

The God of Peace

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[0 : 0 0] Well, over the last several weeks, we've continued our study of the Old Testament book of Exodus. We've been studying God's law. We've been studying the Ten Commandments carefully.

And we discovered over the last two weeks that none of us are really very good at keeping that sixth commandment, you shall not murder. So if any of you guests are, if any of you are guests here today, I hope you're not alarmed that you're sitting in a room full of murderers.

We devoted one Sunday to examining the big picture of what murder is, including the anger and the hatred that lies at the heart of murder. And then we devoted a second Sunday to examining how the God of peace teaches us to overcome this sin in real, practical ways as peacemakers.

And what we're going to do now is we're going to repeat that pattern, getting the big picture the first week, and then talking about the real-life practical details the second week. And we're going to repeat the same thing with the seventh commandment.

The seventh commandment is found in Exodus chapter 20, verse 14, and reads very simply, You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit adultery.

[1 : 1 2] Now next Sunday, we're going to drop into the trenches. We're going to learn how to identify, how to escape, how to combat sexual sin in the real world, how to do battle in the trenches.

Today, we're taking an eagle's eye view of the battlefield. We're going to see what this commandment is about. We're going to look at the larger implications of this commandment when it comes to human sexuality and marriage.

And we live in a culture that is being flooded with this tropical storm of ideas about human sexuality, ideas about the nature, the purpose of sex and marriage, ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman, ideas about what it means to be a human being altogether.

And this week, I was very struck by the words of a preacher named Thomas Watson. Thomas Watson observed, Adultery is the reigning sin of the times.

He says, Adultery is the reigning sin of the times. And I found that especially interesting because Thomas Watson wrote those words in England in 1692.

[2 : 1 8] In 1692. So it turns out that we never really come up with new ways to rebel against God. The old ones do quite nicely. There's much more to this commandment, though, than just sexual activity with someone who is not your spouse.

Or sexual activity with someone who is married. We could examine the other Old Testament regulations that expand on the seventh commandment. There is so much to look at. But we've got a limited time.

So for our purposes, it's probably best to go straight towards the New Testament. Because there we can read the words of one particular teacher in the Bible. And I want to give a word of warning as we begin.

The words of this teacher on sexuality, the words that he says, would seem to our non-Christian neighbors to be some of the most harsh, some of the most repressive words in all of the Bible.

This particular teacher happens to be Jesus of Nazareth. Here, for example, is Jesus' commentary on the seventh commandment in Matthew chapter 5. You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.

[3 : 28] But I say to you, that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

So Jesus not only condemns the act of adultery, Jesus condemns pornography, Jesus condemns sexual fantasy, Jesus condemns the ogling of young women at the beach, Jesus says that is all adultery too.

And we learned from Jesus two weeks ago that unrighteous anger is murder in the heart. We learn from Jesus today that lust and sexual thoughts towards someone other than your spouse, that is adultery in the heart as well.

The same principle holds true for both commandments. And then in Matthew chapter 15, Jesus invokes a term that is usually translated into English as sexual immorality.

This term sexual immorality, that was a catch-all term among the Jewish people for any sexual activity between two people who are not husband and wife.

[4 : 33] And here's what Jesus says, Notice that Jesus manages to fit the sixth through the ninth commandments into his list of sins.

And Jesus says that these sins, where do they start? Where do they originate? They originate in the heart. They originate in the core of the human being, in the hidden thoughts, the motives, the desires of a person.

And Jesus not only lists adultery, he also lists sexual immorality. Jesus is saying that any sexual activity outside of marriage comes from an evil heart and defiles a person.

So here's the big idea that Jesus draws from the seventh commandment. The Lord forbids sexual activity outside of marriage. The Lord forbids sexual activity outside of marriage.

This prohibition, it even extends not only to our actions, but to our thoughts, to our attitudes. We're going to talk more next week about what that looks like in the real world.

[5 : 52] How do we do combat with these thoughts and attitudes? For now, notice in these verses from Matthew 15, that Jesus, he doesn't let you and me cast the blame on anything or anyone outside of ourselves.

The devil made me do it is not an argument that's going to work with Jesus. We might argue, Jesus, didn't you see what image popped up in my web browser or on the TV screen?

Didn't you see what that young woman at the beach was wearing? Didn't you hear all the explicit details of what my friends were talking about over lunch? Haven't you seen the loving attention my boyfriend has lavished on me?

How could I resist? Jesus knows that all of these things are sources of temptation. Jesus knows it's hard to fight. But the reality is, you and I, we could live in a culture without the internet, without dating.

We could live in a culture in which every woman wore a burqa. And Jesus is saying that you would still have a heart that produces evil thoughts, adultery, sexual immorality.

[6 : 58] We can blame the devil. We can blame the world all we want. The problem is in our flesh as well. And that means parents, the tough news is you can never totally shelter your kids from this sin because it's inside of them as well as outside of the culture.

Now the one thing that Jesus and most of the influential figures in our culture, one thing they would agree on is that sexual desires, they thoroughly permeate our body and our soul.

Now our culture takes that reality and it responds in this way. We should act on those desires whenever possible. We should act on those desires when possible.

And the only restriction is that we should try not to do harm to other people in the process. So, you know, act on all your desires. Be authentic to yourself. Be true to yourself. Just don't hurt other people.

And that's the only restriction. Well, Jesus goes a different direction. Jesus presents an alternative path because when Jesus is challenged on the subject of marriage and divorce, Jesus goes back to the creation of the first man and the first woman in Genesis chapter 1 and 2.

[8 : 12] If you're wanting to follow along in your Bibles, that's right at the beginning. Not hard to find. Genesis chapter 1 and 2. The first verses that Jesus refers to are Genesis chapter 1 verses 27 through 28.

Genesis 1 verses 27 through 28. And there we read this. God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Now, when we look at these verses, we can draw from those two verses two essential reasons, two reasons that God created the institution of marriage. Two essential purposes for marriage.

The first essential purpose of marriage is to manifest the image of God. It's to manifest the image of God. The second purpose is to multiply the image of God.

[9 : 20] To multiply the image of God. So, big idea here. The Lord forbids sexual activity outside of marriage because sexual fidelity manifests and multiplies the image of God.

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So, let's look first at how marriage manifests, how it reveals the image of God, how it makes it known. Genesis 1, verse 27.

God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And so, human beings, our value is something that is borrowed.

Our value comes from being created in the image of God. That's something that no one can take away from you. Your culture may want to dehumanize you, but God never will because you are created in the image of God.

[10 : 24] Human beings, both male and female, are created to reveal, to manifest the nature, the character of God. And human beings do it by exercising his authority, caring for his creation.

And human beings also reveal aspects of who God is. For example, the division of human beings into male and female, that plays a key part in manifesting the image of God.

We see that unfolding in Genesis chapter 2. Next page over. There the Lord determines that man should be accompanied by woman.

Verses 18 through 24. The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man.

And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

[11 : 37] She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

Now there is a contrast here between on the one hand, aloneness, aloneness, and on the other hand, oneness. Aloneness and oneness.

God describes man's initial state as alone. This is not merely lonely. This is not so much an emphasis on an emotional state. This is, he's pointing out man has no companion, no helper that is fit for him, that is suited for him.

And God's solution isn't to move the man from aloneness to maybe what you could call two-ness. Now there's two of them. God moves him from aloneness to oneness.

That's why the man exclaims, bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, she is like him. She is like him. And verse 24, we read that in marriage, they shall become one flesh.

[12 : 53] Our 17th century preacher friend, Thomas Watson, he remarks, there is, as it were, but one heart in two bodies.

But one heart in two bodies. God created marriage to reveal that aloneness is not good. What is good is oneness.

And this is because God himself is not an alone being. There are other religions that will teach that.

Islam very clearly teaches God is an alone being fundamentally. A being fundamentally in eternity without relationship. But the true God is a trinity.

In eternity, God exists in three persons. God exists as Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Each of these are separate persons from one another. And yet, each one is fully God.

[13 : 53] And at the same time, there is only one God. Good luck wrapping your minds around that. It's an amazing example of oneness. That is the true precedent for us.

The true God is a trinity. In eternity, in his fundamental nature, that means that God does not exist in aloneness, but in oneness, in relationship. In eternity, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, they exist in a relationship of love, harmony, companionship.

And so, God created human beings to manifest the image of God. Now, how marriage manifests the image of God is it reveals the oneness of God and it reveals how good this oneness is.

Marriage also manifests the image of God by revealing him as the God of fidelity, a God of covenant faithfulness. Genesis 2, verse 24, we read, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

So, the man and the woman, they are brought together by God in a covenant, in this bonded agreement of mutual rights and responsibilities. covenant, a covenant, a covenant isn't merely a contract with set terms and conditions that can then be dissolved.

[15 : 21] A covenant to which a husband and wife are bound, joined, held fast, the old King James says, cleaved together by God who creates one heart where there once were two.

That's the covenant of marriage. A covenant includes more than just words. A covenant always includes some sort of sign, some sort of seal that establishes the covenant.

And verse 24 shows us what that sign or seal is. The sign or seal of the marriage covenant is the act of becoming one flesh. It's the act of sexual intercourse.

This delightful gift of the two becoming one flesh. marriage. So that is why sexual activity must occur only within the marriage covenant. Because sex outside of marriage, it takes that sign and that seal of marriage and it defiles it and it profanes it.

It's like this unfortunate problem I had a couple of weeks ago. A group of us were preparing to travel down to Oregon to observe the total solar eclipse. I told you guys I'd fit, some of you guys I'd fit this in somewhere, this illustration.

[16 : 30] In advance of our trip, I'd ordered several pairs of solar eclipse glasses from Amazon. And these glasses were supposed to have printed on them this sign or seal of the International Safety Standard, ISO 12312-2.

You are all familiar with it, of course. And they did have that printed on them. But a week before the eclipse, even though these glasses had that sign and seal on them, Amazon sends me an email saying the manufacturer may not truly have obtained this certification.

The email concluded, we recommend that you do not, all caps, do not use this product to view the sun or the eclipse. And that event, it shows the danger of taking a sign or a seal and misusing it and abusing it and using it for something that was not intended and applying it for something it was not meant for.

Misusing a sign or seal, it's all fun and games until somebody gets their eyes burned out. And so it is with sex. That's how sex is too.

It is a sign or a seal that is meant to affirm and to continuously reaffirm the covenant of marriage. So what happens is if we take sex and we isolate it from marriage, we say, well, that's a different thing.

[17 : 49] It's disconnected. What we do is we not only undermine marriage, we not only steal from it, it's sign and it's seal, that affirms that covenant, that holds that covenant in place, we also hollow out the sexual act itself.

It becomes nothing more than crass pleasure. The theologian Michael Horton says, marriage was God's gift for experiencing the deepest relationship of humanity and sexual activity outside of this institution is an attempt to enjoy the pleasure of this covenant without the responsibility of the covenant.

The gift itself becomes an empty thing apart from the covenant it is meant to seal. So restricting sexual activity to marriage, it manifests the image of God not only by affirming God's oneness but by revealing the goodness of his covenant fidelity.

of his faithfulness because it reveals that the God who created the marriage covenant is the God who keeps all of his covenants including the covenants that we see in Exodus that he is making with his people.

The God who keeps his covenants who always remains faithful to his word always faithful to his promises even when we are unfaithful to him. the first purpose of marriage is to manifest the image of God.

[19 : 26] The second purpose of marriage it's revealed in Genesis chapter 1 verse 28 where God tells the man and the woman be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Now there are well-meaning Christians who misunderstand this mandate because they read it outside they don't consider the larger context of scripture.

They read this verse and they think well God says be fruitful and multiply so the purpose of my marriage must be to have as many children as God lets me have. As many children as possible.

Autotrader.com search for 15 passenger vans. You know this idea though you have to understand this mandate is called the dominion mandate.

It's part of a larger theme in scripture that's carried throughout the pages of scripture. A mandate and a promise and it finds its culmination in the great commission as given by Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 28.

[20 : 34] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Make disciples of all nations. Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. What God is commanding from the beginning from all the way back in Genesis chapter 1.

He's commanding the second purpose of marriage to multiply the image of God. To multiply the image of God. The Lord wants the whole world to be filled with his image bearers.

The whole earth filled with his glory. One of the best ways to do that is by producing children. As you saw a little while ago some of us are very good at doing that. So you don't have to be married though to do that.

Married couples can work together and unmarried people who are not couples they can work together to mentor to make disciples of those who aren't their biological children. There's more than one way to carry out that commandment be fruitful and multiply.

And merely having children and then not raising them to be disciples you're missing the point of the commandment. The essential purpose of marriage is not only to manifest but to multiply the image of God.

[21 : 46] So this also determines the purpose of human sexuality as well. Sex is also meant to manifest and multiply the image of God.

That's what it's about. And so this brings us back to the seventh commandment. You shall not commit adultery. So what does adultery, what does sexual immorality do that makes it so wrong?

sexual sin defiles and degrades God's gift of a covenant sign and seal for marriage. Sexual sin hinders the spread of the gospel message of hope through which God is saving our world.

Sexual sin slanders God when his image bearers are not faithful to the marriage covenant because it's accusing God, saying that he is not a God of fidelity, he is not a God of faithfulness to his covenant promises.

He's a God who is just looking for his own pleasure, even at the expense of other people, without commitment. Sexual sin slanders God by saying that oneness is not good, that this oneness is not good, that it's better to be alone in isolation or quote-unquote alone together, alone together in two-ness in which we are siloed off from one another.

[23 : 08] And I'm afraid that's a huge problem in our culture and in our church, where we're not seeking oneness in the body of Christ. We're not seeking to share lives with one another.

We've got our lives partitioned off from each other. Nobody really knows what's going on in my life. Nobody's able to call me out on sin. I live my life, you live your life, and never the two shall meet.

sexual sin says that that is what God is like, that he's not a God who is sharing. He's not a God who is life-giving.

He's alone and happy that way. Sexual sin says that he is not a God of love, he is not a God of oneness, he is not a God of fidelity. It says that he is a selfish, unstable, and untrustworthy God.

So please remember that sexual sin is first and foremost a lie about who God is. It is first and foremost an insult against God before it is ever a sin against your spouse or against anyone else.

[24 : 13] Human beings do not flourish through adultery. They do not flourish through sexual immorality. It does not matter what your neighbors or what the schools, what the media, what the movies tell you.

Human beings only flourish when we manifest and multiply the image of God. That is what we have been made to do. So the seventh commandment is not there to repress us and to keep us from being what we should be.

The seventh commandment is for our good, for our joy, to guide us in becoming who we should be and who we were meant to be. The Lord forbids sexual activity outside of marriage because sexual fidelity manifests and multiplies the image of God.

And so now we know why Jesus turns to Genesis chapter 1 and 2. That's why he goes there when he is challenged by the religious leaders of his day. Before we begin to look at what Jesus has to say, his commentary on these chapters, let's be aware of this.

What Jesus says may be very hard to hear. And in fact, Jesus even makes that remark himself. He admits this is hard to hear. Jesus is going to be saying things that shock even his own disciples.

[25 : 43] He's going to say things that leave his disciples in a momentary state of despair. And if we're going to be honest with ourselves, Jesus' words will do the same for you and for me as well.

So I want to imitate Jesus by having us, the first thing we have to do is we have to look the truth in the face. We have to look it in the eye. And then once we have seen the whole truth for what it is, then we're going to encounter the hope that Jesus Christ offers.

Hope to everyone who is guilty of sin. Hope to everyone who is suffering from unfulfilled sexual desire. At the time when Jesus was ministering on earth, there was a lot of controversy in Jewish circles on the subject of divorce.

The controversy centered around a regulation in the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy chapter 24. A regulation that permitted divorce. Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 1.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and then the law goes on in the following verses to lay out that if she then marries another man, then she can't go back to her first husband and marry him again.

[27 : 07] And all the fuss over this commandment originated from that phrase, some indecency, which you find in the middle of the verse. Some indecency. The more conservative Jewish school of interpreters, the school of Shammai, they argued this only meant adultery.

This meant adultery, sexual immorality. The school of Hillel, they argued this meant just about anything at all. Both schools agreed that in the case of adultery, a husband simply must divorce his wife.

You've got to divorce, period. By the time that Jesus is confronted with this question in Matthew chapter 19, the interpretation of Hillel is favored. A husband can divorce his wife for just about any reason at all.

I think the quotation, if I remember right, was if she spoils his dinner. Divorce is running rampant among the Jewish people.

Divorce was just as common in Jesus' day as it is today in our culture. Jesus notices something about this regulation though. Notice the regulation simply acknowledges divorce.

[28 : 22] It acknowledges divorce. It doesn't command divorce. It doesn't promote divorce. It doesn't even encourage divorce. Not in any way. And this influences Jesus' response.

Jesus' answer is recorded in three out of the four gospels. And his answer would have shocked not only the Jewish culture of his day, it would have shocked the secular culture of our own day.

here's what Jesus says, Matthew chapter 19. Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?

He answered, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to him, why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?

[29 : 31] He said to them, because of your hardness of heart, because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery. The disciples said to him, if such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.

But he said to them, not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Let the one who is able to receive this, receive it. Jesus views Genesis chapter 1 and 2 as giving us a paradigm for marriage, a template for marriage.

It's giving us God's original intent for what marriage should be. So we begin by drawing three features essential to marriage, marriage according to Jesus. First and most obvious, marriage is meant to be lifelong.

[30 : 48] Marriage is lifelong. Jesus quotes Genesis chapter 2. He reaffirms that a husband and wife are no longer two but one flesh. Jesus affirms that it is God who has joined them into one flesh.

It is God who has created this union. Therefore, divorce is an attempt to uncreate what God has made. It's an attempt to destroy what God has created and what God loves.

God's original intent is that marriage should be lifelong. Now just like in that culture, divorce is very common in our culture. And just like then, the circumstances surrounding it are incredibly difficult, incredibly emotional, incredibly complex.

and what I've found is you have to look at each one individually. Our church has developed a statement regarding divorce that lays out circumstances in which divorce is permitted in the case of sexual immorality as we see here, in the case of divorce imposed by an unbelieving spouse as we see elsewhere in the New Testament.

And our church leadership will make every effort to protect a wife or a husband from being abused by their spouse. will make every effort to protect people in dangerous marriages.

[32 : 09] And yet at the same time our statement affirms priority is given to the healing and reconciliation of a married couple. Every effort is to be made to achieve restoration. Because Jesus says something, suggests something that not even the scholars of his day suggest that the marriage can be reconciled even after adultery.

There is a possibility, there is hope. And we continue to affirm that God's original intent is that marriage should be lifelong if at all possible. Marriage should be lifelong.

There is a second feature that is essential to marriage according to Jesus. The second feature that is essential to marriage is that marriage is monogamous. It is monogamous.

Genesis chapter 2 features one man, one woman. Jesus says explicitly that marriage starts with how many? Two.

Two. And once again as you study the Old Testament you'll find there is polygamy, men marrying multiple women on many occasions. But that polygamy is once again acknowledged and once again never promoted and never encouraged.

[33 : 18] In fact, it is consistently portrayed as painful, as destructive to women, to families, to the whole people of God. So we affirm with Jesus that God's original intent is that marriage should be monogamous.

Third and final feature essential to marriage according to Jesus. Marriage is heterosexual. Marriage is heterosexual. Jesus is affirming a scriptural passage that repeatedly emphasizes the partnership between male and female.

a man and his wife. If the fact that marriage is lifelong is an implication that Jesus draws out of Genesis 2, if that's an implication of Genesis 2, then the fact that marriage is between a man and a woman is written in bold, underline, all caps, red font.

Jesus has no category for same-sex marriage. marriage. I don't even need to illustrate what a flashpoint this is in our culture. Because if Jesus were to make the same claims about marriage here in the Vancouver area as he did in first century Palestine, Jesus would be rejected as an awful and hateful person.

Earlier this week, the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood released a document called the Nashville Statement, a document affirming this, affirming a biblical Christian model of human sexuality.

[34 : 50] This document, in only a few days, has received massive criticism from pundits, from religious leaders even, for affirming and denying the very things that Jesus is affirming and denying here in Matthew chapter 19.

Jesus even goes so far in this chapter to affirm a gender binary of man and woman. Jesus even addresses the exceptions to that rule, an exception to the binary.

Jesus explicitly says in verse 12, not everyone is going to fit into those neat categories, either because they have no interest in heterosexual marriage, no desire for it, or they've been made eunuchs by men, which was something that happened in ancient cultures.

Glad that doesn't happen today. Or their sexual organs have not properly formed. They're eunuchs from birth. Jesus recognizes this is a fallen world.

This is a world under a curse. Not everyone is going to align neatly and naturally with God's intent for marriage and sexuality. I'd point out, as a matter of fact, not a single person in this room aligns with God's intent for marriage and sexuality.

[36 : 06] Not perfectly. Our desires for intimacy, our desires for companionship, they are all warped. They are all corrupted in our adulterous hearts.

Just like our desires for justice and righteousness are all warped and corrupted in our murderous hearts. We can't simply listen to our hearts and be authentic to ourselves and our own desires when it comes to sexual desire, when it comes to sexual identity.

We have to look outside of ourselves. We have to look to the wisdom of God's timeless word. We have to trust Jesus Christ, trust his hard teaching, that this is what is good.

This is what it means for human beings to flourish. Because Jesus loves us enough to tell us the truth. Jesus doesn't enable our sin.

Jesus loves us enough to tell us the truth even when our culture would rather affirm and enable wrongdoing. And what's so remarkable about Jesus is that Jesus completely undercuts everything the leaders, everything the thinkers of our culture are telling you and me about who we are as human beings.

[37 : 21] Jesus undercuts that idea that the means to being fulfilled as a human being is sexual expression, doing what comes naturally. Jesus contradicts the idea that you are never going to experience the good life that you are meant to live, the idea that you will never be fulfilled and satisfied that you will never find peace and rest unless you get that sexual relationship you long for.

Jesus is saying, no, that is not true. Because that is the lie that is at the heart of our modern notions of human sexuality. There's an acquaintance of mine, a man who identifies as gay, and he wrote the following words to me earlier this year.

Now these are words that really, I've known other people in adulterous relationships who could probably say these exact same words and justify their sin in the same way. And here's what he says, and to be honest, I admire his raw honesty in saying that.

He doesn't pull his punches. Here's what he says. He, that is God, wasn't good enough and he did not fill my soul. I relied on his promises and the belief that he was enough for me.

He didn't come through. I'm not cynical. I simply came to the end of my ropes and could no longer wait for God's promises to be fulfilled. The only conclusions are that either God isn't who Scripture says he is or God never intended me to attempt to deny myself the companionship he intended for me.

[38 : 49] I'm happier, healthier, and more at peace than I've ever been. I have no reason to believe in the Jesus or the Christianity that tells me I can't have the intimacy and companionship we were meant for. Now I don't know this man well enough to say why he found that God wasn't good enough.

And I suspect that what I've often found in situations like this is that a person like this feels unsatisfied because he knows that God is good but he doesn't understand that God is great.

We've been learning from Exodus that God is great, God is good, God is with us and you have to have all three or God will not be satisfying.

If we believe that God is good but we don't see that God is fearsome, awesome, great, mighty, then the goodness of God will seem this big, a trickle of water that cannot possibly satisfy, that cannot possibly fulfill our souls.

Now there is no doubt there is so much more that needs to be said to those who are suffering and who are hurting like this man. You and I need to be willing to listen, to hear them out, to walk with them patiently, to provide them words of encouragement and hope and reminders that God is great, God is good, God is with us.

[40 : 19] And that's why Jesus steps into that gulf of longing, that gulf of disappointment and suffering. Jesus steps in as a monument to you and me showing us that we can live the good life even when our sexual desires aren't satisfied.

Whether we're married or unmarried or in a loveless marriage, whether we're single or widowed or divorced, whether we're experiencing same-sex attraction or suffering from gender dysphoria, you see, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the seventh commandment, you shall not commit adultery.

And he did it as a single man. That's why Jesus goes out of his way to affirm those who are going without sex, those whom he calls, using the terminology of the time, those who he calls eunuchs in Matthew 19.

Eunuchs, quote-unquote, were viewed as damaged goods in his culture. Eunuchs are viewed as wretched and unfulfilled in our culture.

And sadly, eunuchs are sometimes viewed as second-class citizens in our churches. Jesus doesn't view them that way. Jesus views them as precious, as valuable, as God's treasured possession.

[41 : 47] and I'm grateful. I'm grateful for each of you here at SBC for how you imitate Jesus, how you value, how you love, how you serve those of us who are single and who are divorced.

And it's my prayer that we may have further opportunities to express this love to those who are single, to those who are divorced, to those who struggle with same-sex attraction, to those who struggle with gender identity, but all of whom are eager to trust and obey Jesus Christ whatever the cost because they love him more and because they know that he is great, he is good, he is with us.

Jesus demonstrates how to live the good life, how to live a blessed life, even though Jesus was, quote-unquote, sexually unfulfilled. Jesus didn't seek oneness through sexual immorality.

And yet, no one in all of history experienced oneness with God and his people more than Jesus did. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us.

In John chapter 17, Jesus prayed not only for the first disciples, he prayed also for you and for me. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.

[43 : 20] Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

See that? That oneness we have with one another, the oneness Jesus has with his Father, the oneness that we have with God through Jesus. If we show the world that, the world will believe that God has sent Jesus as his only son because the world doesn't know that oneness and doesn't understand it and hasn't experienced it.

That oneness, that God with us, it isn't just for Jesus, it's for all who believe in him. Everyone. And we can enjoy the intimate closeness, the companionship of the triune God, the love the Father has for his Son, the love the Son has for the Father, this love that overflows from the Trinity to the people of God, to all who are brought close to God and close to one another.

Remember, marriage is not the ultimate oneness. A sexual relationship is not the ultimate oneness. It's just a picture. It's a shadow. A pale imitation.

What Jesus prays for in John chapter 17 is the reality. And that's why Jesus taught in Matthew chapter 22 that in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven.

[44 : 54] Marriage is, it really is, till death us do part. At death, it's over. Because the image is being replaced with the real thing. With the true oneness of God.

That is far more satisfying. That is satisfying. And so what that means is that you and I, we have something better to look forward to.

We have something that we can even taste in the here and now. A better rest, a better home, a better peace than any mere human companion or mere human pleasure can ever offer us.

Thomas Watson warns us, the reason why persons seek after unchaste, sinful pleasures is because they have no better. The reason why persons seek after unchaste, sinful pleasures is because they have no better.

Don't you see the despair? That's why people are running after all of these things. That's why they're pursuing sexual pleasure in all the wrong ways. They don't have anything better.

[46 : 01] That's all they've got. They're settling for less than the good life God is offering. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, we do have something better.

This light, momentary affliction. This is a guy who's not only single, he's also getting beat up regularly, constantly in fear for his life, and he says, this light, momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

An eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. And so Jesus showed us that we can seek oneness with God, with his people, with or without marriage, with or without sex.

Jesus also showed us that we can multiply, we can make disciples of Jesus Christ with or without marriage, with or without sex. There's another famously single man in the Bible, the Apostle Paul, who we just read.

He wrote to the churches he planted, he called the people of these churches his children. And Paul took under his wings men like Timothy, Timothy whom he called my true child in the faith.

[47 : 22] Timothy was truly Paul's son, more so than any biological child could have been, because Timothy was his son in the faith, his spiritual son. And so whether you're married or not, you can find joy in oneness, you can find joy in making disciples.

We can find the joy that the Apostle John wrote about when he said in 3 John, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. His spiritual children are walking in the truth and he says, there is no greater joy than that.

But Jesus did more than fulfill the seventh commandments on our behalf. Jesus did more than show us the way to oneness and disciple making.

Jesus not only clothes you and me with his own righteousness, Jesus washes us clean from our own unrighteousness. And if you believe in Jesus, if you trust that his death on your behalf was God's substitute for your sins, then Jesus has washed you spotlessly clean of all the shame, all the defilement of sexual sin.

Jesus has made you a new creation. You're new. You're forgiven and free and beautiful in the sight of God, your Father.

[48 : 48] Once there was a woman who was notorious for being a prostitute and she showed up uninvited to a dinner party of the religious leaders of the town. And in the eyes of these men, they saw this woman and they thought of her as filthy and disgusting because of her sexual sin.

They felt that they would need to take a bath after she left. None of them wanted her there. No one except one man, a man who'd recently come to town who had spoken words of hope, words that made her love him.

Standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

And so the host of the dinner party was absolutely horrified. This is scandalous behavior. But that man, his guest, said to the host, first, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven.

For she loved much, but he was forgiven. Little loves little. And he said to her, your sins are forgiven. Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins?

[50 : 10] And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. And it is the same Jesus who spoke so forcefully against adultery and against sexual immorality, who now sees a woman who has committed adultery, who has committed sexual immorality, and he says to her, your sins are forgiven.

Go in peace. You're restored. Jesus will never turn away anyone who comes to him, though guilty and ashamed, though hurting and defiled.

He covers our sin. He cleanses us of our shame and welcomes us into his arms. Jesus extends the love of the triune God to those who have never known his love so they can see the faithfulness of a great and a good God.

God with us. The God of fidelity. Our Father, we thank you for Jesus.