

# The Problem of Lust

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[ 0 : 00 ] New Testament from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5. We're going to read verses 27 to 30 as we continue to work through the Sermon on the Mount.

So Jesus says this, You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

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.

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 your whole body goes into hell. This is God's holy word.

So Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, in verse 27, he quotes from the seventh commandment in the Old Testament and says, you shall not commit adultery. And then in verse 27, he then says, and let me tell you that if you've looked at another person with lust in your heart, you've committed adultery in your heart.

[ 1 : 22 ] Now, we tonight are going to talk about adultery and lust and some of the struggles we faced in terms of human sexuality. So if you're a visitor, let me just say welcome to you.

Glad to have you tonight. Glad you came along. It's a perfect night for you to be here. It's God's word. It's always good. Why are we doing this tonight? Why are we talking about this? Let me give you a few reasons while it's really, really important for us to think about this issue.

Number one, we are working our way through the Sermon on the Mount, and this is the passage we're on. So that's the first important reason, is that we're working our way through the Bible, and so we want to talk about anything the Bible talks about.

And then secondly, most people in our culture, in a modern and post-Christian city like the city of Edinburgh, think that Christianity is all about rules and think that the biggest rule that Christians really want to push is rules surrounding sexual ethics.

And so people think if you're going to be a Christian, it's about being a certain type of person. Rules, rules, rules. And the biggest thing and the most important thing is to be committed to marriage and to never having any sexual expression outside of marriage, and that's what it means to be a Christian.

[ 2 : 36 ] And I think a lot of people in our city probably think about Christianity in that way. And sometimes, as one writer puts it, even in the church, we can struggle with frail devotion to rules driven by duty, not desire.

And so it's very possible that even as Christians, if you come tonight as a Christian, you can look at something like the Seventh Commandment or Jesus saying, and let me take that to the next level and say that if you struggle with lust, any time we struggle with lust, we've committed adultery in our heart, and we can come and think, I don't know why that is, but I just know that I have to obey it.

That's what it means to be a Christian, just to follow the rules, rules, rules, rules. And we've got to come and see that what the Sermon on the Mount is doing is it's offering something very different than rules.

It's offering a life of joy and peace that walks in the grain of reality the way God has made it. So the Sermon on the Mount and this issue of human sexuality is teaching us what it means to actually walk along the grain lines, the wood lines, of the way God actually made the world.

And that's why when we come to this issue, when we come to so many issues, if we fail to walk along the grain as God has made it, if you break the rules in the way God has ordered them, the biggest issue is that they break you.

[ 3 : 55 ] You'll be broken by them. And so the Sermon on the Mount comes to first offer you a life of joy and peace, but it does so also to protect. Not to say Christianity is all about rules. No, instead to offer you protection and help and healing. That's what it's here for. The third reason is that most of us, most people and everybody in our city comes to this topic with scars in their lives.

And that's because sexuality, human sexuality expressed, has incredible power. It's got power to fulfill in the right context, and it has power to break you, to destroy your life when engaged in the wrong context.

And so in the modern world, people will say things like, sex is existentially meaningless. It's part of the marketplace. It's meaningless unless somebody chooses to give it meaning.

And boy, because of that mentality, that sexuality expressed is meaningless, existentially meaningless, so many people have come from that mentality with deep, deep scars in their lives.

[ 5 : 01 ] And probably many of us are not immune to that. I think there's probably an unprecedented level of pain all over our city based on the free expression, quote unquote, of sexuality because of the modern mentality that sex is just a marketplace.

And that, let me put it like this, one writer says it like this, in the sexual revolution, the sexual revolution has not left behind any winners, only losers.

And when we think about human sexuality expressed in utter options and freedom, the writers have shown us, the sociologists, the commentators, the philosophers, that all we leave behind is a wake of pain and losers.

And so it's really important that we come tonight because some of us will come with guilt and shame in our lives that we've buried for things that we've done or things that have happened to us in the past.

Many of us will come tonight with regret and deep hurt over sexuality expressed in our past. Some of us will come with a lack of fulfillment and loneliness in relationships.

[ 6 : 04 ] We'll come maybe, maybe, maybe tonight with a feeling that you have nowhere to go, nobody to talk to, no help to get you out of deep, dark patterns that are really damaging when it comes to sexuality.

And so we come tonight with deep need and we read, that's all we read in our call to worship, Luke 5, 31. Jesus comes tonight and says, I came for those, I didn't come for the people that are well, I came for the people that are sick, I came for the people that know they need healing, I came as the great physician so Jesus comes tonight in the Sermon on the Mount to help us and to protect us and to heal us in these issues.

And so let's think about two things together. Number one, what is wrong with lust? Why is lust wrong? And then number two, the path to healing.

All right, so first, why is lust wrong? Jesus, we saw here, is reflecting on the seventh commandment. So he says in verse 27, you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.

That's a quote from the Ten Commandments. And the word adultery is well known, it technically means being unfaithful to one's spouse, cheating on a spouse in the context of marriage.

[ 7 : 19 ] And in the first century, just like in the Old Testament, we see that that word has a whole family of words that broaden out the list and so that there's a whole spectrum of the ways we can commit adultery.

So in the Westminster larger catechism, the confession that we subscribe to here at St. Columbus, it talks about a whole list. What does adultery mean? It's much more than that. Paul uses another word, fornication, the Greek word *porneia*, from which we get the word pornography.

And it talks about sexual sin as a spectrum that exists in all sorts of degrees, right? And of course, we all know that. But in verse 28, Jesus says, there's a foundation, a base, a line where sexuality expressed becomes sinful.

And what is it? And he tells us in verse 28, he says, I say to you with utter authority that anyone that has looked at another person would lust in their heart, in their heart and in their imagination has already committed adultery.

In the very deep recesses of the soul, you've already committed adultery. Now that means that Jesus does something that no one expected in the first century. He broadens the concept of the line of where sexual sin begins.

[ 8 : 27 ] All the way down to the soul, all the way down to the heart, all the way down to the imagination, to lust itself. And look, in our modern world, everybody agrees. Everybody tends still to agree in the marketplace of human sexuality that is this 21st century that adultery is bad.

Adultery in the most basic sense. There's not that many people that would argue for it, right? Because nobody wants to be cheated on. And so in the modern world, the ethic is do what you want as long as you don't harm anybody, as long as there's consent.

And so we all feel that if I'm cheated on, I've been harmed. And so people generally will say, yeah, don't cheat on people. Adultery is bad. Don't break your promises. But when it comes to what Jesus does in verse 28, and he says, but that's not the line.

Lust is the line. Boy, people come in our modern world and they say, lust, what is that doing to anybody? That's me. That's just my imagination and my heart.

That doesn't bother anybody. It doesn't harm anybody. And so how in the world can that be a problem? Can that be an issue for us? And so what Jesus is doing is here something that was shocking, that was broadening what was very narrow in the first century just like today.

[ 9 : 41 ] And here's what he does in Matthew 5 here. He says, when he says, you've heard it said, you shall not commit adultery, he's not just quoting the Ten Commandments, the Seventh Commandment.

He's also quoting how the Ten Commandments were interpreted in the first century. So when he says, you've heard it said, he's talking about the way that had been taught by the scribes and the Pharisees in that time.

And the way that they taught about this issue of adultery is very, it's actually incredibly similar to the way we think about it in our modern city. And so what did they say?

Well, they took it very, very, very literally. You shall not commit adultery. And that means the boundaries of sexual sin are quite narrow. To commit adultery means that you actually are married and you cheat, you commit adultery relative to having a spouse.

And so the Pharisees and the scribes said, the way is narrow to commit this sin. You know, you have to actually be married and you have to actually commit the act of committing adultery against your spouse.

[ 10 : 42 ] And that means that what they did was they left a really broad space for freedom, that they could live their lives in other ways that they wanted to live them. Lust was not really on the mind as an issue.

And in the same way when you come to the modern world, what do modern people say? Most ways, modern people say most ways of expressing sexuality is absolutely fine. Most ways. Adultery, yeah, that's bad. That's a narrow path that you don't want to go down.

But every other way is pretty much fine as long as you're not doing anybody any harm and as long as you have consent. And you see, just like the Pharisees and scribes in the first century and modern people today, everybody is trying to make the way, the way of actually doing wrong really narrow in the path of freedom, options, really, really broad.

And Jesus comes and does the exact opposite. He says, actually, where does the line begin? Sometimes when I meet with people who are in a dating relationship or thinking about marriage, they want to know when it comes to sexual expression, where's the line?

And Jesus gives it to us. He says, lust is the line. Desires in the heart, that's where it begins. That's where the sin problem actually starts. Lust is the line. And so we've got to think for a second about lust.

[ 11 : 53 ] It's all about the heart, he says. And what is this thing that he's talking about? Now, last week, Lewis helped us think about the fact that murder, physical murder, the act of violence begins with murder in the heart, as Jesus put it, unjust anger.

And what did he say? He said, you can have unjust anger in your heart and that unjust anger, unrepented of, becomes disdain. And disdain, unrepented of, becomes hatred.

And hatred, unrepented of, can become violence. So he talked about anger on a spectrum, all the way from anger in the heart to murder itself. And in the same way, he comes and says that sexual sin is a spectrum.

And lust, imagination, lustful intent in the heart, is on the same line as the act of adultery itself. The very same thing. And so what is this wrongdoing, lust in the heart that he's talking about?

Okay, this word for lust in Greek is a word that simply means desire. Desire. And if it's translated with its full intent, its meaning, it means over-desire.

[ 12 : 58 ] So you can lust, you can have over-desire for anything. It's not just expressed in sexuality. You can long for things in wrong ways and have the object of your desire be anything at all.

Right, so Jesus is saying here lust is simply when you want good things in life in really bad ways. That your affections, your longings, your imagination about those things is disordered.

You can take anything in life and over-want it, want it too much. And how do you know when that's happened? It's when you want something more than you want God himself. Lust happens anytime you desire anything in this life more than you long for God himself.

And so we are all, we are all prone. Calvin, what did he say? John Calvin, he said that the human heart is an idol-making factory, that we're all cranking out things that we lust after, idols that we lust after all the time.

And that's exactly what Jesus is talking about here, but he's talking about it in the frame particularly of sexual lust, the lustful intent in the realm of sexuality. And it's important to say then that if lust, the word lust, over-desire, means misplaced desires or good things, good things in this life that we mistreat by desiring them in the wrong ways.

[ 14 : 13 ] Jesus is not in any way being prudish about sex and sexuality, not at all. And boy, if you read through the Bible, you find that out, that the Bible is not prudish about these things, not at all.

Read the Song of Songs sometime and you'll find out what the Bible says about these things. No, not at all. He's talking about these things misplaced, disordered, disorganized from the grain of reality the way things should be.

So what is wrong with lust? What is wrong with desiring someone with lustful intent? And let me give you just two deep reasons why. And we could talk about this for a long time, but I can't do that, so I'm just going to give you two.

And the first is this. Lust is wrong because lust is fundamentally selfish. It's greedy. Lust is an attempt in the imagination and in the heart to satisfy an appetite with selfish motivation.

So C.S. Lewis talks about this and he says, the real damage of lust, the real damage of pornography, the real damage of sexual expression outside of marriage in any context is that it makes us more and more selfish, he writes, because we were not made for sexual action, physical union without total union.

[ 15 : 29 ] And so, we're made for emotional union, spiritual union, legal union in marriage, and only then physical union. And when you don't have a relationship of total union, emotional union, where you've been called to give yourself away to somebody emotionally, legal union, where you've been called to make vows to somebody and say, no matter what happens, as bad as it gets, I'll stick with you and it'll be for you, then you've actually committed selfishness when you lust after them for just one type of union, physical union.

All you're doing is trying to attempt self-satisfaction without the costliness of the deep commitment that's required in giving yourself away to somebody totally, totally in total union.

That's the first reason. When you read the old writers in the Christian tradition on what makes lust so damaging, you know what the first thing they say is every time? Because it makes people selfish. More and more selfish, more and more self-centered by seeking satisfaction through your own means, through your own means, without having to give yourself away to anybody in any other way.

The second reason that you see quite often throughout Christian history, church history on this, of what's wrong with this is it treats other people as less than whole people.

So every single one of us has been made in the image of God and we've got emotions and reason and personality and habits and preferences and loves and all of us have ways of speaking and accents and places we're from and stories and narratives and that's the whole of who we are.

[ 17 : 03 ] So every single one of us is in God's image. We are a unity in diversity. We are one person made up of so many parts. But when we lust after people sexually, lustful intent and the imagination and the heart, what is happening is that we're reducing the holistic image of God down to nothing but physical attractiveness.

We've taken a person who was made in the image of God and we've said all you really are is your physicality. The measure of your beauty. That's it. Physical attractiveness is all that you are.

Now it's really interesting that when you think about the Ten Commandments and the Second Commandment, God says, do not make any images of me. No graven images. And when you get to the prophets, the prophets say to Israel when they make graven images, what do the prophets say?

They say, you have committed adultery against God. You've cheated on Him. You've tried to reduce God down to an image. You've tried to objectify Him in an object itself and so you've committed adultery against Him.

And likewise, in a lesser way but a real way, in the Bible, it says when you objectify a person who is the image of God and reduce them to nothing but their physicality, their physical attractiveness, you have done what?

[ 18 : 17 ] Committed adultery in the heart. So in the same way that you can commit adultery against God by whittling Him down to some little idol that you worship, in the same way you can whittle a person down to nothing but their physical attractiveness and commit the very same sin towards that person.

Adultery of the heart we learn here. And so Jesus says, now He takes this, He turns this up to 11 because in verses 28 to 30, what does He say? He says, in 29 to 30, I should say, if your right eye causes you to sin, you tear it out.

If your right hand causes you to sin, rip it off. Right? What is He doing there? He's being hyperbolic, definitely, but He's being hyperbolic to make a point. He's saying that lust is serious because lust never stays where it is.

Remember, it's a spectrum. And so just like if you don't crush your anger, your unrighteous anger in your heart, it can become murder. In the same way that if you don't crush and destroy and seek to kill, mortify lustful intention, reducing the image of God in somebody down to just their physical attractiveness, it's going to make you more and more selfish.

More and more selfish. And lust never stays put. It grows. And it becomes something far more. Far more. Right? And so He says lust is really serious. So Louise Perry, one contemporary commentator, she points out that in modern culture, our modern culture, she says, teaches the myth that sex is, quote, a leisure activity invested with meaning only if the participants choose to give it meaning.

[ 19 : 45 ] Boy. No. It's so full of meaning. It's so full of power. It can make you. It can break you. And if it's not used in the right context, then it really can destroy.

Jesus is not here to, Jesus is not prudish. Jesus is not, Jesus is here to come and heal you and protect you. And so that's the negative side.

Now let me turn very quickly and just give you the positive side. Because I don't want to walk away with just thinking I shouldn't have lust in my heart. I want you to walk away thinking there's a better vision.

There's a better way. There's a Christian vision, a God-given reality to this that's so good. And here's what it is. There's three levels to it and I'll just list them for you briefly. Number one, what the Bible teaches is that physical union is meant by God to take place in the context of total union, legal union, union of every kind and that's the union called marriage, one flesh marriage.

And that means that physical union is meant to take place in a union based in a real love. And what is real love? Love, not lust. What's the difference in love and lust? Love is a decision and a commitment to self-sacrificially give yourself away for other people to the point of great cost to yourself.

[ 21 : 03 ] Lust is entirely inward. It's selfish. It doesn't cost you anything. But in real love, you've got to make such a commitment that you're willing to give yourself away to the point of great cost to somebody else.

And that's why it's meant only for marriage. It's total commitment, real love, real love. The difference in covenantal love versus the market economy of lust. Number two, level two. Let's go a level deeper.

What's the meaning? What's the better vision? That's the first level. Level two is God tells us that physical union is meant for marriage. Why? Because marriage is a signpost, analogy, and living illustration of the kind of love that God has for His people, for us.

And so Ephesians 5 is really explicit about this, that marriage from the very beginning of human history, including one flesh, physical union, has always meant to point to the kind of love that God has for His people, total love, committed, legal, never ending, always enduring.

And so every single person that's ever been married in all of human history has been meant to be a signpost of the gospel itself. That's what marriage exists for, to point to something far greater.

[ 22 : 13 ] It doesn't exist for itself. You see, physical union doesn't even exist for itself. All of it, the total union of marriage is meant to point to something far greater than itself, and that's the love of God that God has to rescue human beings and be for them forever.

Now, that's why thirdly, the third level, our greatest unmet desires in this life can only be fulfilled by God.

So this is the most deep level of understanding what's going on in our hearts, desire. The greatest desires we have, even when they're pointed at the wrong things with lust, those desires can only ever be truly and finally fulfilled by God Himself.

Now, that's why we can say tonight that sex, physical union, sexuality expressed in marriage itself are gifts and they're not necessary at the same time.

They exist to point to something far bigger, far greater, and that's the longing and desires we have to experience the love of God in our lives. And that's why Christianity came into the world and revolutionized the reality of, well, you can be married or you can be single and both are good.

[ 23 : 27 ] Why? Because sexuality expressed in marriage are not necessary because they exist simply to point to something far greater than themselves. And that's the love that we can have truly fulfilled with God Himself through Christ.

And so you can be married and if you are, you've got, you're calling us to illustrate the love of the gospel in your love for your spouse to the point of great cost to yourself.

and physical union is only appropriate when you are giving yourself away self-sacrificially to somebody. And you can be single and you can show forth, look, you can be single and you can show forth the sufficiency of God's love in your life for you.

So if you're married, you can illustrate the gospel in the way you love your spouse. If you're single, you can illustrate the gospel in the way other people can see you fighting for sufficiency, seeing God as sufficient.

God's love for you as truly sufficient. In both ways, in both ways, you get to reflect the highest order of what these things exist for to experience the love of God in your life. God is the true fulfillment of all of our unmet longings.

[ 24 : 31 ] That's the real key. Now that's the key to the path of fighting against the problem of lust. Alright, so let's turn to that briefly. Secondly, what's the path to healing? Tonight, Jesus Christ says lust is adultery of the heart, it's a problem of the heart, and you can lust after anything.

A person or a career? Anything in this life. And what is the path to healing? Let me give you three quick things. Number one, when it comes to sexual lust, there may be some of us tonight who come and say, you know, I can see maybe that I struggle with lust of a different kind, but this is an issue that's not really my issue.

And if that's you, then you've got to come and see tonight where it is that your over desires, your lust, your idol-making factory, what is it? What is the object of your lust, your desire?

And that's really important because we all need to come tonight and see that this is an issue we struggle with. And the reason that we need to see that is because it's very, very critical that we protect this church community and anybody that walks through our doors.

And the way we want to protect them is that if you are a person who is deep in the muck, in the darkness perhaps, of struggling with patterns of lust that have led to all sorts of things in your life, you need to know that the church is a hospital for sinners.

[ 25 : 57 ] Yeah? And that you can come and be safe. And this is not a space of shame. Why? Because Jesus Christ came to forgive us. So you can come, you can come.

You can know that at St. Columba's you will always have a place where you can come and if you need somebody to talk to and to help you fight the path of lust, this will be a place you can do that. A safe place that you can come and do that.

And that means that for those of us who don't struggle as much with the temptations of sexual lust, we've got to be willing to see, but boy, do I struggle with it in all sorts of other ways. So that we're humble enough to keep the church, this space, a place that's safe for people to come and wrestle and fight against the sin patterns that are deep and dark down in their hearts.

It also means that we can never be a place where we're surprised by sin. Sin is never surprising. It's sad. It hurts. It's never surprising. And so we've got to be a place where people can come and fight against patterns of guilt and shame that are perpetually leading to the same patterns of sin in their lives.

Number two, how do you find, if you're that person tonight that's there, how do you find hope in the midst of shame and guilt? Maybe for some things you've done, things that have happened to you, patterns that you're engrossed in right at the moment.

[ 27 : 10 ] How do you come and find hope? And there's so much to say here and I can only say something for two minutes. And so what I'll say is this, we've got to see that in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the concept of lust is just idolatry.

It's longing for things in this life more than we long for God. And every time we see the prophets come and talk about idolatry, what do they say? They say, we have all, you have all Israel, all of us, every single human has committed adultery.

We've chased things, we've lusted for things in this life that we thought could save us and satisfy us far more than we ever wanted God. And the thing that we need tonight to see is that Jesus Christ left His Father's home above, so free, so infinite, His grace, to give Himself away to those that cheated.

That's everybody. That Jesus Christ came for the adulterer, that He came for us, that He came for us who chase after all the wrong things to seek self-salvation. Jesus Christ came, in other words, to forgive and to fulfill.

We mentioned this morning the woman at the well in John 4. Let me come back to her for a second. Remember what happened at the woman, if you've read the Gospels of John 4, the woman at the well. Jesus said, I can give you water to drink by which you will never be thirsty again.

[ 28 : 32 ] The waters of eternal life, and she said, what are you talking about? And He said, look, go and get your husband and bring him back and we can talk about it all together. And she said, I don't have a husband. And Jesus turns around and says, I know you've had five and the person that you're living with right now is not your husband.

Now why did Jesus do that? Did He do it just to expose her and bring shame into her life? Not at all. Not at all. What did He do? What was He saying? He's saying, you've been chasing relationship after relationship after relationship after relationship six times now.

And none of it has ever fulfilled you. So sexuality expressed, relationship after relationship, none of it has ever really fulfilled you. But I can tell you today that I can forgive you and fulfill you.

That's what He was doing when He was offering the water of life. And Jesus Christ comes to every one of us today and says, I can forgive you by the power of the cross. I will forgive you for everything. And then I will turn around and show you what it means to reshape your desires, to fulfill you, to meet the unmet longings that you've been chasing in root of this issue.

And so thirdly and finally, a couple things that you can do. Number one, let me put it this way. Jesus tells us to make a plan. So if you're a Christian tonight and you know, hey, I'm forgiven, only Christ can fulfill the desires that I'm fighting and battling with here, Jesus comes in verse 28 to 30 and He says, what do you got to do?

[ 29 : 56 ] He says, you got to gouge out your eye. What does He mean by that? He means you've got to have a plan in place. You've got to take steps. You've got to turn from here and do something. And what is it that you've got to do?

You've got to be practical. So number one, to be practical, to fight this issue of lust, you've got to first confess your sins to one another. Not to everybody, no.

James, the book of James talks to us about having somebody in your life that you can go and talk to. And so, let me say it like this, it's nearly impossible to win and tackle the problem of lust, the patterns of lust in your life without somebody else walking alongside you.

Nearly impossible. And I know that that may be a step that you've never taken before, but it is nearly impossible to fight this battle by yourself. So you probably need to find somebody that you really trust that you can come and walk alongside in this.

Number two, start where you are with deep honesty. So tonight, we're going to pray in just a second. Are you willing to pray to God honestly about where you are in this issue? Sexual sin that maybe needs to be repented of?

[ 31 : 02 ] All sorts of other things that may be going on in your heart right now. It's a place for honesty. So offer that to you tonight in prayer. Third, don't be passive. You've got to be as active as possible to fight this issue.

And so if you think about, this is a metaphor, an illustration that I've heard from other people, but if you want to be a healthy person, if you made it your New Year's resolution to get really healthy, to get fit, you know, you go to the gym and it's really just two things you've got to do.

One is you need resistance. Right? So to get fit, to grow muscle, what do you need? You've got to have resistance. You've got to pick something up that's heavier than a normal thing that you pick up.

And that builds muscle. Right? And in the same way, the first step in spiritual health, in the health of your heart, is you've got to have resistance in your life. So you've actually got to actively resist the sin patterns, the idolatries, the lusts that you are currently chasing after.

You've got to put things in your life that can help you practically to fight, to resist. You've got to resist. You've got to be really serious about resistance. And then what's the second part of getting fit, getting healthy? You've got to have better nutrition.

[ 32 : 14 ] Right? And in the same way, when it comes to spiritual life, better food has to go down into your soul. Right? The better food than the objects of lust. The better food than the imagination is currently consuming.

And what is that better food? And it's this, and I'll close with this. The most important thing we need is for Jesus Christ, God Himself, to become the apple of our eye.

To become our greatest desire, our greatest longing. God Himself can fulfill all of our unmet longings. And the more we look at the cross and meditate on the cross, the beauty of Jesus Christ for us, the more and more we'll be able in this lifetime path of fighting the problem of lust, be able to see a desire, a better desire, a true desire, good food replace the bad food that we've been eating.

It's a lifelong path. I'll finish with, I love, Alan Noble is one contemporary writer who's written a brief book about this. And he writes this especially to men, but of course it can be for anybody.

But he says this, that whenever the temptation of lust arises, anytime he notices another person and begins to make them an object and reduce the image of God in them, this is what he says.

[ 33 : 29 ] He says, that I immediately pray, Lord, thank you for the beauty you create in others and help me to know in my heart now that such beauty is not mine to possess.

Lord, thank you for the beauty that you've created in other people and thank you, Lord, help me now to realize that that beauty is not for me. It's not mine to possess. In other words, how do you fight with a better desire?

The answer is prayer. Whenever the temptation arises, straight to prayer. Pray without ceasing. Lift up your heart to the Lord.

Confess in the moment my desires are changing, Lord. Pray. And it's very, very difficult. It's very helpful in a season of temptation and lust for whatever it may be to replace that with prayer.

Let us pray. Father, we come now before you needing healing for things we've done, for things that have been done to us, for patterns in our lives, for the misuse of our imagination.

[ 34 : 36 ] And Lord, we ask tonight that the Holy Spirit will come and meet with us in this prayer and then as we sing this final song to bring healing to us. Would you, oh God, Holy Spirit, be the air lifting our wings that we would see that there really is forgiveness, that you cast our sexual sins as far as the east is from the west and there really is a path forward, a better desire fulfilled and a better object, Jesus Christ.

So Lord Jesus, please make us, make yourself to us the apple of our eye. Make you our greatest affection. We pray the prayer of St. Augustine tonight.

Give us the desires you command of us. And so we pray for that now in Jesus' name. Amen.