



MAN'S DISTORTION

The Gospel and Homosexuality

Romans 1: *"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another."*

Homosexuality and the World...

So, what does the gospel have to do with homosexuality? Let's start with thinking about homosexuality and the world, just to address really quickly the ideas and thoughts and ideologies that are out there in people's minds when they think about homosexuality. There's a prevailing view that homosexuality is innate, "I was born a homosexual. God made me this way. Homosexual orientation is one of God's gifts in my life." Mel White, a prominent gay spokesman for a supposedly "Christian" lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender men and women said, "I've learned to accept and even celebrate my sexual orientation as another of God's good gifts."

Others think homosexuality is fixed. "My homosexual orientation cannot be changed, that's just the way I am." One prominent gay psychiatrist said, "Sexual orientation simply can't be changed. There may be severe emotional and social consequences in the attempt to change from homosexuality to heterosexuality. It's fixed." Others believe that the core of homosexuality is loving. "What's wrong with it? My partner and I love each other; we're in an exclusive relationship. How can that be wrong? Why stop that or be afraid of that?"

Others say, "Well, homosexuality is Christian." Many people say, "Jesus didn't say anything against homosexuality." Troy Perry, one prominent gay Christian leader said, "As for the question: 'What does Jesus say about homosexuality?' The answer is simple—Jesus said nothing, not one thing, nothing. Jesus was more interested in love." Others say, "Well, I'm Christian, and I'm gay. How can that be if homosexuality is wrong?" Mel White...go back to him...said, "Now thank God! After 30 years of struggle I can say at last who I really am. I am gay, I am proud, and God loves me without reservation." Others have said, "I attend a gay church where the presence of God is evident. How can that be if homosexuality is wrong?"

The next logical step from there is the idea among many that homosexuality is biblical. "Passages in Scripture which deal with homosexuality have, obviously, been misinterpreted," or "The Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality." So, let us see what the Word says about the homosexuality.

Homosexuality and the Word...

The reality is, Romans 1 deals with homosexuality, but it's even a bigger picture just of the sinfulness of all of our hearts, and how that plays out in all of our sexuality, whether it's heterosexual sin or homosexual sin. So, the picture here is, "What does sin do in our lives?" First, see the anatomy of sin here in Romans 1. This will be huge for all of us, regardless of whether we have any struggle with homosexuality. Sin disorders our worship. Paul says,

"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 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 creeping things."

The picture here is disordered worship. We exchange God's pattern for our preferences. Sin disorders our worship to where God is not supreme in our hearts. That's the whole point of Romans 1:18-32. The reality is, any sexual sin, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual, the picture is it springs from a heart that doesn't delight supremely in God and God's ways.

It's interesting...you go back to Genesis 1 and 2, you see God's pattern for marriage, which is clearly between a male and a female. That is God's design. The Bible very clearly, definitively, shows us that as God's design, and then shows beyond that, sin...sexual sin...all things that are labeled sexual sin in the Bible are things that subvert that design that is in Genesis 2. Whether it's sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman, or sexual relationships between men and men, and women and women. This is the design of God, and that which forsakes or undercuts the design of God is classified as sin in Scripture. In that sense, we are all guilty here of disordered worship.

We have exchanged God's praise for our pleasures; these passions that wage war in our souls. The reason is we're born with a heart of pride. We're brought into the world in sin, and so, all of us have different biological heritages, but we all have one common spiritual inheritance, and it's sin. So, the Bible doesn't leave room for anybody to say, "Well, God wouldn't allow for somebody to be born with a bent toward a particular sexual sin." The Bible says we are all bent towards sexual deviation. This is big...very clear for two reasons. One, because clearly homosexual thought, desire and practice is an adjustment of the pattern of God in Genesis 1 and 2, which is reiterated by Jesus and Paul in the New Testament.

The second reason is huge. It's not just homosexual sin that skews that pattern; it's heterosexual sin as well. The reality is, I represent the class of people that is responsible for the vast majority of sexual wrongdoing in the world today: male heterosexuals. I and every other heterosexual person would be wise to stop looking at the speck in others' eyes on this when there is a log in our own eye. If we shake our heads at conversations about same-sex marriage, but then we turn the channel to stare uncritically at a drama showing us adultery on TV, watch the trivialization of sex on the sitcoms, seductive images on reality TV shows or virtual prostitution in advertisements, then we have missed the point. Are our sins acceptable because they are the sins of the majority? Obviously not!

So, we need only the gospel when it comes to this. Sin disorders all of our hearts' worship, and from this, sin disorders our belief. We exchange the truth of God for tolerance. We exchange truth for tolerance. So, here's the deal: we live in a culture today where to say that homosexual expression...or even heterosexual expression outside of marriage between a man and a woman...is wrong, is to go totally against the grain of the culture. You would certainly be labeled intolerant very quickly, but you think about that statement...that it's intolerant to say that homosexuality is wrong. First of all, it would be self-defeating to say that statement, meaning that you're claiming that I'm intolerant, and in the process, you're claiming your intolerance of me. The way I would put it is that our culture is so sick of intolerant people that it's not going to tolerate them anymore. In other words, people who claim to be tolerant are intolerant of intolerant people, which means they cannot tolerate themselves. Did you follow that?

This is foolishness that we've created in our thinking. There is such thing as truth, and that's the whole point that we're seeing in Romans 1, John 8, and John 14. Not only have we exchanged the truth of God for tolerance, but we've exchanged the Word of God for the experience of man. We have relativized the Word of God saying that truth is actually dependent on what we think or what we believe...what we want. This is the core of the issue when it comes to homosexuality. Even if there was nothing besides Genesis 1 and 2, we would see that this is God's design, but then, we do see clear pictures in Scripture that speak against homosexuality.

Genesis 19, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. There the Bible gives us a glaring picture of homosexual sin referred to in Jude 7. The holiness code in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, "*You shall not lie with a male as a woman; it is an abomination*" For "*if a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.*" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:8-11...both use the same term in the Greek translation of Leviticus 18 and 20 to refer to homosexual behavior, that it's evil in God's sight. It's the picture in Romans 1. To try to say that Scripture does not speak against homosexuality is to take the biblical text on an exegetical circus.

In order to say that the Bible supports homosexuality, homosexual advocacy must maintain either that, one, the Bible is irrelevant. Now, this is where some supposed Christians have gone. Listen to Gary David Comstock, University Protestant Chaplain at Wesleyan University:

Not to recognize, critique, and condemn Paul's equation of godlessness with homosexuality is dangerous. To remain within our respective Christian traditions and not challenge those passages that degrade and destroy us is to contribute to our own oppression... Those passages will be brought up and used against us again and again until Christians demand their removal from the biblical canon or, at the very least, formally discredit their authority to prescribe behavior.

Remove them? Get rid of the verses? Either the Bible is irrelevant, or the Bible is inaccurate. William M. Kent, member of the United Methodist Committee to Study Homosexuality said, "The scriptural texts in the Old and New testaments condemning homosexual practice are neither inspired by God nor [are they] of enduring Christian value." At least Kent's honest enough to hear what they're saying, that the Bible is condemning homosexual practice, but then he just says that it's not true. That it's not inspired by God.

See, either you have to say that the Bible is irrelevant, inaccurate or you have to say that the Bible is insufficient. This one takes the cake. Luke Timothy Johnson, Robert Woodruff Professor of New Testament, Candler School of Theology at Emory University accepts that the Bible nowhere speaks positively or even neutrally about same-sex love. Listen to this:

I think it important to state clearly that we do, in fact, reject the straightforward commands of Scripture, and appeal instead to another authority when we declare that same-sex unions can be holy and good. And what exactly is that authority? We appeal explicitly to the weight of our own experience and the experience thousands of others have witnessed to, which tells us that to claim our own sexual orientation is in fact to accept the way in which God has created us. By so doing, we explicitly reject as well the premises of the Scriptural statements condemning homosexuality—namely, that it is a vice freely chosen, a symptom of human corruption, and disobedience to God's created order.

Don't miss the danger here. He never asks the most obvious question. If we're not going to trust the authority of the Bible, but we're going to trust human experience, then whose experience are we going to trust? The obvious answer is his experience...exalting the experience of man over the Word of God. To put it bluntly, if the claims put forward by the supposed Christian homosexual movement are true, then the entire system of the Christian faith is undercut. Lest you think that is an over-statement, think about it. If the Bible is not authoritative...if the Bible is wrong or misdirected on certain issues...then who is to say what the Bible is right and wrong about? Sin disorders our thinking, our belief.

Then, sin disorders our desire. Who we worship affects what we believe; what we believe affects how we feel. This is where it comes to desire. We have exchanged sexual responsibility for supposed rights. This has become a civil rights issue in many people's minds. They're all about debates over rights. Rights to sexual preference. My purpose, tonight, is not to have a public policy debate, but I want to point out that what's not in the conversation that needs to be in the conversation, obviously, in the church, is responsibility before God. Responsibility before God. At this point, we have exchanged what Scripture says about our desires for what science says about our desires.

The idea that prevails today is that science is serving the cause of civil rights, and the bigotry of traditional Christian religion is against civil rights. I'm not saying that the Bible is opposed to science. In fact, I'm confident the Bible is not opposed to truth in any form, but no matter what science says or science concludes about our desires...where our desires come from, how we get them...Scripture still speaks about those desires, and Scripture says improper sexual desire is immoral, not inevitable.

Let's put it this way: when a man makes a rude sexual comment, or maybe even when a man commits adultery, some people shrug it off and say, "Well, men are just like that. They have those desires." Other people think that young teenagers who experiment with sex are just doing what they're expected to do. They have those desires, but, when an adult solicits sex with a minor because he desires it, no one is saying, "Let him do it. That's just the way he is." His desires are immoral, not inevitable.

Let's go ahead and tie all this together. Sin disorders our worship, our belief, our desires, and then sin disorders our behavior. We act out our desires. You see the core here? The core here is not what we're doing. The core here is what's going on in our hearts, then our behavior. Now think about this: we have exchanged moral obligations for natural explanations. There's a lot of research today, and it's all debatable. Being debated on all sides. Looking at what determines homosexual desire and behavior...biological factors, social factors, environmental factors, emotional factors...all kinds of factors that play into each of us who we are. What I want to propose, based on what we're seeing in God's Word...it doesn't really matter what the research finally concludes, if it concludes anything. None of that determines the rightness or wrongness of one's actions. We have exchanged moral obligations for natural explanations, assuming that if there's a natural explanation, then that implies a moral obligation: "If I am this way, then I have to act it out." There is mega-danger in that kind of thinking.

Just for the sake of illustration, compare this to pedophilia for a second. Why would God have "given" a pedophile that desire if it wasn't intended to be carried out? "He's made" the pedophile that way. "He's given" him that "gift." Jesus never spoke against it. In fact, He welcomed the children. He says he's a Christian. He has these desires. He can't change. He's tried to go to therapists, and it doesn't work. He's been told to suppress his natural

orientation, but he can't deny it no matter how many people in society say he should. He's just a persecuted minority. As a result, all the more deserving of rights to molest children.

Now, I'm not saying that homosexuality and pedophilia are exactly the same. I am pointing out though that causation does not imply justification. "That's just the way I am" does not hold up. Time Magazine reported, at one point, that infidelity may be in our genes. Gentlemen, it may not be natural for you to be faithful to one woman, but adultery is not justifiable before God. This is key. The reality is we do not always choose our temptations. So, there may be sufficient "evidence" that some of us are born with one tendency toward this sin, others born with the tendency towards that sin. We don't choose our temptations, but we always choose our reactions. Everyone has struggles with sexual sin in some ways, and the Bible clearly gives us boundaries in which to live and restrain those things for the glory of God.

Homosexuality and the Gospel...

You say, "Where does that leave me? What does the gospel, then, have to do with homosexuality?" The gospel has everything to do with you because the Gospel reorders our worship. Sanctify, justify...1 Corinthians 6...it reorders our worship.

The gospel renews our belief and transforms our minds. The gospel refreshes our desires. I'm not saying that, in Christ, immediately, when you're saved...born again...all improper sexual desire vanishes, but through the gospel, we pray for God to refresh our desires. The contemporary thinking about sexual sin just says, "You're that way so give in to it." No! You've been conquered by a superior desire in Christ and His holiness and His beauty. You pray for His desire to overwhelm you more and more and more.

The gospel redeems our behavior. I heard one homosexual man testify to the power of the gospel in his life as he stood beside his wife and nine children. In his words, "God heals very well." I'm not saying that people in this room who may struggle with homosexual desires will get married and have nine children, but I am saying that the Bible intends every one of our lives to be a demonstration of grace, and where sin abounds in each of us, grace abounds all the more.

Homosexuality and the Church...

So, I would challenge the church in these three ways: number one, look in. Based on Matthew 7 and Romans 2, it's high time for the church to completely avoid selective moral outrage. Biblically assess your spiritual and sexual condition. Be honest. Let the gospel transform you. You flee from sexual immorality.

Then, look out. How do we respond to gay men, lesbian women around us in our lives and our families and our work places? Based on Matthew 9, express humble compassion. Stanton Jones from Wheaton College said, "If you cannot empathize with a homosexual person because of fear or revulsion to them, then you are failing our Lord." Express humble compassion and maintain deep conviction. It's not easy to cling to the Word today, but cling to it. Cling to it, even when those close to you profess homosexuality. We cannot go the way of throwing God's Word out the window because we are afraid to stand on it. So, show them the Word and weep with them over the Word.

Finally, look up to God. Exalt His glory. Sexual sin starts with robbing God of the glory He is due. So, fight sexual sin with giving God the glory He's due, and proclaim the gospel. Share the gospel. Show the power of the gospel in your life, so that people come to know Christ and His love and His mercy and His grace and His peace and His salvation. Even though it's not easy, God is not calling us to play things safe but to tell the truth. Amidst public policy

debates, share the gospel with your life. God has not called us to control the government but to preach the gospel, and proclaim the gospel with compassion. God has not called us to win arguments, but to win souls. This is the gospel on homosexuality. All right, from one hot button to another.

MAN'S DISTORTION The Gospel and Abortion

Psalm 78 talks about the children yet unborn. In the United States, over 45 million abortions have occurred since Roe vs. Wade in 1973. That averages out right now to, approximately, 1.4 million abortions every year; 3,000 abortions every day; an abortion every 20-25 seconds. One third of American women have had an abortion at some point in their lives. In the world, over 46 million abortions occur every year; 130,000 abortions occur every day.

Do you remember that feeling when you saw the earthquake in Haiti? All those people? Or the tsunami in Southeast Asia? I mean mega-disasters where hundreds of thousands of people were just swept away, swallowed up? I want you to see the moral disaster of greater proportions: 130,000 helpless babies are being dismembered and destroyed every single day, and we hardly even notice it. A woman has an abortion almost every second of every day. I don't think it is an over-statement to call abortion a modern holocaust. That is an understatement. Every month, we surpass that number of people systematically slaughtered in the world and, just as German Christians did not need to hide from the reality of what was happening in concentration camps, we cannot hide...must not hide...from the reality of this happening in abortion clinics all around the world.

Abortion and God...

You won't find the word "abortion" in the Bible, but you will find a theology of who God is, who man is and what God is doing in creating man. You will discover that abortion is not primarily a social issue. It is not primarily a political issue. It is not primarily a woman's issue or a children's issue or a health issue. Abortion is primarily a God-issue. So, think about abortion and God. Primary text here, Psalm 139:

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Three truths spring in from this, and they're all over Scripture, too. One, abortion is an affront to God's sovereign authority as Creator. The one who forms the inward parts and knits us together. He is the Giver of life. He alone has the power to give life and authority to give life, and He alone has the authority to take life. Second, abortion is an assault on God's glorious work in creation. "*You formed my inward parts. You knit me together... I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works...*" The way God creates people compels praise.

When David said this in the Psalms, he didn't even know what we know. We know how God takes a little egg and a sperm and brings them together. In two weeks, a human heart is beating, circulating its own blood. Within a few more weeks, fingers are forming on hands. Brain waves are detectable. After six and a half weeks, those inward parts are moving. Two weeks later, there are discernible fingerprints, discernible sexuality. Kidneys forming function; then a gallbladder. By the twelfth week, all the organs of a baby's body are functional, and the baby is crying. All this within three months, the first trimester...heart, organs, brain, sexuality, movement, reaction...and God on high is doing all of that. Does that not evoke worship and praise?

So, then imagine at that moment...during this time period...inserting a tool, taking a pill, undergoing an operation that takes the life God is designing and destroys it. This is without question an assault on God's glorious work in creation. There's no way around it. Most abortions take place between 10-14 weeks of gestation when it is the "optimal time," so to speak, for dismemberment and removal. The beauty of what God is doing, the intricacy of the person that God is forming, is just ripped apart.

This is, in large part, the crux...the debate...around abortion. What's going on in the womb? The Bible is clear. The womb contains a person formed in the image of God. Psalm 139, Genesis 1, He is knitting together a human being, and this is the most important question. Don't miss this. Virtually every argument in the abortion controversy comes back to this question: "What is the unborn? What or who is in the womb?" Once that question is answered, every other question comes into perspective. If the unborn is not human...if the unborn is not human, no justification for abortion is even necessary. Some say the unborn is not a human person, just a non-viable tissue mass, a potential human. The reality is, if that's true then the argument is over...have the abortion. No justification for abortion would be necessary at that point.

On the other hand, if the unborn is human, no justification for abortion is adequate. This is where I'm going to lean on a great little booklet that I put in the end of your notes by Gregory Koukl called "*Precious Unborn Human Persons*." People say, "Abortion is so complex. There are just no easy answers." However, if that which is in the womb is a person, then this issue is not complex at all. Think about it. If it's true that the baby in a womb is a real baby, is a person, then every single justification for abortion totally falls apart.

People say, "But women have a right to privacy with their doctors." Certainly, we all have a right to a measure of privacy. No privacy argument, though, is a cover-up for doing serious harm to another innocent human being. We have laws that invade all of our privacy whenever we start harming someone else. Privacy is not the real issue here.

People say, "Well, women should have the freedom to choose." Some things, but not all things. Yes, we have the freedom to choose whether or not we have children, but we don't have the freedom to simply eliminate toddlers or teenagers who are inconvenient. No woman has the freedom to kill her child, if it's a child, right? "But making abortion illegal forces women into back alleys with coat hangers." If it's dangerous to kill a person, should we make it easier for them? If it's dangerous to rob a bank, should we make it convenient for bank-robbers? "But more children will create a drain on the economy." When human beings get expensive, do we murder them? You think about it.

Koukl mentions this story...follow along...about a little girl named Rachel, the daughter of a family friend of his. He describes:

Think of a little girl named Rachel. Rachel is two months old, but she is still six weeks away from being a full-term baby. She was born prematurely at 24 weeks, in the middle of her mother's second trimester. On the day of her birth Rachel weighed one pound, nine ounces, but dropped to just under a pound soon after. She was so small she could rest in the palm of her daddy's hand. She was a tiny, living, human person. Heroic measures were taken to save this child's life. Why? Because we have an obligation to protect, nurture and care for other humans who would die without our help—especially little children. Rachel was a vulnerable and valuable human being. But get this... If a doctor came into the hospital room and, instead of caring for Rachel, took the life of this little girl as she lay quietly nursing at her mother's breast, it would be homicide. However, if this same little girl—the very same Rachel—was inches away resting inside her mother's womb, she could be legally killed by abortion.

That makes no sense, utterly ludicrous. If this is a person...a child in a womb...everything in this debate revolves around what's happening in the womb, and Scripture is clear: the womb contains a person being formed in the image of God. You cannot believe the Word of God and deny this, and once you realize this, there is no, absolutely no adequate justification for abortion.

One of the wonderful things Psalm 139 does is it gives us a glimpse into what God is doing in the womb. Though the unborn is visibly hidden from man, he or she is not hidden from God. God is creating in a way that compels praise. All of His works are wonderful. Psalm 139:14, "*All your works are wonderful.*"

Now, here's the deal: abortions here and around the world oftentimes happen because having a particular child is seen as inconvenient, either costly or with the advancement of medical technology, you're able to detect the child's sexuality. In some countries, it's favorable to have a boy instead of a girl; countries like China where there's a one-child policy. India where it's more expensive to have a girl, and you lose money on dowries, so girls are aborted. Or disability that is able to be detected in some ways. So, should abortion be permissible in those circumstances? Not if you believe Psalm 139:14. Not if you believe that all of God's works are wonderful, even or especially in the case of disability. John 9, man born blind, whose fault is this? It's not his fault. It's so that God's glory might be shown through him.

One article on ABC News from a pediatric geneticist at Children's Hospital in Boston said an estimated 92% of all women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Downs Syndrome choose to terminate their pregnancies...92%! God's works are wonderful. Even, especially, in the case of disability, and even, or especially, in the midst of difficulty. God delights...and we sang about this earlier...in taking difficult circumstances and turning them into good.

So, it's at this point some people ask, "What about rape? What about incest? Is abortion justifiable then?" I cannot imagine, again, to presume to know what it would be like to be in that situation. I shudder at the thought of my wife, or any woman, being in that situation. I won't presume to know the physical or emotional toll that brings, but it comes back to the fundamental question: "Is this child a person in the womb?" If so, then everything changes. Would you murder a child who is out of the womb because they were conceived by rape? Of course you wouldn't! Then, why would you murder a child in the womb because they were conceived by rape?

Why should a child, Deuteronomy 24:16, pay for his father's crime? How ought we to treat a child who reminds us of a terrible experience? With love and mercy. You say, "So, what about the emotional toll on the woman?" Think about it. If the rapist is caught, would we allow the woman to murder the rapist in order to have emotional relief for herself? No. Then, why would we allow her to murder her innocent child instead? I'm not saying this is easy at all, but I'm saying this because Scripture is saying this. God delights in taking the worst of circumstances and turning them into good.

It is this picture in Genesis 38, incest between Judah and Tamar leads to, eventually, the Son of God coming into the world in Matthew 1. This is the message of the gospel: God takes unimaginable evil and turns it into ultimate good. If God took the murder of His Son and turned it into the means of your salvation, we can trust Him to take evil and turn it into good, even when it's not easy.

Third, concerning God and abortion: abortion is an attack on God's intimate relationship with the unborn. Everything here just flowing from Psalm 139 all over Scripture. You think about God's relationship with the unborn. He fashions them, Job 31:15. He values them, Exodus 21. He knows them, Jeremiah 1. He relates to them, Psalm 22. He calls them, Galatians 1:15. He names them, Isaiah 49. He anoints them, Luke 1:15. Do you see the intimacy here between God and a baby in the womb, how serious this is? This is not social, political, women's, children's health issue. This is a God issue. Abortion is an affront to God's character and assault on God's work and an attack on God's precious relationship with babies that He creates. So, I hope you've seen the severity of abortion.

Abortion and the Gospel...

So, how does God respond to all this? We've seen what we do to God in abortion. What does God do? Remember, two things I want to point out based on what we've seen in the gospel: God is the judge of sin. He is a righteous judge. God hates the taking of innocent life, and He judges those who take innocent life, including mothers who have aborted babies.

Mothers who have aborted babies stand under the judgment of God. Fathers who have encouraged abortion stand under the judgment of God. Grandparents who have supported abortion stand under the judgment of God. Doctors who have performed abortion stand under the judgment of God. Leaders who have permitted abortion stand under the judgment of God. Pastors who have counseled people to have abortion...

Side note: only time medical action like we're talking about, tonight, would be justified is in the case where a woman's pregnancy would kill her, like tubal pregnancies. Obviously, it's better for one human to live, the mother, than for two humans to die, a mother and her child. So, the intent is not to kill a child but to save a life, and the tragic, unavoidable result is the death of that child. Aside from that, there is no biblical warrant for pastors to counsel people to have abortions. Pastors and legislators and others who have worked to make abortion possible, whether that is the President of the United States or local Congresspersons, I want to be clear. My job...I'm not presuming to give a political speech here, but to preach the Word and proclaim what God has said, and I want a side note...real quickly, look at Romans 13:1-4:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?

Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

So, real quickly, let's see here...the Bible is teaching that the government is given by God for the good of people. The government exists under the authority of God and is instituted, by God, to be...look at those words..."*a terror to bad conduct.*" So, those who do what is good are approved by the government, and those who do what is bad are opposed by the government. The government does this by making laws and enforcing them.

Which leads to the second thing in your notes there: the government is given by God for the legislation of morality. God gives governments to affirm good and condemn bad. That's what Romans 13:3 is all about...to ensure justice, to promote good for all people. That's foundational, but many people have said, "It's not the state's job; it's not the job of the government to legislate morality." That is a sham argument, and we all know it. The state does have the responsibility of legislating morality, saying that stealing is wrong, lying is wrong, murder is wrong, a host of other things are wrong. Now, when it comes to the issue of abortion, people immediately say, "We shouldn't take someone's right to choose away." However, the government exists to take people's "right to choose" away. You cannot choose to steal, for if you do there will be consequences.

I met a kind, government official off the interstate not too long ago, and as we conversed there...he in uniform and me in shame...I did not say, "You cannot take away my right to choose to go that speed. It's not your place." I would not say that. That is his place. He takes away that right from me and other drivers on the road. If everybody chose to do whatever they wanted to do, the inevitable result would always be anarchy, where we're free to do whatever we want. This is not good! Yet, it is the basis by which many...many in the church are saying, "Well, maybe I wouldn't have an abortion, but I don't think we should take someone else's right to choose away from them." We take people's right to choose evil away from them every day as a society, and that is a good thing. It's good for all of us. It's good for us to say, "No one has the 'right' to do evil," and it's absolute moral silliness and cultural suicide to say that everyone should have the right to do whatever they choose to do.

So, I want to call you, church, out of a muddled, middle road that says, "Well, I don't think I should impose my morality on someone else." I want to call you to realize that we impose morality on others every day, and that's a good thing for all of us. When it comes to evil, it is right for us to oppose it...wisely, graciously, firmly, humbly, boldly...to oppose it.

You say you're pro-choice? Pro-choice about what? Whether you have Chinese or Mexican food? Where you live? What kind of car you drive? Of course you're pro-choice about that, but you are not pro-choice about rape. You are not pro-choice about burglary. You're not pro-choice about kidnapping. So, are you pro-choice about killing children?

Brothers and sisters, moral or political neutrality here is not an option. I'm saying...I hope...this based totally on the Word of God which leads me to say God is the judge of sin, including Christians who have done nothing about abortion, i.e. me. This is where I've been convicted over the last year when I've come to this issue, because I'm the chief of sinners here. I have been passive. There is a battle raging in our culture and in the world, and I've sat idly by on this one, and that is not going to be the case anymore. Randy Alcorn put it best when he said, "To endorse or even be neutral about killing innocent children created in

God's image was unthinkable in the Scriptures, was unthinkable to Christians in church history, and should be unthinkable to Christians today." God is the judge of sin.

Thankfully, that's not all. He's also the Savior of sinners! He is the judge. He hates abortion. He is the Savior. He loves sinners. So, let me encourage you, whether you've had an abortion, supported abortion, performed abortion, permitted abortion or done nothing about abortion, know this. Feel this: He forgives you entirely. Entirely. To every woman in this room who has had an abortion, hear this: Christ has paid the price for your abortion. He forgives entirely; He heals deeply. He heals deeply. He restores completely. You do not walk around with a scarlet "A" on your chest. You're forgiven, and God does not look at you and see the guilt of abortion; He looks at you and sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Whether you've had one abortion, five abortions, whether you've performed hundreds or thousands of abortions, He redeems fully. God turns evil into good.

Abortion and the Church...

So, to the Church: we must not only avoid works of darkness, Ephesians 5:11, but we must act against them. So, we need to look around to learn the facts about abortion. If you've sat idly by, let this be a wake-up call. Learn the facts about abortion. See the pictures of abortion. I'm not showing pictures tonight, but I think and believe it is good for us to see, even feel, the horror of abortion. You say, "Well, I don't want to see that." Just as many people did not need to hide from images of concentration camps in Nazi Germany because it was too painful to watch, they needed to see it, didn't they? We need to see it. We don't need to hide from this. Learn, see, listen to the victims of abortion. One estimate is that 95% of the people in the church...of people in the church who have lost a child to abortion have never really come to terms with it, and oftentimes never share it with anybody else. So, listen.

Step forward to share your burdens from the past with brothers and sisters if you have had an abortion or been involved in abortion in the past. Share your struggles of the present with your brothers and sisters. If you're struggling with the potential of abortion at any point, go to brothers or sisters who will walk you through the Word.

Then, to all of us: speak up before God in prayer. This is an intense battle in our culture and across the world, and it requires prayer and fasting, and speak up before the government. I'm not saying I know what this looks like in each one of your lives or the different cultures that are represented around the world tonight, but where there are democratic privileges of free speech and representation and demonstration, press for legal protection for the unborn. Also, reach out through giving to pro-life causes and ministries, serving unwed under-age mothers, volunteering in pregnancy centers, supporting abortion alternatives, adopting unwanted children.

Here's the deal: I'll tell you one final story. A little girl who was born into a country where girls are not popular, her mom decided not to have an abortion. She had the baby girl and put her in a brown paper bag and placed her on a doorstep and walked away the day after she had been born. By God's grace, three weeks from now, I'll go and have the privilege of picking her up and becoming her dad. I praise God that she was not aborted when so many around her are. I pray that God will give us grace and boldness...compassionate courage, broken-hearted boldness...to speak to this issue as the Word clearly speaks to this issue. The gospel and abortion.

MAN'S DISTORTION The Gospel and Polygamy

All right. The gospel and polygamy. Some might wonder why this is even worth mentioning because it doesn't seem like it's that big of a deal here, but this is an issue that is huge in cultures around the world. Let me ask you a question, and I'm going to get you to answer back to me, all at one time, okay? Here's the deal: Say you're in a tribal context in Africa, or maybe a Muslim village in Asia, and you have the opportunity to lead someone to Christ who is a polygamist; he has five wives. So, how do you counsel him when it comes to his wives?

Now, should he provide in every way for all five of those wives...financially, sexually, in every way for all of his wives...yes or no? You ready? Okay, on the count of three you've got to yell it out. Should he provide for all five of his wives, even those who are in different places? All right, you ready? Don't think, "Well, I'm not going to do it and see what others say." No, this is it. We're all in this together, all right? We're all in this together. Here we go. Should he provide for all of his wives? One...two...three... [Audience response: Majority say, "Yes."] All right! All right...let's see. All right...gospel and polygamy.

Okay, just to make sure we're on the same place and plane here...polygamy: having more than one wife at a time. It's all over Scripture, particularly, the Old Testament. Over thirty different references to polygamy. Four chapters into the Bible, we've got Lamech, who takes two wives. You have Abraham, Esau; you have poor Jacob who gets married, he thinks to Rachel, then he wakes up in the morning, rolls over and sees Leah...that would be odd! That would be odd. So, Laban had deceived him. Jacob worked out a deal to take Rachel, too, in exchange for another seven years of service. You've got polygamy in the Bible, even among the Patriarchs.

Polygamy and God...

So, do the Bible and God endorse polygamy? Well, let's think about this...polygamy and God...from the very beginning. Just as we've seen, there is an unequivocally, clear, divine pattern for marriage: one man, one woman. One husband, one wife. This is the picture in Genesis 2, Proverbs 5, 1 Corinthians 7. In addition to that divine pattern, you never see polygamy...ever, not one time...praised as a good thing in the Bible. In fact, you see the opposite. The divine prohibition of polygamy. Most clearly in Leviticus 18:18, "*You shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive.*"

There's a lot of discussion about Leviticus 18, because Leviticus 18, before and around this, talks about incest. Some people have discarded this as not really talking about polygamy, but the same word that is used as a "*rival wife*" here in verse 18 is brought in in 1 Samuel 1:2 to talk about Hannah's rival wife, Peninnah...not a biological sister, but sister in the sense that they were both Israelites; but a rival wife...a second wife.

Then, you get to Deuteronomy 17:17 where God strictly warned the future king or kings of Israel not to acquire many wives for themselves. So, you have these biblical prohibitions of polygamy. Why? Well, just like we were talking about a second ago, it all starts in the heart. Polygamy breeds idolatry. Solomon takes the cake with 700 wives, 300 concubines. Many of whom were taken from other nations for political purposes, but he went directly against Deuteronomy 17:17, and indeed, his heart turned away from the Lord in idolatry. Polygamy

brings disharmony. Some of the major disharmony we see in Scripture, particularly among the Patriarchs, deals with a husband and his wives.

So, we see a divine pattern for marriage in Scripture, a divine prohibition of polygamy, and then we see the divine provision for polygamists. So, much like divorce, for example. Was divorce part of God's original design? No, it was the result of sin, result of the fallen world. Consequently, God made provision for how to address divorce. In the same way, polygamy, the result of sin. Consequently, God made provision for how polygamists should act.

Now, Deuteronomy 21 helps protect against favoritism among wives. Some have taken that passage and said, "Well, there it is. God endorses polygamy." However, this is not an endorsement for polygamy any more than regulations about divorce are an endorsement of divorce. When this passage starts by saying, "*If a man has two wives...*" that's just giving guidance, such as case law, for certain circumstances. Just like when you see in Exodus 22, "*If a man steals an ox or sheep...*" that doesn't mean God is advocating theft. No, He's addressing what needs to be done when this sin happens. So, this is not an endorsement of polygamy, this is simply compassion for people who find themselves in sinful, polygamist situations. God is doing what He does throughout Scripture, using sinful people in sinful situations to show His grace and His mercy and providing for them. So, He provides. He wants to make sure there is not favoritism, that they are provided for in the case where this has happened. Not because He is endorsing it, but because He loves His people.

Polygamy and the Church...

So, polygamy and the church. You go to the New Testament, and the stance is pretty clear: a polygamist cannot be a church leader. Evident all over the New Testament. An overseer, elder must be a husband of one wife. Deacons each must be the husband of one wife. So, that's clear, but can a polygamist be a church member? There's nothing in the New Testament that seems to warn against that, so yes, based on Scripture, a polygamist can be a church member. Polygamy doesn't disqualify somebody from the kingdom of grace, which leads to polygamy and the gospel.

Polygamy and the Gospel...

On the one hand, the gospel compels us to avoid polygamy, to follow the divine pattern. Polygamy defies that pattern and distorts the picture of the gospel. So, in Christ, we're compelled to avoid polygamy to honor Christ, but what about the person who is already a polygamist, like we were talking about? The Bible encourages us to encourage polygamists, first and foremost, to be saved by Christ. We're to share the gospel with polygamists...to be saved by Christ, but what happens when they do? How do you encourage them concerning their wives?

Based upon Scripture, it seems that our encouragement would be for them to be faithful to their wives...all of them. Nowhere does Scripture call a husband to cast off his wife. Scripture calls us to love, care for wives, so even though it's not God's design, there is provision out of God's compassion for His people, just like we saw in the Old Testament, for needs to be met of all wives in a way that shows them love and honor for the Lord who created marriage. At the same time, to encourage polygamists to be opposed to any and all future polygamy. Be faithful to your wives until the next generation, or until death do you part, but never do this again, and preach "one wife" to everybody you know, so that God may be glorified in monogamous marriage. The gospel and polygamy.

MAN'S DISTORTION

The Gospel and Pornography

All right. When it comes to the gospel and pornography...oh, I've struggled with how to address this because, brothers and sisters, we know it's not like there needs to be a case built that this is sinful. Yet, statistics estimate half of men in the church keep running back to it, are addicted to it in some way. So, I don't presume that anything I say of my own words, tonight, is going to change that in your life, but I have prayed that, for this next couple of moments...and just simply reading some different Scriptures and applying the gospel to pornography...that God might deliver people tonight...free people and cause people to flee.

So, what I've done is I've taken the five elements of the gospel that we started with, tonight, and for each one of those five just put in two words of encouragement...gospel exhortations...based on that element of the gospel that, if pornography is something that you are involved in, engrossed in, pulled toward, that you would mediate on these things in the days to come, and you would just receive them tonight. I'll just read some Scripture; I'm going to make very little commentary in between here. 1 Peter 2:11: "*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*" 2 Corinthians 10:5: "...take every thought captive to obey Christ..."

TEN GOSPEL EXHORTATIONS

The Character of God

The character of God. Brothers and sisters, cultivate unshakable zeal for the glory of God. "*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Desire His glory more than you desire pictures and images. Acknowledge that your sexual drive is a good gift from a gracious God. It is good to have desires. God made you that way, so enjoy them in the context of a wife, Proverbs 5. Guard...1 Corinthians 7...married brothers. So, some single men think, "Well, when I get married this won't be a problem." Married men struggle with this all over the place. Married brothers, guard against sexual sin with good sex. Enjoy your wife and sex. 1 Corinthians 7:3, "*The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.*" One of the best ways to fight pornography on the internet is through sex with your spouse in the bedroom. Acknowledge your sexual drive as a good gift from a gracious God. We're sexual beings, and this is good.

The Sinfulness of Man

The sinfulness of man. Exhortation number three: run. Run. Run from every temptation, knowing that one sin is enough to warrant infinite damnation. It was one sin in Genesis 3. They ate a piece of fruit and, from that one sin, came condemnation for all men. All world wars, holocausts, murder, violence, rape, natural disasters, tsunamis, earthquakes, tornados...they all came from one sin. So, don't minimize the effects of one sin. Run from it.

Guard yourself with godly friendships and gospel accountability. We are sinful, and we need each other. "*Exhort one another every day...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,*" (Hebrews 3:12-13). "*Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works,*" (Hebrews 10:24-25). Surround yourself with brothers and sisters who will

spur you on toward Christ, and by the grace of God and the Word of God, help guard you from yourself. You and I need to be guarded from ourselves.

The Character of Christ

The character of Christ, which is where we need to push one another to. Five, contemplate the price Christ paid for your purity. See Him writhing on a cross in agony. Fight tempting images with that image. See Him, not them. 1 Peter 1:13-19, *"...preparing your minds for action... set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ... knowing that you were ransomed... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."* Contemplate the price Christ paid for your purity and fix your eyes on Him, not them.

Then, consider the compassion that Christ has for the souls of men and women. Love and pray for them; don't exploit and abuse them. Women (or men) in pictures are people. They are not objects. They are souls. Love and pray for them. Do not exploit and abuse them. They need you to point them to Christ, not fuel their exploitation. Their eternity is at stake. Consider the price Christ paid for your purity; consider the compassion Christ has for their souls.

The Necessity of Faith

The fourth component of the gospel: the necessity of faith. Believe God is for you. He's for you. He's for you. He's for you, and He knows what is best for you. In calling you away from pornography, He is calling you away for your good. He knows what is best for you. Believe that! He is good, and He will give us everything we need; everything our souls truly desire. Believe that God is for you.

So, how do you grow in your trust for Him? Memorize and meditate on Scripture. *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word... I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you,"* (Psalm 119:9-11). Fight the fight of faith with the weapon of the Word. Memorize these Scriptures or others like them. Lodge them deep within your heart. Take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and fight the flaming arrows of the evil one. Don't give up. Persevere.

The Urgency of Eternity

Press on in light of the urgency of eternity. The stakes in this battle are high, brothers and sisters. Ponder the eternal danger and destruction associated with sexual sin. All of us should just read through those. Don't be counted among the dogs in hell. This is not a game. This is not a game. Ponder the eternal danger and destruction associated with sexual sin; it damns! It damns. Run from it. Last exhortation...and best exhortation...in light of the urgency of eternity, ponder the eternal delight and joy associated with future salvation. You have been saved to delight in God, and one day, that delight will be full. So, look forward to that day; long for that day knowing that, in His presence, there will be fullness of joy. We want to be counted among...on that day...on that day. The gospel and pornography.

All right, these are the two sections I'm going to skip*: Sexual Distinction in the Church, talking about roles of men and women in the Church, and Sexual Sin in the Church. We'll put resources online that will be helpful for that.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Sexual Satisfaction in Marriage

I want to dive...so, kind of keep flipping all the way to sexual satisfaction in marriage, and I know those on the East Coast, it's getting late, and so I want to wake you up with this one. Here we go!

Gospel Foundations...

Sexual satisfaction; gospel foundations. Here we go, and then, what we're going to do is we're going to walk through quickly foundations, then we're going to get into Song of Solomon, and that's where we're going to close. Sex is relational. [Stick to the notes, Dave, stick to the notes.] Sex is relational. This message is the foundation that we see in Scripture. I think there are seven of them here, and I'm leaning a lot on Heimbach, that great resource that I mentioned earlier.

Sex is relational. It's not a mechanical act that happens between two objects; it's a personal act that happens between two people becoming one flesh. Do you see how Proverbs talks about the prostitute? Don't give yourself to a stranger. This is a personal, intimate, relational act with another person that you're joining your flesh with. It's not something you do with someone, treating them as an object for pleasure. This is a person with whom you have a relationship. Sex is relational.

Sex is exclusive. You participate in it with "*the wife of your youth*," (Malachi 2:14). Drink deeply, Proverbs 5 says, from the well that is yours, not someone else's. All throughout Scripture, sex is only celebrated in the context of exclusive, covenant relationship between a husband and a wife. It's exclusive. Sex is intimate. Not trivial; it is deep. This is where we realize sex is, obviously, physical, but it is deeply spiritual. We talked about this. Ephesians 5 says it's a union not only of bodies, but of souls. When Genesis 2 says the man will hold fast to his wife...I've put other Scriptures...and all these other Scriptures after that are places where that same word for "hold fast" is translated differently and is used to point out how it's a picture of loyalty and commitment to one another, where nothing divides and nothing separates. That's what sex is intended to be. Sex is intimate.

Sex is fruitful. Obviously, sex is productive based on Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful, increase and multiply." That doesn't mean, though, that sex is wrong if it's not producing children. We've talked about barrenness earlier tonight, and God used, in the Patriarch's lives for example, unfruitful sex to still build faith. Obviously, we see...and we're going to see in Song of Solomon that there is a picture of intimacy that, obviously, grows in marriage as a result of sex. 1 Corinthians 7:1-3, don't rob one another of this desire.

I remember when we were preparing to do the first live simulcast with Lifeway. Lifeway had invited me to come to a women's event they were doing here in Birmingham, and there were 10,000 women gathered in this big auditorium. When I got there, they asked me, at the end, just to close out in prayer for the women, which that was great until I realized that that meant I then needed to sit in on the final session of this women's conference. The final session was when they took questions from the audience about sex. So, I'm sitting there in a room full of 10,000 women as they're talking about their husbands and this or that, and it was awkward to say the least! However, I was thankful because at the end, Kay Arthur...a woman of God who has taught the Word of God, and I so appreciated her for saying this...she was talking about 1 Corinthians 7, and wives not neglecting...she was encouraging all the women, "Don't neglect your husband sexually." She said, "Especially in

this time of economic struggle in our country and where our men's self-esteem sometimes is down and where they're having a hard time providing...this is all the more time to step it up and provide all the more during this time." I got up, and the first thing I said was, "I am more thankful for the recession now than I have ever been, and may the economy never, ever recover...ever...ever recover!" So, sex is fruitful.

Sex is selfless, not self-centered. We've already seen this in Ephesians 5 with a picture of marriage. We're talking about 1 Corinthians 7. I love this quote from Daniel Heimbach, because you might think, "What? Sex...I thought that was for self-gratification." Listen to this:

Some wonder, of course, how sex can be truly satisfying or enjoyable without focusing on yourself. The idea of enjoying selfless sex seems contradictory. Does not getting the most out of sex require putting your own desires ahead of everything else? The surprising answer is no, both on biblical terms and based on human experience as well. God has imbedded a paradox in how sexual pleasure works that helps to restrain natural human selfishness. The more a couple focuses on pleasing each other, the more enjoyment each receives in return; and the more a person focuses on demanding his or her own satisfaction, the less satisfaction is possible. Self-centeredness always destroys satisfaction, while unselfishness always makes it better.

Good word, Heimbach. Sex is selfless.

Two more: one, sex is complex...so many dimensions. Sex involves the mind. Sex involves the body, which is obvious, I hope. Sex involves the soul. A great quote from C.S. Lewis about how all these come together. Finally, sex is complementary. Meaning that sex brings together two people to complement one another on two main levels: one, complementary gender, as we've talked about. Man and woman fitting together, and then complementary kind, such that sex between males and males or females and females is not only wrong, but also sex between, you see Leviticus 18, people and animals is, obviously, not part of God's design. You can see in Leviticus 18 how God put homosexuality and bestiality beside one another. So, see that.

Gospel Prohibitions...

All right, so that's gospel foundations. Now, gospel prohibitions because there is a list of things in Scripture that God says do not do when it comes to sex. God clearly says no sex outside of marriage, that all sexual desire is intended to be played out in the context of marriage, and anything outside of that is adultery. Whether it's sex before marriage, sex with someone not your spouse during marriage, anything outside of God's design is classified all over Scripture. "Don't do it. Don't do it. No sex outside of marriage." Clear. No questions or discussion. Singles, I urge you not to try to justify anything here where Scripture is absolutely clear.

Second, no sexual worship. This is where we remember sex is good, but sex is not God. We don't worship it. We don't worship the gift; we worship the Giver. Third, no sexual prostitution. It's clear in those verses, as we've seen. No homosexuality. You'd have to deny Scripture altogether to miss this. As we've discussed, no sex with animals, no sex with relatives, Leviticus 18:6. We find it in 1 Corinthians 5. No sex with children. Pedophilia is not specifically addressed in the Bible, but when we take everything else we've talked about sex into account, as well as clear instructions from Christ in Scripture about care for children, it's clear: no sex with children.

No sexual violence. Sex is not designed by God to be hurtful. So, any kind of spousal abuse, or anything along those lines sexually, is warned against in God's Word. No sexual lust. We've seen this. It is wrong for you to think about, to lust after sex with someone apart from your wife or your husband. No sexual lust.

No sexual immodesty. So, lust deals with having sexual desires yourself. Sexual immodesty is about trying to provoke sexual thoughts about you in others. Do not cause your brother to stumble, Romans 14:21. Adorn yourselves, women, in respectable apparel; adorn yourself with modest dress (1 Timothy 2:9-10). Do not draw attention to physical beauty. Sisters, I encourage you, especially...brothers and sisters both...but in a day where skin-tight clothes, low necklines, short dresses, short skirts, short shirts, short shorts...all of which fall far short of the biblical standard of modesty. Do not look in the mirror and think, "What's going to make me look best?" Look in the mirror and think, "What's going to bring the most glory to God in those around me?"

Do not draw attention to worldly wealth. That's what he's saying in 1 Timothy 2. Instead, adore God through a Christ-like demeanor. Adore God with Him. So, sexual modesty...now, it's not just what we wear; sexual modesty also deals with what you see so don't try to see something that someone else is not wanting you to see. It includes what you touch. Deuteronomy 25, the law punishes a woman who grabs a guy in the crotch to help her husband in a fight. That is not permissible, biblically. I'm just saying the crotch is off limits outside of marriage no matter what's at stake. This includes...sexual immodesty includes what you say. We're going there. Here we go: it includes what you say, so guard your language, brothers. Guard your language, sisters.

Question. Final prohibition. People ask, "What about self-stimulated sex?" (i.e. masturbation). People say, "Well, the Bible doesn't prohibit it, so maybe it's okay." I hope we've seen that that kind of argument from silence is not healthy. The Bible doesn't directly prohibit pedophilia, but that doesn't mean it's pleasing to God. So, is masturbation...a self-stimulated sexual act...pleasing to God? It's clear, based on what we've seen in Scripture, that it is not in line at all with God's design for sex. It is a passion of the flesh, Galatians 5.

You think about what we've seen about sex and think about how this goes, how masturbation goes against everything that God has designed for sex. Sex is relational. Masturbation is individual, solitary, alone; not God's design for sex. Masturbation encourages lustful wandering, not exclusive purity. It's virtually impossible to engage in that act apart from lust and unholy desires for someone, something else.

It's superficial, not intimate, shallow at best. Not reflecting the intimate union God has designed. It's fruitless. It doesn't lead to child-rearing, faith-building, relationship-growing at all. It's self-centered not selfless. It's only intended to satisfy yourself, not another. That is not God's design for sex. It involves physical isolation, not complex union. The complete opposite of what happens when two bodies, two minds, two souls come together, and when it comes down to it, it is a personal homosexual act, not a complementary heterosexual act. A male is aroused by a male; or a female is aroused by a female. Same sex arousal; same sex fulfillment. Merely imagining a heterosexual relationship, which we've already seen is also wrong, does not make this a heterosexual reality. It's personal homosexuality. So, it would be wise to put it on the Lord Jesus Christ to make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Okay. So, those are the prohibitions, which are hugely important, but now, on to the good stuff.

Gospel Celebration...

So, Song of Solomon: a book about God and sex. You start to read parts of Song of Solomon, and you say, "Is that really in here? Navels and bellies and breasts, oh my! What is this?" However, it is good. It's good, and it's from God. God has given us desires, and it's good that in Scripture...in His revelation...we have an understanding about how that is to play out.

I remember when we were preaching...I was preaching an overview of this at Brook Hills and, right after the sermon...it was a nine o'clock worship gathering...an older couple comes up to me right after the service, and they were just smiling from ear to ear. They looked at me, and they said, "Pastor, that was such a great sermon. We're not even going to small group, we're headed directly home." I'm thinking, like...poking my mind's eye out. So, okay!

So, there are a lot of questions we've got about the book of Song of Solomon. You read through it, you've got all kinds of imagery, plants and animals and spices. We understand when the guy says his bride is like a dove or a darling or a fountain, but when he says her appearance is like a horse or her hair is like goat, or her nose is like a tower, we've got to wonder if this guy needed a little schooling on romance. So, there's a lot that's difficult to understand.

People have asked, "Is this allegorical?" People have said, "Well does this...do little things here or there stand for something different? Metaphors...what do they all stand for? What does this image stand for? What does that image stand for?" Is Song of Solomon typological? Like a type as a shadow that's pointing to something greater? Others have asked, "Is Song of Solomon is literal?" "Is it literally, just naturally, a book about a man and a woman showing love for one another? Is it a story or is it just songs? Is it two characters or three? Is it to Solomon, by Solomon or about Solomon?" All kinds of questions.

Here is what we do know: Song of Solomon is musical. In other words, it's a song. It's a poem. It, literally, means the finest of all songs—the Song of Songs. It's fine, and it is intended to show us a celebration of sexual love. It is, I think, in a very real sense...the way I understand Song of Solomon is that it's an illustration of Genesis 2:24-25. Man and woman naked, unashamed, not stained by the effects of sin on sexuality but enjoying one another as God has designed. Enjoying the pleasure that God has designed in this. At the same time, reminding us about the cautions of sexual love. Over and over again in the book, you see, "Guard yourself until the time God ordains." You see brothers guarding their sister from giving herself sexually to anybody else until the time is right in God's design.

THE KING AND HIS BRIDE IN THE BOOK OF SONG OF SOLOMON

So, here's the picture: different facets. I hope, in the process, you see that God is glorified in sex. Exclusive devotion: they sought out only each other. Now, you might be thinking, "Well, didn't Solomon have all these different wives?" The reality is this book is monogamous from cover to cover. It's a picture of one man, one woman together. If you look at Song of Solomon 3:1-4, it's a pursuit. She's calling out for him. He's calling out to her. You look at Song of Solomon 4:12-15, she's seeking after him alone. She's longing for him alone, and he describes her, "*A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.*" He is just describing her purity there because she has saved herself. Listen to 7:10, "*I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.*" So, this is a picture of a man and a woman seeking after each other.

So, exclusive devotion, seeking only each other. Leading to heated expectation. This is where I want us to see...regardless of whether you see in this book a drama or not...there is anticipation here that builds between the king and his bride. Two facets of this anticipation. See this. First, they began with tender words. This is evident from the start, and it lasts throughout. Listen to how she starts, "*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine; your anointing oils are fragrant,*" (Song of Solomon 1:2-4). He says,

If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents. I compare you, my love, to a mare [there are the horses] among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels," (Song of Solomon 1:8-10).

It continues throughout,

My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool. His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars," (Song of Solomon 5:10-15).

That will make any guy feel great! If I had a dollar for every time Heather said my arms are like "*gold set with jewels,*" I would be a rich man.

So, here's the deal. This is key. This is key. Passion for one another is clearly grounded in praise for one another. Passion with one another, grounded in praise for one another. You talk to your wife like this, brother, you're in for a good night. Sister, you talk like this to your husband...all talking about his body like polished ivory and his wavy locks...this is romance in the making.

So, they began with tender words and that led to tantalizing work. This is the climax of the book, and this is one of the shadiest parts of the book where the king, basically, starts at the top of his bride's body and works his way down, praising every part of her body. The imagery is beautiful, healthy, God-glorifying images to describe sexual love in a way that is appropriate and alluring at the same time. So, follow along here. These verses are, basically, the king's mental, if not physical, undressing of his bride.

"Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead." A little explanation here: the picture is from a distance a herd of black goats coming down the mountainside, the sun glistening off their backs. That would be a beautiful thing. So, she lets down her hair for him, comes across her shoulder, he's drawn in, okay?

"Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young." So, she's got her teeth. This is positive. This is very positive. So, I twitter this one day...the idea that not one of her teeth is missing...and I had a couple of people from Kentucky respond that she couldn't have been from there. That's horrible! That's horrible! So, anyway. Blessings to our brothers and

sisters in Kentucky! You guys said it, not me! I didn't say that! So, she's got her teeth, which is great.

"Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil." Blushed red, like a sweet fruit and attractive to the eye; ready to be kissed. *"Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors."* So, you read that and start thinking "Hmm, so she had a long, fat neck." That's really not the picture. The picture here is like a tower...tower of David...dignified, elegant, holding her head above her body proudly.

"Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that graze among the lilies." Anybody else feeling awkward right now? *"Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense."* I'm not even going to try on this one, so I'm going to lean on my friend, Danny Akin, who wrote a great commentary on this book...Song of Solomon...called "God on Sex." He writes:

Note that there is nothing even remotely pornographic about this imagery here. Porneia clearly refers to evil sexual desire and an entire industry is built on exploiting this sinful passion. Solomon's point here is that a man's desire for his wife is holy. His pleasure and erotic desire for her is holy. To deny this is to deny one of God's good gifts. First, they are compared to twin fawns of a gazelle that feed among the lilies. They are soft and attractive, tender and delicate, making her husband want to gently touch and caress them. Second, he describes them as two mountains: one a mountain of myrrh and the other a hill of frankincense. Both spices were expensive and used as perfume for the body and the marriage bed. Now the senses of sight and smell are aroused. So enraptured is Solomon that he desires to make love to his wife all night long: *"until the day breathes and the shadows flee away."*

Well said, Danny! So, isn't it good that God has given us a beautiful description of how our sexuality is intended to be expressed? So, he continues in 4:7-13:

You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue [apparently the French did not invent that one] the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed. Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates..."

There it is. A garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon. This is like a fantasy garden, a lover's dream. To find all these fruits and spices and flowers together. This is my bride, and she is wonderful. This is good. When you go to the garden, you will never be bored. There will be pleasures to be discovered.

All leading to intimate consummation.

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!" (Song of Solomon 4:16-5:1).

They gave their bodies over to one another. She, who had been a locked garden, closed to the public, now opened up for him to enjoy. Heimbach says,

Here is something extraordinary! She takes the key locking everyone out, and gives it to him! She has kept everyone out, and that made her special, but now she gives him the key, allowing him in, and that makes him special. That is why modesty is alluring! It does not keep the garden locked forever, but saves it for the right person at the right time.

Intimate consummation. A picture of pure satisfaction on every level. This is emotional satisfaction. This is spiritual satisfaction. This is intellectual satisfaction, and this is clearly physical satisfaction. Akin says, "We cannot be certain of all that is meant by the imagery of coming to the garden and tasting the choice fruits. But it is not difficult to imagine all sorts of good stuff!"

Constant anticipation. "*Make haste, my beloved* [this is how it ends], *and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spice,*" (Song of Solomon 8:14). After all that's happened, he's off doing something else as a part of his daily routine, and she says, "Make haste. Be like a gazelle, a stag," animals known for their speed and swiftness. "Run after the mountains of spices," which, there's not a lot of room for imagination here. Basically, the Song of Solomon ends with "Hey! Hurry up, let's do this again. We desire to do this again soon." This is kind of...this is the way sexual love perseveres. It lasts again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and... you get the point.

So, Scripture...Song of Solomon...a picture of sexual love, but this is where I just want you to...all right, just go kind of "Google Earth" with me for a second; bring this out. This is where we'll close. Bring this out because, yes, this is a picture of sexual love between a man and a woman, but we know from all we've seen, tonight, that a man and a woman in love like this...in the context of marriage...is intended to be a picture of something much greater. Not every little detail, a picture that's standing for this, or this, or this, but love between a man and a woman is pointing us to a King and His bride in Ephesians.

A KING AND HIS BRIDE IN EPHESIANS

What we've already read: Ephesians 5:22-33. Think about the gospel that we have talked about tonight. Humble devotion. The reality is that the King has sought after you. Christ has come running after you. Humble devotion. Historic expectation. What all of Old Testament history longed for. He came to us as the fulfillment of all of God's Word. Flawless in all of His works, exactly who we needed. Sacrificial consummation. He gave up His body for us, so that we could be reconciled to God and experience total satisfaction. Loving Him with all our hearts, and all our souls and all our mind, and all our strength, leading to continuous anticipation. Where we long for the completion of our salvation. More and more and more of Christ...more of Christ...until the day where we are like Him; when we see Him as He is; we're conformed fully into His likeness.

A KING AND HIS BRIDE IN REVELATION

Which leads us to a King and His bride in Revelation.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure," (Revelation 19:6-9).

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... dwelling place of God is with man... God himself will be with Him as their God... wiping away every tear from their eyes... death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away," (Revelation 21:1-4).

Marriage here is intended to point us to the eternal relationship we have as the Bride of Christ. A relationship of continual devotion. Know this, brothers and sisters: the King who sought after you on the cross will never stop seeking you. He will continually pursue you as His beloved. It won't be easy. That's why John writes us the book of Revelation...the suffering saints...many who are being persecuted for their faith. John implores them in hopeful expectation, "Cling to God's Word. Trust in His Word. The King is coming for you. This is a hurtful, fallen world. Trust in Him. The King is coming for you." Then, commit to God's work. Don't waver in the battle.

Preach Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. Proclaim Christ to every nation on the planet, every people, Matthew 24:14, until all nations have disciples of Jesus. Until the day when a great multitude that no one can count from every nation, tribe, people, language sings of salvation. Give yourself to that work, brothers and sisters...Bride of Christ...because glorious consummation is coming, when our bodies will be made complete with Him, and the sufferings of this world will be gone and glory will come.

We will be resurrected with Him, and together, we will experience eternal satisfaction. Brothers and sisters, death will be replaced by life; night will be replaced by light; corruption will be replaced by purity; the curse will be totally replaced by blessing. This is our consuming anticipation. Revelation 22:4-5, "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will need no light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."

Let's live, brothers and sisters, in our families, in our marriages, as men and women...let's live out the gospel. Let's proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, all the families and the people and the nations on the earth. Give our lives, lose our lives if necessary, making this gospel known with one cry constantly on our lips, "We want to see your face!" "He who testifies to these things says 'Surely, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 2:20).

***NOTE:** Notes from Pastor David’s manuscript covering these two sections can be found at the [Radical Website](#). Click on the “Materials” button to download the two Resource Documents for this section.

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