



SEVEN DEADLY SINS

SEVEN DEADLY SINS: LUST

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Matthew 5:27-30

Doxa church is taking a look at the seven deadly sins. Commonly brushed off and rarely considered for our own lives. Each sin presents a unique sickness in our hearts that can only be remedied by Jesus and a battle only winnable through the Spirit's empowerment. Join us for this eight week series on these deadly sins and their antidotes found in Christ. Visit doxa-church.com for service times or more info on how we make disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

Good morning, Doxa. This morning we're gonna be in Matthew chapter five. We're gonna be reading verses 27 through 30. "You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." This is God's word. You may be seated.

All right, thanks Jamie. Good morning. Hey, where's everybody? <laugh> What happened? I thought if I put the schedule up and I put lust that everyone would come. Turns out the exact opposite happened. No schedule for you next time. Shame. Anyway, we've got a long way to go today. It's gonna be a little bit extended. Obviously we got the little, there's a big crew of middle school kids in that room, so we got some freedom. That's all I'm saying. So let me, uh, let me pray over us and uh, we'll get right into it. Lord Jesus, as we open up a really important part of your word, um, I pray that you're present with us. It's, uh, it's a scripture that sometimes can leave us condemned and not feeling like there's any grace. But Lord, this is a message of grace. And so we ask that our hearts and minds are open. We ask for the Holy Spirit to be present on us. I ask anything that comes from me, would that just be rejected. Lord, I want what it's coming from you to hit hard and to be stuck and be sticky with my people here. And, uh, I do pray against any hearts that just think, "you know what, this isn't for me. This isn't something I need." I pray that we all be receptive because lust is a slippery slope and we can all fall down it apart from Jesus. And so, Lord, I pray you stick with us. I pray that anyone who hears doesn't know you would you be gracious to them and kind of them as they hear a message like this. We love you and praise you. In His name, amen.

Alright. Well growing up, uh, I don't know if anyone else is in this boat, but grew up in the eighties and nineties. In my kitchen, there was always this massive like cabinet thing. I don't know if it's like a hutch. I don't like they're not super popular anymore. You know, it's not minimalist to have these giant like cabinets in it, but you know what was always in mine? Fine China. Anyone else have fine China in their house? No. Exactly. All the young people were like, "What? What's that?" Yeah. Cause you off of paper plates now. Um, in this giant cabinet was always this fine China and fine China is like this indestructible amazing, uh, cutlery and cookware, I don't know, plates, whatever that's called. And, and they have all this great stuff. And when do you use it? Like Christmas maybe? Thanksgiving, something like that. Maybe when a special it's family comes over. But the right answer is what many of you said, which is never because we never use.

And it used to be really popular in the eighties. And I remember going to that cab-, I still remember what it looks like. It had ducks on it, which still figuring that one out. Like green ducks like mallards perhaps? Anyway, so there's giant mallards on this. And I remember, you know, as a kid there's not a lot of clean dishes. I go into the giant, insanely large cabinet, pull out an insanely large China plate, no furniture, or if there's no silverware, nothing. And I just put it out. And soon as that like hit the table, like my parents would hear that and go, Whoa, whoa, what are you doing? That's the China, what are you doing? You can't use that. Use a regular plate. I'm like, we never even use this stuff. Who cares? Right? But as the years go by, as many of you younger people are confused, people use them less and less. I don't know about you, but we just didn't use it anymore. We ate less special meals. Meals got less special. And usually out of the box, right? Mac and cheese, hamburger helper, come on, somebody. Is someone gonna leave me hang in here? In my poverty? Okay, come on. Top Ramen, use all that stuff. All that stuff. Not exactly fine China food, right? We ate more of that kind of stuff. And with so many people in the house, you know, especially when you know you got the babysitter stay in the night or you got the in-laws are coming to town, what are you gonna get? You get paper plates. Easier. No dishes, paper plates, plasticware. Just throw it away. It's fine. It's very wasteful. I understand. But it was easier. Why are you gonna put such cheap food on fine China? You know what's weird is this isn't actually unique to my family because the more casual meals have become, the value of the idea of fine China has actually gone down because there's cheaper options and we're eating cheaper meals. Take out food, box food.

What does this have to do with lust <laugh>? Well, lust is a disordered and, it's a disordered and broken catalyst for an idea- for sex. Okay? And today, like fine China and paper plates, sex has gotten a lot cheaper. Sex is a readily available commodity today. And if it's performed under the spell of lust, it can be found incredibly cheap: giving up little to get it and giving it away without much in return. Sex used to be a highly prized resource that humans desired, but it's now become an oversaturated commodity. Sex, and this is just in society, by the way, not to the Bible but in society. But sex used to be this highly prized commodity. And again, not unlike the comparison between the once more valuable and pursued fine China and something like paper plates, we using oftentimes paper plates far more.

Mark Regenerus in his book, Cheap Sex makes the sociological case like it or not, that essentially historically women have been seen as the gatekeepers for sex because they would hold it as valuable. They had to protect it because it was a big decision for them. And they had to ask certain questions like, could this man provide for me? Or would I be safe in this relationship? Or would me and my child be cared for and protected if I were to give myself to this man? And men were typically seen, historically speaking of course, as buyers for sex. Not literally, but they would pursue. They would need to essentially, for a woman, to- they'd have to court a woman and they would have to persuade a woman. They, would need to demonstrate that they could provide and they would have to then propose in marriage. But today, men and women can find cheap sex all over, online and in their regular lives. And so the price has gone down kind of like fine China.

Why? Well, today, for men, at least, men can access sexual pleasure freely in person and online far more easily than they could in past. And women who are the, typically the gatekeepers, they don't need what men have to offer because they now can get it themselves through job security and financial security. Mark Regenerus in this book, *Cheap Sex*, he says this: "Sex is cheap if women do not expect much in return for it, and men do not have to supply much time, attention, resources, recognition, or even fidelity in order to experience it."

Now, again, this is not to say that women don't desire relationships and they don't pursue. And it's not to say that men aren't also gatekeepers, it can happen. But just generally speaking, over the course of history, this has been the case.

Now, what else has made sex cheap? Well, things like birth control and abortion have made sex... you're able to have the benefits of sex without the obligation. And the prevalence of online illicit materials like pornography, these things cheap in sex as well, cuz you're able to go online for free and experience sexual pleasure. Regenerus says that these have shifted the emphasis in early relationships towards sexual attraction. Now, another thing that's happened is the misuse of online dating platforms. Now I know people, family, friends of mine that have gotten married on these platforms. It's not to say they're bad, but the misuse of almost anything can be pretty bad, especially with we humans involved, right? So we're talking about the misuse of these platforms and you can use them to pursue simply nothing but sex. And again, these have shifted the emphasis in relationships towards sexual attraction, while vastly increasing the efficiency of cycling through more partners, not only making sex cheaper because it's easier to find, but increasing the, the opportunity cost of having to remain with one person for any length of time. The idea of cheap sex though has benefited almost nobody in society. And what we have left in society is this sort of undeclared emotional catastrophe. People are starting to engage in relationships earlier. There are, they are underdeveloped in, there's an underdeveloped interest in sacrificing on behalf of the other. And it creates a bunch of drama and a bunch of mixed emotions in the, in the end, we're left with nothing but a bunch of expired time.

And what's the weird thing is society, in society today, no one is happier. Statistically, we're as unhappy and as unfulfilled as we've ever been, as a culture. Friends, lust is dangerous. And it's perhaps the most significant category. I don't think it's a stretch. I think it's perhaps the most significant catalyst for the destruction of modern western society. Out of all the seven deadly sins, lust is perhaps the most powerful and perhaps the most overwhelming of all of them. And the odds are there isn't a single person in this room or in the last gathering, last service, that has not experienced some version of lust and has acted on it and it's disordered love. Scripture teaches us though, that while this vice is tempting, there is an antidote. There's actually a solve for this. And by the way, it's not you white knuckling your way through trying not to do stuff. There's a lot more than that.

So let's explore together and uncover the virtue that's gonna help us undercover, uh, uncover how we defeat a sin like lust. Okay, three things. What is lust? Where it hides? How do we solve it? What is lust? Where does it hide? What's the antidote? Okay? First, what is lust? Like all these, I've looked up the regular definitions for these things. I go to the Webster's dictionary just to see what they have to say. And this is what Webster's dictionary came up with: "Lust is the strong passion or longing for sexual or sensual pleasure." Now, is that lust? Well, biblically speaking, there is a, there is a scenario in which God provides an environment for strong passion and longing for sexual and sensual pleasure. So lust, therefore, if it's a sin cannot be fit into this definition. It's not possible.

So looking at the scriptures, I got more biblical definition for you. Lust is the wrongfully directed perversion of intimacy and sexual gratification that is focused on satisfying the pleasures of the self. There's a few things here: wrongfully directed. There's a perversion of intimacy and there's a perversion of sexual gratification. Okay, let's start with this wrongfully directed idea. Well, if there's a wrongfully

directed version of intimacy and sex, then there must be a rightfully directed, angle for intimacy and sex. This means that God has provided a proper context for intimacy and for sex. Now, scripture teaches, if you look at the totality of scripture and you read through all of the passages on marriage, and you, you look back at the Old Testament law, and you look through all of the epistles of Paul, and you look through the gospels and where Jesus talks about adultery, and he talks about divorce, he talks about marriage.

We can come to grips with an actual biblical understanding of what the context is. Okay? Scripture teaches that the context for sex and for intimacy is within a godly, heterosexual, monogamous marriage. A godly, heterosexual, monogamous marriage. Now, God orders creation this way. That's all throughout scripture. It's, it's almost undebatable. This way, we believe that as Christians, this way leads to life, it leads to procreation, and it leads to the flourishing of God's people on Earth and for the enjoyment of them in the next life. We believe that. We believe that this is the way God has designed humanity. Now, there's wrenches in the gears of that, and we'll get to all of that shortly. Lust is a wrongfully directed sin because it happens in any other context outside of God's design for marriage. I'm trying to speak very clearly for you so you- I don't misspeak. I know it is like a sensitive subject for many people. Okay? So wrongfully directed, there's a context for sex that it's to be enjoyed in it's fullness.

But there's also, in lust a perversion of something called intimacy. A desire for intimacy, by the way, with a person of the opposite sex happens and it's meant to compel us towards God honoring marriage, where intimacy at its point can be explored at its apex. That's God's design. Now, modern culture has no idea how to understand intimacy or what it should look like. Zero. And we live in modern culture. I'm, I'm not different from this. See, intimacy is more than a regular relationship. It's, it's a deep level of care and love and connection. And by the way, intimacy doesn't have to mean sexual attraction. A deep level of intimacy can be had between two friends that's not sexual. It can. In fact, last service, I said an intimacy can be had between a, a mother and a brother. And there's some chuckles, ha ha. But I think the reason why we, we kind of chuckle at that is because in our culture, intimacy is a substitute synonym for sex. But that's not true. Can you have an intimate relationship with a friend? Can you have an intimate relationship with your mother or father? Can you have an intimate relationship with your sister or your brother? Absolutely. Can you have an intimate relationship with God? Is that a sexual relationship? Hmm, no, it's not. So then the two aren't synonyms, they're not synonyms at all. You can have intimacy without sex. So hypothetically, when two people experience intimacy today, it's often confused for sexual attraction. So when two people experience a level of intimacy, say, let's say two people of the same sex, then it must according to today's culture, mean that you should become a sexual in that relationship.

Intimacy can be mistaken for sexual desires in today's culture. There's no doubt about it. So there's a perversion of intimacy. But one layer down is this perversion of sexual gratification. Now, when you think of lust, this is what you think of, right? You're continuing down this path for intimacy, but it leads to more carnal forms of sexual perversion. You're all of a sudden starting to desire things and want things and you're, you'll stop at nothing just to gratify your carnal desires. So these human beings, although we're still sinful, we can take a good thing like intimacy, a desire that's meant to compel us towards the marriage and to compel us towards God. And we can take that and reduce it down to just sexual gratification, to satisfy the self. It's a slippery slope and it moves quick, it moves very quick. James chapter one says this: "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived birth, give, uh, conceived, uh, when it's conceived, gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown, brings forth death."

So you start with a desire that leads to temptation, that leads to sin, that all of a sudden becomes death. It starts out as this temptation and eventually uses, uh, leads us to choosing our, our creation, the created body over the pleasure that God can provide. Now, the human body, by the way, is the pinnacle

of God's creation. This is what makes this so difficult to understand. God created everything in Genesis chapter one and he says everything is good. He creates man declares to be very good. Human body is the apex creation of what God has made, made in the image and likeness of God. That is the imago dei. And God actually gives sexual pleasure as the height of all creation, of all of creation's pleasures to compel man and woman to become one flesh together as his design has ordered. But the pinnacle of God's creation is so alluring. It's so sacred. It's so desirable because it's made in the image and likeness of God. And so we all long for it, disordered way of course.

Few more things about lust: Lust is not only an outward reaction out reaction, it's an inward reality. This is what Jesus is getting at in this sermon on the mount here in verse 27. He says this: "You've heard it said you should not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Turns out the act of adultery is not just where lust starts, that's where lust ends. It's where lust reaches its apex. Lust begins in our heart long before the adultery or whatever else is in our hearts that leads us to. Another thing on lust: Lust leads to separation from God. Now, don't hate the messenger, okay? Take it up with this guy. His name is Jesus. He, he says this: "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."

Now, why on earth are we talking about hell in the context of lust? But we haven't really done that with the other sins so far. Why? Well, the Bible refers to hell or eternal separation from God in the context of lust several times. So we should take note of that. That's important to notice. And this is Jesus here mentioning in that context. Lust is a slippery slope. It starts out, it quickly leads to downward, a downward spiral of loss of faith. I'll just say this.

I've been a pastor for long enough to know, I've never seen so many people quickly abandon their convictions, than they do under the influence of lust. It is the thing that gets people, "I'm out." So we had a worship leader some, some years ago at another church. Great faithful guy, good looking, band leader, single guy, fresh outta college, loves Jesus, been a Christian his whole life. Meets a girl, girl's not Christian. Girl sleeps with him. They sleep together, they start cohabitating, living in the house together. And then so quick: boom, "I'm done, I'm no longer a Christian just like that. Now I'm not saying that's gonna happen to everybody, just what happened to him. Another, another godly couple we knew in a church, married couple, loves Jesus so much. Woman caught the eye of another man. They started sleeping together in the church. She repents, or she recants her faith and then they moved to Nebraska. Now, if anything's gonna get you to move to Nebraska, it's probably not a good thing. <laugh>, I'm sorry to take a shot at Nebraska. I'm sorry. My roommate in college from there, I'm gonna send 'em that clip.

Anyway, <laugh> point is, it's not a good thing. I've never seen so many people quickly abandon their convictions than going, than they do under the influence of lust. It just happens so fast. Now it's a serious thing, which means we should probably understand where it might be hiding in our lives. Now as preface, you're not gonna, it may not be hiding in all these places for you. You also may have a place, it's hiding that I'm not mentioning. It's not exhaustive, but for time's sake, I wanna point out a couple that might be helpful. Okay, where is hide? First place: in solitude. One theologian says, religion is what you do with your solitude. Who are you when no one's watching? Jesus was tempted in the desert with nobody else around. You're gonna face your deepest and most difficult temptations in solitude alone. It happens all the time.

Now, there's different varying ways that this happens. One of the ways this happens is in something like pornography or illicit materials, but it also can happen in television shows and social media. Now, I was asked in between gatherings and I was asked before it, you know, why would we talk about something

like online illicit materials or pornography in a sermon? Well, 40 million American people regularly visit these sort of sites. 80% of men ages 18 to 40 regularly view a pornography website in a typical month. Not kind of, kind of does or maybe stumbles upon it, but regularly views. I don't know if you're here, you're a Christian or you're not a Christian, you may believe this: 38% of adults believe pornography is morally acceptable. And for the women, one third of porn viewers are women and they're the fastest growing demographic and have been for the last 15 years.

Men are particularly affected by porn, as you can hear from the stats, and they have created cheap sex mindsets around it. Men, Mark Regenerus from the book, Cheap Sex, he says this: "Men can see more flesh in five minutes than their great grandfathers could see in a lifetime." Pornography though, the industry, is getting wiser because it's preaching an evolved message. Just so, just to be clear, I'm preaching now, but this isn't the only preaching you receive. You receive preaching from anything, ideologies, worldviews, other religions, cults, your professors at college, your bosses, your, your, your mission statements at work. These are all messages preaching at you. And pornography industry is also preaching and it's getting wiser and it's, it's messages beginning to evolve because it's not just going after sexual desires any longer, but it's going after our deepest desire, which is actually intimacy and being disconnected from one another. In the next online evolution of pornography, we have things like OnlyFans. OnlyFans is a subscription paywall service that allows regular people to produce content and DM and text message with people and charge a fee in order to do that. There's these things called the "boyfriend experience," the "girlfriend experience." You're able to engage someone and have a girlfriend or have a boyfriend online. Now why would we talk about something like this? Well, 170 million users are on this platform, 1.5 million content creators. And every day 500,000 new users join.

What's uniquely pernicious about websites like this is its exploitation again, of intimacy. Particularly, particularly, but not only, lonely and outcasted men. Look into this quote: "Lonely men are moved to give into their desires and may develop an addiction to explicit content. This argument also stands for regular illicit sites, but with OnlyFans there's also a feigned personal connection. Lonely men on the edge of depression might easily fall for the companionship that models offer and substitute real connections for ones they pay for."

Now, friends, this is not only sinful, it's psychologically abusive, and it preys on the imago dei's desire for connection and for intimacy. This is utterly dangerous. So why are we talking about it? Because it's a warning. Because everything is preaching. John Owen says, again, "Be killing sin or sin be killing you." We must be on guard and keep watch as we fight the fight of faith. The enemy is also a preacher. His tactics will change if necessary. And by the way, he is far older than us. He's been around since the beginning of time. He fooled our first parents. He's fooled people far smarter, way more educated, and far better looking than any of us in here. He's just done it. He's been around. And so we cannot take this lightly. We must hold fast to Jesus, must hold fast scriptures. And many of us might be under the spell or the illusion that what we're doing and the lifestyle we live is totally fine. It's a game.

This gives us a little bit of a glimpse of our antidote. We need wholeness, but more, more on that in a minute. Where else do we find where lust hides? Well, in the justification of our circumstances. This one's a little bit easier to explain, okay. Justification of our circumstances. This is when we say, "you don't understand, I needed this, I needed this." "You don't understand. It's been so long since I..." "You know what, it's, it's been a really long day. You don't understand." Or "You know what? I've already done it anyway. I'm already damaged, so who cares?" Or maybe it's more practical, like, "Oh, you know, I was drinking, I was drinking." Or, "You know, it's college. That's what college people do. This is what we do." Or, "Well, you know, my husband already did it, so what's the big deal if I do it too?" Or "My wife has been doing it for years. So what does it matter?" One author says, there's never been someone so creative than a person in the midst of self justification.

Where else does it hide? This one: it hides in socially accepted societal norms. Now, just by way of preface, I'm gonna make a, I'm gonna list a few things out there. I'm not gonna be able to explain all of 'em in great detail from a biblical perspective. My hope is that this would spur you on to do some study of your own. You can also come up to me or any of the pastors if you have conversations. But I want to paint very clearly what's out there and what's happening and what's normal. And you may think even yourself, "Oh, that's totally normal that, I do that." Absolutely, I get that. And hey, I'm not, I'm not trying to judge you for this. I just want to give you a clear understanding of where lust could lead and what might actually solve your problem so you can get yourself in a, in a relationship that will actually honor the Lord Jesus and actually bring far more fulfillment than you think you're experiencing now.

Okay? Now, news outlets are guilty of declaring Gen Z as the most "sex positive" generation. That's literally what they're saying. And they're saying it in a positive way. I would argue that Gen Z is not sex positive, it's sex cheapened. And not because of their own doing only, by the way. It's because of boomers, Gen X, millennials, and guess what? Every other generation that humankind has ever walked on earth. All of 'em. It's a human state, has contributed to the downfall of lust.

Now, here's a list of widely accepted social sexual norms today that God has declared are not good contexts for a marriage that will lead to your flourishing, that will lead to your happiness, and that will lead to connection with God and connection with other people. Okay, here's a list.

First one, fornication. Fornication is sex outside of marriage. It's sex outside of God's good design for marriage. That's what it is. And it's the most common. It happens all the time. It's a thing that most people partake in. But let me hear, let me, I know you might experience some of that intimacy, that connection, and you might mistake that for what's right because we're in a feelings based society where if you feel something is good, we believe it's should be done. Contrast that with an eastern society that's a guilt and honor based society, which mirror shame and honor. So that means society dictates what's good. So we have one where I dictate what's good, feelings based; eastern, what, what society believes. Neither of those are actually correct. We believe the scriptures say, we believe what God says is right. So we have to sort of be transformed by the renewing of our mind and engage the scriptures. Fornication.

Another one, gay and lesbian sex. This is a hard message for a lot of people to hear that we ha- we experience intimacy with another person of the same sex and we want that relationship so bad. I have family that, that are gay and lesbian and are a part of this. I understand that struggle, not like you do, but it's a difficult one.

Cohabitation. This is living and sleeping with someone that's not a spouse. This is when we get, we hook up together and we believe we're gonna practice marriage. By the way, if you've been married for any length of time, you can't practice marriage. Like, you know what I'm talking about, right? If you've been married, when you cohabit, you just, you get all the benefits of marriage without any of the hard stuff. But when you get married, all that hard stuff comes on. It's called obligation. And there's no more leaving bank accounts combined, social securities combined. It's, it's a weight. And then all of a sudden little children start showing up. There's no hitting the object button on that, they are there. Okay? That's what a marriage is meant for, right? It's, it's heavy, it's weighty. Cohabitation. And by the way, for those that cohabit, you're more likely to get divorced anyway because when you add obligation on the back end of, of all of the benefits, it gets really hard.

Another common sexual norms, reading romance novels. This is a thing: 98% of people that read romance novels are women. And I mean, admittedly, I don't, I try to do a little research and I understand that there are varying levels to this. And once it gets too far, you're actually not, you're actually not reading a book anymore. You're just reading pornography.

And another one that's really common, something called attention seeking. Attention seeking is when we say things like, "Oh, you know, I met this guy or this girl at the grocery store. We connected. Yeah, I

know I'm married, but he notices me. He finally gives me the attention I feel like I deserve and I need." Or "She finally connected with me. She likes video games. I like video games. Don't worry, it's not a big deal. We haven't done anything yet." And those things could lead to emotional affairs. And yeah, by the way, by the letter of the law, that's not adultery. But Jesus isn't going by the letter of the law. He fulfills the law. He says, if you've already fought it in your heart, you've committed adultery. It's not about just the action, it's about the innovator. Now this list is very common.

There are so many more, and all of these are common ways we seek intimacy. But I just wanna affirm something in you: your desire for intimacy is God given. You feel disconnected from your creator and you feel disconnected from others because that's what happened in the fall of man. So I wanna say, I hope, I'm trying to understand. We all want to feel good. We all want to feel connected to other people. Listen, we were made for that connection, so we can justify lust because we all desire that intimacy. And maybe you're here on this list and you're going, "You know what? It feels good and I'm happy. And man, if it seemingly solves my biggest need, then why on earth would I stop?" I've been across from people in counseling meetings and they in tears, they would say, "Listen, don't, don't take this from me. You don't, don't, don't yank this from me. I, I finally whole." Lust seemingly solves the intimacy problem because of the flood of serotonin and it feels downright euphoric. If you've ever been in love, you know what I'm talking about. And then we'd say things like, God would not want me to suffer from a lack of intimacy. And you know what? You're right, of course not. But he desires ordered love for you, not disordered love for you. And when we experience lust, we are experiencing the echoes of the fall and we long to satisfy ourselves from the pain of loneliness and disconnection. But God's got a plan for that solve and that solve's actually gonna fix it. And yeah, you might feel good in the moment, but man, the long term joy that comes with living in the will of God and the flourishing that comes with that for you and your family is so much greater, so much greater. God wants ordered love for you. He can satisfy your intimacy needs. And he's also provided an environment and marriage that could also satisfy those as well.

Okay. That's a lot on lust, but we, we kind of do need to get to the antidote. So that's a lot, right? So what's the antidote? Well, here's what I've got for you. The antidote to lust is integrity that comes with a proper understanding of intimacy. You might be thinking, "Well, are you gonna teach me life skills now, like fourth grade life skills, integrity. Seriously? That's the, that's the answer?" Yeah! You know, integrity, the root word for integrity comes from the word integer. For you math nerds, right? Wholeness, whole number. That's where it comes from. It's essentially asking you the question, are you the same person all of the time? Are you the same person in private and in public? Alone and together? You know, Jesus actually alludes to integrity right here in the passage we just read.

I don't know if you heard it. Look at verse 29 again. He says, If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your members than for your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. Cut it off and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. What is Jesus saying? He's saying it is better to be less of a person with integrity than it is to be a full person with none. It's better to be less of a person with integrity than to go to hell with your entirety. Do you know that if you build integrity in your life, you can become resistant to lust?

Do you know that integrity might actually be your answer? Because the moment you segment your life, you lose what's called integrity. You lose wholeness because integrity's about this idea of wholeness. Rick, Pastor Rick Warren, he calls this the Titanic myth. It's the myth that says, I can take on a little water and not sink. It's this idea that the Titanic segmented the bottom of its boats thinking, Well, if we crash into something, water will flood into each segment and we should be fine. Right? We should be totally fine as long as we hit it. And we can say, this is my work life, this is my marriage life, this is my private sexual life, this is my online life, and I should be fine. But what if you hit an iceberg? What if you're trying to steer that boat and you scrape the side of an iceberg and all of your segments fill up with water?

What if your iceberg is that person at work? What if your iceberg is that Instagram account? What a silly thing to be your iceberg. What if it's your OnlyFans account? What if it's that person or that website? What if it's that thing?

Look at the ramifications of no integrity. Proverbs 11, it says integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them. The integrity of the upright guides them. Your integrity can be your guide. I think, I think the Bible teaches wholeness. Jesus is here saying it's better to have a reinforced ship than it is to have a segmented one that's falling apart. It's cheap.

"Fine, pastor, I need integrity. How do I get it?" Fair enough. I was thinking on a sermon like this, it's impossible to cover everything, right? We're talking about lust. This is a, this is a long, long conversation. Hopefully this spurs a start in you. But I do think that one of the things might be helpful is there's just a few practical things that could sort of make sense of this that you can actually do to help you. I think that might be helpful. So I got four of them for you and I hope they're helpful. So let's, let's go over the first one. First thing you can do that you can pursue life of integrity and battle this lust.

First, leave, no provision of the flesh. Leave no provision for the flesh. This is a quote, this is a quote from the apostle Paul. Okay? Essentially what this means is, find out what's causing your loss of integrity and get rid of it. Don't put yourself in situations that you might stumble in this area. It's better to have ignorant bliss and not put yourself in that situation than it is to just put yourself in the spot. Proverbs says, Can you hold a open flame to your chest and not catch on fire? That's what we're talking about here. Leave no provision to your flesh. So what's causing your loss of integrity? Is it your laptop? Is it your Instagram account? Is it being alone? Do you need to get married? Bible says that it's better to marry than it is to burn with lust. Is there a specific person causing these issues? If so, flee from it. Jesus says the thing that's causing you problems, get rid of it. It's better to go to heaven and to be with God forever without an Instagram account than it is to go to hell with one. That's practically what he's saying. What's the thing in your life that's causing you problems? What is it? Leave no provision for the flesh. By the way, if you're struggling with an addiction, like a sex addiction or something like that, there's all sorts of resources out there. First and foremost, pornography. There's all sorts of wonderful accountability websites. Covenant Eyes, Triple X Church. You can install these on your phone, you can install 'em on your laptop. You can go to counseling sessions. We'd love to help you with that. Talk about what that might mean for you. But you do need to find accountability.

Speaking of which, number two, find trusted accountability. We need to go at life together. I can almost guess that if you've been living life segmented and isolated from other people, that this is probably a sin in your life because that's just the way it works. This is a very, very difficult sin. It's hard enough when you're in community with people, let alone when you're alone and you've got no accountability, no one to help you understand the truth about where you're living. Okay? Now, are you in an MC with people? Are you in a DNA group? By the way, I would hope our DNA groups would be space, spaces for people to enter into confession of their sin. You can also, again, pursue counseling as needed. And for those of you that are like, "You know what? I just don't feel like this is me, I don't, you know. Wrath, oh yeah, greed, yes sure, uh, lust? I don't, I don't know if I'm there. I don't know if I'm there." I would say we need to be a church. That's a safe space for confession. We need to work on what it means to be a community of people that accept other people at their worst so that they would accept us at our worst and we could see Christ redeem them and give them their goodness back. We want that. And so for you, how can you be a person in a church that's a safe space for confession, a safe space and bring light to darkness?

Third thing, set clear boundaries with friends and family. Sounds easy when you know what you're feeling. So you've gotta identify, yes, I think this is lust. Yes, I'm angry, I'm sad around it. I've got fear. I'm shame. I've got a lot of guilt. Once you identify that feeling, then you can know what to think.

Once you know what to feel, you can know what to think about your situation. And then once you know what to think, you're able to set clear boundaries for yourself so you don't, so you don't fall into a lack of integrity. So you say things like, "Well, no friend, man, no, mom, dad, cousin, uncle, boyfriend, girlfriend. I can't watch that movie, that TV show. That triggers me. Hey, listen, no, I can't stay the night with you." Again, Proverbs says, Can you scoop hot coals onto your lap and not burn yourself? No, it's impossible. It's impossible. Or no, I can't go to that bachelor party. I can't do that. I know where it's gonna be. This might make you a little weird and a social outcast for Jesus. Understood. But that's kind of the point. That's, that's the point. Romans 12 says, Don't be conformed by the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Well, what does that mean exactly? Well, it means you're not gonna look like everybody else. It means like when you have four less beers that people are gonna look at you a little funny. It means that when you don't go to the gym with all of the people with their shirts off, you might be a little weird. It means that you don't go to the Vegas bachelor party. It means that you don't put yourself in weird situations. It means that someone looks at your phone is like, "Wow, do you have, what's that you, do you have a accountability website? Like what's wrong with you?" Say "I'm just trying to protect myself. I don't, I wanna set boundaries. I don't wanna make any mistakes. I'm a Christian. I love Jesus. I wanna, I wanna be pure for my wife or my future wife or my husband or my future husband, or for Jesus himself."

Fourth thing, embrace grace. You're gonna need a lot of grace walking through this. We're all gonna need a lot of grace walking through this. Why? But do you know you don't have to be perfect to have integrity. Did you catch that by chance? We're gonna need grace from God because we're gonna fail and we're gonna need grace from one another because we're gonna fail. That's why we need to be a community that's okay with confession and repentance, but you're gonna need to rely heavily on God's grace for you as a believer. But if you're listening to this sermon and you thought, that you think God's after sort of perfection with lust, then you kind of missed it. But he does say it's about the heart, right? Jesus in this text and his Sermon on the Mount, he does double down and he does say the law's not behavior.

It's about the heart. And I know if you're reading that, you're going, "Man, I'm done then because he's got me from all angles. I'm not doing anything wrong. I'm not doing anything. But man, I've got motives. I've got thoughts. I've got words. I'm saying some things. I'm done. I'll never be able to fix myself to get in God's good graces." And you'd be right. You can't. But Jesus isn't telling his listeners that the law is more strict so they would work harder to be perfect. He is telling them that they actually have no shot at fulfilling the law. That's his point. Matthew 5:19 and 20: Therefore, whoever relaxes at least one of these commandments, just one by the way, and teaches others to do the same, they'll be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Oh great. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Awesome. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, just by show of hands, picture a religious first century Jew religious leader who ties, he doesn't wanna walk a thousand feet from his tent, so he ties a rope around himself on the Sabbath. So when he walks, he snags because he's so religious, He goes down to his dill and his cinnamon and ties out of every single-. Do you go to your pirates booty stash and give 10% to Jesus? These guys did all of it. Do you think you're more righteous than those people? You're not. And neither am I. None of us are, and that's the point. None of us are more righteous and more perfect than these people. But Jesus is, every person has the opportunity knowing they can't overcome lust alone, to believe in Jesus and have him represent them before God fulfilling the highest standards of the law, that you should not commit adultery in your heart.

Jesus can fulfill that for you. When you believe in Jesus as your savior, you're gonna wear Jesus' integrity before God. And God's going to deem you as a righteous person covered in his blood. And then the Holy Spirit is gonna come upon you and grant you sanctification, an ability to grow in your integrity. You don't white knuckle yourself towards no lust. You go to Jesus and you give them your weakness and he gives you back a power that he can empower you to overcome. Even the hardest things. The Spirit does it Galatians 5, but I say walk by the? The Spirit. And you will not gratify the desires of the? So if I walk by the Spirit, I won't gratify my fleshly desires? For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing things that you want to do.

The Holy Spirit empowers you to grow and to change. When we place our faith in Jesus and pursue intimacy with him, we can trust that our desires for intimacy can come from him. And if we're given the desire for marriage, most of us are, we can also live in righteous intimacy in our marriages too. So the question is, do you have intimacy? Do you have an intimate relationship with God? Do you? Do you draw near to him? You know, if you're driving, driving on a road trip, you're going on this big long road trip, you know, you're driving down the street and driving down the the big highway. You turn on the AM radio station and it's all fuzzy. But there's channels out there. There's channels out there that actually are really clear, but you can't hear 'em unless you tune into the right frequency and then you can hear 'em clearly.

In order to be intimate with God, you're going to have to turn on the radio and you're gonna have to tune because he's speaking. But are you listening? And you've gotta turn it up and say, Lord Jesus, what are you saying to me here? And the way you do that is you draw near to him, you open your scripture and you ask him to speak to you. Some people want new words from God. It's like, how about an old word? That's the Bible, can open that up. Hear from him, you draw near to him, you confess sin. Do you tell him I'm struggling and I need your help? Tell him your lust is overwhelming? James 4 says, Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Tune in to God to the right frequency and he'll tune into you.

Now, you might be thinking, "Man, that sounds great. I hear you, but I am not perfect. I sin and I sin a lot." Or you might say, "You know, I'll never get married. I've been trying, I've been trying. How on earth am I supposed to stay pure?" Or you might say, "Man, the strength of the passion that I have for people as the, for the, that are the same sex as me is too much to bear." Or, "You know what? I failed way too many times to ever be forgiven. I mean, there's no chance. If God knew what I did, he'd ever forgive me." Friends, laying that sort of authentic brokenness at the feet of Jesus, that is the antidote to lust. Do you understand this level of confession and honesty with God? You know what that is? It's intimacy. That's what we're looking for. The substitute is an intimacy with Christ. Laying out this sort of authentic brokenness is intimacy.

Look at what Paul says, Lord, three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that I should, that this thing should leave me. But he said to me, This is what God said to him. My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness so that by the, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ, then I am content in my weakness. Because when I am weak, then I'm strong.

You see, the antidote is when you go to Jesus in intimate relationship and confession and weakness and you sort of like let go of your life trying to white knuckle this. And you go, "Lord, I got no shot here. I got nothing left." And Jesus like, Oh, that's perfect because my powers made perfect in weakness. Here's the Holy Spirit. You're gonna do an amazing work in this world. That's the antidote. It's when you come to the end of yourself that Christ work can begin in you.

Let's pray. Holy Spirit, fill this place. Father God, we're thankful for you and your power and your wondrous creation. This is not an easy subject to attack, but Lord God, I pray you're glorified in it. Pray

that it is profitable and pleasing. I pray for those of us that are feeling a measure condemnation, would you just kindly remind them from Romans chapter eight, that there is no condemnation for those in Christ. And for all my friends here that are just on the fence kind of wondering, prodding, would you just be kind and gracious to them? As they say, wrestle with their sin, wrestle with their uncertainty, wrestle with whatever it is they're wrestling with. We love you and let us respond with worship to you and praise you as our king in his name. Amen.