

# It's My Life - Doing it My Way

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Preacher: BK Smith

[ 0 : 00 ] A couple things that I just want to comment on, and we're going to be talking a little bit about this theme in this sermon is Thanksgiving. I'm very thankful for our music team.

They're excellent musicians. And we just don't sing songs to make us feel good or to create an emotional response, but the desire is to sing songs that will engage us with God's word, right? A lot of people have written some of these songs, go back hundreds of years, and it's always great to remind ourselves of God's eternal truths that come out. But if you get a chance, just thank some of the men and women that get an opportunity to serve.

We've been blessed with such great musicians, singers, and just the time they put in. I'll just share just a quick little funny story. You know, every song that they take to prepare is something that they consider seriously.

They pray about it. I think Dustin would say that for every song that he considers, he would put in about 10 hours listening to it, going over the words. And we want to have a pastoral approach.

[ 1 : 12 ] We want to make sure that not only the words represent God's truth, but those who write the songs are representing God's truth, right?

And there's a tension in that because some people in different type of churches, we might not agree on some of these things. So we take it and we pray about it. But there was one song that Dustin had kind of brought to me pretty recently, and I'd never heard of him, right?

So he gave me the song and went over the lyrics. And there was a lyric that really kind of bothered me. It could say one thing or the other. And I wanted to make sure. So I actually wrote the song artist.

And I said, I really, you know, people are talking about this song. They're really encouraged by it. But I need to know what this means. So they were really great in the response.

And they were kind of saying, if you don't know what this song means, don't sing it. No, no. And that's a really great attitude to have. Like, don't sing these songs of eternal truths if you have not grasped them in your heart.

[ 2 : 15 ] Then they gave me their reasoning for this line. And I so appreciated, just sent them off a letter. And sure enough, I'm talking to my mom that week.

And she says, man, I've been listening to this one group nonstop. I've been so encouraged. Same group, same song. So these are some of the songs we're singing, right? So it had my mom's stamp of approval.

So that's really all I needed. All right. We are going back to Ephesians chapter 5. In case you don't know, we've been out of Ephesians for a spell.

We started actually Ephesians well over a year ago. And then we kind of jumped ahead. We jumped ahead to chapter 6, 10 to 20. And I want to thank you guys for being with me as I wrote my project.

For you guys that are new or don't know, I was in the middle of doing my doctorate. And I needed a sermon series on the armor of God. And you guys were so kind to allow me to teach that.

[ 3 : 14 ] The good news is that they've accepted my doctorate. Hey, thank you. So really it means they're accepting you guys, right? You know, we took the surveys and we combined the results.

So they took a lot of time and prayer. I'm just now in the final edits and formatting. And this has been something I've been working on for five years. So I'm really looking forward to be done.

But I want to thank you for your patience, your graciousness. I didn't hear any complaints. I just heard a lot of words of really a lot of support and love. And that really means a lot to Danielle and I. It's been a grind. But if you are new and visiting our church, you will understand that we believe in a thing called expository preaching. We believe in God's word, that God has something special to say

to us.

And we believe that it's God's word and God's word alone that reveals his truth to us. Amen? So that is what we submit ourselves to. The Bible, when I say special, is what informs us about him. [ 4 : 19 ] It informs us of, answers the question, who created us? Why we were created? Why we need a God? How are we to reconcile ourselves to this just and holy God?

How do I live a life in a world that is cursed by sin? These are obviously no small things. What about us as a combined people, a church, a group of people that the word says we are called out, that God has separated us for a purpose?

This is where Ephesians comes in. Ephesians is a letter that Paul writes to Christians who meet in this church of Ephesus. And because we haven't been here for a while, I'm going to give you a quick recap to help give the context.

Because you will notice on Ephesians chapter 5, look at that first word that you read there. It says, therefore. So he's taken into understanding everything that we know.

[ 5 : 28 ] So a little bit about Ephesus. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire at the time. It's kind of interesting. As I was digging into my project, I found a little bit of disputes on the numbers.

But people believe it was between 250,000 to 400,000 people living in this city. And you need to understand the size of that.

Because when we think of that, you know, that's just a small, we have building multiple stories. But in a city that doesn't have multiple stories, it can spread out. Have any of you guys ever been to El Paso, Texas?

Who's ever been? Put your hand high. You've been to El Paso, Texas. Okay. You guys will know exactly what I'm talking about. Remember when you look over the border at night, you see Mexico? Right?

They have no high rises there. But the city spreads for miles and miles. El Paso's right at that border. You know, they've got different rules, regulations, wealth to create.

[ 6 : 32 ] Buildings that go up. But when buildings are one or two stories, it goes out for miles. So planning roads and infrastructure is a complete humongous thing.

So this city would have been gigantic. It was a port city. And it also had two major highways for trade going through the Roman Empire. It is currently what we would call in Turkey today. And the city was formed in 1044 BC. So 1,000 years before Paul showed up had been the existence of this city. Just think, if we go back 1,000 years, England is just 100 years old. It's interesting that the largest, longest establishment town in North America is 1,000 years old. Do you know that? It's outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

It is a Native American town. And it's been around for a long, long time. Now there were certain characteristics that made Ephesus special.

[ 7 : 37 ] There was this temple to Artemis or Diana in the middle of this city. We understand that there was over 50 different cults.

But the temple to Artemis or Diana was over everything. In fact, they said the only biggest thing that was more influential than the temple was its evangelists or proselytizers who went all around the Roman Empire preaching about Diana.

But it was unique in that it became a center of Jewish magic. It became a center of worldly magic. And yes, I was correct. Jewish magic.

There was a Jewish folk magic that they used. This would have been Jews from the first exodus. And a lot of times, Rome would take a group of people or even Greek people and send them to the frontier to build up these towns.

So there would have been a Jewish culture that had been there for over 300 years. It was interesting. There's these articles about these wrestlers.

[ 8 : 44 ] And I don't know if I told you about this. You know, they were into the Olympics and their Greek games. And there was this wrestling match. And one wrestler was disqualified. And they used to wrestle in the nude because they didn't want to give any advantage.

But he had an amulet on his ankle. To a certain God asking for strength. That was their version of steroids. And he was disqualified. Right?

They took that stuff really seriously. Right? So not only it wasn't just a folk thing, but the people's a populace. Well, after Jesus Christ had died and rose again, the word went out.

There was a team of, we believe, husband and wife named Priscilla and Aquila went over, shared the gospel. A church got started. And Paul visited this church many, many times.

And he had stayed over several years ministering to these people. So he then writes them this letter. And as we all know, there's six chapters to Ephesians.

[ 9 : 45 ] The first three chapters, he talks about the inward reality of a believer. Basically, why you are renewed. The work of God. The work of Jesus Christ. And the work of the Holy Spirit.

How we're saved. Where we came from. And then we have these last three chapters, which is the outward working of a believer. One of my former pastors used to say, it's kind of like a driver's book. The first three chapters are reading all about the book. Like how your engine work and what pressure to keep your tires. But the last three chapters are how you actually drive the car.

Right? So the first thing, you're understanding the car. Now you're driving. Now, today, we just drive our cars. We don't understand them. Right? So, but back then, we want to understand what is going on.

It's an amazing book. And I'm going to give you three key passages that I think sum up for the first three chapters of Ephesians.

[ 10 : 43 ] You can write them down in your notes. The first one is chapter 1, verse 4. And it explains to us salvation through the Trinity.

But Paul writes, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. And then he gives us our purpose statement. That we should be holy and blameless before him.

All right? So, we're going to look at three quick purpose statements that the first three chapters of Ephesus. So, the first purpose statement is that we be holy and blameless before God.

Chapter 2, verse 1 and 2. We learn of our condition before God. It says, What he's simply saying to the church is, You know what, guys?

You were dead. You were part of the world. You followed the prince of the air, who we all know is Satan, a.k.a. the devil. How bad were we?

[ 11 : 53 ] Verse 3 just says, Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

If there ever comes a time in your life that you think you are special, and you are better than the world, guess what? You weren't. You were a part of the world.

God identified you as an enemy of God. There was no special heritage, no special works. Your parents did. That is how you were identified by God.

We were in very rough shape. But we read in verse 4, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved and raised up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

And then we have this faithful verse, right? For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one would boast.

[ 13 : 22 ] And what we pull from that is our second purpose statement. Verse 10, take a look.

Ephesians 2.10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

So we've been first created with a function of purpose to be holy and blameless, right? And now we're reading here that we are his workmanship, and we've been created for these good works, that we should walk in them, all right?

So there's this preparation that God has done before us. And then in chapter 3, we learned about God joining these Jews and these Gentiles, and he's bringing them together as a new group.

And you weren't a Jewish Christian or a Gentile Christian. You were simply a Christian. Amen? And there is no separation. There was this one people, a new race that was created by God.

And notice it says in verse 10 of chapter 3, and he says, so that through the church, that's what he's doing, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the holy places.

[ 14 : 44 ] Because what he's saying there is, because I'm taking you Jews, you Gentiles, I'm putting you together, you're now a church, through this church, my wisdom can be shown to the world.

Now you might be asking yourself, what wisdom is he talking about? Now up to that time, only the Jew had God's word, right? Every other people group in the world had, guess what? Nothing. They could see through creation that there was a God. Archaeologists, anthropologists, all tell us that every culture knows the existence of God.

They could tell, they just knew that there was something there, but the problem is, they would ask themselves, how do I connect with this God, right?

I have to feed my family, I need my crops to grow, how can I please this God to make the rain fall, so my crops grow?

[ 15 : 56 ] So it could, some cultures, I was doing some research on the man, you know what, we're just going to sacrifice our kids. Crazy, right? Some people will burn part of our stuff to God.

They were trying to figure out what is some way, somehow, that I could please God. Think about that. How lost you would be.

You know there's a God. We know from Romans 1 that every man has a conscience. They can tell what's right and what's wrong, but it's like walking around in an entirely black room trying to figure out who this God is, how do I please him, I know I've offended him, what do I do?

So just think, this is going on and on and on for centuries. And then this church gets created. And this church is to express, it's like to bring light to the world that Paul says, so the wisdom of God might be made known to the world.

They would know that who created him. Why did Jesus die on the cross? How do I make harmony with this God? They would have learned all these truths.

[ 17 : 20 ] So the first three things, I'm going to repeat them. God wants us to be holy and blameless before God. That's what he wanted for the Ephesian church. God wants us to walk in God's good works that he prepared before us.

And the third is, God wants us to make God's wisdom known to the world. How do we do this now? Take a look at Ephesians 4. We know we've covered this. I want you to know this verse inside and out. Paul simply says, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling.

Now you know what that calling is. To walk holy and blameless. To make my wisdom known. To do good. These works that were created beforehand. To which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

We've talked about it before, this word walk. How you live your life. In common vernacular, it's to say, you know what?

[ 18 : 40 ] You talk the talk, but do you walk the walk? Is your life consistency? And he gives them these positives, right? Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing one another.

That you would maintain unity. These aren't natural things. We need to work towards them. But then Ephesians 4, he gives us these negatives. It's take off the old.

Put on the new. Don't lie. Don't sin in your anger. Don't steal. Don't speak corrupting things. And now we find ourselves in Ephesians chapter 5.

This is an exceptionally practical chapter. It is a debated chapter. It's going to touch on things that people in our society do not want to hear.

We do not want to talk about. It's going to talk about sex. It's going to talk about marriage. It's going to talk about work. It's going to talk about our relationships and our families. We're even going to learn that word submission, right?

[ 19 : 45 ] All these red panic buttons that this world has. So read along with me in Ephesians 5, chapter 1. We're going to be going through verses 1 to 7.

So therefore, that's all what we just read or learned. Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness might not even be named among you as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place but instead let there be thanksgiving.

For you may be sure of this that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous that is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not become partners with them.

[ 21 : 04 ] So today I want to look at three different aspects of Paul's teaching here. One, the first aspect is I want us to see God's calling for us.

What God's calling for us is in our context, our world. Two, what is our commitment to the Lord? So the first is the context. The second is what is our commitment?

And third, what are the consequences for disobeying God? What are the consequences for not heeding him? So therefore, we begin the first one.

It says, taken in everything I've just finished teaching you. Paul's writing in these last four chapters, holy and blameless, walk in God's works, make this manifold wisdom available.

He simply says, be imitators of God. Simple, right? I'm sure when Paul preached this and I have it on pretty good authority, he had a Nike shirt that said, just do it.

[ 22 : 06 ] Right? It's easy. Go ahead, imitate God. But he adds this condition. He says, as beloved children.

This is actually a command, an imperative. This is an understanding that I want to dig into a little bit here because a lot of people really mess this up and it leads them to a life of defeat because they try to imitate God without understanding what it really means to imitate God.

Notice how he qualifies the statement when he says, as beloved children. Right? Ask yourself, how do I imitate God?

Or, if you were to ask your child, how are they to imitate you? That word imitate means to be a copy, to be like something, but it's actually not saying you are to be exactly like them.

Okay? You understand that? There's a difference in this understanding. Paul's not saying, I want you to be exactly like God. What I want you to do is be a part of the heritage that you have in Christ which is to be like God.

[ 23 : 34 ] And we're going to learn what this is in a bit. Take a look at verse 2. And walk in love.

Now let's be honest. I could ask you right now, end this service, and ask you to write down what are all the ways that you think you can imitate God and what does it mean to walk in love?

Right? You could write for hours just thinking through what are the different means that we could do this. But that is actually not what Paul is saying here.

Now, this is actually the only place in all of the New Testament where we're told to imitate God. You know that? Never uses that term anywhere else.

1 Corinthians 4.16, Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Christ. 1 Corinthians 11.1 says, be imitators of me as I am of Christ. In Philippians 3.17, Paul says, join me in imitating God.

1 Thessalonians 1.6 says, some of you become imitators of us. And even in 1 Thessalonians 2.4, there's an invitation to become imitators of the church.

[ 24 : 45 ] What he's saying is, I want you to follow our path. The standard here is not perfection.

And this is where I want to draw this distinction. There's several times in the Bible, the Bible compares Jesus Christ to God.

But it doesn't use the word that Jesus Christ is a copy. Okay? It actually uses stronger words.

Hebrews 1.3, Jesus Christ is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

The writer of Hebrews is saying that Jesus Christ is the exact imprint. It's not less. You know how when we get a photocopy and after you photocopy, you use the ink, it goes down, it's not exactly.

We're having that problem right now with our photocopier. We think it's green, but it comes out yellow. Right? It's not exact. We kind of know it's the same picture, but it's not the same thing.

That's kind of what we're being called to.

We're not being called to perfection. And why do I say this? Because a lot of people kill themselves trying to be perfect. They do. And what happens when you try to be perfect, what do you look to?

[ 25 : 59 ] You look to yourself. You start dwelling on yourself, your imperfections, your sin, your issues, and despair sets in and you start to get beaten down.

But that's not what God's calling you to. When you're to imitate God, we're to put our eyes on Jesus. Right? We're to look to the one who's able to do it. John 1.1, we just read it today.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. That's complete equivalence. God, Jesus Christ, exact same. Colossians 1.5, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

So what I'm trying to communicate here to you, Paul is not calling us to be exactly like God. He's calling us to follow him.

Now, what does that mean? When he says that term as children, he wants you to be like your father. You guys have your kids, right? You are teaching them life to follow you.

[ 27 : 02 ] You do. Right now, you do not expect your six-year-old kid to act exactly like you. But you're teaching them how to walk like you, right? Use a fork, right?

Spoon. All those things. Those are the ways that you're learning, teaching them how to do. There was a sad story I had in, well, it's kind of sad, but it's kind of good. There was a friend that I went to school with.

His father owned a multi-million dollar company. And his father would show up every semester and review all his grades. And he would make a decision whether he lost his car that semester or his allowance.

because he understood that his son was going to inherit his company. And they had hundreds of employers. And his dad was, and he wanted him to be like him, right?

To understand business. So because he knew his son would grow up to care for hundreds of families. And he wanted to be mature. And it was kind of funny because my friend was depressed.

[ 28 : 08 ] There was a time he was actually suicidal because as he said, he can't be like his dad. So they actually reached out to his dad. And it was this great father-son issue, but it was like, I'm not asking you to be all that I am now.

Like I've got, I'm over 50 years old and I've got all this life experience. You're 20. I just want you on the same path. Right? So what he says, I want you guys on the path that I've laid out.

And you represent my name. We all know when our kids do stuff to embarrass us, right? They do. And you know what it is?

It is. It's an embarrassment to your name. Now when your kid hits this like winning shot at a basketball game that I heard about a couple of days ago, you know, father's quite proud, right?

It's my prodigy, right? You know, we're proud. Whether it be skiing, basketball, running, we're happy for our kids are carrying on in our line. But we also know what it is to be disappointed when our kids don't carry along in our line.

[ 29 : 17 ] But Paul is referring to something. Notice in your Bibles, you will have a period after children and then the next verse starts with end.

It's a complete thought before we get to love. Look at Ephesians 4.32. Ephesians 4.32.

Paul simply writes, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

If you want to be imitators of God, you need to forgive. You need to forgive. We talked about that last week. There's a command to forgive here.

There's one author on the subject, right? We are no more like God when we forgive an offense that's been done to us. So what Paul's talking about as we go in is that we are to forgive.

[ 30 : 21 ] Now look at verse 2. And walk in love. And he qualifies that love. As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Walk in love. Paul doesn't allow the world to understand what love is. We know what the Hallmark cards say, right?

Sometimes it's not exactly right love. It's not biblical love. The love that God is calling about is a love that imitates God and that is perfectly demonstrated in who?

Jesus Christ. And how did Jesus Christ demonstrate his love to us? He went to the cross. At great cost to himself, he sacrificed himself.

love is pain, is it not? It's easy to love during that dating relationship or when you get into marriage, there's certain things.

[ 31 : 31 ] I was just spending time with my friend yesterday and I had the pleasure of marrying him and his wife 15 years ago or so and he says, you know what, we're just in that. He goes, sometimes I feel like I've married three different women.

Right? You know, there's the pre-kids, the kids, now they're growing up kids, right? And he said, you know, one of the things he says, you know, he was just asked to be an elder and he's just going through these things at his church and he says, you know, sometimes it's hard.

I need to accept the fact that my wife has changed and she's different and we just talked about how that is actually good for him and his growth in Christ. Jesus Christ did something that was really good for us and for our growth as well.

he saved us at great cost. So we have this calling, this way to walk, which is described as being forgiving and it's being loving to people and understanding that it is a costly love. Paul is writing this letter to people in the church. church. He's not calling them the world to be this way. It's not a Coke song.

[ 32 : 51 ] We're supposed to be all loving. But it's the reality is that a true believer is the only one who can truly understand what forgiveness and love is.

All right? This is important for us to understand. Now, a couple months ago, I guess, and you guys have been in Bible studies, you heard me teach about how does God reveal himself to this world? Remember, he uses natural revelation through creation, through the beauty that we see, through science, when we study ourselves or the complexity of the stars and all that, we know there's order at points to a God.

It's called natural revelation. Then we have this thing called special revelation, which is the Bible, that God revealed himself true through the Bible that we may know him. But there's also a third way that God reveals himself to mankind, and that is through you.

God reveals himself to this world through this church. Do you recognize that? That's what he's talking about.

[ 34 : 08 ] When he says, I want you to understand the manifold wisdom to this world, it's through you. I mean, your lives need to matter. How you walk matters.

How you live this life matters. You can live in such a way that someone would never know Jesus Christ. Christ. And the two biggest ways that you do that is showing a forgiving spirit and loving others.

So our calling is to be imitators of God by forgiving in our self sacrifice. That's our calling.

Now, what is our commitment? We see this verse 3 and 4, it's don't be like the world. Don't be like the world. Ephesus, an incredibly immoral city.

Notice it says verse 3 and 4, but sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness, no foolish joke, nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead, let there be thanksgiving.

[ 35 : 23 ] Three questions I want to answer from this text. What is the sexual immorality that Paul is talking about? The second question is, why does Paul place this here and not in the earlier chapter of chapter 4?

Remember when he was talking about don't lie, don't steal, don't be angry? Like, it would seem it would fit with a whole bunch of these other don'ts, but he's got it over here. And notice that last word of chapter 4, but instead, let there be thanksgiving.

really? How does that fit with this whole sexual immorality and inappropriate talk? Alright, let's look at the first verse here.

We've got the sexual immorality, all impurity, covenants must not even be named. Now remember the culture. Alright? Most of the believers in Ephesus, we believe, was made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

And if you were a Gentile, you most likely took part in cultic practices and they actually had temple prostitutes. So you could go, that was part of the sexual act was considered this part of worship that dragged you in, right?

[ 36 : 42 ] So you would have been a part of that at some point. That would have been a normal way of thinking. Why? Because we know and understand it was total darkness about such things.

But you're no longer a part of that life. So the question that everyone always asks is what specific sexual immorality is Paul talking about?

Is there certain activities that are considered more or less? I'll tell you what it really means. All this stuff. The Greek words. It essentially means scandalous sex.

It's to be no longer involved in scandalous sex. What is scandalous sex? Any sex outside of marriage. That's it. Not some special sex acts.

Every sex act. Every sex act not done in marriage is scandalous sex. Do you guys get that?

Everything. There is no other exceptions or anything.

[ 37 : 44 ] So that's what Paul's teaching. All that is scandalous. sex is meant to be at the right time with the right person.

That is God's design. This is the design from the very beginning. This is the command given by Jesus Christ himself. There is no exception. Now notice what it says.

The talk about filthiness, foolishness, crude joking. Are those just dirty jokes? It's the jokes about the scandalous sex. It's talking about the scandalous sex.

It's reading the magazines that we have that talk about the affairs that Brad Pitt maybe had with whoever. It's just all that stuff. So Paul's saying there's a thing in the world and there's a thing that's not in the world.

That stuff is all about the world. So when you act the way you're called to act, guess which way you are to be? See the reality is we know that sometimes we joke about such things to be light hearted but we're truly being light hearted about immorality.

[ 38 : 57 ] And God is telling us specifically here, don't do it. In fact, he uses a special word here. So I want to go to the second question.

Why is it placed here? Why not when it says don't lie, don't sin in your anger, don't steal, don't speak corrupting talk. Why? Sex is good. Sex is a creation that God gave us.

It is a blessing to be in a proper context. Lying is never good. Anger is never good in sin.

Stealing, never good. Corrupting talk, tearing people down, never good. But sex is good. And God created that with a purpose but the world does something with it.

It perverts it. It twists it. And the sex that they're talking about here is the sex not about love but about self-gratification. The sex that was being practiced there did not have love.

[ 40 : 00 ] It did not have self-sacrifice. It's interesting. The world doesn't accept lying, angry, stealing, or slander, but it does for some reason accept sexual immorality, right?

How prevalent is that today? I don't think I need to tell you. An interesting story just comes out in Christianity Today, two weeks ago, or last month's issue, and the article is The Pastor's Next Sexual Frontier, Polymory.

And I don't know if you know what Polymory is, but it's, you know what polygamy is? One man can have multiple wives. They're saying now that there's Christians coming into the church who are in polymory relationships, where I can be in a relationship with this person, but this person can be in a relationship with several other persons.

And Christianity Today is trying to say that this is normal for the church, okay? So we pastors need to know how to answer it. Duh. Like, there's no special verses that I gotta bring up to talk about polymory, right?

But that's how twisted and convoluted. If you have the NIV, and you're reading this verse, it says, but sexual immorality and all impurity or covetous must not even be named.

[ 41 : 20 ] The NIV says not even a hint. Shouldn't even be a hint, a whiff of that type of stuff in your church. If you are a believer in Christ and your life leads people to suspect or wrongly assumes that there is an unrighteous relationship, it affects the church.

It's not just you, you're a part of a body. It affects people. Now, how do we deal with this? Paul says thanksgiving.

How can thanksgiving fix this world, right? Reality is, we live in a world of no restraints. We live in a world where people live to self-gratify.

notice the word covetous that Paul uses in verse 3. It means more than just greed, desire, lust, but it's like an appetite that I have to satiate by using others.

That's what it's talking about there. Some commentators will talk about, you know, they kind of throw in money. It has nothing to do with money. That is not the context. context.

[ 42 : 32 ] The context is how people will use other people to gratify themselves, their appetites.

In case you don't know what the 10th commandment, 10th commandment is written in Echidus 20. It says, you shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkeys.

You see, this is where sin, the desire to fulfill your appetites begins. It begins by looking over that fence and seeing that there might be grass greener on the other side.

That is the beginning of sin. It could be your neighbor's house. It could be your neighbor's wife. It could be your neighbor's husband, your neighbor's wife.

I want you to turn with me back to Romans chapter 1. Look at Romans chapter 1 verse 21 with me. I believe this helps us understand what Paul is talking about with this word thanksgiving.

[ 43 : 53 ] says, for although, when he's talking about the world, they knew God, they did not honor him as God, or as you read, give thanks to God.

you see, to covet is desire more, something more. We covet those things that we do not have.

We are saying, God, I am not satisfied with what you have given me. I am not satisfied with the life that you have designed for me. I am not satisfied with how you've designed my body to be used. so what you're saying is, I'm not thankful for any of that. I want more. I want that. I want this. Because that will satisfy me.

See, when we're not thankful, we show displeasure with the wisdom of God. We show displeasure with the wisdom of God.

[ 45 : 14 ] What is the consequence? The third C, so we understand what we are called to, to walk and be imitators of him, forgiving and loving.

Two, our commitment is to not be like the world. And three, what is the consequence? Just what Paul says here, for you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, who are in his covetousness, and notice that covet, but he says that is an idolatry, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Notice that term, let no one deceive you with empty words.

I get some articles that come in and one of the things I've talked about, about deconversion, why people lose their faith, and there was this discussion group, and this one woman had grown up in the church and she makes this comment about how she seemed to have grown up in a very legalistic culture and she was rejecting a lot of really good things, but she says I can now read and experience sex like I've never experienced before.

And people are kind of chiming in and one person says, what are you talking about? I'm a Christian and I experience all sorts of great sex outside of marriage. They're talking about all this stuff and then some wise person just adds, I think you might have Christianity confused with something else.

[ 46 : 48 ] Right? It was just something like that. Whatever you were told what Christianity is, someone lied to you. Wasn't that great? like it wasn't a condemnation but it was just you were lied to.

You cannot live for yourself. So let no one deceive you with empty words. Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Let me clarify something. Paul is not stating that everyone who has done anything sexual is going to hell. the implication is if you continue to live in this way, knowing the truth is the road to hell.

Right? It's a rejection of everything that God has set up. Therefore, do not become partners with me. All right, one last place I want to take you guys to.

Colossians 3, 5, and 6. Colossians 3, 5, and 6. It's kind of the partner book to Ephesians. But Paul actually provides something I think that is incredibly helpful to us.

[ 47 : 57 ] I've actually shared this with my growth group and I thought I would share this with you. Because it helps us understand sexual immorality. Because when we see sexual immorality or having an affair or any of these things, we just say, no way, we're going to go down that road.

I totally reject that. It's not going to happen. But I'm going to be honest with you. I've been pastoring and friends long enough to know I've had friends who've gone down there. People who I never, ever, ever thought in a million years would have an affair with their spouse or do some of these sins.

And it's not like they just woke up one day and decided, I'm going to have an affair on my spouse. Nobody that I know ever started off that way. But what we have here is these wisdom words that Paul gives us in Colossians 3, 5, 6.

Now, I want you to pay attention. It says, put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you. First word, sexual immorality. Second, impurity. Three, passion.

Fourth, evil desire. And notice what that fifth one is, covetous. All right? So I see sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetous.

[ 49 : 12 ] flip that around. What I mean is start at the bottom of the sentence. What is the first sin?

Covetness. Right? It begins with looking over the fence, seeing the green grass, the big house.

I wish I had all those things. That's where sin starts. Notice the second sin, evil desire. It's not enough just to admire, hey, that's a really nice house.

We can do that, right? People have nice things. They've worked hard for them, and it's okay, that's a kicking car, right? A guy had a Ferrari, I asked him if I could drive it, and he said yes.

Wonderful hour of my life, right? Never thought he'd say yes, but he let me drive it, right? It's a nice car. And that's all where it ended.

[ 50 : 09 ] Now look at the evil desire. The evil desire is a desire that happens in my mind where I start really wanting that car, or that woman, or that man, or that.

Now I'm going to start thinking of ways. So I start dreaming of myself, and it becomes a picture in my mind that I know is wrong, but I don't do anything. Notice the next word, passion.

Passion he's talking about is the physical part. It's actually I start to get really revved up about this evil desire, which is based on this covetous thought. Then it moves towards impurity.

It's putting myself in a position that I can acquire these things that I'm coveting. Hey, it might be a really good woman. I'm going to start talking about it. It's kind of funny.

I'm dealing with a friend of mine who's a pastor. It's interesting because there's this famous baseball player and his wife slept with my friend's pastor.

[ 51 : 20 ] This guy was a pretty big name. It blew up everything. It all happened for the pastor. They had money beyond anything that he could ever.

He noticed the wife is here. Church, husband is away all the time, kids, and he prayed on it. This guy's written books about how to love your wife and kids.

Yeah, he's a hypocrite, but do I believe he was in sincerity and wrote those books? I do. He was a good man. But somewhere along the line, whether there's something being destroyed in his house, so he started paying attention to her, started having them over, and basically seduced her into an immoral relationship.

He followed this plan perfectly, or he fell for Satan's plan perfectly. And it all begins with covetous.

So when Paul says the cure to all this with thanksgiving, it's to be thankful for what you have, everything that you have, whether it be your marriage, your children, your work.

[ 52 : 39 ] one author simply said, a contented person will not desire to violate another person.

A contented person will never covet what someone else owns. Where do I start? We start with this thing called necessity.

We recognize that if you have done these actions, whether it be simply this, I'll be honest with you. It's kind of funny, it's a little childhood story.

I became friends with a guy just because he had Star Wars figures. I didn't like him, but I was a kid and my parents wouldn't let me get there, but he had all the toys. I was just like eight years old at the time, right?

It gets in there. Our hearts are deceptively weak and you become friends with a guy for something that they have or that you want. It doesn't have to be the big grown-up adultery stuff.

[ 53 : 50 ] This was one of the things that I had to confess when I became a Christian. I became friends with a guy because of his toys. But we recognize that, right?

And it begins with the necessity that I need a savior. I need someone to work in my heart to help me be thankful for what I have. Because I can't do it on my own.

Because we live in a world that constantly throws out beautiful, wonderful things, whether it be jewelry, our watches aren't good enough, our sunglasses aren't good enough, our children aren't good enough.

It doesn't matter. The whole world is committed to this ideology. So we need to recognize this.

Second thing we need to recognize is we have responsibility. You guys have heard Dave say it enough, right? We have power to make a choice. We make a decision.

[ 54 : 49 ] Dave would call it agency, right? If you've spent any time, Dave's using this agency like he's a six-year-old who just learned a new word. Don't let him know he said that. No, but he's using it a lot.

He loves it. He's getting it. It's helping in his counseling. It's like this breakthrough thought. It's this, we have agency. Meaning no matter what our background or what's happened in our life, we have a choice.

But the question that always comes down to is do we have ability? Do we have ability to change? And this is where the gospel of Jesus Christ comes in. It's to say I can't do this in my own strength. I need someone outside of myself who can give me the strength. Remember, we just covered this in spiritual warfare. It says be strong in the Lord and the power of his might and put on the armor of God.

We're at war, my friends. There is a whole culture that tells us lies. And the reality is we cannot do it.

[ 55 : 56 ] We need to call on the name of Jesus Christ. If you've experienced this immorality, I'm here to tell you the good news. You can be forgiven.

Right here, right now. You can just quietly confess the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, I sought something for my own needs, my own means.

The Bible is true, it is right. I sinned. I can now repent. That means I can make this decision through the power of Jesus Christ to no longer act in this way.

I'm going to turn away from that life that I once lived that said it was okay, and I'm going to lead this life that says it's not. And then I'm also going to seek forgiveness from the ones that I've hurt.

I'm sorry. Please forgive me. The Lord Jesus Christ promises to forgive you. You know that? He promises to remove every ounce of shame, hurt, and pain.

[ 57 : 04 ] In fact, he says he's going to throw it as far as the east as the west and never to bring it up again. That when we become a believer, we become new creations.

I'll tell you what happens when we don't live outside of the world. Two things happen. God's name is blasphemed. You know that?

God's name is blasphemed. If we associate ourselves with the church and don't live according to the way that God has called us to walk, we are blaspheming him, his name. And two, we are depriving the world of an illustration of truth.

truth. When we walk in the lie, we're depriving the world of truth and an opportunity for someone to come to the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

Let me pray. Father, I don't know all the stories here in this church, but I do know the incredible grace and love that you offer this church, that you offer each and every one of them that just simply says, Lord, I need you because I am unable to clean up the mess that I make.

[ 58 : 27 ] I bought into the lies of this world. I bought into self-gratification. I was told that this was loving. Now I know differently. Father, we are free to come.

We don't have to clean ourselves up. In fact, if we try to clean ourselves up, we only make ourselves more dirty. The best place for us is at this foot of the cross, whether we are a first-time believer or we're a 30-year believer.

We can come to this cross and say, Lord, I need your power, I need your strength, but I need your forgiveness. It's the recognition that I have not been an imitation of you.

I have withheld forgiveness from my parents, my mom, my brother, my sister, my co-worker, my old boss. And because I've withheld that forgiveness, I am miserable.

You bring it up, it sets me off. I have to give it. Because the reality is, Jesus Christ, you forgave me for so much more.

[ 59 : 31 ] And in fact, my sin placed you on the cross where the Lord God poured out the wrath, the punishment for my sin on you.

So I could be made clean, pure as the driven snow, white as a lamb's wool, because of the work that you did, oh, Father.

Father, I pray that we would commit to this life, that we would no longer want to blaspheme God, but that we would want to be an illustration of your great and glorious truth to this horribly lost world.

The reality is, this world is not going to be saved by us telling them to clean up their act, quit sinning. It's to tell them that all that sin is going to lead to destruction.

But there's a better way, a peaceful way, a way in which you can know the forgiveness and love of God in ways that no human person can ever satisfy.

[ 60 : 45 ] So, Father, we come here as a church praying this together, praying that we would model this and all these things. Pray that we model your forgiveness, your grace. The Bible tells us that your mercies are new every day.

There is far more mercies than sins we could ever sin. We can claim to these mercies. We can claim to these promises that you will renew our spirits. So, Father, we just come to you.

We thank you for your word that instructs us for the warnings that are included in it for our safety. In your most heavenly and precious name, amen.