

# Desire and the Freedom of the Gospel

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Okay, this morning we are bringing to a conclusion our series called God's Good Design. And we have been looking at this area of marriage and sexuality and singleness and relationships and identity and desire.

And I hope it's been a good series for us as a church. I know it's been challenging, but I hope it's been hope-filled and I hope it's been encouraging even still. So, today we come to the final part and we're going to look at this idea of sexual desire and the heart of desire.

And why the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ gives hope to those of us for which this area of our lives is an area of pain or shame or hurt or difficulty.

Now as we dive into this, I just want to write up front. I want to tell you about two books that I want to encourage us to get and to read. Both in the area of pornography. We're going to be talking about pornography a little bit later.

But the first is a book by Deepak Reju on the right, left, called Fighting for Purity. Pornography, Fighting for Purity. That's a 31-day devotional. Deepak Reju is an associate pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

[ 1 : 0 9 ]     And the second one is by Tim Chester called Captured by a Better Vision, Porn-Free Living. And so I really want to encourage you to download those. If you do struggle with this in any way, get those.

Those are both fantastic books. Now let's dive into our passage, Matthew chapter 5. This passage that Justin read to us this morning is not just an isolated passage of Scripture about lust and sexual desire.

It's a passage of Scripture which is found in a body of teaching which is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Okay. And the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, is a body of teaching which is found in a larger context.

The book of Matthew, which one of Jesus' disciples, Matthew, wrote, is very carefully constructed. There are seven parts to the book of Matthew. We're going to be preaching through it starting in two weeks' time, so we'll talk about it a bit more then.

But there's an introduction, which is all about Jesus. And then there's five bodies of teaching. And then finally, the climax, which ends with Jesus' death and His resurrection.

[ 2 : 1 7 ]     And so in the middle in between these two bookends are five bodies of teaching. And the Sermon on the Mount is found in the first body of teaching, which is chapter 4 to 7. And the summary statement for this first body of teaching in Matthew's Gospel is actually found a little earlier in chapter 4.

And it goes like this. And Matthew, speaking about Jesus and His public ministry, says this. From that time on, Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And then a few minutes later, a few verses later, Jesus finds some fishermen, and He says to them, Follow Me. And so the rest of the first section of Matthew's Gospel, the first of these bodies of teaching, is all about what it looks like to follow Jesus as King.

Or another way of saying it is, what does life in the kingdom of heaven look like? So remember, Jesus says, Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Follow Me. And so this whole Matthew chapter 4 to 7 is all about, what does it mean to follow Christ as King?

What does it mean when the kingdom of God comes into our lives? What does that look like to live under the reign and the rule of King Jesus? And so that's the context in which we find ourselves this morning.

[ 3 : 31 ] And that's really important, because sometimes we can read the New Testament or the Gospels and think, Jesus did away with the Old Testament, like the Old Testament was bad, you know, didn't work.

And so let's come up with a new set of rules. And Jesus is saying, No, not at all. I haven't come to do away with the Old. I've come to show you what the whole Old Testament is all about, is what do our lives look like under King Jesus when the kingdom of heaven comes.

Now this morning, if you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, a couple of things that would be good for you to understand. The first is, Jesus' words here might seem strange to you.

And that's fine, because Jesus is speaking to His disciples here this morning, to those who have come to know Him as King. And so in some ways, you may think like, well, that doesn't really resonate.

But in many ways, as you read further, you'll see that Jesus is answering the big questions of our hearts. But in this passage, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and He wants to show you what life looks like as you become a disciple of Jesus, as you follow Him as Lord and King.

[ 4 : 35 ] But the other thing that's good for us to know is Jesus tells us that you can't divorce His teachings from Him as a person. Sometimes we think, I like Jesus, I like His teachings, I like His morals, but I don't know if I want to submit to Him as King and Lord.

I'll follow His teachings, but I'm more open about different religions and different teachers. And Jesus says, in that case, my teachings won't make sense, because I didn't come just to give you new teachings or new morality.

The message of the gospel is the message of the person. Jesus Himself is the message. The gospel is that the King has come to rescue and redeem. And so this morning, as we look at these passages, this isn't just good advice for us to improve our lives.

This is the message about Christ the King Himself. Now, today's sermon, there are three parts, as usual. And so we're going to look at the heart of sexual desire, when sexual desire goes wrong, and then thirdly, good news for a broken world.

Okay? So let's dive in. So if you've got your Bible, let's look at the first verse that we read this morning. Verse 27. Jesus says this, You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery.

[ 5 : 49 ] Now, what's Jesus talking about when He says this? He says, you've heard it, right? This is common knowledge. We all know this. What's He referring to? He was referring to the Ten Commandments.

Remember the seventh commandment? You shall not commit adultery. Which is a commandment that every Jewish man and woman and child would have known. They would have learned it early on at school.

But in addition to these Ten Commandments, the entire body of Moses' teaching, the entire law, the first five books of the Bible, had many commands and rules having to do with sexuality and relationships and intimacy and our sex lives.

And so Jesus is referring to this entire body of teaching. He's not just saying the seventh commandment. He says, remember what Moses taught you. Remember what the entire Old Testament has been teaching you about relationships.

Now, why does God give us these rules? Why does God give us these commands? Sometimes as Christians, we can get a bit strange and awkward and weird around sexuality and blush when we talk about these things.

[ 6 : 54 ] But God, why does God give us these commands? Why is God so strict and stringent and so careful about what He says about sexuality? Doesn't God know that we're fluid human beings and we've got passions?

And can't He just, you know, understand that? Well, there's a whole bunch of reasons, but I want to just remind us of two of what we've been saying this whole series. The first reason is because God tells us that our sexuality is a reflection of Him.

And God's design for our sexual lives, our sexual relationships, is meant to reflect the nature and the character of God, His selfless love. When sexuality is distorted and becomes about me and what I can get out of it and how I can please myself, it paints a distorted picture of who God is.

It tells the world that God is self-centered and self-seeking. But sexuality, which is about me giving of myself to somebody else with whom I'm in covenant relationship, is meant to be a picture of God's selfless, self-giving nature that He gives to those with whom He's in covenant relationship.

And so sexuality is a picture of the nature and the character of God's selflessness. But secondly, because God's design for marriage and sexuality is such that He designed it beautifully and purposefully and it's well thought out.

[ 8 : 09 ] And whenever you take something that's well thought out and well designed and you take that away from the original design and you use it for another purpose, it's always going to get messy.

You take anything in life that's been well thought out and designed and you use it for something else. I take this iPad and I use it for a chopping board. And I think, oh, it's nice and flat and it'll work well.

It's not going to end well. It's not going to serve the purpose for which it was designed very well. God's got to design an intention for our sexuality. And when we divorce it from that, it's never going to end well.

And so God gives us specific instructions and He says, follow my design and things will go well. And God's design is that two distinct people, male and female, come together in covenant commitment to live together for the rest of their lives, to give themselves to the other person.

And when that happens, we are bonded and united in a very strange and physical and spiritual way. And there's this deep union. And out of this oneness comes new life.

[ 9 : 14 ] And that life is nurtured and cared for and protected. And out of that new life is families and societies and communities are formed. And so when that goes wrong, it not only defaces the nature and the character of God, it causes all sorts of problems and dysfunctions and families and problems and homes and society.

And it causes a whole bunch of pain and heartache. That's not, of course, to say that every family that does things by the book is going to have a perfect marriage. Of course, we're still broken and we've got to work through our sinfulness.

But friends, I think most of us here can testify that there's nothing that causes such pain and heartache as sexuality that's gone wrong. There's nothing that causes such devastation in lives and hearts and families and homes is when God's design is distorted.

And so God gives us clear instructions. And so God's instructions to His people throughout the entire Old Testament and throughout the entire Bible is this. So sacred is human sexuality, so profound is intimacy, that it's only to be given to one other person in the context of a lifelong commitment and covenant forever.

Anything other than that is going to result in heartache and pain and difficulty. Okay? That's the big picture. And so now Jesus comes to His disciples here in the Sermon on the Mount and He says, You've heard all this.

[10:35] This has been told to you from the beginning. This is what Moses had been telling you from thousands of years ago. That you've heard it said, Do not commit adultery. So Jesus doesn't set that aside. He doesn't nullify it or say, That's old.

Let me give you something new. He affirms everything that God has said. But now Jesus ups the ante. Because what does He say? He says, What's Jesus doing here?

What's Jesus saying? He reminds them what God has said. But then He says, Let me tell you what is behind God's rules and God's laws. Let's dig under the surface, but let me show you what's underneath God's instructions for you.

Let me color in the pictures so that you get the whole story. And Jesus is saying that when we end up in bed with someone other than our covenant partner, it's not only wrong and destructive and blasphemes God's name and His holiness and His character, but more than that, says Jesus, it's not just the behavior that God is interested in.

It's the motivation that's behind the behavior. Jesus is saying the problem is not just the behavior or the conduct. The problem is that the behavior and the conduct is actually downstream from a source that started way upstream.

[11:58] And that source is, where does He say? It's in our hearts. It's in our hearts, right? And so what Jesus is saying is, He's not only interested in our behavior. He is interested in behavior. But He's actually interested in the heart that's behind the behavior.

Which drives our behavior. Behavior and conduct is downstream from something that started way up here, and it's the source of this behavior that is so destructive. It's the source of this that ends up committing adultery.

It's the source of this that ends up having sex outside of marriage. It's the source of this, our heart, that calls us to visit strip clubs or look at pornography or whatever it is. Because these things are not found in just our behavior.

It's found in our heart. And this is true for women as much as it is for men. Sometimes we think of pornography and strip clubs and sexual sin as just a man's problem.

But Jesus is saying that actually the problem is our heart. And all of us, male and female, have a heart that has been turned in on itself because of our sin. And so Jesus is saying it's not just a matter of biology.

[12:57] It's a matter of the heart. And so what is it that Jesus is critiquing here? Well, the ESV calls it lustful intent. In other words, it's when we feed our sexual desire and our pleasure outside of who Christ is and who God has called us to be.

So does that mean that now when you go to work tomorrow, you go on the MTR, and you kind of just sit like this in case you don't see any beautiful women around you? Or maybe you walk to work and just close your eyes and hope you don't bump into anyone?

Or sit at the office desk with your sunglasses on and just blindfolded? No, no, of course not. What's he talking about? He's saying he's talking about looking or staring or feeding our eyes in such a way that feeds the sexual desires of our hearts.

It's when we see something that grabs our attention and we take that second look or that third look or we follow that look and stare, right? It's looking in order to feast on something that we know God has not given us.

And so the problem, Jesus says, is not just that you and I might have broken one of the Ten Commandments. We have a far deeper problem. We have a far deeper problem.

[ 14 : 12 ] And that is in the private places of our hearts, in the deepest and most fundamental places of our lives, we may be actually no different from those whose sin is obvious. We may just be better at hiding it.

And the reason is because whether we find ourselves in bed with someone other than our covenant partner or whether we undress a colleague at work in our minds or whether we are looking at pornography or whether we are hooking up with a random guy or a girl at a club, all these things are actually downstream from the source of the problem, which is that our hearts are turned in on themselves.

Our hearts want to take what God has given for His glory and use them and consume them for our own desires. And Jesus says the problem with this is that it's a cancer in our hearts. It's like there's a virus in the control room of our lives and it's not going to end well.

And so Jesus always goes off to our hearts. And the question He's asking us this morning is what's happening in our hearts? What's happening in our hearts? Remember, Jesus tells us that outwardly obeying the rules doesn't make you a Christian.

A Christian is someone in their heart in the most fundamental part of their lives has come to surrender to Christ as Lord, confess our sin, and ask Him to come and be our King and our Master. Someone in our hearts has put our hope and our faith in Jesus.

[ 15 : 23 ] And the reason is because unlike traditional religion, Jesus tells us that the things that our hearts love and the things our hearts long for and the things our hearts delight in, those things are actually our functional God. We can read all the Bible verses and memorize the Bible and come to church and go to CG and do all the Christian activities, but the things that our hearts love and trust in, that's actually our God.

That's who we really worship and bow down before, whether it's sex or money or career. And so Jesus points out here that looking at someone with lustful intent, taking that second, that third look, is actually not just a matter of biology or anatomy.

It's the same thing as ending up in bed with someone because it's where our heart is. The heart is rooted in self-seeking and self-serving. Okay? So that's, Jesus talks about the heart of sexual desire.

Now you may say, but Kevin, what happens if my desires don't affect anyone else? I mean, I look at pornography, let's just say, or maybe someone walks down the street and I just stare the hallway, or maybe I've got a colleague at work and I'm thinking in my mind, I wonder what they would look like undressed.

But it's not affecting anyone else. It's just me and the privacy of my own mind or my own bedroom. It doesn't hurt anybody else. What's the problem? And that leads us to our second point, which is desire gone wrong.

[ 16 : 43 ] You see, there's many problems with private sexual sin and with pornography in particular. And so let's just talk about a couple of them. One of the problems with sexual sin is that it's addictive and it's progressive.

Okay? How many of us here, you don't need to raise your hands, but how many of us here have been gay, looking at pornography, or maybe involved in a relationship which we just knew this isn't right, this isn't good, this dishonors God, and we promised ourselves this is the last time.

The last time. And then a day later, two days later, three days later, we find ourselves back there again. Why is it? Unable to say no. And the reason is because pornography and sexual sin is so addictive.

It has a power over us. We think we're in control of it, but actually it controls us. I was reading this week a testimony of someone who said, he used to just watch normal pornography, and I don't know what normal as opposed to unnormal is, but anyway, normal pornography.

And he said, hardcore, max pornography, abusive pornography was distasteful to him. It was disgusting. He couldn't stomach it. But he'd look at it just now and then, just to see what is out there, what other people are looking at.

[ 17 : 56 ] And before he knew it, he was looking at it every week, and then every third day, and before he knew it, he was loving it and enjoying it. What was once distasteful and disgusting, his appetite started to change.

Why is it? Because pornography and sexual sin is addictive and it's progressive. It reels us in. It gets its hook inside of us, and we think we're mastering it, but actually it has mastery over us.

And one of the markers of an addict in every sphere of life, whether it's alcohol or drugs or anything, is that we deny that it has control over us. But pornography is deeply addictive.

And so, I want to ask you, do you have control over it? You think you do and you can't stop? Just try stopping for six months. Friends, it's deeply dangerous.

Another reason why it's so dangerous is the sin of lust often leads to more sins that are with grave consequences. This is actually true of all sin, but often with sexual sin, because it's so private and there's so much shame involved, when we sin in one way, we often end up committing more sins in order to cover it up, right?

[ 18 : 58 ] Right? And so, let's just say, for instance, a wife is addicted to pornography, and she starts lying about it to her husband in order to protect her reputation. Or a man is addicted to sex, and so maybe starts keeping money from his wife who has a separate bank account in order to feed and fuel his desire.

Or maybe someone falls pregnant outside of marriage and ends up having an abortion in order to protect their reputation. And so, we might think, oh, it's just one little sin, doesn't hurt anyone, doesn't affect anyone, but actually, the consequences lead to bigger sins, which have massive consequences.

And part of the problem is because of the private nature of sexual sin. Its powers and its secrecy. In order to keep it a secret, we have to cover it up, and so we engage in more and more addictive sins.

Another problem with sexual sin and porn is that it actually damages people. Gail Dines is a professor of sociology and women's studies at Wheeler College in Massachusetts, and she wrote a book called Pornland.

And just one little line, this book, there's a lot of good stuff in it, but one line says this. She says, men addicted to pornography demonstrated zero empathy, respect, or love for the woman with whom they did actually have sexual relations.

[ 20 : 13 ] So, men and women addicted to pornography actually destroy the empathy, the love, the tenderness, the respect that they should have for either their current spouse or their future spouse.

And the reason is because pornography, whether viewed by men or women, tells us a story. And the story is that we are not human beings made in the image of God, worthy of dignity and value and respect.

We are just physical bodies with appetites to use and abuse one another for our own pleasure. And so, just think about the Me Too movement. Thousands of women around the world are testifying to the fact that generally men, and generally a few about pornography that have now viewed women as just objects to satisfy themselves, are being sexually harassed and assaulted at work, by bosses, by colleagues, at church, by family members, by church leaders.

Why? Because pornography has told us a story that people are there just as objects for us to use for our own pleasure. Fourth problem with porn and sexual sin is that it lies to us.

It deceives us. Porn promises respect. It tells you you're sexy. It tells you you're desirable. It tells you you're looked up to. It tells you you're wanted by others. But friends, it's a lie. It's not true.

[ 21 : 27 ] The people that are acting in those movies or on the whatever it is, I'm sorry to tell you this, they don't know you. They don't actually think you're that amazing. They're just actors.

It's a lie. And it's a lie because your value and your worth are not determined by how sexy or appealing you may be to popular culture. It's based on the fact that you're a human being made in God's image, designed by Him.

Porn lies to us because it promises us relationship. It tells us that you can be known in the most intimate and vulnerable way, that somebody cares about you and that you can know them and that they can know you. Porn actually triggers a chemical reaction in our brain that God designed to be released during intercourse between His spouses that forms a bond of relationship.

So porn triggers this chemical reaction so you feel like you're bonding to this person, but then actually that person disappears. And so porn promises a relationship, but that relationship is never there.

But it's a lie because you can't experience true relationship through porn or casual sexual relations. As we mentioned a few weeks ago, sexual relations, casual sexual relations actually hinder and undermine the sexual intimacy that we actually desire and crave.

[ 22 : 38 ] Thirdly, porn promises us a refuge. For some of us, we may go to porn because it's an escape. It's an escape from the storms of life. Maybe from a difficult relationship, a difficult marriage.

Maybe marriage is hard and you feel like this is one way I can escape from the difficulty of marriage, but still have my needs satisfied. Or maybe you're running away from work.

Work is pressured. It's stressful. You come home late at night and you're exhausted. And one of the ways you just deal with it is by porn. So porn promises a refuge on the storm. Friends, it's a lie.

Because whenever we medicate or just go to something to distract us from our worries of life, it doesn't solve the problems. It just kicks the can further down the road and we're going to have to deal with it later on.

The problems just grow and get bigger and bigger. And so porn lies to us. It doesn't take those things away. You still need to face them. And finally, porn lies to us because it tells us that intimacy and pleasure are found in consuming sexual experiences rather than giving it away.

[ 23 : 39 ] But it's a lie because God designed us that the most pleasurable sexual experiences we have are when we give of ourselves to our spouse for their pleasure. We think, how can I please you? How can I make you happy?

Non-consuming sexual experiences. And so porn lies to us because it promises a shortcut that it can never deliver. And then finally, the problem with sexual sin is that it eventually will destroy you.

In the book of Proverbs, the book of Proverbs is predominantly written by a man, a father to his son. And he wants to teach his son what does it mean to be a godly, God-fearing, mature man.

It's this young son that's going through adolescence. And his father is giving him all this wisdom. And in the book of Proverbs, particularly the first 10 chapters, there are these two voices that this father's warning his son about, saying, you're going to have two voices that are competing in your ear.

One of them is going to lead to life and one's going to lead to destruction. And so in chapter 3, we read this. The first is the voice of wisdom. And so this father says, wisdom cries aloud in the street.

[ 24 : 44 ] In the marketplace, she raises her voice. She is a tree of life for those who lay hold of her. Those who laid hold of her are called blessed. And so this father's saying, the voice may be distant, but there's a voice of wisdom.

Listen to her. She will bless you and she'll produce life for you. But then there's this other voice, the voice of lust. And so the father warns his son, says, with much seductive speech, she persuades young men.

With her smooth talk like honey, she compels you. All at once, a man will follow her as an ox goes to the slaughter. He does not know that it will cost him his life.

Friends, men, women, husbands, wives, singles, marrieds, sexual desire is a gift from God. But because of our corrupted nature, because sin and the fall has corrupted us, the consequences of sexual desire gone wrong is broken homes and broken families and broken lives and broken hearts.

Our culture is a graveyard of brokenness of men and women that have felt the consequences of it. They have no idea whether they are loved or ever can be loved. Our city is full of men and women that wonder, will anybody ever love me?

[ 25 : 57 ] Because the promises of porn and sexual desire gone wrong have just broken their promises and lied to them time and time again. And so the question is, what should we do about this? What should we do?

Well, let's look at what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 5. Let's look at verse 29 and 30 together. Jesus says something quite interesting. He says, So what should we do?

Those of us that struggle, should we book ourselves in for an operation? Maybe change our bodies a little bit? But, well, I think that's clearly not what Jesus is saying, because Jesus has just told us the week before, the verse before, that the problem isn't with our bodies, the problem is with our hearts, right?

He's just said that. And so Jesus said, you can go and cut off your hand or constrate yourself or poke out your eyes, but actually if your heart is still corrupted, you're going to find a way to still give in to sexual desire and temptation.

And that's why even putting software on our phones and our computers or being accountable, those are good things, but if our heart isn't in the right place, we're going to find a way around those things, right?

[ 27 : 19 ] And so Jesus is saying, you need to be radical with this. This is a cancer in our heart that's going to destroy us. Be radical and ruthless with the measure that you take. It's like, friends, if you've been diagnosed with cancer, you know, you don't just take an aspirin and go to bed and hope that it goes away in the morning.

What do you do? You get radical. You go for surgery. You go for radiation. You go for chemo. You take a drastic measure to destroy the cancer in your body.



Friends, when there's a cancer in our heart, Jesus says, don't just take an aspirin. You've got to get radical and ruthless. And so Jesus is saying, whatever price it costs you is a small price to pay now compared to the massive price you'll pay one day if this thing gets out of hand.

It may feel like a big price now. You cut off your hand, that feels like a big price. It is pocket change compared to the price you'll pay if this gets out of hand. And so Jesus is saying, don't compromise.

Don't give in. Don't bargain with it. Don't cut a deal. It's lying to you and it's going to stab you in the back. You make a deal, say just once a week, it's lying to you. It's going to kill you.

[ 28 : 26 ] Friends, be ruthless with it. Whatever it takes, make sure you walk out of here alive because it wants to destroy you. You fight the fight. You wage your warfare. Don't give up.

Don't give in. Friends, for some of us here, maybe we've given in. And some of us, we feel such guilt and such shame. And we feel like, what's the point? I'm so far gone. I've messed up so badly.

I might as well just keep on going. Friends, let that guilt drive you to fight. Let it put steel and concrete in your backbone. Let that guilt drive you to pick up your sword and you fight this fight.

Jesus is saying, yeah, it may cost you, but you fight it because it wants to destroy you. And so for some of us, what's that small price that we need to pay? Which seems like a big price, but it's a small price now.

For some of us, maybe we need to quit our jobs. If your current job is incompatible with sexual purity, you quit your job. You find another job. You ask God. He's faithful. You ask him to look after you, but you take the radical step.

[ 29 : 27 ] For some of us, maybe you're a boss or a CEO. Why don't you institute a policy at work? No two people traveling together of the opposite gender. You put that in place. It'll cost you business money, but put it in place.

For some of us, we may need to confess to our spouse. Now just on that, that's a good thing to do. Be careful. Maybe don't do it on the bus on the way home. Maybe find a third-party member that can sit with you and help you.

And work through that together. Don't drop that bombshell as if it's nothing. But maybe we need to talk to our spouse. For some of us, we need to break up with a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Because your whole relationship is built on intimacy.

For some of us, actually for all of us that are struggling, we need to tell someone. Tell someone. Talk to your CG leader. Talk to me. Talk to anyone. We'll pray with you. We'll fight with you. Talk to somebody.

Let's walk out of here alive. Friends, this is a cancer of the heart, which is more dangerous than we like to admit. In the words of John Owen, be killing sin or sin be killing you. Let's get radical.

[ 30 : 29 ] And so thirdly and finally, in this super-sexualized world of ours, with phones and internet and travel, and where pornography is throwing itself at us, we don't even need to go look for it. It's coming into us all the time.

Is there any hope? And so thirdly and finally, the hope of the gospel. Now there are four things I want to say to us. First thing is this. Jesus came for sinners, for the broken, for the hopeless.

Jesus came for people like me and for people like you, and therefore there is hope. As we said earlier, the book of Matthew is about an announcement. It's not about good advice.

It's about good news. And the good news is that the King has come. The King has come to rescue and to redeem and to bring healing and freedom to those that are slaved.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is that Christ has come to die on the cross for sinners like me and sinners like you. Friends, there's not a single person in this room that has not been affected by sexual sin.

[ 31 : 25 ] There's not a single person in this room that has not fallen short of God's standards of holiness and righteousness. There's not a single person that can stand before the holiness of God on your own merit and say, I am fine.

But friends, Jesus came to take our sin upon the cross, to cover our shame, to give us a righteousness and a holiness, which isn't ours, which is His, but He gave it to us as if it is ours.

And now we can stand before God saying, Father, I can stand confidently because Jesus' righteousness covers me. Friends, those who turn to Jesus in faith and repentance no longer carry their guilt or their sin or their shame.

They are set free by Him. And I recently had a conversation with a new friend of mine that I met here in Hong Kong. And he was trying to convince me. We were talking about karma and grace.

And so he was saying to me, I believe in karma. I believe that. And the one thing he said was, karma always comes true. Whether it takes a thousand years or a few hours, karma will always be balanced in the end.

[ 32 : 25 ] And so my response to him is, I said, I agree with you. You reap what you sow. We're going to be held accountable for our actions and our desires and our thoughts. I absolutely agree with you. The problem is, in my case, that's very bad news.

Because I've done a lot of bad things. And I may look like I've got it all together. And I may put on a brave face. But in my heart, I'm more of a mess than I let on. And if karma is all I've got, I'm in a bad way.

Because I'm holding out for grace. I'm holding out for Jesus. That's the only hope I've got. Friends, some of us here this morning, you're feeling so condemned about what you've done this week. Maybe even what you've done this weekend.

Maybe even what you've done this day. Friends, maybe you think that you're too far gone. Friends, the truth is that you're worse than you think you are. The truth is the situation is worse than you think it is.

The truth is you're worse of a sinner than you like to admit. Friends, we don't just sin because we make bad choices. We make bad choices because we are sinners and our heart is distorted and turned in on ourselves. And you and I are more sinful than we like to admit.

[ 33 : 27 ] And our situation is more hopeless than we think it is. But friends, you know what? No matter how hopeless it is. No matter how far gone you are. No matter how beyond the reach of redemption you think you are.

Jesus Christ came for sinners like you and like me to rescue us and redeem us and to bring us out of the pit of destruction and debauchery and to set us free. Friends, you are never too far gone.

Some of us here think, I'm too wicked. What I've done is too wrong. Some of us may feel like what you've done, what you're currently doing, you can't even fight anymore. Friends, Jesus came for people like you and I.

Friends, if you will humble yourself, you'll come to Jesus in faith and repentance and rejoicing. If you'll turn from your sin, Christ will give you his righteousness. There's an old hymn which I love and it goes like this.

It says, Friends, Jesus Christ is a majestic Savior.

[ 35 : 03 ] Friends, some of us here are maybe in the middle of an affair. Maybe even just this week you've been unfaithful to your spouse. Friends, you need to confess that. You need to come clean. You need to repent.

But you can rejoice in Jesus. Jesus, he came for you. You're not too far gone. He came to save you and rescue you. Jesus came for sinners. Secondly, Jesus came to pour his love into our hearts.

One of the lies that porn tells us is that the reason we're stuck in porn is because nobody will ever love us sincerely or deeply or love us as we really are. Porn tells us that we're nobodies and that this is the only option we have to really fulfill our desires.

Porn tells us that we're stuck. We're nobodies. We're useless. No one will really love us. And so the best option we have is just to use porn. Friends, Jesus came to pour his unending, never ceasing, never giving up, steadfast love into our hearts.

Where porn and sexual encounters affirm the lie that your identity is based on your sexual appeal or how good looking you are, Jesus says, I love you because I chose you. Jesus says, I love you because I set my sights on you.

[ 36 : 08 ] I love you because I created you before the world, because I called you before the world was made. I love you just the way, and I made you just the way I wanted you. I love you because my heart overflows with love and I choose to direct that love to you.

Friends, what do we do with sexual desires when we have them? What do we do with our heart's desires to love and to be loved? Buddhism tells us desire is wrong. Just eradicate it. Try and get rid of your desires.

Western thinking says desire is all you have. Go with it. Jesus Christ says your desires are a small picture of the real longing that your heart is made for, which is heaven. Jesus says the desires in your heart is a small picture of the intimacy that I promised to give you and that I will give you one day.

Jesus Christ comes to fill our hearts with the love that our hearts were made for. Jesus Christ promises us what our hearts long for. Third thing is this. Jesus came to change our hearts.

Came to change us. Sorry for all the ancient hymns. There's another ancient hymn I like, and it goes like this. It says, You see what he's saying there?

[ 37 : 26 ] He's saying Jesus' death on the cross was a double cure. It did two things. It saved from wrath and judgment, and it gave us forgiveness, but it didn't just do that. It also is the means by which we are purified and cleansed and sanctified and made whole and made more like Jesus.

Friends, God's, Jesus' death on the cross is the reason that you and I can be purified and actually fight sin and get better and overcome it. Because Jesus died to give us a new heart.

Remember in the Old Testament, Ezekiel says, There will come a day where I'll take out their hearts of stone, which are centered on themselves, and I'll give them a new heart. A heart which is tender. A heart which loves me.

A heart which is made for me. I'll give them a heart of flesh. Friends, so many people in our city, my guess is many of us here are addicted to pornography and other sexual sin. And we don't know how to get free.

We're lost. We feel enslaved. We feel trapped. We hate it. We hate ourselves, and yet we cannot get free from it. Because our hearts are hardened to God and hardened to others, and we're enslaved to our sin.

- [ 38 : 29 ] Friends, Jesus came to set us free. Jesus came to change our hearts. Jesus came to rewire our hearts. Jesus came to take our hearts which are turned in on themselves and think about ourselves, and to open us up to look at others and to love others again.
- Jesus came to give us a new nature. Paul writes in Corinthians, he says, Don't you know if anyone comes to Christ, he is a new creation? The old life which is self-centered and self-seeking is gone.
- And now you're a new creation. He's given you a new heart. He's changed you from the inside out. And he says, All this comes from God through Jesus Christ. He reconciled us to himself.
- And then finally, friends, Jesus came that we might know him and love him and be satisfied by him. Remember in the beginning we said that you can't just follow Jesus without following him.
- And the reason is because Jesus didn't just come to give us new rules and new teachings. Jesus came to give us himself. Jesus knows that our hearts were actually made for him. Our hearts were made to delight in him and to feast on him.
- [ 39 : 32 ] And Jesus didn't just come to give us good advice. He came to give us himself. And apart from encountering Jesus Christ, all his teachings will ever be good advice.
- There will just be rituals. There will be rules. They won't give you the power to change. Friends, but you need to encounter Jesus. You need to have your heart ravished by King Jesus. You need to have your heart to sing and rejoice in him again.
- Friends, you need your heart captured by Christ and his glory. And you need his kingdom to become more beautiful. And Jesus came that that may be the case. You know, St. Augustine was a Christian around 1600 years ago.
- And he grew up, I think his mother and his grandmother brought him up. And so they taught him about Jesus and the Gospels in, I think it was Alexander or somewhere in Greece maybe.
- Even Greece or Egypt. And he knew the Gospel. He knew about Jesus. But he had these desires in him that he wanted to fulfill. And so he, as a young man, he goes off, I think, to Alexander and Egypt.
- [ 40 : 32 ] And he studies. And he lives life to the maximum. And he fulfills all of his sexual desires and all of his sexual fantasies and even more. He absolutely just goes full tilt.
- And at one point in his life, he says, I prayed this prayer. I said, God, deliver me from my lusts. Just don't deliver me just yet. Okay? It's a very honest prayer. I said, God, deliver me, but maybe in a year or two time.
- Right? I'm quite enjoying myself right now. And so Augustine was fully delighting in all the sexual pleasures that these major cities were offering him. But at the end of his life or middle of life, he becomes a Christian.
- He discovers the wonder of Jesus. His whole life gets turned around. And at the end of his life, he writes this in his book called Confessions. He says, Friends, here is a man that tasted to the bottom every delight that he thought he could fill his heart and his body with.
- Here is a man that drank to the bottom of the dregs, the cup of self-indulgence and sexual desire. And in the end, he tasted Jesus. And he said, you are sweeter and more desirable and more beautiful and more pleasurable than all of those pleasures in all the world.
- [ 42 : 15 ] Friends, this is why Jesus came. He came that our hearts will truly be satisfied. He came that we will no longer eat a little bit of rotten fruit down there, that our hearts will feast on true delight and true food, that our hearts and our minds and our bodies and our souls will be satisfied in him.

Friends, if you struggle with porn, you'll never kick it just by trying hard. You'll never kick it by just telling yourself to be a better Christian. You'll kick it by delighting in the wonder of Jesus.

You'll kick it by feasting on his glory and his grace. You'll kick it by having your eyes open to how wonderful and glorious he is. This is why Jesus came. That you might know him and encounter him and be set free by him and delight and rejoice in him.

Deepak Raju in his book concludes his book like this. And let's conclude this series like this. He says, Jesus is always the beginning and the end of every matter. Because of what Christ has done for you in dying on the cross for you and being raised from the grave to conquer death and sin, you can have hope in the fight for purity.

Trust in Jesus. Give your life to him. Rejoice in him. He will not disappoint you. He will be faithful to the very end. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning because we are sinners and we need you.

[ 43 : 42 ] Our hope is in you. God, as we come to the communion table, the Lord's Supper, we come to feast in you. It's a small picture of how you, Christ, satisfy our hearts and desires.

God, come and set us free. Come and change our hearts. God, our hearts are corrupt because they're bent in on themselves. But God, you give us new hearts.

God, once you come and make us more like you, we pray. God, I pray for those of us that feel hopeless, that feel like there is no solution, that feel like they are too far gone.

I pray, God, once you give fresh courage and hope this morning, to carry on fighting and to delight in you. God, I pray for those of us that are not Christians this morning, those that are spiritual seekers or maybe we thought we're Christians but we're actually not.

God, won't you come and cause us to be born again? Won't you open our eyes? Won't you give us the gift of faith to reach out to you and to call on you so that you can save us, God? Oh, God, we need you.

[ 44 : 48 ] Come and have your way, we pray. Amen.