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Grounders:

How many times have you committed adultery? Jesus said that it might be more than you think. With the invention of internet pornography, adultery in our world might be at an all-time high. In His second of *six examples of inside-out righteousness*, Jesus taught His disciples to *be adultery free*. In each example, Jesus followed a three-fold pattern: (1) He addressed an Old Testament command saying, “You have heard that it was said;” (2) He alluded to the Pharisees’ legalistic interpretation; and (3) He clarified the intent, or spirit, of the law, prefacing His fulfillment with, “But I tell you.”

The Old Testament command: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery’*” (Matt. 5:27). Jesus referred to the seventh of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:14). The Old Testament’s penalty for adultery (to alter, or to change, marriage vows) was the death of both parties, including an adulterous fiancé (Deut. 22:22-24). Adultery is not only a sin against others; it is a sin against our Creator. After his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, King David said that he had sinned against God (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51:4).

The Legalistic Interpretation: “*Adultery is a bodily act of sexual intercourse.*” While this is not mentioned verbatim, it is alluded to by Jesus’ context. Outside-in righteousness follows the letter of the law, but misses the spirit of the law. While in this mode, we seek loopholes that allow us to “keep the letter of the law” while maintaining control of our own lives. “I never had sexual relations with that woman” has become one man’s legacy. He chose his words carefully in order to justify his following of the law’s letter while falling short of its intent.

The Spirit of the Law (Heart): “*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt. 5:28). Sin, including adultery, begins when we desire it in our hearts (Jas. 1:14). Jesus was not saying “Now that you’ve thought about it, you might as well do it.” Rather, He was calling His disciples to *be faithful in heart*—faithful to God and faithful to their spouses. Jesus said that faithfulness was one of the most important matters of the law (Matt. 23:23). He followed His fulfillment of the intent of the law with two tools for His disciples to be faithful.

First, bounce your eyes, “*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*” (Matt. 5:29). Jesus referred to the right side of the body because it was considered the most dominant. He was not advocating self-mutilation. Instead, He used hyperbole, deliberate exaggeration to make a point. In essence, Jesus said that immediate gratification leads to dissatisfaction and death. Sexual temptation enters through the eyes (Jn. 2:15-17), and the eyes are never satisfied (Prov. 27:20). Thus, the more that we see sexual temptation, the more we desire it.

When you are tempted, bounce your eyes and refocus your mind with God’s Word and images of your spouse if you are married. Two thousand years ago the people of Corinth were surrounded with live sexual temptations, not with virtual ones that we have available on the internet today. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).



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Second, run. “*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 our body than for your whole body to go into hell*” (Matt. 5:30). Joseph ran from Potiphar’s wife who pursued him to go to bed with her, noting that it was both a sin against her husband and a sin against God (Gen. 39:6-12). Immediate gratification leads to dissatisfaction and death. Sexual temptation enters through our eyes, gets mulled over in our hearts, and is executed through our hands. However, God always provides a way out (1 Cor. 10:13).

Paul called the Thessalonians to run from sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:3). The Greek word for “sexual immorality” is the same root word for “pornography.” The comprehensive definition of this word includes any sexual gratification outside of marriage. God designed sex to take place between one man and one woman in the context of marital union. This is the only kind of sex that satisfies.

If you have committed adultery, realize that you can be forgiven and restored in Christ. God’s intent of the law is faithfulness because *God is faithful* (Exod. 34:6; Ps. 145:13), and *Christ is faithful* (Heb. 3:6)—faithful to forgive and to restore (1 Jn. 1:9). Left to ourselves, we are unfaithful; we lust in our hearts for others who are not our spouses. But, Christ in us is faithful. When tempted, (1) bounce your eyes from the temptation, and refocus them on God’s Word and your spouse if you are married; and (2) run away from the temptation, both in your heart and physically if necessary. Fix your eyes on Christ, and run to Him.

Faithful,
Mitch