

Beyond Brokenness

Two weeks ago I shared about my own personal struggles with sexual purity as did a few other brave members of our congregation. This a topic which we must face. According to one 2006 survey, 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women are addicted to pornography.¹

We must remember God is perfect in holiness, and his standards are clear.

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

I shared how the brokenness of our hearts can lead us into sexual sin as a means of filling the void within us. We all have emptiness apart from God, and some have deep longings, wounds and scars from the pain in our hearts due to abuse, neglect, or other hurts. These things make us ripe for falling sexually, and for men sexual addiction is very easy to turn to when we need something to fill the void in our hearts.

But there is hope – great hope due to the fact we serve a God who does not wish to condemn us, but rather to redeem us and make us his children.

Ezek 11:19 "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. 21 But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

So we need to leave behind the idolatry of sex – or for you perhaps it is a different idol – and pursue the living God. Then we can have the connection with Him first and with others second that gives us true life and joy.

So why is it so hard? Again, sexual sin, because of all of the emotional and spiritual ties and brain chemistry involved makes it very hard to break free. And as Jenny Woolf eloquently shared last week, God cannot remove something that is part of who we are. God made us as sexual beings.

¹ “The drug of the new millennium” Mark Kastleman, 2007

I shared how to get on the road to freedom. It is a journey, but we have a direction, which truth. We have a path which is narrow so we need to put up some guardrails. And we have community to walk with. The Father must be our guide, and open and honest relationships with others along the way.

1. Facing the truth.

We need to **taste fully the pain** that we cause others with our sin. It requires facing the truth about our sinfulness and how we hurt the people we love. We also need to consider the dreadful consequences of our sin if we don't stop. Some have destroyed themselves and even little ones they loved because of the powerful deception of sexual sin.

We need to renounce the past and ask forgiveness for specific sins.

Learn God's truth about who He is and what His love is like – This really is the key. Jesus said the truth will set you free. Learning about who we are and how God loves us and wants to be our true father. How he took our shame and we don't have to carry it.

2. Put up boundaries to guide the way. We can struggle with the cycle and keep leaving carnage and hurt in our wake, or we can set up guard rails while we are clear minded that will help to keep us from falling even when we want to. These shouldn't be permanent things, but part of the process. Internet accountability and filters. Don't watch TV alone.

Boundaries like a school master lead us to Christ

3. Community

Learning to walk with God in true closeness. When our hearts are close to God, and we have connection with Him and with each other, the false things fall away. We no longer desire the counterfeit when we have the real. Complete dependence on God is the goal. We want to become more dependent on God and interdependent with each other.

Developing open and honest relationships. One of the banes of the openly homosexual culture is the death of true male friendships. Men need to have close friendships with other men. The heart is looking for connection.

Grace for healing. Patience and forgiveness from those who are close to the offender are essential. I'm not suggesting a spouse takes this lightly, but we all need to remember where we came from and we need to realize we are all desperately lost without Christ. We aren't perfect now nor will we ever be this side of eternity. But like Paul we press on toward the goal.

Imputed righteousness

Now, I want to get a little theological here. But it is very important that you understand that although there is a lot of forces working against you in your struggle to overcome sin, there has been something given to you which is sufficient for the battle.

If you are in Christ, you are truly righteous. I jokingly called my first message righteous sex, both to be a bit funny, but also to make a point that covenant marital sex was holy. This is an important point in learning to become free from the sins that bind us

Phil 3:7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not only is our sin debt cancelled by Jesus death, His righteousness based on a perfectly obedient life is credited to us by our faith in Christ. See this is so important – if you are in Christ. Have you have repented of your sins, you have been baptized signifying you have left your old life behind and have committed your whole self to following him as the Lord of the universe? If so, then you’re righteous in God’s eyes.

Now – this is so important because what it means is that:

- You don’t have to earn God’s favor,
- Nor do you have to carry shame from the past.
- When you stumble and fall you don’t lose your standing in Christ – just get up

Prov 24:16 for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again,

Now of course there are consequences to every sin and our hearts desire should be to walk in a way that pleases God and gives life to those around us. But we need to take on a new view of our failures. Rather than beating ourselves up, wondering why can’t I break free from this? We need to realize, “I was reverting back to the old life, the false self, the sinful shell of the flesh which needs to die. That is not who the real me is, for I am a new creation.”

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

And,

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

See how important the truth is in learning to overcome sin? When you struggle with temptation you need to look straight forward into the truth of God and say “If I go my own way it will end in death, I want to follow Jesus because I no longer live, but I live for Christ and he is alive in me! Jesus empowers us through the connection of His Holy Spirit with our hearts making something brand new. If you are in Christ you are not the person who committed adultery. You are not the sex addict or the lustful person who committed acts of darkness. Though in your flesh – the old habits and patterns of thought in your mind and soul – those evil and dark desires may still reside, you have the power to put them to death by living in the light.

2 Cor 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We need to learn to walk in the light, depending not our own strength, but in Jesus alone.

See theology is important and practical. *Play song stay strong.*

Paint a vision for the future

If you are someone who has struggled to get free from sin but has been unable to break free – maybe it's sex, maybe it's alcohol, bottom line it is yourself on the throne – I want to paint a picture for you.

See yourself as the friend of the great King of the universe. The King loves you and invites you to come and sit with Him every day, as often as you can make it. He wants to go with you on your job and even give you His wisdom to solve the tough problems you are facing. He wants to bless you and your spouse – in fact, he wants to pronounce a blessing over you which includes every good and perfect gift. He wants to come to your home and see your kids and share His love with them. He wants to go out with you and enjoy the game or playing with your friends. He wants to invite your friends to become part of his family too.

All this is your rightful inheritance as a child of God, if you will only take it.

Now, I'm not going to kid you that you can come up here and say a prayer and walk away and everything is fine. You must retrain your mind in the truth of God, you must learn to hear God's voice, you must be in the fellowship of community. These are disciplines to help us grow as a child of God

- Scripture reading and meditation
- Prayer and fasting
- Community
- Silence and solitude

I want to challenge you. Do you really want to leave your sin behind? I don't say that to mock you because I know the frustration of habitual sin and the painful struggle of it. But have you grown comfortable with your sin?

Have you decided that you prefer to remain the lord of your own life and decide when it is convenient to obey God and when you will choose what is best for you? If so, you may not be in Christ. Now, hear me clearly – I am NOT saying that if you struggle with sin you are not in Christ. What I am saying is that if you don't hate your sin and want to get rid of it then you need to ask God to refresh your spirit with a love for God's holiness that will make you feel sick to your stomach when you lust or drink or whatever.

The life that you have always wanted is truly available to you, but there is one condition:

Matt 10:39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

How many of you want to see our culture change? One of the key things that will change the world we live in is for us to fight the culture by living the truth well. Political action has a place, but how many politicians stood for “family values” while doing deviant things on the side? The church empowered can make a difference. Can you imagine what would happen if the 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women who are held back by the shame of sexual sin would be set free? No longer would they be off in their own world separated from reality, but they would come into the game and make a difference in their world.

If you want to get free, we will be offering some resources to help. I encourage you to come and see me, or Nathan or April or John and Jenny.

Best thing is prevention

A couple of great quotes:

If you think you can't fall into sexual sin, then you're godlier than David, stronger than Samson, and wiser than Solomon.²

Is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.³

I want to close by encouraging us to become vigilant in this area.

It is estimated that 9 out of 10 children between 8 and 16 have viewed pornography online.⁴

² Pastor Bill Perkins – from “the drug of the new millennium”

³ Frederick Douglas – from “the drug of the new millennium”

⁴ “The drug of the new millennium” Mark Kastleman, 2007

I want to share Mark Kastleman's 3 "power principles to protect your family" taken from his book "The drug of the new millennium".

1. Teach sacred sexuality
2. Create and nurture true intimacy in your family relationships
3. Promote daily self-care (guard your heart)

Teach Sacred Sexuality

- We need to hold up and the positive image of God's design in sexuality. It is a beautiful and powerful gift to create life and bond a man and a woman together in marriage. It is only safe when used in covenant marriage.
- We need open communications with our families. 91% of teens 15-17 who have not had sex said they were influenced by what their parents taught them about sex.

Now you may not be comfortable talking to your kids about these things. To this end we will be having a program for our young people in the near future called "everyone is not doing it" by Mike Long. Not that we will tell them for you, but we want you to be involved in telling them too.

- We need to challenge our young people that it is possible to bridle the power of sexuality and give them the right motivations to do it.
- Parents need to set the model. If you want your kids to do well but you lower the standards for yourself what you do is the message that they hear. If you have failed but you are desperately seeking God to change – be open and honest with your older children about your struggles. If you think you can point your kids toward God while you go off and do your own thing you might as well just point them to hell. This does nothing but implant doubt in their minds about the truth of the gospel that they will gladly search to reinforce as their own sinful desires emerge.
- We need to shut down the gateway of illicit sex into our homes. **Do not be naïve about the dangers of the internet.** Under no circumstance should you allow your kids to have open access to the internet in their room or other private area of the home. Be very careful about email and chat and my space communications. There are internet filters and protections to monitor for inappropriate content, but nothing is fool-proof.
- Teach your kids how to avoid porn and what to do if they stumble upon it. They need to have a game plan before they see it so they can respond.

Create and nurture true intimacy in your family relationships

We crave intimacy as people – especially from our family. If you build this within your family it will take away much of the drive for illicit sexual activity from your children.

- Start with loving your spouse. Have a regular date night. Try and connect and talk every day. Pray together. Cultivate your relationship.
- Spend some time together daily as a family. Dinner time is a good although often that is challenging. But make time each day where you communicate, read a devotional or a chapter of the bible together, and pray together.
- Intentionally spend time one on one with each of your children. Try and do this once a week with each of them. One study showed that the average Dad spends only 3 ½ minutes a month with his children. Find a minimum of 20 minutes a week that is reserved for each child. Make it a positive time, not a time to lecture.

Promote daily Self-Care (Cultivate your relationship with God)

- Every day you need to spend time in God's word. You need to have communication with your Father. Take at least 15 or 20 minutes everyday. Start a journal to talk with God about what is in your heart and mind and what you are feeling. I know it helps me deal with my own emotions.
- Maintain a reasonable schedule. You must take care of your own relationship with God first. If you are over committed you need to evaluate what you need to cut out.
- Take care of yourself physically. Eat right, get enough sleep, exercise. These things help you to keep from being spiritually and emotionally drained to the point where you are unable to resist temptation.