

Guard Your Heart

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Matthew 5:27-30 NLT

“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, 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 hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, 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 be thrown into hell.

False Narrative: As long as sexual activity is desirable, consensual, and doesn't hurt anyone, it is acceptable and should be embraced.

Jesus' Narrative: Any form of objectifying another human being for personal gratification is wrong and destructive.

HOW TO INTENTIONALLY GUARD YOUR HEART

1. Practice Your **STRATEGY** for Dealing with Temptation

- a) Recognize the Trigger (what emotion/feeling am I experiencing?)
 - Afraid
 - Angry
 - Bored
 - Discouraged
 - Lonely
 - Sad
 - Stressed
 - Weary (physically, emotionally)

- b) Begin with **Gratitude** (what are 10 things I am thankful for?)

- c) Confront the **Rationalization** (what lie am I telling myself?)

- d) Replace with **Truth** (what do I really want?)

- e) Connect with a **Human Being** (who can I reach out to?)

2. Ruthlessly **RE-DRAW** the Boundary Lines

What is one boundary line I need to ruthlessly re-draw in order to guard my heart?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: GUARD YOUR HEART

We live in a sex-saturated world. In our daily lives, we are consistently confronted with images and messages that shape our thinking and ultimately see their effect on our actions. In many cases the primary message we are receiving comes from the media that we are consuming. A 2016 Nielsen report indicated that the average person in North America was devoting over 10 hours a day to the consumption of media. This consumption included daily news, time spent surfing social media and things like our favorite TV shows and movies.

In those hours what messages are we receiving? Research has shown that **the average person will view over one hundred thousand sexual references during the course of their lifetime** while watching TV. Jesus knows that these things are not good for our hearts, and though he uses hyperbole here in Matthew 5:29 (“So if your eye—even your good eye causes you to lust, 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.”), the point he is making is that we need take drastic action to guard our hearts and to ‘cut out’ anything that hinders our pursuit of sexual holiness.

How are we to guard our hearts in a time where the common media we consume offers a message saturated in sexualized themes? One spiritual practice that can begin to help us apprentice with Jesus in this regard is to self-impose a media fast.

Over the next week consider cutting out all media for a 24-48 hour period, taking the initiative to cut out all screen time that is not absolutely necessary during that time. Though this may seem impossible (!), you may be surprised how freeing it can be to disconnect from the bombardment of sexual images that saturate the media.

Use the 24-48 hours as time to do a media reset, reflect on the time spent and the impact each form of media has on our time and our thinking. Ask, “**How can I minimize exposure to that which offers a distorted view of God-honouring sexuality** and instead intentionally cultivate a heart pursuing purity and holiness by what I allow my eyes to see?”

Be sure to ask Jesus what kinds of media habits He would consider wise for you moving forward.

Adapted from James Bryan Smith, “The Good and Beautiful life.” Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009

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