

Lust

Desire Outside God's Design

Lust takes a good created capacity for desire and bends it toward self-serving gratification, fantasy, possession, or objectification. Jesus addresses not only outward sexual behavior but the heart that trains itself to use another person in imagination rather than honor them as an image-bearer.

22 Study Sections

Theology + application

3 Biblical Case Studies

Trace the pattern in context

Interactive Tools

Diagnostics · scenarios
· mapping

7-Day Practice

Purity & Holy Love

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Course Dashboard

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study sections completed

Progress is saved privately on this device.

Chapter Aim

Lust takes a good created capacity for desire and bends it toward self-serving gratification, fantasy, possession, or objectification. Jesus addresses not only outward sexual behavior but the heart that trains itself to use another person in imagination rather than honor them as an image-bearer.

Opposite virtue: Purity & Holy Love

Primary passage: [Matthew 5:27-30](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1-8](#). Read the complete passage before working through the study.

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How to Use This Study

This Go Deeper chapter is designed for slow study rather than quick completion. Read passages in context, answer honestly, and use the tools to move from recognition to repentance and practiced obedience.

Important distinction: self-examination is not self-condemnation. Conviction names sin truthfully and moves toward Christ, grace, repair, and obedience.

Questions to carry through the chapter

- When does attraction become possessive, objectifying, or intentionally cultivated fantasy?
- What environments, media, loneliness, stress, or secrecy make temptation stronger?
- Do I treat people as whole image-bearers or as sources of gratification?
- What would purity look like as positive love rather than mere avoidance?

Before you begin, what do you want God to expose, renew, or strengthen through this chapter?

Primary Passage Lab

Read: [Matthew 5:27-30](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1-8](#)

Lust takes a good created capacity for desire and bends it toward self-serving gratification, fantasy, possession, or objectification. Jesus addresses not only outward sexual behavior but the heart that trains itself to use another person in imagination rather than honor them as an image-bearer.

Observation — What words, contrasts, commands, motives, promises, or movements stand out?

Theology — What does the passage reveal about God, Christ, grace, holiness, or human dependence?

Heart — What does the passage expose about desire, fear, worship, relationships, or self-rule?

Response — What specific faith and obedience does the passage call for?

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Word Study

Original-language study is useful when it clarifies the inspired text in context. These terms are not “secret meanings”; they are study aids that should remain subordinate to the passage as a whole.

epithymia — desire / craving

Reference: [James 1:14-15](#)

The word can refer to desire broadly; context determines whether it is ordered or sinful. Sinful desire pulls and entices.

porneia — sexual immorality

Reference: [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#)

A broad New Testament category for sexual conduct outside God's design.

hagiasmos — sanctification / holiness

Reference: [1 Thessalonians 4:3-7](#)

God's will includes a life increasingly set apart for Him, including embodied faithfulness and honor.

Which word or concept most sharpened your understanding, and how does the surrounding passage control its meaning?

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Biblical Theology Trace

Trace the theme across the biblical storyline. The goal is to see both continuity and development rather than building doctrine from one isolated verse.

Creation	Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25	Human bodies, sexuality, covenant union, and relational delight are created good before the fall.
Wisdom	Proverbs 5:1-23; 7:1-27	Wisdom treats sexual temptation as morally serious and calls for foresight, fidelity, and delight within covenant.
David	2 Samuel 11:1-5	Looking becomes taking when desire is cultivated through power and disregard for another's covenant and dignity.
Jesus	Matthew 5:27-30	Jesus locates sexual faithfulness in the heart and calls for decisive resistance to cultivated lust.
Church	1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8	Believers belong to Christ in body and spirit and are called to holiness, honor, and self-control.

What changes or deepens as you trace this subject from the Old Testament through Christ and the church?

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How This Sin Hides

Sin often survives by changing clothes. Mark the expressions you have seen in yourself or want to examine more carefully.

☐ Calling deliberate fantasy “harmless because nothing happened”

☐ Using loneliness or stress to justify secret sexualized habits

☐ Reducing people to appearance or availability

☐ Testing boundaries instead of asking what best honors God and the other person

☐ Consuming media that repeatedly trains objectification

☐ Confusing strong desire with an entitlement to act

☐ Hiding patterns from trusted Christian community

☐ Treating purity only as rule-keeping rather than love, dignity, and worship

Which hidden expression is easiest for you to excuse or rename? What would truthful language sound like?

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Anatomy Map

Use this map to catch the pattern earlier. The earlier you recognize the movement, the more choices you can make before the behavior becomes entrenched.

Trigger

Attraction, loneliness, boredom, rejection, stress, media exposure, or opportunity.

Desire

For intimacy, pleasure, affirmation, control, escape, or novelty.

Lie

“Because I feel this strongly, I need to feed it; fantasy does not affect anyone.”

Consent

Lingering, searching, replaying, objectifying, planning, secrecy, or crossing boundaries.

Fruit

Distorted perception of people, secrecy, shame, fractured trust, escalating appetite.

Renewal

Flee what feeds lust, honor bodies, seek honest community, renew imagination, practice holy love.

Map one recent real situation through these six stages. Where could faithful interruption have happened earlier?

Biblical Case Studies

Biblical narratives let us watch motives and consequences develop in context. Avoid flattening every detail into a formula; ask what the text itself emphasizes.

David and Bathsheba — 2 Samuel 11:1-27

Read: [2 Samuel 11:1-27](#)

David's gaze is joined to inquiry, summons, power, adultery, and concealment. The narrative refuses to treat private desire as disconnected from harm.

Trace the trigger, desire, lie, choice, consequence, and possible point of interruption in this account.

Joseph in Egypt — Genesis 39:6-12

Read: [Genesis 39:6-12](#)

Joseph refuses repeated sexual pressure and physically leaves the situation, showing that wise flight can be faithful strength.

Trace the trigger, desire, lie, choice, consequence, and possible point of interruption in this account.

Jesus and the heart — Matthew 5:27-30

Read: [Matthew 5:27-30](#)

Jesus intensifies the command by exposing cultivated lust in the heart and urging decisive action against what leads into sin.

Trace the trigger, desire, lie, choice, consequence, and possible point of interruption in this account.

Gospel & Opposite Virtue

What must be put off?

Lust is not only a behavior to suppress. It is a pattern of worship, desire, reasoning, and action that must be brought into the light.

What must be put on?

Purity & Holy Love is not a personality style. It is Christ-shaped character practiced through concrete choices.

Gospel foundation: We do not practice holiness to make Christ receive us. In Christ, grace creates a new identity and trains believers to live differently. See [Titus 2:11-14](#) and [Romans 8:1-14](#).

How would fighting this sin change if you fought from acceptance in Christ rather than for acceptance?

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Heart Diagnostic

This is not a spiritual grade or clinical assessment. Use it to notice recurring themes worth prayer, Scripture, counsel, and concrete practice.

1. I intentionally linger over sexualized images or situations to intensify desire.
2. I use fantasy as a recurring form of escape from stress, disappointment, or loneliness.
3. I hide browsing, messaging, media, or relational behavior from people who would be affected.
4. I evaluate people primarily by physical attractiveness.
5. I test boundaries by asking how far I can go rather than how I can honor.
6. I become resentful when another person does not meet my desired level of attention or affection.
7. I have clear plans for high-risk times, devices, places, or relationships.
8. I confuse temptation with inevitable defeat.
9. I believe secrecy protects me more than honest community would.
10. I cultivate gratitude for other people as whole persons made in God's image.
11. I know the difference between attraction, temptation, entertained fantasy, and chosen action.
12. My understanding of purity includes love, justice, honesty, fidelity, and self-control—not merely avoiding scandal.

Answer the statements prayerfully. This tool does not diagnose or grade your spirituality.

What two or three themes deserve the most honest attention right now?

Scenario Lab

Choose the response that best reflects truthful, grace-shaped faithfulness. These are formation exercises, not attempts to cover every pastoral detail.

1. Media

A show repeatedly uses sexualized content that becomes a predictable trigger for you.

Keep watching to prove you are spiritually strong.

Use a wiser boundary—skip, stop, filter, or choose something else—without treating the boundary itself as righteousness.

Assume everyone must adopt exactly your boundary.

2. Messaging

A private conversation with someone outside appropriate relational boundaries is becoming emotionally and sexually charged.

Keep it secret because nothing physical has happened.

Name the trajectory, establish clear boundaries, bring needed accountability, and honor existing commitments.

Continue until the other person makes the first move.

3. Temptation

An unwanted sexual thought appears suddenly.

Conclude that being tempted is identical to choosing sin.

Redirect attention without feeding the thought, pray, and continue in faithful action.

Deliberately replay it while claiming it was involuntary.

4. Failure

You return to a secret habit after a period of growth.

Hide until you feel less ashamed.

Confess promptly, identify the sequence, strengthen boundaries, seek support, and receive the gospel without minimizing the

Decide change is impossible.

Write one realistic scenario from your life. What would an impulsive response, a self-protective response, and a Christ-shaped response each look like?

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Truth vs. Lie Builder

Sin is often sustained by believable-sounding claims about God, self, other people, or what will satisfy us. Practice answering the lie before the next moment of pressure.

Lie

Desire is a command.

Truth

A strong desire is real, but it does not have authority over obedience.

Scripture

[1 Corinthians 6:12](#); [Galatians 5:16](#)

Lie

Fantasy is harmless because it is private.

Truth

Jesus addresses the heart, and repeated fantasy trains how we perceive and use people.

Scripture

[Matthew 5:27-30](#)

Lie

Purity is only about saying no.

Truth

Holiness is positive: honor, fidelity, love, self-control, truth, and worship with the body.

Scripture

[1 Thessalonians 4:3-8](#); [1 Corinthians 6:20](#)

Lie

I cannot resist this temptation.

Truth

God is faithful in temptation and calls us to concrete escape and Spirit-dependent obedience.

Scripture

[1 Corinthians 10:13](#); [2 Timothy 2:22](#)

Lie

Shame will make me holy.

Truth

Godly sorrow leads to repentance; condemnation and hiding do not produce lasting holiness.

Scripture

2 Corinthians 7:10; Romans 8:1

Write one recurring lie in your own words.

Answer it with a truth drawn from Scripture, in context.

Scripture Investigation Lab

Proverbs 7:21-27

Read the passage in context, then answer below.

What does this text reveal, warn, command, promise, or re-order? How does it apply to this chapter?

James 1:14-15

Read the passage in context, then answer below.

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2 Samuel 11:1-5

Read the passage in context, then answer below.

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Genesis 39:6-12

Read the passage in context, then answer below.

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2 Timothy 2:22

Read the passage in context, then answer below.

What does this text reveal, warn, command, promise, or re-order? How does it apply to this chapter?

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Read the passage in context, then answer below.

What does this text reveal, warn, command, promise, or re-order? How does it apply to this chapter?

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Put Off · Renew · Put On

New Testament change is often more than stopping. Old patterns are put off, the mind is renewed in truth, and new Christlike practices are put on.

PUT OFF — What specific behavior, access point, speech pattern, or habit must stop?

RENEW — What truth about God, identity, desire, or neighbor must become more believable?

PUT ON — What would Purity & Holy Love look like as observable action?

Personal Pattern Mapper

Common trigger

What I want in that moment

The lie or interpretation

My usual response

What it costs God, neighbor, or faithful stewardship

Truth I need ready

A wise boundary or friction point

Who can help me stay in the light

Cross-Reference Explorer

WARNING

Proverbs 7:21-27

Wisdom warns against walking knowingly into sexual temptation.

WARNING

James 1:14-15

Desire can entice and conceive sin.

EXAMPLE

2 Samuel 11:1-5

David moves from seeing toward taking.

EXAMPLE

Genesis 39:6-12

Joseph flees repeated temptation.

COMMAND

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness with others.

COMMAND

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Flee sexual immorality; glorify God in the body.

PROMISE

1 Corinthians 10:13

God is faithful and provides a way of endurance/escape in temptation.

GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

The church includes people washed, sanctified, and justified in Christ.

TRANSFORMATION

Philippians 4:8

Train attention toward what is true, honorable, just, pure, and commendable.

S.O.A.P. passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

S — Scripture: Write the key verse(s) or phrases in your own study notes. What is the immediate context?

O — Observation: What do you notice about God, motives, commands, warnings, promises, relationships, and repeated ideas?

A — Application: What concrete change would faithfulness require this week?

P — Prayer: Respond with worship, confession, gratitude, dependence, and specific request.

Knowledge Check

1. According to Matthew 5, Jesus addresses lust at the level of...

- ☐ Only public behavior
 - ☐ The heart as well as behavior
 - ☐ Legal penalties only
-

2. A sudden unwanted thought is...

- ☐ Automatically the same as deliberate fantasy
 - ☐ A temptation that calls for a faithful response
 - ☐ Proof of spiritual abandonment
-

3. Joseph's response in Genesis 39 includes...

- ☐ Negotiating longer
 - ☐ Fleeing the situation
 - ☐ Secret compromise
-

4. Purity is best framed as...

- ☐ Only avoidance
 - ☐ Whole-person holiness, honor, fidelity, and self-control
 - ☐ Fear of bodies
-

5. What often intensifies lust?

- ☐ Secrecy and repeated access
 - ☐ Honest accountability
 - ☐ Wise boundaries
-

6. The body belongs...

- ☐ Only to the individual's impulses
 - ☐ To the Lord; believers are called to glorify God in the body
 - ☐ To public opinion
-

7. A wise strategy in temptation is...

- ☐ Wait until desire is strongest
 - ☐ Plan earlier for known triggers and access points
 - ☐ Rely on shame
-

8. The gospel response to sexual sin includes...

- ☐ Minimization
- ☐ Confession, cleansing, new identity, and Spirit-enabled obedience
- ☐ Permanent identity as the failure

Check Answers

Use the quiz to retrieve key ideas, then review explanations and passages.

Personal Action Plan

What must I stop feeding or making easy?

What truth must be ready before temptation?

What practice of Purity & Holy Love will I begin?

What boundary changes timing, access, environment, or secrecy?

Who can pray, ask direct questions, or help me stay in the light?

If this sin has harmed someone, what truthful repair or restitution may be needed?

Prayer & Confession Journal

Confession — What do I need to name before God without euphemism?

Grace — What does Christ’s finished work mean for my guilt, fear, and identity?

Desire — What good or distorted desire has been driving this pattern?

Neighbor — How has this pattern affected other people, even when hidden?

Prayer — Write your response to God.

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7-Day Practice

Practice one focused response each day. The goal is not a flawless streak but intentional formation.

☐ **Day 1**

Identify your highest-risk time, place, device, emotional state, or relational dynamic.

☐ **Day 2**

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; write what holiness positively seeks, not only what it avoids.

☐ **Day 3**

Make one concrete access change that reduces a predictable trigger.

☐ **Day 4**

Practice an “image-bearer reset”: intentionally describe people by dignity, story, gifts, and neighbor-love rather than appearance.

☐ **Day 5**

Invite a trusted mature believer into one area where secrecy has been protecting temptation.

☐ **Day 6**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and write a prayer of embodied worship.

☐ **Day 7**

Review the week: where did desire become easier to recognize before consent?

After seven days: where did you notice the pattern earlier, what helped, and what practice should continue?

In-Depth Conclusion

Lust narrows a person into what the self wants from them. Holy love moves in the opposite direction: it receives bodies and sexuality as God's good creation, honors covenant and dignity, refuses exploitation, and learns to see other people as neighbors rather than objects. The goal is not fear of desire but desire reordered under the lordship of Christ.

Carry forward: The goal of this chapter is not to become fascinated with lust, but to become quicker at recognizing it, more confident in the sufficiency of Christ, and more practiced in purity & holy love.

Write your one-sentence summary: What is God calling you to believe and practice now?
