

VII: Not Committing Adultery

Good to see you all this morning. **If you have a bible**, turn with me to **Deuteronomy 5, v. 18**. Today, we cover the seventh commandment, which is about not committing *adultery*. So as we mentioned on social media this week, and in the welcome this morning: that means this teaching will likely be a little more PG-13 than normal. Maybe more like PG-10 or 11. It's up to you as a parent if your child is in here with you, really. I certainly don't mind being a helpful conversation starter for you, but also don't want to *force* you *into* a conversation you aren't *ready* to have with them. So do with that information what you will—just know we're gonna be going for it this morning. Make sense?

Okay. We've got plenty of ground to cover, so I'm just gonna hop straight into our text. Deuteronomy 5, v. 18 reads as follows:

You shall not commit adultery.

So **that word *adultery***, in the Hebrew language, describes **any sexual interaction between two people, where at least one participant is married to someone *else***. So it could refer to a married person *cheating* on their spouse, *or* to an *unmarried* person being sexually *involved* with someone who is cheating on *their* spouse. The seventh commandment prohibits anything and everything resembling *that*. “You shall not commit *adultery*.”

So **upon understanding that**, we probably find ourselves in a similar situation to *last* week. Last Sunday, when we read “you shall not *murder*,” we noted that not many people take *issue* with that command as-is. Same thing here: I don't know of many people who would say “don't commit adultery” is a *bad rule* to have in place. Maybe there are people who would say it's *unrealistic*. Maybe people who would say it's sometimes a *difficult* rule to follow. But *still*, I don't know that many people are going, “I *disagree*; I think adultery is a really *good* thing for marriages and for society in general.” Very few people out there with that *perspective*. **Most wedding vows even contain something about promising faithfulness to your spouse—because most people agree that *adultery* is a net negative.**

And I would *also* imagine that on some level, at least a *lot* of us have **had our lives negatively impacted** by adultery. **Maybe we committed adultery ourselves and regretted it. Maybe we were cheated on. Maybe one of our parents committed adultery against the other parent; maybe that happened *multiple* times throughout our life. Maybe we have had to walk with one of our good friends or family members through the *aftermath* of adultery.** It's been my experience that the vast majority of people have at least been in

proximity to an act of adultery at some point or another, and have seen up-close just how devastating it can be to everyone involved.

So for *multiple* reasons, **most of us are probably on-board** with the *reasoning* of the seventh commandment, “do not commit adultery.” The logic of this command checks out for us at an intellectual level. / **But that said, here’s my *concern*. All my cards on the table, I do wonder if some of us are living in ways that are more *consistent* with adultery, than we fully realize. I wonder if the way we currently think about life, and other people, and sex in general, actually has more in *common* with the reality of adultery than we think it does.** And if that’s *true*, that’d be well worth us pressing into as followers of Jesus—as a way of aligning our life with the heart of this command. So that’s what I want to get into this morning.

And **that is actually the point Jesus makes** when he references the seventh commandment in **Matthew 5:27-29**. We’ll put this up on the screen for you. This is Jesus, in one of his most famous teachings, commenting and expounding on the seventh commandment. *There*, he says this:

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (So...) If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

So we’ll touch briefly on **the bit about amputation** and disfigurement before we’re done. But notice what Jesus does here in Matthew 5. He starts with the seventh commandment (“you shall not commit adultery”), and then he ups the ante. Very similar to what we read about murder and anger *last* Sunday. He says ‘yes, for sure: do not commit adultery. But I’m telling you that if you are looking at someone in order to lust after them, you have already *essentially* committed adultery with that person in your heart.’

As we mentioned **last week**, God is **always concerned with our hearts**, not just our *actions*. So while he does deeply *care* that people not commit adultery, he’s also **not content with just that**. **It’s actually not a win, in God’s eyes, if we all go around objectifying each other constantly, and just happen to stop short of acting out on that objectification.** That’s not better. At least in part, because that’s not really how human nature works. We don’t typically exercise that level of self-control; if we lust after people long enough, eventually, we act out on it.

But **also, Jesus says this because objectifying other people still demonstrates a corrupted view of other people.** A less-than-biblical view of other people. It indicates that on some level, we've failed to see that other person as an image-bearer of God. As someone worthy of dignity and respect; as a whole person who deserves to be treated as such. They shouldn't have their existence truncated down to an object of our gaze or fantasy. That *robs* them of their personhood, whether they realize it's happening or not. **It takes a person with a soul and story and life...and boils them down to a collection of body parts that you enjoy looking at. Or fantasizing about.** And doing *that*, according to the Scriptures, is a sin against them, and a sin against *God* who made them in his *image*.

So **practically**, it would seem that **we need to ask: what does it mean to “look at a person lustfully”?** What does Jesus *mean* by that phrase? What is he saying is off-limits there? The *Greek* word for *lust* means to *show focused passion towards something*, and allow it to *build* and *accumulate* over time. So it's **not simply to notice** that another person is *attractive*. That may happen from time to time, and that doesn't necessarily mean that you're lusting after that person. *Lust* is when you choose to take that *second* look, that third look, and on down the line. It's when you settle *into* the glance such that it becomes *more* than a glance. *Lust* is when your mind runs past “that person is attractive,” and into “I *want* that person for myself.” **Martin Luther**, the sixteenth century theologian, explained the difference between noticing beauty and lusting after another person with an analogy of sorts. He said:

You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.

That I think is what Jesus is warning against in Matthew 5: against letting “birds build a nest in your hair.” Against nourishing and cherishing that gaze towards someone you're not married to. Against letting an observation grow and build into an obsession. A fixed, settled desire towards someone you are not in a covenant with. *That*, Jesus says, is objectifying to the other person, and is virtually the same as committing adultery *with* them. It is, in essence, a violation of the seventh commandment.

And just to state the obvious, **opportunities to lust seem to be most everywhere** in our *society*, and our daily lives. *Lust is when you see that person out for a run* or at the gym with very few clothes on, and choose to take that second or third glance back at them. *Lust is the mindset that fuels pretty much all hook-up culture.* It's when you're swiping through your **dating app of choice** and primarily asking the question, *would I or would I not* like to hook up with this person on the screen? It's having **a friend that you hook up**

with periodically because dating is just too complicated and you both need a release. To state the obvious, lust is what fuels **porn**—which is now a *billion* dollar industry in the U.S.

It's when you click over to that **explore tab on Instagram** and start scrolling, pausing a little longer on all the posts with physically attractive people in them. It's when you pause long enough on the **more suggestive videos on TikTok**, such that your For You Page knows exactly the type of thing that you like. It's when you see that **photo of that person you went to high school** or college with and start imagining what life would've been like if you would've ended up with them. It's hyper-sexualized movies and TV shows that you watch for "the plot"—but the *plot* is just wildly attractive people sleeping with each other on repeat. It's podcasts and audiobooks and books where the plot *revolves* around sex. We could go on with examples for a *while*. But **lust is anytime we turn another person—someone we know, or someone we don't know—into the object of our gaze, fantasy, or pleasure.** That is what Jesus warns us against in this passage.

Now, some people **might be inclined to respond** to that: **what's the big deal with lust?** Sex is a natural human desire, it's not hurting the other person—and in many cases, the other person might not even be *aware* that it's *happening*. How could that possibly be all that bad? **I'll tell you why.** Here's some of the data we have, so far, about *lust*. First, **lust destroys intimacy**: studies are now showing that specifically, the more *porn* a person watches, the more crushingly *unrealistic* their sexual *expectations* are, and the less *tolerance* they have for the imperfect realities of a real human relationship.¹

Lust also fuels sexual violence: there are over 50 studies out there that directly link porn consumption to acts of sexual assault.² Lust **decreases the frequency of sex** people actually have: most every survey done is showing that the further we get into the so-called "Sexual Revolution," the *less* sex people are actually having with each other.³ Which doesn't sound like a wildly successful revolution, if you ask me. Lust **contributes to widespread body image issues**: the more our society idolizes men and women that meet our near-*impossible* cultural standards of beauty, the more the other **99.9% of us struggle to see our own bodies as beautiful and desirable.**

Lust is having a profoundly **negative impact on children**: the most recent data I could find shows that children are having their first exposure to porn when they are *ten* years old. That's *elementary* school. **Some high schools are even adopting "porn literacy" classes because their students are entering into sexual relationships thinking that the**

¹ From Regnerus and Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America*. Available [here](#).

² From Foubert's "fact sheet," found [here](#).

³ Read more on this [here](#).

porn they watch depicts *realistic* sexual relationships (which it pretty much never does).⁴ High schools are having to teach their students *not* to follow the cues they see in porn so that rates of sexual assault and violent sex acts in our schools don't skyrocket.

And *finally*, **lust harms women**. More and more, we're seeing articles in mainstream magazines that claim to help women "have sex like men"—by which they *mean* "have sex flippantly and *meaninglessly*." Here's a couple *actual* headlines out there: "*How to bio-hack your brain to have sex without getting emotionally attached*." Another one: "*Here's what to do if you start 'catching feelings* (for the person you're sleeping with)."⁵ Some of these articles advise women to try *substances* like cocaine or meth before sex, or to focus their thoughts on a different *person* during sex to avoid becoming attached to the person they're having sex *with*.

Now, any professional therapist worth their salt will tell you that what is being advised in those articles is something called *dissociation*: disconnecting your mind from your body and/or surroundings. And dissociation is *typically* a psychological response to *trauma* that you receive counseling to *unlearn*; not a method you should *encourage* people *into*. So just in case you're wondering how the sexual liberation movement is going for *women*, there you have it: we're at the point where we are teaching women to view sex as *trauma*, so that they can keep up with the demands of the modern sexual ethic. Lust *harms* women.

And there are **so many other things** we *could* say. So many *other* ways that the normalization of lust is having a profound harmful impact on our society. A lot of it is actually *becoming* very well documented by researchers—both in the examples I just listed out and beyond. There is a fascinating book that just came out last year called *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution* by Louise Perry. **In the book, she essentially makes the case that much of what passes as a modern, feminist sexual ethic is actually centered around *male* pleasure and doesn't actually have the best interests of women in mind at all.** It's not at all a *Christian* book, and it certainly isn't for the faint of heart, but I'd highly recommend it if you're skeptical at all about anything we're talking about this morning.

But **here's my point**: the more the data accumulates, the more it is actually confirming what the Scriptures have insisted all along: that when we fight *against* God's design for our humanity and our sexuality, *harm* ensues as a result. And part of that is because, as we try to say *often* around here: **God doesn't make arbitrary rules.** God does *not* just go around identifying things that humans like doing and randomly deciding to make those

⁴ *What Teenagers are Learning From Online Porn*, New York Times, 2018.

⁵ Articles [here](#) and [here](#).

things off-limits. That's not what's happening. *Rather*, God *knows* how our humanity and our sexuality and our relationships and our societies are designed to work. He knows because he *designed* them to work that way. And he gives us commands and instructions that seek to align us with that design.

So let's **talk for a bit about *what* that design *is***, exactly. **What *is* God's design, God's *intention*, for human sexuality? And just as importantly, *why* is that his design for it? *Why* does he think that's the way sex should work? At least from where I sit, I think the Church has often been really *good* at articulating *what* the biblical sexual ethic is (i.e. "no sex outside of marriage"). But much of the time, we haven't been quite as good at articulating *why* that is the ethic. And listen: **with every degree that our culture moves further away from agreement with the biblical sexual ethic, I think it's going to be really crucial that we learn how to articulate *both* the *what*, and the *why***. It's not going to be enough for us to just say to our non-Christian friends and neighbors and coworkers "the bible says sex is for marriage." We're going to need to articulate *why* that's what the bible teaches, and why we choose to participate in that ethic. So let's do precisely *that*, this morning.**

The *origins* of the biblical sexual ethic can be found all the way back on the very first couple pages of the bible. In **Genesis 2**, God brings the first man and the first woman together in marriage. The author of Genesis *records* that moment with these words:

*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*⁶

That phrase "**one flesh**" in Hebrew is a profound concept. One scholar interprets it as meaning something like "*fused together* at the deepest level." Sex, according to Genesis 2, is a way of becoming "fused together" with another person "at the deepest level." Specifically, a person of the opposite sex that you've committed your life to through marriage. Sex is a way of giving yourself to that other person in a safe context of trust, friendship, and mutual affection. / Biblically, **marriage is joining your life to another person mentally, emotionally, spiritually, financially; it's a way of saying to the other person that *you* belong to *them*, and *they* belong to *you*, with nothing at all held back.**

And at its best, Genesis tells us that a husband and a wife in that context can be "naked," and still, "feel no shame." Let that sink in: God designed sex to be a shame-free experience. That, according to the bible, is what *marriage* is: giving every part of yourself

⁶ Genesis 2:24-25

to each other, with nothing held back. **And if that's what *marriage* is, then sex is acting all of that out *physically*: with your bodies.** It's becoming "one," *physically*. **It's communicating with your bodies what is *already* true of the rest of the relationship.** And because that's what sex is *designed* to be, the bible *does* teach that no sexual activity should happen *outside* of marriage. The reason being that **sex outside of that context would be to say something with your body that is decidedly *untrue* of the rest of the relationship.** *Physically*, you would be saying 'all of me is yours with nothing held back.' But in *reality*, there would actually be a good bit of you that you're holding back.⁷

So **the biblical view of sex *outside* of a marriage context *isn't* necessarily that it's dirty, or nasty; but rather that it's *dishonest*.** It's *disingenuous*—it in essence *lies* about the nature of the relationship. It pretends something is true of the relationship that isn't actually true. And **because God insists that our bodies are a significant, meaningful part of who we are, he also insists that what we do with our bodies *matters*.** He insists that we should not do something with our bodies that is inconsistent, untrue of the rest of our lives. Which, put most simply, means that sex should be enjoyed and frequent *inside* of a marriage relationship, and *never* present *outside* of a marriage relationship.

Now, **unfortunately, far too often, that is *not*** the situation—both *within* a marriage and *outside* of it. Far too often, sex *within* marriage for many people is difficult and frustrating and infrequent. And far too often, sex *outside* of marriage is presented by our culture as the most exciting, enjoyable type of sex there is. And all of those dynamics tend to mean that people experience a great deal of *shame* around sex.

Maybe you **grew up in a family that communicated** implicitly or explicitly that sex was dirty and shameful and not to be talked about. Maybe you **spent time in a church** that communicated something like that. Maybe you were **in a sexual relationship** with someone that ended up becoming exploitative and manipulative. Maybe you are part of the 1 in 3 *men* or what we *now* think is over *half* of women who have experienced some type of **sexual assault**.⁸ Maybe some of that has contributed to you feeling a lot of shame around sex. Maybe it's left you in a place where you don't *know* how to think or feel about sex, where you're *intimidated* by just the *thought* of it.

Or maybe there are **choices you've made around sex** in your life that have left you feeling like it's honestly not really that big of a deal. Maybe you feel like, given the amount of sexual sin and sexual experiences you've already had *outside* of God's design, there's not really much of a reason *not* to *continue* making those types of choices in the future.

⁷ I owe much of the language in this paragraph to the writing and teaching of Tim Keller.

⁸ [Source](#)

To you, it feels like you're already so far down that road, it's not going to make much of a tangible difference to stop *now*. / Or maybe the dysfunction you experience around sex is something *different than anything I've mentioned* so far. The reality is that probably a lot of us experience some amount of shame, some amount of dysfunction, some amount of difficulty or confusion around sex. So what I wanted to do *before we're done today* is to spend some time speaking into *those* types of situations.

And I'd like to do that by talking for a bit about *a word with an admittedly checkered history*: I want to talk for a bit about the word *purity*. *Mention that word to most modern people and you will most likely trigger at least an eye-roll from them, if not something worse*. And I think a lot of that is because some churches have used that term in some *not-so-helpful* ways. Sometimes they've used it as a weapon to swing at people who they consider *not* to be pure, for one reason or another. / But today, if it's cool with you guys, I'd like to endeavor to do the impossible, at least in some people's minds: I'd like to try and *redeem* the word "purity." Because I sure do love a *challenge*.

One of the words we translate as "pure" in the New Testament is the *Greek word hagnos*. It means, properly, to be pure, chaste, unadulterated, uncontaminated. And all of that is what has led some Christians through the years to use the word "pure" to describe someone who has no *sexual sin* to speak of. Functionally, it is thought by some that if you are a *virgin*—if you're completely free from any present or past sexual sin—you are *pure*. That means you're operating from a place of *purity*, at least in the minds of many.

But here's *what I think that definition of purity misses*—and to be honest, it's a pretty *glaring* omission. It *misses* that ***none of us, on our own, are pure. I repeat: none of us.*** *Jesus* showed us that in our Matthew 5 passage from earlier. He said, "but I tell you that if *anyone* looks at someone else lustfully, they've already committed *adultery* in their heart." Anyone who has done *that*, according to Jesus, *isn't* pure. 1 John 1 says "if we claim to be *without sin*, we *deceive* ourselves and the *truth* is not *in* us."⁹ In other words, if *any* of us claim to have obtained purity on our own—the bible says we are *lying*. Psalm 14 says, "*All* have turned away, *all* have become corrupt; there is *no* one who does good, not even *one*."¹⁰ Romans 3 tells us that "...*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."¹¹

Are you seeing a theme here? The absolute *silliness* about telling people that purity is *achieved* through never making any ill-advised sexual choices...is that pretty much *none of us* have successfully done that. If looking at a person lustfully means we've committed

⁹ v. 8

¹⁰ v. 3

¹¹ v. 23

adultery in our hearts, just to call out the elephant in the room: that means the vast *majority* of us have committed adultery in our hearts. And even if you maintain that *you're* one of the few on planet Earth that have *never* done anything like *that*...first, I have some doubts about your integrity. But *second*: even if that's true, at best, that only makes you *sexually* pure. It doesn't at all make you *pure*.

For instance, how's your heart in regards to *anger* and *bitterness* and *resentment* towards others? How's your heart in regards to *money* and *possessions* and *greed*? How's your heart in regards to how you view other *people*—is there any *condescension*, any *self-righteousness*, any *superiority* in your spirit towards anyone? Because any of *that*, biblically speaking, is still *impurity*. **Scripture tells us, over and over again, that none of us are pure.** Even if we've managed to keep one *aspect*, one *compartment* of our life pure—which again, *doubtful*—but even if we *have*, that doesn't make us *pure*. That just makes us in need of God's grace in all the *other* areas of our life.

Now at this point you might be wondering, “wait—didn't you say this was going to be *helpful* in regards to how we think about sex? This does not feel very helpful thus far.” Okay, here's why I think it's helpful. It's because of the rest of that sentence from Romans 3. Right after it says “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, it says this:

...and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.¹²

The good news about none of us being pure, is that us being pure on our own is never what mattered anyway. It was never *about* purity being something *we achieved*. It was *always* about what Jesus would achieve on our behalf. It was always about Jesus' purity standing in place of the *impure*. It was always about *his* holiness, *his* righteousness, *his* performance, *his* goodness—in *our* place. **You see, the moment we start to believe that God came for pure people, we have radically misunderstood ourselves, and radically misunderstood the gospel message.** Jesus came *exclusively* for the *impure*. Those with a spotty track record at best. He came *exclusively* for those who have realized they cannot cut it on their own.

You see, what's so incredible about Jesus is that he not only gives us a path to follow in regards to our sexuality; he also gives us a clear path back when we've failed. So as odd as it might sound to hear, if you walked in here feeling like you're no good at purity, you might be in the *best* place to see and savor the beauty of the gospel. Because

¹² v. 24

you are keenly aware—at least in that arena of your life—of your *need* for Jesus. Your need for his intervening, transforming power. And **on the other hand, if you're convinced that you're *already* pure on your own, you'll have the hardest time truly *appreciating* the gospel—because you don't think you functionally have much *need* for it.**

If you pay close attention as you read through the early accounts of Jesus' life, you'll notice that this is the message he tries to get across nearly every time he is seen interacting with someone with a questionable sexual reputation. **There's one famous story**¹³ where a group of religious leaders bring forward a woman caught in adultery. They want to have her *stoned—killed*—for her sin. So Jesus turns to the religious leaders with their pitchforks out—and says, “tell you what: let any of *you* who is *without* sin cast the first stone at her.” *Silence*. Do you hear what Jesus is saying there? He's saying “sure—she's impure due to her sin. But then again, so are all of *you*.”

There's **another story in the gospel of Luke**,¹⁴ where Jesus is having dinner at the house of a prominent religious leader named Simon. And while he's there, a woman “with a sinful reputation” shows up uninvited. In all likelihood, she's a sex worker. While she's there, she begins to weep at Jesus' feet, wiping his feet with her hair, and pouring perfume on them. Meanwhile *Simon*, who is appalled by the fact that a so-called “*holy man*” is allowing a woman with this reputation anywhere near him, gets *really* bent out of shape about it all. In response, Jesus makes an observation to Simon. He says that the woman doing all of this has a better understanding of God's love and forgiveness than *Simon* does. Simon doesn't think he *needs* much forgiveness, and therefore has very little *love* in his heart to show for it. Do you see what Jesus is saying *there*? He's saying to Simon, “Simon: are you really saying you have *nothing* you need forgiveness for? There's *no* impurity in your heart that needs forgiving, at *all*?”

If you do not see any impurity in yourself, you will never display much of a need or an appreciation for Jesus. (Or for that matter—much *compassion* for those you see as “impure.”) **But if you live aware of the impurity in yourself—of your inability to achieve true purity on your own—Jesus becomes the most compelling person in the universe.** Because Jesus *makes* impure *people*, pure. That's what he *does*. It's what he's *always* done. And it's what he can and *will* do for you. **I'll try to explain it one other way.** In the world of precious metals—which is, without a doubt, the nerdiest beginning of a sentence I have ever uttered—there are two ways to obtain an entirely *pure* metal. The first way is to *find* one that's *already* pure. But just to set expectations, that pretty much

¹³ Found in John 8:1-11

¹⁴ Found in Luke 7:36-50

never happens. Finding a naturally occurring, 100% pure metal is basically *unheard of*. It's *exceedingly rare*. Some would argue it's even *more rare* to find a *human* in that state.

But the **second way to obtain a pure metal**, is to find it in *whatever* state it's currently in, and then to *purify* it. You see, this is what we're told *repeatedly* that Jesus does for anyone who chooses to follow him: he finds them as they are, and he *purifies* them. No matter what they've done, where they've been, what sexual choices they have or haven't made—God grants every single person who comes to him *purity*. Which means if you've made a series of ill-advised sexual choices in your life, and you choose to follow Jesus, you're *pure*. If you've made *one*, really *bad* sexual choice, and you choose to follow Jesus, you're *pure*. If you've experienced sexual abuse, sexual manipulation in your life—when you choose to follow Jesus, you're *pure*. What Jesus does—what he's *always* done—is find each of us in whatever state we're in, and then *makes* us *pure*.

The hope for every one of us in this room is not that we can achieve or have achieved *purity*; the hope for every one of us is that through Jesus we can be *purified*. Just to be abundantly clear: the pastor standing in front of you on this stage right now is not *pure*—not by a long shot. But he has been *purified*. The message of the gospel isn't that God gravitates towards the pure; it's that he gravitates towards the *impure* and *purifies* them.

And **the craziest thing happens** when Jesus *purifies* you: you start *wanting* to be pure. You start *desiring* purity. You want to take Jesus up on his instruction in Matthew 5 to do anything possible to uproot lust and objectification from your heart, whatever it takes. You want to do anything you can to see other people as image bearers of God—and not objects of your gaze, fantasy or lust. God finds us in our impurity, he *makes* us pure, and then births within us a *desire* to live *from* that new identity he's given us. This is what it means to follow Jesus—in *every* arena of life, *including* our sexuality. It means being *given* a new identity through Jesus, and through that, a *desire* to live *out of* that new identity. **So I don't ultimately care what your sexual history looks like, and Jesus doesn't either.** Because *you are not* your sexual history. You are who *God* says you are: forgiven, redeemed, rescued...*pure*.

And every week, **when we approach the tables** around this room, we are resetting our minds and our hearts on that simple reality: that through Jesus, we have been made into something we wouldn't have been otherwise. We have a status we would not have had otherwise. We possess an *identity* that we wouldn't possess otherwise. And all of that was made possible by what happened on the cross. Jesus' body was broken, his blood was spilled, so that you and I could be made *pure*. Regardless of what we have and haven't done, that is now who we are. And when we literally take these elements into our

body, we are praying, “God, may your body and blood be deeply integrated into the core of who I am. May I live out of *that* identity, more than any other.” So if you’re a follower of Jesus, or want to become one, you’re invited to participate in that with us.

Let’s pray.