

# Sexual Flourishing

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 July 2020

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning. My name is Matthew. I'm here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. Special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back to God's word over and over again, because we believe that he has something to say to everyone.

We're continuing our series in the book of Proverbs, and we're going to be in Proverbs chapter 5. You might be wondering what happened to Proverbs chapter 4. Proverbs as a book works topically, and so many topics are revisited over and over, and so Proverbs chapter 4 repeats the same themes that we covered in chapters 1 through 3.

This is similar to what we did last summer, where we started out with the first few psalms. We did Psalm 1 through 3, and then we skipped 4, went to 5. I think we may have skipped 6 and gone to 7. So that explains why we're in chapter 5.

I told you at the beginning of this series about the practice in my family growing up that we would read the chapter of Proverbs that corresponded to the day of the month. So we're actually doing that today. Today's the fifth, and we're reading the fifth chapter.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] And it's been practiced not just by my family, but by many individual Christians throughout church history. And because of that practice in my family, I knew the Proverbs very well.

I knew there were various sections in it. And there was one night where my parents decided, it seemed like it came out of left field, they decided they needed us to memorize one verse from the Bible that evening.

And I had, and also they told us, and this was their great downfall, that we could pick whatever verse we wanted. Now I had other plans, I think, for that evening, and this was an interruption to those plans.

And I did not like the idea of random Bible verses at night, and so I decided I was going to put an end to this once and for all. And knowing my Proverbs well, I went off and I memorized Proverbs chapter 5, verse 19.

And I went back to my parents and I proudly declared, A lovely deer, a graceful doe, let her breasts fill you at all times with delight, be intoxicated always in her love.

[ 2 : 2 2 ] And my parents were speechless. And they never asked us to memorize a random Bible verse again. Now I mention that story not because I was the youngest child in my family, and maybe a little bit of a punk, but because of two things that it shows for us.

First, when we talk about sex, we're talking about a subject that's very sensitive. And I knew this, part of the reason that was the verse I picked. When we talk about sex, we're also talking about something that the Bible speaks clearly about, which is why I knew it was safe to pick that verse.

What were my parents going to say? It's in the Bible. You said any verse. And so the same thing is true of us. Sex is a very sensitive topic, so we need to be careful in the way that we talk about it.

We also need to be bold and clear in talking about it, because the Bible is bold and clear in talking about it. And so as we look to be sensitive and careful, I'll say a few things as we get started.

First, whenever we talk about a controversial or sensitive topic, I always tell you, I'm going to say something, not everything. Something, not everything. Second, this is another area, as I've mentioned in the past, where we need to talk about the masculine color of the book of Proverbs.

[ 3 : 40 ] We're going to see a son being told to stay away from a woman who might tempt him. And it's possible for us to think that maybe the book of Proverbs is misogynistic in some way, right? Are we supposed to leave this thinking that men are innocent and women are tempters?

Well, no, that's not the point that we're going to take away. Remember, I've discussed before the genre of Proverbs in the ancient Near East. Proverbial literature was written in this form. It was written in the instruction of a father to his son.

And so it makes sense that this would be the warning. If it were written by a mother to her daughter, we would expect it to be different, right? We would expect it to be warning about a man who would be tempting.

And so at risk of stating the obvious, both men and women are tempted sexually. Both men and women tempt. And it can be hard sometimes the way that we talk about sexuality in the church, especially when we talk about women's sexuality, because sometimes it comes off as if it's a men's issue, and it makes women feel like it's not safe to struggle.

And so it creates an extra level of shame. And in fact, that's the last thing we want, right? Because we know that shame and silence is a tool of Satan. It's what he uses. So we just want to say these things out loud and say them clearly, right?

[ 4 : 54 ] Both men and women struggle with sexual integrity, whether that's adultery and fornication, and I'll talk about this morning, whether it's pornography, that's an issue for both sexes. And so it's not that men struggle and women don't, but that we're humans.

All of us are sexual beings and all of us struggle. And the other thing that's important to say, of course, is as we're coming to these topics, it will bring up for some of us painful memories, maybe painful memories of ways that we've fallen short of God's standard in the past, maybe painful ways that other people have sinned against us in this way in the past.

And so I just want to remind you as those memories come up that of most and greatest importance, God is with you. His grace and his forgiveness are real. And of much less importance, I am with you.

And so with that, let's turn to Proverbs chapter 5. I invite you to turn in your Bible or in your worship guide near the end. You can turn on your phone or turn on your phone. However you go, remember that this is God's word.

And Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5 tells us that every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. So that's why we read now, starting at verse 1.

[ 6 : 04 ] My son, be attentive to my wisdom. Incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion and your lips may guard knowledge.

For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil. But in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

Her feet go down to death. Her steps follow the path to shale. She does not ponder the path of life. Her ways wander, and she does not know it.

Verse 7. And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless.

Lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner. And at the end of your life, you groan when your flesh and body are consumed. And you say, how I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof.

[ 7 : 10 ] I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation. Verse 15.

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you.

Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight.

Be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths.

The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he has held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly, he is led astray.

[ 8 : 12 ] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you don't shy away from hard things, and we thank you that you don't leave us alone, that you don't just create sex and bodies and men and women, but you give us guidance and instructions and rules to protect us and to keep us safe.

We ask that you'd help us this morning as we talk about good and hard things, that you'd send your spirit to give us the grace that we need, that we would hear from you and believe and follow you.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. As I've mentioned, in the past, I grew up in the Presbyterian Church.

I grew up in this denomination that we're in now, and I've tallied it up recently, not counting Cheyenne Mountain. I've been a member of some sort of five different churches in the PCA, in our denomination.

And as I added up, in three of those churches, three of those five, there was at least one leader who ended up, you know, an elder, deacon, staff member, who ended up, their marriage ended up ending because of their adultery.

[ 9 : 32 ] So three out of five, leaders, Presbyterian churches, two of the other two of the five, there was a leader or a staff member whose marriage ended. Given the circumstances, I'm not sure if it was because of adultery or not.

So three of the five, clearly adultery, five of those five churches, that was what happened. Not for just someone coming to church, but for a leader, someone who's prominent in the church.

Even more than that, in one of the churches that I grew up in, the one I was at when I was in elementary school, it's a very small church. And of the kids that I was with in Sunday school in that very small church and in a homeschool co-op, now there have been four pregnancies that have come out of marriage, out of wedlock.

And I tell you that story not to be heavy, not to be a downer, but to highlight what this passage is highlighting for us, which is that we are not immune to sexual temptation.

I mentioned when we talked about the issue of violence that it's tempting to believe that if we're in the church, if we're part of good, conservative, reformed Presbyterian churches, that somehow, you know, we'll struggle with these normal sins.

[ 10 : 44 ] Maybe we'll struggle with pride or lust. Maybe we'll be tempted to gossip, but of course we wouldn't struggle with adultery, right? We wouldn't be tempted to actually commit violence or to trample the poor. And yet this Israelite father writing to his Israelite son realizes that even as he's raising him in the covenant community, this is a very real temptation.

It's one that he needs to warn him against. It's something that he should be on guard for. He should not assume that somehow this doesn't affect him, right? When we're in the church, we're not in this bubble that's somehow unaffected by the temptations of this world.

And so we need this passage from Proverbs to remind us of these very real dangers. It is a mistake to think that we will not be tempted by sexual sin.

It is a mistake to think that our children will not be tempted by sexual sin. It is the fool in Proverbs who doesn't take guard against these things, who's not cautious about these things.

Remember, the fool has not committed to the path of wisdom. And so it's the fool who doesn't realize that these temptations are very real and very threatening.

[ 11 : 58 ] We see this allure that happens in verses 1-6. This woman is coming. She is potentially saying wonderful things to this man, things he's longed for someone to say to him. She's seducing him.

Her lips drip honey. Verse 3, her speech is smoother than oil. There's potentially a sexual innuendo going on here that she's offering things to this man that feel and experiences that are incredibly pleasurable.

And so that helps us understand why this temptation is so strong, why it's alluring to him. Despite all he has to lose, he is going to feel drawn to it. And of course, we can say the same thing for women, right?

There might be a man who says wonderful things, whose lips drip with honey, who tells her the things she's always wanted to hear. And there's going to be a very real temptation to give in to that. And so the first thing we're told here is simply that sexual temptation is real.

It's something that affects us. The second thing we're shown here is that this temptation, while it presents as something wonderful, actually leads to death.

[ 13 : 06 ] It seems that it's like honey, right? Her lips seem like honey. What do they end up tasting like? Verse 4, actually really bitter. Bitter is important. There's a bait and switch going on.

You're offered something that seems wonderful. It ends up being something terrible. We again find our metaphor of the path here, right? Her path, verse 6, is not the path of life, but verse 5, the path to shale.

She leads to death. Sexual sin leads to death. Adultery, fornication, lead to death. death. We're given in verses 7-14 a picture of the type of death that they lead to, and there's an emphasis here on ruin.

There's a financial ruin. Verse 9, you're giving your years to the merciless. Strangers are taking your labors and your strength. What you do is going to go to the house of a foreigner, so there's financial implications to this.

There's physical complications. Verse 11, at the end of your life, you're going to groan because your flesh and body are consumed. There's going to be a groaning, an agony that you experience in this life from this sin.

[ 14 : 19 ] Now, what's going on in the book of Proverbs, most likely in this cultural setting, there's a legal recourse for the spouse who is harmed by adultery. So, for example, let's say there's a wife, her husband commits adultery, her husband and his wife commits adultery.

The person who is harmed, the innocent spouse, would be able to come after them for financial ramifications. Now, that actually used to be true in the United States. It's not true anymore.

We don't have that specific consequences, but there are still consequences that come from sexual sin. I'll give you a few examples.

There was a article that came out a few years back in a wall journal of all places, and the article's title was a question. The question was this, does sex still make babies?

The answer is, wait for it, yes. This was, of course, examining in the light of birth control, saying, with the reality of birth control, do we really think of sex as something that's connected to children?

[ 15 : 21 ] And it talked about the failure rate of birth control. No matter how well you are using birth control, no matter what you have available to you, you still have the chance of having a child.

Ask many married couples about this, by the way. And, of course, that's going to have financial legal ramifications, right? You may end up giving your honor, your wealth to others because you're suddenly supporting not one family, but two.

Or maybe you're in a situation where you're trying to support a family, but you don't have the support you need, right? There's a financial element there. It may lead not to that. It may lead to a divorce. It's common knowledge that divorce is one of the great destroyers of wealth.

And, of course, we're not just talking about this in pragmatic terms. This person's groaning at the end of his life. There's the risk of disease, right? But there's also the fact that maybe he's groaning out of the loneliness that he has.

He's abandoned the spouse that he committed to or she's abandoned the spouse she committed to. And suddenly, at the end of their life, they don't have what you would have from investing in a marriage over a lifetime.

[ 16 : 26 ] Maybe this is a single person who's chosen promiscuity over marriage. They, at the end of their life, they don't have something to look back on and hold. So there's this ruin that the author of Proverbs, that Solomon, holds out to us.

There's real and true destruction. There's emotional destruction we could talk about. And so he's warning them. I told you before, our greatest warning are not the consequences of sin, but our loves.

But the consequences of sin still matter. And he's telling him, look, this leads to death in real and practical ways in this world. Don't believe the lie. Don't believe the lie that you can indulge in this for a minute and it will not affect you.

Now, with the physical and legal and relational implications, of course, there's one consequence that's even greater than all of those. It comes at the very end here. Verse 21, Verse 23, In other words, even if none of these consequences happen to you, God still sees.

And if you persist in unrepentant sexual sin, you have reason to question whether you are actually a Christian. If you persist in unrepentant sexual sin, you should question whether you're actually a Christian if God has given you a new heart.

[ 18 : 01 ] I'm not talking about those who struggle with sin, right? All of us struggle with sin. All of us have sexual brokenness. I'm not talking about those who are fighting a good fight against temptation. I'm talking about those who are not fighting any fight.

They should question if there's no struggle against sin in your life, you should question whether you belong to God. And so that's an even greater consequence than all of these.

No matter how well things go in your life, at the end of time, you will answer to God for how you lived in this world, including what you did with your body. And so the Father here is warning His Son of the very serious temporal consequences consequences, and the very serious eternal consequences.

That sexual sin will bring Him death. Thankfully, there's not just a warning here in Proverbs chapter 5, but there's also a word of hope.

There's a solution that's given, a particular solution for this passage. There's actually a couple of them. Verse 8 says, keep far away from her. Do not go near the door of her house.

[ 19 : 13 ] I'm not going to focus as much on that this morning because we're going to have a chance to talk in chapters 6 and 7 about what it looks like to keep far away, about running from temptation. And so instead, I'm going to focus on the other element that's given to us here in verses 15 through 20.

Back in a long time ago, in 2017, I told you the story of the actor, Paul Newman, who was married to Joanne Woodward for 50 years. And it was rare for someone to have that long of a marriage in that industry, in the film industry.

And so he was asked at one point, how have you remained faithful for this long in this kind of setting, in this culture, in the way, places where you run, how have you done it to stay married for 50 years?

And Paul responded with this quip. I have steak at home. Why should I go out for hamburger? Now, you might find that illustration crass, but it's similar to the image that's used in this next passage.

We see, not steak and hamburger, but water. Verses 15 and 16, drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?

[ 20 : 32 ] In other words, you have high quality water at home. Why would you go out to the city and scoop up water from a puddle and drink that?

Why would you drink dirty water like that? That doesn't make any sense. You have your own well at home. Same thing he's saying about sexual sin.

This is speaking specifically to married people. Why would you go out there? You have a relationship at home. You have your marriage. Embrace that.

In other words, the application is this. Make your sexual relationship with your spouse a priority. Make it something that you pursue.

Make it something that you create time for. Make it something that you work at. Now, there's many reasons for this, but the reason given here is specifically about sexual temptation. Paul tells us the same thing in 1 Corinthians 7 in the New Testament.

[ 21 : 31 ] work on your sexual relationship so that you won't be tempted, so that you can avoid sexual sin. Make it a priority, whatever it looks like, for that stage of life, for your stage of life.

Women, seduce your husband. men, men, pursue your wife. That is one of the primary ways, the avenues that God has given for people to escape sexual sin and sexual temptation.

salvation. We're then told something else here. Now, I'm not going to go into detail, but there are people who believe what's going on here in verses 15 through 18 is a very explicit, graphic, sexual innuendo.

But what's here in verse 19 is a prayer. And it's a prayer from the Father about his son's marriage. Now, this is a very bold prayer. I am going, I'm guessing you've probably never heard a prayer like this, prayed at a wedding.

I'm going to be in a wedding in October, and I don't think I'm going to be bold enough to pray this prayer, although who knows, I've got a few months to kind of work myself up. But the prayer in verse 19 is this.

[ 22 : 48 ] I am praying that you'd be filled at all times with delight, be intoxicated always in her love. In other words, I am praying for you in your marriage that you would have a lot of sex.

And I am praying that that sex would be really, really good and that you would enjoy it. That is this father's prayer for his son. And so that's the urging of Solomon for those who are married, that they would pursue that same thing in their marriages.

And of course, there's a lot of caveats, right? This is going to look different at different ages and stages. Writing to a youth here, he has a youth kind of sex drive.

There are very real health issues and complications that are going to make this hard. There are times and seasons in a marriage where it would actually be unwise to pursue sex.

And so we're talking about the ideal here. This is an ideal image that's given. It doesn't rule out exceptions. It doesn't rule out the complications of life in the real world.

[ 24 : 01 ] And yet, it's still an ideal that God holds out for his people to pursue in marriage. And so I'll say a couple things in general and then a couple things about specific situations.

First of all, this is something for them to work on together. Both of them, if we follow the logic of some of this innuendo, are very excited about what's happening. The husband and the wife are very excited about their sexual relationship with one another.

Which means that the application of this is not to use this passage as some sort of guilt manipulation. Do not go home and say, the pastor said we need to have sex.

No, the application is go home, take responsibility, work on it together. What is it going to take from me to make this really good for you?

What do we need to do so that we as a couple can move forward? What's the next step we have to make in working towards God's ideal? What is it that we need to do to protect each other from sexual temptation?

[ 25 : 06 ] We may not be at verse 19 tomorrow. That's true of all of God's ideals. But we can take our next step towards verse 19.

And this may, right, this is going to take probably more time and more space the older you get. So again, different, it's going to look differently for different people, different stages and ages of life.

And it may take some very, very painful conversations. If you're talking about what is this going to look like for us to move towards this ideal, it may involve some conversations about things you've never talked about, very painful things that have happened in the past, painful things you've done against each other, painful words that have been spoken.

And that conversation is worth having. There may have to be things outside of the bedroom that get fixed before things inside the bedroom get fixed. It's part of the logic of marriage.

It's part of how God uses the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife to encourage them to work on their relationship together. For some of you, I realize this is probably an especially painful topic and it's an especially painful topic because we may be so far away from verse 19 that sex in marriage is a distant memory, right?

[ 26 : 25 ] Maybe it's something from months ago or years ago or decades ago. And the word of discouragement and defeat when we think about God's ideal, that is a word from the enemy, right?

But Satan is the father of lies. He's the one who comes to lie to us and pile shame on us. It's God who comes to speak truth and hope to us.

And so first of all, we have to realize there's hope. There's real hope. And so there's a future, right, if we're in Christ. You may feel lost, but you're never alone.

I'll remind you of the illustration I gave you when we talked about sexual addiction, specifically in 1 Peter, the illustration of the forest. If you walk 10 miles into a forest, how long is it going to take to walk out?

It's going to take 10 miles to walk out. So if you've walked your way far, far away from verse 19, it can take a long time to walk back to verse 19. Wherever you are, wherever you are in your journey, take the next step.

[ 27 : 40 ] The next step might be realizing and admitting that you're lost. And you're almost certainly going to need help to walk your way out of the forest.

If you've never gone to marriage counseling, that's not something to be proud of. There are people who are proud of the fact that they've never sought help. I'm not saying you should be ashamed that you haven't. Some people don't need to go.

But part of embracing the gospel is knowing that it's okay to not be okay. It's okay to talk to other people about our failures because it's okay to fail. God gives us grace for that.

So the gospel frees us up to go and begin to confess and have hard conversations with other people. People who understand the gospel, they don't boast in their strength.

They boast in their weakness. It takes courage and strength and reliance on Jesus Christ to begin to talk about how bad things might be in your marriage and take the next step.

[ 28 : 45 ] If you take the next step, if you begin to talk openly about these things, know that I'm proud of you. I'm rooting for you. It takes a lot of courage to talk about things that are not right.

It takes vulnerability. It takes confidence and trust in God to know that it's going to be okay. And God does have a future and a hope for you.

There is always a future for people who belong to Jesus Christ. Now, you might be wondering, okay, this is great.

I am so glad for all those married people that they have an outlet to escape temptation. What about those of us who are single?

What in the world does this passage have to say to us? Well, one application would be this, and it's the same thing that Paul again tells us in 1 Corinthians 7.

[ 29 : 45 ] Paul says, it's better to marry than to burn. In other words, if you are experiencing a strong and high sex drive and you find it challenging to work with that as a single person, there's an app for that.

It's called marriage. It's not wrong to be single. There can be goodness and singleness, right? I'm single. I don't disapprove of single people, obviously.

And it's good and right to pursue marriage as part of your pursuit of sexual purity. It's okay to say, hey, I'm not sure if I can do this on my own.

I had a conversation with a friend of mine not connected with this church in any way in another part of the country earlier this week who had incidentally and he told me he's in a place where he's starting to think he needs to pursue marriage more aggressively in part because he believes that's going to help him live with greater purity in his life.

And so if you're a single person, it is good and right to pursue marriage. marriage. You don't have to. It's good and right to be single as well. But if you feel like your sex drive is something that is pulling you away to temptation constantly, that is a good reason to pursue marriage.

[ 31 : 01 ] And in fact, the Proverbs talks about marriage as something that we pursue. Proverbs 18, verse 22 says, it's a blessing to a man who finds a wife. That is a active word.



It's a pursuing word. There are things single people can do to increase chances and likelihood of marriage. It doesn't make it simple, right? There are single people who have done everything they can and they're still single.

So we don't make assumptions or judgments about why someone's single. There's also people who are single who think of themselves as victims when instead there's all sorts of things they can do to pursue it.

Whether you're a man or a woman, there are things you can do to make yourself a more attractive partner. Whether you're a man or a woman, you may have to re-examine some of your expectations for marriage.

You may have to think that some of what you want or are desiring is unrealistic. You may have to deal with things in your past that cause you to be unable to make a commitment like marriage.

[ 32 : 01 ] All of that to say there are all sorts of things that we can do as single people if we desire marriage to increase our odds. Now, I'm not saying it's going to happen and it's going to guarantee it.

I'm just saying it's good and right to pursue it. And that is one of the solutions God has given us for sexual temptation is to pursue marriage as single people.

There's nothing to be ashamed of by the way of being single. There's many good things about being single and there's also nothing to be ashamed about of wanting to be married and pursuing marriage.

Marriage is not the only answer it's one of the answers that the Bible provides. It's a reason Paul says it's better to marry than to burn.

Now, I've told you before that there are many negative reasons that we go away from sin. Proverbs lists many of those. We've listed many of them this morning.

[ 33 : 07 ] But ultimately, it's not the consequences of sin that we want to use as our greatest motivation. We want a greater love. We talked about our loves in chapter two.

So we want to love something more. We want something to be even greater than the offer of sexual satisfaction. And sex is a gift from God.

He's given it to us to point to something that's even more glorious than sex itself. It's pointing, it's looking forward to an even greater and fuller intimacy and community that we are going to have with God in heaven.

And so we can see it knowing that it's good and knowing that it points to something better. We can desire that something better. There's a French man whose name I'm going to butcher, Francois Marillac, who struggled with sexual temptation and he looked at the consequences that came from it and he said, at the end of the day, what motivates me is not the danger.

The warnings aren't what's most helpful to me. What motivates me is Jesus' words in Matthew chapter five when he says, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. It's my desire to see God, my love for him.

[ 34 : 25 ] It's that greater love that's greater than my sexual drives. That is what motivates me because I know that that sex is something small that points to something big and that something big is being able to see God.

And so that empowers us and enables us. Remember, Jesus makes better promises. He promises us something better than sexual pleasure. He promises us something better than this strange woman in chapter five or a strange man.

He promises us himself and so we can look forward to that as people who are married. There is something better that God's given us. He's been faithful to us.

We can model that faithfulness now as we look forward to our intimacy with him in the future. As single people, we can remain sexually faithful knowing whatever pleasure we miss out on in this world, there is something greater for us in the next.

There is something greater for us now. And so we haven't failed if we do not have the sexual experiences that our culture tells us we need to have to be successful.

[ 35 : 36 ] There is a greater and better definition of sex that God gives us in his word. In his book, *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?*, a man named Sam Alberry gives a wonderful illustration of mistaking something small and missing something that's big.

He says, there's a scene in the movie *Amadeus* where the young Mozart meets Emperor Joseph II for the first time. As he is led in, he is presented before a man who is dressed grandly and looks to be highly important.

So Mozart instinctively bows low, thinking him to be the emperor. The man looks horrified and discreetly points toward the side of the room where the actual emperor is sitting at a piano.

It is an awkward moment as Mozart realizes what he has done and he quickly goes on to acknowledge the real emperor appropriately. He mistook something small, someone small for someone great.

That's what we do when we mistake sex as the end of our lives, the greatest thing we can experience. Many of us need to go through a similar process when it comes to marriage and romance.

[ 36 : 51 ] When we first encounter it, it can seem so glorious and resplendent with significance that we easily think it must be ultimate. How else do we account for how it can make us feel?

But the fact remains that it is the purpose of such things to point us to where fulfillment is really meant to be found. In other words, it's not sex that gives us our greatest fulfillment and meaning in this life.

That's what the world wants to tell us. Instead, it is God and our relationship with Him. He goes on, one of the ways that happens is when we realize that our relationships cannot deliver all that we expect from them.

If we look to them to provide ultimate satisfaction, we will only be disappointed. C.S. Lewis puts it so vividly, we are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us.

Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

[ 37 : 55 ] To make sexual freedom our ultimate goal is to think that sex and romance is simply an end in itself. Sexual temptation is real.

The destruction that comes from sexual temptation is real. God has offered us many ways out. One of them is through the relationship he gives husbands and wives in marriage.

But even more than that, he has offered us something greater. He's offered us himself. And so whether single or married, we remain sexually faithful because of that, because of Jesus.

We look forward to that now. We practice it now and we'll celebrate it even more in the future. So I invite you to pray with me. Our Father in Heaven, we just thank you and praise you for your word that reminds us of what's true when we're tempted to believe lies.

We ask that you would help us in our sexuality, the temptations that face us, that for those of us who are married, that we would walk more and more together in our sex lives, that it would be something that builds up and nurtures our marriage and it protects us from temptation.

[ 39 : 13 ] We ask for those of us who are single, for those who desire a spouse, that you would provide it. And for those without a spouse, that you would be faithful to your promise that there's no temptation that you haven't provided escape from.

That you'd give us not a love of pleasure, but an even greater love of what you offer to us in your Son. We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.