

The 7 Deadly Sins—and How to Deal with Them

Discussion 5 :: Dealing with Lust

Resource: *The Seven Deadly Sins*, by Graham Tomlin (Chapter 6—Lust).

Timing: 40-50 minutes, leading into ministry/response time.

The Point: The main idea of each section—feel free to add other Scriptures, stories, etc to support the ideas.

An Illustration: Living examples from your own lives. Suggestions are offered, but feel free to use your own.

The Application: Ideas for how to live out and apply the principles being discussed.

Recap last week's discussion :: Dealing with Gluttony

The Point: Gluttony is considered an unhealthy preoccupation with food and is usually marked by over- or under-eating. People that are struggling with eating issues are usually advised to simply “eat less” or “eat more” when in fact there is usually a much deeper issue at hand. God offers a more balanced approach to dealing with gluttony:

- God created food for our enjoyment (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25).
- There is a time to abstain or fast (Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 5b).
- There is a time to feast (Numbers 10:10).

The Application: Ask a couple of people to share their experiences while attempting to cultivate contentment. (refer to the action steps that were suggested last week)

Ice-breaker—break up into groups of two or three and discuss the following:

Share about a childhood crush—celebrity or not. Why did this person appeal to you so much?

Introduction to this week's discussion :: Dealing with Lust

God created us to desire all forms of intimacy—emotional, spiritual and physical. They are meant to draw us closer to him and to one another. The result is that we are able to live our lives to the fullest (John 10:10). When these intimacies are expressed as God designed them, they are healthy and good. Our sexual desire is a gift from God that was meant to be fully expressed in a marriage relationship. In this context we are encouraged to give freely with the result being that we will receive as well.

However, many think that “healthy” sexuality is unrestrained and is to be satisfied when and how we choose. Lust objectifies a person, making him or her the means by which our desires are satisfied. When sex is viewed in such a self-centered way, these desires can become distorted and are no longer healthy or good.

Tomlin asserts that “if our souls, minds, hearts and bodies are all intertwined with each other, then to have the most physical union of bodies without a corresponding spiritual union of hearts, minds and most importantly, lives, is to live a lie.” Tonight’s discussion will focus on what God says about physical desire and why there is a time to abstain from it as well as at time to express it. God’s solution to lust is love.

1. What does God think about sex? (Genesis 2:21-25)

The Point: Sex is meant to be enjoyed freely and without restraint within a marriage relationship. Lust can make us believe or behave as if sex should be expressed freely—either within or without a marriage commitment.

- There is no shame in sexual desire (Genesis 2:25).
- It is meant to be a shared experience (Song of Songs 2:16).
- Is expressed in a marriage relationship (Proverbs 5:15-20).
- Do not deprive one another (1 Corinthians 7:1-7).

An Illustration: Share which aspects of this discussion fall in line with your understanding or experience with sex. OR, share any aspects of God’s view that surprise you.

The Application: Consider if you have any attitudes toward sexual desire that are contrary to God's original design. What steps do you need to take to realign yourself with his perspective? (e.g. talk to a trusted friend, consult your pastor or a member of clergy, if unmarried—have a physical boundaries conversation with your partner)

2. Resisting temptation (Galatians 5:16)

The Point: Heterosexual desire is natural and good. However, there are times to abstain from an intimate physical relationship. Lust can make us believe or behave as if refraining from sex is abnormal or unnatural.

- Avoid sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- Be alert (1 Peter 5:8).
- Temptation looks different for each of us (Romans 14:1-3).
- God will provide a way out (1 Corinthians 10:12-13 + Romans 8:26).

An Illustration: Be brave! Share a time when you were able to resist a lustful temptation. What were the circumstances, and what part did God play in helping you stand firm?

The Application: Consider an area of your life where you consistently fall into temptation. In what way(s) do you contend with your temptations? In what way(s) have you invited God to be part of the solution? (e.g. talk to an accountability partner, a member of clergy, consider if what you read/watch/listen to helps or hinders you in your struggles, etc)

3. Community as a solution (Galatians 5:13)

The Point: Because sexual desire is natural, all of us are subject to temptation of some kind; and all of us are in need of accountability. Healthy friendships can satisfy some of our needs for love, attention, comfort and support; but helping others carry their burdens is a way to express love toward them. Lust can make us believe or behave as if we are responsible only to ourselves in personal matters of sexuality.

- We are in no position to judge one another (Matthew 7:2-4).
- Bear with one another's weaknesses (Romans 15:1-2).
- Grace when we fail (Galatians 6:1-2).
- Have compassion for others in weakness (Colossians 3:12).

An Illustration: Share how your friendships have helped encourage and sustain you as well as to help you deal with temptation. How has life in community made a difference for you in these areas?

The Application: Consider if there is an area of temptation in your life that you are attempting to handle on your own. What might it look like to invite others into your struggle? Deciding to be honest and share your weaknesses with someone is often the hardest part; commit to talking to someone about your struggles.

Ideas for ministry/response time during the pastorate evening:

- Break into *same-sex* groups of two or three and share your beliefs, attitudes and experiences with regards to sexual desires and temptations. Pray for one another as needed in this specific area of life.
- Create space for a time of silent prayer. Pray over your group, encouraging everyone to talk to God about this area of their life. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your heart and minds, and to inspire any necessary changes or action steps. Pray that individuals and/or couples will invite someone into any struggles that God reveals; encourage them not to go it alone!

Ideas for response during the week :: cultivating love

- Choose one of suggestions from the “The Application” portion of this week’s talk and commit to doing it in the next two weeks. Be prepared to share your experiences and the results the next time the pastorate meets.
- Consider the nature of what you read, watch or listen to and how it affects your views regarding sexuality. Are the messages you receive in line with—or contrary to—what God says about sexuality? Do you need to make any changes?
- Consider if there is someone in your life that seems to be struggling with temptation and could really use support. Have you been contributing to the problem in some way (e.g. watching or listening to questionable material together), or are you attempting to help carry the burden?