

Weekly Study Guide

The week of April 17, 2016

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SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

Option 1:

Christian growth takes practice. Nobody runs a marathon with their first step out the door. Use these weekly "soul training exercises" to help you practice cooperating with the Holy Spirit so that you can hear and walk by the Spirit's leading all throughout your life.

Mass media bombards our minds with objectifying images, often without us even realizing it. When you see pictures of people online, on TV, or on various advertisements, try to imagine them as fully human people. Try to make yourself think about that person's hopes and dreams, their parents, their fears and worries, their mind, their talents, their heart, their faith, or their soul.

Option 1 & 2:

Regular habits of private Bible reading strengthen our relationship with God and teach us how to follow Jesus. In addition to the thematic exercise above, you can use this guide each week to lead you through relevant sections of the Bible.

MONDAY

Matthew 6:5-15

TUESDAY

Matthew 6:16-18

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 6:19-24

THURSDAY

Matthew 6:25-34

FRIDAY

Matthew 7:1-12

SATURDAY

Matthew 7:13-23

Group Discussion

CONNECT

Now that winter is (mostly?) behind us, what are you looking forward to most about spring and summer?

THIS WEEK'S LEARNING GOAL

This week we are learning how our Kingdom identity can set us free from lust for healthier, more humanizing relationships.

LEARNING FROM THE BIBLE TOGETHER

Start by reading the theme of this series out loud together: "I am a child of God in whom Christ dwells, and I live in the unshakeable Kingdom of God."

Sexual desire is a normal part of being human. Jesus taught people how to express sexual desire in the Kingdom of God. Start by reading **Matthew 5:27**.

- Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience, most or all of whom revered the ten commandments, including "You shall not commit adultery." How controversial do you think this was?
- In our previous series, *The Good and Beautiful God*, we learned that God is holy and that because God is for us he is against that which harms us. How does adultery harm people?

Jesus also raised the stakes on this traditional teaching. **Read Matthew 5:28**.

- What kind of first reactions could someone have to this teaching? Try to think of both positive and negative reactions.
- The word translated as "lustfully" (or something similar) in this verse is a fairly common word for other kinds of desire also. The same word is used in all of the following verses, even though the translation may vary. Read each one for comparison.
- Sometimes the word can be used in a very positive sense. **Read Luke 17:22 and Luke 22:15**. What kind of desire do you see here?
- **Read Luke 15:16 and Luke 16:21**. What kind of desire do you see here?

- **Read Acts 20:33.** How would you describe this kind of desire?
- How are these various examples similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 5:28? How are they different?
- What's the danger or harm in desiring or longing for a person who is not your spouse?
- One element of the danger is that the person becomes an "object of desire." What's the problem when a person becomes an object? How or where do you see people objectified today?

Read Matthew 5:29-30. These verses are, of course, an exaggeration. None of Jesus' early disciples seem to have done this, and he never corrected them for it.

- What point do you think Jesus is making? What could people do today to help minimize their temptations?
- Making rules is never the whole solution. **Read Colossians 2:21-23.** How could knowing our Kingdom identity affect the character of our hearts and relationships?

SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

As a group, recall last week's soul training exercise. Did you learn or experience anything you'd like to share with your group? Now, look at the soul training exercises on the front of this study guide and get ready to practice them this week. Is there a particular time of day or some other specific commitment that would help you succeed in doing these exercises?

PRAY

Share your prayer concerns with one another. Pray for healthy, humanizing relationships.



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