

3 Connecting The Stories

REVIEW

Last week we talked about God's Story:

- Our story is all wrapped up in God's story.
- God created us. God loves us. God rescues and forgives us. God makes us new. God has a good, (sometimes hard) plan for us. THAT is God's story.

Take Home Follow Up:

- Where did you put the card (or object), associated with the verse you did the last time you met. Has it been a good reminder? In what ways has it been helpful for you?

INTRO

Warm Up Question: What's the scariest thing you've ever done that ended up being totally worth it? Why did you do it? What was that experience like?

We're talking today about "repentance" which is a crucial step towards healing on this journey we're on. It's important that we understand what it is.

Is it a word that sounds familiar? How would you describe it? What do you think the best definition is of the options below?

Repentance is:

- a) Begging God for a second chance
- b) Promising to never sin again
- c) Turning away from sin and towards God
- d) Feeling guilty and admitting your sin

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Last week you were asked to share your journey and struggles with pornography. That's a really hard thing to do and we're sure took a lot of courage. Today, we're at a bit of a crossroads. It's one thing to be aware of the sin you're living in and the choices you're making but it's another thing to confess it, ask for forgiveness, turn away from it and run the opposite direction. In fact, there may be times that we are actually quite content living in our mess. We might not like the idea of giving up our habits and the satisfaction or pleasure we find in them, even while we know they come in between us and our relationship with God.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult it is do you think it truly is to repent of sin in the area of pornography and turn towards God? Why did you choose that number?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What are the fears, questions or thoughts that might be holding you back from genuinely repenting and turning toward God?

GOD'S VIEW

Read Matthew 5:27-28 (NLT)

You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Put an "A" on the word adultery every time it is used. Put an "L" on the word lust every time it is used. What does this passage tell us about lust?

Now read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (NLT)

God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honour— not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways. Never harm or cheat a fellow believer in this matter by violating his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

In this passage, put an "S" over every reference to sexual sin. Put an "L" over every reference to lust in particular. According to this passage, what two things are opposite of lust?

"Holiness" focuses on our awareness of God. In this passage it means that we take our sexual desires, and act with a high regard for the holiness of God.

What might it look like to have a high regard for the holiness of God when it comes to our sexual desires?

"Honour" focuses on our awareness of others. It means we have a passion to honour others, to protect and provide for their physical, relational, emotional and sexual well being.

What is one way we can honour others with our sexual desires?

Take a look at this passage again...when it comes to our lusts, who are the victims?

When it comes to pornography, who are the people in your life pornography victimizes? Think in terms of people you know (family etc.), and people you don't know...or may not know yet. Let's list them. (This may be a bit of a tough assignment...it's OK, God's grace is big!)

Is there anyone else in your life, that your struggle with pornography has affected?

What might it look like to have a passion for the honour of others?

One of the greatest messages of Jesus Christ is His desire to forgive us. Perhaps the verse where we see this most clearly is 1 John 1:89.

Read 1 John 1:89 (NLT)

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

What does it mean to confess our sin?

What is the result of confessing our sin?

What is the difference between "forgive" and "cleanse"?

Take a look at 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

When Christ died on the cross for us, two amazing things took place. First, He took our sin on Himself, and took the punishment for sins we committed (that's forgiveness). But second, He took His rightness and placed it on those who would confess and repent (that's cleansing). So here is the truth, because of Christ's work on the cross, not only can we be forgiven, but we can be totally cleansed.

What is more difficult to experience or believe...that we can be forgiven, or that we can be cleansed? Why?

Take a few minutes and write down the ways that you have specifically sinned in the area of lust and pornography. Talk about them together. Use this as an opportunity for confession.

There is something we can't miss here... and that's God's **grace** in this process. It can be really hard to write this stuff down and to talk about it. The guilt we feel is our awareness that we've gone down a path that leads us away from God. But if you're familiar with the story of the prodigal son, you'll remember the crazy **grace** the father extends to his son when he sees him returning home. The son knows he's messed up. The father has a million and one reasons to be angry, disappointed, and to turn away. But he doesn't.... he comes running. That is our Father's response to us when we admit that we've sinned and we turn back to Him.

If you have time look up and read through the story of the prodigal son Jesus tells in Luke 15:11-32 (NLT).

When we feel *convicted* that's the Holy Spirit at work drawing us back to God. But when we feel shame... that's not from God. Shame tends to move us away from God...it isolates us.

Repentance is to be a FREEING experience not one that brings more guilt and shame.

Our God is a God of HOPE, FORGIVENESS, JOY and FREEDOM.

RESPONSE

Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper or napkin. In the left column, write down feelings or words you associate with your struggle with pornography. In the right column, write down what we are meant to experience through the process of repentance. (Often, these words are opposites!) See the example we started below..

shame		joy
guilt		forgiveness
dirty		clean
trapped		freedom

TAKE HOME

Ask God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to help you through this process.

Write down specifically what this sin is you have committed, who the victims are, and what the effects of the sin are on the victims (this includes the people in pornography and the people in your life)

Write down how the sin of pornography is a sin against God.

Spend some time thinking about the reality that Christ died on the cross for these sins in particular.

Now confess these sins to Christ and ask God to forgive you. (You may want to write these down as a list, or as a letter to God.)

Spend some time thinking about the awesome reality that when Jesus Christ went to the cross, He specifically took these sins you have confessed on Himself, and paid the debt to God that you owe for these sins, and because of His death for you, you are now completely forgiven and purified. **You no longer have anything to hide before God or others.**

Now draw a line through each sin you wrote down earlier, and beside it, write "forgiven".

Look up and read through the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 (NLT). Spend some time thanking God for His response of grace, and for His forgiveness, and finally spend some time asking Him to empower you to pursue a pure or holy life.

Take some time this week to listen to Sons & Daughters by Brett Stanfill.

FIGHTER VERSE

Fight the Lie: I'm unforgivable.

Luke 15:20 (NLT)

So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

PRAY to wrap up your time together!