

**Group discussion** Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”

Read Matthew 5:27-32 aloud.

1. What strikes you about this text? Why do you find this word, phrase, or image significant?

What did Kevin say this morning (or last week) that you found to be a helpful or challenging point about these topics?

2. Jesus discusses two consecutive topics both related to the issue of “adultery” (see Bible notes). How would you define this word?

What is Jesus’ initial teaching about adultery (27-28)?

How is Jesus’ new teaching on the matter more challenging?

How is Jesus’ new teaching better than the previous one?

What do you think a person’s life would look like if they took Jesus’ new teaching seriously? *Hint: Use both your experience and your imagination to think a possible life patterns and behaviors.*

3. Jesus gives two challenging implications of this new teaching (29-30). What are they?

Do you think Jesus is speaking literally here? If not, then what point do you think he is making?

Do you think we live in world with the same attitude towards lust? Why or why not?

What would a disciple today need to do in order to transform their attitude toward lust into one that is in sync with the teaching of Jesus here?

4. Jesus gives a second teaching concerning the issue of adultery (31-32). What is this teaching?

How is this teaching more challenging than the previous one?

How is this new teaching better than the previous one?

What are some practical implications for a person who wanted to take this new teaching of Jesus seriously?

5. Both of Jesus’ teachings (27-32) here concern how we treat our neighbors (be it a stranger or a spouse). What happens to the relationship between the two people in each example of Jesus?

What do you think it is like to be on the receiving end of each of these examples? *Hint: Think emotionally, physically, mentally, etc.*

What would love of neighbor look like in each of these examples (e.g., what would love of neighbor instead of lust of neighbor look like?)

Name some specific challenges/attitudes in our world that prevent us from living out such love today. How can we overcome them?

6. Take some time to further explore the personal dimensions of each of these topics/teachings (see Leader tips).

How has your life been affected painfully by these topics/teachings?

How has your life experienced grace or healing involving these two topics/teachings?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Name one way you can view your neighbor in order to love them better. Name one practice you can implement in your life to love your neighbor better. Think in terms of the topics discussed.

## Resources

### Bible notes

Notice that these two texts are enclosed by a common root word that means, “commit adultery” (5:27, 32). This structural hint helps us to read these two teachings of Jesus together and hopefully increases our understanding of Jesus’ words.

Notice in Matthew 5:28 Jesus describes the kind of looking a person does who commits adultery. It is looking “with the purpose of lusting” (literal translation). This distinction is important to remember because there is a certain kind of heart-intent that Jesus is against. Remember, this is a sermon about a righteousness that goes beyond the Pharisee’s superficial focus and moves into one’s heart (Matt 5:17-20).

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

### “Body by Jesus” Activity

Prep: Collect a bunch of pencils, paper, scissors, and glue.

Activity: Have each kid draw a person on a sheet of paper and cut it out. Let them decorate the person as they see fit. You make one too.

Read: Matthew 5:27-30.

Delivery: Take the person you made and begin ripping it up piece by piece. As they begin reacting (hopefully they will), ask them why they are so upset. After a variety of answers make the point that Jesus, in this passage, is saying that when we act certain ways towards others we end up destroying them. This is not the intention of God.

Activity 2: Ask the kids to work together to glue your broken person on a single sheet of paper. Have them also glue their person on a sheet of paper and let them take it with them.

Delivery: As they are gluing begin telling them that God’s intention is that we treat others as whole people (not destroying them). This is the intention of God. This is how we love God and love our neighbor.

Pray: God, help us to remember that we and others are created in your image. Help us to treat everyone that way. Amen.



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## LIFE Group Guide

### Matthew 5:27-32 – The Heart of Adultery

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

**The theme: The heart of adultery is unfaithfulness. To be unfaithful implies involvement of another person. Therefore, adultery is never isolated; it always affects our neighbor. This way of life contradicts Jesus’ central command to love our neighbor, which is at the heart of God’s intended righteousness (Matt 5:17-20). So in whatever place we find ourselves the aim and heart of God is to honor the relationships around us.**

This week (and the one before) Kevin spoke about these two, interrelated passages both involving someone who “commits adultery.” A few key points are worth keeping in mind from his lessons. First, lust and divorce both run against God’s intention for relationships. Second, God’s passionate involvement in humanity gives him a deep understanding of the pain involved in broken relationships of any kind. Third, that passionate involvement gives hope to all in that God refuses to give up on his people and continues to seek relationship with them.

**Leadership tip:** Lust and divorce. These two hot topics are difficult issues so your role as leader is critical. Be sure to set the tone for your group by good listening, a calm presence, and doing whatever it takes “to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). There will likely be much emotion in discussing these topics, so pray for wisdom in your preparation that you would be open and responsive with love to all in your group.

**Relate** *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ The Oscars were last week. Any surprises? What was your favorite movie from 2010?
- ❖ How have you been enjoying the break from the cold weather?
- ❖ Here’s a random one. What’s your favorite ice cream?