

# Do Not Lust

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Hey guys, Donnie again. We are jumping back into this series we've been doing in the month of January called Words to Live By. Really just picking up on this idea of resolutions.

Probably most of us or all of us have got some kind of thing we wanna do different in 2022, do less of, do more of. And so we're looking at some passages where Jesus talks about how to improve our lives.

We're pulling these from a sermon he did that's called the Sermon on the Mount. That's in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And he starts off his intro to the sermon are these beatitudes where he describes the blessed life.

Like if you wanna have a life that God smiles on, a life with God's favor, that's what he intros the Sermon on the Mount by saying that's what this is gonna be about. And so it's a great passage for us to consider.

And Jesus is going to be going at the things that are sort of deeper than losing a few pounds or cussing a little less. Those are maybe like, you could think of them as like fruits, whereas Jesus is really getting at the root system.

[ 0 : 5 7 ] He's getting under the surface into our hearts. Now, if you are already a follower of Jesus, just a reminder, when we hear Jesus's teachings on these things, we can't take that as like advice that we can take or leave.

Jesus gets to command us. If we're his followers, that's what it means. We follow him, we obey him. He doesn't just save us from our sins, he's our Lord. He gets to lead us and command us.

And so just a reminder, as we jump in for us Christians, that's a settled issue. Whatever Jesus says, we have to obey, we have to follow him. If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I'm really glad you're here with us as we consider this together.

I think this is gonna be helpful for you, fascinating for you, and I hope that it will leave you going, man, that Jesus is really amazing. Okay, so so far we've looked at subjects like worry and anxiety or anger and hate and judging people.

This week we're diving into the subject of lust. I just wanna say to the parents, we put this in the email link for this sermon, and we mentioned it the last couple of weeks, but we're gonna talk about lust, we're gonna talk about pornography.

[ 2 : 0 4 ] I want you to be aware of that in case you're watching this with your kids. I'm gonna do my best to be tasteful. My kids are gonna watch this, but I want you to not be caught off guard. And so maybe you wanna watch this and then decide if you want your kids to watch it.

That's up to you as a parent. First, just a few things as we approach this subject. I think one misconception that people often have is that God is like, that he's anti-passion or anti-desire.

And that's not true. That's the furthest thing from the truth, actually. God created our bodies. God made sex. God said these things were good. And so as Christians, we believe that those things are good and right.

That's not what lust is. Lust isn't passion. Lust isn't desire. We were actually made to be passionate. We were made with desire. Lust is coveting. And coveting is the sin of wanting what's not yours.

Lust is coveting. And coveting is the sin of wanting what's not yours. So it's not wrong for Christians to have passion or desire. It's wrong for Christians to have passionate desire for things that aren't theirs.

[ 3 : 09 ] Coveting is obviously much bigger than the subject of sexual lust. You can covet someone's new boat or their new truck or their seemingly perfect family life or their perfect head of hair or their job.

You can covet all kinds of things. But we're focused on sexual lust in this sermon because that's the context that Jesus brings up in the Sermon on the Mount. Now, I think like all the other things we've talked about in this series, this one has been really exacerbated through the last two years with COVID.

Isolation, it works like gasoline if you had an already existing lust problem. Like if you had a little tiny lust problem at the beginning of 2020, I bet it has gotten a lot bigger, potentially even out of control by now.

Because that isolation, that living in secret, that living in, you know, like coupled with the constant frustrations and stress, man, those things, they're like gasoline on this problem.

Secondly, I think something really dangerous about lust that's different than the other things is that it can live in the secret far more successfully than some of the other things we've discussed.

[ 4 : 17 ] So if you have an anger problem, and you might be good at like suppressing your anger, like just boiling on the inside, but a lot of times if you have an anger problem, people around you will have, they will have encountered that anger at some degree or another.

Whereas you can go your whole life with a lust problem and nobody knows. In fact, we're often shocked when we find out people in ministry or celebrities think that Jared Fogle guy, the subway guy who was famous for losing all the weight eating subway sandwiches.

I still don't even know how that works, but he did it. And then you find out he gets busted with 400 videos of child pornography in his home. I mean, it's crazy.

No one would have ever thought Jared the sandwich guy, right? It's like a shocking thing. So that makes lust really dangerous. It sort of lives under the surface. And I think that means that a lot of us are not as inclined to take it seriously.

Like your anger problem or your judgmentalism might have been on a list that you wanted to see change this year. But because lust isn't often a public thing for us, it might not have even made your list of things that like you think, gosh, that's serious.

[ 5 : 26 ] I really need to change that. And so if that's you, I hope that this morning I can convince you otherwise. A few other things by way of introduction, I hope you can appreciate this is a difficult subject. And so we want to be clear before we just jump in.

Lust is not like a man-only problem. Women, too, struggle with porn. They struggle with masturbation. And increasingly, like this is happening more and more.

And I think, I've been told actually, that by making it a man-only kind of subject, we are heaping shame on top of the already existing shame. For women who might struggle with pornography, when they hear that it's a man-only issue, they're far less inclined to stick their hand up and go, hey, I need some help over here.

Because they think, well, gosh, what kind of a woman am I? You know, if I struggle with this. And so I want to just say out the gates, we know this is not a man-only problem, right? And we know that that sort of stigma has made it harder for women to admit they need help.

The porn industry, which is a \$97 billion industry, they're smart. They're not going to just waste all of their energy and effort aiming at men. That's leaving out a giant swath of the population of which they could profit from.

[ 6 : 39 ] They're going to absolutely go after women as well. And oftentimes, their approach is different. Maybe it's a more romantic take. Think sort of 50 Shades of Grey or something. But all these are ways to lure women into a porn addiction as well.

Another thing just that we need to say is that kids are looking at porn younger and younger. A lot of times, you know, parents will say, kind of when should I have the talk? Earlier than you think.

Some studies say that kids are likely to have viewed pornography before they finish elementary school. That is crazy. That is absolutely crazy.

So parents, this is not one of these things that we can, you know, we can just punt on. We can't just hope for the best. Also, they're not like just finding a magazine out in the woods or under their dad's mattress or like some National Geographic.

You know, a lot of us, our introductions to pornography were sort of like that. Kids now, especially if they have access to a phone or internet, man, they can see worse pornographic images than their parents ever dreamed of.

[ 7 : 48 ] Add to that the sexting and all that's being normalized with kids. It is devastating. So you and I, we can't afford to hope for the best. But we've got to actually address this with our kids.

If we're gonna be good parents, we have to help them. I told my boys, you know, sex, it's like a fire. And it can be really beautiful, it can be really helpful, but if you let it get out of control, it will burn your life down and it will hurt a lot of other people.

So man, parents, I hope you are, you're jumping in this fight with me. Another thing I'll say is, even if this isn't your issue, like you're already like, I don't even need to watch this. It's your issue.

It's your issue in the same way that, you know, addiction would be your issue because there's people around you, loved ones who are, their lives are being ravaged by lust. It's also your issue because inadvertently, we have all been affected by the porn industry.

Our views on beauty, our views on what sex should be like, all those things have been transformed by the porn industry. Some of you have been, you have not had a porn addiction or lust addiction, but you've been abused.

[ 8 : 57 ] You've been abused sexually and that abuse, lust was behind that. Lust preceded that awful sinful act. So this is one that all of us need to hear and we need to reckon with.

Last thing I'll say is, I'm not sure that you're gonna get over lust through this one sermon. That would be epic, probably not gonna happen, but it's gonna take time, especially if this is like an addiction for you.

Experts say it could take two to three years. But what I do hope is that you'll gain awareness, courage, and hope as we look at these words of Jesus. So let's dive in, keeping all of that in mind.

Matthew chapter five, verse 27. Verse 27.

Man, it's pretty serious, right? Jesus here apparently prefers dismembering your body to lusting. Now the Sermon on the Mount is full of all kinds of these sayings.

[ 10 : 23 ] They're shocking. And that's the point. They're supposed to be shocking, right? Because what Jesus wants to shock his audience into hearing is that lust is more serious than we could ever imagine. I mean, what's wrong with a little lust?

Jesus said, you need to tear your eye out. You need to cut your hand off. Lust is more serious than we can ever imagine. I think that's one of the challenges that I'm gonna face in this sermon is helping to convince maybe a lot of you that Jesus isn't exaggerating here.

He's not some prude who doesn't get it. Jesus is saying, no, you don't get it. You don't get it. Looking with lustful intent is the same thing as taking the action.

Sam Alberry brilliantly writes in his book, *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?* On this passage, he says this. Jesus is saying that her sexuality is precious and valuable, that she has a sexual integrity to her which matters and should be honored by everyone else.

Listen to this line. Jesus is saying that this sexual integrity is so precious that it must not be violated, even in the privacy of someone else's mind.

[ 11 : 29 ] Even if she were to never find out about it, she would have been greatly wronged by being thought about lustfully. From Jesus's perspective, lust is as serious as adultery.

It's a sin. And Jesus goes on to say, and it's especially true with this sin. Jesus says in Matthew 8, 34, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

And Jesus says this isn't you just having a look every now and again. You're a slave. In fact, if you've ever actually tried to stop lusting, you've found pretty quickly that you don't just have a hold of lust.

Lust has a hold of you. C.S. Lewis, speaking of this, says that it's only when people try to live with some kind of chastity, some kind of purity sexually, that they find out their own spiritual desires and how much they've been mastered by them.

You don't actually find that out until you try to control it. Now, the obvious thing is that we culturally don't think this is as serious, right? Our culture fights hard to normalize lust.

[ 12 : 35 ] When I was a kid, porn was hard to get your hands on. It was still kind of gas station behind the counter, like down low. I can still see that image in my head.

There was like magazines and it still had little stuff in front of them. And there was a store in town where they had them kind of like up on the wall and it was like a little bit, you could catch a peek a little easier.

You know, I remember someone found a magazine out in the woods. I was still a kid when it was like, when I was like a teenager, we had dial-up internet just came out.

And it just, it made the whole experience very different. You know, it just was, but I vividly remember my first time seeing like a pornographic image on the internet. But still back then, it was considered shameful.

You know, it was back at the counter, you know, like kind of stuff. It was, it was, and that the generation before me was still very influenced by a purity culture. And their conversations back then were like, you know, they were having these philosophical conversations around, you know, what is leading to people, people, you know, doing sexual things that are unhelpful or harmful.

[ 13 : 45 ] Oh, it must be a starvation of sex. So let's open wide the gates. Let's make sure there's no starvation and then that'll fix the problem. Well, pornography and sex is a whole lot more available, but man, we're not getting any better for it.

However, that era that I sort of like, my generation I think was the last possibly to have it. Really, you can catalog all of that as what they would call old porn.

Think like Playboy magazines. Now, that's not what's going on in our day. New porn, as it's called, is a completely different ball game. Sean Clifford, who's the CEO of a brilliant accountability resource called Canopy, he says this.

New porn is much more addictive, harmful, and difficult to avoid. It is a totally different problem than what parents face with Playboy. Let's start with addiction.

Video pornography is just more compelling than photos. Add the instant availability of the smartphone and the endless novelty of new content and you have the most tempting and bingeable pornography ever made.

[ 14 : 55 ] It's no wonder millions of Americans say they're addicted. Next, let's talk about the harmful impacts of new porn. We know from scientific literature that pornography is formative. It shapes our taste, our perception of what's normal in the brain itself.

For example, over time, users have to watch more and more intense content to get the same effect, right? To get high, just like with a drug, you have to go further and further. You have to use worse and worse stuff, right?

That means that a teenage boy with normal sexual desires can, after years of consuming pornography, find that he's developed unhealthy and extreme taste. That is not a recipe for healthy, real-life relationships.

The real tragedy and the problem we are determined to tackle is just how hard new porn is to avoid. Listen to this line. You don't have to go looking for it. That was my generation.

Now it comes, it now comes looking for you. It's on social media. It's on group chats. It's on the good websites that you'd never expect to have explicit content. That's a different world than what a lot of us grew up in.

[ 16 : 02 ] Added to that, there's now this wide acceptance of looking at porn. There's always been an attempt, I think, to sort of normalize it or even to make it feel somewhat like noble.

I mean, think about like, that little phrase has always got me, for mature audiences only. Like it's the last thing. If anything, it's not mature, right? But for mature, or it's a gentleman's club.

Like, man, that's not what a gentleman is, right? But there's always been this sort of subtle attempt to make it seem normal. But now we've swung all the way that this mainstream culture has, it's taken acceptance much further.

Everyone mentions it nonstop. Like it's nothing to be shy about. It's free. It's everywhere. It's something everyone does. And I have noticed just watching TV shows how they're like weaving into the plot line of these characters this normalized addiction to pornography.

Like it's something that guys do and something that girls do and something we all do. And like, it's like this, like this attempt to make it feel normal. And again, this added to that is this assumption that it's free.

[ 17 : 05 ] You know, because you can just turn your phone on and look or get on your computer and look. And that's because the porn industry is hiding the cost, mostly women and children, the cost of those who are being trafficked as slaves for our pleasure.

So our culture tries to normalize it, but it's not just the secular culture. And a lot of times us Christians, we go, yeah, that's bad. It's our culture too. Religious culture does normalize lust as well.

Remember where Jesus was speaking. Let's turn on the mount. He's not at a frat house. He's not at a military base. He's not at like a porn hub event. And Jesus is talking to a crowd of religious people and telling them to stop normalizing lust.

Religious people, devoutly religious people. Jesus said, hey, it's your problem. You're doing this. Now the excuse they're giving is, well, I'm not committing adultery, right?

What are they appealing to? They're appealing to the 10 commandments. Like that's a religious audience who goes, hey, I can justify my sin. I can appeal to the 10 commandments. I'm not committing adultery, Exodus 20, 14.

[ 18 : 15 ] You shall not commit adultery. I won't commit adultery, but a little looking can't be bad, right? It's that old argument of how close to the line can I get before it's sin? And Jesus said, well, that's a great commandment.

Why don't you keep reading a few more commandments down the way, you'll find Exodus 20, 17. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Jesus said these commandments, you shall not commit adultery.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Like these commandments are connected in your heart. They are speaking about the same thing, that God is concerned with this internal action, not just the external action of adultery, but the internal action of wanting what's not yours.

Today, we are just like that audience, that religious audience standing there on that mountain where Jesus preached. We're just like them. We still use the same excuse.

We still say things like, you can look, but you can't touch. You can check out the menu, you just can't order anything. I've had people tell me that their parents who were deacons in a church, their dad would at a restaurant tell the son, like, hey, look at all this.

[ 19 : 26 ] You can look, son. You can look at the menu, you just can't touch. That's the same thing Jesus is saying you can't do. That's the same thing. I've known people who went to church, bought their teenage sons a Playboy, and said, well, they're gonna look at it.

I want them to do it under the safety of our own roof. I never want them to go and actually commit adultery, but I'm okay with them lusting. It's just in the safety of our own home. Jesus is saying to religious people then and religious people now, stop it.

It's not okay, but why? Why? So Christians and those not followers of Jesus, we both, we might disagree on how much you can lust and how far to take it, but I think both audiences feel like a little bit of a look and ain't gonna hurt, right?

But Jesus disagrees, why? The lie that Jesus is exposing here is that lust is harmless. That's the lie. That's the lie that the secular culture we live in thinks.

They don't think that porn is harmful. They say it's harmless. It's the same lie, though, that that religious community believe on that mountainside, that we believe and we say, you can look, but you can't touch.

[ 20 : 38 ] And Jesus is saying, it's a lie. It's a lie to say that lust is harmless. It's the opposite of harmless. Remember, Sam Albari says that that woman has been greatly wronged. Even if she never finds out, she has been wronged.

The porn industry is just, frankly, demonic. It's vile, it's wicked, it enslaves, it degrades, it destroys lives and families. We don't have time to get into all of this, but just a few facts for you.

A study in 2016 of the 50 top rented pornographic videos discovered that the majority of the content contained physical and verbal abuse targeted against the female performers.

The top 50 videos that were being rented, the majority of the content was physical and verbal abuse of women. 88% of the scenes in those 50 videos included slapping or gagging women.

College men who regularly viewed mainstream pornography, some 83% of men in college, said they were more likely to commit rape or sexual assault if they knew they wouldn't get caught.

[ 21 : 53 ] That is formative. That is formative. They spend their time and their energy looking at pornography, which is increasingly violent. And what it's doing in their brains is telling them, hey, if you could get away with it, that wouldn't be a bad idea.

Gail Dines, a professor of sociology and women's studies, likened the porn industry to the tobacco industry's decades of denial about lung cancer. They are lying to us.

The porn industry is lying to us by hiding the effects, by hiding the cost. We don't have time to get into all the statistics in this sermon, but even the experts, even the experts outside of Christianity, outside of the church, are realizing we have on our hands a public health crisis when it comes to pornography.

And we, the followers of Jesus, we cannot afford to ignore him on this. We are part of this world, but we are to, as we've said again and again, One Harbor, we've said we are here to seek the welfare of the city, to pray to the Lord on its behalf, not be partnering with the abusers.

Additionally, lust is not harmless because it has a plan for your life that's worse than you think. Lust is like an entry drug for adultery and abuse. The studies show that rape and abuse are preceded by porn.

[ 23 : 10 ] I can imagine those, you know, who've committed those crimes never imagined that they would do that, but slowly, surely, they found themselves there.

In the same way, I'd never cheat on my spouse. I'd never cheat on my spouse. I'm just looking. I'd never touch. Man, who do you think you are? Like, how arrogant. Better men than me and better men than you, better women.

They have gone down that road and found out that it's not true. You're not in control. You're a slave. Sin always takes you further than you wanted to go.

It always costs you more than you're willing to pay. And the goal with lust is the same with every sin. It's to lure you and I further and further away down this road. And it's got a plan to destroy us and it guarantees we have not fully calculated the devastation.

It's so dangerous. C.S. Lewis, speaking of this, says, a man with an obsession is a man with very little sales resistance. That's what we've got.

[ 24 : 14 ] Very little sales resistance on this. So it's serious, it's harmful, but it's everywhere. We can't normalize it, but what are we supposed to do? It feels like there's no way out of it. Well, getting free from lust is a fight that requires others.

Jesus says he's serious. He says, you gotta cut off your hand, take out your eye. I mean, this is serious stuff. This is fighting language.

Colossians 3, 5 says, put to death sexual immorality. Reminds me of that old John Owen quote, be killing sin or it be killing you. This is a fight. It's a fight.

You're gonna have to get serious. You're gonna have to go to war and like in any war, if you're going to win, you're gonna need allies. You're going to need others. You're gonna need help. And here I think is the most difficult part of overcoming lust or an addiction to pornography.

Shame. Shame is what keeps us from admitting that we need help with lust. You know, there's a shame element for alcoholics to admit that they're alcoholics, but what they've got going for them is if they'll know this is that there are lots of people in the community, successful people, people who are impressive members of society who are alcoholics.

[ 25 : 37 ] And when they go to an AA meeting, they'll likely be surprised. Oh my gosh, I would have never thought. There's this sense of community, there's this, but there's this understanding that there are, there are good people. I mean, all kinds of people fall into alcoholism.

So there's a, there's less shame on that front, but no one wants to be honest about their battle with lust. My friends, you're gonna have to find some courage on this.

You cannot beat this alone. Ray Ortland says, you can be impressive or you can be known, but you can't be both. You can be impressive or you can be known, but you can't be both.

And for too long, churches have been a place where we pretend, where we hide, where we come and we dress up and we smile and we say everything's fine. The last thing in the world we're ever gonna do is admit this kind of a thing. But we're going to have to be willing to get vulnerable if we wanna get out.

You're not gonna win this war if you don't have some allies. Listen to Paul write the church of Thessalonica about lust. He says this in 1 Thessalonians 4. Finally then, brothers, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus that you, as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God just as you are doing that you do so more and more for you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus for this is the will of God, your sanctification that you abstain from sexual immorality that each one of you know how to control his own body and holiness and honor not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God that no one transgresses and wrongs his brother in this matter because the Lord is an avenger in all these things as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you for God has not called us for impurity but in holiness therefore whoever disregards this disregards not man but God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

[ 27 : 29 ] This word, this phrase, sexual immorality, that you abstain from sexual immorality, this word is pornea. It's where we get our word porn or pornographic or pornography.

That's what he's saying here. He says, we wrote to you, we told you that the will of God is your sanctification and that means you have to abstain from porn. You have to abstain from sexual morality, from pornea.

That you were called to, brothers and sisters, you weren't called to this. He says, you were called to holiness and that word holy is to stand out, is to be other than. He's saying, you're in a world full, even then, think about, even then, with no internet, with no smartphones, with no magazines, none of that, even then, he says, you church, you are surrounded by pornea.

You're surrounded by sexual morality and you're supposed to stand out. You're supposed to stand out as different. You were called to stand out and live differently but remember, as much as there's a personal responsibility here, this is a letter to a community.

It's a letter to a church which means that we have personal responsibility to fight our own sin but the assumption from Paul is that we will be doing that alongside the community, that together we will fight to stand out together, that together we'll fight for holiness to stand out.

[ 28 : 43 ] A few things for you to consider as you and I pick up this call to fight, this is new for you. I wanna just give you a warning. When you go to war with temptation, the temptation usually gets worse before it gets better.

When you push back on darkness, darkness pushes right back on you, right? So just know that. I'm gonna give you now a few resources that we've got available at the church and then I'll tell you that we're working on some other stuff.

There are some, some of the pastors at our church have started at each site, there are these groups now starting, it's called Conquerors and it's, these are for men. They're small groups, it's a 10 week, it's a 10 week course and then the goal is to like reproduce those groups again and again and for a couple of years now, men in our church have been going through this and finding victory like they never imagined.

So if you want information on that, you can just email our church office. If you're like, hey, I would like to maybe lead one of those or I'd like more information on that, just email it and we'll get some information to you. Additionally, this book here, The Death of Porn by Ray Ortlund is the absolute best book I have ever read in my life on this subject and I've read, I feel like, all the books.

In fact, if you go and look on Amazon, you'll see that Ray gets a little beat up in some of the reviews and really, the criticism is that it's not, it's not got enough tactics. You know, we need tactics.



[ 30 : 07 ] The reality is for 20 or 30 years there have been books coming out with tactics on how to deal with lust and porn addiction and those books really haven't worked by and large.

What Ray does here is he writes a letter from a father to sons and so this book is specifically addressed to men but the, yeah, he writes a letter and he writes, he holds out hope but he holds out grace like I've never experienced anyone do on this subject and so we, we think this book is so helpful that as a church we purchase 500 copies of this and we want, we want all of them to go out.

We want you to read them. We want you to, you know, pass them around to your friends. We want you to start groups. We want all that. You can purchase them for eight bucks a piece which is a lot cheaper than you can get them online or you can just take one for free.

We want them to get out. We want you to read it. We want you to, to just to, this will, this will be a, man, it'll be a lifeline to you. I promise. Now both those resources are specifically for men and I said at the beginning this is not just a man problem.

This is male and female, right? So a couple of things on that. One, there is a resource, it's a software called Canopy. There's a link in our email where we emailed this sermon out for an article about that, about that software and that is a brand new software that's phenomenal.

[ 31 : 28 ] It blocks images, it blocks videos, it's got like 99.7% accuracy. It also works to prevent sexting which makes it a great resource if you're a parent of a child with a phone.

So yeah, super, super helpful there. First Corinthians 6.18 says to flee sexual morality. This is one of the best resources that's ever been made. Maybe the best at helping you to flee sexual morality.

It's working all the time. Even when you're not online, it's working to block all the stuff. And so, man, I'd really encourage you to check that out. And then additionally, ladies, we are working with the leaders of the ladies' ministries at One Harbor and we're working to find ways this year to come alongside you and help you create safe ways for you to put your hand up and say, hey, I'm struggling with this.

Or maybe you've got a spouse or a loved one who's struggling with it and that's shame on you, feelings of betrayal. We want to find ways to come alongside you and help you no matter what it is. We're going to fight to change culture as a church, not just to stop looking at porn.

So, think about how we've worked with drug and alcohol addiction. We've learned that it was a massive problem. It affected all kinds of people in every kind of neighborhood and you had to help the family and the addict and really what was missing was that people just didn't think there was hope.

[ 32 : 51 ] They didn't think there was help. in the same way that the pastors at One Harbor, we are hoping that by the end of the year as a church we're all at a place where we see that porn is a massive problem for men, women, and children.

It is a darkness that we need to push back on and that we help everyone in our community know that there is hope and there is help available if you're struggling. In the same way as with drug and alcohol addiction, it's going to take years but we're committed to that.

We're committed to that fight and this year you're going to see more and more resources get laid out. We're working on events. We're trying to find ways to help equip all of us to push back this darkness in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Last thing I want us to consider before we close is just how good God is. Lust is bad. It's more serious than we think but God's grace is far greater than we could ever imagine.

A sermon isn't just that lust is bad. Sermons are designed to point us to the Lord. So yeah, lust is really bad. It's worse than we think but man, God is better than we can ever imagine. Jesus didn't come to take away our fun.

[ 33 : 58 ] He came to give us real life. Remember the beginning of the sermon it was the blessed life. That means if you're normalizing lust and pornography, you're not living the blessed life.

You're not living a good life. You're not living a life that God smiles on. You're a partner with darkness and your heart is dark but Jesus is calling to you. Lazarus was laid dead in the tomb and Jesus called him back to life.

Jesus is calling to you saying listen to me, follow me, obey me, find in me the life that you were made for. In this book, Ray says your battle against porn is not about porn, it's about hope.

And he says that your shame is precisely where God can recreate you the most gloriously. The worst things about you are where he loves you the most tenderly. Porn wants to enslave you, porn wants to shame you, Jesus wants to redeem you and recreate you.

And so I know that some of you are feeling very uncomfortable, even the thought of admitting this is a problem has probably got your heart pounding and I just want you to hear that your Savior loves you and he loves saving. As we look to respond, if you're watching this and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I hope that you found out that God doesn't just want to help you a little, he wants to totally transform you.

[ 35 : 22 ] And from his perspective, the sin that you're dealing with, you don't just need a little help, you're a slave, you need to be set free. But this Jesus, he put a cross on his back, he marched up a hill that was shaped like a skull and up that hill he marched with this perfectly sinless life.

Jesus never lusted, not even once. And he went up there to die and in his death, he swallowed up the sin and the shame of all those who would follow him. So my friends watching this who aren't yet followers of Jesus, my invitation, Jesus' invitation is for you to follow him.

Say, Jesus, swallow up my sin, swallow up my shame, give me new life. If you want to talk more about that, just reach out to us, we'd love to help you. If you're watching this, you're already a follower of Jesus.

Something Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, he taught him how to pray and he added this line, he said, pray this, Father, deliver us from evil. That is a very bold prayer.

That's not, Father, just let me have a few more minutes with this evil. Father, just look the other way on this evil. This is a call for rescue. Father, deliver us from evil.

[ 36 : 33 ] I wonder if you'd be so bold as to maybe close our eyes together and we can pray that prayer together. Father, deliver us from evil. The evil of lust, all the ways that it manifests itself in our lives and the lives of those around us, would you deliver us from evil?

Rescue us from this evil. In Jesus' name, amen. We're gonna take communion now. Some of you are, your heart's pounding, you feel shame, you feel a sobriety about this that you haven't felt in a long time, maybe or ever, but you're coming now to a meal of grace.

Jesus, knowing every vile thing that you and I would ever do or look at, he took bread and he broke it and he said, this is my body, broken for you.

And then he took a cup and he passed it around and he said, my friends, this is my blood shed for you. And in that meal, he inaugurated this new covenant of grace and mercy. Jesus was saying simultaneously, your sin requires my death, but I want to eat with you.

Think about that. He wanted to actually eat with them and he still does. He knows every vile thing you've ever thought or done and yet he wants to eat with you, which is amazing.

[ 37 : 57 ] And in Revelation, Jesus writes to a group of Christians who've really messed up and he says to them as they cower behind closed doors, he says, behold, I stand at the door and I knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him, into him and I will eat with him and he with me.

Jesus says to shameful Christians in a shameful mess, you know, blind and naked and pitiful as he describes them in that letter, he says, hey, it's me, let me in and let's eat.

That's this Jesus who you and I get to approach in this meal. I bet he's knocking on the door of some hearts saying, hey, don't keep me out. I know you're in a mess.

I know it's a shameful mess. I know you'd rather just hide in that mess but let me in. And so my friend, he says, you eat this meal, you're eating and drinking with Jesus. Pray in your heart and say, Jesus, I need you.

Come in. Come in and help me with this mess. Set me free. Lastly, every week we end with the commissioning.

[ 39 : 07 ] We have, you know, these seven days this week to go and make disciples and push back darkness all for the sake of the gospel and certainly there's a massive commissioning piece here. I mean, we've talked about so much darkness that needs to get pushed back on but I wanna end with a blessing this week.

I want you to know and feel that you're loved and blessed by your heavenly father. I tell my boys every night, I've got this little ritual, this little kind of call and response liturgy that we do. We just, I made it up through the years with them and I'll say this.

At the end of it, I say, you're up and they say gift and I'll say, you're made to be a, they say blessing and I'll say, you're safe and daddy's, they'll say strong and I'll say, and you're strong and they say too.

I say, how strong? They say so strong and I say, hey boys, what's a good man? And they say loving and strong. My friends, man, how much more our perfect, lovingly, heavenly father, how much more does he wanna bless us?

So, you are made to be a blessing. you are made to be a good man or a good woman. You are made to be loving and strong and your heavenly father is mighty to save.

[ 40 : 24 ] Receive his blessing as you go be a blessing. God bless you. Amen.