

**“The Eyes Have It”**  
**Matthew 5:27-30**  
*Series: Breaking Bad Week 7. Do Not Commit Adultery*  
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The Woodside Church

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Men and women are different especially when it comes to romance. A few days before their anniversary a husband and wife are shopping. After a time the wife realizes her husband is not with her and she becomes worried. Reaching him by cell phone she asks, “Where are you?” He replies, “Oh honey, you caught me. Remember that jewelry store where you saw that diamond necklace you loved and I told you at the time I just couldn’t afford it but one day I would get it for you?” The wife becomes misty-eyed and says, “Yes my darling. I remember that store.” “Well,” he said, “I’m at the Home Depot next to it.”

I’m not a big fan of chick flicks – not because I’m a guy (ok it’s partly that) – but also because the message of such movies as *Titanic*, *The Notebook*, and *Letters to Juliet* is “You’re with the wrong guy. You’re missing the one true love of your life. You need to dump the loser you’re with and go get him.” After my wife and I watch a chick flick she sighs and says, “Wasn’t that romantic?” I start to wonder if she’s planning to get rid of me.

The theme of so many stories is: To be happy and loved you need a new relationship or a better relationship. Find the right person and it will be perfect. Yet we all know that’s a fantasy. Eventually Mr. Right becomes Mr. Leave the Toilet Seat Up at Night and Ms. Right turns into Mrs. Honey Do This Right Now. Novels, songs and movies say it will be better if you are with someone else. And that’s a problem if you are married.

Today, in our Ten Commandment series called *Breaking Bad* we look at the Seventh Commandment: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Typically adultery is defined as having sexual relations with someone who is not your spouse. This is **Physical Adultery** and the Bible clearly tells us to avoid it. Yet there are two more levels of adultery. The second is **Emotional Adultery**. Jesus teaches,

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:27-28

Notice: there is no physical contact. It’s just a look. The eyes have it. The eyes, driven by emotional desire, reach out and snatch the image of a person and pull it in. What’s wrong with a look? Lust feeds on that image. The more the eyes have, the more the eyes want. The more the eyes want the more the eyes need until, as Jesus says, it causes you to stumble. The Greek word for “stumble” is skandalizo or, in English, scandal. Emotional adultery can and does lead to physical adultery. Yet the stumble and scandal of adultery, according to Jesus, happens within before it happens without. This is so serious Jesus adds,

If your right eye causes you to stumble, 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. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, 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. Matthew 5:29-30

Wow. That sounds extreme. If we take that literally we'll all be one-eyed lefties. Jesus is clearly exaggerating to make a point. If you let lust in through your eyes or your hands you create hell for yourself, your family and others. What is hell? It is pain and sorrow but mostly hell is separation from God.

And that leads to the third level of adultery: **Spiritual Adultery**. The core sin in the Bible is not physical adultery but spiritual adultery – loving an idol instead of God. Spiritual adultery is wandering away from God. The people of Israel did this often. Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel God says,

How I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols Ezekiel 6:9

Spiritual adultery happens whenever we let anything on earth – possessions, positions, pleasures, power, popularity - take God's place in our hearts. It still happens today. Emotional and physical adultery cause hell in our lives and those around us. Yet they are the symptoms of a deeper problem: spiritual adultery. To prevent physical and emotional adultery, we must avoid spiritual adultery at the core. We must be filled with God instead of stuff, love God first instead of idols. Our core problem is, in the words of that great theologian Willie Nelson, we keep "looking for love in all the wrong places." If you want a love that never ends, the place to begin is with God. The Apostle John says,

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. We love because he first loved us. (I John 4:7-8, 19)

In His very nature, God is love. He is the source of love, the definition of love, the first and greatest Lover of all. He wants to love you with the love you've always been looking for.

God's love is **Passionate**. The word "passion" refers to any strong feelings from intense pleasure and satisfaction to intense pain and suffering. You can be passionate about politics, the environment or your beloved. God is passionate. In the Ten Commandments He says, "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." (Exodus 20:5). He means He will not share His people with other gods just as a husband will not share his wife with other men. God feels strongly about us. God is passionately in love with you. The Lord created you for passion. Genesis 1 concludes,

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:27-28)

From chapter one we are given a mission that involves passion. He wants us to reproduce: the first commandment and the only one of God's commandments we have done perfectly.

When it comes to passion there are two opposite errors people make. One is to assume sex is wrong, shameful or dirty. The Church preached this message especially in the Middle Ages when priests and nuns were told to be celibate. Virginity was the highest of all virtues because sex was considered shameful. The other extreme, which is current in our time, says sex is just a natural hunger like eating or sleeping. It needs to be satisfied whenever and with whomever you want, so long as nobody gets hurt.

The truth is a lot of people are getting hurt. Our culture is saturated with sex. It's pouring into our homes through internet pornography. Researcher George Barna found:

1 out of 3 Americans seek out pornography at least once a month.

90% of teens and 96% of young adults are either encouraging, accepting, or neutral when they talk about porn with their friends.

55% of married men say they watch porn at least once a month.

Google's mobile search sites found more than 1 in 5 searches being for pornography, the most popular search query.

In 2017 the world's most popular porn website reported 3,732 petabytes of information transferred (enough to fill the memory of every iPhone on Earth)

We are learning that pornography use is not simply a bad habit. It's similar to a chemical addiction. Dr. Jeffrey Satinover says,

Modern science allows us to understand that the underlying nature of an addiction to pornography is chemically nearly identical to a heroin addiction.

We need to especially take action to protect the rising generation which is exposed to this at a much younger age than ever before. The U.S. Justice Department states,

Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.

And what is the impact of porn? According to sociologist Jill Manning, the research indicates pornography consumption is associated with six trends, among others:

1. Increased marital distress, and risk of separation and divorce.

2. Decreased marital intimacy and sexual satisfaction.
3. Infidelity.
4. Increased appetite for more graphic types of pornography and sexual activity
5. Devaluation of monogamy, marriage and child rearing.
6. Increasing numbers struggling with compulsive and addictive sexual behavior.

One website, Freedom Begins Here, puts it all in perspective:

It's more than statistics. It's people. It's husbands, fathers, mothers, wives. It's children, sons, daughters. It's families, friends, co-workers. It's churches, ministries, the body of Christ. Statistics only tell part of the story. Statistics represent people you know. People struggling with sexual addiction. Oprah calls it "America's #1 addiction." Chuck Swindoll calls it "The #1 secret problem in your church."<sup>1</sup>

Children, teens and adults, singles and married couples are affected by this issue. The Church must be a place of healing and deliverance not judgment and rejection. Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in adultery. Neither did He condone what she did. Instead, with grace and love He freed her to change, to "go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11). Passion and sex are God's creation. They are good gifts He gave us. But like all God's gifts, we have broken them. How can we recapture God's original plan for passion?

First we must realize that **Passion is Powerful**. Among all the drives within us – hunger, thirst, knowledge, friendship – sexual pleasure is one of the most powerful. It can create life, it can deepen or destroy a relationship. There are a lot of powerful forces in our world such as fire and electricity. These are a great benefit to us. Imagine your house without light or heat. They are a blessing so long as the fire stays in the furnace and the electricity goes through the circuit box. If they get out, they will burn down the house. Genesis 2 teaches us the safe place God created for the fire of passion is in marriage. I saw a cartoon once in which a teen asked his father, "Dad, what did you wear to have safe sex in your day?" The father replied, "A wedding ring." When the fire of passion rests in the fireplace of marriage it warms the whole relationship. But if the fire goes beyond those boundaries, people get burned.

Second, **Passion Involves the Whole Person**. Since Adam and Eve are the result of God dividing one into two, when the two become one it's more than a physical union.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is *united* to his wife, and they become one flesh. Genesis 2:24

The word *united* describes a bonding of the whole being – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. You can't pull them apart without tearing both. There's no such thing as "casual sex." It's never "purely physical." Every time you have intimate relations with someone you give away a part of yourself. We see the physical effect but we cannot perceive what we are giving away on the spiritual level nor how they are poisoning our spirits. Paul says:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.freedombeginshere.org/statistics/>

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. I Corinthians 6:15-18

On a spiritual level we carry with us all our past partners. You may have entered these relationships willingly. You may have been the victim of abuse. Either way they don't leave our spirits until we ask God for healing and deliverance. We often drag these into a marriage and they cause problems neither spouse can understand.

Here's the Good News: Jesus Christ can heal your past. His passion and death on the cross show He is passionately in love with you. Paul says,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

No matter what's in your past, Jesus gave His life to purify you and make you holy and blameless in God's eyes. Let's protect our children and youth. The website [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com) provides tools to filter and monitor your children's internet use. It offers helpful articles on the problem of porn and how to protect your family. If you are struggling with lust, inside or outside of marriage, break the silence and seek help. I will listen confidentially, without judgment and, if needed, direct you to a counselor or support group. Don't suffer in the prison of silence and fear. God wants to set you free.

Third, **Passion Takes Practice**. A marriage license does not suddenly make passion perfect. Here are some of the obstacles I've seen that turn a passionate couple into just passing ships.

- Lack of communication
- Issues from the past
- Lack of trust
- Attraction to porn or to people outside the marriage
- Too much work
- Too many demands with the children
- Anger
- Depression
- Alcohol or drugs

Even when you work through some of these passion killers there is still the issue of simple practices such as tenderness, romance, kindness, making time and communicating your needs and desires.

This September we will offer the Alpha Marriage Course. It helps couples uncover and deal with these issues and others in a safe and encouraging atmosphere. They even

have a whole session on Good Sex. For some reason people really like that week's homework assignment. Many describe it as a date night. It's the best kind of date night – instead of staring at a movie, you'll be strengthening the most important relationship in your life. I strongly encourage every couple to rearrange your schedule and attend the course. Some say to me, "I'm too busy. I can't afford to make the time for it." You can't afford not to. It will make a struggling marriage stronger and a good marriage better.

Eugene Peterson shares a story about a completely unchurched young woman who discovered true passion. She started attending his church and made a genuine commitment to follow Jesus. Eventually she asked to be baptized and started studying Scripture, and attending worship—"embracing everything readily and gladly." But one thing puzzled Peterson: the young woman continued to live with her boyfriend (as she had done for years), and she was uninterested in marriage.

She told me all this without apology and not as a confession but quite casually, as we were getting acquainted with one another. I wondered if I should say anything. Surely she knew that the Christian way had some sexual implications for the way you lived. She was in church each Sunday .... I assumed that she would eventually notice. I waited for her to bring up the subject.

One day on impulse I said, "We have been having these conversations for seven months. Astrid, would you do something for me?" "Sure. What is it?" "Live celibate for the next six months." Surprised, she said, "Why would I do that?" "Trust me. I think it's important."

I learned later that her boyfriend moved out before the week was over. She said: "When you asked me to live celibate for six months, I had no idea what you were up to. You asked me to trust you, and so I did. It's been two months now, and I think I understand what you were doing. I feel so free; I've never felt so 'myself' before, never felt so at home with myself. I thought everybody did what I was doing—all my friends did. I just thought this was the American way. And now I am noticing so many other things about my relations with others—they seem so much more clean and whole. So uncluttered. And do you know what? I have been thinking that I might want to get married someday. Thank you."

The celibacy decision survived the six-month mark and continued for two more years, at which time she and her fiancé exchanged vows, and I blessed their Christian marriage.<sup>2</sup>

Let God fill you with his passionate love and set you free.

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Practice Resurrection* (Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 195-196