

What Should You Do About Sexual Sin?

Steve Burchett

In the town where I grew up, the sexually explicit magazines in the bookstore were placed on the top shelf. That usually didn't keep a curious young boy or teen from grabbing one, stuffing it in a Sports Illustrated to make it look like he was a respectable kid, and taking a look. Eventually, the bookstore workers put the pornographic magazines behind the counter, limiting access significantly.



My how things have changed! Today, it's as if access to pornography is *unlimited*. No longer does a person have to go to a bookstore. He only needs a device with a connection to the Internet. Pornographic material is more accessible than ever. Even worse, sexual sin of all kinds is widespread, and only the worst types of immorality are condemned. Our culture says that sexual satisfaction is a "right." Compare that perspective with Jesus' words:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (Matthew 5:27-30)

Even though Jesus is dealing specifically with the sin of adultery, his teaching can be applied to any type of sexual sin. He couldn't be clearer: You should take sexual sin *very seriously*. Why?

You should take sexual sin very seriously because it's addressed so often in the Bible. Jesus mentions one very significant place where sexual sin is spoken about—the Ten Commandments. Other types of sexual sin are spoken of frequently throughout the Old Testament. For example, the Law of Moses addresses sins like adultery, incest and even bestiality; the Prophets confronted these sins among God's people; and even the historical sections contain stories of both sexual purity and immorality.

Along with Jesus' words in Matthew 5, sexual sin is addressed various places in the New Testament. For example, Paul charged the Corinthians to remove a sexually immoral man from their church (1 Cor 5). He also made statements like, "Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor 6:18) and "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thess 4:3). Hebrews

13:4 says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

You should take sexual sin very seriously because you are guilty of it. In Matthew 5:27, Jesus quotes the seventh commandment. However, not all were guilty of this outward act based on sexual activity with a married person (adultery). But Jesus speaks of a new standard: "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." He's not talking about just noticing that a woman is attractive, but desiring her sexually. This is pictured in David's long look at Bathsheba. Jesus is specifically speaking of mental *adultery* that a man commits, but mental sexual immorality (not requiring a married person) is certainly a sin we have all committed—man or woman.

You should take sexual sin very seriously because Jesus says you must. "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away... And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away" (vv. 29-30). Jesus is speaking symbolically to say that we must take the most radical measures imaginable in order to be done with sexual sin. We've got to address sexual sin ruthlessly. No more protracted looks! No more aimless wandering on the Internet that often leads to mental sin! No more unnecessary lengthy chats with that pretty woman at work! Flee immorality! And victory over sexual sin *is* possible because, through Christ's work on your behalf, you have been delivered from sin's power (Rom 6:17-18) and you are indwelt by the strength-giving Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13).¹

You should take sexual sin very seriously because, if you don't, you will go to hell. Jesus words are unambiguous: "For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell." Jesus is communicating what the rest of the New Testament makes plain: faith in Christ yields instant justification and a life of forsaking sin. The alternative to aggressively repenting of sexual sin is an eternal hell. Paul concurred: "Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral,...nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality...will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9-10). There will be people in hell who at one assumed they were believers, but they didn't take sexual sin as seriously as Jesus said they should have.

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¹ For further insight on these truths, see Daryl Wingerd, *Delivered by Desire: The Encouraging Truth About Christians and Sexual Purity*. This book is available on Kindle or as a hard copy at www.CCWtoday.org.