



Character Starts in the Heart

NOTE: Small Group Leaders please proceed with wisdom and care as you discuss this message/text. The issues that are presented are deeply personal and emotional. Please take time to pray over and think through how to best apply truth and share these truths with each person in your small group.

Scripture: Mathew 5:27-32

Sermon Points:

God will not elevate me any higher than the sin I allow to rule over me.

1. Jesus calls me out of self-focused lust (5:27-30)
Don't take Jesus's words literally, take them seriously!
2. Jesus calls me into self-giving love (5:31-32)

Group Opener:

During the message Jim shared 2 stories about animals (raccoon & cobra), who can remember what they were and why are they important?

"It is easier to crush the egg, than to deal with the full-grown cobra later."

CH Spurgeon

Discussion Questions:

1. It's easier to manage appearances than live from the heart. Why do you think Jesus wants full access to our hearts?
2. Read Matt 5:29-30, what actions does Jesus tell us to take regarding lust? How is that going for you?
3. Jesus calls out the issue of divorce and sexual immorality. How were these two linked? What was God's original design Jesus as drawing from (see Mark 10:5-9)?
4. Discuss this - Focus on Family commissioned a study to examine divorce rates. Nominal Christians (name only) were separated from devoted Jesus followers (regular church attendance, read Bibles, pray w/ spouses & kids). They found that...

"Devoted Followers of Jesus" are **35%** less likely to divorce than general population.

"Nominal Christians" **20%** higher rates of divorce than general population.

5. The desires you feed will always grow. How might that play out regarding lust (see James 1:13-15)? How might that play out regarding the things of God?
6. Jesus brings forgiveness and transformation when we surrender our desires to God's. Take some time in prayer to do that right now.