



## Captivated (Part 2) – Physical Intimacy

Matt Chandler – June 4, 2017

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If you have your Bibles, let's go to Genesis 1. This is week two on our marriage series that we've just called *Captivated*. Throughout this series, we'll be going back to Genesis. We're doing that because we're trying to kind of bring to the forefront here and look at what God has created and what God has designed. Last week, we defined what marriage was, and we used Tim Keller's definition from his book *The Meaning of Marriage*.

I want to remind you that this is what we said last week in case you weren't here. Here is how we defined marriage. "Marriage is a lifelong, monogamous relationship between and man and a woman." Then Keller goes on to describe, "According to the bible, God devised marriage to reflect the saving love for us in Christ, to refine our character, to create stable human community for the birth and nurture of children, and to accomplish all this by bringing the complementary sexes into an enduring whole life union."

What we said last week is when we think about marriage, we're not thinking through the cultural lens of consumerism. "You'd better adjust to me. You'd better meet all of my needs. You'd better make me happy. You'd better solve all of the issues going on in my heart and in my mind." Instead, we set up and looked through the lens of seeing marriage through the lens of covenant. "We are in a partnership designed by God to make much of God in a way that leads to human flourishing."

We saw that in Keller's definition. We create this environment in our homes that is safe for the birth and nurturing of children by coming together in this complementarian way. We then see, out of our understanding of this view of marriage, that it is my wife and me adjusting to God, not adjusting to one another.

I don't get to say, "Lauren, you make me happy." We both kind of fight together and work together so that we both might submit our lives fully to God in Christ and have a marriage that is all about

servicing him and making much of him and creating an environment where our children see and get a sense of the glory of God in life together. That's what we talked about last week.

This week (as I said last week), we're going to talk about physical intimacy or what I'll call physical oneness. First, let me set up our time together like this. In December of 2006, a group of atheists started a project that went viral. They called it Project Blasphemy. Maybe you remember this. Maybe you don't remember this.

The RRS, the Rational Response Squad, put out this challenge that encouraged young men and women to post on some sort of media outlet, whether that be YouTube or Facebook or something else, and to blaspheme the Holy Spirit as a way of kind of daring God to do something about it, to cross the point of no return as they understood it.

The sad irony of that is the texts that they're coming out of don't even mean, "Say something bad about the Holy Spirit, and you can never be saved." They revealed their ignorance of even what the Bible teaches by participating in Project Blasphemy. Even if you Google it today (don't do that right now), you would see hundreds of videos of young men and young women recording themselves saying very wicked and deplorable things about the Holy Spirit of God.

Here is something I want to draw attention to. These are people who are purposefully blaspheming against God. If I were to kind of take just a hand raise poll in here and say, "How many of you on purpose this week said, 'I'm going to blaspheme God in the hopes to show that he is not real and that I am not afraid of him?'" I'm guessing there wouldn't be a lot of hands going, "Actually, Tuesday, Pastor." I just have to believe there wouldn't be too many hands that would go, "Yeah, that's where I am. I want to bow up to the God of the universe."

Yet, here is something that is fascinating to note. Of these thousands of people who did this, they got to eat food. They got to laugh with friends. If they got a headache, they got to take medicine. They got to have sex. They got to do all of these things because there is this category that I think we forget about. It's called common grace. It is God's goodness to all of mankind, regardless of whether or not they shake their fists at the heavens or not.

What you see so clearly in Project Blasphemy are these people who have made it publicly clear, posted on YouTube clear, that, "I hate God, and I don't want anything to do with God," while enjoying the common grace of God. Now, when we think about sexual intimacy, when we think

about sexual oneness, sex is a gift of God, a gift of common grace. That means you don't have to know God or love God to enjoy the physical act of sex.

I want to stay close to my notes here early on because I know... Well, I'm just going to do this. Few things can be as beautiful or as painful as the pursuit of physical oneness, a healthy and intimate sex life. If you grew up in church, more than likely, you heard very little about sex, except maybe, "Sex is filthy, dirty, and disgusting, so save it for the one you love."

Maybe you grew up in that kind of church. "This is disgusting. We're not even going to talk about this. You'd better avoid it." Then, when you get married, you're like, "Okay, go." Talk about whiplash in that moment. "It's disgusting, so you save it for that person you love the most who you're going to spend your life with."

There is that teaching, but I honestly think that as much as that was around when I was a teenager, I think the pendulum swung all the way to the other side of the fence now. Christians (God help us), seeing that sex markets everything else, have kind of bought into this lie also, that sex is somehow the apex of relational experience.

Really the Mount Everest of relationships and companionship has to do with great physical sex. It's like we're desperately trying to keep up with the sex we think the world is having. We're desperately trying to keep up with...look right at me...the sex we *think* the world is having, when in reality, all of the sociological data paints a very different picture.

By and large, our culture's view of sex is divorced from any true relationship. You read about and think about these hookup apps, things like Tinder and Bumble. What are they? They are the ability to connect physically without any kind of relationship. It is divorced from affection, and it is divorced from commitment, natural boundary lines by which humanity flourishes and is not harmed. Yet, we have removed all of that.

What happens is you make sex purely a physical act. That's all it is. It's a physical act. It's a thrilling, physical, biological happening that is not connected to my mind or my spirit. It's just physical. It's the same thing as eating a really good steak or riding a carnival ride, just something that is thrilling that doesn't ultimately affect my heart and spirit.

One of the things that is becoming more and more vibrant the more secularized we get as a culture is the hypocrisy in how we see and think about the world around us. What we know... This isn't a guess. It's not a gamble. It's not a might. What we *know*, with a ton of data, is that viewing sex simply as physical pleasure with no true relationship, no real affection, and no real commitment, does not address the deeper needs we have as human beings.

If you remember last week, we talked about a deep need for companionship. We have a deep desire for intimate, rich, real, deep relationships. Sex as a mere physical act will not solve that. It does not increase respect between genders. You would have to... If you want to take what is going on in pornography, the kind of grotesque, perverse nature of pornography and how insidious that is getting, and then you kind of start drawing parallels to the increase in sexual assault, the increase in sexual degradation of women...

The idea of sex as just a physical act has not led to this mutual love between the genders, this mutual respect between the genders. In fact, more and more and more women in our culture are treated as something to be consumed. It has not created more loving environments for children. It has not been able to remove the ache of personal loneliness, nor has it fostered intimacy.

In fact, I heard a man one time say that when societies decide to experiment sexually, it is women and children who bear the brunt of that. Let me give you just a quick example, and then I want to dive into the Bible because I have not come bearing bad news today. I have not. Earlier this year, 2017, in the *USA Today*, there was a survey.

Here was the title of the survey. It was written by a woman named Mary Bowerman. It was called, "Sleeping together before a first date is a-OK, but cracked phones are a put-off." I'm quoting her here. "Research shows that Millennials believe..." I'm not dogging on you, Millennials. This how you showed up in *USA Today*. I don't think it's all of you. In fact, I have great hope for your generation, but you failed this survey.

"Research shows that Millennials believe it is more intimate to go on a first date than it is to have sex." The research, according to this *USA Today* poll of a few thousand Millennials... They thought, "Sex? Sure. Going out together? Having a conversation? That's way too intimate." Think about first dates. What are first dates? "Where did you grow up? What did you major in?" "Oh, gosh. That kind of intimacy wigs me out."

Unless you have that weird first date who says, "Tell me about your deepest sorrows. Let's share." Don't because that guy. This is what has happened. You have a hollowing out, an emptying out of the beauty and meaning of sex. With that said, let's dive into Genesis 1:28. Here is my attempt at the first part of this sermon.

The first part of this sermon is to say God did this. This is God's idea. God created this. This is not man-made. The Devil hasn't introduced sex into the cosmos to deceive us. It says something about the nature and character of God that sex was given to humankind to begin with. Let's look at this. Genesis 1:28. **"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"**

What you have here... Again, we looked at this verse last week when talking about marriage. You have this cultural mandate. The command is to fill the earth, to subdue, to bring order, to bring beauty, to bring command to chaos. How? Fill the earth. How do you do that? Well, the man and woman were to have children and have a lot of children. Now, how do you have children? Again, I said last week, no graphs, no charts, no videos. You have sex.

Here is where I want to draw your attention. The physiology of sex, the biology of sex, was kind of wired into us by the God who created us. Sex is God's idea. There is no part in the narrative of creation where God builds the man and woman, gets busy doing something else, so the Devil comes up and puts stuff on us that is more sexual in nature.

What does it say about the God of the Bible that when you think about the physiology and biology of sex, God put certain cells and parts of our body that only exist for pleasure? How does that reflect on the nature and character of God, that it is God who puts onto the woman and onto the man parts of their anatomy that exist for pleasure alone? That says something about God, that God is not anti-sex. He's not nervous about sex. He doesn't have any regrets. He's not like, "Oh, gosh. This is so gross." That is not how God is operating here. This was God's idea. It's his deal.

If you look at Genesis 1:28, I think there have been moments in church history where you're like, "Sure, for procreation, but not for any of this fooling around stuff. You have a baby, and then you don't touch each other." That would not be great, but it's all over the Bible that this is not true. In Song of Solomon 5:1, it says, **"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!"**

This is a poem that Solomon writes after his honeymoon night. You're getting a sense in this poem that this isn't about procreation. Later on, when he says, "Drink until you're drunk with love," that's like, "Enjoy your bride. Enjoy your husband. Enjoy. This is a good gift I have given to you. Enjoy. You're in the confines I have created for your protection. Enjoy."

Then again in Song of Solomon 7:1-6. Brothers, this is a poem from a long time ago. It will not translate to your game with your spouse today. You'll know what I mean as we read. Song of Solomon 7, starting in verse 1. **"How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O noble daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies."**

Look right at me. Don't. Just don't do it. If you're like, "Oh, that's good." It's not good. I have not met the woman yet who is like, "Will you describe this as a heap of wheat encircled with lilies?" You have not married that woman. "I married that woman." You did not marry that woman. I would even tend to stay away from the rounded thighs line. I'm just saying this will not translate well into 2017, for better or for worse. Verse 3:

**"Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses. How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights!"**

Does that sound like science to you? Does that sound like procreation? He is marveling. In fact, one of the things that most marks Solomon in Song of Solomon about his bride is that he loves her. It is not her body that he is after. He wants her. It's not a mere sexual act. Chapter 7 is the only time in the book that he starts with her feet and goes up. He almost always starts with her head and goes down. He just marvels at her.

Almost all of this has a dual meaning. With the nose, he's talking about her dignity, her value, her strength. He's not just looking at her body as some kind of sexual object. He's held captive by her, not just by her physical beauty, but by her strength, by her dignity, by the way she navigates the

world, by the way she loves, by the way she serves. He is held captive. "I am a prisoner. I am held captive by your beauty, inside and out."

This isn't mere physicality. It almost comes off as lust in a good way. God started this, and it's not just for procreation. We are to enjoy it, to drink it deeply, but from here, God is going to begin to say some things that are scary and beautiful at the same time. They produce a great opportunity and a dangerous threat. Sex is not a mere physical act. Sex touches the soul in some of the deeper places.

In Genesis 2, we read last weekend that two shall become one flesh. Jesus will later say, "Let no man separate this." They're saying, "Two people are becoming one. Two souls are coming together, being knitted together as one." The Hebrew word for this (and we'll talk more about this in the back part of this sermon) is *dod*. It means the mingling of two souls. It is not two bodies that have come together but two souls that have come together and touched one another in a significant way that shapes and orients them in some specific ways. We see this in 1 Corinthians 6:15-18.

**"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body."**

What do you think he's saying in this text when he says that to have sex with a prostitute is to become one body with her? Is this merely just a physical act, or is he saying something more significant? It appears in the text via the allusion of the Holy Spirit that is inside of us that now enables us to flee such immorality that he's saying, "Listen. Sex touches the soul. That can be really beautiful or that can be really, really dangerous. It can be really dangerous."

Sex brings the body and soul into a kind of wholeness not otherwise known. I'm going to say that again. Sex brings the body and soul into a kind of wholeness not otherwise known. Sex then is a divinely mysterious and beautiful thing. Let me try to illustrate in a way that might be helpful. You can physically harm yourself in a way that does not affect your soul. In eighth grade, for the first time, I was running high hurdles. I tripped over a hurdle and broke my arm. I just broke it.

It was like a junior high track meet, so there were 22 people in the stands. It was a really traumatic experience for me. Here's what happened. They put a cast around my arm, and six or eight weeks later, they took that cast off. I don't have any soul wounds over that. It is not a real fight for me. I don't struggle to connect with people because of that broken arm. I don't struggle with my self-worth because I broke that arm. There are no residual effects of my broken arm.

If you have ever been around someone who has been sexually abused, if you have every been around anyone who has been raped, if you've been in those spaces... I am well aware that these are heavy subjects. The soul has been wounded. They do carry those wounds. Intimacy is difficult. Relationships are trying and painful, because sex touches the soul in a way that nothing else does, which is why the warning to bring God's commands concerning sex abounds in the Scriptures.

To bring both the body and soul together is actually yet another shadow of the form of what God is doing in the gospel. I want to talk now about kind of how the Hebrews would have understood love and how they would come to think about sex. I think it is really helpful for you and me in a day and age when there is not a lot of help in this area, despite the fact that as I said last week, there are 190,000 books written about sex on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), 190,000 books about sex.

What happens is when sex becomes merely physical and not attached to the soul, all you're left with is technique to work on. That is why there are 190,000 manuals basically on how to have better sex. I think it's sad and absurd. The Hebrews had multiple words for love. We don't. I think it's one of the weaknesses of the English language.

We just have *love*. We love tacos. We love fajitas. We love the Cowboys. We love our wife. We love our dog. We love our spouses. We love our children. We love our car. That's all we have. We have this word *love*. We love our friends. We love our new computer. We love the new iPhone. That's all we really have.

The Hebrews had multiple words, much like the Greeks. If you have a church background, you know the same is true for the Greeks. They had multiple words for love. You have *phileo*, which means friends. You have *eros*, which is kind of the erotic love. You have *agape*, which is this full-on, "I love you no matter what." You have this unconditional love.

The Hebrews did this the same way. They actually had more than three, but I'm going to share the three that I think build on top of one another that gave them a right understanding of sex in a way

that it might flourish. The first is the Hebrew word *rayah*. *Rayah* is friendship. That's basically what it is. We see it in Proverbs 17:17. "**A friend loves at all times...**" *Rayah* is just friendship.

This is the foundation upon which relationships grow, whether they become relationships that have a sexual component to them or not. The base, the foundation of companionship for the Hebrews is this idea of *rayah*. It's friendship. It's, "I know you. You know me. We're getting to know one another." *Rayah* flows into the second word, which is *ahava*. *Ahava* is a love of the will. It is a love of the will. *Rayah* leads to *ahava*.

Here is how that kind of works. When you start a friendship, you kind of get a version of a person, and as your friendship grows, you begin to see more and more and more about that person. Well, *ahava* occurs when you begin to see the weaknesses of the other and decide to stay anyway. *Ahava*, the word for love, is not an overly romantic word, if you will. Don't think, "*Ahava*, a love of the will. He sees me. She sees me. Oh, my heart is fluttering. I will to love him."

This is much more, "This person is crazy, and I am not going anywhere." That is a good way to think about *ahava*. "This person has some problems, and I'm not going anywhere." This is *ahava*. In order to get to this... Remember we talked about *dod*, a mingling of souls. In order to get to that, there is a deep friendship now rooted in commitment. "I've seen your crazy. I'm not going anywhere."

I think one of the more romantic ideas around marriage that I think is somewhat silly is that you're not supposed to fight a lot. When Lauren and I were dating, we just kept getting into the same fight over and over and over again. It always had a different starting point, but it was actually the same argument. I went to David McQueen, who is one of my mentors and dear friends.

I said, "Hey, I love Lauren Walker. I really do. I want to make her my wife. I just think she has a real love for the Lord that I love, but we just keep getting in this fight. It's like a six-week cycle. It blows up. Then we have to talk through it again. We do well for a while, and then it blows up again." He said, "Okay." He said to me something that was both the most encouraging and discouraging thing I had ever heard. He said, "You're going to fight with someone for the rest of your life. Do you want that person to be Lauren?"

I was like, "You know what. I do want to fight with Lauren for the rest of my life." Here I am in 2017 all of these years later, still fighting with Lauren. That stuff is *ahava*, the love of the will. I'm not going anywhere. Lauren, I see you're crazy, and I'm staying. Lauren says, "Hey, I see you're crazy,

and I'm staying." I'm going to lean into this. I'm going to *ahava* our love. It's not just friendship. It's deeper than friendship. It's, "I'm stepping into this, not stepping away from this."

For the Hebrews to get to *dod*, which was this mingling of souls, sex as it was intended to be, not for the mere physical act, but the joining, the weaving together of two individuals into one, it required friendship that was committed. Then and only then could you experience sex as God designed it to be. Now, I just want to always say that I don't think you have to be a Christian to enjoy sex. Biologically, sex is pleasurable. It's not like you have to know Jesus in order to have sex.

What I am saying is the fullness of what you have been created for and what God designed sex to be will always be missed by you without an understanding and submission to the God of the Bible. Here is why. Without soul-level harmony, without this understanding that we have been put together as companions to partner for the glory of God, we might be able to come together physically. We might be able to come together emotionally, but we'll never come together spiritually. That *dod*, mingling will never take place.

Sex will always hit a kind of ceiling. We see this happening everywhere, which is why we're so consumed with technique. If you want to think about sexual relationship like God does, it's strong friendship rooted in strong commitment where you are known, valued, and loved, where two become one flesh. What makes this a little more difficult is the physical act is a lot easier than building an ongoing friendship and continuing to lean in when things get difficult.

What happens is the physical relationship is somewhat easy compared to these other two. Yet, it is in these other two that lead to a better, more soul-rich sex life. If you punt on friendship, if you punt on commitment, then sex will always be hollowed out in its ultimate meaning. God has designed for you...ladies, look at me...to be cherished as a soul before you're enjoyed as a body. You have been designed by God to be cherished as a soul, to be valued, to be seen as someone of great worth.

That can't happen if there is not a friendship there that has gotten so deep that your weaknesses have now been seen. It's in your weaknesses being seen and someone extending that graciousness, going, "Hey, I love all of that brokenness in you. I'm broken too. You're broken. We should heal up together as we partner with one another to glorify God."

This is why sex is reserved for marriage, because it's in that kind of relationship, the covenant, locked in, monogamous, "I'm not going anywhere, *ahava*, working on *rayah*, and enjoying *dod*,

because of the deep friendship and commitment that we have for one another." Right? This is God's big plan. This is where sex begins to flourish and thrive.

I have a couple of things I want to chat with you about here. I know for many of us, intimacy can be extremely difficult. There are few things more vulnerable than sex. We bring a lot of baggage, a lot of hurt, a lot of brokenness usually into our marriages. For some of us, sex is physically extremely painful. You're almost always dealing with two separate drives, not always, but usually dealing with two separate drives. You have a real strong drive and a real low drive or the opposite.

Every time I have taught on this... I have done some conferences on this stuff, and every time I do it, I get these emails on repeat from women saying, "Hey, I have a real strong sex drive, and my husband does not." This isn't just a one-way street. We kind of snicker every time we talk about a guy wanting more sex than a woman, but in reality, that's not all that is out there. There are all sorts of brokenness. There are all sorts of issues we're trying to navigate through.

That's not to mention the fact that if I think about our church particularly here in Flower Mound and Plano and Southlake, you're talking about a lot of people with a lot of kids. When do you even have sex? You're exhausted when they go to bed. How do you work toward that or work on that? I know intimacy is difficult. Nervousness can keep us uptight. Physical issues can make sex difficult.

I said this last week. I want to continue to encourage you in this way. These things should not embarrass you. I said it last week, and I'm going to say it again. You are human. Just breathe for a second. Here is what humans do. Humans get afraid. They get anxious. They get nervous. Humans can struggle with sexual things because they're humans, and the world is fallen and broken.

What I want to ask you to do, like I did last week, like I'm about to do, and like I will again next week, is to step into the light. Again, if you will remember back to last week... If you weren't there, hopefully by this point in my, "Last week, last week, last week..." you'll get the podcast and catch up. Listen. The projection of strength, the projection of, "This isn't an issue for us," is harming, not helping. You have to step into the light.

It is not a knock on you to have issues in this area of your life. You just need to have the courage to come forward and say, "Man, we're really struggling in this area. I'm not sure what it is. We can't navigate it. We need someone to help us navigate it." You need to come into a community that can

hold you accountable and encourage you in your relationship with one another while you extend grace to one another.

In the marriage bed... Let me talk to the men first. Brothers, to pressure, force, or manipulate sex is so outside of what God has for you and for your wife, and the damage you cause both of your souls, what you rob both of your souls of when you manipulate, coerce, or force sex, is reaping for you a harvest of loss and destruction that is probably hard to get your mind around because you haven't tasted the goodness of cultivating a deep friendship. When weaknesses and vulnerabilities are seen, you enter that with compassion and grace, not with demands and whining.

There has never been a sexy pouty man. Do you understand that? There has never been that man who could pout and be sexy at the same time. You're moping around the house all day. She's never going to be like, "Man, I love the... Oh, gosh. Nothing gets me all bothered like you pouting around the house like a child." You have to enter this space with grace, patience, and kindness. Do you know why? That's how God entered your space with you. Grace, patience, and kindness.

In Song of Solomon, one of the things that is fascinating about it is in chapter 4, on their honeymoon night, one of the things that becomes clear is she is really insecure. Earlier in chapter 1, she says, "I am swarthy. Don't look at me. I don't look good. Don't look at me." She has these insecurities. On their wedding night, the entire wedding night seems like it's him trying to draw her out. He's like, "Look at your hair. Dadgum. Your hair."

"Look at your hair. Look at your eyes. Look at your cheeks. Look at your nose. Look at your mouth. Oh, my gosh. Look at your teeth." Solomon had this weird thing about teeth. Every time he describes his girl, he's like, "All of your teeth are like white-washed ewes. You're not missing any of them. The whole flock is there." He just really geeks out about, "You have all of your teeth, baby. I love this. Look at your chin. Look at your neck."

When he approaches her breasts, he says, "They're like two fawns." How do you approach fawns, baby deer? Do you run at them? You don't run at baby deer. They are frightened creatures. Solomon's commitment was, "I will woo her out of her insecurities if I have to stay here all night. The goal for me is not have physical sex with my wife's body but to love one another in such a way that the mingling of souls actually occurs. I want to value her, love her, woo her out of her insecurities until she can rest and give herself to me."

That is slow and requires patience and grace. Men, the pursuit of your wife's heart should always be the pursuit of your wife's heart. We don't do things to get sex. We love because we love. Are you tracking with me? Ladies, here is what I would lay before you. Unless you are the one who has the really strong drive, then biologically speaking, the hormones that work in you and the hormones that work in your husband are different.

Testosterone is going to put in us a desire for a lot of sex often, for most men. Not for all men, but most men. Estrogen is not going to produce that same drive in most women. There will be times when you just graciously give to your husband, when you're not all filled with wine and happiness, that you have just in your heart, "I'm going to serve my husband in this way." He doesn't get to demand that from you, but there are those times where you're like, "Hey, listen. I know this serves him, and I want to serve him." You give yourself to him in a way that serves him.

He's not allowed to demand that. You don't need to feel bad if that just isn't happening this day or this week. I just want to encourage you if you're just stuck and jammed up because of past abuse, because of shame and guilt that you carry because of maybe a lifestyle before you came to know Christ or before you came into this marriage, or if your marriage is filled with all of these regrets as you look back on what you were doing before you got married and how you came into your relationship with Christ.

I want this to be a space where you can begin to work through that together, whether that be at Recovery, or if you come up and grab the hands of one of our ministers up here. We have ladies up here as well as men up here. Come and just grab their hand. Go, "We're stuck. We're not sure how to navigate this space." It's not uncommon for us to hear about money and sex. If you think you're going to be the first one to go, "Hey, we're struggling with sex," you're not going to be the first one. You're going to be the 400,000th one, I think, in 15 years.

You ought to just come and see what the Lord might do. Nothing gets better by hiding it in the dark. Everything gets better by coming into the light. Sex isn't a bad thing. It's a very good thing given by God, a gift of common grace for the flourishing of humankind. As Christians, we see an understanding that it's not a mere physical act. It's an act of two souls becoming one that can be very beautiful or very painful.

We want to heed God's warning. We want to save sex for marriage. We want to protect the marriage bed. We want to work at friendship. We want to work at our commitment. We want to guard our

eyes and our hearts and our imaginations. We want to be a one-woman man or a one-man woman with how we think, with how we act, with what we look at. We should be constantly trying to cultivate friendship, cultivate respect between one another.

I said last week that I want to continue to press you toward becoming an expert in the beauty and goodness of your spouse. Become an expert in that. You don't need to become an expert in some other guy or some other woman. You need to become an expert in your spouse. You should have a PhD in your wife, fellas. Ladies, you should have a PhD in your husbands. Like a dissertation. "I can tell you all of the good things."

"What about the bad?" You know the bad, right? You don't have to work at spotting weaknesses. Don't we naturally see what we wish was better? What we don't naturally see is what is so good. Again, I want you to continue to cultivate this. Listen, I have high hopes. If you're a younger generation, you guys are being disciplined in the exact opposite direction of where I'm trying to teach and where I think the Word of God teaches.

You're going counter to the very thing that leads to the thing you so desperately want, to be known, to have deep relationship, to be valued as a soul. If you buy into your generation's version of what good sex is, you're going to be off the mark. You will not experience the goodness God has created you to walk in.

Brothers and sisters, let me just end with this really. No one in this room has out-sinned the grace of God. There is no sexual perversion in this room that, upon repentance and confession, coming into the light, and moving toward the forgiveness and mercy of God, cannot be wiped clean, reset, and re-invited into God's goodness and grace. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I just know that for our time together today, there are probably some gaps and some holes here and some questions that need to be asked. I do pray for men and women who are struggling in this area of their lives. I just pray a willingness to come into the light and be honest.

I pray a real specific prayer for my brothers and sisters who are struggling with consistent pornography use. I just ask, Spirit of God, that they would come into the light with that, that they would take very serious steps to put that sin to death. What a twisted and morbid sin that is. God, it reshapes how we think and see, how we measure and approach, how it dehumanizes and belittles.

I ask, God, that we would have the courage to confess that, come into the light. Where intimacy is a real issue, either because of physical pain or emotional or spiritual baggage, I pray that you would help us not feel shame or embarrassment but to seek refuge in you and seek refuge in the community of faith. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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