

November 14-18, 2022 Edition

Following

# The Year Of Jesus Part 46

Jesus On Lust:

You Are NOT An Animal (so don't act like one)

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

November 12/13, 2022



When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

\*\*\* These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well you knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

\*\*\*\* Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside](http://www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside)). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

## Monday:

*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. Matthew 5:27-28 (NLT)*

**Reflection:** I don't know about you, but when I read this part of Jesus' sermon on the mount it kind of freaked me out. What chance does anyone have with this kind of new legal code.

The good news is, this isn't about a new legal code. It's not about making things so difficult that nobody could possibly do it. This is about two things in my humble opinion... freedom.

Wait a minute... I thought you said it was about two things. Freedom is only one thing.

Yes, but it's freedom from two very different things.

Have you ever noticed that we all have different struggles? Some have struggles with substances while others seem to have a lot of self control in that area. Some have struggles with their sexuality while others seem to not have problems with that area of their lives. Some struggle with anger... Some with dishonesty... And for those who seemingly have a handle on all those things, they struggle with being judgmental.

This particular part of the sermon on the mount isn't really directed at those who struggle with sexual sin (we'll end up talking about that this week but ultimately this isn't really about them)- it's directed at those who think they don't have a problem and so they look down their holier-than-thou noses at those whose problem is much more visible. Jesus wants all of us to know that all of us have something to deal with when it comes to sexual sin...

So before we dive into the concept of sexual sin itself this week... Spend some time thinking about how Jesus is speaking to you with this passage.

**Prayer:** Father, we often see things as black and white. We see other people's sins and problems but miss the things we are struggling with. Show me today what you want me to see in this passage. In Jesus' Name, amen.

## Tuesday:

*Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. James 1:13-14 (NLT)*

**Reflection:** Have you ever noticed how much the Bible talks about death? A lot. But it isn't always the kind of death we think about. It's not always the grab your heart and fall to the ground and stop breathing kind of death... Often the Bible is talking about a kind of zombie-like existence where we continue to walk this earth... We just do it without the life we were created to live it with.

When it comes to temptation... The Bible says ultimately it leads to this kind of existence. It doesn't advertise the fact that it will lead to death. In fact, it promises exactly the opposite of death... And we fall for it more often than we should. We end up being a lot like fish. When someone drops a line into the water they don't just throw in a naked hook. You wouldn't catch anything. The fish knows what the hook promises and isn't tempted to bite. But dress that hook up with the right bait or lure and you know what happens. Fish have been biting at appetizing bait for as long as there have been humans to dress up a hook.

Aren't you glad we're not like fish?

Or maybe we are. Satan would never drop just a hook in front of you. He would never tempt you by saying, "do this and over time all the pleasure will drain away and you'll be enslaved and spend your days in a zombie-like stupor wondering what happened to you." No... Satan always dresses the hook up with appetizing bait. And human beings have been biting at this appetizing bait (it takes different forms with all of us) for as long as there have been humans around to make stupid decisions. Sometimes we are made much more susceptible to the lure of Satan's bait because of our past. Because of things that have happened to us or decisions we've made. But the good news is, no matter where you've been, what you've done or what has happened to you, you have a Father who is in the business of healing broken lives. He can free you from the hooks that tie us up and turn us into zombies. He can create in you a life free of regret, guilt, fear, anxiety and worry. He can turn you into the kind of person that is proud of who you're becoming when you look into the mirror. You just have to ask Him.

Will it be easy? No. It may take years... And the process will never be over until the day you see Him face to face. But it's SO worth it. I've been on this journey with God for over 27 years now and He has healed my life in ways I never thought possible. I'm far from perfect (and if you know me you know that's an understatement) but I am constantly amazed at the miraculous way He has transformed my life even with all the mistakes, the stumbling and fumbling and continual mistakes (see... There's another one there ;o). And I know He can do the same thing for you.

**Prayer:** Father, forgive me for the times I've failed to see the hook that is wrapped up in appetizing temptations. Show me all the hooks that I am missing in my life. Teach me to be more than a fish, to learn to live a life in which I am more than my appetites. Teach me to be free. In Jesus' Name, amen.

**Wednesday:**

*I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman.  
Job 31:1 (NLT)*

**Reflection:** They say that the greatest journeys begin with a single step. My greatest journey began when I decided to stop believing the lie that I knew better than God what was going to bring me joy and peace and hope and satisfaction. Just making a

commitment to that belief has led me on the greatest adventure I could've ever hoped to go on.

Part of that journey for me was when I decided that I would change how I looked at people. Maybe you don't have this problem but one of my main weaknesses is looking at people and not seeing a brother or sister or son or daughter of God, but seeing a means to an end. What can that person do for me? How can they help me further my goals? This is what lust really is. We talk about it in a strictly sexual sense but it's really just objectifying people to satisfy a hunger. That hunger doesn't have to be sexual in nature. Preachers struggle with lust all the time when they look at the human beings in their congregations as cogs in the machine that will build their church, legacy and reputation. Parents struggle with lust when they see their children as instruments to make them look good or fulfill the dreams they never were able to attain. And we can of course use lust to satisfy sexual hunger by objectifying other human beings (and Jesus says it's something that can be done in our hearts even if we never touch those people physically).

What's the big deal? Why is Jesus so worried about this?

Because in this new reality that Jesus invites us to in the sermon on the mount (He calls it the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God) our relationships are THE MOST IMPORTANT THING. And when we use and abuse others to satisfy a hunger in us (even if it isn't sexual) it impacts our relationships. It will arrest the transformation of your heart as fast as anything else I can think of (and the transformation of your heart is what life in this new reality is all about).

So are you ready to stop objectifying people? Are you ready to treat every human being as though they are cherished sons or daughters of God Himself? Sometimes it's tough to know that I've been objectifying people... sometimes it's very obvious. Ask God to show you where you are treating others with lust (even if it's not a sexualized lust that you're struggling with).

**Prayer:** Father, I want to live in Your reality and enjoy all the blessings that go along with it. Please show me if there are any areas in my life where I am objectifying/using/abusing/lusting people without really being aware of it. In Jesus' Name, amen.

## **Thursday**

*From now on, think of it this way... You are dead to sin and alive to God...That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly... into God's way of doing things. Romans 6:11-13 (MES)*

**Reflection:** Once you've made that decision or commitment to stop objectifying people you need to realize, you will be continually tempted to move back toward that way of life. As with the original temptation... the hook will be hidden carefully whatever appetizing bait Satan thinks you will fall for. And generally the temptation won't be to dive back in with both feet... it'll be much more subtle and crafty.

The day I wrote this the date is July 6, 2013. That may not seem like an important date for you but it is for me. Twenty seven years ago on this date I stopped abusing alcohol and drugs. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. I wish I had never bought into the bait that Satan covered the hook of addiction with but I did. And if I'm not careful I know I could be right back where I was 27 years ago.

In the days and weeks after July 6th I had to put all my energy into not drinking or doing drugs. I had to find something to fill that space with and I filled it with God. When I was tempted I would sit down and read my Bible. It didn't take long to wear my first Bible out because I was tempted A LOT.

Now here I am, 27 years later and when I'm tempted it's not to go back to the gutters and do the drugs or get so drunk I make myself sick. It's much more subtle than that. It's what I picture Paul to be talking about in the scripture for today. It's the "little errands that are connected with that old way of life." I know what those look like for me (most of the time I'm even smart enough to turn away from them by throwing myself wholeheartedly into God's way of doing things). Do you know what those little errands look like for you?

I was talking to a guy once who struggled with online pornography (it really is a destructive thing in our society... If you could see what it does to families and marriages you'd be wary of it too). He said the hardest thing now is when he goes on a simple news site like nbc.com and sees something about wardrobe malfunctions or stars in swimming suits or maybe even some actress whose phone was hacked and naked pictures have been released. It's not full on porn but for him it's associated with those little errands associated with that way of life (my words... Not his but I'm pretty sure that was his meaning).

So he disciplines himself not to click on those seemingly innocent links. Sometimes he might even have to discipline himself not to go to news websites because those silly links are part of every serious news website.

So how about you? What are the little errands associated with that old way of life for you? What are the things that Satan uses to lure you back to that old way of life where sin was in charge and destroying your life? If you don't know think about it. Pray about it. This is important.

And if you do know... Stop running those errands.

**Prayer:** Father, show me the ways that Satan tempts me to go back into my old way of life (whether that means addictions, sexual sins, judgment, anger, greediness, etc.). Open my eyes to the things that I need to avoid. In Jesus Name, amen.

## **Friday:**

*I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born. Isaiah 44:2 (CEV)*

*Leave your impoverished confusion and live! Walk up the street to a life with meaning. Proverbs 9:6 (MES)*

**Reflection:** How many people do you know who left behind a destructive life of sin, only to fall back into that way of life again and again. We all know someone like that... maybe for you that someone is very close... maybe that someone is you.

How can we keep ourselves from falling for the bait that tempts us?

I think we need to learn to live deeply satisfying lives. The temptations that Satan uses to bait the hooks that will enslave us lose their ability to fool us and even lose their appeal when we lead deeply satisfying lives. Nobody who ever ended up addicted to substances or a destructive habit ever took that first step because they said, "Man! Things are going so well for me and I am so satisfied with my life that I think I'll engage in this self injurious behavior!"

We fall for the bait of temptation generally when we are dissatisfied with how our lives are going. When we feel like there's just something missing. The best defense to this is to live a life infused with meaning and purpose. Figure out what God put you on this earth for. The scripture for today says that before you were even born you were in His care. That means if you're walking around and breathing the air of this planet, it's not a mistake. It's no coincidence. God knew you were coming and He made plans for how you'd spend your life.

The more you discover that plan the more satisfied you will be and the less influence temptation will have on your life. So figure it out. Be what you were created to be. Need help? That's what we're here for. Make an appointment to talk to someone and start reading the owners manual for the human life. There is nothing like living out the purpose that you were designed to fulfill.

**Prayer:** Father, I don't always know what my purpose is. Please show me what you designed me to do so I can live a life infused with meaning and purpose. In Jesus' Name, amen.