

Your Cheatin' Heart

"Do not commit adultery"
Exodus 20:14

"In reality, moral rules are directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in the running of that machine.... When you are being taught how to use any machine, the instructor keeps on saying, 'No, don't do it like that,' because, of course, there are all sorts of things that look all right and seem to you the natural way of treating the machine, but do not really work."

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

*Your cheatin' heart will make you weep
You'll cry and cry and try to sleep
But sleep won't come the whole night through
Your cheatin' heart will tell on you
When tears come down like falling rain
You'll toss around and call my name
You'll walk the floor the way I do
Your cheatin' heart will tell on you*

Hank Williams, Country Singer

Monday – Character

"Character is what you are in the dark." D.L. Moody, 19th c. American evangelist

1. Please read Exodus 20:14 and Hebrews 13:4. What thoughts go through your mind; what scenarios do you imagine as you read these words?
2. In Matthew 5:27-30, Jesus talks about the importance of controlling our thoughts. How easy is it to violate Exodus 20:14? What do you think Jesus means in his comments about hands and eyes?
3. What does Jeremiah 17:9-10 say about thoughts, and how they tie into God's evaluation of our conduct?

Making it Personal: The New Testament message is clear that without God's help we simply cannot live lives that are sexually pure. Ask God to help you with your thoughts, as well as your actions.

Tuesday – Commitment

"Art, like morality, consists in drawing the line somewhere." G.K. Chesterton, 19th-20th c. English journalist

1. Please read Psalm 119:9-10. What is the key to staying pure? Why do you think this is so?
2. What does Ephesians 5:1-4 tell us about sexual impurity and imitating God?
3. How are Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 designed to help us obey Exodus 20:14?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Genesis 39:1-23. What would you do if similarly tempted? How did God protect Joseph?

Wednesday – Consequences

"I say that a man must be certain of his morality for the simple reason that he has to suffer for it." G.K. Chesterton

1. Please read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 and James 1:12-17. How are we to view temptation? From where does the gift of a way out of temptation come?

Text Insight: God uses tests to help us develop into the people he wants us to be, often by giving us new insights into ourselves, but he never tempts us to sin.

2. What do Proverbs 5:1-14, Malachi 2:13-16 and Matthew 5:31-32 say of the consequence of breaking the marriage commitment? How does it impact a person's relationships with God and others?
3. David's affair with Bathsheba, recorded in 2 Samuel 11:1-27, had dire consequences, including the death of her husband Uriah. What remorse did David show in Psalm 51:1-9 & 14-17?

Making it Personal: When you sin, remember to offer God the sacrifice that pleases him – your repentant heart.

Thursday – Contentment

"True contentment is a real, even an active, virtue--not only affirmative but creative. It is the power of getting out of any situation all there is in it." G.K. Chesterton

1. Please read Proverbs 5:15-20. Where is a person to find satisfaction in an intimate relationship? What does the imagery used in this passage suggest to you in the context of a wife and husband?
2. How could you apply Philippians 4:12-13 (though not written specifically about marriages) to Exodus 20:14?
3. What circumstance is Paul writing about in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16? How specifically might a Christian follow Paul's instructions?

Prayer Focus: Do you know any marriages where one person is already a Christian but the other is not. Pray for them in line with 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

Friday – Care and Comfort

"Compassion costs. It is easy enough to argue, criticize and condemn, but ... comfort draws from the deep. Brains can argue, but it takes heart to comfort." Samuel Chadwick, 19th-20th c. English theologian and educator.

1. Please read Hosea 1:1-3. What did God ask of Hosea? How would you have responded?
2. Now look at Hosea 3:1-5 and Leviticus 20:10. What actions could Hosea have taken when Gomer cheated on him? What did he actually do? What would it take for you to be able to do the same?

Digging Deeper: How is Hosea's personal life a reflection of God's relationship with his people in Hosea 2:1-23?

For the Weekend: Read the Song of Solomon (also entitled Song of Songs) – 1:1-4; 1:16; 2:3-7; 2:16; 3:1-5; 4:16; 6:2-3; 7:10 and 8:3-4. Then jot down some insights for finding fulfillment and intimacy in a marriage relationship.