must not have been on the Mount when Jesus preached his sermon there. Otherwise, he would have known that a person doesn't have to actually take a life to violate the sixth commandment; anyone who is angry with a brother, anyone who engages in hateful name-calling has broken it. Neither does a man have to have sex physically with another man's wife to violate the seventh commandment; anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already broken it. The conventional view of adultery, then and now, assumes that a person is not guilty until he or she commits the physical act. Jesus statement debunks that assumption.

On committing adultery without having sex, one author writes, "Sexual impurity begins in the desires of the heart. Again, Jesus is not saying that lustful desires are identical to lustful deeds, and therefore a person might just as well go ahead and commit adultery. The desire and the deed are not identical, but, spiritually speaking, they are equivalent. The 'look' that Jesus mentioned was not a casual glance, but a constant stare with the purpose of lusting. It is possible for a man to glance at a beautiful woman and know that she is beautiful, but not lust after her. The man Jesus described looked at the woman for the purpose of feeding his inner sensual appetites as a substitute for the act. It was not accidental; it was planned" (Warren W. Wiersbe, "Matthew," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:24).

It goes without saying that contemporary culture has little time for what Jesus had to say about moral

purity. Sex is used to sell just about everything. Marketing seems to be all about inciting lust for a beautiful woman, and then shifting that desire to some product, which explains why you see so many not-ugly models at an auto show. Sex outside of marriage is taken for granted and exploited by the entertainment industry. If you have HBO, Showtime, or any number of other movie channels you know how difficult it is to keep your "right eye" from causing you to sin. What's more, pornography, sad to say, is only a smart phone away. Obeying the seventh commandment, as most understand it, is hard enough; obeying it, as Jesus understands it, seems next to impossible.

So why bother? Jesus gives the answer in verses 29 and 30. In a nutshell he says that sin is serious, and one must do whatever it takes to avoid it. Its dire consequences imply as much. As one author advises, "We are to deal drastically with sin. We must not pamper it, flirt with it, enjoy nibbling a little of it around the edges. We are to hate it, crush it, dig it out. 'Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry' (Col. 3:5). Paul adds, 'Because of these, the wrath of God is coming' (Col. 3:6)" (D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 44).

And how are we to do this? The answer is twofold. First, no one can keep the seventh commandment by trying hard to not break it. The golfer who repeatedly tells himself, whatever you do don't hit the ball in the water, invariably does so, and likewise, the disciple who repeatedly tells himself, whatever you do don't look at that woman lustfully, invariably does the same. Adultery is a matter of the heart; consequently, the desires of the heart have to be refocused—on one's own spouse is a good place to start. The wisdom of the Proverbs is worth repeating. "Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom

of another man's wife?" (Pr 5:15-20). And they must be refocused on knowing Jesus (Php 3:10).

In addition to purifying the desires of their hearts, disciples must, second, discipline themselves to live godly lives. "The eye and the hand are usually the two 'culprits' when it comes to sexual sins, so they must be disciplined. Jesus said, 'Deal immediately and decisively with sin!

Don't taper off—cut off!' Spiritual surgery is more important than physical surgery, for the sins of the body can lead to eternal judgment. We think of passages like Colossians 3:5 and Romans 6:13; 12:1, 2; 13:14" (24). So if something you routinely look at causes you to sin, look elsewhere. If something you routinely do causes you to sin, do something else instead.

The Message of the Passage

Christ's disciples wisely discipline themselves to avoid lustful looking, which like lustful acting is a violation of the seventh commandment.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“The Flipside of Desire”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 27 **you have heard** "The introductory formula reminds the audience that they have heard-the normal way of learning . . . The formula pointedly draws attention to God's act of giving Israel the Law that was orally read and expounded in the worship settings. It is precisely this law and not its traditional interpretation or understanding that is countered in the Antitheses" (Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 182).
- v. 27 **it was said** The passive voice often implies divine action, i.e., "God said." (The force of the passive is to avoid referring to God directly.) The direct quotation of the seventh commandment (Ex 20:14) confirms that this is the case here.
- v. 27 **adultery** "Adultery in the Old Testament involved sexual intercourse with mutual consent between a man, married or unmarried, and the wife of another man. The term and the penalty (death) applied equally to both the man and the woman (Lev. 20:10; cf. Deut. 22:22)" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 244). "In the ancient world generally it was held that a married man could have sexual adventures as long as they did not involve a married woman (which would mean violating the rights of her husband). A woman, however, was expected to have no such relations; she should be chaste before marriage and faithful after it. The command Jesus cites makes no distinction; people of both sexes were to remain faithful. Specifically he speaks of the man as the adulterer (v. 32; 19:9)" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 117, 18).
- v. 28 **woman** One commentator argues, "The Greek noun woman [*gune*] can refer to a married or single woman. Since adultery in Jesus' day and in the Old Testament always involved a married woman, woman [*gune*] more precisely should read another's wife" (Guelich, 193). Another argues, less likely, to the contrary that the term probably refers more broadly to any woman and not simply the wife of another. "If a more restrictive understanding were in view, one might expect the noun to be modified, e.g., *tu plesiou* [*sou*] "your neighbor's" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew*, 120; another, likewise, believes Jesus is speaking about sexual sin in general, Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 108).
- v. 28 **lustfully** The phrase translated "lustfully" means literally "in order to desire having her (sexually)" and the word in that phrase that means "desire to have" [*epithumeo*] appears in the tenth commandment for "to covet." "'To lust' in English connotes accurately the sensual overtones but lacks the accompanying thought of possession inherent in [*epithumesai*]" (Guelich, 193, 94). "This is not a prohibition of the normal attraction which exists between men and women, but of the deep-seated lust which consumes and devours, which in imagination attacks and rapes, which mentally contemplates and commits adultery" (Carson, 44).
- v. 28 **already** "He is saying that disciples are to regard lustful looking at a woman as an offense no less serious than an act of adultery: such is the import of having 'already committed adultery with her in his heart'" (Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 87, 88).
- vv. 29, 30 **right eye, right hand** "The eye is chosen because it has looked and lusted; the hand is chosen, probably because adultery, even mental adultery, is a kind of theft" (44). The right side of the body is more highly valued. "The right eye was thought of as especially valuable, for a warrior would be gravely handicapped if he lacked sight in this member . . . The same argument is applied to the right hand, the hand favored by most people for all activities" (Morris, 118, 19).
- vv. 29, 30 **gouge, cut** Cf., Mk 9:43-47. "Literal self-mutilation is not Christ's objective. It is quite possible to be blind or cripple and still lust. Rather, as is characteristic of Jesus' figurative and hyperbolic style, he commands us to take drastic measures to avoid temptations to sexual sin-to remove from ourselves anyone or anything that could lead us into scandal ('causes you to sin')" (Blomberg, 109). "Some have taken this language literally. Origen (c. 195-254) castrated himself so that he would not be tempted. But that, I think, quite misses Jesus' point, and the absolute cast of Jesus' preaching noticed earlier; for if I gouged out my right eye because it had looked and lusted, wouldn't my left do as well? And if I blinded myself, might I not lust anyway, and mentally gaze at forbidden things?" (Carson, 44).
- vv. 29, 30 **throw it away** "The greater vividness of the separation between gouging and cutting, on the one hand, and throwing, on the other hand, adds emphasis to the demand for self-discipline (Gundry, 88).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

For this activity you will need blindfolds for each family member, a timer, and a feather or other soft and "tickly" item. Have everyone sit on the floor with no one touching another. Blindfold each person and ask everyone to sit quietly.

Tell your kids that they are soldiers in enemy territory. They are hidden under a small bush and there are enemy soldiers all around. The slightest move will alert them to your presence. Each child must hold perfectly still for three minutes. No talking, giggling, scratching or anything! After a minute, take the feather and begin tickling your children with it. See if they flinch or if they are able to remain still and quiet. After three minutes, remove the blindfolds and ask your kids how hard it was to keep perfectly still. If a real enemy was around and the situation was real, would it have been easier to hold still? Remind your kids that we do have an enemy who is real and that he would like nothing better than to tempt us to disobey God and sin. One way to combat temptation is by using self-control. The good news for the children of God is that we don't have to do it on our own! The Holy Spirit will help us fight off any temptation we encounter!

What Does The Bible Say

Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13.

1. What does verse 13 say about temptations we may face?
2. Who will help us in our temptations? How?

Read Hebrews 2:17-18. This passage is talking about Jesus.

3. What does it say Jesus came to make atonement (payment) for?
4. When did Jesus suffer? How does his suffering help us?

What Do You Think

Weekly Verse: Matthew 5:29-30

Jesus is using a figure of speech to show how seriously we are to be in avoiding sin.

1. What does the passage say we are to do with a body part that causes us to sin?
2. Since we know we aren't really supposed to cut off our body parts, what was Jesus telling us to do when we are tempted to sin?

What R U Going To Do

Our memory verse this week is a GREAT one for you to post around your home. Place a copy of it beside the computer, beside the TV, on the dinner table and beside each family member's bed to remind everyone in the home to think on things that are noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Self-Control - Taking charge of myself with Jesus' help

Memory Verse

Php 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than thirty-five years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-two years and have one son, Zach.

Keith Smith (B.A. in Speech Communication, Texas Tech University and M.A. in Religious Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the Family and Children's Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. Keith speaks at children/student camps across the country. He has developed a number of relational parenting seminars designed to motivate parents to empower their parenting by emotionally connecting with their kids. Keith lives with his wife, Denise, and their two children, Jordan and Alex.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.