

# **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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Sermon manuscript

## **Sermon Series: Cultivating a Knack for Life**

(Studies in Solomon's Proverbs)

### **The Wisdom of Sexual Sanity**

(Proverbs)

Study #4

#### **Introduction: A glorious wreckage...**

Author G. K. Chesterton once likened this world to the desert island site of a shipwreck. A sailor from this ship had washed ashore, and lay unconscious on the beach.

He finally awoke, but suffered from severe amnesia. All around him lay items from the ship, relics that belonged to a world he could scarcely remember.

One by one he picked up the relics - a gold coin, a compass, fine clothing. He was certain that these items had meaning and purpose. But, because of his amnesia, he was having a hard time figuring out what they were good for and had no idea as to how to put them to their intended use.

Chesterton's story is a parable of humanity. All of us are in the sailor's predicament.

We find ourselves in a world filled with valuable resources, but without the wherewithal to rightly use them. We don't remember exactly what they are for and even we ourselves aren't exactly what we were meant to be!

Among the relics are things like power, wealth and intellect, food and drink, all of which are great!

They are part of the store of treasure God entrusted to us from the beginning. But, now they are as likely as not to be misunderstood since we have been shipwrecked on the sea of sin.

Sexual desire would be another one of the powerful relics we find on the beach. It was and is an incredibly good gift of God, but it now invites abuse, obsession, and manipulation.<sup>1</sup>

As with all the relics, though, the problem is not sex. The problem is that we are the problem. It is a treasure given by God to the first man and woman and to all their descendants. Now, though, our broken condition means that we are hard pressed to put sex to its proper use.<sup>2</sup>

*Seeking sexual sanity from the Author of sex...*

For the next few minutes we are going to open Proverbs and look to Solomon for some guidance as we seek sexual sanity.<sup>3</sup>

As we have seen, Proverbs deals with real life. Solomon addresses the themes of money, friendship, ministry, the proper use of our words, our relationship to authority - and much, much more. So we're not surprised that he tackles a subject as personal and as relevant as sex.

In fact, the subject of sex is not at all out of place in God's Word. God was, after all, the One who dreamed the whole thing up in the first place.

There is even one whole book in the Bible that is given to the theme of the beauty of sexual love in marriage - The Song of Solomon. And lots of other passages in Scripture address sexual themes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The eminently quotable Mark Twain wrote, "*Man is the only animal that blushes, or needs to.*"

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix at the end for some thoughts on some specific cases.

<sup>3</sup> This sermon will certainly not be an "everything you've always wanted to know about sex from the Bible" message. There will be huge chunks of biblical wisdom about sexuality that I'll not address today. My fervent prayer, though, is that what is presented is true and presented in love and grace.

<sup>4</sup> In strict Jewish cultures The Song of Solomon has always been considered "off limits" reading material until a person was 30 years of age. See also select passages in Leviticus, Ecclesiastes, and 1 Corinthians.

The subject is not taboo and the Bible speaks frankly about sex.

Scattered throughout Proverbs are Solomon's comments about what we are calling today, "Sexual Sanity."<sup>5</sup>

His vision is that we would all have a healthy regard for this valuable treasure, that we would all adopt God's perspective on sex, and that we would all order our sex lives on the wisdom of Scripture.<sup>6</sup>

*Talking about sex...*

I'll introduce this theme by pointing out that there is more than one way to talk about sex.

It is possible to have a clinical discussion about sex. This is the way you discuss sex with your doctor when you go to him or her with a problem.

We could analyze all human physical contact in this way, but (as someone has noted) it would take a lot of the fun out of kissing.

Then, it is possible to talk about sex in a vulgar way. This is the language of the street. It is the language of obscenity. It's crass. It devalues the act and the people involved.

But, it is also possible to discuss sex discreetly, sweetly, and with tenderness. What makes this kind of discussion possible is the skillful and subtle use of figurative language.

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<sup>5</sup> If there were ever a need for some sanity in regard to sexual issues, it is today. I don't think many would disagree with the opinion that ours is a society run amuck in confusion and dysfunction concerning the issue of sex. The sexual revolution spawned in the 60's and 70's has borne some bitter fruit. We are a sex-saturated society. But, that doesn't mean that we are at all sexually well-adjusted. Rather, the words "boredom" "frustration" and "obsession" would describe many Americans' sexual experience. As we will see today, this is not God's plan.

<sup>6</sup> I admit that the Bible doesn't address every conceivable life situation relative to sexual expression. Yet, in its entirety, Scripture does adequately address the concerns any person might have about their sexuality. Since the focus of our study today is the book of Proverbs, I am limiting myself to the two truths Proverbs speak to most often. One, the need to avoid sexual union outside of marriage; two, the goodness of sexual union and enjoyment in marriage.

This is addressing sex sensitively, and it is the way the Bible most often deals with it.

That's certainly how Solomon speaks about sex in Proverbs, chapter 5. In the short span of a few verses, Solomon commends sexual union - within the confines of marriage - as the good gift of a gracious God.<sup>7</sup>

### **Solomon: On Sexual Intimacy in Marriage (5:15-20)**

#### **Sexual UNION in Marriage Commended (5:15-17)**

*Sexual desires satisfied in marriage (v. 15)*

***[5:15] Drink water from your own cistern  
And fresh water from your own well.***

As the context makes clear, here is Solomon encouraging sex within its legitimate context. He gives the imagery of thirst. He wants us to picture someone drinking water to quench that thirst.

Drinking water here is a subtle, but clear reference to the satisfaction of sexual desire. This proverb commends the expression of marital love by inviting married people to participate in sex.

Further, Solomon argues for the exclusivity of marital intimacy.

*Sexual exclusiveness required (vv. 16-17)*

***[5:16] Should your springs be dispersed abroad,  
Streams of water in the streets?***

If verse 15 says that it is good and right for people who are married to have sex with each other, then verse 16 says that people who are married are to have sex ONLY with each other.

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<sup>7</sup> In Proverbs 5:15-20, we have what scholars call one of the most sexually explicit and erotic passages in ancient literature.

This arrangement shows the genius of God's design. Reserving physical oneness for one person and one person only safeguards the intimacy of marriage. Only with exclusivity can intimacy be as rich as God intends.

We can be sure that God is no cosmic kill-joy. He doesn't want to deprive married people of joy by barring multiple partners. No!

The issue is the nature of the sex act. Contrary to the Playboy philosophy popularized by Hugh Hefner and others, sex is not just like eating and drinking, and every other biological human function.

Sexual union is not like anything else we do. And the ultimate human act demands the ultimate covenanted relationship of marriage. Sexual union is for marriage.<sup>8</sup>

But Solomon doesn't just tell us that sexual *expression* is allowed or even required in marriage. He tells us that sexual *enjoyment* is God's plan.

We keep reading in Proverbs 5 and find the focus shifting to the passionate expression of physical love between a husband and wife.

### **Sexual ENJOYMENT in Marriage Commended (Proverbs 5:18-19)**

***[5:18] Let your fountain be blessed,  
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.  
[19] As a loving hind and a graceful doe,  
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;  
Be exhilarated always with her love.***

You'll notice that nothing is said in this passage about procreation, although marriage IS the God-ordained context for the bearing and rearing of children. The idea here in Proverbs 5, though, is not procreation. It is recreation.

Here, in appropriate, figurative, but frankly erotic, language, Solomon speaks of the legitimate enjoyment of married sexual union.

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<sup>8</sup> It is customary for married people to wear a wedding ring. This ring is a small piece of jewelry designed to stop our "circulation." ☺

What is in view here is a God-blessed ecstasy. This word we translate "*exhilarated*" is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe drunkenness, the negative effects of strong drink.

But here it is something altogether wholesome and positive.

A wife can give to her husband refreshment and satisfaction that no other woman in the world can give. Likewise, a husband can provide for his wife what no other man can give her.

Now, everyone knows that sermons are made better by quotes of famous people. And it would be easy, easy, easy to find quotes about sex by famous people!

Stars and starlets, politicians, athletes and others in the public eye have lots to say about sex. But I'm going to quote someone from a different part of society. I've got a great quote about sex from a great theologian: J. I. Packer.

Packer - who is a good thirty years older than I am - is best known for his theological writings, like his masterpiece, Knowing God. Well, in another book, Knowing Man, Packer expressed some very straightforward ideas about sex.

*"Let me do a little frank talking about sex on my own account.*

*"God's commandment to mankind was to subdue the earth. Note, however that this was only the second thing God told man to do to the earth; his first appointed task was to be fruitful, and multiply, and fill it. But, if procreation is commanded, then sexual relations are commanded, and sex is, among other things, fun. Can it be that God actually commands us to have fun?"*

*"Surely not, says somebody. At least, not THAT much fun. No, you are wrong - you are in good company, but you are wrong.*

*"The great St. Augustine, chief post-apostolic architect of western Christianity, held that sex within marriage for affection, affirmation, tenderness, and pleasure, as distinct from the holy purpose of procreation, could never be quite right.*

*“Many noble souls since his day have swallowed this bitter teaching without a murmur. But, by biblical standards, Augustine was wrong.”*

It is true. Sexual delight in marriage is God’s gift to us. Within the protective boundaries of marriage, sexual intimacy and union and passion between a man and a woman is sweet, blessed, good, and godly.

Now, we’re not at all done, but even to this point, Solomon has brought helpful wisdom to us about sex. We’re grateful to him for his freeing insights and for his good counsel.

Unfortunately, we have to note that Solomon didn’t exactly practice the wisdom that he preached. At some point, he abandoned the wise path he has set out for us.

He ended up marrying seven hundred women (many of them for political purposes). He took for himself three hundred concubines.<sup>9</sup> (1 Kings 11:3).

Scripture tells us that these many romantic and sensual relationships turned his heart away from God, which led him to lead the nation into idolatry, which led to the eventual destruction of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Now his foolishness doesn’t make his counsel false. But his foolishness does highlight the force of sexual temptation. If sexual temptation proved to be wise King Solomon’s undoing, then the urge toward sexual missteps must be strong, indeed!

And people like you and me - people who would be wise - need to be VERY careful to guard against sexual sin.

I’ve already said it. And I’m going to say it again, now. Entering into sexual union with your wife or with your husband is blessed by God. Entering into sexual union with anyone else is not.

<sup>9</sup> In Ecclesiastes Solomon refers to concubines as *“the pleasure of men”* (2:8). In gross violation of their personhood, these were women made available for the service of the king.

<sup>10</sup> We unfortunately have to say, *“Do what he said, not what he did.”*

It inevitably leads to all kinds of problems, as Proverbs makes abundantly clear. And right before speaking about the beauty of married sex, Solomon comments on non-married sex.

Among other things, sex outside the bounds set by God leads to deep remorse.

### **Solomon: On Sexual Intimacy Outside Of Marriage**

#### **The Path to Deep Remorse (5:12-14)**

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**Note:** You will notice in what we are about to read that the one doing the seducing is referred to as the *“immoral woman”* or as *“the adulteress.”* You and I both know - and Solomon knew, too - that men were just as likely to attempt seduction as women. He was not a misogynist and he would not want us to conclude that only women are guilty of seduction. Nor would he want us to think that only women were wise and that only men are in need of wisdom. But he personifies wisdom as a woman who is constantly urging men to follow her.<sup>11</sup> In feminizing both wisdom AND seduction Solomon is using a literary device to grab our attention.

In the same way that wisdom made great claims for herself, so also immorality, pictured as a woman, make promises to the one who would follow her.

The advice Solomon is giving about sex is no more limited to men being seduced by women than wisdom is only dispensed by women to men. Both in inviting us to follow wisdom and in warning us against sexual sin he is speaking to girls and women every bit as much as he is speaking to men and boys.

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<sup>11</sup> Wisdom invites men to follow her. [8:4] *“To you, O men, I call And my voice is to the sons of men.”*

Solomon imagines the guy who has fallen into the trap of the seductress thinking to himself -

**[5:12] ...“How I have hated instruction.**

**And my heart spurned reproof!**

**[13] “I have not listened to the voice of my teachers,**

**Nor inclined my ear to my instructors.**

**[14] “I was almost in utter ruin**

**In the midst of the assembly and congregation.”<sup>12</sup>**

Hear that painful self-reproach. He’s asking himself, “*How could this have ever ‘happened’ to me?*”

Maybe he doesn’t see himself as an active agent in the sexual escapade. Maybe he sees himself as nothing but an innocent victim. But he’s not innocent and he wasn’t a passive bystander, and his life is now a mess.

He is filled with remorse and a feeling of helplessness as his life seems to spin out of control.

Do you remember that moment when you did something you knew you shouldn’t have - and were caught? Do you remember feeling like your sin had pushed a stone off a cliff and you had no control over the ensuing avalanche? That’s this guy.

I have never read a more honest and instructive confession than that of Gordon MacDonald after his moral failure of a number of years ago.

When I was a young pastor, MacDonald was one of my heroes. Great preacher. Great pastor. Then he became the president of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Then he violated his marriage vows.

In his book, Restoring Your Broken World, he described his anguish when he saw the pain that his sin caused his wife, his children, and his friends.

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<sup>12</sup> Some believe that this man is saying that he was almost stoned for his immorality (Dt. 22:22-24)

He wished that he could undo the damage, that he could re-enact the whole thing so that it didn’t happen. But, of course, that is impossible. He wrote of having “broken” his personal world.<sup>13</sup>

Now, by the grace of God, personal worlds can be rebuilt after they have been broken. And today Gordon MacDonald is still one of my heroes for having faced his sin and for repenting and for allowing God to re-form him.

But MacDonald wrote his book and Solomon has written his book to spare us the grief of having to travel a very painful road.

Wisdom understands that there are two ways to learn things in life. The smart way and the hard way. We will all eventually come to see - either by learning the smart way or the hard way - that outside of marriage, sexual relationships simply don’t work.

They may be fun or appear to work for a time, but they don’t work over the long haul.

The ultimate one-flesh union of sexual consummation demands - by its very nature - the ultimate commitment of a lifetime covenant.

Besides remorse there are other damages that arise from non-married sex.

Without hyperbole, Solomon says that the path that leads to sexual union outside of marriage is the path that leads to death.

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<sup>13</sup> I find it instructive and alarming that men I have most trusted and admired who have wandered from their marriage vows when it comes to sexual involvement with other women have not sinned in their seemingly more vulnerable 20’s or 30’s, but in their 40’s and 50’s. Vigilance over the sexual drive is necessary throughout life.

## The Path of Suffering and Death

*A moral and spiritual death (5:18-19; 7:27)*

Again, speaking of the woman or the man who seduces someone sexually -

***[5:18] For her house sinks down to death,  
And her tracks lead to the dead;***

***[19] None who go to her return again,  
Nor do they reach the paths of life...***

***[7:27] Her house (i.e. - the house of the adulteress) is the way to Sheol,<sup>14</sup>  
Descending to the chambers of death.***

The path to sex with a partner not your spouse leads to a moral death.

Married Christians don't remain spiritually vibrant when they give themselves to sex outside of their marriage.<sup>15</sup> Unmarried Christian don't grow in their faith and in their passion for Christ when they are involved in a sexual relationship.<sup>16</sup>

A deadening of the spirit will eventually begin to take place. The conscience is seared, the will is hardened, the heart calcified.

<sup>14</sup> In the Old Testament, "Sheol" usually refers to the place of the dead, generally.

<sup>15</sup> The married person may be tempted to seek another partner when they are in a less than satisfying relationship with their own spouse. God says, "*No, you have entered into a one-flesh relationship with your husband/wife. No other sexual union is permitted.*" The great delusion is that the delicious ends up as the disgusting. Sexual escapades outside of marriage, which may appear so appealing from the outside, will be, in the end, appalling.

<sup>16</sup> For those who are single, there may of course be tremendous pressure to become sexually active. Nobody is going to deny that sexual frustrations are real. But God doesn't require that singles deny their sexuality. That would be impossible. We are sexual beings - we are *men* and *women*. God does forbid sexual union with a partner for the unmarried. That may be difficult, but that is not impossible. Ignore that counsel and you'll regret it. Follow that wisdom and you'll be glad you did. Sexual self-control will build character, is pleasing to God, and is a sign of growing discipleship.

In addition, what we know in 2013 was just as well known in the ancient world, that there is physical danger associated with sexual immorality.

*Physical death (5:15)*

***[5:11] And you will groan at your latter end,  
When your flesh and your body are consumed.<sup>17</sup>***

Solomon paints a gruesome picture of someone whose sexual promiscuity has wrecked his health by stress and anxiety and wasting sexually transmitted disease.

Finally, he says bluntly, that a life given to sexual sin is a wasted life.

## The Path That Wastes a Life (5:8-10)

***[5:8] Keep your way far from her,  
And do not go near the door of her house,***

***[9] Or you will give your vigor to others,  
And your years to the cruel one;***

***[10] And strangers will be filled with your strength,  
And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien.***

Depending on who you listen to, sex can send you to heaven or hell. Both are extravagant claims - and both are false.

Still, sex, as a *misused* gift of God, is a tyrant, ruling our lives with devastating effect.

Case in point: King David. David was the man after God's heart. But at a certain point David used his position as King to take sexual advantage of the woman, Bathsheba. For the rest of his life he would look back on that night as the night that broke his world.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Today, the known dangers of sexually transmitted diseases should serve as a "stand alone" rational against the lure of sexual union outside of marriage.

<sup>18</sup> See Psalm 51, written after his sin.

There is not one example in Scripture of a sexual relationship outside of marriage having anything but disastrous effects.

We don't want to "go there." And there is a hero to whom we can turn, a role model who shows us another way.

In Genesis we read about Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. But then, because of God's favor, he rose to prominence in Egypt.

He worked for a man named Potipher, a powerful Egyptian ruler. Potipher trusted Joseph completely.

Then one day, Potipher's wife tried to seduce Joseph. Joseph's response was to literally flee from her, leaving his garment in her hand so that he ran out naked! He sprinted to safety.

Sprint to safety when aggressively attacked. That's great advice for anyone this morning - married or single, young or old, male or female.

As we prepare to close let's listen to a couple more sprinting tips from Solomon.

### **Solomon: On Sprinting for Safety**

#### **Sprint from Flattery (7:5)**

***[5] That they (i.e. - wise words) may keep you from an adulteress, From the foreigner who flatters with her words.***

Men or women who would lead us down the primrose path, who would tempt us toward non-marital sex, will often use flattery. Watch out for flattery.

Some people are willing to say nice things to you for the purpose of gaining an advantage, sometimes a sexual advantage. Flattery is a net that the seducer uses to snare unsuspecting victims.

We shouldn't think that "pick-up lines" were a 21<sup>st</sup> century invention. We should by all means gratefully accept sincere compliments.

But if you sniff even a faint whiff of empty flattery, an agenda behind the words, sprint for safety!

The person flattering you may be doing nothing more than trying to soften up their prey.

And here's another tip from Solomon about sprinting for safety. We find it in Proverbs 7.

We see the woman, Wisdom, observing a young man who is taking a stroll through a city's streets late at night. He's alone.

#### **Sprint from Temptation (7:6-27)**

***[6] For at the window of my house***

***I looked out through my lattice,***

***[7] And I saw among the naïve,***

***I discerned among the youths***

***A young man lacking sense.***

***[8] Passing through the street near her corner;***

***And he takes the way to her house,***

***[9] In the twilight, in the evening,***

***In the middle of the night and in the darkness***

Obviously, young people are naïve. They haven't had many life experiences. They don't understand how the world works. So it makes sense that the case study here would involve a **"youth/young man."**

But not all naïve people are young. Sometimes older people haven't learned important life lessons, some of them involving sexual sanity.

This particular young man would benefit from some wisdom. He is naïve. And he is making the first mistake of the naïve. He is not being careful. In fact, he's looking for trouble. We watch him as he walks around the city late at night.

This is Eve hanging around the apple tree in the Garden of Eden. This is David walking around on the roof of his house in Jerusalem, looking. Just looking.

What begins as a mostly innocent walk ends in disaster. He is seduced, just like an ox is led to slaughter. (7:22)

We won't take time to walk through the whole passage, the enticements and the promises (7:13-18), the assurances ("**my husband**<sup>19</sup> **will never find out**") made to this young man.<sup>20</sup>

But he falls for all of it, hook, line, and sinker. And like a fish on a hook, he is trapped. He "**doesn't even know that it will cost him his life.**" (7:23)

It's easy to see how this evening started out. He was sitting inside, bored and said to himself, "*I need some fresh air.*" So out he went to take a hike.

Then, as he kept walking, "*Hmmm... I've heard about this part of town. I wonder what it's like.*" And then, "*Look, a woman leaning against a light pole. I'll just go over to see what's up...*" and it's all downhill from there.

This is the mistake of the naïve. He's trying to see how close he can come to the fire without getting singed. When we do that, we'll get burned. Wisdom seeks to stay as far away from the fire as possible.

Wisdom sprints away from temptation.

So...

- if you are single and find yourself in a relationship that's getting too hot to handle, sexually, sprinting to wisdom will look like taking steps to change the relationship's dynamics, to cool it off.
- if you are married, and begin to sense a growing attraction/infatuation to someone other than your husband or your wife, sprinting to wisdom may involve backing away and refusing to fuel that relationship, or refusing to spend alone time with that person.

- if you are tempted to go to sexually explicit places on the Internet, sprinting to wisdom might include confiding in a close friend, or positioning the screen so that others can see it, or placing controls on the computer, or giving others the freedom to search your history.

To find sexual sanity in a sexually insane world will often require being a Joseph, and learning to sprint for safety.

### Conclusion:

One of my hopes for this message is that it wouldn't sound like Dave's "Just say 'NO'" sermon! The Bible is so much more positive about sex than that.

So, here at the end, please hear clearly -

**YES!** God's gift of sex is a very good gift, just like fire in a fireplace is good and warm and life-giving. And in the same way that fire outside the fireplace is destructive, sexual union outside the protective bounds of marriage is destructive.

God wants husbands and wives to find delight in sexual intimacy (see Hebrews 13:4). And His warnings to us all against non-marital sexual relationships is prompted by His goodness and by His love.

<sup>19</sup> Could just as easily be "my wife" or "my parents".

<sup>20</sup> I encourage you to read the whole passage. It is a graphic and helpful look at a tragic fall into sexual sin with its devastating consequences.



## APPENDIX

### *For the Wounded Hearts*

Since the late 1970's Bill Hybels has been a pastor (Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago), author, and speaker. He's a really good guy.

Once, after delivering a message on the topic of sex, he was approached by a woman who had heard him refer to married sex as the good gift of God.

She told him, "*Bill, you should know that there are some of us who have had very negative experiences in this area. We don't consider sex one of God's better ideas at all.*"

Research confirms that a high percentage of women in the United States have had an unwanted sexual experience forced upon them - by the time they are eighteen.

This abuse might come from anyone, but it usually comes from someone they have trusted, or should have had every reason to trust.

I would say to you: There is hope for healing and wholeness in Jesus. If you are wrestling with memories of past abuses, or don't feel safe in a current relationship - there are resources available here at Northwest to either help you or direct you to trained, qualified, biblical counselors.

God understands your pain, your confusion, your numbness. He is reaching out to help you. Don't suffer alone. Make it a point to seek help. You can start by seeing Jeff or me, or one of our elders.

### *The War Within*

Men, generally, understand the pull of visual stimulation. The advertisers' ploy of subliminally selling sex along with beer or cars is not lost on us.

With the easy accessibility of sexually explicit material on the Internet, many men - Christian and non-Christian alike - are often drawn to go where they know they shouldn't go. The temptation is great. Even men who don't

want to "go there" find themselves violating their own consciences and "going there."

Men, if this is where you are this morning, struggling with an appetite for porn, there is help available.

You probably want to stop watching, renting or buying the offending material. Maybe you have found it too difficult to change alone.

Let me invite you to avail yourself of the resources of our church. Specifically, feel free to call Jeff or me or any of the Elders. We'd be more than happy to speak with you, pray with you, and point you to helpful resources. We would want to be great, safe shepherds who will point you to holiness and encourage you in the fight.

### *A Generation at Risk*

I am so very grateful to God for the teens who have become a part of our church. It is wonderful to have a vibrant and growing youth group!

Most adults remember the difficulty of navigating the sexual jungle - and in the years since my adolescence that jungle has gotten wilder. Much wilder!

We long to see the kids in our youth group stand strong in the face of sexual temptation. PT Gaines and Jack and Sue Biros and the other adult sponsors of our youth group want to help!

The youth leaders and the church leadership want to provide our young people with support, with loving, Christ-centered relationships, and with truth from God's Word.

### *The Forgiveness of God*

There is the possibility that some of you may have been listening this morning, and have been overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. Guilt because of a present relationship in which you are violating God's Word, or guilt because of a past violation.

Let me assure you that, as opposed to what some may say, sexual sins are not unforgivable sins. My prayer, of course, is that you would always make wise choices when it relates to sex - and every other aspect of your life.

BUT, if you make a mistake, sin, become sexually involved with another person sexually before you marry, or if you violate your marriage vows, forgiveness is still available from God.

The words of Scripture still ring true, *[1 John 1:9] If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

God will give you the strength to break a harmful relationship, and rebuild your life.

This church wants to stand ready to serve as the body of Christ to provide restoration to you in the wake of moral failure. At this hospital, we don't want to shoot our wounded.