

Closer to God: The Real Reason for Lent

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of March 6th

MAR 6TH SERMON SUMMARY

CLOSER TO GOD: SEXUAL SINS (1 THES. 4:3-8)

God made man and woman to be united in every way in marriage (Gen. 2:22-25) and he intended sex for marriage. Sexual sin is any sexual activity outside of marriage, in thought, action and desire (Mt. 5:27-28). How does sexual sin prevent us from closeness to God?

- 1. God's will is for us to become more like Jesus, i.e., sanctification (4:3-7).** Sexual sin hurts others, takes advantage or exploits others, and is contrary to God's plan and his character.
- 2. Sexual sin is consciously, willingly choosing to reject God's will, and God Himself (4:8).** This sin is black and white: it's clear when we sin. It can make it easier to reject God in more subjective, gray areas (like pride, greed, worry), and to reject Him completely.

Because of the Gospel, we can draw near to God, come to Him with our sin, and ask for help. (Psalm 51:17)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION: On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you talking about sexual sin?

1 ----- 10
(don't want to talk about it at all!) (totally fine with it!)

Be considerate of each other's comfort level as you discuss. You can talk specifically about sexual sin OR talk about sin in general depending on your group.

But please don't judge others and feel superior and prideful and talk about "them"! Seek to discuss what's relevant to you and how you can draw closer to God.

II. THINK AND REFLECT.

Read the excerpt from Psalm 51 (below), written by David after his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. You can also read or skim 2 Samuel 11 for the back story.

1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight; so
you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

1. If you are familiar with David's sin, what are some conscious, willing sinful choices he made?
(Refer to 2 Samuel 11 for help.)

- How did his sin start?
- How did sin lead to greater sin?
- How did he exploit and take advantage of others?
- Do you think this kind of progression is always true of sexual sin? Why or why not?

2a. How does David view God? What qualities of God does David recognize in Psalm 51?

b. How is David's sin against God (v. 4), i.e., contrary to God's will and character?

3a. How did David's sin affect him? What feelings do you observe in Psalm 51?

b. How did it affect his experience of God's presence and nearness?

c. How have you observed similar responses to sin (sexual sin or sin in general)?

4a. Does David have any doubt that God will forgive Him? Why or why not?

b. What does he seek from God? How does this demonstrate David's faith and desire for more of God?

III. PERSONAL APPLICATION (Choose 1 of the following if time is limited)

5. How do you relate to David and his response to sin? Consider:

- When have you felt the effects of sin on yourself, and/or your relationship to God?
- Which phrases in Psalm 51 stand out to you? Why?
- How do you desire to draw closer to God?
- How are you thankful for God's mercy and compassion?

6. Think about 1 Thes. 4:3-8, the passage Erik talked about in Sunday's message.

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality **7** For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. **8** Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Spend a few minutes thinking about the following questions. Share whatever you feel comfortable sharing.

- Are there any sins (sexual or otherwise) that you feel convicted about?
- Is there an area where you are consciously, willingly choosing to reject God's will, and even God Himself?
- What do you need to avoid in order to be sanctified (seek to become more like Jesus) and "live a holy life"?
- How can your small group support you, provide accountability, and pray for you?

7. How is God speaking to you through this discussion or Sunday's message?

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