The Elephant in the Room

TEXT: Matthew 5:27–30

Jeff T. Peterson, Springfield, Missouri

Audio file: http://centralassembly.podbean.com/2011/05/01/the-elephant-in-the-room/

INTRODUCTION
1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that:
   - adultery is a grievous sin.
   - adultery is more than the act alone.
   - there is no compromising with sin.
   - there are eternal consequences to sin.
   - the eye is the pathway to the heart.
2. From The Witherspoon Institute (2010):
   - 400 films produced annually by Hollywood
   - 11,000 porn films produced annually
   - 11.5 million teenagers have friends who regularly view Internet pornography and download it. (Columbia University, 2004)
3. From Covenant Eyes ministries (2010)
   - In August 2006, a survey reported 50 percent of all Christian men and 20 percent of all Christian women are addicted to pornography. Sixty percent of the women who answered the survey admitted to having significant struggles with lust; 40 percent admitted to being involved in sexual sin in the past year.

MESSAGE
1. The struggle with lust.
   a. God created man more physically / mechanically oriented.
   b. God created woman more emotionally / relationally oriented.
   c. The effects of lust
      (1) the physical – the flood of chemical reactions in the brain.
      (2) the spiritual – the depravity of the sinful nature.
      (3) the emotional – everything from boredom to pleasure to desire to self-pity.
   d. Scripture calls us to sexual purity: 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5; Ephesians 5:3; Job 31:1; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 5 and 7.

2. Three battle grounds of lust.
   a. Eyes – learn the bounce principle.
   b. Mind – learn to capture and evaluate thoughts.
   c. Heart – honoring and cherishing womanhood; loving God, the Creator more than His creation.

3. Six keys to victory over lust.
**Scriptural promise.** “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

a. Be Honest to admit sinful patterns — repentance. “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

b. Count the cost of the moment — contemplation. “Sin would have very few takers if the consequences came immediately.” Tom Richardson

c. Avoid the temptation — prudence. “Keep to a path far from her [the adulteress], do not go near the door of her house” (Proverbs 5:8).

d. Meditate upon God’s Word — discipline. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9,11).

e. Establish accountability with a brother in Christ — reliance. “You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17, The Message).

f. Guard your heart — discernment. “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23, ESV).

**FOLLOWUP BULLETIN INSERT: Winning the Battle Over Lust**

Philippians 4:8: “Finally brothers, whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there is any virtue and anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

**From Pastor Jeff:**

We live in a sex-saturated world...obviously. But there is hope. There are incredible ministries and helps available today for the Christ-follower that sincerely wants to walk in victory in this area. To seriously face and win the battle over lust/pornography is seldom done alone. Through the spiritual disciplines of prayer and God’s Word, the support and accountability of others in Christ and the insights of spiritually gifted and educated counselors the battle can be won.

We define addiction as: “Compulsive or habitual use, leading to uncontrollable abuse.” Great discoveries are being made today in the understanding of the amazing, God-given human brain as it relates to addictive (sinful) behaviors. A good Christian counselor can be especially helpful in utilizing this information to guide us in this particular area of sinful struggle. If you find yourself in such a struggle with lust, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the resources God has provided for the “day of evil” (Ephesians 6:13) we are living in. There is hope.
Steps to winning the battle:
• Be honest and admit sinful patterns — repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).
• Count the cost of the moment — contemplation (Proverbs 14:15).
• Avoid the temptation — prudence (Proverbs 5:8).
• Meditate upon God's Word — discipline (Psalm 119:9–11).
• Establish accountability with a brother in Christ — reliance (Proverbs 27:17).
• Guard your heart — discernment (Proverbs 4:23).
• Learn to bounce your eyes — self-control (Job 31:1).

Symptoms of Sexual Addiction:
• An inability to stop the behavior(s) and porn use despite previous attempts to do so.
• Anger or irritability if asked to stop.
• Hiding or attempting to keep secret all or a part of the porn use.
• Living a double or secret life related to porn.
• Continuing the behavior despite obvious consequences, such as a relationship or job loss.
• Getting lost in the problem porn use (i.e., spending more time than intended, losing time).

Sexual Addiction Helpful Tips:
• Talking about the issues in detail with a trusted Christian friend or Christian counselor/therapist who will be as honest with you as you are honest with them.
• Making an addiction prevention plan to carry out when tempted.
• Putting tracking devices on your Smartphone and computer so others (best not a spouse) can monitor your online behavior.
• Knowing the signs of porn addiction, both the general signs and those specific to you.
• Knowing the stages of porn addiction.
• Making good use of porn addiction resources.

A simple course of action with a trusted counselor/friend:
• Speak the truth.
• Define the problem.
• Define the impact on you & others.
• Define expectations.
• Plan accountability.

Suggested helps:
• Local Christian counselors/therapists.
• Pure Life ministries: www.purelifeministries.org.
• Careforce Lifekeys with Dr. Allen Meyer study: “Valiant Man.”
• Turn Your Life Around, by Dr. Tim Clinton, president of the American Association of Christian Counselors http://www.timclinton.com/.
The Other Elephant in the Room
(First of a two-part sermon)

Jeff T. Peterson, Springfield, Missouri

TEXT: Matthew 5:31,32; 19:1–12

Audio file: http://centralassembly.podbean.com/2011/05/15/the-other-elephant-in-the-room/

INTRODUCTION

• 41 percent of first marriages in the U.S. end in divorce.
• 60 percent of second marriages in the U.S. end in divorce.
• 73 percent of third marriages in the U.S. end in divorce.

• By age 30, 75 percent of woman marry, and about half have cohabited out of marriage.
• Unmarried cohabitations overall are less stable than marriages. The probability of a first marriage ending in separation or divorce within years is 20 percent, but the probability of a premarital cohabitation breaking up within 5 years is 49 percent. After 10 years, the probability of a first marriage ending is 33 percent, compared with 62 percent for cohabitations. (The Center for Disease and Control Prevention).

In His questioning regarding marriage and divorce (Matthew 19) ...

MESSAGE

1. Jesus strongly upheld marriage. Marriage was created for:
   a. distinction.
      “‘Haven't you read,’ ” he replied, “‘that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, …’”
   b. relationship.
      “‘and [God] said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh ...” ’”
   c. oneness.
      “‘and [God] said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh,” So they are no longer two, but one.’”
      Two souls in one body, with a complete union of interests, and an indissoluble partnership of life and fortune, comfort and support, desires and inclinations, joys and sorrow. (Adam Clarke Commentary)
   d. longevity.
      “‘So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.’”

2. Jesus strongly denounced divorce.
   a. Divorce was not in the original plan of God.
   b. Divorce came as a result of hardened hearts.
   c. Divorce leads us down a path into sin.
CONCLUSION
No matter the sin, God’s grace through Jesus’ blood can cover it all.

God’s grace is never to be abused as a license for sin.
The Other Elephant in the Room
(Second of a two-part sermon)

Jeff T. Peterson, Springfield, Missouri

TEXT: Matthew 5:31,32; Malachi 2:13–16

“And here’s a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don’t get what you want from God. Do you know why? Simple. Because God was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now you’ve broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. God, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does he want from marriage? Children of God, that’s what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don’t cheat on your spouse” (Malachi 2:13–16, THE MESSAGE).


MESSAGE

1. The effect of divorce (Malachi 2:13–16)
   a. Worship: God ignoring their offerings: the witness of their marriages.
   b. Faith: God saw them as breaking faith: the covenant of their marriages.
   c. Being: God had made them one: the spiritual bond of their marriages.
   d. Family: God desiring godly offspring: the perpetuation of the faith of their marriages.
   e. Injury: God saw it as a violent act: the holiness of their marriages.

2. The key to protection from divorce (Malachi 3:15,16).
   a. Guarding of one’s spirit.

3. Ten ways to guard your spirit in marriage.
   a. Both spouses remain completely committed to Christ.
   b. Both understand and keep the covenant of marriage in the forefront of your mind and heart.
   c. Pray together regularly, alone as a couple.
   d. Both consistently worship and fellowship with other believers.
   e. Both consistently receive God’s Word into your heart (both corporately and privately)
   f. Do not allow any unresolved conflicts to remain.
   g. Both be willing to get marriage counseling, the earlier, the better.
   h. Both be spiritually wary of temptation of the eyes/heart.
   i. Plan occasional times away without the children.
   j. Both invest into your marriage by reading books and attending classes/seminars/retreats, etc.

CONCLUSION
Divorce is a tragedy plain and simple and is not respecter of persons. I have never met a person yet who enjoyed the experience nor married a person with it in mind. Divorce while in ministry is difficult at best. I have seen my share of friends and colleagues in ministry destroyed by churches and leaders who preached love but did not walk it out with them. It is a poor testimony to the world when we shoot our own wounded. — A broken pastor.

No matter the sin, God’s grace through Jesus’ blood can cover it all.

God’s grace is never to be abused as a license for sin.