



Message Transcript

The Cure for Immorality

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Let's go before the Lord. Let's prepare our hearts in prayer to hear the word of God as it is faithfully proclaimed. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we love your word because your word reveals the living and active God. Lord, your word is living and active.

It is sharper than any two edged sword. It has the ability to penetrate both soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and judges the attitudes and intentions of the heart. So, Lord, we pray right now that you would do that very work in us, that we would have soil or hearts that are receptive to hear the word and put into practice the very things that you show us. And, Lord, as we take a look at a topic today that our church and our culture desperately needs, I pray, God, that you would be gracious to us and merciful to us and helpful to us as we address this. And, Lord, get all the glory, honor and praise through what you're going to accomplish and through how you're going to do it.

And we give you all the glory and all the honor and all the praise, and all God's people that are gathered here this morning that are ready to hear it with a very loud amen. Agreed with me by saying amen. Amen. I want to encourage you. Open your bibles up to one corinthians, chapter seven.

One corinthians, chapter seven. And while you're turning there, the book is going to take a little bit of a shift now, because Paul is going to begin to address specific questions that the corinthian people had regarding things that they wanted to ask him about. So Paul's been going through and talking to this group of people about their sainthood and the love he has for them and the love for the church. But now he's going to address specific issues as it relates to questions they were asking him. And as you know, we just came out of chapter six where Paul was specifically addressing sexuality and talking about how God is the designer of it, God is the creator of it, so therefore, God is the authority on it.

And as he's talking to the people about this topic, it's time for him to begin to address questions. And you're gonna see that one of them that he begins to address is this issue of immorality. Really these first seven verses in chapter seven, Paul is talking about the cure for immorality. Now, whether you're single or married, if you're hearing my voice and you want to apply the word of God today, we can cure immorality if we'll put these verses into practice. And without building a huge case for this, let me tell you, there's a huge need for this.

There's a huge need to address this topic. Let me tell you why. These are just some statistics, and whether these are completely accurate or slightly off, it doesn't matter. You'll get the idea here. This week, as I was doing research, here's just kind of the culmination of this.

One out of every five men admits to having cheated on his wife. One out of ten women admit to having cheated on their husband. Eight out of ten married would consider an affair. 1 million divorces a year in the US, a rate of one divorce for every two new marriages. In 1970, the nation's population had reached 200 million and there were 25,000,002 parent homes.

In 2009, when the population reached 300 million, which is another 100 million people, there were still 25,000,002 parent households. Listen to this. 59% of people believe that sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman is morally acceptable. I would say. I think that percentage is much higher in 1960.

Listen to this. Fewer than a half million couples cohabitated, while in 2013, there

is more than 6.4 million. America has three to four times more couples living together than getting married during the year. Between six and 8 million that cohabitate, versus 2.2 million that get married. I mean, do you see some problems here?

According to the word of God for Christians, 63% of 12th graders claim to have had sexual. How about this friends with benefit hookup thing? Check this out. Since 1980, the number of children born to unwed parents has climbed from 18% to 40%. Today, an estimated 293,000 children in the US are in danger of being sexually trafficked.

And 5000 children have been identified as sex slaves in Las Vegas alone. In 2006, a study showed that one in five Google mobile searches was for pornography. In 2007, a study said that nearly 70% of men and nearly 50% of women saw nothing wrong with viewing pornography. In a 2008 study of college students revealed that 93% of the boys and 62% of the girls were exposed to pornography before the age of 18. A 2012 study said that 43% of teens view porn weekly.

I mean, I could go on and on and on. I mean, these are just a small percentage

of the statistics I studied this week. And I can tell you from my own experience, being a pastor and listening to stories and being one who's been itinerant in traveling, it's pervasive in our culture. Kim and I, one time we were in Ohio and we were doing a Super bowl party and I was gonna be speaking at the halftime of the Super bowl party. And the people came to me during the warmup and said, hey, there'll be no 6th graders here this week.

And I'm like, okay, that's fine. Why? 6th graders aren't welcome. No, no, no. You don't understand.

They closed down the 6th grade classrooms because the twelve year old kids, we're having oral sex parties after school and everybody has herpes and they can't come. Twelve year olds. This was ten years ago. So as your pastor, I wanna tell you this cure is needed, and we need to talk about it, because so often when it comes to these things, church takes a step back and we think, well, the world will figure it out. The world hasn't really done a great job.

Hollywood's really not helping us much. Las Vegas is not helping us much. The

Denver culture is not helping us much. Let me tell you what will. God's word will help us, right?

And so as you open your bibles to one corinthians, chapter seven, Paul is going to begin to address what the cure for this is. And you're not immune to this. There's nobody who's sitting here that says, this doesn't apply to me. If you're single or if you're married, it applies, I promise. Now, Paul writes to them and he says this.

There's going to be really four things I'm going to highlight from these seven verses that are really important for us to understand collectively as a body and for us to understand individually. Now notice what Paul says. He says, now, concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman, but because of immoralities. Each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband. Now, you see what the question is.

We don't know. The Bible doesn't say, here's the specific question, but you can kind of gather it from what Paul's been writing. He's been talking about sexuality. And if you talk about sexuality as God's design and God's creation and God being the author

and God being the inventor and God having the answers, what do you think the culture's gonna say? Well, you're saying all sex is bad then, Paul.

Hey. Or are you just saying, like, if I'm really spiritual, whether I'm single or married, I'll just remain abstinent no matter what? Cause, you know, I'll just disengage. Like, it's a really bad thing. And he's like, no, as a matter of fact, that's not my answer.

And in verses one and two here he gives, the first thing you need to know is the cure for immorality. And here it is. It's that celibacy for singles and sexual fulfillment for marrieds are both a necessary part of God's design. Did you hear what I said? Celibacy or abstinence for singles and sexual fulfillment for marrieds are both a necessary part of God's design.

Paul said, now, concerning the things you wrote, let me tell you, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. That's a euphemism for sexuality. It's good for a man to not engage in sexuality. Being single, can I just tell all the single people it's good to be single? I mean, we live in a culture, especially in the church culture, that looks down on singles, that says, oh, you poor things.

If you were just married like us, then you'd have no, not according to God's word. According to God's word. There's no superiority in Christianity based upon your marital status. That's a great place for an amen, by the way. It means this.

If you're single, you are as important to the kingdom as if you're married. And if you're married, you're as important to the kingdom as if you're single. They're both good choices. Did you hear what I said? I said they're both good choices.

Okay, thank you. I just want to make sure you heard, because sometimes in church we don't celebrate that Paul was single and Jesus was single. Right? Nothing wrong with being single. It's not second class.

It's not. You're missing out. It means I've made a choice. And here's the choice. If you're single, you're abstinent according to God's word.

If you're a christian single, you're celibate all the time according to God's word. That's the choice you're making, right? If you're 16, you're abstinent. If you're 80 and you're single, you're abstinent, you're celibate. That's God's design.

It's God's design for all singles. Can you imagine the cure for sexual immorality and the unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases if every single would say, hey, I'm just single. So of course I'm not going to engage in sexual intercourse. I mean, what would happen. Be beautiful according to God, right?

That's what he says to singles. Now notice what he says to marrieds. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. So God is the one who's created marriage. Going back to Genesis 224, for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and those two shall become one flesh.

Okay, this is what happens in a marriage. When you get married, you are no longer two different people that live under the same roof. You're one. Now, I talk so

down about Hollywood. There is one thing they kind of get right.

Okay. You ever notice if you read tabloids, and I'm not saying I do. I just see things from time to time. But you ever notice, like, I really don't read them. But you notice, like, when couples date or they're together as a couple, they kind of mish their names together.

So if Jennifer's dating Ben, then it's like Bennifer. You ever see that? So if Jeff were married to Kim, it'd be like Jeffer Lee or something like this. I mean, that part they get right. The part they don't get right is that they don't follow God's standards on anything.

And it usually only lasts, like a week or a month or a year. Right? But that's how God sees you. So if you're married, guess what? You're one.

That's why first, Peter, three seven says your prayers can even go hindered if you're not living out the oneness that God requires. Why? Because when you get

married, you are no longer two but one. Right. That's why I'm a huge fan of wives taking the name of their husband as a sign of their oneness.

Just a side note there, okay? Why? Because we're one. Right? And this is what he's saying.

And notice this. Each man is to have who his own wife. Each woman is to have who her own husband. It means it's. That's the only place sex is engaged is with your spouse.

That's the way God designed it. Not with anybody else, just your spouse. And it's a necessity when it says each man is to have his own wife. That's a euphemism for sexuality. It's the same wording that's being used in one corinthians five when it says that this man who was immoral, this son had his mother.

This young man was sleeping with his stepmother. He had her. It's a euphemism

for sexuality. God's design for singles, abstinence, God's design for marriage, sexual fulfillment, that's God's design. What would happen if all singles said, we're choosing to be abstinent for the glory of God?

And all married said, because this is God's gift to me, I'm choosing to sexually fulfill my partner? What would happen? Immorality is cured, right? Does God have answers for today? Yes.

Are these answers we need to hear today? Yes. To have. I mean, have you ever been to a wedding? I mean, if you have traditional vows in your wedding, it'll say something like this.

You're making a vow to what? To have and to hold. It's a very polite way in a congregation to talk about sexual intimacy in a marriage. When I vowed to my wife I wasn't vowing to have and to hold me. I'm vowing to snuggle on the couch and watch the notebook, right?

I didn't make a covenant to that, nor did my wife vow to snuggle on the couch and watch football with me. We're making a covenant to that. We were vowing to be sexually intimate with one another and fulfill each other's needs. That's what he's saying. And there is not only nothing wrong with that, it's God's design for marriage.

And as we talked about sexuality last week, and the binding that happens within a marriage, the sexual binding that happens in the way that God intended it should be, it's a necessity for a marriage to grow and be all that God designed it to be. Doesn't Satan tell us just the opposite? See, here's what Satan tells every single. It's what Satan told me when I was a single. It's what Satan's telling you if you're a single, regardless of your age, it's this, hey, you can have sex and get away with it.

You do whatever you want to do. I mean, have as much sex as you want. You know, do it, do it, do it. You know what Satan says when you get married? No, no, no, not in your marriage.

You need to look for it outside somewhere else. Right? God's just the opposite outside of marriage as a christian man or a christian woman. No sex inside of

marriage. Lots of sex.

That's God's design. That's how God created it. And God said, both choices, both good. Which choice do you want to make? That's what he said.

Now, if this is the truth, which it is, because it's coming right out of God's word that celibacy for singles and sexual fulfillment for marriage are both necessary. Paul is now going to address the marriage and the unity in marriage that needs to happen. And let me tell you this, this point you won't get in many sermons, but I'm going to tell you, it's coming right out of God's word. So how about this? If you want to cure sexual immorality, how about this?

Sexually pleasing your spouse is an obligation required by God. How about that for. .2 you're not getting that. Many churches today across the country, sexually pleasing your spouse is an obligation required by God. You say, where do you get that?

Verse three. The husband must, must fulfill his what? His duty. His obligation. His responsibility to his wife.

And likewise, the wife to her husband. Wife. What? Must fulfill her duty. Why?

Verse four tells us, because the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, also, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Now, do you see what's going on here? It is a responsibility in marriage to sexually fulfill one another. It's a duty.

Now, let me tell you something about this. Oh, it's a duty I have to. No, no, no. God's duties always become delight when we have the right attitude in them. I have to read the word.

I have to preach. I have to pray. I mean, I got to tell this person about Jesus. You mean I have to love my neighbor? You mean I have to forgive?

No. God's duties become delights when we have the right attitude about what he's intending. Right. And sexual fulfillment is the same thing. It is required by God.

I mean, in the Bible, God requires us to make disciples and share the gospel and forgive and to pray for one another. Guess what? He's also giving us a requirement to do this. He's giving us a requirement to fulfill our sexual intimacy with our spouse. And as I told you last week, God's not embarrassed to talk about this.

I mean, he wrote an entire book in his word called the song of Solomon, where he addresses this. And from chapter one all the way through the end of chapter eight, it's all about sexual fulfillment in marriage. I mean, what book starts off with a woman saying, oh, that he may kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is more delightful than wine. Two things we don't talk about in church, wine and kissing. Right?

So, I mean, she's comparing one to the other, and she's saying, it's good. And I'm telling you, I mean, read about this. I mean, here is the bedroom of this couple. And

God uses great poetic imagery to give us a picture of what's going on to keep the sanctity of this beauty, of everything God's created. And God doesn't talk down about sex.

He elevates sex. But listen to what the bride says to her husband in song of Solomon 4:16. And then his response in chapter five and verse one. The wife is comparing her body to a garden. And here's what she speaks to her husband.

She says, awake, o north wind, and come, wind of the south. Make my garden breathe out fragrance. Let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden and eat its choice fruits. Now, if you don't understand that, ask your mom and dad, okay?

She's giving an invitation sexually for her husband. Now notice how the husband responds in chapter five, verse one. I have come into my garden, my sister, sister, my bride. I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey.

I have drunk my milk and my wine. Eat, friends, drink and imbibe deeply, o lovers. What's he saying? I am so satisfied. Let's do this thing again.

Right? And here's the challenge we get in church. There is a procreative element to sexuality, but it is not the only element to sexuality. God intended sexuality to be pleasurable. That's why he made it the way that he did.

And it's very, very good, according to the word of God, within the bounds of marriage, within the container of marriage. Because only in a marriage can you have the safety and the intimacy and the love and the cherishing that can go on and be helpful to you, only in marriage, right? Now, when you read this, for those of you that have been through a lot of pain in your life or have had abuse, when you read this word like, the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, also, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Let me tell you what this means.

This comes out of christian understanding of what marriage is, which is oneness, okay? It means this. When you become one, the Bible says that the husband is the authority, the spiritual authority of his wife. And the wife is to submit to her husband. That's biblical.

So often, even in church, we view it like this. Husband's the boss. Wife submits, but you're both equal. No, no, no. You get a picture of the Trinity.

Father, son and Holy Spirit, they're all one. But let me tell you something. The Son always submitted to the Father. The Father never submitted to the Son, okay? But he was no less God.

Jesus Christ submitted to his father in the garden. Jesus Christ was submissive to his father in going to the cross. Jesus Christ, the son died on the cross. Jesus Christ was given the name that is above every name. He was submissive, but he was one with his dad.

He only do what I see my dad doing. If you see authority like this in your marriage, where there's a distinction, you miss out on everything. If you see authority in a marriage like this as of oneness, it really does work. Well, when Kim and I got married, I mean, because I have authority over her or because she has authority over me, we don't abuse one another. We're all, we're part of the same body.

Like, my right arm is part of my body, my right leg's part of my body. I can tell it what to do. It doesn't mean I abuse it. I mean, if I hurt my right arm or I hurt my right leg, who's hurt? I am.

So to have authority over my wife or for her to have authority over me, from a christian perspective, when our goal is to honor God and to serve one another, I will never choose to do something in my marriage that would be hurtful to her or hurt our oneness. So my authority over her is not me bossing her around, telling her what she needs to do. Her authority over me is not her bossing me around and telling me what to do. The authority we have over each one is to ask each other as authority in each other's life, how can we best please one another? And what's that look like?

And how can I serve you? Because from a christian perspective, sex is not selfish in what I'm getting, sex is serving and what I'm giving out to the person that I'm with, my spouse receives it, right? So if a wife were to come to me and say, well, my husband bullies me all the time and tells me I need to do well, then he's not acting like Jesus. And if a spouse, if a wife comes to me and says, well, he doesn't do this, this and this, you're not acting like Jesus. I mean, in oneness, in marriage, what you should be doing is how do I build the other one up in a way that they feel honored and cherished and respected and free and hopeful, because that's what God designs.

Now, I think we can be clear here that first corinthians seven, in these short verses is not the only word that God has to say about marriage in the Bible. I mean, Ephesians five talks all about it. I mean, Ephesians five talks about, wives submit to your husbands, and husbands submit to your wives, and all these different kinds of things. And even though the husband is the head of the wife, and the wife is to respect him and submit to them, and husband is to love his wife like Christ loved the church. I mean, there's a really interesting statement Paul makes in Ephesians 5:28.

He says, so husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife, loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but

nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church. So what? Sexuality be in a marriage, a place to nourish, cherish, build, honor one another. That's how God created sexuality.

Not to rob each other or make each other feel bad, okay? That's according to the word of God, right? And this is what he says, and it is an obligation that is required by God. Now, why do we need this? Because temptation is all over the place in the world, right?

I mean, it starts in ourself, our flesh, it's outside of us. The world system tells you everything. I'm telling you the world would tell you today. That's nuts. That's crazy.

Single people, if you don't believe me, just go say, hey, I was listening to God's word today, and I've decided to remain abstinent until I get married and see what all your friends say. That's stupid. That's what they'd say. Hey, married people, go tell your friends that I only have eyes for my spouse, and he or she's the only one I'm going to look at. And I'm all about serving them.

And they'll tell you that's kind of nuts, too. You really can't live that way. God says it's not only true, it's possible by the power of his holy spirit. So if celibacy is for singles and sexual fulfillment is for marriage, and for marriage, we're required. Paul goes even one step further.

Notice what he says in the next verses. This is my third point, I promise you. You've never heard this in a sermon. How about this? Never withhold sex in a marriage unless it meets all three of God's concessions.

Did you hear what I said? Never withhold sex in a marriage. Never. That means never withhold sex in a marriage until it meets all three or unless it meets all three of God's concessions. Notice what he says.

Now, we have a lot of verses in the Bible about loving one another and praying for one another and admonishing one another. This is also one of the one anothers in the Bible, too. And here's what Paul says. Stop depriving one another. Stop depriving one another.

It means never use sex as leverage or a weapon. It means always be engaged sexually within your marriage, except he says, by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer and come together again. So Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self control. But I say this by way of concession and not as a command. Now, what does this mean?

It means in a marriage, your sexuality is a top priority. This is not a time to elbow your spouse. I'm just telling you from the word of God what this says, right? It's a top priority. Okay, let me tell you three things.

Sexuality can never be, okay? Three things. Sexuality and marriage can never be. It can never be conditional. Never can be conditional.

Well, you didn't take out the trash today, so you can forget about that. Hey, you spent two money over there, you can forget about that. No, it's never conditional. It's

not based upon how you perform and what you do, and then you get to, no, it's never conditional. Stop depriving one another.

That's what he says. Okay? It's never this. Number two, it's never burdensome. Never burdensome.

Well, I'll do it because the word of God says, but I'm not going to enjoy any part of this. It's never like that, right? It's never a have to. It's never a burden. It's never, that's not what God says.

It's not why he intended it. It's to be delighted in, it's to be honoring. And how you treat your spouse sexually is a reflection of how you are, are in your relationship with Jesus Christ. This is the person in your life that you're covenanted to that you're treating in a way that honors Jesus. So it can never be conditional and it can never be burdensome.

How about this one? It can never be your final thought. It can never be your final

thought. When it's a priority, it means it's not your final thought. It doesn't mean that the kids are in bed and the day's been long now it's like, oh, I have to.

That's a final thought. I mean, it should never be a final thought. It should be first thought. I should be thinking about my spouse. If I'm a wife, I should be thinking about my husband.

If I'm a husband, I should be thinking about my wife. And how do I honor you and how do I please you in such a way? Because our sexuality is such a huge component to our marriage, and I want it to be a priority in our lives. Okay? And just a word on this, just being a pastor, I mean, every time I've heard a story about a sexual affair, okay, and I hear details of that story, it always rolls something like this, that the person that was engaged in the affair, they took incredible amounts of time, incredible amounts of planning.

They got dressed up in a certain kind of way. They drove a distance to get to a certain place to engage for a long period of time, only to have to drive back and do all these things. I mean, hours of planning went into this thing to have the affair. You

should spend hours planning your sexuality within your marriage. It means this married people, you should be able to talk freely and openly about, hey, this would be fun for me, and this would be enjoyable for me.

Hey, what would be enjoyable for you and how would you enjoy that and what would be fun? And what are ways we can engage in this, and how could we make this fun and how could we spice this up? That's what married people, christian married people are supposed to do. And so I'll just tell you this as your pastor. Cause there's probably like less than 1% of you, but you need to hear this, okay?

Some of you, I'll talk to the ladies for a second. I mean, some of you ladies, the way you dress for the world, I mean, you'll spend an hour, hour and a half, 2 hours dressing up in hopes that the world will notice you. It's a waste of your time, okay? And especially when you come to church. Cause there's no guy here that wants to see your cleavage or your backside or a tattoo in a weird place.

They just don't dress modestly for the world. But did you know it's okay in your marriage to dress provocatively for your spouse if that would be something that you're

both comfortable with and pleasing, dress for them in that way. Have your husband want to notice you, have your wife want to notice you, right? That's okay, right? It's never a final thought.

There's a lot of thought and planning that should go into this. So I'll just say it like this. Paul would say, if you're married and you're not satisfying your partner sexually, that would be sinful. That would be sinful. If you want to affair proof your marriage, this is a great way to affair proof your marriage.

Now, here's the question I'm going to get as your pastor. I know I'm going to get this question, so I'll just answer it for you. Well, how much should we be having sex? Like, how much is enough? Okay, here's what you do.

You talk about it with each other until you're both satisfied. Well, that doesn't work. Cause, like, my spouse, like, wants like twice a day, and I'm cool with like once a year. So here's what you do. You just average it out and you just have sex once a day, right?

And that way everybody's kind of happy. You're meeting in the middle, right? I mean, the point is this. There should never be either spouse that feels unsatisfied. And women, let me be crystal clear on this.

If your husband has an affair, it's not your fault. It's always the person's fault who's engaging. But let me tell you something else. Don't put him in a position of temptation as a christian wife. Like, you should want to fulfill his needs so much that he doesn't have the energy or the wherewithal to his even look around.

I mean, christians in their marriage should be so intoxicated with one another's love that they don't even have the energy to go out and look for something else that pleases the Lord, by the way. And it shouldn't cause us to blush because God said, because of immorality. That's why I created it. And it's really, really, really good, right? And there's a binding that takes place and a love that takes place and a respect that takes place and a cherishing that takes place.

And it's something that we can mature in over time. And this is what God has for our lives, right? So I just tell you this, and I get this, man, because I was a kid once, too, and I remember when I was in 6th grade, my parents sat us down and my mom was a labor and delivery nurse, and they had a picture of all these sonograms. We always had pictures of sonograms on the fridge. And it was back in the day, you couldn't even see anything except, like a blob.

Now you can, like, see the whole kid's head. And I remember my mom, we were sitting, we had our first, like, ever family meeting. And we were close as a family, not formal, meetings. And we're sitting down and my mom says, this sonogram here is going to be either your new baby brother or sister. I was in 6th grade, my sister was in fourth.

My sister started crying. She's like, yes. I didn't know a whole lot about sexuality other than, hmm, I know how this happened. And I'm in junior high and I'm totally embarrassed that my parents are still having sex.

Fast forward five years. We had our second ever family meeting. We're sitting on

the back porch, and now my five year old sister is sitting on my lap. And I look at my dad and I'm like, are you kidding me? He's like, well, yeah.

And I was okay with it at that time, but it seemed weird to me growing up that my parents would be engaging sexually. And if you're a kid, I know it feels that way. But let me tell you something. You want that for your parents because it's a way that's going to keep your family together. That's a great place for an amen.

It's the way God designed it, and it's really, really good. And in church, we don't talk that way. And in church, we don't encourage those things, but God does, and they're good. Now, if this is what God calls us to do. Now, I want to tell you this for you guys that are single, that want to get married, you'll say, well, man, if I had that opportunity, I would never let anything get in the way of that.

But I'm gonna tell you what gets in the way of that. Your job. I've watched this happen all the time. Job, your career advancement, sports, hobbies, leisure activities, travel, an argument, a way of disciplining your kids differently, a way of seeing the future differently, a way of handling money differently. And all of a sudden, you start

going different directions.

And all of a sudden you're sleeping on opposite sides of the bed. And all of a sudden you have different bedrooms. And all of a sudden, things just aren't what they don't ever let anything get in the way of your intimacy with one another. And I got great news for you. If something has, God is a redemptive God, and God can heal what's been broken.

Quick word. Cause I think I need to share this for you. Men that married a woman who's been abused, or a woman that's married a man that's been abused, let me tell you something. To show the love of Christ, you're gonna have to be a lot more patient and tender. Because sometimes, guys, I mean, when we grow up, we dream of all these fantasy things that our marriage is going to be like, and our wedding night is going to be like.

And we expect somebody to do something for us. We expect our wives to perform in a certain way for us. And I want to tell you something. If you've had a wife who's been wounded by another guy or coach or a dad or a parent or something like

that, it's just going to take a little more time and massaging and love and care and, hey, I understand, but I'm here for you, and you can trust me because I'm what a real man should look like, and I am a real man. And so here, it just takes longer.

And don't get frustrated with that. God gave you to your spouse to love her in such a way that she gets built up. And women, God gave you to your husbands to work with them, to build them up. I mean, I've been married now for almost, almost 13 years. I've known my wife for 15 years.

And it's really interesting because you may meet me and you may say, well, man, Jeff's way rough around the edges, and he's got all these challenges and issues. You shouldn't have met me 15 years ago. I'm awesome compared to what I used to be. Right? Great place for an amen.

And so that was only seven years, bro. But the point is that God uses us to shape each other. And when we enter marriage and we think marriage is only about happiness, and it's my spouse's job to make me happy, you can get disappointed in a hurry, but if your spouse's job is God's gift to you to make you holy, than even the

uncomfortable things in your life, or, I didn't know that this was going to be, and I didn't know she was like that, and I didn't know he was like this, or I would have thought about it different before I got married. That's why you're married. Because now in that container, you get to show the love of Christ to another human being that's not as perfect as you thought they were, right?

That's marriage. And that's where sexual intimacy becomes a huge part of that. Now, if that's true, then Paul ends by saying this. Oh, by the way, we didn't even talk about this. So some of you are asking, so you said there was a concession here, that there was a time we shouldn't be engaged in sex.

There's three concessions. All three of these things need to be met. They come right out of the word. You want to know what they are?

Three of you? Okay, great. One is it's mutual. It means you both agree on it because it says accept by agreement, which means both parties are saying, let's abstain for a while. Not the wife, not the husband.

Both the husband and the wife are agreeing. It's good that we're not having sex right now, and it's for a time. This means you've set the boundaries of the time. It's not like, let's just try this for a while. It means, hey, this week, here's what we're setting aside, or this month, here's what we're setting aside.

We've agreed on it for the purpose that we can devote ourselves to prayer. That's why mutual agreement for a period of time to devote yourself to prayer. You say, well, what would be some of the opportunities that would happen? There could be health issues. You know, there could be a time that your spouse is sick, right?

You're just like, hey, let's just agree right now that we got to pray for your healing and we got to pray for your health. And until you get better, this is what we're going to do. Some of you remember four years ago, I did a 40 day fast going into Easter, and I knew because what fuels our sexuality is our food. It's our appetite. So if you don't eat, you don't have energy, right?

I had to talk to my wife. I'm like, hey, this is what I sense God's calling me to do.

Are you cool if we pray together and for one another? Because there may come a time during this 40 days that this isn't going to be part of our marriage. Do we agree on this?

But afterwards a promise will come together. I mean, there can be times that we choose to do that, but it's mutually agreed upon for a set period of time for the purpose of seeking the lord in prayer. And then he says, but then come back together. So Satan doesn't tempt you. In other words, you can't keep doing this for a long time.

When I meet people and they'll tell me this, and I used to be naive enough to believe them, and I don't believe you at all anymore if you tell me, well, you know, I just travel a lot. I see my wife like twice a month. Here's what I know. You don't have a good marriage. No, no, no.

You don't understand us, pastor. I mean, this is just the way we are. This is just the way we operate. This is the way. No, no, no.

You do not have a good marriage blowing in and blowing out. It just doesn't work. You've got to be frequently together. That's the only way this thing works. I know that.

And sure enough, three, four, five years later, oh, they're divorced. But I already knew that five years earlier. It wasn't healthy. Right? Because God's design for you, if you're in covenant marriage, that your marriage partner is more important than your, get this, get this.

Your job, it's more important than your kids. It's more important than your kid's future. It's more important than your bank account. Do you see what I'm saying? And let me just say this.

Like, how do you keep the sizzle in your marriage? I have a really good friend that's helped me a lot with this who says, you know, date your wife or get into counseling. And so we would spend time talking about, what's that mean? And Kim and I would have this discussion because, have you ever had this as a married couple? You

go out on a date, and all you end up doing is talking about who's spending what money and the kids and how busy you are and how boring.

I mean, and you're halfway through the meal, and you're just like, let's just go home. You ever had that? And so he said, hey, if you go out on a date with your wife, Jeff, you can't talk about money, you can't talk about the church, and you can't talk about your kids. You have to talk about what you talked about when you were dating. And it's changed our marriage.

Right? Like my wife told me years ago, you can't bring a phone on your date. I tell her now, you can't bring your phone on a date. But if you go, I mean, remember when you dated? You didn't sit around and talk about how much money do you want to set aside for that and why did you spend that and how you didn't date like that.

You dated because you loved each other. So if you're going to be married and you're going to keep the spice in your marriage, you got to date. Which means when you go out, what do you do? You do what you did when you were dating. You love each other.

You talk about, hey, what are you enjoying? What are you doing? How's life going? And what are you having fun? Where should we take our next vacation?

And all that stuff. And pretty soon it's like, this was a great night. This was awesome. Why? Cause you're dating again.

And, guys, just a word for you. Date your wife, don't like. Well, if she wanted to go out, I'm sure she'd put on my calendar. That's probably not what she's looking for. Right?

You pursued her to marry her. You tricked her into believing you were somebody or not. Right? Do it again. Right.

Okay, enough on that. All right, so here's the point, the fourth point. Paul kind of

wraps all this up, and I love this. And this is the fourth point. It's a cure for sexuality.

View your present life circumstance, whether single or married, as a gift from God. View your present life circumstance as single or married, as a gift from God. Paul says this, yet I wish all men were, even as I myself am. Paul, at this time that he's writing, is single. I wish all men could be single.

Why? Because when you're single, and you'll see it in a couple weeks, when you're single, you can give wholehearted devotion to Jesus in a way that you can't when you're married, when you don't have a spouse, you don't have kids, you don't have other responsibilities, there's a way to give wholehearted devotion to Jesus as a sinner, single. That's really, really good. And Paul's saying, I wish, I wish that all people could be like me. But however, each has his own gift, his own gift, marriage.

If you're married, it's a gift. If you're single, it's a gift, one in this manner and the other in that. Let me just tell you how important this is, because Christians, we don't get this singles. Tell me if I'm telling the truth or not. I was single for a long time.

I got married at 34. I met my wife at 32. Listen, I hated singles ministry when in my twenties, hated it because you walk in the door and it's almost like this look, like, oh, I feel sorry for you too. Don't feel sorry for me. I'm like, I'm not really looking.

I just haven't found somebody that can keep up with me yet. I haven't found somebody that can go the way I'm going. I'm in seminary, I'm getting a graduate degree. I'm leading a whole youth ministry. I'm going God's way.

And unless I find somebody that can run at my speed, I don't want to waste my time and get dragged down. There's nothing wrong with me being single. And oh, by the way, Paul was single, Jesus was single, and I think we could affirm that they were fairly gifted and were used of the Lord, which means this, married people, just because you get around a single person, don't try to set them up with everybody, you know? Thank you. Right, because they don't want that.

If they wanted, they'd ask you. And some of the people you set them up with you wouldn't even want to go out with if you were single, right? And we do the same thing

to married couples. Married couples will tell us about their challenges and what do we say, man, if I were you, I'd leave, I'd be single. Whatever lot you're in is God's gift for you.

If you're single, it's an awesome time to focus on three things. Focus on the mission. What's the mission? To go into all the world and make disciples. Make Jesus Christ your primary mission as a single.

Then figure out your ministry. Which is how in the kingdom am I uniquely wired to do it? Am I a businessman, a teacher, am I a coach? Am I going to help kids after school? I mean, what is my unique way of serving Christ then?

If you're going full speed ahead and God brings you somebody, you'll know if they're going the same direction as you. It's much easier to figure that out as a single. And oh, by the way, when I'm talking to singles, I'm not just talking to that under 28 year old group, I'm talking. I know we have singles in their thirties and forties and fifties and sixties and seventies and eighties and oh, by the way, marrieds, there's no guarantee you're going to be married next week. Did you not know that?

God may have a plan for your spouse to call them home before you're ready.

And I can tell you this, if I outlive my wife, I'm never going to be ready. I totally hope I go before she does. Right? So there's never going to come a time in my life where I'm like, I'm ready now, never.

But if my whole goal is about me and how I'm getting pleased and not about serving the Lord, it's going to be even harder. Right? You're gifted. If you're single, you're gifted, you're not second class, you're not. Well, when I get married, then I can serve in the church.

Serve now. We need you. Jesus needs you. If you're married, serve now. Jesus needs you.

And if you're married, don't say, well, as soon as my kids are grown and we're out of the house. And no, Jesus needs you as marrieds now, too, because our singles

need to see what it looks like in married couples that genuinely love one another so that they'll have a desire to be married. Right? Proverbs 16 nine says this, a man plans his ways, but the Lord determines his steps. Psalm 115 three says, but our God is in heaven and he does whatever he pleases.

Because I know I'm talking to some of you now that are single. Like, yeah, I've heard all this before, but where is my spouse? Where is my spouse? Here's what I say. Just keep pushing and pursuing the Lord.

If God's plan for you is marriage, it will happen. If God's plan for you is not marriage, it won't happen. And if your whole life is hung up on whether you're married or not, you're missing out on the greater work that Jesus Christ put you on this world to do while you're single. Let me tell you something else, too. Be the best that you can be.

In other words, I see a lot of people that are like, okay, like, when I meet my spouse, then I'm gonna stop sleeping around, I'm gonna stop drinking. I'm gonna stop going to those parties. I'm gonna be the person God wanted me to be. Some of you

guys, hey, when I meet my spouse, then I'll start going to the gym and I'll be chiseled up and stuff like that. Then I'll be, you know, I mean, let me just be the best you that you can be.

Guys don't look at magazines and think like, oh, I gotta look like that guy. Gotta be all chiseled and totally look like a stud. I mean, not everybody can look like me. I get that. Okay?

And women in the same way, quit looking at magazines too, and comparing, saying, well, I'll never look like her, and I'll never act like that, and I'll never be airbrushed. Like, you don't need to be somebody else. Just be the best you you can be. I mean, it's okay for you to wear makeup. It's okay for you to dress appropriately.

It's okay for you to work out, take care of yourself. Because here's what christian men and christian single men and christian single women should be attracted to is meeting somebody that's going after the Lord with everything they have. So it's not about finding the right person. It's about what it's about being the right person, if you'll be who God wants you to be, even if you're single, you can be satisfied. And if God

has a spouse, you'll find yourself moving in a direction.

It'll be very similar to me. Like, you're looking over like, well, there's Kim, and there's Kim. And man, she is hot and I know her and she's got great character and I love her family, and she's going the same way I am, like, let's just put this thing together and let's go do it together. That's what God has. But I'm telling you, whatever circumstance you're in, it's a good circumstance.

Singles, I apologize to you if in any way, ever in the church you felt like you were less than. Because I want to tell you something. Jesus doesn't think that about you in marriage. You're not better than, they're both, both really, really good. And we're called to encourage one another.

And whatever scene of life you're in, because I know that I'm talking to some of you who are married, who are saying, man, if I was single, I wish I could be single again. No, this is your lot. In life, we tend to look and think the grass is always greener. Here's what Jesus says. Notice, tend to your own garden.

Tend to your own garden. Paul said in Philippians 4:11, learn to be. He had learned the secret of being content in whatever circumstance he was in. Because in 4:13, he says, I can do all things through Christ, who gives me the strength. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, he said that God's grace was sufficient for him and was perfected in his weakness.

And in 1 Timothy 6:6, he said, godliness with contentment was great gain. Be content in your circumstance. I mean, if you're married, that spouse is your gift. Well, it's not the gift I would have wanted, but it's your gift. It's the gift God gave you for what he wants you to be.

And if you'll receive that as a gift, and you'll love that as a gift God gave you, and you'll cherish and nurture the gift God gave you, not only will God bless your gift, God will bless you. And if you're single in this season, and you'll pour into your singleness for the glory of God, God will give you your blessing too. Isn't that good to know? I mean, we sang a song earlier in the service called Set My Heart, which is how I wanted to end our service today just by singing the words to that song again. Because whether you're single or whether you're married, here's what God's calling us to.

He's calling us to greater glory for himself, to set our heart on him, right? And that's what God wants us to do. And whatever he's shown you through his word today, I'd encourage you to put that into practice and honor him in every way so that God can get more glory through you as either a married or as a single to the glory of God in the church. Amen. Would you stand with me as we pray?

Lord Jesus, we give you praise. Lord, we give you praise for your design of sexuality, for your creation of it, for your creation of marriage, for your design of singleness. And, Lord, whatever lot you have us in, in life, we give you praise, glory and honor. And, Lord, right now, as we sing this song, here's what we're doing. We're setting our heart upon you afresh again.

We love you, Lord. Have your way with us. In Jesus name, amen.