

How does one open a letter on the topic of lust? Is there a path between authentic and embarrassing? Is there any way to overcome the inherent limitations of my own male perspective? Is there a way to stay out of trouble with my wife?

You can see all the reasons why this topic fits so clearly in our discussion of the purgative way: Lord help me! You can also see why I will keep these opening remarks fairly concise.

Lust is the problem. It turns a fellow human, a fellow bearer of God's image into an object of our own desire, our own use. It is the habituated way of a consumer, rather than the spiritually disciplined way of a commissioned citizen of the Kingdom of heaven. It takes, rather than gives. It reduces, instead of bearing fruit.

Jesus takes this problem seriously: "tear it out...cut it off."

Jesus also makes clear the integrated nature of our being. Our senses, thoughts, actions, wills, and spirits are inseparable—each affecting the other. Therefore our response to the problem must enlist our whole person.

And Jesus' words remind us that our whole person is also a member of a much larger body, the body of Christ. Our perceptions, thoughts, words, and actions all have the capacity to bless or break others.

I think it is this body of Christ, this family of God that corrects and counters the world that sees others as objects.

I have a great dad and a beautiful mom, who have loved me, nurtured me and modeled faith for me my whole life. I have a wife who bears God's image in ways that challenge me and call me to pursue love more fully and authentically. I have two daughters whom I cherish and admire. They amaze and surprise me. I have a son whose heart is so pure I am called to pray for him, for the world he is walking into, for all of us who carry the light of Christ into the darkness.

This is my family. I can't define them or diminish them or defile them. They are too precious a gift. To share this life with them is too great a privilege.

And here's what is also true: my family is much bigger than I too often fail to remember. My brothers and my sisters, His sons and daughters all bear His image and for that reason alone are worthy of my attention, respect, and love.

Father God, teach me how to love my family day by day.

Small Group Direction  
Matthew 5:27-32

27“‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

- Let’s not skip past the clear commandment.
- What makes fidelity and monogamy critical elements of a life of faithfulness?

28But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- Jesus draws a line between the eye, the mind, and the heart.
- Consider and discuss this connection. How does perception give way to meditation and objectification?
- What disciplines safeguard our eyes, thoughts, and hearts?

29If 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. 30And 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.

- Here Jesus calls on his followers to subordinate the physical to the spiritual.
- What does this challenge look like in your own life?
- How can we encourage one another as a community’s/