

3.4.19 – Admiration vs Lust

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary:

Admire: To regard with wonder, delight, and pleased approval

Lust: 1 a desire to gratify the senses; bodily appetite **2** a) sexual desire b) excessive sexual desire, esp. as seeking unrestrained gratification

It is rather easy to see that to admire is a good activity and to lust is bad. The problem is, can admiration be turned into lusting? If so, where is the line between the two?

Admire is not used in the KJV, but The Blue Letter Bible site suggests "wonder" and "marvel" are accurately similar. Most of the verses with "wonder" in them are talking of acts of God. Admiring God is close to the first commandment: **Mar 12:30 - And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.** David could be saying "I am admired by many" in **Psa 71:7 - I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.** That is the only verse that seems to apply "wonder" to humans.

"Marvel" seems to come closer to "admire". "Marvel" is used 11 times in 11 verses, 10 are in the New Testament. We are not to marvel at **the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice**, marvel not that **Ye must be born again**, marvel not **at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice**, do not miss place the admiration **Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this** (healing the lame man)? **I marvel that ye are so soon removed...** There is some difference between "marvel" and "admire" but replacing "marvel" with "admire" would not change the meaning of most of the verses.

"Lust" does appear in the KJV 19 times in 18 verses. Most of the Old Testament occurrences are about lusting for meat when the Hebrews were getting free manna in the desert. Most of the New Testament uses are about sexual desires.

The verses on admiration seem to direct our admiration towards God. We are to admire God's power, wisdom, justice, mercy, love and His creation. It is admiring His creation that can be connected to lust. The Hebrews in the desert saw the sheep and wanted mutton, not because they were starving, but they were tired of the same food day after day. They lusted for variety even in a land where to have any food would be a blessing.

The area that is of most concern to us is admiring a member of the opposite gender. They are made in the image of God and therefore may be admired. I will give the male perspective for this since that is how I am looking at it. We have all seen women that are very attractive (admirable). God made them that way on purpose. He knew that if the command to "be fruitful and multiply" was viewed like sending Jonah to Nineveh or asking for a tenth of our hard-earned income or asking us to get out of our comfort zone and share the Gospel there may not be a next generation. Like creating light produces darkness, so the sex desire can produce fornication or adultery. Most of God's blessings can be misused. God's will in any choice is not the default choice. God's way is usually not the easy choice. He wants to know if you are really following Him. Satan seems to say, "enjoy it now and pay later." Like a credit card debt, that interest charge can destroy you before you get it all paid off. There's an old southern gospel song that says, "sin will take you farther than you ever want to go".

As often is the case, it comes down to the thoughts or intentions. Suppose you meet an attractive lady. On the first meeting the sex desire is some of the attractiveness. Later, character is more admired than at first. What you do with that desire makes the difference between admiring and lusting. If you remind yourself that God does not want sex outside of marriage and you make it a non-romantic encounter, you are admiring her image of God. If you start plotting a way to "get in bed" with her, it is lust.

The verse is **Mat 5:28 - But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust G1937 after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.** The Greek word used here is also used in the story of the prodigal son **Luke 15:16: And he would fain G1937 have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.** If you have not been around pigs you may not be able to understand how hungry this guy was, but I would need to be really close to starvation before I would even consider eating pig slop. The same word is used in the story of the rich man and Lazarus **Luke 16:21 - And desiring G1937 to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.** We assume that Lazarus had a strong desire for food. All of these are quotes from Jesus and He used the same Greek word as noted. Based on these verses we can safely conclude that we can have a rather strong desire way before it becomes lust. I heard a preacher once describe lust as "I must have it, I must have it now and I must have it now no matter the consequences." That definition moves lust way beyond simple admiration. The people who teach the bouncing eye to avoid lust missed the other uses of the same word and is making a caricature of the true meaning of lust and admiration. They are also adding to Scripture to make it mean what they want it to so they can prove their point rather than follow Godly doctrine.

It should also be pointed out what is missing from **Mat 5:28....**As mentioned in other articles, it does not say, "don't look on a woman", it says don't look on her to lust after her. You see, we are not admonished to not look...we are even allowed to admire...but we are not allowed to lust. Notice also, that the Bible does not say anything about her attire, so we can not expect the woman to keep us from lusting. We make the choice to obey God or sin.

God does not put the solution on the object of our lust. His instructions are very strong on that point. **Mat 18:8 - Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, G4624 cut**

them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. Mat 18:9 - And if thine eye offend G4624 thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Paul uses the same Greek word which is translated "make to offend" **1Co 8:13 - Wherefore, if meat make G4624 → my brother to offend, G4624 I will eat no flesh while the**

world standeth, lest I make G4624 → my brother to offend. G4624. I do not think we are far from the verses to say that if lust is a problem, surgery is God's answer of last resort instead of indulging in sin. That is enough motivation to ask God to help me control my lust. I would also at this point like to point out that God had a system in place to help men conquer the look to lust problem and that was that He created us to be naked and unashamed. Men today who have a look to lust problem could benefit enormously from a Godly world view of the body. God's world view of the body is that it was made in His image, that it was naked and that that nakedness was "good." If we were all living as much as possible to the way that we were created and intended to live, then the sight of a naked body would be commonplace and therefore not so shocking. Admiration would still be a normal event, but lust would have to be in the heart rather than in the sight and the only thing that can be done about that is to change the heart condition. Again, the command was not for the woman to dress so that men don't lust...the command was for men to not lust, admiration of God's beautiful creation and His own image was never intended to be construed as evil. If it were, God would not have made anything beautiful and to be enjoyed. We have got to the point in Christianity today where we are beginning to claim that if you enjoy it then it must be bad. Why, where in the pages of Scripture did you get that? God made everything here in this world for our enjoyment and pleasure. We have allowed Satan to steal our joy...stop, take it back from him and enjoy God's wonderful creation, but do not lust after any of it!

In case you missed lusting by women in the Bible or you think lusting can only occur when there is nakedness, consider Potiphar's wife and Joseph. **Gen 39:12 - And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.** Clothing was not the solution in this case of lust, so we can not say that it would have prevented David from lusting either. Also note that it is possible to avoid sinning even when the woman is very openly asking for sex. Bathsheba did not catch David by his robes and entice him to commit adultery.

It is sin for the woman to try to lead men into sin with her appeal, but lusting, fornication, and adultery will not be overlooked by God because the sinner was enticed.

Briefly, admiring the opposite gender is not a sin. Allowing the desire that comes with admiration to become so strong that you have to satisfy it at any cost is. King David lusted for Bathsheba, Potiphar's wife lusted for Joseph, but Boaz admired Ruth. Both women were probably seen naked, but Joseph was clothed....clothing is not the issue, the heart is!

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!