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## SEXUAL SIN

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### Part 5 of Religion Saves

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Romans 1 | February 03, 2008

Pastor Mark here from Mars Hill Church in Seattle. We are putting forth a lot of content, and we've broken it down into two categories – offensive, and really offensive. This content would fall into the really offensive category – the reason being, it's not typically the kind of thing that is said in a church.

To be fair, we're in the least church-ed city in America. The services tend to include a lot of non-Christians and new Christians. Our evening services don't have child care or families at all. And so, we allow people to ask questions via text message. Sometimes I'll teach things that are very intense, and you wouldn't normally hear in a home school coop or a rural church with ladies who have head coverings and guys who churn their own butter.

Nonetheless, the content is, I think, pretty fun. You, however, may want to view it before letting your children do so, and if you are a minor, you should get your parents' permission, because this is rated MH-17.

You're listening to "Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions," a sermon series in which Pastor Mark Driscoll answers nine controversial questions about Jesus and Christianity. The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, please visit [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org).

Well, good to see both of you. Thank you for joining me.

(Laughter)

My name is Mark, one of the pastors here at the church. I'm here because I love you, and gonna teach you the Bible tonight. So, we'll have a good time, and we're gonna do something tonight that we usually only do at the 8:30, but it's a value-added bonus for both of you who chose to join us, and that is, I will move very fast through the sermon, very fast meaning about an hour.

(Laughter)

And then, we'll leave some time at the end to answer questions from you. And so you'll be able to text message in any questions you want regarding the subject of tonight's sermon. And at the end, off the cuff, for better or for worse, I'll answer them. So, if anything comes to mind, feel free to text message it in, and we'll take a look at it.

I will go ahead and pray. We're in the middle of a series called "Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions." And we're in question number five tonight of a variety of questions that 343,000 votes were cast online regarding. And so, this is the fifth most popular question, regarding sexual sin. And so I'll pray, and we'll get to work.

Father, you are a great God. We thank you that you made us male and female. That you made marriage as a covenant for us to enjoy. That you made our bodies to enjoy marital intimacy and love and affection and oneness. God, we confess that in many ways, both in thought and in deed, we sin. We sin sexually in particular, and so, God, we ask that tonight the person and work of Jesus would allow us to understand how significant our sin is. How fully he forgives us, and how you, Holy Spirit, can empower us to live a different, transformed life, marked by holiness and worship.

And so, we ask that, Holy Spirit, you would instruct and transform us, that we might live for Jesus, and we might live to the Father's glory. We ask these things in Jesus' good name, amen.

Well, here is the question, which is no small question – how should Christian men and women go about breaking free from the bondage of sexual sin? That is the question I am given to answer this evening.

I'll start in the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, where everything finds its origination, and therein we find that God created us male and female. He created our bodies for pleasure and enjoyment. He created marriage for one man and one woman, as his holy means by which bodily pleasures and sexual desires would find their satisfaction.

So God's plan is one man, one woman, one covenant, one lifetime together, enjoying marital relations as one flesh. The Bible says at the end of Genesis 2, "naked and without shame." That's God's good intention.

Our first parents then sin in Genesis 3, and all kinds of things ensue, including nakedness that is accompanied with shame. They hide from one another and God. Sexual sin ensues throughout Genesis. There is incest. There is homosexuality. There is adultery, fornication, polygamy – all kinds of lust in

various sinful forms and kinds dominates.

And it continues throughout human history that sin, in particular, has a devastating effect on gender, sexuality, and issues related thereof. All the way, fast forward, to the fact that you and I, most of us who are in the latter evening services, are members of generations that are the result of social sexual experimentation during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and '70s.

Much of this was undergirded by a scientific – I use that word loosely – study that was conducted by Alfred Kinsey, called the Kinsey Report. You may have seen the film which depicted his life as an utterly sad man, who was a pervert and gave his life to homosexuality and the endorsement of pedophilia, and undertook an investigation to try and legitimize various sexual sin throughout culture by saying that it was statistically common, therefore normative.

Well, his study has since been dismissed because it included a disproportionate number of people who were prostitutes, inmates, people of all kinds of deviancy. It was not in any way representative of an average American life, but nonetheless, in its day, it sort of gave the impression that people were far more sexually active in far more perverted ways than was ever previously imagined – the result being that it legitimized deviant conduct and behavior.

It also led to the founding of something called the Kinsey Institute, which is interesting in that he himself died around the age of 62 from a pelvic infection as a result of his own life of unrepentant perversion.

Out of the Kinsey Institute came modern public sexual education for public school children. That inception was around 1964. The cofounder of the organization that continues providing sex education in public schools to this day, and the first president of that organization was Dr. Mary Calderon.

She says this regarding her work, quote, “A new stage of evolution is breaking across the horizon, and the task of educators is to prepare children to (quote) step into that new world. To do this, they must pry children away from old views and values (insert parents and churches). Especially from biblical and other traditional forms of sexual morality, for religious laws or rules about sex were made on the basis of ignorance.”

She said, “We’re going to prepare children to be more sexual. To do that, we must separate them from church and family, and we must introduce sex education into the public school system.” That was a radical revolutionary change that includes those of us who were born after the 1960s, or during the 1960s and '70s.

And not surprisingly, who was the first financial donor for public sex education in America in the public school system? None other than Playboy’s own Hugh Hefner, to indoctrinate children to become perverted, so that they would grow up and purchase his products.

You and I are products of an experiment that is tragic. The result is that you and I – most of us who are of a certain age or younger – born into a world where it seems like sexual sin and perversion of all sort and kind is normative, because it’s all that we have known.

But is not normative. It is, in fact, deviant. This includes the fact that I will build my presuppositions on the point today that I believe there are really two popular religions in America and across the globe. There are secondary religions like Confucianism, and Buddhism, and Islam, and such – Hinduism and Mormonism and such.

But truly, the two most popular religions are Christianity and sex. And sex is not understood as a religion, but it is a religion. It’s a world view and ideology. It’s a commitment. That’s why people will say, “I am gay. I am straight. I am bi. We are swingers.” Or, “I’m a Christian.” It’s an identity that encompasses all of your life.

You identify yourself by your sexuality, your sexual proclivities and preferences and lifestyle. That’s why people devote themselves to groups/causes. They have parades. They have pride days. They have Web sites and gatherings and fund raising and devotion to promulgate a certain sexual ethic – in effect to have evangelistic crusades to convert people to sexual practices – as very much evangelistic as any religion.

The question is, “Well, why is sex such a popular religion with religious devotion and adherence?” Well, it’s because God made our bodies to enjoy sexual pleasure. And God’s intention was that it would bind a man and a woman together in marriage. But sadly, it has been used for sinful purposes.

Steven Arterburn, who is a Christian counselor that writes extensively on the issue of sexual sin and sexual addiction, says this, “Sexual pleasure is one of the most intense human experiences. Physically speaking, when a man or a woman reaches sexual excitement, nerve endings release a chemical into the brain called opioid.

Opioid means opium like, and is a good description of the power of the chemical. Now, listen to this, “Apart from a heroin-induced experience, nothing is more pleasurable than sex.” The only thing that is equal chemically, physiologically, to sexual intercourse is heroin.

“This is a wonderful thing in a committed marriage relationship, because it helps to bond two people together and to bring joy to living together and building a relationship. There can be a down side to the pleasure of sex, however. If sexual experiences happen outside of marriage and are constantly repeated, a sex act can move from being a simple pleasure to an addiction.

“Instead of being bonded with a person, you become bonded to the act itself. If the sexual experiences are pornography, your flesh or your body will instantly recall the images you viewed for relusting purposes. We’ll call that the harem of the mind. These images are stamped into your brain with the aid of hormones released during sexual arousal.

“God intends sex to exist within marriage. God hardwired our physical, anatomical male and female bodies to enjoy pleasure and to cause us to desire one another within marriage. That means that lust, by definition, is morally neutral. Lust is a strong, passionate desire – a yearning for pleasure. And that can be a very good thing within marriage.”

If your lust is for your spouse, you desire your spouse, you long for your spouse, you enjoy your spouse, you delight in your spouse, you yearn for your spouse – well, that’s a perfectly holy and good thing. But lust in its negative sense is lusting for a person or a thing or an experience outside of God’s boundaries of marriage.

Jesus says that lust in its sinful form is ultimately rooted in the deception of the heart, the center of who we are. Jesus says in Matthew 5 that it is a sin to commit adultery, but in addition to that, to lust in your heart is to commit adultery in your heart.

And so, lust is the problem – sinful lust – which leads to sinful activity. All sex outside of heterosexual marriage is by God’s own decree from Genesis to Revelation unholy and forbidden. That would include homosexuality, bestiality, bisexuality, fornication, adultery, rape, polygamy, pornography, prostitution, friends with benefits, pedophilia, and incest.

All of that is lust in a depraved way, working itself toward sin rather than marriage. And some of you are here, and you’re immediately thinking, “Well, I do something not on that list. Does that mean I’m okay?” No, you’re a pervert, and you are condemned as well.

(Laughter)

Okay? And in the New Testament, God anticipated perverts, and so when speaking of sexual immorality, which is the English translation, the Bible uses the Greek word, *pornea*, which is a junk drawer term that means any and all kind of sexual sin.

God knew that if you made a big list and put all the sexual sins on it, someone eventually somewhere would invent something else, thinking they were the exception clause, and you’re not. God has a junk drawer that just says, “sexual immorality.” Whatever it is you are doing – it falls into that category.

Now, moving right along, this is an epidemic culturally. Some of you would come here and think, “I don’t want to talk about sex and sexual sin. I feel like I’m all alone. I’m isolated.” You’re not. This is discouraging, but in some ways, it gives permission to be more honest.

More money is spent in this country on pornography every year than country music, rock music, jazz music, classical music, Broadway plays, and ballets combined. It’s America’s favorite past time. It’s the biggest religion, with the most devoted fan base. More money is spent on pornography in this country every year than pro baseball, basketball, football (including the Super Bowl) combined.

Adult DVDs are sold at a rate of \$4 billion a year. The adult film industry pours out 11,000 adult movies every year. That is 20 times the number of films that are put forth by mainstream Hollywood. There are roughly two-and-a-half thousand strip clubs in America. They generate as much as \$8 million dollars a year of revenue.

The number one search word on the Internet in various search engines is sex. Also in the top 20 are the words “porn,” “nude,” “Playboy,” and “erotic stories.” Seventy (70) percent of all pornographic Internet traffic occurs between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., while people are at work, unable to work their job because they are so consumed by perverted lust that they’re using the high-speed Internet access of their employer on company time to view what God forbids.

And in our day, this includes something that I call “naughty coffee.” I don’t know if you’ve seen the proliferation of naughty coffee around Seattle. Naughty coffee are these drive-thru sort of coffee stands that usually have a glass door, so you can see the woman inside, who’s wearing clear heels, lingerie, a push-up bra, nearly altogether naked, leaning over the counter to deliver coffee to some guy who should be struck dead in an instant and sent to hell for what he’s thinking as he receives his naughty coffee from the naughty nurse. Have you seen these things? If you have, shame on you.

(Laughter)

If not, you will see them; they’re all over the city. I witnessed one the other day. Literally, it was a glass coffee shop. You could see the woman completely underdressed in it. And it advertised the name of the barista, who was available, and that naughty coffee stand was right across from a school bus stop for a public school.

And the children were standing there, waiting for their bus, watching the woman in clear heels and the push-up bra make mochas. That’s the world we live in. The result is that sexual activity is more inclined toward early origination than ever before. Sixty-one (61) percent of high school seniors have had sex. Half are currently sexually active. Twenty-one (21) percent have had 4 or more partners.

By the time the average student graduates from high school, they will have viewed 15,000 hours of television, and only spent 12,000 in the classroom. That means their education will come primarily through television, not school. Each year they will watch 14,000 sexual acts and references on TV. Only a handful of them about any kind of abstinence or God-based holiness.

And some, as well, tell us that this has led to a whole nation of sexual addicts. Not just people who are sexual sinners, but are sexually addicted. Whereas, Paul says not to be mastered by anything – they are mastered by this sexual temptation and sin.

We are told that between 6 and 8 percent of Americans are sexually addicted. That means between 16 and 21½ million Americans are sexually addicted. That means that Mars Hill Church – at least 5, 600 people are sex addicts on any Sunday. I believe our numbers are higher than 8 percent. We’re an

urban church, young, new converts, probably somewhere in the category of 10 plus percent would be more appropriate.

And some would say, "But isn't this primarily a men's issue?" No, it's a woman's issue as well. Twenty (20) percent of those seeking help for sexual addiction are female, and their number is on the rise.

Regarding addiction, there are various kinds of addiction. Ultimately, it all comes out of the heart that is fallen and depraved and has desires and yearnings that are unholy. And it can work itself out with food or sex or money or power or alcohol – all kinds of manifestation.

But maybe to diagnose you, you could ask these kinds of questions. First of all, addiction begins with tolerance. That's the first step. You know it's wrong, but you accept it. You're okay with it. You learn to live with it. You excuse yourself.

Secondly, then, there are withdrawal symptoms. If you don't satisfy those depraved desires, then you physically and mentally begin to crave them. There are withdrawal systems. You get depressed. You get frustrated. You get desirous in an unhealthy way.

Which leads to the third step, and that is self-deception. You find a way to make it okay. Not that it is okay, but you're trying to deceive yourself. This would include philosophical, sociological, and if you're a Christian – even bizarre theological reasoning that would justify what is otherwise unjustifiable.

This would include whole denominations that say, well when the Bible says don't have sex before marriage, don't commit adultery, don't commit acts of homosexuality, they will say, "Well, in the Greek, that's not what it meant," or, "In the Hebrew, that's not what it meant." Whole denominations that have gay pastors, sexually depraved pastors, bishops that are having sex outside of heterosexual marriage – all of which is supported with bizarre theological and sociological reasoning.

Some of you have more pop-culture, street-level articulation of your defense, "We're married in God's eyes." No, you're not.

(Laughter)

His eyes are blazing red – he's furious.

(Laughter)

"Well, we're married in our heart." No, you're not. You're acting like it with your hands, but that's a sin. "Well, it's not a big deal. We're consenting adults. It's our body. We're not hurting anyone. It's just pictures. I tend to keep it under control." All myths, lies – fairy tales, really. But it's self-deception.

Some of you even here right now, there is a legal defense team running to your mind to defend you. "No, no, no. That doesn't refer to me. I'm the exception to the rule, and I have good reasons." Maybe even out-of-context verses. Those are my favorite.

Number four, it leads to a loss of willpower. You can't stop. You try to stop. Maybe you have victory for a little while, but eventually you cave back in. It has overcome you. It now rules over you like a false god and a functional savior.

And then, number five, it leads to a distortion of attention. Now you're thinking about it all the time. Planning about it all the time. Longing for it all the time. You become more frequent in your satisfying of that illicit desire. It becomes more intense.

You graduate from pornography to more intense pornography to more depraved pornography. All of a sudden, it's not just occasionally; it's frequent and regular. And there's a distortion of attention.

People I've dealt with that are in extreme cases spend six, eight hours a day online, surfing inappropriate Web sites. They plan business trips and their whole life around how to get together in seedy massage parlors and hook up with prostitutes and do the unspeakable.

Money, time, energy becomes disproportionately focused as altogether distortion creeps in and perspective is lost. That's because sin leads to death, and you can't keep sin under control. It just keeps growing until it overtakes everything else that is good.

That's why I would encourage all of us to occasionally reboot. Our conscience can become very dulled, and our reasoning can become very corrupted. I would say occasionally it is good for a few days, or even a week, to fast – not watch television. Not listen to talk radio. Not listen to music on the radio. Not listen to your iPod. Not flip through your magazines. Just go to work, return as many e-mails as you have to. Don't surf the Internet. Read your Bible and pray.

And after a few days or a week, see if you do not more clearly interpret the intensity of the sexual temptation that is constantly being screamed at you from the culture. Things that didn't bother you will. Things you didn't see, you then will. Things that previously you thought were maybe a problem are obviously a problem.

It is good to reboot – to fast from temptation, and then reengage the culture with the mind of Christ. Now, that will help us as well to view sexual sin as God does. To look from the perspective of God through his word. Perhaps the most perverted church in the New Testament is the church at Corinth.

They're a young, urban church, like Mars Hill in Seattle, and they are repeatedly and resoundingly rebuked by their pastor, Paul. He begins in I Corinthians 5, rebuking an alternative lifestyle. This man is with his stepmother. And I'm sure the argument was, "We're consenting adults. We're not hurting anyone. We love each other. We care about one another. We're a good fit."

And Paul says, "That's disgusting. And it's despicable. And it's deplorable." And then we can't expect non-Christians to think like Christians. But if someone is in the Church and claims to be a Christian, we have to hold them to God's standard of his Word, and we have to judge them and call them to repentance. And if they refuse, we need to kick them out of the Church, so that the rest of the people in the Church don't follow their perverted example.

And I know that there are hundreds, maybe thousands of people at Mars Hill that would fall into this category. Fornication – sex before marriage, adultery – sex outside of marriage, bisexuality, homosexuality, pornography, lust of all kinds of perverted sorts and manners.

And Paul says if we're Christians, we gotta judge one another. We gotta judge ourselves. Otherwise, we'll stand before the judgment seat of God, and then it will be too late. Paul then moves on in I Corinthians 6 and says, "Do not be deceived. The sexually immoral and the homosexual offender will not inherit the Kingdom of God." God says that unrepentant, ongoing, habitual lifestyle of sexual sin is such a serious matter, that you can go to hell for it. And you will, apart from repenting to Jesus.

And third, then in I Corinthians 10, Paul says, "Don't forget the witness of the Old Testament were my people, or at least claimed to belong to me. God knew their heart, 'They had so much sexual sin that I grew so weary and sickened by them, that in one day, I put to death 23,000 people.'"

God can and does and will kill. God can, does, will judge. God can, does, will condemn forever in the conscious eternal torments of hell those who worship sex rather than him. And that's the issue. Too many of you think that sexuality is just one among a myriad of issues in your life. That you might have victory in the rest of your life, but you excuse yourself, as if that were just a portion of your life and not something that bleeds through and influences the totality of your identity and practice.

What we're talking about here is a conflict between two gods, two religions, two world views, two moralities, two ideologies – one that is of light; one that is of darkness. One that is of life; one that is of death. One that is of God; one that is of Satan. And it expresses itself sexually.

Sex is the way that people who don't know God worship. They worship sex, not God. They worship sex as god. I'll prove it to you. We'll go to perhaps a place you wouldn't anticipate that the answer to this question I would go – that being, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.

And there, we see that this is such an important issue, that God himself, with his proverbial finger, writes the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone. The first commandment is this – there's only one God. The second commandment is that we are to worship only that one God, who is our Creator who made us.

The seventh commandment then is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." And the tenth commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet," including coveting your neighbor's spouse, which is lust. Now, some would say these are ten things that God wants us to do.

Martin Luther, the great Reformer, said, "Actually, the key is to understand that if we obey the first two commandments, we won't break the others." That if there is one God, then sex won't be your God. And if you worship that one God, then you won't commit adultery. That if God is your God and lust isn't your god, then you will not be guilty of coveting someone else's spouse, looking at other people in a lustful way, people you're not married to and not supposed to have any sexual desire for.

So, the real issue is this – who or what is your god? That's the answer that is manifest in your sexual decision making. If you choose sex, you are saying, "I worship sex, not God." If you're choosing adultery, or pornography, or fornication, or homosexuality, or bisexuality, or whatever it is, you are saying, "I deny the first commandment. There is not one God. I deny the second commandment. I refuse to live to worship that God. Instead, I have chosen the body, its pleasures, their body and their pleasures as my god, and I live to worship sex, the body, nudity, and pleasure."

It's all idolatry. At its root, it's all paganism. "The opposite of Christianity," Peter Kreeft, a great philosopher, says, "is not atheism, but idolatry. We're all worshippers. We all worship someone. We all worship something. We all give ourselves for some person, some feeling, some experience, or something."

And the Ten Commandments would tell us, we should give ourselves to God alone, and we should live to worship him. And if we do, we won't be perverts. We won't be thieves. We won't be coveters. And we won't be murderers, because people who know there's one God and worship him, their conduct doesn't resemble those who worship someone or something other than God.

Turn with me, then, to Romans 1, and what we will see here is that Paul picks up on these great themes. This is the way to look at all sin, and we'll apply it particularly to sexual sin. The problem with sexual sin is treating it as if it were an isolated sin, not to be dealt with like all other sins. The heart has all of its idolatry, false gods, and false worship, and it comes out with food and sex and power and money and pride. And it's just different ways that the heart manifests its depravity.

But ultimately, though the fruit is different, the root is the same. Who is God? Why are you alive? And whom or what are you worshipping? It's why I can't overstress how important this issue is. Strip clubs are not strip clubs – they're pagan temples. Dirty Web sites are not just dirty Web sites, they're digital pagan temples.

People who advertise on the Internet, people who flirt, people who wrongly text message and chat and go into discussion rooms and put their ads in various media outlets, people who would invite you to their house or bedroom, or people whom you would invite to your house and your bedroom – all of that is entering into paganism. It's worshipping created things rather than Creator God.

It is participating in that which is not just wrong, but at its heart is idolatrous. Paul picks up these themes in Romans 1, beginning in verse 18, writing to an urban church like ours in a prominent country, "For the wrath of God" – and the wrath of God here is passive, not active. God's active wrath is where he kills someone and sends them to hell. God's passive wrath is where he allows them to do whatever they want. That means, right now, every person who's logged onto a nasty Web site, rolling around with someone they're not married to, is experiencing the passive wrath of God.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." Here's the problem. We know what's right; we know what's wrong; we just don't like it. We suppress it.

In Christianity, this includes stupid arguments, as I noted previously, "That's not what the Hebrew says, that's not what the Greek says. That's not how God sees me. God gives me the exception clause. We've evolved beyond that primitive culture. Oh, that was a patriarchal society, and now we get to be naked. I have my own views."

In some circles, it's even something called a trajectory hermeneutic, which is, "Yeah, the Bible says things, but we've evolved beyond that." And we're supposed to follow this arc of devolution – my interpretation of trajectory hermeneutic.

You guys need to know that you have been sold an absolute endless stream of lies, "It's just sex. It's just the body; it doesn't affect the soul. It doesn't affect the spirit. It doesn't separate me from God. It doesn't have any real bearing on my future."

All day, people are getting up and leaving. You know what? It breaks my heart. Why? Because you would rather be naked than have Jesus. Bottom line, you would rather be naked than have Jesus. And Paul says, "For that cause" – to continue that sin – "people suppress the truth" – They fight it. They argue against it. They lobby against it.

They legislate against it. They picket. They protest. They reason. They go to college. They get degrees. They become therapists and psychotherapists and psychologists and counselors, and they try to legitimize it, and it's just a suppression of the truth – "for the unrighteousness of deeds."

It's not that complicated. They just want to be god, and they want to do whatever they want. And they don't want the real God to tell 'em it's wrong. Paul goes on. He speaks of natural law, beginning in verse 20, "For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that are made, so that they are without excuse."

In this section, Paul is saying that God has put a conscience in us, so we know what's right and wrong. And God put creation around us to show us how great he is, so we're without excuse. We know that God exists, and he's bigger than us. And we know that there is right and wrong, and we are to obey God.

"For although they knew God," – verse 21 – "they did not honor him as God, or give thanks to him, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." You think of a blind person leading blind people. Spiritually, that's what he's talking about. Their thinking is futile – it doesn't mean that they're not smart. It just means that they're foolish – brilliantly, convincingly foolish.

"Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." Some read that and say, "Isn't that funny, how primitive they were. They worshiped animals." Some people do this with their pet.

(Laughter)

And others have teams that are symbolized by birds, animals, and reptiles as mascots, and people dress up like those animals, gather into large cathedrals for football, baseball, basketball, soccer and such, and they declare themselves allegiance to this particular team by dressing up as the animal which is the mascot that symbolizes their collective oneness.

At least pagan. Right? Sea Hawks fans – right? I mean, you know what I'm talking about.

(Laughter)

You go to the game and people are dressed up like animals. What that is, that is a religion. That is people getting together to worship. I'm not against sports, but I'm against idolatry and paganism.

"Therefore," – verse 24 – "God gave them up to the lust of their hearts" – God gave them their lustful desires. He allowed them to go – "to impurity" – some things are impure – "to the dishonoring of their bodies" – God made your body good and honorable, and some things you do in it are dishonorable – "dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because" – and here's the key – "they exchanged the truth about God for the lie" – in the Greek I believe it is "the" lie, not "a" lie – "and worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator who is forever blessed. Amen."

Paul says this, "There's the truth, and there's a lie." The truth is this – there's one God. He made us. We live to worship him and enjoy creation that he has given us. The lie is that we're god, and we could worship things that God made, instead of God the Maker. There's an inversion in paganism or idolatry (those words are synonymous), whereby in Christianity we worship the Creator God and enjoy created things.

And in paganism and idolatry, just like the violation of the first two commandments, we worship created things that God made, not the Creator God who made them. You say, "What does this have to do with sexuality?" Here's the point. Everything that the Lord God made in Genesis 1 and 2 was – what? Good.

God made the man and the woman, male and female, gender, body, physical creation of the human anatomical structure, declared it to be (quote) "very

good.” The apex, the crowning achievement, the most lovely aspect of God’s creation is the human body. That’s why paganism leads to sexual sin, because those who worship creation instead of Creator invariably pursue the body, its pleasures, its feelings, its nudity, and they worship the body.

They worship the feelings of their body, and they worship the exposure of the body of others for their pleasure. If you worship creation, you end up as a pervert. It’s not just a sexual issue. It’s a worship issue. It is, “Who is God, and what is worship? And why do I exist – to glorify Creator or creation?”

That inversion ruins, destroys, undermines everything that God intended. Everything that God intended. Some of you would have come in here minimalizing your sin, saying, “Well, yeah, I’ve got some sexual sin, but overall, my life’s in order. And I just have this one area I’m struggling.” You are struggling with the issue, “Who is God? And do you worship Creator or creation? Are you Christian or pagan? Are you worshiper or idolater?” That’s the issue.

For this reason, verse 26, Paul then talks about how worship of creation instead of Creator, how paganism and idolatry leads to sexual sin. He’ll condemn here lesbianism, then homosexuality, and all kinds of sin. “For this reason, God gave them up to the dishonorable passions.

“For the women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature” – that’s the clearest condemnation of lesbianism in the Bible – “and the men, likewise, gave up natural relations” – as God created the world to be – “with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” Some of your translations will say “perversion.”

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debase mind to do what ought not to be done.” Their mind no longer works. They don’t understand what the big deal is. If they don’t know Jesus and you talk to people who are in sexual sin, they’ll think that you’re just making no sense at all.

“They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetous, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty or proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, and ruthless.”

See, the problem is sin just keeps going until it leads to death and destruction and all of life. Then he closes, “Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.”

They make parades, and Web sites, and organizations. And raise funds. And support campaigns. And make decrees. And publish magazines. And host news talk shows. And promulgate their world view. And they’re evangelists for their religion, to get you to be a pervert and to worship creation instead of Creator.

And sometimes they do so very convincingly, very persuasively, very enticingly. The question is, how do you resist sexual temptation? That’s the question I’m given to answer. There’s 11 things I will say. It is truly one thing, with ten applications.

And the first thing I will say is this, the only way to overcome sexual temptation is to become a Christian and to worship the Creator instead of the creation. That’s the first thing. If you’re here and you’re not a Christian, everything begins with you giving your sin to Jesus, who is God, being forgiven, and entering into a relationship with God, so that he can change you, so that you can live a new life.

Paul says it this way in Romans 11:36-12:1, “To him” – that is God – “be the glory forever. Amen. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

What he’s talking about is that all of life is comprised of three aspects. One, there is glory. Two, there is worship. And three, there is sacrifice. Glory meaning you will live for something or someone.

You’ll live for yourself. You’ll live for your family. You’ll live for your nation. You’ll live for your cause. You’ll live for your friends. You’ll live for your experience. You’ll live for your pleasure. You’ll live for your fame. You’ll live for your wealth.

Something/someone will occupy the position of glory, the most important, preeminent thing/person/feeling/experience in your whole live. It’s in the position of glory. It’s not if you will have that; it’s what will occupy that place. And everyone does, religious and non.

Secondly, then, what he says is that we worship that which we hold into glory. We give ourselves to it. It’s our identity. I’m gay. I’m straight. I’m a swinger. I’m bisexual. Or, I’m Christian. It becomes our identity. It becomes our motivation. We worship it. We live to glory in it.

And then thirdly, we make sacrifices for it. Our time, our money, our energy, our health. It is devoted. Sacrifices are made to give ourselves in worship to the glory of that person/experience/thing/feeling that we so crave and yearn for.

And the truth is, it’s either Jesus our Creator, or someone or something that is created. It’s either worship or idolatry. It leads to life or death. It leads to freedom or bondage. It leads to happiness or shame. And it’s a worship issue. Who or what are you living for?

And you make your worshipful decisions by who you touch, how you perceive people, what Web sites you log onto, and what you do with your hands, and how they are informed by your eyes, which are ultimately guided by your heart.

Number two, live out of your regenerated heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. We’ll deal with this more thoroughly next week with the next question that has been asked. But regeneration is this, that God takes out our old heart, gives us a new heart. That means new desires, new passions, new

pleasures.

That means that now, in addition to temptation, which is conflicted desire, we have holiness as Christians, which is deepest desire. And the power of the Holy Spirit, which empowered the life and ministry of Jesus, our great God and Savior, empowers the life of the Christian to live out of the deep new desires.

Jonathan Edwards, the great theologian – the greatest theologian in the history of this nation – said that to overcome sin, we must take a desire and replace it with a stronger desire. The issue is not to kill passion, but to be passionate for the right things. To be passionate for the things of God.

And the regenerated heart has as its deepest desire holiness and obedience and Christ likeness and life. And it is to nurture and to feed that desire, guided by the Holy Spirit, who indwells us, that we live a new life. It's not a life without passion. And quite frankly, it's not a life without pleasure. It's pleasure within marriage, as God intends.

In the fall, I'm gonna preach through the whole book of the Song of Solomon. Every time I say the word "sex," the Internet goes crazy, so this should be exciting.

(Laughter)

But what we'll do in the fall, we'll talk about married sexual pleasure – within the confines that God decrees, so that it might be fun and enjoyable and pleasurable, as Genesis 2 says, "nakedness without shame." That should be the deepest desire of the heart.

Number three, live as a new person with a new mind. Romans 12, Paul says, "Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." My whole hope today is to get you to think differently. To think not in categories of, "How far can I go before it's bad," but "What is the condition of my heart to ask that question in the first place?"

A new mind that doesn't see people as parts, but sees people as image bearers of God. To not look at men and women as potential sexual partners, but to, as I Timothy 5:2 says, see them as brothers and sisters to be loved, but not in an inappropriate physical way. A renewed mind that says, "God and Satan are different. And worship and idolatry are different. And that everything comes down to how I vote with my eyes and my hands and my heart."

To have a renewed mind that doesn't believe all of the junk and filth that is introduced in the world, but in addition, goes to Scripture to think differently. I like to say all the time that people are thirsty, and too many drink from the toilet. There are other places to find water. If you want to know about sex and pleasure in the body, go to Scripture. Go to Jesus. Renew your mind.

Point number four, put your sexual sin to death. On this I will quote Colossians 3:5-8, "Put to death whatever is earthly in you:" – whatever is debased and fallen and sick and depraved and dark. He goes on to list such things as – "sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming" – and speaking to the Christians he says, "In these, you too once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away."

The situation is this, Jesus as God came into human history, lived a life in our place without sin, died a death in our place for sin. And because Jesus died for sin, we can now put sin to death. Don't manage your sin. Too many people try and manage it, meaning, "I'll sin a little bit. I'll sin infrequently. I'll keep it from getting out of control."

Sin is an enemy. It separates you from God and the life that he intends. Because Jesus died for sin, we are to put sin to death. We're not to accept it, tolerate it, weaken it, manage it. We're to crucify it as Jesus was crucified.

Some of you have been managing your sin for too long, and the truth is, it continues to grow more cumbersome and overwhelming. The only answer is to put it to death, to stop it – all of it. Dig the root down to the end. And with Jesus, it is possible.

Point number five, make no provision for the flesh. Paul says it this way in Romans 13:13, 14, "Let us walk properly, as in the day time" – open, nothing to hide. If you have nothing to hide, then you can live an honest life, speaking truthfully to people – "not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires." No provision for the flesh.

Now, the problem is in your heart, but this may mean that you need to impose on yourself what I will call personal legalisms. Okay? Legalism is where, in addition to the Bible, I take my own opinions and preferences and personal ways of doing things, and I impose them on you. That's legalism. We don't believe in that.

We believe to obey the whole Scripture, and live by your conscience, which may include personal legalisms that you don't impose on everyone else, but you need them because there are parts of your life that you're weak, and you need to be careful. And that may mean for some of you the problems in your heart. And it comes out in your television, your computer, your friendships, your recreational activities.

You may need to change those things. You may need to say, "I need new friends. I need a new place to hang out. I need to get rid of that package on my television that has the channels that I just too often find myself watching. That I shouldn't have high-speed Internet access if I live by myself, 'cause I'm looking at things and talking to people in ways that I shouldn't.

The problem is in my heart, but maybe I should make no provision for the flesh. Maybe I should put on my computer accountability software, so that

another Christian brother or sister whom I trust gets a report often of all the Web sites I've visited, so I'm walking in the light.

For me, I'll give you one of my personal legalisms. I was in Illinois all week. I was in Chicago and Deerfield and Peoria and Wheaton, speaking, traveling, writing, signing books and all this stuff. And one of my little legalisms is I never travel by myself. So, I bring Pastor A. J. with me. He rides in the car, flies in the airplane, stays in the hotel.

And he's with me all the time. Why? So that I can ensure there's no provision for the flesh. Do I want to sin? No, I don't. But by having someone there, going out two by two, like Jesus sent his disciples, it's just another way for me to ensure that I have a very boring testimony. Which is my goal, quite frankly. I want a boring testimony.

I don't want to be the pastor who's on Larry King, going, "Yeah, I had 27 girlfriends, and I got a bunch of kids, like an NBA player. And then I was in rehab, and I finally met Jesus for real, and now I'm gonna go back to Mars Hill." I do not want to be that guy.

I wanna be the guy who went home, kissed his wife, went to bed, woke up, read his Bible, and did it again. That's my goal. Boring testimony. And I have, by God's grace, I have a very boring testimony. Make no provision for the flesh.

If you can't handle certain things, then be honest and just say, "I can't handle it. I can't go to the bar with you. I can't hang out with that crowd. These guys are always bringing girls home. I can't room with them. These girls are always bringing guys home. I can't room with them. These guys and girls are bringing all kind of girls and guys home, and I need to move right now."

(Laughter)

You may need to not make provision for the flesh. You get the point. Point number six, run to Jesus, your sympathetic high priest. Too many people run to Jesus after they sin, not when they're tempted, before they sin.

Hebrews 4:13-15 should be of great encouragement. It says, "We do not have a high priest" – that's Jesus – "who is unable to sympathize with us in our weakness, for he's been tempted in every way, as we are, yet without sin." So, when in your time of need, run to him, and he will give you the grace you need.

~~When you're in the spot, now to Jesus~~ When you're in a secret – Jesus is alive. Okay? He rose from death. He's alive, and he hears and answers prayer. So, you could talk to him. And you can tell him, "I'm being tempted, and I'm struggling."

And some of you would say, "Oh, but I'll feel embarrassed if I do that." It's not like Jesus will look down and say, "Oh, I had no idea. This totally caught me by surprise. You're lusty? I can't believe it. I had no idea." Jesus already knows what you're thinking, feeling, experiencing. He already knows the temptations that you're facing. He loves you. He's paying attention to your life. You can go to him freely, boldly, confidently. After you sin? Yes.

I would recommend going to him before you sin, say, "Jesus, I am really hurting here. Your word says that every time I'm tempted, there's a way of escape. Get me out of this. What do you want me to do?" And trust that he'll speak to you, and lead you, and guide you, and answer your prayer. And he can sympathize. I mean, Jesus lived his whole life without any emotional or sexual misconduct or sin of any sort or kind. But he had to be tempted, 'cause he was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin.

Number seven, walk in the light with your church and professionals if needed. Become a member of this church. Too many of you are out on the fringe. You're struggling and sinning alone. It's not good to be alone. Become a member of the church. Get into a community group. Join a redemption group for those who are struggling sexually. This may mean meeting with a pastor, or going to a professional biblical counselor for help.

This may mean, if you're out of control, you actually get into a treatment program. The key is to have humility. Satan loves to work in darkness, and walking in the light, 1 John says, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" – we have friends who know what's really going on – "and the blood of Jesus, through his death, burial, and resurrection, cleanses us from all unrighteousness, gives us a new life."

You're not going to make it on your own. This means that you need to invite into your life people who love you enough to ask you how you're doing, and that you'll be humble enough to honestly answer the question. And this would mean, as well, if you're here and you're married, you talk to one another about what's really going on.

Too many people don't even ask. They assume everything is fine until they hear otherwise. If you're married, on the way home, ask this question, "How are we doing? What's the truth? Where are you struggling? Have you been faithful?" Those kind of questions – not accusations, but inquiries.

I know couples that have been married for years, and never even asked the questions. You need friends. You need church. You need to pursue accountable relational Christian community. And it's incumbent upon you to put that together, because you are an adult, and you're responsible for yourself.

It's not enough to sit back and criticize and say, "No one has pursued me. I will live in my shame and sorrow, and I will condemn others for not loving me." That's the most pious, self-righteous bucket of nonsense. You are responsible for yourself, and you need to pursue whatever relationships you need to walk in holiness.

Number eight, flee temptation. He says it this way in I Corinthians 6:18, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body." "All sin is equal," James says. But sexual sin, Paul says here, has more prolific implications, "But the sexually immoral person sins against his

own body, or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you” – that God lives in the Christian – “whom you have from God. You are not your own. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.”

Jesus died to purchase you as his possession, forgive your sin, and make you a child of God. Your body is not your own if you’re a Christian. It belongs to Jesus. The Holy Spirit indwells you if you are a Christian, so you can live like Jesus. In a very real way, when you sin, you are taking God to sin with you.

Some of you say, “I would not do those things if Jesus were there.” By the indwelling power and presence of God the Holy Spirit, Jesus is there. He’s there when you’re doing what you shouldn’t be doing and seeing what you shouldn’t be seeing and touching what you shouldn’t be touching and lusting after what you should not be lusting after.

And the Holy Spirit didn’t take up residency in you to empower you to live a life that is unlike Jesus, but to empower you to live a life of holiness and obedience that is patterned after Jesus, whom the Holy Spirit empowered to live his life in the first place.

So, flee temptation. Run. You’re either going to or away from sin all the time. The myth is that there is stasis – that you could just sort of hang out, and whatever comes, you’re a victim. It’s not true. You run to Jesus and away from sin, or you run to sin and away from Jesus. That’s all there is.

Number nine, pursue satisfying marriage when ready. Now, if you are here and you’re single, and you’re sexually out of control, this is not the time for you to get married. You need to get it straightened out with Jesus. You need to get a couple clean years under your belt, literally, and then –

(Laughter)

And then you could pursue marriage. If you’re a pervert, out of control, don’t take your sickness and infect your spouse. Deal with it. Repent of it. Get help for it. Get it under control – not just under control, start worshipping Jesus instead of the body – yours or someone else’s.

In I Corinthians 7, Paul says there are really two kinds of people, those whom God has given the gift of singleness, and those who do not have that ability. Those who have the ability to be single – they don’t have to be married and have sex. They seem to make it okay.

Jesus was like that. Paul was like that. Jeremiah was like that. Others, the vast majority, 93 percent statistically marry. They are incapable of remaining single. They need to be married because they have sexual desires and urges that otherwise are going to lead them to all kinds of trouble. That’s me.

I still remember the first time I heard about the gift of singleness in college. I was a brand new Christian. One of the Christian brothers came up and said, “Do you have the gift of singleness?” I said, “What is that?” He said, “It’s the gift of not having sexual desire or need to be with a woman.” I said, “What kind of gift is that? That’s the worst gift I’ve ever heard of.”

(Laughter)

And he said, “No, it’s an ability that God gives some to go do ministry without falling into sin.” I said, “Oh, okay, I get it. No, I obviously don’t have that. If it sounds like a curse and not a gift, it’s probably not one that I have.”

(Laughter)

Right? And I Corinthians 7 says, “If you have desire, the holy, natural outlet that God gives is marriage. It’s better to marry than burn” – literally – “with passion.” So, I married at the age of 21. My wife and I are coming up March 12 the 20th anniversary of our first date. By God’s grace I could tell you this actually works. I love my wife. I’m totally attracted to her. We have a great marriage. I’ve been a hundred percent faithful to her, and I assure you, this all really, really works. Take it from a guy who’s been with the same woman for 20 years, his high school sweetheart.

[Applause]

Now, within that, what Paul also says, “When you are married, do not deprive one another, but by mutual consent and for a season, otherwise bitterness and temptation comes in, and Satan destroys the marriage.” That means that Christian couples need to have intimacy often, and it must be satisfying.

Too many Christian couples are not together enough, or there’s not enough freedom and joy to really make it satisfying. God’s answer is free, frequent, holy marital intimacy together. That’s his desire.

Now, if you’re here and you’re single, you should aspire to that. If you’re married, you should pursue that. And if you’re dissatisfied in your marriage, you need to get help to fix it. Maybe the problems are outside of the bedroom, but the answer is not sin. The answer is working on the marriage with Jesus, so that you’re satisfied with one another, the frequency, and the kind of intimacy that you enjoy.

Number ten, have your spouse as your standard of beauty. God made Adam and brought Eve – not a lineup of women for him to pick his favorite. God made Eve and brought Adam – not a lineup of men for her to pick her favorite. Your standard of beauty is your spouse. There is no objective standard to beauty – there is a spouse.

Lust/pornography encourages a standard of beauty that is not your spouse, that by definition is sin/lust to the heart, that leads to sexual temptation/dissatisfaction with your spouse.

I told a guy recently, I said, “Your standard of beauty is your wife. When she’s 20, whatever she looks like, that’s your standard of beauty. When she’s 40, whatever she looks like, that’s your standard of beauty. When she’s 60, whatever she looks like, that’s your standard of beauty. When she’s

80, whatever she looks like, that's your standard of beauty."

Your standard of beauty is a woman, not a type. Same for the women. Your standard of beauty is a husband, not a type, a category, a form. That leads to dissatisfaction. Why do you think that pornography has images of all kinds of people? To cause dissatisfaction in you. That you would not be satisfied being devoted to one person and one body. That you would have a dissatisfaction of lust.

Job 31:1, he said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look upon a woman lustfully." The only way to do that is to be, as all elders are to be, a one-woman man. All your desires pointed entirely toward your spouse. That's true for men and women.

Now, I need to say this carefully, 'cause last time I said it, I said it not so carefully, and I got picketed. So, let me say this carefully.

(Laughter)

One other thing I would recommend is that you try and maintain your appearances to be attractive to your spouse, and that your spouse maintain their appearances to be attractive to you. I'll leave it at that so I don't get picketed again.

(Laughter)

Number 11, repent quickly. Repent quickly and keep fighting. When you sin, repent. Apologize to God, your spouse, your Christian accountability friends, your small group, whatever it is, quickly. Don't let time linger. You'll get into more sin and shame and condemnation and demonic accusation. And you'll start legitimizing your sin. It'll get worse. Repent quickly. Come back to Jesus quickly. Tell others the truth quickly and fight continually.

Peter says that we have desires that are at war against our soul. Paul says that our warfare is not just against flesh and blood. It's not just a sexual issue. That it's powers, principalities and spirits. That Satan and demons are behind the scenes, and that they are truly just baiting our hook with nudity and lust and pleasure that is illicit and inappropriate.

And Satan wants us to nibble and then bite, all the while neglecting the truth that there is a hook, and we will be reeled into death. And it's a real fight. And so, we must continually fight. That being said, I'll take some questions and see what I get.

"Will I be able to experience the sex that God intended with my future husband if I have an extensive past of sexual sin?" Yes. Yes. Now, Satan will tell you otherwise. Revelation 12:10 says that he's the accuser of the children of God. That he accuses them day and night. That if you have sexual sin in your past, Satan will constantly condemn you and accuse you, "You're dirty. You're defiled. You're nasty."

You can tell it's your enemy when it's in third person, "You, you, you, you, you." That's your enemy talking to you, "You're dirty. You're nasty. You're unforgiven. You're damaged goods. You don't deserve love. You'll never receive the grace that Jesus promises. Your spouse will never see you as pure and clean. You're without hope."

Some will even hear, "You should kill yourself. You should just sleep around. You should be with someone that doesn't love Jesus and doesn't love you, because you don't deserve any better than that."

Romans 8:1 says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ." The picture of the bride of Christ, the Church in Revelation, is that she gets to wear white, because she is seen through the finished work of Jesus, who died to take away all sin – past, present, and future.

If you are someone who has sexual sin, you can, through Jesus, be forgiven, cleansed, made new, clothed in white, to go live a life of holiness. I'll tell you as somebody who didn't go into the marriage sexually pure. I looked at things and I was intimate with someone before marriage. I shouldn't have been. I shouldn't have been. It's the greatest regret, greatest shame, greatest remorse of my whole life.

Could I take back one thing, it would be that I would've walked with Jesus as a Christian, and I would have been sexually pure going into my marriage. But here's the truth, God's honest truth, for 20 years I've been with the same woman – almost 20 years. I'm more attracted to her than I've ever been. I enjoy her more than I ever have. I'm more drawn to her, stronger drawing than ever. I'm more satisfied with her mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally than I have ever been.

Every year of our marriage, we've gotten closer. We're connected physically and emotionally and spiritually and mentally. We're one. Right? The Bible says that the man would be with his wife, and they would be one. And the word there is – I told the previous service this – it's echad in the Hebrew. In Genesis it says that the man and the woman will be one. It says in Deuteronomy 6:8, the shema, something that the Jews say three times a day, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is echad, he is one." That God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit are one.

And because of the finished work of Jesus, which takes away sin, the husband and the wife are one in a way that is analogous to, not identical of how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are one. There is that kind of intimacy, healing, satisfaction, joy, pleasure that Jesus gives.

Apart from Jesus, no – there is no hope. But with Jesus, you're a new creation in Christ. Old things have passed away and all things are made new. I'll tell you as a guy who honestly has a better, more satisfying, wholly enjoyable marriage than I even thought was possible, and it gets better every year. And we've still got 40 or 50 years left. And I expect to be able to say this every year for the rest of my life.

It's not without work. It's not without repentance. It's not without growth and change and confession and learning and honesty and pain and tears. But the truth is, we're one. We work it out as one. We come together as one. I really love my wife. I really enjoy my wife. I'm really satisfied with my wife.

And by God's grace it is possible, if a husband and a wife will have between them not just their sin, but Jesus, who takes away sin. I promise you. And if you don't believe that, I want you to borrow my faith until you have your own.

Next question, "Will God delay in bringing me 'the one' if I continue to struggle with and submit to sexual sin?" Two things: One, I don't know if there is "the one."

(Laughter)

I don't know if I believe that. Secondly, whomever you marry, that's "the one."

(Laughter)

I hear this all the time from Christians, "I don't think I married 'the one.'" Well, when you married them, they became "the one."

(Laughter)

Now, if you are sexually sinning, God may bring "the one" – we'll put it in quotes and use it loosely – but "the one" may not be attracted to you, or you may not even see that person because you're so filled with shame and lust and condemnation. And you're dating the wrong person and doing what you shouldn't, that you'll not see them. You'll not be walking in the will of God, led by the Spirit.

Additionally, God should not bring into your life someone who would be for you a functional savior. A functional savior is someone that you are trying to use to do what Jesus is supposed to do. See, Jesus is supposed to take your sin, heal you. Walk with him, love him, trust him, overcome sin, walk in holiness. Functional savior is saying, "I would like someone else to do that for me other than Jesus." That is, by definition, idolatry. It's worshipping a created person rather than the Creator God.

So, what I would say is, if you are still sinning sexually, you're not ready to be married. But you need to begin your relationship with Jesus and his people, growing in holiness, so that one day you are able, through the Spirit and the spiritual gift of self-control, to walk in holiness.

You know what, too? I would tell you, if some of you are rescuers – and I say this, sometimes the best people are attracted to the worst people. Sometimes the people who walk with God pursue those who are farthest from God. Sort of this functional savior rescue mentality. This is the Jesus-loving girl who goes after the shipwreck guy. This is the decent Christian guy who goes after the drama queen girl.

You say, "Why do they do that?" Well, they've got a savior Jesus complex. They're trying to step in and do what Jesus can only do. And that's save somebody and change them. And so, what Jesus wants you to do is run to him and not wait for this functional savior false god.

And when you're ready, he'll bring someone along. And his intention is for you to have love and intimacy and relationship and marriage. But the truth is that, yes, you must put to death your sin. Otherwise, it will come into your marriage, and it will put your marriage to death. Which means first relationship first – the one with Jesus.

Next question, "So tolerance is a bad thing?" It can be. We live in a culture that doesn't tolerate drinking and driving. We live in a culture that doesn't tolerate indoor smoking. We live in a culture that doesn't tolerate pedophiles teaching elementary school. Everyone makes judgments, and not all of them are bad. I haven't even read the rest of the question, I just sort of got fired up there.

(Laughter)

"But who am I to judge others?" Ultimately, you do not pass eternal judgment, Heaven and hell. Jesus says in John 5, "The Father has entrusted all judgment to me, and I will judge." But Paul says in I Corinthians 5, "Regarding those who claim to be Christians and are in the Church" – he says (quote) – "make a sound judgment." Judge – make a decision. If somebody walks up to you and says, "Hey, can I get naked and break commandments?" You should say, "No."

(Laughter)

And in so doing, you're just reminding them of God, who has already laid down certain judgments. Isn't God the only one righteous enough to do so? Yes, and he has in his Word. And he's entrusted it to us to make a sound judgment. See, you won't – see, many of you are single and perverts. Let's just bottom line this.

Were you parents, you would not ask this question. Let's say you had a 16-year-old daughter that you loved and cared for and raised and encouraged and blessed and led to Jesus and prayed for and read the Bible with. Some 17-year-old boy knocks on your door, "Can I get her naked?" What you wouldn't say is, "Well, who am I to judge?"

(Laughter)

What you would say is, "Sweetheart, get my shovel, we gotta find a way to hide the body." That's what you would say.

(Laughter)

[Applause]

See, people only don't like to judge when they're the sinner, not the victim.

(Laughter)

Next question, "Do you have any suggestions on how to confront people who claim to be Christians that are living in sexual sin?" Yes. The first thing is humility. The first thing is humility. And because if you come in proud and arrogant, they're going to – they're going to fight you in their pride. You come with humility, you come with love, and you come with truth.

The Bible says that Jesus came filled with grace and truth. You come with humble, loving grace, and a double dose of truth. And you tell 'em, "Look, I love you. I care about you. You claim to be a Christian. The first thing I would then check is, are you really a Christian?" Ask them, "Who is Jesus? What is Christianity? Where are you at with God?"

If they can't articulate Jesus, if they don't know how to be saved, turn from sin, trust in Jesus; if they say stuff like, "I think Jesus was a good guy," but they're not sure he was God, "I think the Bible's got some good suggestions, but I'm not sure it's true," you may not be dealing with a Christian. So rather than trying to get them to be moral, share Jesus with them, encourage them to trust in him and be a Christian who lives to glorify Jesus and worship him and make sacrifices for him – not people, things, and experiences he's made.

If you truly believe they are a Christian, then you've gotta be honest with them. You've gotta say, "Here's what Scripture says. Scripture says that fornication is a sin, I Corinthians 6. That adultery is a sin, it's the seventh commandment. That lust is a sin. Jesus says it in Matthew 5."

You just gotta be honest with them. And then you've gotta ask them, "Are you going to repent? Are you going to stop fighting God? Are you going to stop committing idolatry? Are you willing to walk with Jesus? If so, you know what? I really want to help you. I wanna walk with you. I wanna pray for you. I wanna care for you."

And if they're unwilling, you may then need to bring in a few friends. Matthew 18 talks about this. Other Christian friends saying, "Look, I know you're sleeping with your girlfriend. I know you're sleeping with your boyfriend. I know you're cheating on your spouse. I know there's a lot of things in your life that are sick, and we love you. And we're not going to give up that easy. We want to invite you to walk with Jesus and walk with us."

And if they refuse that, and they're even a part of a church, well, then, you go to the church leadership and you say, "This person is in sin, and we're worried about them. And we want you to now be involved." And if at that point they refuse even that kind of counsel, what tragically happens is that people will be allowed to go out and sin.

The hope being that like the prodigal son who ran away from his father and ended up literally eating in a pigsty, at some point they come to their senses and realize, "This is not the life that God intended for me. I need to go back to God. I need to go back to my Christian family. I need to repent. And I need to get cleaned up."

And the sad, hard truth is, some people, you've got to let 'em go. It's not that you want to let 'em go. And the last resort is to let 'em go. But you don't let 'em go in bitterness or anger. You let 'em go in love, and you keep the door open, and you don't burn the bridge. And if they want to repent, they know that you're the first person they should call.

And as a pastor, as a friend of people, this is the most painful thing in the world. To see someone destroy their own life. You can't save someone from themselves. They need to repent and walk with Jesus for themselves. But some of us are just too cowardly. We don't like conflict. We don't want our friends to not like us, and so we don't say anything. That's a sin. That's a sin of pride and cowardice.

How about if we end with that? I'll pray for your friend and I'll pray for us. We'll now give you a chance to respond. You can become a Christian by in prayer confessing your sins to Jesus and thanking him that he died for your sins, so that you can now live a life that puts sin to death.

If you are a Christian, or become one today, you can take communion, which is remembering the body and blood of Jesus. You can give of your tithes and offerings, and we'll sing and celebrate to Jesus that he has liberated us from sin, so that we might be worshippers of him.

Father God, I pray for this person who has to talk to their friend. I know they're not alone. I know there's a lot of other people that are thinking the same thing. Lord God, I pray that they would come with humility and love and truth. I pray that, Lord God, they would first find out if their friend really is a Christian. And if not, that they would work hard in love to share the Gospel of Jesus and to see them become a Christian.

For those, Lord God, who are here and are in sexual sin, I pray that before they partake of communion, they would repent of said sin. If they're here with a boyfriend or girlfriend, that they would apologize if they have sinned with or against them. If they're here with a spouse, that they would apologize for sinning with or against them.

Lord Jesus, I thank you that you died for all sin, past, present, and future. That you live to hear an answer prayer, change hearts and change lives. I pray, Lord Jesus, that we need not be those who worship creation, but we can worship our Creator. That we need not be idolaters; we can be worshippers. That we need not walk in darkness; we can walk in light. That we need not live in shame; we can live in forgiveness.

And, God, on this very important issue, I pray that for all my friends, in Jesus good name, amen.