

Facilitator's Guide

Seven Deadly Sins

REAL PROBLEMS FROM REAL PEOPLE



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O F K A N S A S C I T Y

Seven Deadly Sins

Real Problems from Real People

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SESSION

LUST

Focus Scriptures: Matthew 5:27-30; Philippians 4:8

Session Goal: To help group members understand the ways lust can infiltrate and damage a person's life.

OPENING OUR MINDS

Option 1

Begin by asking your group how they would define "lust." Then, read the following definition of lust: *a strong feeling of sexual desire; a strong desire for something.*¹ The author of *Seven Deadly Sins: Real Problems from Real People* defines lust as "having an intense desire for someone or something that isn't yours."²

Most of the time we associate lust with inappropriate sexual desires; however, we can lust after power, control, food, and so on. Today, we will look at the ways lust can enter and hurt a person's life.

1. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lust> <Accessed October 8, 2015.>

2. Don Welch. *Seven Deadly Sins: Real Problems from Real People* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2016), 7

Option 2

Ask your group to silently consider whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- *Lust is associated with sexual thoughts, feelings, and desires.*
- *Lust only becomes harmful when we act upon it.*
- *Lustful thoughts only happen to people with impure minds.*
- *Lust is believing you need something, rather than accepting God's embracing love.*
- *Lust, if not dealt with, can become an all-consuming force in a person's life.*
- *Lust is a sin.*

OPENING THE WORD

Understanding Matthew 5:27-30

These words of Jesus are part of His sermon on the mount. Jesus does not waste words, but gets to the point: sin starts in the heart. He says that we must rid ourselves of sin.

One of the Ten Commandments is that *You Shall Not Commit Adultery* (Exodus 20:14). That is, a person was not to have an inappropriate relationship with someone who was not his/her spouse. But Jesus takes this a step further, He said that if you commit adultery with a person in your mind, that is mental adultery, and still sin. Sinful yearnings lead to sinful behavior. Being faithful is a matter of both mind and body.

The point is, Jesus' followers must keep their hearts and minds under the control of the Holy Spirit. We are to "cut out" and renounce those things that hinder our walk with Him.

Understanding Philippians 4:8

In the preceding verses, Paul has told the Philippians that God's peace will guard their hearts and minds. He now gives some everyday suggestions to make that promise real in their lives. He points to the ways they are to think and act. He basically is telling them to "recognize the good wherever it is found and employ it in the service of Christ and the gospel."³

Option 1

As mentioned in Option 1 above, lust is having an intense desire for someone or something that isn't yours. Ask,

- **Why is there a temptation to want something that's not ours?**
- **What is it within human nature to desire that which isn't ours?**

One of the Ten Commandments is that *You Shall Not Commit Adultery* (Exodus 20:14).

- **How would you define adultery?**
- **Why do you think adultery was included in the Ten Commandments?**

Read Matthew 5:27-30.

- **What is the difference between looking at someone and looking at someone lustfully?**

3. Dean Flemming. *New Beacon Bible Commentary: Philippians*. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009), 223.

- **Why do you think Jesus took obeying this commandment a step further, making it a matter of both thought and action?**
- **Do you think we should take verses 29-30 literally? If not, how should we interpret these words of Jesus?**
- **What is Jesus' overall message in these verses?**

Read Philippians 4:8.

- **In what ways do the words of Paul relate to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:27-30?**
- **Why is what we think as important as what we do?**
- **In what ways does dwelling on the good help us avoid the temptation of lustful thoughts?**

Option 2

Divide your group in half. Give each group a piece of paper and pen/pencil. Assign one group to read Matthew 5:27-30 and the other group to read Philippians 4:8. Ask each group to read their Scripture and write down any thoughts and feelings they get from their reading. After sufficient time, bring the groups together. Invite each group to share what they wrote. Then ask,

- **How would you summarize the message of Matthew 5:27-30?**
- **How would you summarize the message of Philippians 4:8?**
- **In what ways are these two passages related to one another?**

OPENING OUR HEARTS

Option 1

Close by sharing the following steps the author of *Seven Deadly Sins: Real Problems from Real People* suggests for overcoming lust.

- First, **ask God for help**. He wants you to experience a pure life.

- Second, **ask for God’s forgiveness.**
- Third, **talk with your pastor or a trusted accountability partner** who understands biblical truths surrounding lust. God knows this is a challenging area of any person’s life. God wants to help you live life to the full (John 10:10b)!
- Fourth, **develop consistent spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and church attendance;** continually inviting God into all areas of your life.

Option 2

Share with the group that lust is something that someone can struggle with privately for years, not being able to overcome its power over his/her life. As all-consuming as lust can be in a person’s life, God offers the help and power needed to overcome lust’s hold on his/her life.

Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” We must keep our thought life pure and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Share the following helpful keys to winning the battle against lust.

- *Recognize and identify the problem.* Be honest in identifying the real issue.
- *Stop those actions that feed the lust.* Think about the things you watch and listen to that might be contributing to impure thoughts. Also, think about the places you go and the people you hang around with to determine if any of those things contribute to your struggle.
- *Acknowledge its cost.* Consider the consequences of a lustful thought life.
- *Trace its history.* When did these thoughts begin and why?
- *Obsession arises from legitimate needs; follow them to their authentic source.* What need are these thoughts fulfilling?
- *Talk to a trusted counselor or pastor.* Seek help.

- Confess your battle with lust to God and allow Him to help you with overcoming this struggle through His power and guidance. Only God can truly give you victory.

Imaginative Option

Many people are tempted with lustful thoughts. The good news is that God can give us the power and strength to overcome this temptation. Read Romans 7:18-25 and share with the group that this passage points out two important truths:

1. Our inability to do right in our strength.
2. The enabling power that comes from Christ.

Invite the group to silently reflect on the words of this passage. Emphasize the truth that “Christ is the answer” to their struggle.

Connect

WEEK 1

Lust

THIS WEEK: We will see what Jesus had to say about lust and examine the ways we can overcome this type of struggle in a person’s life.

THINK ABOUT THIS: Are you allowing any thoughts to enter your mind that would be considered lustful?

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