

Lust: A Desire For Fulfillment

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1986 (rev. 90, 99,01)

Introduction: Desire exists within the natural heart of all humans, (James 4:1 "desires in your members;" and Romans 1:24 "lusts in your hearts"). Because sin permeates the whole being of all humans, sin often controls an individual through their desires, (Romans 1:27; Ephesians 4:19). God's Word calls this desire "lust." In order to help someone struggling with sin, defusing the "lust" involved is an important key to restoring the individual and keeping the individual from committing the same sin over and over.

Mankind cannot know much about "lust" without God's insights, (Romans 7:7, the Law revealed "covetousness" which is the same Greek word, "epithumia," for "lust"). Therefore the Christian counselor and the individual who has a problem must understand what God's Word says about "lust" in order to have the victory.

1. TYPES OF LUST

There are many different kinds of "lusts," (2 Timothy 3:6, Romans 1:24). There are five different kinds of lust noted in God's Word.

A. "Lust," (Greek "epithumia," Hebrew equivalent "hamad") meaning: "a strong desire," (Matthew 5:28; Romans 1:26; 13:14; 2 Timothy 3:6; 1 Peter 4:3; 2 Peter 2:18; James 1:14,15; 4:2; Galatians 5:24 and 1 Thessalonians 4:5, as concupiscence) This lust is characterized by a longing for what is forbidden, a deep burning, a covetous desire, and sometimes can be irregular or even violent. This word is used 54 times in the Bible.

B. "Lust," (Greek "pathos") meaning: "an inordinate affection, a suffering passion or hurting affection," (Romans 1:26, as "affection;" 1 Thessalonians 4:5; Galatians 5:24, as "affection"). It is characterized by a very strong desire, often develops as a sudden arousal.

C. "Lust," (Greek "hedone") meaning "self-gratification or sensual pleasure, (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; James 4:1,3; 2 Peter 2:13). It is characterized by a never ending and unfulfilled desire, often identified in pornography and materialism.

D. "Lust" (Greek "orexis") meaning "an over extending, a reaching after, a stretching for, an indulgence in, a devotion to," (Romans 1:27, "burned in lust"). It is characterized by an ignoring of limits, a disregarding of any restraints, and an excitement of the mind that quickly raises the intensity of the pursuit.

E. "Lust," (Greek "dzeloo") meaning: "to have a strong affection toward, jealousy, envy," (James 4:2, Acts 13:45, Romans 13:13). It is characterized by two things: by a slow and gradual increase which then intensifies (the root word for this word means "to boil"); and by zealous pursuit where one doesn't give up easily.

2. WORKING OF LUST

"Lust" seeks to accomplish at least four things which will show the Christian how "lust" works.

A. Lust seeks to "draw away" (Greek "exelkomenos," James 1:15, which is a hunting term that describes an animal that is brought out of cover into a vulnerable position.).

B. Lust seeks to "entice" (Greek "deleazonmenous," James 1:15). "Entice" is a fishing term which describes catching a fish with a lure that catches a fish's attention, awakens the fish's inner craving, and prompts him to bite the hook.

C. Lust seeks to "conceive" sin (Greek "sullabousa," James 1;15). "Conceive" is a biological term for "conception." Lust seeks to impregnate the will to action. When "lust" is successful, it gives birth to "sin."

D. Lust seeks to "enslave" (Romans 6:12)
When "sin" reigns, lust will rule one's life.

3. EVIDENCE OF LUST

What does "lust" produce in and around a life? How would you recognize "lust" in action?

A. Lust produces strife (Greek "polemoi," James 4:1-2, "wars"). The word for "strife" means "to be quarrelsome, disagreeable, and turbulent."

B. Lust produces conflicts (Greek "machiai," James 4:1-2, "fightings"). The word for "fighting" means "to be the cause of contentions, disputes, and controversy."

C. Lust produces character assassination (Greek "phoneuete," James 4:2,11, "murder"). The word for "murder" means "to put something to death or to kill something."

D. Lust produces selfish consumption (Greek "dapanesete," James 4:3). The word "consume" means "to expend, to waste, to consume by extravagance." We desire things so that we can indulge our own selves.

E. Lust produces sinful excesses (1 Peter 4:2-3; 2 Peter 2:18; James 1:15; Romans 1:24-31; Galatians 5:19-21). A look at the above verses reveals a list of sinfulness produced by lust.

F. Lust produces perversity, (Romans 1:26-27). Changing what is normal into something that is abnormal is the result of lust.

G. Lust produces unrighteousness, (Romans 6:13). Unrighteousness is anything that does not conform to God's character.

4. CONSEQUENCES OF LUST

How does "lust" affect an individual? Why should we avoid sinful "lust?"

A. We become alienated from God (Greek "echithra," James 4:4, "enmity"). Lust will create a state of discord between us and God.

B. We enter an adversarial position with God (Greek "echithros," James 4:4, "enemy"). Lust will place us in an hostile state with God.

C. We do not have our prayers answered (James 4:3, "ask amiss"). Lust will cause us to petition God with wrong motives.

D. We are left unfulfilled (James 4:2, "do not have"). We desire pleasure and satisfaction, however, our lust is never fulfilled.

E. We are not able to obtain what we really need (James 4:2, "cannot obtain"). We focus on what we want and lust after it, but we never really attain.

F. We will not fulfill God's will for our life, (1 Peter 4:2).

G. We become "slaves" of various lusts, (Titus 3:3; Romans 6:12).

5. CONTROL OF LUST

Anyone involved in continual sin will need to do battle with "lust." How can someone control lust?

A. We must "arm" our thoughts for battle against lust, (1 Peter 4:1-2). We must be willing to suffer the loss that lust promises to bring. The battlefield is in our mind with our "thoughts" (Greek "ennoian," 1 Peter 4:1). Christians must "arm" themselves, (Greek "hoplisasthe" meaning "equip for battle," 1 Peter 4:1). There is a real "war" being waged inside us with our desires, (Greek "strateuomenon" meaning "a military battle," James 4:1)

B. We must say "no" to sinful desires, (Titus 2:12). Only those who have experienced "regeneration" can "deny" or say "no" to sinful lusts.

C. We must "build" into our lives the character qualities of Christ's righteousness, (Romans 13:14).

D. We must "make no provision" for lust to be fulfilled, (Romans 13:14).

E. We must "commit" our lives to God's Will and not fulfill the lust, (1 Peter 4:2). God's will for our lives is that we don't spend the rest of our time fulfilling sinful desires like those who have not experienced regeneration.

F. We must "maintain" a close relationship with the Holy Spirit in order not to fulfill lust, (Galatians 5:17).

G. We must "learn" more about God and strengthen our relationship with Him, (1 Thessalonians 4:5).

H. We must "think" of the consequences of what fulfilling our lust will produce, (James 1:14-15).

Lust produces "sin" and sin produces "death."

Conclusion: The world, the flesh and the Devil are all involved in "lust." It is through the "flesh" (i.e. our physical body parts) that sinful desire fulfills itself, (Romans 13:14). The Devil seeks to tempt us away from God and also to destroy our testimony through "lusts." He sows sinful thoughts and throws obstacles in our way to attract our "lust," (James 4:7). The world is the place where "lust" can be fulfilled, (James 4:4). The world, the flesh and the Devil, all contribute to this spiritual battle of "lust," (1 John 2:15-16). However, for the Christian, "lust" has no victory unless he allows himself to fulfill his desire.