

## **Sexual Seduction**

Sermon—Sunday, June 12, 1994

1 Corinthians 6

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As many of you know, I have been doing a series on spiritual warfare, which is the great war that we find ourselves in, inescapably between those people and forces aligned with God and those who are aligned with his enemy, Satan. How many of you, through the course of this series, can see that you are becoming more aware of spiritual warfare in your own lives? How many of you feel like the warfare has actually heated up? Because I know it has for me. I have become more aware of the press and the opposition as I put on the lens of warfare to look at life through. It has just made things a little clearer, but I think things have also heated up.

Well, last week I began a second phase of this spiritual warfare series as I started to talk about inroads to our spirits—things that open us up to the demonic realm. And I said last week that we don't need to be afraid that there is some spirit under every rock. We walk along and we are following Christ and we are praying and something is just going to leap on us. And uncontrollably, we are going to find ourselves to be demonized. Rather, from a biblical perspective, there are things that open one up to demonization. These things are inroads to our spirits.

I mentioned a few of them that I was going to cover. One I began to speak about last week, and that is illicit sex, sex outside of the parameters that God has established for sex and sexuality. A second had to do with unforgiveness and anger regarding past wounds and past hurts. And the third area had to do with the occult. I may add a fourth, which would be legalism, but we will see how the series goes.

Now, this morning I want to continue in working out this business of a connection between demonization and illicit sex, illegal sex, sex that is outside of the parameters and borders laid out in the Bible for the expression of sexuality. And perhaps some of you didn't understand what I was talking about last week, if you were here, or weren't able to draw some of the connections together between sex and demonization. I realize that some of the concepts that I was employing were new and so I will try to go back over some of those things and clarify points for you that maybe you didn't understand. But beyond that, I also realize that this is difficult material for many of us who have been wounded deeply in the area of our sexuality. That is, I realize that we have a high level of emotional preoccupation and, frankly, a high level of pain as the topic of sex comes up and sexual wounding comes up.

I do know, as I speak to you, that there are a number of people here who have been sexually abused. And in your life you have noted the really bad crop of fruit that has been born from that wounding. You see the effects emotionally and spiritually. You don't like them and now to begin to even talk about this issue is painful and difficult for you. In a moment I am going to pray for you that the Lord

will enable you to hear this and that the talk will provide some window of insight for you and, at least, a place of understanding that can assist you. But I do know that it is hard.

I also know that it is hard for those here who are sexually addicted or who live with or are married to someone who may have an addiction. It is difficult to listen to teaching like this when you really are caught. You have been snared by the enemy. The reason why I want to do this teaching is so that you really see what is going on. What is the power behind false and illegal sexuality?

So, I would like to begin with a prayer for this church and for the ability to hear material on sex without the kinds of emotional barriers that I know would naturally exist. I believe it is really important in our time of increasing brokenness and an increasing sexually sinful society, that we understand what our entire culture has gotten itself opened up to.

This morning I am going to preach on the subject of sexual seduction. Let's ask God's presence.

If you have a Bible open it to Numbers 22. We are going to be looking at the story of Balaam for a little while. Balaam is one of those really curious people who are fun to study in the Old Testament. I want to set a little background to this story of Balaam. In Numbers 21 the Israelites are on their way to the Promised Land. They are this huge army of people on the east side of the Jordan river marching from the south to the north when they encounter, it says in Numbers 21:21, Sihon, king of the Amorites. They said to Sihon, king of the Amorites:

"Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway until we have passed through your territory."

They make a very reasonable request. Let us just go through your territory. But instead, Sihon comes out to meet them. It says in verse 23:

"But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. He mustered his entire army and marched out into the desert against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok [those are two rivers that are now in modern Jordan] but only as far as the Ammonites because their border was fortified. Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all the surrounding settlements."

So here this tremendous Israeli army meets the army of King Sihon and completely defeats it. Then at the end of chapter 21, Israel meets another king's army, King Og, who deserved to be defeated with a name like that. But they meet King Og of Bashan's army and defeat that army.

Now, here they are coming. And you can practically hear the marching of their feet as it echoes against the hillsides. You can hear the hoof beats of their animals. You can hear the Israelite shouts. They are coming as an invading army. Here we pick up the story of Balaam in Numbers 22 and it says:

"Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho. Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel

had done to the Amorites [in defeating Og and in defeating Sihon] and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, 'This horde is going to lick up everything around us as an ox licks up the grass of the fields.'

Now Balak who is the king over Moab realizes that he cannot militarily defeat the Israelites. So he decides to take a spiritual route in defeating Israel. He knows that he can't meet them man for man. And he cannot hope to fight against Israel on the physical plain. His army is no match for the Israelites. So he decides to attack them spiritually. Perhaps to unleash against them spiritual opposition which would wipe them out.

So, it says in Numbers 22:

"So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: 'A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.'"

Balak is in a panic. He contacts this seer, in Hebrew it is called a "Baru", a person who is a diviner. And Balaam apparently works for hire. He is one of those palm readers that you see with their signs out on High Street and around town. They will tell your fortune for a fee. There were all kinds of diviners, these seers, these barus that were around in the ancient world. They still exist in different third world nations and we see them, as I mentioned - palm readers, card readers, tarot card readers - today. But then they would open up animals and feel the animals' intestines and tell you things regarding the spiritual realm. Apparently, this particular seer did have some power and an international reputation. Actually we read of Balaam in non-biblical sources from an Assyrian inscription that we discovered archeologically, dating back to 700-800 BC. And while this text is much earlier, this Balaam lived apparently 1300-1400 BC, we have outside records of Balaam's prophecies and Balaam's activities in the ancient Near East from non-biblical sources. So he had quite a reputation. And his reputation lasted at least 600-700 years after. Real Power.

If you know the story of Balaam and his donkey, you can remember that Balaam turned out not to be the most spiritually perceptive guy in the world. Balaam is riding his donkey and has decided to put a curse on Israel for a fee. As he is riding his donkey, the donkey stops in the middle of the road because the donkey sees the angel of the Lord with a sword raised.

God has already told Balaam not to go with Balak. But when Balak finally upped the offer, Balaam figured God had changed his mind. See, don't we think that way? God changes his mind and wrong things suddenly become right when more money is involved? Now Balaam, who is this seer, [I mean this whole story is dripping with irony] cannot see the angel of the Lord, but this ass can see the angel. And so finally this ass instructs the seer. And Balaam has a conversation

with an angel in which the angel clearly tells Balaam that had he not been instructed by his donkey, he would be dead.

The next two chapters are chapters in which Balaam, this pagan seer, is overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit and finds himself unable to curse Israel. Every time he tries to curse Israel, the Holy Spirit comes on him and he ends up blessing Israel.

Balaam learns an important principle regarding battling with the people of God. And the principle that Balaam learns is this: That so long as the people of God are faithful to the Lord, no power can defeat them, neither a military power or a spiritual power. So long as God is with his people, and the people of God are loyal to their God and are walking in obedience, there is no power on earth that can beat them—none! And Balaam says this in Numbers 23:21:

“No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The Lord their God is with them. The shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt, they have the strength of a wild ox, there is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘See what God has done.’”

There are many people today concerned about witchcraft, concerned about the occult and the loosing of something against the church. So long as the church is faithful to our God, no sorcery, no witchcraft, no divination can stop it. Didn't Jesus say, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it.”? So long as the church is with God.

Again, the principle that Balaam learned is this: So long as Israel is faithful to her calling to be God's people, to obey the Lord and to obey his commandments, God will not allow the people to be defeated or cursed.

But what if the people of Israel can be drawn aside from loyalty to God? What if the people could be seduced, enticed, tempted away from God toward the worship of foreign gods? In such a case, the Lord would withhold his hand of protection and blessing and then the nation of Israel would be defeated. If the nation could be drawn away through a weakness, if they could be somehow hooked, then Balaam realized that the nation would lose the protective umbrella of the Lord's presence and they could be defeated like any other country.

Sort of like the old cold war spy tactics that we read about where Russian agents are trying to get American CIA agents to give away some of the national security secrets of the United States. So long as the American agents have integrity, so long as they are walking in obedience to a moral code, those CIA agents are untouchable and they are not going to be disloyal to the American government. But if the Russian agents could ensnare them somehow, if the CIA agent could be seduced through a point of weakness, perhaps through a bribe, perhaps through sex; they could be drawn in through that weakness to be disloyal to the government.

What Balaam does is that he uses the oldest form of trickery in the world, he uses the seduction of sex to draw the Israelites away from loyalty to God into false worship and we read that story in Numbers 25:

“While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with the Moabite women who invited them to the sacrifices to

their God. The people ate and bowed down before these gods, so Israel joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them."

And in the rest of chapter 25 we read about a great plague that the Lord sends against Israel and in verse 9 it says that "24,000 died in the plague" and then we read of this bloody killing of an Israelite man at the end of chapter 25.

You ask how do I know that Balaam was the one who came up with this master plan of the sexual seduction of Israel? The book of Numbers tells us that in Numbers 31:15,16 where Moses is taking vengeance on the Midianites and Moses asked, "'Have you allowed all the women to live?' he asked the Israelites, 'They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor so that a plague struck the Lord's people.'" Balaam was the one who came up with the plan.

See, the bottom line is that the enemy, Satan, has no power over us unless we willingly give it to him either through some sin that we commit or some traumatic sin that has been committed against us. But unless we or our families collaborate, unless we go along with the plan, the enemy cannot defeat God's people.

One of the major ways that Satan gets us is by seducing us through illicit sex. That is the wide open door and, certainly, the wide open door in our culture to demonization. Now, I want to draw together in your mind again this connection that I began to try to draw together last week and that is sex and demonization.

Now we see this connection between illicit sex and the demonic first of all in the person of Balaam. It is interesting, if you look through the scriptures, Balaam is mentioned a number of times. This obscure figure is plucked out of the Old Testament in the book of Numbers and he is mentioned in seven other books of the Bible. But what he is specifically mentioned for along with the sin of greed in 2 Peter, he is specifically mentioned for connecting sex with false worship.

If you have a Bible, open it to Revelation 2:12. The Lord says to the apostle John:

"Write to the angel of the church in Pergamum: 'These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. [Here is a city where emperor worship was being carried on in Asia Minor and then the Lord goes on to say,] Nevertheless, I have a few things against you [meaning the church]: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.'"

What you are going to find as I go through this is that there is this connection drawn out between immorality and idolatry. Illegal sex leading to illegal worship. Behind the whole thing is Satan, but you see it in the teaching - the seduction of Balaam who knew that he could not defeat the people of God unless the people

of God collaborated with the enemy. So he secured that collaboration through sex.

Now, the worship that Balaam seduced Israel into was the worship of a Canaanite deity named Baal, or if you don't like the Hebrew pronunciation, we can use the Americanized version of "Baal." We can just call it "Baal-worship." See, when the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were immediately confronted with the Canaanite fertility religions in which people worshipped this God, Baal, and the goddess, Ashura. What you will find out as you read through the Old Testament, Baal is portrayed in ancient Canaanite religion as the "storm god," the god of Thunder and Lightning in Canaanite religion. But Baal is also the male god of sex. Archeologists working in Israel and the surrounding areas have found temple ruins to Baal around the Sea of Galilee. And statues of these Baals with enlarged male sexual organs.

You see, the worship of Baal involved male temple prostitutes. The Canaanites would worship Baal by engaging in homosexual acts with male temple prostitutes and also sometimes with female prostitutes. The men would give their seed to either the homosexual recipient or the female recipient and that was intended to be a gift to the Baal so that the Baal would fertilize the land with rain. Sex was tied to this false worship of Baal.

And in the case of Ashura or Ashtera, the female goddess, whose worship was involved with female prostitutes and violence, we have also found statues of these female goddesses. In other countries that same goddess took on the name Ishtar, Astarti, Venus, Aphrodite - it is all the same goddess.

The Lord warned the people of Israel very sternly about getting hooked to a demonic spirit through illegal sexuality. By having sex with these temple prostitutes, the people were opening themselves up to what was behind the prostitutes, these homosexual spirits or these spirits of Ashura or Astarti. The result was that by opening themselves up to these spirits, the people of Israel were subject to defeat.

Now, again, from last week, I attempted to link up in your mind false worship and false sexuality. Perhaps it is not clear to you that worship is not just what we do on Sunday morning in singing. The biblical idea of worship has to do with drawing near so as to kiss. That is literally what the word in worship means in the Greek, *proskuneo*, means to draw near to God so as to kiss. The word "worship" has to do with intimacy, connectedness.

As a person draws near so as to kiss, to embrace, and then to have sex, illegally, outside of the will of God, they are drawing near and kissing, as it were, the power that is behind that person they are having sex with. They are communing not only with the person, but whatever stands behind the person—God or the enemy. False sex, illegal sex, means false worship and illegal worship.

Don't we see this connection in the world's religions? Look at the world's religions and what you are going to find is distorted sexuality, illegal sexuality as a major part of the world's religions. When worship gets distorted, sexuality gets distorted and vice versa. In Hinduism, to this very day, if you go into a Hindu temple what you are going to find is an extraordinary number of phallic symbols

lining the walls. In the streets of Bombay and Delhi and Calcutta, during Hindu parades, you will see gross distortions of sexual organs, statues and phallic symbols being carried through the streets—the monumental pornographic display. Until the British eliminated it by force of law in the last century, Hindu temples were surrounded by temple prostitutes. This was up until the 20th century. When I talk about temple prostitutes in the worship of Baal or Ashtera, this is not just something that ended 1500 BC. This was up until the 20th century in India.

If you look at the streams of Tantric Buddhism, you will find the most extreme sexual practices—sex with demons and the opening up of one's body by the invitation of sex with all kinds of spirits. Read about Tantric Buddhism.

Read about Mormonism in this country and what Mormons really believe and what Mormons really practice in the area of sex and sexuality. The Mormon view of heaven is a continual act of sex. And men having hundreds of goddess wives and impregnating them. That is in family values, conservative Donny Osmond version Mormonism.

Read about the Muslim view of heaven straight out of the Koran and you will find the most extreme and gross views of women and sexuality.

You see, the Bible ties together idolatry and immorality. It is all through the scriptures. You've got to see this link. That is why I am hitting it over and over again because folks don't connect up sex and spiritual matters. But the Bible does and we see evidence of it all around us in the world's false religions. Idolatry leads to immorality. Romans 1 lays out this pattern. Paul says in Romans 1:

“Though they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him but their thinking became futile and their foolish minds were darkened. Although they claim to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal men and birds, animals and reptiles.”

Idolatry. And what does that lead to? Immorality. In Romans 1, the reverse order is the case in the temptation of Balaam; immorality leads to idolatry.

Now, I think that is the sequence that we find in modern America. That we are seduced by sex. We are seduced. We are drawn aside to illegal sex. We open up our bodies and by opening up and offering our bodies, we are opening up and offering our spirits to whatever lies behind this illegal act of sex. It is foreign powers.

We open our eyes and our imaginations and our hearts to these spirits of Baal, to the Asheras, to whatever the spirits names are behind pornographic movies. We indulge in activities that we should not be indulging in. We handle and touch and fantasize about things that we shouldn't.

And then we shake our heads in distress about why we are always depressed and why we always feel defeated and why we always feel so much in bondage. We come up with all kinds of theologies regarding why we see so little power for healing. And we have all these elaborate explanations about how God doesn't really need to work in the western world the same way because of modern America, how God wants us to simply use persuasion. Power is just to make us

better. Why week in and week out the same deaf people and the same blind people and the same people who have emotional problems walk in and out of the church without getting touched and without getting healed, and our marriages break up and our kids have problems—and we, the people of God; we, the people of God don't understand that as leaders, as pastors, down to the least person in the church, we are opening the door to spiritual defeat, to the seduction of Balaam.

But God says, "It is enough." And it is time to expose the whole system of illegal sex that leads to our defeat. He is exposing it all. He is using the lens of the Bible to do it.

Now, I want to mention real quickly some lies that Satan uses to seduce us sexually so that we can be opened up spiritually and ultimately defeated. Satan's tool is always the tool of the lie. He gets us to respond to that word of darkness. We respond and obey and then we get opened up to the power of darkness.

What are the lies? Flip with me real quickly to 1 Corinthians 6. We are going to finish today's talk by looking at some of the lies surrounding sex that seduce us and ultimately bring us into contact with the demonic.

1 Corinthians 6 - Paul is writing to the Corinthians and he says in verse 12:

"Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial.

Everything is permissible for me—but I will not be mastered by anything."

Here is the first lie: I am free in Christ; therefore, I am free to do what I want [sexually, is the implication]. The Corinthians, I believe, are quoting Paul back to himself as the Corinthians are engaged in all kinds of sexual activities. Again, by illegal sexual activities, I mean sex outside of the bounds and the will of God; sex outside of heterosexual marriage. They are involved in fornication; they are involved in adultery; they are involved in incestuous relationships. And then they quote back to Paul this statement, "Everything is permissible for me." Paul, aren't you the one who taught us our liberty in Jesus? We are no longer bound by the law. Therefore, we ought to be able to do what we want sexually. The battle cry: I am free in Christ. Stop being so legalistic about sex.

Well, of course, Paul by saying "Everything is permissible for me" was talking about things like food and drink and holidays and Sabbath days and worship rituals, all the little rules and laws that used to bind him as a Jew under the Old Testament law. He is saying that now that he has turned to Jesus Christ, he is free from all of that. He is free from food regulations. He can eat anything he wants. He is free from drink regulations. He is free from having to worship only on certain days. He doesn't have to treat one day above another. He is free from the whole bunch of rituals that they used to have to go through in the Old Testament. He is free.

Nowhere does the apostle Paul ever say that his freedom extended to the area of sexuality. That somehow God had changed his mind regarding his perfect will. That is that a man and a woman have sex only within the confines of marriage, period. Freedom doesn't go that far.

But I love Paul's mind because he picks up on this argument of freedom [and I have heard this], people using legalism as a weapon to defend their particular sexual practices. "Hey, don't be so legalistic as you challenge me regarding



what is obviously God's will laid out all through the Bible. Don't be so legalistic as to remind me about God's will." Paul has such a brilliant mind. I would hate to debate the apostle Paul, because he turns the argument of freedom around and he says, "Well, everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything."

In other words, if you are so free, are you also free to stop having sex? Are you free to stop the illicit practices you are engaged in? See, he is using the argument that we would use today with an addict who denies that they are, in fact, addicted. You talk with someone who is an alcoholic or addicted to cigarettes, addicted to pornography and the person's response, in denial to their addiction, often might be "Hey, I am not an addict." "I am not an alcoholic. I just choose to drink every night and sometimes during the day. But I am not an alcoholic."

And so you might say, "Well, if you are really free in this area, well then, how about if you stop for a week or two weeks or a month?"

See, if you are mastered, Paul is saying, then you are not free, as you claim to be, in Christ. If you are dominated so that you cannot stop doing this behavior, then you are a slave. If your liberty in Christ has gotten you to the place where you are now in bondage to a particular behavior, then you are not free in Christ at all no matter what you claim. You are a slave.

So, to those who argue "Well, I am free in Christ, stop being so legalistic," Paul responds two ways. He says, first of all, "Your freedom in Christ was never meant to extend to things like sex where God's moral will from the beginning has not changed. But in any case, I can tell you that if you exercise your liberty outside of God's moral will, in a very short period of time you are not going to have any liberty at all. You are going to be a slave."

The only kind of liberty that a Christian can have is liberty within the will of God. Within the will of God, we find tremendous freedom. Outside the will of God, we are slaves.

Here is the second seductive lie: Hey, this is just my body. Sex just affects my body. It is just physical. Sex doesn't affect me spiritually.

Verses 13 and 14:

"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food' - but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also."

The Corinthians were saying that what we are talking about by sex is just the body. It is like food. Sex and food are the same. You know, you eat, you enjoy your meal, you wipe your mouth and it's all gone. You have sex, you get up from the bed and it hasn't affected you at all. You take a shower, it's over. It is just the body.

People say that today. What difference does it make if I have sex with my boyfriend or girlfriend? Or ten boyfriends or ten girlfriends? I can come to church and lift my hands in worship and sing. None of those sexual things have affected me spiritually.

What Paul is driving at when he says “the body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and by his power God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also” is that he is trying to get us to understand a true view of the body. See, the Corinthians were working with a Greek view of the body which was dualistic. By dualism, I mean that the Greek view of the body was kind of the same view that we might have of a car. A car is just a vehicle to get us around in, but we are not the car. I am not my Toyota and the Toyota is not me. The Toyota is just a vehicle that drives me around.

And the Greek view of the body is just like that. I am not my body, my body is not me. My body is just a vehicle that transports the real me around, my soul. So if I misuse my body, it is really rather like misusing my car. You know, my Toyota, I have lots of trash all over it. There are paper cups tossed in the back seat. There are old newspapers, there are cans, the car is dirty. But that really doesn’t affect me very much. I can jump in and jump out and still be the same Rich.

That is a dualistic view—that what I do with my body really doesn’t affect me. And Paul is working from not a Greek dualistic view, but a Hebraic, Jewish view of the body which says “You and your body are one.” It is not just your soul that is meant for the Lord, but your body. And rather than becoming a disembodied soul on the last day, floating around in space like some wisp of smoke, the Lord, he says in verse 14, will raise you up bodily the way he raised Jesus from the dead. You will never escape the body, ultimately. You are always going to be bodied. Either you will be in this body or on the last day you will be in a resurrected body, but you will be bodied.

So, it matters what you do with your body. Your body is not just a vehicle. Your body and you are inextricably intertwined. And, therefore, it makes no sense to say, “Well, hey, I can be a good Christian and do whatever I want with my body.” Ultimately, your spirituality and Christianity will be affected by the uses to which you put your body. And you can’t just wash your body off with a shower and be clean. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away the stain left on us by sinful sex.

Well, here is the third seductive lie: Well, I don’t know about you, but I can have sex without worship and sex without intimacy. Now obviously, you don’t have to have worship in your mind or intimacy in your mind when you have sex. It’s not a matter of what’s in your mind. It’s a matter of what was in God’s mind when he invented sex.

Paul says in verse 15-17:

“[Don’t you understand the purpose of sex?] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never. Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh, but he who unites himself with the Lord is one in spirit with him.’”

In a certain sense, you can have sex without intending intimacy, sex without intending connectedness. But to do so is to deny the very purpose of sex, God’s design of sex, which is designed to unite you with someone else. God designed

sex to connect you. To have sex without intending intimacy and sex without union is to leave us feeling emptier and more lonely, and more broken than before we ever engaged in the act of sex. When we have sex without intimacy, we are denying God's design for sex. It is designed to connect us.

You know, when you use something for a purpose for which it was not designed, you end up breaking that thing. It is like using the base of a lamp as a hammer. I need to drive this nail in and I don't have a hammer, so how about I use this lamp? And it is possible, perhaps, to drive the nail in with the base of the lamp, but what you will probably end up doing, though, is breaking the lamp. There will be this crack. And it won't do what you want it to do in the future which is to give light.

When we use sex wrongly, other than for connectedness and union and intimacy within marriage, what we end up doing is shattering ourselves. We are like broken lamps that can't give light. And we are lonelier and emptier than before we ever had that sexual act.

Here is the fourth lie [and I only have one more after this]: Why focus so much on sex? There are so many other sins. You conservative, religious people are always talking about sex. What about rage? What about greed? What about economic inequalities? What about pride? What about all of the other sins listed in the Bible? Why focus on sex? Sex is a big deal.

Paul says in verse 18:

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

What about gossip and racism? Well, it is absolutely true that sex is certainly not the only sin. Nor is it biblically worse in the eyes of God than other sins that we may dismiss in us because we are not having illegal sex; therefore, we may feel like we are really good people. Sin is sin in the eyes of God.

But I notice that when authors or people are pushing for illegal sex, sex outside of the revealed prescriptions and bounds of God, they always attempt to muddy the waters with this argument, "What about all these other sins?" Well, we can talk about those, but let's talk about sex now. Just because there are other sins doesn't make sexual sin any less of a sin.

Paul seems to be saying in verse 18, at least in my reading of it—I know it is a controversial passage and can be read a number of different ways, that sex and sexual sin is unique not because it is worse than other sins, but it is unique in that it seems to affect us bodily and opens us up bodily in a way that other sins do not. I, frankly, believe that sexual sin opens up your body to dark powers. So that the very members of your body and my body get gripped by dark powers in a way that pride or greed do not open up your body. Perhaps the closest equivalent might be substance abuse, drug or alcohol abuse. But sexual sin seems to allow the exertion of power on your body.

In verse 19, again, Paul connects up sex and worship by saying:

"Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God."

We take what is the Lord's and should be under the Lord's mastery and we put our body under the mastery of another person or object, whatever that person or object represents.

Here is the last lie, seductive lie number 5: Well, I have a right to do what I want with my body. And nobody is going to tell me that I don't have a right to do with my body what I want to do. If I want to have sex with whomever, whenever, however I want, that is up to me.

That radical kind of right to privacy, my right to autonomy, my right and ownership over my body, Paul meets that spirit head-on. It was in the Corinthians and it is in Americans today—I have a right over my body.

Paul says in verse 19:

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”

If you claim to be a Christian, then you have given up ownership rights, not only over your Sunday morning from 9:00-10:30 or 11:00-12:30. You are not just giving ownership rights over to an hour and a half church service. Becoming a Christian means that you have transferred the title deed of your life to Jesus.

Marlene and I, last year, sold our house to another family. And at the closing we transferred the title deed of our house to that other family. What that meant is that I no longer have the right to use that house. I can't just walk in any time I want. I have no right to set up a BBQ in their backyard. I have no right to sleep in any one of the rooms anymore. That house is now owned by someone else. And to use the house, I must ask their permission.

Do you understand that becoming a Christian transferred ownership rights of your life - calling the shots in your life, the right to exercise sex, to use your body, your rights regarding your money, your career goals and ministry goals - you have transferred those to Jesus, completely. You were bought by his blood shed on the cross. And so now anything we do, it's “Lord, may I? Lord, may I? Is it OK?” And if it is not OK with the Lord, then it's “Lord, you own me. I am yours. You have a right to deny me permission!”

Now, rather than creating slavery and oppression, being owned by Jesus Christ creates freedom. The Lord knows what is going to maximize our lives. He loves us so much that he wants us to have liberty. He loves us so much that he doesn't want us to be under dark powers. Some of you are maybe thinking today about becoming a follower of Jesus, you must begin to understand that Christianity is not just going to church and it is not just a set of beliefs, but it is a transfer of ownership over all of your life. Let's get rid of our arguments with each other about “No one is going to tell me and I don't have to listen to...” We gave up those rights when we came to Jesus. He has a right to call the shots. He owns us. And praise God for that, because I sure wasn't doing a very good job of running my life and many of you weren't doing a very good job either.