

JESUS ON OBJECTIFICATION AND OPPRESSION

This weeks Bible passage is one that tackles the legal law given to Israel in Exodus 20 and shows Gods heart behind it. The laws are being fulfilled in Jesus teaching. They should leave you wondering about the impossibility of following them and that is just it. We cannot. We need Jesus' help. We need the Holy Spirit to guide us daily on the narrow path of discipleship to humble us enough to ask for help. There may be topics that are raised this week that are emotional for you. We hope that home groups are safe places to share your life experiences with but if you aren't comfortable to share something please do not feel compelled to do so. Perhaps you might like to confide in an individual you trust after the session. Let us begin in prayer.

PRAY

Lord open our hearts and minds to your teaching this week. Help us to see what damage we do to ourselves and our brothers and sisters. Where there is pain within our past, we ask you to start to heal it as we study and talk through your precious word.

READ Matthew 5:21-32

STUDY

You shall not murder, or commit adultery. Got that right? Jesus then tells us what it actually means. He takes it to another level, the heart of the issue. Not so easy right? The temptation here is to write Jesus off as out of touch or to lean into shame. Firstly emotions and beauty are God given. Anger, sexual attraction, beauty are part of Gods good creation. In Genesis 1:31 it is written: God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good**. PAUSE - do you agree with this?

Temptation is everywhere. You cannot stop anger and sexual attraction from entering your mind. It is part of you, it is how you were created. I don't think Jesus is talking about the appreciation of beauty or the momentary flash of sexual desire. Instead of reacting like a monk in the middle ages hidden away and riddled with guilt due to his desires we are given instructions and help. Rick Warren quotes Martin Luther's famous saying when commenting on this passage:

“You cannot keep birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.” You can't keep the Devil from suggesting thoughts, but you can choose not to dwell or act on them.

If we let anger take root, let is fester, it can destroy us. If we look twice and start objectifying another person for our own sexual needs it dehumanises and oppresses all those involved. The word 'look' here in greek means to gaze or stare rather than a glance. Lust is a religious word that means to use a man or woman's body to gain sexual gratification. Love and lust can be confusing within us but it is clear within scripture.

Love is...(1 Cor. 13). Lust is the opposite. Can you create a definition for lust?

We are told to control our eyes, to not look again, or to not let anger go uncontrolled before both your eye and anger control you. In this context Jesus is teaching the men and it is my (male) opinion (maybe wrongly) that it is men who struggle most with anger and lust. Historical responses have been to further oppress women to deal with our own lack of control. Just look at what the religious leaders do to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). No man was brought before Jesus. Does Jesus side with the law? Yes but his heart goes out to the victim and Jesus calls them out on their own sinfulness. Our fleshy desires, our animal instinct, all dehumanise ourselves and those around us. Lust dehumanises those who fit our cultural definition of beauty and those who do not fit.

The dominant concept of the *good* life in Western culture is hedonistic. It is no longer a pursuit of virtue, what is good and evil, but rather a pursuit of desires. The lie is sold to us that if we give into our desires we are living a *good* life. Trust your feelings, follow your heart, and you will flourish. Do you agree? Who or what is your guide to the good and bad desires within you?

READ Matthew 22: 36-40.

If this is the case, what are you being asked to change today? What has the holy spirit been whispering to you throughout your conversations?

