

Influence

Faith | January 2

1 Timothy 4:12 “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

This week, we are going to talk about **faith**.

1. What do you think faith means?
2. A good definition of Biblical faith is this: *Trusting God enough to do what he says....even when it's hard*. We are going to read a story where God asks Abraham to do something REALLY hard. **Read Genesis 22:1-19**. How did Abraham show that he had faith in God in verse 8?
3. What did God provide as the sacrifice in place of Isaac? What does this show about God?

Influence

Purity | January 8

1 Timothy 4:12 “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

Preface: Remember what I talked about at our meeting on this article. This article is one perspective on this subject of purity. So hopefully this article brings up questions, dislikes, likes, and sparks conversation for our next meeting.

The Modesty Talk for Men

I have held my tongue long enough. Of course, I hold my tongue like a toddler holds a 25 lb. barbell. As women shed their winter fur (coats) along with most of whatever else they used to wear, the modesty debate rises to the surface, trying to take the place of the discarded clothing. I read almost every modesty article, pro and anti, that shows up in my various news feeds. I believe quite strongly in the merits of modest dressing as I wrote **here**. However, while women have been scrutinized, harped on, measured, and discouraged, I see a serious problem that modesty culture has obviously not done enough to address.

Modesty is often held up as The Way to help men overcome their lust problem. The consequences of this idea are lethal: Guys feel helpless or justified in succumbing to the lustful glance whenever they see a girl who is “immodest” by their standard. Girls get discouraged and then angry when they feel like they are unfairly carrying the burden of men’s purity. Because they react to this bad reason for modesty, they often can’t see the more valid and godly reasons for modesty and throw clothing restraint to the wind.

I want to be clear upfront: modesty will not solve the problem of lust! I am ashamed that we Christian men have let this problem get so far. We need be more ruthless in attacking lust and take responsibility for our own thoughts and actions. It is ridiculous to blame the Christian girl in your circle for your lustful thoughts. If you lusted after her, she is not the problem. If she was completely covered up you could still find a way to lust, if not over her then over some other girl, and in our sexually charged culture, you wouldn’t have to look very far, in fact, perhaps no farther than your next thought.

I think Satan has twisted the basic principles behind modesty and left guys feeling like they don’t have a choice when an “immodest” woman walks in. This woman failed to do her part to dress modestly for you and now you have to give in to lust. That is satanic bovine poo-poo. (Excuse my strong language, but I’m a little upset!)

I want to challenge you men with some reasons to guard your eyes regardless of the way the women around you are dressed.

Resisting beauty?

I was explaining to Heidi the other day how strange this idea of looking away from beauty can seem sometimes. I believe God is the source of beauty and he has filled this earth with stunningly beautiful items. To the male eye, a woman is the most beautiful thing in creation. With every other thing of beauty, we are free to enjoy it, soak it in, and give praise to God, so why can't we do that with other women?

First the biblical guidelines

Even though we humans love a good game of throwing "you can't do that" around, the only authority we really have in condemning certain actions comes from the Moral Lawgiver Himself. He is the one who has laid down specific moral requirements for His creation. He has revealed these laws in His Word, by raising up governments, and in giving us a conscience. Our wrong choices have caused our consciences to malfunction regarding our own actions, though when it comes to noticing the wrong actions of others, our consciences seem to be in fine working order.

I take this brief digression because it is important to note that when I talk about lust, I am not just talking about my taste or what I am comfortable with. I am trying to appeal to God's ultimate standard. So you can feel free to reject my thoughts and opinions, but you do have a duty to your Creator and you will give an account of your actions to him some day. Now that we have that out of the way, what does His Word say about lust?

Two of the Ten Commandments apply here (Exodus 20): Number 7, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and number 10, "Thou shalt not covet ...your neighbors' wife." Job, who was held up by God as a righteous man, felt the need to make a covenant with his eyes to not look lustfully on a young woman (Job 31:1). In the New Testament, Jesus taught in Matt 5:28 that "Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Now obviously part of his point was that we are all adulterers at heart and need His forgiveness, but Jesus was also pointing out that this is God's standard for us, and He wants to bring us, through a process of sanctification, to a place where we are freed from the destructive consequences of lust.

We cannot hope to achieve this standard on our own strength, but God still calls us to obey it by the power of His Holy Spirit. Paul tells us to "flee youthful lusts" in 2 Timothy 2:22. There are many other places the Scriptures warn about lust and the dangers of immorality, but I hope you are already getting the idea. God specifically and graphically condemns gazing lustfully upon any woman you are not married to.

What is the difference between sexual desire and lust?

The distinction is an important one. Sexual desire is God given, and one should not feel ashamed for feeling that desire. Given the biblical commands to keep sex within marriage (Heb 13:4), sexual desire seems to become lust when one starts to receive sexual gratification from something or someone other than his/her spouse. When Jesus talks about a lustful man already having committed adultery with a woman in his heart, he must mean that the man in question did more than just desire her, he acted on it in his thoughts. Being tempted is not a sin. Jesus was tempted, yet did not sin. James says in his first chapter that "When desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin." So desire is not sin, but it is a force that must be watched carefully and surrendered to God. God created our desires for sex, and he wants to fulfill them in a way that makes us whole, instead of destroying us. Sexual desire also turns into lust when it becomes selfishly motivated. God made sex to pull us out of our self-centered state into a satisfying relationship of mutual giving. Lust only cares about selfish

gratification and cares little about who is affected as long as it gets what it wants. Godly sexual desire can never be divorced from its relational purposes.

Follow the bouncing eyeball

The sight of a beautiful woman showing off more of her body than anybody but her husband should see can be a flaming dart and set off a fire of desire. Women who have encouraged other women to “dress for yourself in whatever makes you comfortable,” seem to have difficulty recognizing the effect they can have on male bodies and minds. That being said, I want to add loud and clear, that you are not a victim to the way a woman dresses. She is not responsible for your battle with lust. You always have a choice to bounce your eyes away from the tempting sight, and the sooner you do, the more manageable the flame will be. God has a grace for you that covers that first unintentional glance. If you look longer and more deliberately, you are surrendering ground and rapidly becoming enslaved to that desire.

In your eyes...

Think about what a woman sees when she looks in your eyes. Does she see love that shows genuine interest in her whole person, including her mind and emotions? Or does she see eyes that are selfishly roaming her body and making her feel dirty or judged? Does she see disgust? Have you deceived yourself into thinking that looking is okay as long as you are condemning her outfit at the same time? A woman who has dressed carelessly and is showing more skin than is good for her, should find the most grace and understanding in the eyes of a Christian man. Sadly, this is rarely the case. We are as twisted by our warped, sex-saturated culture as the next person.

<http://www.purityandtruth.com/2014/07/29/the-modesty-talk-for-men/>

1. Write down questions, thoughts, dislikes, and what you liked about this article and come prepared to talk about it at the next meeting.