

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

SIGNIFICANT OTHER | SEXUAL FORMATION – PART 1

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Alright, alright, alright, how's everybody doing today? Good. Good. Good to be with you, everybody in the room and at all of our physical locations, those of you joining us online.

Today we are continuing on in our series that we started last week called *Significant Other*. So we're going to be walking through a passage of Scripture in Genesis 2 and 3. So if you've got a Bible, and I hope you brought one with you, go ahead and be turning to Genesis, chapter 2.

And while you're finding that and getting settled, something that I just want to kind of put on your radar—on Easter weekend a couple of weeks ago I just made the announcement that we're going to relaunching our Northeast campus in the Fishers area in September of this year. We're super excited about it.

So, if you live on the northeast side, or if you know somebody who does and you'd like to be a part of the gathering that is going to be launching this campus, we're going to begin having gatherings beginning in mid-May. You can just simply text Northeast to 87221. I think we have a QR code as well that you can scan to get all of that information and just be looking for more information in the days ahead.

And then church-wide, regardless of what campus you go to or maybe you live out of state, just be praying for the relaunch of this campus in September.

As many of you already have been made aware of on social media and the announcement that was just made on signage on the way in, today we're talking about this thing called *sexual formation*. I'm going to explain what I mean by that term here in a few minutes.

And a couple of things here, I have prepared way too much information than I have time enough to fit into one week. So on Wednesday of this week I made the decision to split this into two parts. Today we're going cover part one.

Then next weekend we're going to take a break from the series because it's Mother's Day, right? We're giving everybody a seven-day heads up on that. And we're going to have a very special guest. Maddie Wentz is going to be with us. Carson Wentz, the quarterback, his wife, is going to be joining me.

And we're going to have a conversation with Maddie. So you're going to want to come. And this would be a perfect weekend to invite friends and family who don't normally go to church to come with you.



And then the next week we'll resume, and I'll try to cover everything that kind of hit the cutting room floor this week in my prep as well as the questions that I am sure are going to come in from today's content, alright? So we'll hit that and then cover the rest of the series.

Now, once again, if you're a parent and you've got kids under the age of 12, this is going to be somewhat sensitive to their ears, so I really encourage you to check out our Kids' environments.

But if you're a parent of kids 13 and older, I highly encourage you to lean in on this and listen and take notes and have a series of intentional conversations, in the plural, not just one, with your kids about this content.

Now, I understand that that can be a little bit awkward and uncomfortable, but can I just say, it could always be worse. You could be the one teaching this message, alright? I have three teens listening to this message today. That's fun. So, pray for them and me.

Here's the reason why this is so important. Some of you may be like, "Well, we've already got older teens and they already know, they already know." No, they know mechanics, they know how it works, they don't necessarily understand the emotional and spiritual ramifications of it.

Last week I talked about the word *discipleship*, and I basically gave this definition:

There is something or someone that is constantly shaping your beliefs, determining your perspectives, and guiding your decisions. That's a pretty good explanation of discipleship.

And so if you, as a parent, don't run point on having these conversations with your kids, someone, or something else will, and likely already is. So it's really important that you run point on it.

Now, others of you, maybe you have a four or a five in your age or older, like my generation or older. Here in the next few minutes you might be a little bit uncomfortable, kind of taken back, like, "Should we be talking about this in church in this straightforward way?" And I would just simply say that we need to be talking about in just a straightforward way as what society has been.

The late Howard Hendricks said it this way:

"We should not be ashamed to discuss what God was not ashamed to create."

And so remember this from Luke 4, I said this last week, it's the umbrella of the whole series, "Jesus came to bring," what? "Good News." I will also take life; I will accept both. But Jesus came to bring Good News.

I think oftentimes when it comes to sex, we only tend to read bad news, meaning He's grossed out by it, or, "How could you," or, "I'm so ashamed of you." But Jesus came to bring Good News and not to condemn the world but to save.

So, if you missed last week, the big idea of this series is that one of the richest and most rewarding experiences in life is the relationships that we have with other people. And I think most of us would agree with that regardless of whether you're an introvert or an extrovert, regardless of your profile on Myers-Briggs or your Enneagram number, all of us crave social connection and we need it.

In fact, the highlight reel of my life involves doing things I love with the people I love. And I would guess that it's the same for you as well.

And the reason why is because we are made for connection. We were built for it. God is a relational God as is demonstrated in the Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So He created us to be in relationship with Him vertically and in relationship with one another horizontally. In the New Testament the greatest command is to love God and love people.

And as God was creating the universe and the animal kingdom and Adam He stepped back and He goes, "Man, everything is good, good, good." And the first and only thing that was not good was that the man was alone. And so He created a significant other in the person of Eve for Adam.

And she was like him in so many ways, but she was different and distinct from him in so many ways: physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

If you were to place them side by side without any clothes on you would see that they were like each other, but they were so different than each other and that actually, their bodies biologically fit together.

However, we were never meant to fulfill one another. That role is only for God and God alone. And so when we try to find somebody who will fulfill us, "Make me happy. Meet all of my expectations, make me a complete person," then we are actually placing on them a load that they were never designed to carry. It's a huge burden and it ruins the relationship. It just crushes it.

See, two half-empty people, when they find each other they do not make a whole. They make a large sucking sound. So that role can never be fulfilled by another human person.

Now, don't get me wrong. A dating relationship, a romantic encounter, a marriage—that is fantastic. Adam's response when he sees a very naked Eve is an ecstatic at last. "At last. She's like me but she's so different than me and thank you, God, for this gift of relationship."

In fact, before Adam and Eve had anything else in their relationship, what they had was a deep and abiding friendship. And that's where every romantic relationship, every marriage has to be built on—a rock-solid friendship. Otherwise it will not stand the test of time and the storms of life.

And my guess is that the words at last have leapt from your heart, not just in romance, but whenever you made a best friend. Or whenever you connected to somebody, whenever there was a chemistry, whenever you just clicked. There was a bond, and we know those words at last in our hearts whenever it comes to a relationship with another person.

So, what went wrong? Genesis 3 is what went wrong. Genesis 3 ruined it for all of us and it made our relationships so complex and painful. This is why one of the greatest things about our lives is relationships and one of the most complicated, painful things about life is relationships.

And many of us can attest to that, whether in our past or something we're walking through right now. It is the argument with no easy resolution. It is the unexpected or repeated interpersonal conflict. It doesn't seem like there is any way around it. It's the betrayal, the break-up, or the back stab. And every single one of us likely know the pain of a broken heart.

See, what Genesis 3 did was it introduced sin into the world and sin is not just an action, sin is a noun. It is a state that we are born into. And what sin did is it ruptured our relationships with God vertically and with others horizontally.

And there is a reason why there is so much interpersonal conflict and so much division in the world. There is a reason why dating relationships can be so complicated. There is a reason why marriages are so painful and destructive that come to an end. I will get into this more, but for now, if you're taking notes, there is a reason why:

What God designs, Satan seeks to destroy.

If I could say it this way:

When God instituted a marriage, Satan initiated a war.

And he's been waging war ever since, attacking the very essence of how we image God. And here's what I mean. Marriage is not a contract, it's a covenant.

So a contract is what I have with my local gym, "I'll go to this gym just as long as they have the equipment and the classes I want, but as soon as it doesn't, then I'm out. I'm going to break the contract."

A contract is what I have at Costco, "As long as you carry the huge vat of ketchup that I want to buy in bulk, I'll continue to pay those annual fees. But you discontinue it, then I'm out."

A contract is, "If you keep your end of the bargain, I'll keep my end of the bargain."

Marriage is a covenant, a very different thing. It's a promise that we make, and it's meant to mirror the covenant that God has made with us in and through Jesus.

So the Bible speaks in the language of Jesus being the groom and the big 'C' church, which you and I are a part of, is the bride He lays His life down for. And we keep cheating on Him. We keep breaking the covenant with our affair with sin.

What I need you to know about Satan is that Satan is not some Will Ferrell character from *Saturday Night Live* running around in a red suit with a pitchfork making a bunch of mischief and practical jokes. No, he is much more sinister than that.

He is a deceiver, he's an accuser, and the thing that I really need you to know is that he is a counterfeit. He takes the good gifts that God has given us, and he counterfeits them, and he makes them look really, really good only to find that they are really, really bad.

This last week I was in a meeting and my son was FaceTiming me and I couldn't get it. So later he texted me and he was fishing. We have a stocked pond behind our house. I stocked it in 2016 so the bass are getting pretty big. And he texted me a picture of a bass that he caught. And he was like, "Dad, check out the size of this bass."

And I texted back to him and said, "Well, what did you catch it on?" And so he texted this lure. Our conversations are titillating, it's amazing.

So he texted me back this lure, this fake bait, and it's one of those really good ones. It looks like a fish when you're reeling through the water, it looks like a real fish. You can't see the hook or anything.

And I always feel bad for the fish that bite on that thing, because you know they are like, "Oh, man. This is going to be a good meal. Ugh, hook in the mouth. I'm going to get pulled out of the water."

In the same way, Satan has created bait, he's been doing this for thousands of years, for centuries, he's much, much better at it than you are, and it looks real, it looks like the right thing, but it's a counterfeit.

And that's what he does. He takes the good gifts of God, sex being one of them. This is his favorite way to counterfeit the good gifts of God. And it causes us an incredible amount of confusion, harm, and pain.

I'm going to get into this more specifically. But when I'm talking about this, I'm talking about when it comes to sex, how do we view it, what is it for, and when do we practice it: when, how, and where.

And what I want to ask you to do here is in just the next few moments together, if at any point in the message you find yourself a little bit uncomfortable, squirming in your seats, bristling a little bit, pushing back—which by the way is totally okay, that's totally fine, but

if you find yourself doing that, can I just ask you to get really curious about that? Can I just ask you to ask yourself, "Why am I having this sort of reaction to it?" See, this has massive implications for our relationships.

Last week I introduced to you C.S. Lewis' concept of the four loves. The downside of love in the English language is that we only have one word for it: *love*. And we use it for all kinds of things. So we say things like, "I love my spouse." "I love my family." "I love my kids." "I love corndogs." We're using the same word.

And C.S. Lewis breaks it down and he says the words for love are:

Philia (friendship)

Storge (nostalgia)

Eros (Erotic)

Agape (Sacrificial)

Now just keep this up for just a minute here. Most of the time, when it comes to who we're attracted to, physically, when it comes to romance and dating relationships and marriage, would you not agree that there is a lot of emphasis on, that we're looking at Eros—a lot. It's almost like an over-emphasis on the erotic part of love to the detriment of the other loves.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I will never say that physical attraction isn't important. It is. Physical attraction is important, but it isn't everything. It can't be everything. Primarily because bodies change. I didn't think I was going to get an amen on that, but you know that they do. If you don't believe me, just pull out a picture of yourself from 20 years ago and you'll see it.

Now, here's the thing. I'm not talking about you guys. This is the best-looking church on the planet. You guys are aging like a fine wine. Way to go. I'm talking about everybody else, alright?

Everybody else, bodies physically just change. That's the reason why in the vows: sickness and in health. We gain weight. We lose weight. We age. Our bodies change. So physical is important. Attraction is important. It can't be everything.

Now here's the thing, I don't think that I've told you anything that you don't already know. I think that all of us know this, but it's so easy to overlook this when we're in the heat of the moment.

Maybe you're like into the later half of your 20s, early 30s, and you're like, "Man, I really want to be with somebody," so it's easy to.... Maybe you've got a catch in your spirit. Maybe a little bit of a red flag about somebody's character issues or their spiritual maturity, "But I'm going to overlook that because she's hot," for now. That's the thing.

So here's the thing. For many of us, we're like, "Gosh, I don't know. It feels like to me time is kind of running out and maybe this is the best that I can do. So I'm going to overlook his character."

Can I just say this to somebody? It will save a lot of heartache. Young women, young men, right now, you're in a dating relationship and you've got this catch in your spirit, please do not marry a project. You're meant to marry a person, not your homework.

Now, listen. I'm not trying to be too harsh about somebody. We all have rough edges. We are all a work in progress. I totally get that. I'm talking about overlooking somebody's character issues. I'm talking about overlooking somebody who is a spiritual mismatch for you.

Here's what I'm trying to say. God designed sex as a gift, but because of the sinful nature that exists in all of us, sex has become one of the greatest sources of pain in our relationships and marriages, causing so much disillusionment.

Why is that? And what do we do about it?

Let me just recap a verse that we walked through last week in chapter 2, verse 18. It says:

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.'"

So Adam goes into a deep sleep. God pulls a rib out of his side. He creates a woman in the person of Eve. Now, let's pick this up in verse 24. It says:

"This explains why a man leaves his father and mother," so all of the dads and the daughters in the room, this is where you need to pay attention when it comes to a potential suitor for your daughter, one of the main things is has he left mom and dad? That's pretty big. I'm talking like: he's moved out of the basement. He actually has a job. He's not playing Call of Duty all day. He's left mom and dad financially and the address, alright?

"... and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame."

That's a profound sentence. Back in chapter 1, verse 28—I said this last week—the very first command that God gave to us was, "Be fruitful and multiply." It all sounds great. So what went wrong? Chapter 3. Let's walk through it together. Verse 1 says:

"The serpent," so this is Satan in disguise, "was the shrewdest," meaning he is more cunning, he is more crafty than, "of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, 'Did God really say...?'"

Now, I'm going to keep saying this and bringing it back up until I'm blue in the face at the end of my ministry days with you at Traders Point, I'm going to keep bringing this up. This

is the primary question that he deceives us with over and over and over again, "Did God really say?"

Here's how we say it today. "Well, the Bible meant that then, doesn't mean it now." Like, "Oh, it meant it then but that's old-fashioned and you know, it's been interpreted a bunch of times so we can't really trust it." We are constantly trying to edit the words of our Creator, really because we just want it to fit the life we want to live.

So Satan is like, "Hey, did God really say?" And then what he does is he'll give you just enough of the truth, so it sounds good but then he twists it. That's what he does with Eve:

"... you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

And notice her response, verse 2:

"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," so she notices his deception right away. Good for Eve. She saw it. "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said..." I love this. She comes right back with clarity around the words of God.

Which, by the way, if you fast forward to the gospels when Jesus was tempted in the desert, Satan came at Him, and how did Jesus defend the temptation? "God said." "The word of God said." So he clarified that.

She clarifies it:

"You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die."

Now, Satan doesn't just go, "Oh, I'm sorry. My bad. Thanks for clarifying." It's not like he gets called out and then he shrinks away. No, what he does is he comes back with a haymaker. And he always does. And we see it in verse 4:

"You won't die!" Notice the exasperation, I'm sure that he made her feel small, he just made her feel stupid, "You're not going to die."

"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

Verse 6:

"The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful," no doubt that it was, "and its fruit looked delicious," no doubt that it was, "and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her."

Up until this point I thought she was alone. So what we see here is that Adam was with her, but he was checked out. Where was he? I don't know. On the couch drinking a beer watching the game, where we usually are.

He was there but he wasn't there, which means that the sin of men in general, and I would put myself in this place because I'm guilty of it, I see it all over my life, and I don't like it—the sin of a man is passivity and abdication. And it gets rooted all the way back to our great-great-great grandfather, Adam.

This is the reason why roughly 65 percent of those who attend our church are women and roughly 65 percent of those who serve are women. And it's the reason right now why your boyfriend or your husband is sitting in this message, a really important message, and he's on his phone playing games.

It's passivity and it's abdication. He was there but he wasn't there. And he eats it too.

"At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves."

Verse 8:

"When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid," that's what we always do and that's what we've always done when it comes to sexual sin. We hide it and we hide from God.

"... they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'"

This is not Marco Polo. This is not hide and seek. It's not that God didn't know where they were. He knew exactly where they were. God was actually acknowledging the question that something had ruptured their relationship. They were in communion, now they were not.

Verse 10:

"He replied, 'I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.'"

He's trying to blame it on his naked body. Verse 11:

"'Who told you that you were naked?' the Lord God asked. 'Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?' The man replied, 'It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.'"

He just threw her completely under the bus. And he's been doing it ever since. There is a reason why there is a battle of the sexes. This skirts all the way back to our great-great grandparents.

"Then the Lord God asked the woman, 'What have you done?'" She said, "'The serpent deceived me.... That's why I ate it.'"

There is a lot here, there is a lot about it that is really beautiful, there's a lot about it that is so tragic and painful, and it explains so much of why our understanding of and practice with human sexuality is so complex and causes us so much pain. There is a reason why it is the root of so many issues in our relationships and even in our own personal shame and the way that we see ourselves.

Here's what I want to do in the remainder of our time. I just want to get really curious about it and I just want to ask a few questions. What is it? How do we view it? What went wrong? And how should we respond?

I think we need to start here. If you're taking notes, I just want to start here:

God designed sex

He designed it. We didn't discover sex behind God's back. He wasn't strolling through the garden one evening, "Oh, I wonder where Adam and Eve are, they kind of disappeared on Me." And all of a sudden you hear some strange moaning sounds behind a tree and He's like, "What are you guys doing? I can't unsee that." That's not what went down.

I think, for many of us whether you grew up in church or not.... Maybe some of you grew up in a church, a lot like I did. A lot of purity culture. Maybe you grew up outside of church. Maybe you just had some weird Christian college roommates, whatever.

So you just had the impression that God is grossed out by it, that He's ashamed of it, and that we should just feel really, really bad about ever thinking about it and we should never engage in it. It's really, really gross, even after marriage.

If you grew up in purity culture, and I know that a lot of purity culture meant well, but what it did is it created the opposite. Instead, you were faced with these really, really strong temptations and urges in your body, and you were trying to white-knuckle them, "I need to stay pure," and then you fell.

And so you didn't think it was a safe enough environment to be vulnerable with that and confess it, because you saw what people did and said about those who did, so you hid it, and you just carried the shame.

Some of you young ladies, you were told, "It's bad. It's bad. It's bad. It's bad." Wedding night: good. And it's like this hard right turn and it's so hard to begin to wrap your brain around it and it's created significant intimacy issues with your spouse.

Maybe you grew up in a church that just stayed silent on it, while society continued to disciple you in it, which is part of the reason we're in the predicament that we're in because as Christians we just don't have a way to engage in the conversation without sounding old-fashioned and like a prude. And none of us want to sound that way.

So what is it? What did God design it for? Well three things if you're taking notes.

Number one: He designed it to:

Consume the marriage covenant between a husband and wife

It is a supernatural fusion where two become one. There is this mysterious supernatural sacredness to it and there is a reason why God asks us to not engage in it until after the

covenant has been made, because it is part of the way in which we reflect the covenant that has been made.

It's not a perfect analogy, but in a similar way, even just at Easter, you gave your life to Christ, you confessed your sin, you repented of them, Jesus is Lord and Savior and then you did something physical, you did something tangible to demonstrate that inward connection.

Sex is very similar to that. You've made promises to each other. I'm going to always be there for you. And then you consummate that internal decision you made through a very physical act. It is a gift that God gives to us that we then give to another person who we've made promises to.

It is not a selfish act in which I demand something to have my needs fulfilled, but a selfless one where I'm actually looking to fulfill the needs of another. I'm not operating out of expectation, but out of consideration.

And it's really important that we get the four loves in order. What I mean by that is that I'm not going to *Eros* you until there is *Philia* and *Agape*-demonstrated love.

Number two, it is designed to:

Reproduce and start a family

And that's just a no-brainer. We understand that. The first command: Be fruitful and multiply.

Number three, for our:

Pleasure and enjoyment

And I think sometimes we miss this. Just think about all of the ways that God could have created for us to reproduce and have a family.

I would imagine.... Just imagine with me the week of creation. The Trinity sends out an email to all of the angels, "Hey, man. Pile in the boardroom. We've got one last thing that we've got to come up with. I need to hear everybody's ideas. We made creation. We've got to figure out a way for Adam and Eve to express their bond to one another and to reproduce. There are no bad ideas. I need to hear everybody's ideas."

And the Holy Spirit grabs a marker and He's up on the white board. And one of the angels says, "I think I've got one. What if we sprayed water on Eve's back and she developed a boil and after nine months a baby pops out?"

"Okay, let's save that idea for the 1980s movie, *Gremlins*. Do we have any other ideas here?"

All of a sudden, God walks up and He's like, "I've got one. You guys, it's going to blow your mind. You've seen some amazing things this last week that I've created, but I've got the best idea ever."

One of the angels on the front row is like, "What is it God? Is it another rainbow? Is it a pony, God?" And He's like, "No, no, no. It's far better than that. Give Me the marker." And He starts drawing diagrams on the board and the angels' eyes are getting big.

The Hebrew word is *dode*, and it's the mingling of souls. And He designed it as a way for us to express a bond and connect. And I sometimes wonder if God looks at what society has done with sex and how we've sort of twisted it and perverted it and He's like upset by that, "Hey, man. This was My idea. I designed this. There are some major copyright infringements going on."

And whoever designs it gets to define it. God says, "I know what works best. It belongs to Me. Sex is a divine design. So I think that anytime that we hear God's Word warn us about sexual immorality, that is not God trying to ruin our fun, that is God saying, "Hey, man. Don't hurt yourself. Please don't hurt yourself. This is a really, really powerful thing."

It's kind of like a manufacturer's warning label on a product. You know those? I've got a Husqvarna chainsaw and one of my favorite things to do is go out and clear brush. There is something really therapeutic about it. And all over the chainsaw are all of these manufacturer's warnings. And honestly, I'm really appreciative of them.

You know one of the main ones that is one there? "Don't stop chain with hand." I think I would have figured that one out, but I'm really grateful that somebody took the time.... And I don't read the warning labels and go, "Man, you're just trying to ruin my fun." No, this is saying, "I don't want you to hurt yourself."

God isn't trying to dampen your sex life. He's trying to maximize it. So, I just want us to get really curious about what His plan is. Here's why. Ours isn't working. If we reduce sex to behaviors and attractions or something that we link to our very identity, we are setting ourselves up for pain in our relationships.

Our society is so focused on technique and behaviors. You go to Meijer, and you walk through the cashier line, and you see the magazine covers *Three Ways to Rock His World*. You know, *Five Ways to Just Drive Her Crazy*. It's all technique but they don't actually talk about the emotion and the spiritual weightiness of it.

Contrary to what you may have heard, seen, and experienced, sex is not just physical, it's spiritual. And we are obsessed with it in our culture. We use it to sell everything from cheeseburgers to toothpaste. And society will say, "Well, it's a really, really strong desire that cannot be controlled so it must be satisfied."

And one of the things of the sexual revolution's ideology that came out of the 1960s or so, what it did was it produced this generally accepted understanding in society that sex is either one of two extremes.

Number one, it's no big deal. "Hey, man. It's no big deal. Just do whatever you want with whoever you want just as long as it is consensual," which by the way that word *consensual* is rapidly being redefined.

"Hey, man. As long as it is consensual, as long as you're not hurting anybody, it's a desire like anything else. It's a natural, physical, biological appetite. It's just like any other appetite. You get hungry. You eat. You get thirsty. You drink. You get horny. You have sex or you masturbate. No big deal."

Or we run to the other side. It's a really huge deal. And your whole identity should be wrapped up and rooted in your sexual appetites and desires. And God never meant it to be that way.

So, non-emotional, hookup culture is the norm. Non-traditional expressions of sex and gender aren't just accepted but celebrated and encouraged. Modesty is repressive and oppressive. And I'm not just talking about the young ladies, but I'm also talking about the guys.

Young people are given the impression that when you enter into a dating relationship it should be as physical as possible as soon as possible, leading them to think that they actually have deeper feelings than what they really do, which makes breakups especially painful because of the bond that has already taken place sexually.

So the best way to deal with the pain of detachment is to attach physically to someone else as soon as you can, leading to broken heart, after broken heart, after broken heart, which leads to a whole bunch of scarring and baggage.

And by the time you do meet somebody who you are ready to walk the aisle with, your marriage starts in a deficit. That's what society has given us.

Nancy Piercy, in her book *Love Thy Body*, which I highly recommend you put that in your Amazon box and purchase it today. Nancy Piercy, *Love Thy Body* mentions how sex is described on children's network television. It's a group of kids, they put them together, and they are actually telling these kids what sex is. Here's what they said, "Sexual relations: Something done by two adults to give each other pleasure."

No mention of marriage. No mention of a covenant. No mention of family or love. No hint that it has a richer purpose other than immediate gratification.

In the book *Adam and Eve After the Pill: The Sexual Revolution* described it this way, "The destigmatizing and demystification of non-marital sex and the reduction of sexual relations in general to a kind of hygienic recreation in which anything goes so long as those involved are consenting adults."

And you run that out and eventually there is nothing really sacred or special about any of it. And none of this is a new idea.

All of this goes way back. There was a word for this called dualism and it was basically the separation of the spirit from the body. We don't necessarily use that term dualism a lot now a days. Here's how culture says it, "We're just having fun. We're just having fun. It's just biology."

Listen to me, when you separate spirituality from sexuality, it always creates a wound even if you're not consciencely aware of it in the moment.

I cannot recommend the movie, but in the movie *Vanilla Sky* from years ago, Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz, their characters get involved and then he distances himself from her. She is really distraught over it. And in this moment of emotional outburst, Cameron Diaz's character says this to Tom Cruise's character, "When you sleep with someone, your body makes a promise even if you don't."

And the more broken things get, the more pain and chaos that comes from sexual sin in society, the more clear it becomes that God knows what He is talking about.

And sociology is beginning to catch up with theology and beginning to see it. What I mean by that is that over the last several months as I've been preparing for this series, I've come across a number of articles in *The Washington Post*, and in *Time* magazine, which, by the way, are not necessarily written from a Jesus-centered perspective, and they are saying a lot of the same things that it says in the New Testament. I find it fascinating, just in the name of science and biology.

In fact, I want to read just a portion of one article to you. This was from March 24, 2022, so like just six weeks ago. *Rethinking Sex*. Just let me read a portion of the article.

Christine Emba has a radical proposition. What if there is no such thing as casual sex? In her new book *Rethinking Sex, a Provocation* Emba suggests sex is inherently not casual, it's not just a physical interaction, even if we try to internalize the modern assumption that sex is like any other social activity.

Emba argues that sex involves the spirit as well as the body and that the sexual liberation, which promises lots of fun, no strings, easy to access, consensual sex has actually left us miserable.

Emba, a columnist for *The Washington Post* believes that thinking about sex and our sexual partners casually and commoditizing them on dating apps has created a bleak romantic landscape.

"Too many people," she writes, "are having too much of the kind of sex that saps the spirit and makes us feel less human, not more. Sex that leaves us detached, disillusioned, or just dissatisfied."

“Even if we want to think of sex as something that can be casual, the act of being naked and entwined is inherently vulnerable and unique,” she argues.

She writes that sex implicates the human person and thus our inherent human dignity and we should treat this act and our partners accordingly.

Or, you can read the New Testament.

God knew this all along:

Sex isn’t just casual it’s purposeful.

And the term casual sex came about in our history when we disconnected it from three things. First of all when:

Disconnected from procreation.

Throughout most of history, you could not think of sex with someone without the possibility of long-term responsibility. But as recently as 1972, that was when single people could use contraception, we just disconnected it from that, and sex became casual.

Second thing:

Disconnected from emotion and relationship.

The fallout of hookup culture is pretty self-evident. Increasingly there is a debate around what the term consensual is, meaning that at the time he thought it was, she didn’t think it was, she didn’t say anything for any number of reasons: she was intimidated, thought she was in love, imbalance of power, whatever. Later she came to realize that actually it wasn’t consensual. This is what is behind the Me Too movement. Increasing numbers of sexual harassment charges, human trafficking, abuse, rapes, incest, and unwanted pregnancies—all that came after we disconnected it from emotion and relationships.

Third thing:

Disconnected from people.

Well, you don’t even need a person. We just traded a bond with a spouse with a bond with a picture or a screen. And increasingly a culture that grows up with this just kind of says, “Well, it’s easier to turn this into a selfish act that I kind of do to meet my own desires rather than tending to the emotional and physical needs of another. So that’s what I train myself in.” And then you meet someone, and you get married and it’s a totally foreign concept to put his/her needs above your own.

Casual sex just leads to causalities.

Last point:

Sex points to the story we all long for.

We all long to be fully known and fully accepted for who we are. We all long for connection, vulnerability, and love.

I want you to know that sin is love turned in on itself. The Bible's definition of love is love is channeled selflessly toward others, like what Jesus did for us on a cross.

And we want to have, as Christians, the highest view of sex. Do you know that statistically nowadays—I just saw this recently.... They took a poll. They wanted to determine which groups of people are having the best sex. And what they found was that it wasn't the young people who are just running around and one-night stands at nightclubs. It's actually committed Christian couples in a covenant relationship who attend church regularly—they are having the best sex. Go figure. That's what's happening. Some of you are like, "Are we allowed to clap for that?"

So, I'm going to say this in a couple of weeks. When it comes to marriage we should be Pentecostal, lots of tongues and laying on of hands.

Some of you are like, "I just found my church. This is my first weekend, I'm coming back."

Seriously, Adam and Eve were in the Garden, and they were naked and not ashamed. We get naked, we're still ashamed, even in a marriage, "Turn out the lights before we do this." We're hiding because of rejection.

And the gospel is this, "God sees you. He knows you fully for who you are. And He receives and He embraces you in Jesus Christ." And there is acceptance and grace for you, not condemnation, rejection, and shame.

And how we view this is a type of formation. What I mean by that is most of the time we ask the question, "Well, what am I allowed to do?" And I'm actually anticipating that question and we'll get to it in a couple of weeks.

Dating couples are like, "What are we allowed to do anyway?" In translation, "What's the line because we want to go right up to it." Is it first base? Is it second base? Is it third base? What are we allowed to do?"

The greater question is this, "Who am I becoming by what I do?" That's the greater question.

So, you've got to ask yourself, "Who am I becoming? Is this act, is this thing, helping me be made more and more in the image and likeness of Jesus, or deformed away from Him?"

Sex is like nuclear energy. So if you came to me and you were like, "Hey, Aaron. Are you pro-energy?" The answer is not yes or no. The answer is where? In a confined area nuclear energy can bring light and life to a whole city. You get it outside of that, you've got Chernobyl all over again. It's a meltdown. The same is true when it comes to sex.

So, I want to be really, really clear. The Bible is not anti-sex:

The Bible is pro-sex within boundaries where it will bring blessings and not pain.

And the sexual revolution ideology of the past 60 or 70 years or so, what it did is that it encouraged and even promised more liberation and fulfillment by walking away from God's design. But the exact opposite is happening and now science is catching up.

I will give you one example. The research on oxytocin and vasopressin, the two chemicals released by our bodies during sex that bring the attachment system online and cause us to bond to another person, now says that it seems that the more sexual partners you have, the less capacity your body has for intimacy.

Translation: God doesn't want to hinder your sex life. He wants to maximize it. But we keep biting on the counterfeit and being deceived by the deceiver and we are like, "I'm not quite sure I can trust what God says in this area."

When we look at everyone else who seem to be having an amazing sex life on social media and stuff, we're just like, "I just feel we should do it this way." Or, "It's hard to live upstream." Or maybe you're being pressured by a girlfriend or a boyfriend right now and it's just really, really hard. But we don't want to trade the counterfeit for the real thing.

I'm reminded of that classic movie, I think it's from the 1990s. It's Ben Stiller's *Zoolander*, right? If I were to introduce a whole new generation to this movie today, then my task has been done, alright? He plays this male model, and he wants to give back to the community, if you haven't seen it.

And he says, "I'm going to build a center for kids who don't read well and do other good stuff too." So they reveal to him the model of what they are going to build, and he mistakes the model for the real thing and he's like, "What is this, a center for ants?"

And every time we think romance and sexual pursuits will make our lives complete, every time we go against the design of the Designer, we do the same. We mistake the model for the real thing.

Here's how God's Word puts it in Romans 1:25:

"They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created," on the top of that list would be sex, we worship sex in our culture, "instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise!"

And as a result of that, which we are all guilty of:

We are all sexually broken.

Every single one of us. We're sexually broken by the things that we've thought, by the things that we've done, and the things that have been done to us.

Now, here's the manufacturer's warning label on sex. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6:

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified:" just a fancy word for growing to look like Jesus, "that you should avoid sexual immorality;" don't hurt yourself, "that each of you should learn to control your own body," meaning that there are going to be urges that war against what God is asking you to do, "in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister."

Which is where it always leads. We see that in society today. The word lust in the Greek is *porneia*, sounds familiar, it's where we get our word pornography, what it means is any sexual activity in mind, eyes, or body outside of a Biblically-defined marriage between a husband and a wife who have made a covenant with one another.

The term sexual immorality is a junk drawer term, basically, any sexual activity outside of the Genesis 2 ideal. So this takes us back to the question: What is that exactly? What are we allowed to do? Not allowed to do? What is sexual immorality?

Well it is, if we were to make a list: sexual intercourse before marriage, same-sex sex, polygamy, polyamory, adultery, swingers, and open relationships. Some of you are like, "Hey, man. My spouse is totally okay with this. We have an open relationship." No you are just co-conspirators in the adultery.

Oral sex. Over the clothes groping, dry humping, emotional fantasizing, masturbating with anybody other than your spouse, lust of the eyes, and porn.

Now there are some of you right now, maybe, who are going... you hear that whole list, you're running through it and you're like, "Okay, I think I'm good. I think I'm good. I don't even know what dry humping is."

The sign language lady is doing her thing, alright? I'm curious what dry humping is in sign language. I really don't want to know. I would rather imagine. Let me come up with my own. I'm just trying to figure out how many more times I can say dry humping in a sermon. That's inspired.

So for those of you who go through that list and you're like, "Haven't done that. Haven't done that. Ooh, um, no I haven't," or, "It's been a long time." You're kind of going through the list, "I think I'm good. I think I'm good." Understand that Jesus said that if you've ever looked with lust at somebody, you're guilty of all of it.

So what that means is that all of us over the age of 13 or so, we're all in the same boat. We are all guilty of sexual sin. In fact, right now, just to make this point, if you saw yourself in that list, across of all our campuses, just raise up your hand and keep it up. I'll go first. I'm on the list. Just raise up your hand, keep it up, keep it up long enough. We're taking a few names. No, I'm just joking.

Keep your hand up. Keep your hand up. Like now, just look around the room. The people with hands up are all sexually immoral. Everybody with their hands down are the liars. So we're all in the same boat.

And I know some of you, you just came to church for the first time, you're coming here and you're like, "Man, what in the world?"

I want this to be so clear right now. We are not all sexually pure people trying to tell you how to be sexually pure like us. There is only one sexually pure person. His name is Jesus, and He makes all of us pure through His forgiveness and His grace that He purchased for us on a cross.

He shed His blood for you to have it. And it's really Good News. Jesus came to bring Good News.

And it's challenging to be a pastor in this society and culture. I'm not bemoaning it. There are lots of blessings. But I increasingly receive pressure from many who want me to affirm certain sexual desires because someone they are related to is going through something or maybe all in the name of love.

And I want to be compassionately clear. I cannot call something right that God has clearly called wrong, or something wrong that God calls right. I won't affirm the counterfeit. Not because I don't love you but precisely because I do. I'm not going to edit the words of the Creator because I'm concerned with what the creation might think.

And some of you are upset with me because I said that. And you're like, "Well, this isn't the church for me and I'm out." And I grieve that. I respect it, but I grieve it.

Can I just ask you to get really curious about why you feel that strongly? There are one of two reasons. Either I offended you and I was too abrasive, and I went over the line, which maybe that is possible. If that is the case, then I'm glad to apologize. Or that might be conviction. And conviction is really uncomfortable.

And I've been doing this long enough to have people walk out of our church who are never coming back and flipping me the bird on the way out like, "Forget you." Only four or five years later to circle back around and say, "Hey, can I tell you what God is doing in my life?"

So, I would imagine that this has stirred up all kinds of interesting questions for you. And I want to hear them. Here's why. I want to pastor you through this. I don't want to just preach a message and just say, "Well, we covered it."

No, I want to pastor you through this. So if you've got questions you can simply text the word *relationships* to 87221. I want to just hear how this is hitting you. What are you wrestling with. What does God's Word say about these issues?

Two weeks from now, as I work to cover everything that hit the cutting room floor, I'll try to hit as many of those as I possibly can.

Now, others of you, you're nailed to your seat right now because of what we've talked about over the last 40 minutes and you're really humble and you're really broken. And

maybe there is this sense of dread that has fallen over you. Maybe it's because you've never heard this before. Or maybe you're like, "I've heard this before, but I rejected it and ran away from it."

I want you to know that not only is Satan a deceiver and a counterfeit, he is an accuser. So what that means is right now he's accusing you. He's flashing images in your head of things that you've done sexually in your past.

And some of you are thinking right now, "Man, I feel like such a failure in this area of my life. I'm caught right now. This isn't something in the past. This is last night. I'm caught up in this addiction, this practice, this behavior, this thing."

"I'm here with my girlfriend." "I'm here with my boyfriend." "And we are so clearly on the other side of the line and not living in God's design."

And you've got this question right now, "Would God ever receive me?" And I just want you to look at me right now. The answer is unequivocally: Yes. Yes, He would. Jesus has so much compassion for those who are struggling with sexual sin.

He has an incredible amount of compassion because the Bible says that Jesus is like us. He faced every temptation that we faced but He never sinned. And some of may be, "Well, that's not fair. He was fully God." No, no. He was fully God and man, which means that He was likely attracted to the form of beautiful women, and He never sinned. Therefore He knows how strong of a desire that is. And Jesus never scolded, He never shamed, He never passed by any sexual sinner, not one time. Not once.

In fact, one time He was traveling to a part of town that He shouldn't have gone through, and He sees a woman who He shouldn't have been talking to in public, and He was like, "Nope, I'm going to stop and I'm going to talk to her," because He knew what she was going through.

Five scars on her broken heart. She had five previous husbands, she was shacking up with someone who wasn't her husband and Jesus knew. The reason why isn't because she was a sex addict. The reason why is because she was thirsty. She was looking to this other man to fulfill what only God could.

So Jesus said, "I can give you water that will never make you thirst again." And she jumped at it. And Jesus said, "Go and leave your life of sin."

And she went back to the town, and she ran around, and she said, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. It's Good News!"

I don't know about you guys, but if there was someone backstage who knew everything I ever did, I'm like, "Stay away from him. I don't want you to know that I'm bad news." But she saw it as good. She could be vulnerable and real.

One time there was a woman caught in the act of adultery. Can you imagine how embarrassing and shameful that would have been? But it was a trap. Mainly I know that because it was the religious leaders who brought her out and where was the man? It takes two to tango.

To pull her out and throw her out in the crowd, judging her and scolding her, they wanted to know what Jesus would do. And Jesus drops down and He draws in the dirt. I don't know if He was writing anything legible or not. But what I think He was doing was trying to draw their attention away from the woman. He was drawing a wedge between their accusation and her, a daughter of the King.

And Jesus would draw a wedge between your shame and your sin, your accusations and that which is accusing you as well. And you can find and experience His mercy and His grace and new life. He would love to do that for you. And He's ready to offer that to you today. I'm fully convinced.

I've had a number of people who have come up to me and like, "Hey, Aaron. Are you nervous to preach this sermon? Man, you are so bold." And honestly I don't feel that scared to preach on a subject like this. I feel like the greater the level of potential push back, the greater the level of discomfort, that's where God really works.

And I believe somebody's life can change today. I believe somebody's relationship can change. I believe that there are going to be new relationships, new dating relationships that are going to spring up out of this message.

I believe maybe there could be some immediate pain where a relationship is going to have to break, maybe not forever but maybe for now. And it will actually be the best thing.

There can be some marriages that are healed. There are going to be some people who take the bait out of their mouths and say I'd rather have the real thing.

Let me pray for you.

Father, we love You, we thank You. Thank You for the gift of sexual intimacy. Forgive us for where we've traded the real thing for the counterfeit. God, I pray that You would give us spiritual eyes to see and true compassion and love to love people.

Father, I pray that if there is anybody ready to give his/her life to You that they would do that right now—like right now. That they would feel the power and presence in their lives, and something radically would shift in their heart, soul, and mind.

God, I pray that You would rescue and redeem marriages. I pray that You would give hope to single people. I pray that You would give that young man who is wrestling with sexual addiction and porn the freedom to be unleashed from it by the power of Your Spirit. We ask this in Jesus' name.

If you need prayer as we sing, you come right down front and receive prayer. Would you stand as we sing together?