Culture Shock-
Responding to Today’s Most Controversial Issues
Full Series Transcripts
By Chip Ingram

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I believe today if God would send Moses to America, remember he went to Israel? And when Moses came to Israel and they were in bondage he said, “Let my people go.”

The bondage that I see in America, especially inside the Church, if God sent Moses to America He would say, “Let my people think.” Let my people think. They’ve lost sight of how to think. They don’t know right from wrong. They don’t think clearly and they don’t know why.

We’ve got a big problem. We got a big problem inside the Church and a big problem outside the Church.

Now the symptoms flow out of morality. And morality is just the oughts and shoulds. Every culture from the Code of Hammurabi to the Ten Commandments, to the Persians or Ancient Chinese, everyone has had a code of morality. This is what is right and this is what is wrong.

We’re going to talk about a journey that’s happened in about the last sixty to eighty years beginning with the philosophers all the way down to modern culture about how truth has changed.

I want to read something that is deeply disturbing. It’s a bit graphic. But what’s happened is you can watch the ten o’clock news and read an article or hear something and get so desensitized like I am that I read this article and it shook me.

And it shook me just not because it’s a terrible, insidious thing that occurred but it shook me because of the response of the people that did it.

Let me pick up the story. It happened in Houston. Two young girls, Elizabeth and Jennifer had gone to a party in the suburbs. They called their moms and dads at eleven thirty and said, “We’re on our way home.”

The two girls decided they would take a shortcut through the woods. And as they took the shortcut through the woods there was a gang. It was called the Black and White Group.

There were about six young men, ages fourteen to eighteen. They had just finished an initiation rite where they were fighting and proving their machismo and who was strong.

And these young girls were walking by and as the article says, one of them yelled,
“Let’s get them!” Those six men descended on those two young girls. Four days later, their naked bodies were found in the woods. It’s too graphic to give the details here but they were raped multiple times, strangled, killed.

Now you say, “Well, Chip, those things happen all the time.” No, no, no, no. Wait a second. Ironically, one of those gang members was caught on television the day before with these words, “Human life means nothing.”

Human life means nothing. All six of those young men, ages fourteen to eighteen, participated in both the rape and the murders. All of them were indicted. And upon hearing that they were going to go on trial for murder one of these young men’s response was, “Hey! Great! We finally made it to the big time.”

My point of that story is not that murder occurred or rape occurred. That’s happened for centuries. My point is there is no remorse, there’s no thought that this is wrong or right.

My point is what you’re going to see is those exact words, “Life is meaningless. Human life is meaningless,” came from about a seventy year journey of the transformation of truth beginning with German philosophers, then through Europe, across the Channel to England, over to America by the early 20th century, into everyday culture and then when existential thought came into full bloom we have people who say, “Who’s to say what’s right? Who’s to say what’s wrong?”

Truth is completely relative.

And so people indiscriminately kill other people for pleasure with no remorse.

The symptom is our moral issues and it’s not just isolated. I noticed as I did my research every twenty-four hours one thousand unwed teens become pregnant, five hundred adolescents will begin using drugs, a hundred and thirty-five thousand kids will either kill someone or take a weapon to school, and six youths will commit suicide.

That’s not every week. It’s not every month. This time tomorrow, another six of our teenagers will commit suicide. Human life is meaningless. There is no purpose.

The real issue has to do with ethics and values. Now when things begin to roll out in the sixties, and the seventies, and the eighties and business people found that you can’t trust people anymore, the universities begin to put, you know, ethics and, you know, we have to have a standard of conduct, and honesty, and integrity.
You see, life can’t work without some values and ethics. But here’s the dilemma. Whose ethics? Who is to say what’s right and wrong? Who can say, “This is right and this is wrong” when relative truth gets into the core, and the fabric of a society, where everyone says, “Well that’s true for you but that’s not true for me.”

And so as you see here the question behind what’s right and wrong is always, “Well, what’s true?” If you can’t identify, “this is true” you cannot make up any right, or wrong, or code of ethics.

To understand the real problem you need to really get your arms around what’s occurred historically, philosophically. And for this I’m going to take you on a journey.

About seventy percent of the philosophical and some thinking and some truth and some history and about the last twenty-five or thirty percent will be, we’re going to deal with the Scriptures, and then the next number of weeks we’re going to apply, “So what’s true?” to the most controversial issues in our day? Like sexuality, and homosexuality, and abortion, and then the Church and politics, and the environment.

But before we do I put a list of four books that will trace this journey. The first is *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. It was published in 1943. When the intellectuals were debating the issues of truth he talks about the oughts and the shoulds within every soul and he is that famous person who was an atheist, Oxford professor, who became the greatest apologist in the last century.

The next book is *The Closing of the American Mind*. It was written in 1968 and this is a very secular book written by someone who makes absolutely no claim to Christianity. But Allan Bloom wrote this, was very, became a bestseller. Was very controversial in the day.

And he writes in the introduction of his book, “There’s one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of.” He was teaching, he taught at Yale, Cornell, later Chicago University.

“Every professor can be absolutely certain that every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. The students’ backgrounds are as varied as America can provide. Some are religious, some are atheists, some are to the left, some are to the right, some intend to be scientists, some humanists, others professionals or business people. Some are poor and some are rich. But they are unified only in their relativism and then their allegiance to equality. And the two are related in a moral intention. The relativity of truth is not a theoretical insight to them but a moral postulant.”
Do you hear what he’s saying? This is 1968 and he basically claims that the universities are ruining the entire next generation because they’re teaching that all truth is relative and now the students believe that.

The next book is by a Berkeley Law professor, Phillip Johnson. It’s called *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism*. And he takes the issue of relative truth, applies it to the law and to the sciences. He is a Christian, he debates all over the world.

And finally, Francis Schaeffer, who wrote from the sixties all the way through the nineties. And Schaeffer begins to trace philosophically, and in culture, and in art how did we get here?

See the question, I entitled this sermon, whatever happened to right and wrong? What happened to right and wrong? How did we get to where there is no real right or there is no real wrong or at least no one can agree on a few basic things.

I mean, historically, I’m telling you, for thousands, and thousands, and thousands of years, up until about the last fifty or sixty, everyone agreed, telling the truth, not stealing, being faithful to your partner, being kind, being respectful, not hurting other people indiscriminately, keeping your word, forgiving people who have done you wrong, not murdering, these were absolutes.

And it produced, people may have disobeyed them, but when they disobeyed them they thought what they were doing is wrong. They didn’t do it with a calloused, “Human life has no meaning. We just killed and raped two little girls and it doesn’t matter. And who’s to say it does?”

See that’s the logical end when there is no absolute truth.

I was not a Christian most all my life growing up, totally disillusioned with the organized Church, which, in my particular case, not to say that others were but in my particular case, was filled with hypocrisy. No one believed God’s Word and no one lived it. And so I rejected it.

I came to Christ at eighteen and after coming to Christ I began to grow rapidly after about three or four years. And then in grad school I found myself with a lot of relative truth, and a lot of sociology professors, and psychology professors, and a lot of people challenging my faith.

And what I found myself was, I was in the situation where I had this amazing experience, I was experiencing God, my life was changing, but I didn’t have good answers for the intellectual questions that were being thrown at me.
Anybody ever go through that? And I kind of made this internal decision that I’m not going to throw my brains in the trash to follow Christ. I’m not going to be, sort of, led into, you know, maybe it’s just my emotions.

And so I went on a journey. I went on a journey in terms of philosophy, and other religions, to dig out what is true and how could we know?

I was playing on a basketball team at the time, there was a pre-med student named Steve Vogel, and Steve was very familiar with Francis Schaeffer. I’d never read anything by Francis Schaeffer.

He has three key books. One is, *He is There and He is Not Silent*. The other is, *Escape from Reason*. And then the other I put in your notes here, *The God Who is There*.

It’s Schaeffer in those three books that the core of his trilogy will trace for you and me the movement from absolute truth of all of history, how it started, how it changed, and then how it moved through the different disciplines, to where it gets all the way to the point where someone kills two little girls and says, “Life is meaningless.”

And what I want you to know, that didn’t just happen. There was a clear shift in how people viewed truth that impacted morals, that’s created the world, by the way, that you live in and your kids live in.

And I just want to tell you, this whole series will not be banging the table about people are doing what’s wrong and we need to do what’s right, and this right and that’s wrong, and those are terrible people and the problem’s the government or the problem’s Hollywood, or the problem’s the media.

That’s not what this is about.

This is about us saying, “We have a problem. We, the Church, have a problem. We don’t believe in what’s true. We don’t know how to think anymore. And that’s why we can’t understand why the average age of a teenager leaving the faith is sixteen years old.

There are only four percent of the teenagers today that would self-identify as a follower of Christ. Ninety-one percent of teenagers don’t believe in absolute truth. Sixty-six percent of adults in America don’t believe in absolute truth.

And then the eighteen to thirty-five year? Seventy-two or three out of four people don’t believe in absolute truth.
In a recent Barna research, very, very interesting. They went on a campus after doing all this research, went on a large university campus and went randomly to twenty people and just asked them, “Do you believe there is an absolute truth, that’s true of all people of all time, that is just absolutely true?” And the responses went like this, “Truth is whatever you believe. There is no absolute truth. If there were such a thing ‘absolute truth’ how could we know what it is? People who believe in absolute truth are dangerous.”

Nineteen of twenty of those people that was their response. The twentieth was an evangelical student who said, “I believe absolute truth is in the person of Jesus Christ.”

Most of mankind’s history has believed that there is truth that is absolutely true, whether I experience it or not. For example, things like, if I take a book I can say, “I don’t believe in gravity,” but if I drop the book, whether I believe in gravity or not, the book drops.

To get more personal people can say, “I don’t believe in gravity,” but if they get to a three story building and step off, their belief system may change very quickly. Or at least their experience does.

We act on things that we don’t see like electricity. When we want to have brain surgery we’re really hoping the person believes in absolutes like that might be the right tumor to take out instead of that.

We believe in absolutes when we pull up to a gas station. We don’t say, “Any liquid will do.” Who are you to say, “Why don’t we just put water in? It’s cheaper! I mean, how narrow and intolerant to think the only thing that you can put in a combustion engine is gasoline or diesel!”

We live on the basis of absolutes in all these areas except in the things like, “What is life all about?” “What’s right and wrong?” “Is there meaning or purpose?” “Why am I here?” on the biggest issues of life.

And so, for most all of history, it’s been there’s absolute truth.

By contrast, you’ll notice that truth is relative is an existential concept of truth. In the sixties and the seventies is it went from the philosophers down to everyday people you heard phrases like, “Just do your thing.” “If it feels good, do it.”

Later as it moved on it was, “Well, truth is different for me then different from you.”
And then finally the one we hear all the time, “Well, who are you to judge?”

The premise of, “Who are you to judge” is pluralism. I mean, pluralism simply states that all opinions all the time have equal value. And so the number one virtue of relative truth is tolerance. Not the meaning of the word “tolerance,” in terms of accepting people for where they are, but tolerance as in anyone who says, “This is right and this is wrong” on any issue is intolerant.

The number one virtue of absolute truth is truth and justice.

And what I’d like to do is take you on a little journey and talk about how we got here.

I told you I met that friend on that basketball team and my first book by Francis Schaeffer, I wasn’t a philosophy major, and so I was getting words like “metaphysics” and “epistemology” and so I remember having a 3x5 card where I would read a paragraph, go to a dictionary, look things up.

Later that became the basis of my master’s thesis at West Virginia University because I decided I needed to dig in and find out what’s true, what’s not, what’s happened.

And so as those three books, along with a lot of other information, became the heartbeat of - why do I believe what I believe, why do I believe, or do I believe that there is an absolute truth?

And what I want to do is give you a thumbnail sketch. And here’s my challenge: some of you need to pick up some of these books and read and think. We are so technically savvy to get right now information what happens, we’re living inside of a bubble. And you’re living inside of a bubble about what’s practical and what can you get and what about this and what about that?

But you don’t stop to ask the big issues of life. Sometimes you need to read some books that are hard to read, that are thoughtful, that are deep.

And then you need to take those concepts, especially if you’re a parent, and sit around the table and talk about not just what’s right and what’s wrong and be a good person, but why do you think the way you think and what’s the basis for it?

Wisdom, according to the Scriptures, is built on knowledge and understanding. Knowledge is about the what. Understanding is about the why.

So bear with me but let me give you a little journey on what happened. How did our view change so dramatically?
For the first twelve hundred years of the Church, truth was defined by revelation. In other words, God has spoken, He’s spoken through His Word, Old Testament, New Testament.

But most people didn’t have a Bible. There wasn’t a printing press. The only people that had the truth were the “clergy.” Well after twelve hundred years, actually after about five hundred or so, we saw that what the Church was saying, what the Bible actually taught, there was corruption. Just like there’s corruption in the Church today.

And so little, by little, by little, the Church began to teach things that the Bible would say this, but the Church would say this, and you have the period that’s called the Dark or Middle Ages.

People didn’t know much. Lot of things were said in the name of God that were contrary to God, contrary to His will. And religion got used and mixed up with the state.

Then we saw the big breakthrough. And the big breakthrough happened in the thirteen to about the fifteen hundreds called the Renaissance. And the Renaissance, in essence, the word means “rebirth.”

And a rebirth happened in two streams. The one stream in the secular world was a going back to the classics, to Greek literature, to Plato, to the arts, to David, to statues and pretty soon instead of man being this worm and this person that has no value or nobility the Renaissance was the birth of humanism.

It’s that man has value and nobility and given enough time and energy we can change the world and make the world what it is. And so the classics and art was changed.

The other stream was among Christians and there was a return to historic Christianity - to the original text. And so people like Martin Luther began to actually study the Bible for themselves in the original texts, the Hebrew and the Greek, the Latin vulgate, and they began to do things and realized, “You know what? The Church is saying this but the book of Galatians and the book of Romans says this.”

And that gave birth to the Reformation. It was a calling back to truth, a calling back to, “What does God say?”
And so the Reformation occurred and you had Zwingli, and Luther, and Calvin, an Melanchthon, and this return to truth and this return to, “What does the Bible say?” and the authority of Scripture and you had a revolution occur. Overlapping that was then the Enlightenment in the sixteen to seventeen hundreds. It was called the Age of Reason. Rousseau would say that man is basically good.

But what we need is we’ve had all these difficult, painful things that have happened in history but man is basically good. With enough time, with enough education we can produce a utopia. Immanuel Kant would follow up that and you had what was called the Rationalists and people that though reason instead of revelation. Now it’s man’s thinking, man is the center, man is the measure. And we and our thinking and our reasoning is the authority. When what we think is different than what God says, reason champions.

And so you had this birth of the Enlightenment.

After the Enlightenment, again, crossing over was the Industrial Revolution of the seventeen, eighteen hundreds. More inventions in that period of time happened than probably the last two thousand years.

Amazing inventions. Inventions that began to change the world, and prosperity occurred, and industry occurred, and things are just multiplying and so now man is the center, reason is the authority, and with self-sufficiency where we can actually change the world. We’ll make the world what we want it to be.

In the midst of that in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds, Charles Darwin wrote a book, did you know he was a theology student? 1859 he wrote a book called *Origin of the Species*.

Now what you need to understand is that it had little or no scientific impact. No one bought into it whatsoever. But at the end of the nineteenth century it became a buzz word: evolution.

And it was the soft, or the social sciences, that picked up on evolution as a way of thinking and relationships and it began to become how people began to think. Not that there was scientific credibility behind it.

At the same time another young man, the theory of relativity would be birthed by Albert Einstein. Einstein never thought truth was relative. What he was talking about was a new way of looking at the world, a new paradigm instead of through just one reference point he said, “No, no, no, no. You can look at reality through more than one reference point.”
But the buzz word in the early twentieth century was about this idea of relativity.

Now, the philosophers then got a hold of this. German philosophers first, and then those German philosophers began to extend through Europe, and then from Europe across the Channel, as I said, then to America.

And so that gave birth to what’s called the Age of Modernity or modern thought - 1890 to about 1930. You had people in ways like never before saying, “You know what? Truth isn’t absolute. It’s relative.”

And so as they came through all these seasons in history a group like Jaspers, later it would be Kierkegaard, a Dane. And then later, across the Channel, in France, John Paul Sartre.

And pretty soon Nietzsche and the “God is Dead” movement and all this was, like, way out there, kind of weird intellectuals. And then it came across to America and Huxley, who is a biologist, picks this up and believes, and Spencer, who is a philosopher picks it up.

And then they began to teach this in the universities and it began to make its way early in the seminaries of the major denominations.

Dewey, then, in the early part of the 20th century would say, “You know something? The real issue isn’t what’s right or what’s wrong. The real issue is what works,” and pragmatism was birthed.

And basically the whole educational system rather than the classics, and this is true, and what we know, and God being the authority. It’s, man is the center, our reason trumps everything, truth is something that is a matter of perspective.

And then it moved because since that doesn’t work, that reality doesn’t work in real life, we’ll look at it in a minute. But then what happened, people began to experience despair.

So Kierkegaard would say from a, sort of a religious perspective, “You need to take a leap of faith to find meaning.” Jaspers would say, “You need a final experience.” And so pretty soon the only way to authenticate truth is your experience. Existentialism. So if it feels good do it.

This would give birth to situational ethics. And so I still remember as about a ten year old, my mom was a guidance counselor and William Coffin Sloan, William Sloan Coffin, excuse me, wrote the book and then all of our public schools would begin to teach situational ethics.
And it was taught by giving these people these impossible dilemmas, you know, what would you do if there are five people back in the room, would you lie in order to protect them? And, you know, no sense of, “Yes there are competing values.”

And so in our, all of our public schools, we begin to teach, “There is no absolute right or wrong. There is no moral fabric.”

And so you get the birth of the sixties. And the sixties is a throwing off of all moral constraint. And then the seventies is the age of experimentation. The eighties becomes the “Me” generation. It’s not just what works but what works for me, and greed is paramount.

And then the nineties, we have the kids of the parents of the sixties who grew up without any sense of absolutes. And so now we’re surprised because the divorce rate goes from single digits to over fifty percent. Why? Who’s to say?

The question in life isn’t, “What’s right?” It’s not, “What’s wrong?” It’s, “What works?” In fact, it’s “What works for you?” Do your own thing. That’s true for you but not true for me.” Do you get it?

Here’s what you gotta understand. All of what I just shared, philosophically and historically, is why when your kids go to trade school, or college, or hang out in your high schools, at sixteen or seventeen and say, “I believe in Jesus” and people start asking them questions, one, two, three, and four that they don’t have any good answers.

And that’s why, by the way, inside the Church the problem may be as big or as difficult. Research right now in the people in their twenty and thirties in Bible teaching churches now would say that living together is morally acceptable.

We have about a third of our teenagers who would say homosexuality, or loving another person of the same sex, is morally acceptable. This is in the Church. And when you say things like, “This is right and this is wrong,” you’re pegged as some sort of old fashioned, don’t you get it…

They have no idea where they got that. When the guy hoists up a beer and says, “Life is meaningless!” and kills someone indiscriminately, what he doesn’t understand is that’s what John Paul Sartre said. Exactly. There is no meaning. There is no rhyme. If we’re from chaos, random chance, this is just the logical flow of what’s happened.

And the Church has got to wake up. And, by the way, if this interests some of you
and I certainly hope it does, Schaeffer’s work is a good place to start.

And what Schaeffer will do is give you the flow of philosophy and philosophers, and then what happens is it’s the philosophers and the intellectual elites, it starts there.

And so what, it’s, “Oh, that’s cooky, that’s out there. No one will ever believe that.” And then it usually filters into the arts. Now think about it. If you go back to Byzantine art, and the pictures of art, and pictures of God and symbols and now you think of “modern” art. If life doesn’t have meaning, if there’s not a right, if there’s not a wrong, if there’s not an order you can take paint and throw it at a canvas and see it and go, “Wow!”

Or you can be like John Cage who went into a jazz place and just began to pound on the piano indiscriminately. And then stopped. What’s he saying? The music simply represents your worldview.

And so it goes from the arts, and then it moves to the music, and it goes to the general culture.

If you think I’m exaggerating a bit let me read an article from a high school student. Okay? High school student. And I want you to listen for some of the buzz words and the key words. This is a high school student just a few years ago. I want you to think about absolute versus relative truth, I want you to think about the shift, and I want you to think about the implications in terms of not just morals but at the core, thinking.

He wrote this in his high school paper. It’s entitled: “God.”

“There are too many things in Christian dogma that I can’t accept. The first of which is the universal idea of truth. Good and evil. I can’t rationalize all of that. All religion is based on subjective views of the universe.”

I wonder where he got that?

“All views are based on,” I mean, it’s so authoritative, “objective views of the universe.” You know, if I could sit down with that kid and say, “Well, actually, only in about the last fifty years. You’re at odds against thousands of years of human history.”

He goes on. He says, “My problem is that in your opinion God made the universe. And other people’s opinion someone else did so. So on and on it goes. I do believe that everyone is entitled to their own subjective reality,” relative truth.
“You’re entitled to your own subjective reality.”

So there is no truth, there is no real reality but you’re entitled to your little dotted line to perceive it any way you want.

“Because I just can’t see how one opinion is right and one opinion is wrong.” That’s a high school junior or senior. What he’s saying is pluralism. But he has no idea where this came from.

“I believe that all religions are right for particular groups. But there’s no one religion that’s right for everyone. My god is not a god of love but a god of reason.” Huh, wonder where he got that?

“Anything that can be explained with facts and charts seems reasonable to me. I worship,” notice we all worship something, “I worship the idea that nothing is intangible. That man can explain anything given enough time and given enough data. My god is not a person or a being, he is an idea.”

I mean, I mean, I can just literally trace the philosophers and the thinking that got him there. The tragedy is life doesn’t work that way. How do you explain love? How do you explain personality? How do you explain the reason for being here? How do you explain the longing in your heart when you’re lonely? How do you explain the particulars and the beauty of life that just randomly came?

Well here’s his explanation. He says, “We live in a mechanical universe. Your God doesn’t exist here. We don’t have any equation for love. You know what happens when you die in a mechanical universe? You rot. No clouds, no angels, no free candy bars. You rot and I rot.”

Now think of the moral implications of this type of thinking for this person when he would choose to be married or when he goes to work for you. Or when he has a decision to make about putting someone ahead of himself that might have a need.

There’s not only no remorse there’s no reason logically. He finishes by saying, “Why do I create such a world? Why do I make this place into a machine functioning on random chance and chaos? Why do I make it like that? It’s for the same reason that you make life about the kingdom of God. It’s just my opinion of reality.”

If you don’t start turning your brain cells on and if the Church doesn’t start turning our brain cells on and start learning how to think, not moralize, not just, “Don’t do that, honey. Don’t do that, honey. That’s wrong. That’s right.” Why? Why? And on
what basis?

We gotta get off our tablets, get off our Google searches, and read some things with substance, and content, and reality, and teach our kids to think and understand where we are in world history and how we got here, and where we're going, and what it's going to take to change.

Because what's happened is it's just encroached on the Church. The Church is full of pragmatists. Well what kind of worship should you have? Whatever works! What should you do in your marriage? What should you do with your child? Whatever works for me!

What we do is we just say, “And Jesus will help me get whatever works for me.” He becomes sort of like a cosmic vending machine. “Make my life work, Jesus, for me, my way, as I perceive it.”

And so that's why I remember discipling a young man that came to Christ and about six or nine months into it was growing rapidly. And I remember one morning we met and he just turns and he goes, “Um, I've made a decision.” I said, “What's that?” He said, “This relationship with Jesus is very real. It's very helpful. It's really transformed my life. But I've decided all the issues that regard to, you know, premarital sex and sexual content, I'm just not going to obey those. I just don't, those aren't for me. Those don't fit in my lifestyle.”

Well, so what's he saying? He's saying, “I'm God. I choose what's best for me. I call the shots. The ultimate authority and center is man.” What he doesn't understand is he's mixed his existential, relative truth into his new experience.

And here's what you need to understand. There are painful consequences. See you don't have to believe in gravity to jump off a three story building, you don't have to believe what God says about truth, you don't have to believe what He says about human sexuality, you don't have to believe what He says about homosexuality, you don't have to believe what He says about debt, or lack of debt.

You don't have to believe anything the Bible says about wisdom. But when you violate it because it is absolute, and it is true, there are devastating consequences. Painful ones. And here's what you need to hear and what we need to share: it breaks God's heart.

It breaks God's heart. “My children perish for lack of knowledge,” the old prophet would say.
How is this relative truth or absolute truth, how is it played out daily? Here’s the interesting part: the public rhetoric in our day and now in the Church is that all are right, pluralism, tolerance, truth is relative. The private reaction, however, is my rights, justice and fairness, truth is absolute.

In other words, I can be as existential as I want, Christian or non-Christian, and I can say, “Everyone has a right. You have your truth, I now have my truth and now I’m driving on the freeway and as I drive on the freeway someone cuts in front of me, ‘What are you doing?’” Why are you angry? Who are you to say that that space in front of you should be yours?

Or someone gets promoted ahead of you. Well, who are you to judge how your supervisor decides? Or they get a raise and you don’t. Or someone leaves you that you love for another person and they betray you. And you get angry and frustrated and it’s not fair.

Well, whoa. Fair? Who are you? That truth is okay for them. This truth is okay for you.

See here’s what you gotta understand. Everyone draws the line somewhere. You can verbalize, or publically say, “Your truth for you, my truth for me.” Everyone, one hundred percent of the population, draws the line and you have an absolute.

And when your absolute is violated you get hurt and wounded and angry. And when someone you care about gets a “raw deal.” How can there be a raw deal? There is no truth. There are no absolutes. It’s just random chance. No one is consistent. Do you get it?

And one of the ways that we help those inside the Church, and outside the Church, when their lives are falling apart and when things aren’t working is to gently help them understand there is absolute truth and when you violate it there’s a price to pay.

But you have a heavenly father who loves and cares about you. And He wants you to understand what it is and cooperate with how He’s created life.

Galatians chapter 6 verses 7 and 8. It says, “Don’t be deceived, God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that sinful nature will reap destruction and the one who sows to please his spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

See absolute truth is absolute truth. And we see soaring divorce rates, breakups, communicable diseases, people in debt at levels that turn their world and their
life upside down, people that have addictions that they can’t shake trying to fill
the gaps and the holes that the world doesn’t fill. You reap what you sow.

Now, what I want you to do is I want you to step back and think about what it
means for you to think. What are you going to do with what you’ve learned? How
much time are you just going to keep asking and answering the question? Not by
your mouth or your words, but by your behavior, that basically as a Christian
says, “What works for me? What works for my family?”

How much energy is going to keep going on to, “I gotta make more, I gotta get
my kids in the right schools, we gotta do this, we gotta do that, we gotta do that,
they have to be involved in all these sports so that they, so that, so that, when
that, we can, so that.”

When’s the last time you sat around the table and had some deep discussions?
When, and where, and how are you modeling truth? How is your life different?
How do you think differently? And here’s the thing I ask myself, “How much of
this, because it’s in the air and the water and the culture, so subtly is squeezing
me into its mold without me even knowing?”

Turn to the back page because I want to give you what Jesus said. He was the
most tolerant person who ever lived. He was the kindest person who ever lived.
But He made outrageous claims. He said he never sinned and no one could
prove that He ever sinned.

He not only said He never sinned but He said some even more outrageous
things. Jesus’ outrageous claim about Himself, John 14:6, follow along. He said,
“I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by
Me.”

That is a very intolerant, non-existential statement. But in space-time history He
lived it out perfectly and rose from the grave. And there is an absolute truth that
when you’re down, and when you’re hurting, and when this life is over there is a
future and it’s real whether you “believe it” or experience it or not, in the right now.

Notice His outrageous claim about His Word: John 17:17, “Sanctify them,” His
last prayer on earth, “sanctify them by Your Word, Your Word is truth.” There’s
an infinite reference point. There’s something you can bank on. This is Jesus, the
one who rose from the dead, He said, “This is true! It doesn’t change. It doesn’t
shift. It doesn’t depend on circumstances.”

And after His outrageous claims, notice His outrageous concern for you. He
would say this to a woman who’d been married five times, was living with
someone, and instead of a “shame on you, what’s wrong with you?” He said to her, “You’re missing out on life.”

And after a little bit of a religious discussion He says, “Here’s what I want you to know,” John 4:23. He says, “I want you to know that there’s coming a day and is now when your heavenly father is seeking, or pursuing, those who will worship and follow Him in spirit and in truth.”

In truth.

God has a concern for you, a concern for me, a concern for your kids, a concern for your neighbors. And He’s pursuing people. He longs for relationship and connection that’s real and absolute, and all the things we talked about don’t change.

And then finally I love His concern in John 8:32. He says, “You’ll know the truth and the truth will,” what? “Set you free.”

He wants you to be free. Free of guilt. Free of anxiety. Free of overwhelming debt. Free of addictions. Free of pleasing people. Free of codependency. He wants you to be free. But you’ll never be free with the, “Well that’s good for you, that’s good for me. If it feels good do it. If it feels good do it and then you pay later.”

Here’s my challenge: let’s become a people who think - clearly, truthfully, winsomely, no bashing of anyone. What’s true? Let’s look at the evidence. And then let’s go into our homes, and go into our neighborhoods, and go to our workplaces as thinking people, who understand truth and where and how we got where we are, so that we can make a difference.
Never in the history of the world has a culture and its values shifted concerning sexuality as fast or as drastically as America in the last forty to fifty years. I’m not saying, and this author, historian, is not saying that there hasn’t been morality far worse or equivalent to America.

But never in the history of this planet has a view of sexuality moved as fast and as far in as short amount of time.

I want to chronicle the shift. I want to talk today about sex. The search for truth about human sexuality. What’s really true?

Here’s the shift. In the 19, late 1940s, 1950 about five percent of girls in high school and about ten percent of boys in high school were sexually active. Fast forward fifty to sixty years, seventy percent of girls, eighty percent of boys are sexually active in high school.

Today, fifty percent of all women under thirty cohabitate, live with someone prior to marriage if they are married. The divorce rate in the late forties, decade of the fifties, single digits. Divorce rate today? Over fifty percent.

In fact, the problem, by the way, don’t get this that there are these terrible things that have happened out there. This is in the Church.

1969 we entered into “no fault” divorce. Morality had been changing, doesn’t matter why. By 1996 evangelical Christians’ divorce rate was four percent higher than the national average. And in the Bible-Belt it was fifty percent higher than the national average. I’m talking about the shift inside of sexuality, in family, in the Church.

I read an interesting statistic. 1987, seventy-five million people bought a rental of a XXX porn. 1987. 1992, four hundred and ninety million rentals of XXX porn. By 1996, six hundred and sixty-five million rentals. US News has said, “The distributor of porn in all the world has its heart here in America.” We distribute more than anyone else.

Back then it was a hundred and fifty new XXX porn videos per week, new titles. Once the internet exploded they don’t even count rentals anymore. About forty percent of most men in American visit a porn site regularly. And the percentage of women is increasing rapidly.

I just had a little conversation between a friend after the service who has a good friend who is a sexual therapist and she said, “You know, for the first twenty-five years I had no women in my sexual therapy and now thirty percent of all the
people that I see for sexual addictions are women."


In fact, in the Church, I read an article, World Magazine, some of you may take it. An interesting article and it was an article about a panel at a conference, a Bible conference, and a professor from a college was there talking to people about sexuality.

And the quote goes something like this, she’s a professor from an evangelical school and she said, “It’s fine in Church to stand up and talk about God’s ideal for sexuality in marriage and all the rest but the fact of the matter is we know people in their twenties and early thirties are not going to be sexually celibate so at the Church what we need to do is say, ‘Yes, there is an ideal but we need to provide contraceptives in Bible churches so when people disobey the damage will be a little bit less.’”

Now think of that. In other words, the Sprit of God living in Christians now doesn’t have the power for us to obey God, so let’s violate one command so maybe we won’t mess up on another one.

All I want you to get is you are living in a day where the speed and the change of sexual moral standards have moved like never before.

Well the shift in truth, the search for freedom in the sixties and the seventies, the bad teaching in the Church. We’ve done a terrible job. I mean, how many people growing up, well, don’t raise your hand but at least for me before I opted out of church, I never heard a message on sex. Most people won’t hear a message on sex.

In fact some of our heroes of the faith, Calvin and Martin Luther and others. I mean, they had a very warped view. They did a lot of things well. They had a pretty warped view about sex.

Martin Luther taught that the only reason for sex, even in marriage, was to procreate. And so when he stopped being a monk and got married he had a lot of kids. He really believed in kids.

But, I mean, there’s been this picture of this Victorian, snobbish, sex is dirty, sex is bad, or you don’t say anything about sex and it’s off limits and you get around Christians, or kids grow up with parents, and if sex comes up and their parents are uncomfortable. Kids read from that, “Well, it must be bad. Or God’s anti-sex, who knows?”
Well then you have Fifth Avenue, who realized early on, that once the moral floodgates are opened sex sells. You want to sell toothpaste? Sex. You want to sell cars? Sex. You want to sell beer? Right? Sex.

And so now we’re bombarded in ways like never before.

The impact spiritually is a Church that’s impotent. When you meet someone and they talk about, “Why don’t you come to my church?” Or, “I really believe in Jesus. He’s made a difference in my life.” And two people are living together or you’re having an affair or you visit porn sites, guess what? They don’t think you have anything to say. You’re no different than me.

Scandals of the eighties, the televangelists, we’ve got the clergy and the ongoing issues in the Catholic church. I mean, the credibility and the reputation of the Church because of the shift is just, I mean, I didn’t grow up as a Christian, I grew up as a skeptic and when I look at the panorama of how the Church has handled this it’s like, pfff, they’re just a bunch of hypocrites.

Relationally, divorce rate has skyrocketed, a million to two million people divorce every year, which leaves one million kids without a home or a family that they had the year before. Mom’s here, dad’s there, someone left. We have a fractured family, we have dysfunction like never before. Relationally unwed teens, people struggling, emotional scars, abuse, damage, dysfunction.

Not to mention AIDS, herpes, incurable gonorrhea all time high. And then the cost. The cost spiritually is the Church’s reputation. But the cost, if I did not believe in God, okay? If I was not a Christian and if I didn’t believe the Bible I would tell you, if I was an economist, the dumbest thing that’s ever happened in America the last fifty to sixty years is our sexual morals.

We’ve spent billions, and billions, and billions of dollars to help unwed mothers, a whole welfare system, and billions more on research for what? Sexually transmitted diseases and then on sexual education, which, by the way, we’ve learned that when we do sex education, without values, and we teach our high school and junior high students their activity goes up instead of down.

All I want you to get is something big happened and we want to talk about the truth about sex. Human sexuality. Are you ready for this? You are a sexual being and so am I. How you think about sex impacts your identity. Your view of God. Your relationship with others.

And I’m going to suggest that you have been fed lies most of your life, whether you’re a Christian, not a Christian, married, or single.
And I want to look at the top six lies that you’ve been fed and I’ve been fed and then I want to flip it around and talk about God’s truth.

Myth number one is that God is anti-sex. In other words, when sex happens God goes, “Oh, Gabriel, let’s look the other way. Woo!” The truth of the matter is God is so pro-sex He created it.

He created it to provide physical pleasure, procreation, relational intimacy, and to be a spiritual object lesson of Christ in the Church.

In Genesis chapter 1, it’s the story of creation. Chapter 2 gives us the specifics. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image, in our own likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over the livestock and over the earth and all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created in His own image, in the image of God He created them male and female.”

And then here are His first words, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the Earth, subdue it, multiply it, be fruitful.’”

Now, if God is anti-sex I have a thought for you. Let’s get out of your religious thinking and that we happen to be in a building where we worship God, and take some of your baggage and let it go.

I want to take you, for a moment, to Eden in a perfect environment and an all-knowing, and all-loving, and good God who has created these beings in His image, and we’re going to learn in chapter 1 He made mankind.

A little bit later, in chapter 2, He’ll talk about how He’ll take a part of mankind, mankind is both male and female, and in His image it’s male and female and He’ll take part of that out, so that there’s this corresponding part and this draw, and magnet toward one another - male and female.

And then as they’re in the garden the very first words they hear, are you ready for this? “Be fruitful and multiply.” Translation: the first thing God said to our original parents was, “Make love.” Can I be a little more graphic? Have sex!

That’s how you’re fruitful. You don’t get fruitful, you don’t multiply unless you have, are you ready? Out loud, sex! It’s holy. It’s sacred. God’s for it. And, by the way, He designed their bodies like He designed yours. He designed bodies, well when people come together in a monogamous relationship that God’s heart’s
desire, He looks on the marriage bed as holy, as pure, as a gift, as sacred. He wants it to be deeply pleasurable.

And then He wants it for procreation - for children. And then He, you learn in chapter 2 verse 18, that it’s not good for a man to be alone. It’s not good for a person to be alone. God gives the gift to certain people and they have a unique set of desires to serve Him in ways where they want to be celibate and be single.

But for most of us there is a yearning in your heart and my heart and there’s an attraction to the opposite sex to want to be known, and to be loved, and to be connected.

And you want to be known and loved, and connected intellectually, and spiritually, and emotionally, and psychologically, and physically. And so at the end of that it’s not good for a man to be alone, He tells us the story of Adam and Eve and creation, and a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they become one flesh and they were naked and unashamed, is the end of that chapter.

And they were naked and unashamed, not just physically. They were emotionally transparent. They were psychologically transparent. There was connection.

There are three Hebrew words for sex when it happens in the Old Testament. One is “to lie with.” Second is, “to go into.” And the third is, “to know.” When David lies with Bathsheba, when a man goes into a prostitute, when sex isn’t sanctioned by God He uses words like, “they lie together” or “he goes into her.”

And yet when He describes Adam and Eve it says, “Adam knew Eve.” See far from some lustful act it was about intimacy, it was about connection, it was about knowing, it was about self-revealing, it was the climax in terms of the physical reality of what they were sharing at the heart and the spiritual level.

And that’s God’s design. It’s His design for you. Sex is awesome, it’s a gift, and it is holy. He’s not anti-sex.

Myth number two: Christians’ sex lives and views of sex are dull, boring, and out of touch. I grew up with that. I wasn’t even a Christian but I don’t think I saw my mom and dad kiss two or three times. I didn’t see them be affectionate.

And then when I came to Christ, since I’d never heard any messages on sex, it was like taboo, I figured if people really became Christians they became holy,
and Victorian, and so I don’t know what it’s like to be a Christian married but I don’t think I’d be one of them. I mean, I’m not sure what they do at night.

You’d be surprised how many, especially Christian women, have grown up in that environment and despite maybe some later teaching otherwise, have some major issues with sex in their marriage, because of that sense of “something is wrong. It’s dirty.” Instead of a beautiful gift from God.

The truth is is that the Scriptures command God’s people to be downright, you can go ahead and write this word in, erotic in their marital love.

Not suggested. Not, “it would be a nice idea.” God is pro-sex, He created sex for the reasons defined, and inside of marriage He commands us, literally, to be erotic. To deeply enjoy one another.

Listen to the wisest man on the earth. Solomon. He says to a man, “May your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer, may her breast satisfy you always, may you be captivated by her love.” Literally the word “captivated,” may you be intoxicated by her love.

Translation: may you be turned on by your wife. That’s God’s will. It’s God’s desire.

I Corinthians chapter 7 verses 2 through 5, Paul is making some corrections. You need to understand you don’t live in the most sex saturated time, although there is the internet that would maybe argue otherwise.

If you came to Christ in Corinth there were temples on every corner and spirituality and sexuality are very, very close. And so in most of the pagan religions there was a prostitute, male or female, that was a part of their religion.

And the Canaanite religions, they were prostitutes, there were all kind of sexual things that always got connected with spirituality.

So in Corinth these people became Christians and as they came to know Jesus as the Messiah and the forgiver of their sins, and began to follow Him, they had two grave errors.

One group of people, it was like this, is the food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food. In other words, that if you have a sensual desire, in other words, if you want food God gave you a desire for food, eat. So if you want sex you should have sex anytime, anywhere, with anyone.

That’s how they grew up.
And so Paul says, “No, no, no, no that’s not exactly what God says.” Paul says no, see, God put a box around sex. It’s called a fireplace. And He wants the fire to burn hot and passionate inside the fireplace of marriage where it brings light, and heat, and warmth, and intimacy.

But when you take it out of the fireplace and you put it on the living room floor, or as we see here in California, you know forests? It burns wild and does destructive things.

The other group wasn’t sex anytime with anyone. They were sort of this Greek background and Greek had a dualistic thinking. They thought the body was evil and the spirit was good.

And so they came to Christ and they said this, “We’re not going to have sex, even inside of our marriage, because it’s dirty and unholy.” Listen to what the apostle Paul says to this group.

We pick it up in verse 2 of I Corinthians 7:

“But since there’s so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. So the husband should fulfill his marital duty,” (translation: sex) “to his wife. Likewise, the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband and in the same way the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. But do not deprive each other, except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

The apostle Paul basically is saying, and we have not taught this well or clearly in the Church, you are one before God. Your body, your mate, you are to serve your mate with your body and she, or he, is to serve you. And the apostle Paul is saying this is such a dynamic part of the marriage relationship, far from being some small, little area, it’s a part of the bonding process. It’s a part of the mental, physical, and relational that God desires.

He commands us to, literally, be erotic and passionate in our relationship with one another.

Walt Larimore who is a psychologist and a doctor. And he has a great article that talks about what happens in a man’s brain when he has sex.
And they’ve just discovered where there is a bonding that happens in a man when he has sex with a woman that also causes him afterwards to have a desire to kind of open up and self-reveal.

God designed the sex act in marriage to build an incredible core and bond in relationship. And that’s why it’s so important.

Now here’s what’s interesting. You know, I always get a kick out of, my background was always kind of doing all these studies and I always get a kick out of a study that says, “Oh, by the way, God really was right.”

In 1994, (every few decades, maybe three or four, there’s this exhaustive study) in 1994, the University of Chicago did an exhaustive study on sexuality. Probably the biggest one before that was the Kinsey Report that was very flawed in terms of how it was done.

But in 1994 it became the book, a landmark book, *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey* by Robert Michael, John Gagnon, and Edward Laumann, and Gina Kolata. And in it, it’s very interesting, basically they say, “Everything people think about how sex works in America is far from the truth. America, TV, commercials you would think the hottest sex is single people in the swinging lifestyle.”

The report: single people have less sex than married people and have it fewer times than married people and then it goes into this crazy part. “The people that are most satisfied sexually, that have sex the most often, and have the greatest experience in sex,” it’s kind of crazy! Be careful here. “People in monogamous, marital relationships with what they call ‘orthodox conservative’ views often that are highly religious.”

So those Christians may be a little embarrassed to talk about their kids but they’re having a lot of fun.

And you know, here’s why. You know what? Because you gotta communicate if you love your wife, as a Christian man. There’s vulnerability. There’s trust. And see at the end of the day sex is far from technique. Sex really is about vulnerability and love and trust and serving your partner rather than what you can “get.”

And that principle of give and it will be given unto you as you care and love and a woman feels nurtured, as one author says, she opens up like a flower. And as a man learns to serve and care for his wife.
See God is far from anti-sex. He’s not only pro-sex but He commands us to be outright passionate in our relationships.

The third myth that most of us have heard is as long as people love each other sex is okay with God. I actually did college ministry for a number of years and I’d have college students say, “I don’t think anywhere in the Bible it really says that sex outside of marriage is wrong. I don’t think it really says that anywhere.”

You’ve probably heard that. And if we really love each other, I mean, you know, why does God care? I mean, what’s a sheet of paper? Marriage. Why can’t we just be committed to one another?

News flash. You’re not committed unless you’re married. You can say you’re committed but anybody can walk out anytime in that relationship and if you’re really committed then get married. Get married.

But listen carefully. This is what the Bible says in terms of the truth. The truth is the Bible actually prohibits all sexual relationship outside of marriage. Exodus 20:14, “You shall not commit adultery.” That’s when people have sex, that are married, with someone else other than their mate.

“We shall not commit sexual immorality,” I Corinthians 6:18. “We should not commit sexual immorality,” I Corinthians 10:8. “But among you there shouldn’t even be a hint of sexual immorality,” Ephesians 5:3. “And it is God’s will for you that you should avoid sexual immorality.” Six direct commands, twenty-three other inferences in the New Testament.

Now the root word for “immorality,” this is a very broad word. Are you ready? The Greek word is “pornia.” Can you imagine any words that we get from that? Pornia. Okay, what pornia means, it’s a broad word. It means that adultery, fornication, homosexuality, when it says a hint it means fantasizing, thinking, lusting in your mind, pornia, immorality.

It means petting heavily to bring arousal to a person of the opposite sex that can’t be fulfilled righteously in marriage. It says all of that is prohibited and it’s wrong. And it’s a sin.

Now just before you go, “Oh wow. See I knew the Bible was strong. You are right.” Do you ever wonder why? You know why? Because God doesn’t want you to just lie with people. He doesn’t want you just to go into or receive someone. He wants you to know and be known.
The great majority of unbelievers and believers are experiencing desperately second-rate sex. God already knew when these commands came down that He knew about AIDS and gonorrhea and herpes. He knew about emotional scars. He knows about flashbacks when you’re having sex with someone and you’ve had it with four other people. He knows about the emotional scars. He knows about sexual insensitivity.

He knows about all the pain that it brings. He knows that when you’re loose before marriage the probability of an extramarital affair really goes up.

These are the boundaries of the fireplace so God would say, “I want you to get the best. I want to protect you. I want to provide for you. I want to give you the highest and the best because sex matters to Me. It’s not just an action. It matters. It’s important. It’s about who you are. You’re a sexual being.”

In fact, it leads to the next myth. The next myth is simply this: only a cosmic killjoy, totally out of touch with today’s culture and people’s needs, would prohibit all sex outside of marriage.

Have you ever thought that or had someone say that to you? Now I’m, I mean, this was my testimony. I didn’t come to Christ until I was eighteen. I had never read the Bible. I grew up in a moral home but not a Christian home. And the church that I got to experience was far from God so I rejected church, rejected God. I come to Christ after my senior year and I go away to a college where there are four girls for every guy. You can be ugly and get great dates. And it’s the early to mid-seventies so everyone’s sleeping with everyone. I mean, it’s like free love. Make love, not war.

And as I start growing and reading my Bible I come across all these crazy commandments. No, no, no, no, no. I’m thinking there’s this great fence and all the good stuff’s on that side of the fence and God says, “No!”

And I’m just thinking, “He is the biggest cosmic killjoy in the world.” I remember telling God, “You know, like even, like, in school, like, a seventy out of a hundred is a C. Eighty out of a hundred is a B. Ninety is a, you know, like an A. I think I’ll, I could do, like, eight out of ten commands. I could be an eighty-percenter. I’d even be willing to be a ninety-percenter, I think! But how in the world can you tell me, with all these girls and everyone make…”

Here’s the truth. God prohibits all immoral behavior outside of marriage because of His desire to protect you.
Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life.” Wages. What’s a wage? A wage is, if I do something, if I work so long, that’s what I get for it.

The wages of doing something wrong sexually is death. And in Scripture, death isn’t just physical death. Death is separation. When our first parents sinned, they didn’t fall over dead, they were separated from God.

See God’s heart, here’s what I had to learn, that it’s not a fence. It’s not, I’m over here and all the good stuff’s over there and God is on the fence.

The light came on to me when the Spirit of God showed me, through His word, and then when I watched how it was working out for other people, that instead of a fence it was God over here with His arm around me saying, “Chip, that’s not a fence with all the good stuff there. The good stuff’s there. That’s a guardrail. I just want to keep you inside the guardrail so you get first-rate sex. So it’s not about lying or going into. It’s about knowing.

“I want you to have sex without guilt. I want you to have sex without shame. I don’t want sex with flashbacks. I don’t want sex with scars. I want you to get the highest, best. I want you to have the kind of sex where you know I’m looking down on the marriage bed and I’m rejoicing with you.” That’s biblical.

But here’s a guardrail. It’s to protect you. But it’s also to provide for you. God knows your needs. He created you with the hormones that you have. He knows the longings of your heart. He understands the loneliness that you have.

In Jeremiah 29:11, when it seemed impossible for Israel. They had worshipped idols, they were far from God, and you know, they just felt like there’s no hope, God sent Jeremiah to say, “Look. It may be difficult right now.” You may be single and without dates. You might be hooked on pornography. You might be in the midst of an affair today and you feel like, “I could never break it off.”

You might have all kind of issues. God would say, “Look. You come to Me, I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for good and not for evil to give you a hope and a future.”

God wants to provide spiritual reward in intimacy with Him. Sexual immorality, whether it’s visual, mental, or physical puts a barrier between you and God. It puts a barrier between you and yourself. And it puts a barrier between you and other people.
He says, “I want to give you a spiritual reward. I want to give you emotional peace. I want to protect you from sexually transmitted diseases. I want to reward your life with the very best. I want to give you sexual fulfillment.”

See that’s, there’s a heavenly Father who understands the media in the last forty or fifty years, and the silence of the Church and when you meet other Christians and they’re living together and, you know, he logs on or she logs on and, you know what? What happens is, what do we do? We start looking at other people and we start adopting their practices.

I think God would just say, “Dr. Phil, could you come here for a second?” “Sure, Lord.” “Could you just tell my entire Church, would you ask them the big question that you ask people on your TV show?” “Yes, Lord, I’ll do it. How’s this working for you?”

How did the affair work out in terms of financially? How did it work out for your kids? Well, what’s it feel like to log on and feel like you can’t wait to, you know, you’re at work and you’re just looking for a time and you’re hiding?

What’s it feel like to read romance novels and feel like you’re sexually unfulfilled in your marriage and have dreams and fantasies about people that don’t exist? What’s it feel like to always feel like you got sexual thoughts all the time and you don’t like yourself, and there’s a shame, and there’s a guilt?

Or what’s it like to have a, which happens in many Christian marriages, when you come with a lot of baggage, all of a sudden it was exciting because it was illegal. It was exciting because you had to hide. And now it’s boring.

I think God would say, “How’s that working for you?” Don’t you want better? Don’t you want the best?

See so often when churches talk about sex so much of it is, “Shame on you, don’t do this, don’t do that, don’t do this.” I’ll tell you what, you need to start doing some really good things the really right way.

For many of you today is the first day of a new beginning of your new sexual identity before a good and loving Father where it can be clean, and holy, and wholesome, and fulfilling.

And you’re going to have to break some things. And that, yes, it’s going to be
hard and, yes, you'll need help, and it will take courage, and a lot of faith, and you'll be swimming upstream, even in the Church. But I will tell you, you will experience the rich quality of life that the Jesus who died for you on the cross, and was risen from the dead, died to pay for.

You're not, and never will be, loved by anyone more than Jesus. And He's not embarrassed by sex, He knows where you've been, He wants to forgive, cleanse, strengthen.

And help His Church be a model of passionate sexuality in the right place, in the right time, with the right person.

Number five is everyone needs to sow their wild oats and experiment sexually before they settle down in a long-term relationship. I mean, it’s kind of like, you know, I’ve kind of gotten this from people.

“So far, Chip, I get it. I get it. I get it. I get it. I get it. You know? Kind of understand. And I’m going to do that. Like, everything you’ve said so far, believe me, I am really going to do that … in about three years. Ah, make it four. Because, I mean, you know, God, God’s forgiving, right? So He'll forgive me all that stuff. So I’m going to go out and...

“And then I’ll sort of come back around some day, some way.”

Here's the truth. Sexual sins have uniquely devastating impact on people's lives. Listen to that. Sexual sins, unlike any other sin, has uniquely devastating impact on people’s lives because it’s a sin against yourself.

Paul would write to this sexually confused church, the Corinthians, yet again. And almost in astonishment he says, “Do you not know that the man who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her body? For it’s said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who unites himself for the Lord is one with Him in Spirit.”

Do you see how sexuality and spirituality, they always are so close? Then the application: “Flee from sexual immorality, all other sins a man commits are outside his body but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You have been bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

Listen carefully. This is the part where, I mean, the stakes get so much higher and so much more important. I’m reading a little book called The Ethic of Eden right now. It’s an overview of all the Old Testament and how God has worked and
the professor talks about how really in Eden the whole goal of God, He just wanted to be with His people.

He wanted to be with them in a perfect environment and talk, and share, and be close to them, and bless them. And then sin entered in and then you have the story and then over time you have Moses and the Ten Commandments and then what’s God say? He has him build this tabernacle and the Shekinah glory does what? You know, there’s this outer court, there’s a holy court, then there’s the holy of holies and it can move whenever His…

But He wants to dwell with them. God wants to be with His people. He wants to enjoy their fellowship, He wants to bless them. And then later David raises some money and Solomon builds this temple and the temple was built like the tabernacle and there’s the outer court. Then there’s this holy place. And this holy of holies.

And God in His Shekinah glory fills this place and He wants to be with his people. And today, He lives in the temple made without hands. If you are a follower of Jesus His temple is your physical body.

The holy, pure, awesome, all-knowing, powerful Creator of the universe, in the person of the Holy Spirit dwells inside of every child of God. And so when you decide to have sex it’s like going into the most beautiful church you’ve ever seen with stained glass and taking a hammer and just breaking it all up.

It’s like taking a bright red Ferrari and driving on the road and deciding, “I’m going to go off-road with it like a Jeep. Boom, boom, ba-boom, boom. And just messing it up.

That’s what happens when you have sex. That’s what happens when you fantasize. That’s what happens when you log on to porn. He wants to dwell with you. And He’s holy. And what you do is you cut yourself off from Him.

There’s a reason why some of you, in this room, your prayers don’t get answered. There’s a reason why that certain things that you’re asking God to do, He doesn’t do. There’s a reason why you open and you read the Bible and you just think it’s dead, it doesn't pop out, there are not promises. You know why? Sexual sin causes God to close His ears.

And He does it out of mercy. He does it with a velvet vice that you would realize this is unacceptable. What scares me today is that sexual immorality, in all of its forms, and whether it’s living together, twenty-five or thirty percent of Christians or whether it’s logging on, or whether it’s an affair, or whether it’s soft porn…
It's become so acceptable in the Church today we don't know what we're missing. There's a reason why the Church is impotent. You talk, we are spiritually impotent in a decadent culture because we're not like the culture, we're worse than the culture.

And you are the beautiful bride of Christ. Your physical body is holy to God. He wants to dwell in it. And He's not against sex. Some of you are getting such second-rate, lame sex. He cries out today and says, "Stop it. It's devastating. It's a sin against your own body, psychologically, physically, and spiritually."

And not only that it's a sin whose roots are in spiritual rebellion and idolatry. See at the end of the day there's part of us that says, "You know what? No one's going to tell me what to do with, you know, I've got these impulses. I've got these drives."

This was me, freshman in college, brand new Christian. And I started reading these verses and I was just, "Hey, you know what? Hey, God, you know, you know what? You can run the universe but you're not running this part of my life."

When you say to God, "I'm doing my thing my way," let me give you a definition for that. Rebellion. And in the Bible when you rebel it's real serious. Listen to what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5. He makes the connection between rebellion, sexual sin, and idolatry.

And this is a sex-saturated, the temple of Diana there, there are prostitutes, these people have come to Christ in a decadent, sexual world. "But among you," he says, "there mustn't be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed." And the word is sexual greed, lustfulness.

"Because these things are improper for God's holy people." And he goes from their behavior to even their speech. "Nor should there be any obscenities, or foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place. Rather the giving of thanks. For of this you can be sure:" listen to how serious this gets, "no immoral, impure, or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore, do not be partakers with them."

Now I want you to hear very carefully what I'm saying and what I'm not saying. This gets really, really serious. When your sexual practice, in your mind, out of your lips, with your body is opposed to what God says, at the end of the day what
he wants you to understand is you're worshipping you.

It’s using people, viewing things, you are the center, and you are dominated by lust seeking for, in the words of G.K. Chesterton, “Every man who walks into a brothel is taking a first step toward God.” It is a false intimacy; it’s a searching for. But it is, what? It’s worshipping yourself.

And it’s spiritual rebellion. It’s rejecting God. Because spirituality and sexuality are so closely linked.

Then notice what he says, “No immoral, impure, greedy person,” he’s talking about habitually. Doesn’t mean you don’t slip, doesn’t mean you have a problem. But if this is the practice, ongoing of your life, then he says there’s basically the rest of Scripture would say there are two options.

Number one is that you are a genuine, born-again believer of Jesus and over time you’ve compromised, compromised, compromised and you are trapped in sexuality and you need to repent as fast as you can.

But he says the other is is that maybe you’ve prayed a prayer, raised a hand, intellectually agree. “Oh, I believe in Jesus, intellectually. I believe He died, rose from the dead, and I prayed a prayer once. I actually come to church.” But when the Holy Spirit comes inside of your moral body it creates a desire for holiness.

And if, habitually, your sexual sin demonstrates no desire for holiness, or for God’s Word, or to move the direction He has told you, then he says, “Examine yourself to see if you’re in the faith.” Because Jesus said, “A tree will be known by its fruit. And if the fruit of your life is progressive, habitual, sexual immorality then you need to really ask yourself, “Does the Holy Spirit live in me?”

And that’s what Paul’s saying.

The final myth is one where I’m imagining some of you are right now. The final myth is in the heart of maybe some that, like, “You know what? I’m not sure I should have come today. I’ve been logging on for years, I’m involved in an affair right now. I’m so deep in sexual sin…”

I remember playing basketball one summer with a guy from USC, great athlete, played ball for USC, this was thirty years ago. One of the good looking, surfer-type guy.

And I remember one night as we were, after a game I said, “Tell me, how did you
come to Christ?” He said, “You know,” and he looked like some guy that should be on a poster. He said, “I had, I didn’t have sex every day, I had sex multiple times a day, with as many women as possible, in high school and throughout college. And I remember when I got where I got so numb I had sex and I didn’t feel anything and all I knew was I was deathly afraid because I realized the only thing that could give me the buzz was perversion and I looked at perversion and it scared me.”

And he said, “I remember crying out to God and said, ‘I’m a prisoner, will someone please help me?’ But I didn’t think there was any help. And God brought Jesus to my life.”

And for some of you, you think there’s no hope. You think that, “I’m too far gone. You know, I’ve been in this. It is, you have no idea where I’ve been and what I’ve done.” Here’s what I want you to understand. Here’s the truth. Look at it. Read it with me.

“Christ died to pay for the penalty of your sin and break its power in your life.” While you were yet a sinner, while I was yet a sinner, Christ died for you. Before you committed any sins He loves you, He loves you, He loves you.

I hope you hear, yes, the standard is clear, the fire in the fireplace. But there is a heavenly Father who loves you and no one is too far gone. But in order to receive that love, and to be cleansed, and to be forgiven, and to begin to experience the kind of sexuality that God wants, one, you gotta be honest.

Psalm 145:18 says, “The Lord is near to those who call upon Him to those who call upon Him in truth.” In truth! If I’m pretty passionate I remember those early years of college, I was stuck, stuck, stuck, stuck in lust. And I would have that, “Oh, God, I’m sorry. I know what I did tonight was really terrible. I’m sorry, sorry, it’s three o’clock in the morning.” And the next day, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” Three days later, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”

I remember this, this went on and on and on. I was trapped. I remember praying and telling God how sorry and how much I really wanted to change. And I heard a strong whisper from the Holy Spirit. “Chip, shut up.” Literally. “Shut up. You like what you’re doing.” It’s true.

Get honest. If you really want to change, I’ll give you the power. But stop playing games. So how about you? Where are you really at right now? This may be one of the most pivotal moments of your life. You may turn a corner and make a decision at a crossroads in this room right now that will change the course of your life. Are you willing to be honest?
The second step is to repent and confess. Repent just means a change of mind. “This way I’m living, what I’m doing is not good anymore. I’m changing my mind.” And confess means you just agree with God. And the promise is if we agree with God, if we confess our sin, in this case sexual sin of thought, word, or deed, He is faithful to forgive us of our sin. But not just forgive but to cleanse you, cleanse me, from all unrighteousness.

You will have a power in your prayer life. You’ll have a power and a confidence with people. It will be a journey. You’ll have to renew your mind. You’ll probably need to get help. Some of you will need to go to a counselor. Okay. Well, what’s the alternative? Living where you’re living?

And then finally, you need to forsake it. “He who conceals his sin will not prosper,” Proverbs says, “but to the one who makes it known, who forsakes it, the hand of God and the blessing of God.”

That means if you’re having an affair you don’t slide out of it. You tell the person today, “We’re done.” If it’s a porn issue you find another man or another woman and you say, “I need help. I’m going to address it.” And you unplug your computer.

Whatever you need to do be as radical as you need to be. That was what Jesus meant when He said, “If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. If your hand causes sin, cut it off.” He didn’t mean it literally. You could pluck out this eye and lust with that one.

He said be as drastic as you need to be, to do whatever God calls you to do, because your heavenly Father has a desire and a plan to love you and give you what’s best.

Don’t miss out for you but know that your life is a series of dominos that impact every person in your world. Your mate, your girlfriend, your kids, your friends. And as you go so go many of them.
It was the spring of my junior year in college and a couple buddies and I got in my little green Volkswagen and we said, “Fort Lauderdale spring break. It’s going to be great.”

So we traveled the long trip from West Virginia, and played a lot of outdoor basketball, and the sun was setting one night and I was pretty tired and it was a beautiful beach so I sat down at the beach, had my Bible, and I had been a Christian about three years and at this point was really beginning to grow.

And so as I did that I was sitting out and the beach was starting to clear, the sun was going down, and probably five or six hundred yards away, in fact, the person was pretty small. There was a man walking down the beach and nothing unusual about that.

And I’d never had an experience like this before but this thought came into my mind. “Chip, that man is a homosexual. He’s going to walk right up to you and I want you to share My love with him.”

And I’m thinking, “Did I, like, maybe eat too many enchiladas earlier? Or…” Now that must be, where did that thought come from? And so he’s now about two hundred yards away and I can see him, he looks like a mid to late twenties.

And then this happens again. I would later begin to recognize that the Holy Spirit, at times, would prompt you. He said, “Chip, this man’s hurting and he’s a homosexual and I want you to share My love with him.” And I think God was just trying to prepare me. I’d never had this experience before and sure enough the guy walks right in front of me, he got right to me, he stopped, looked down, saw me with an open Bible, walked right up to me.

Now, I need to tell you something. Just my background, my experience, my first reaction was fear. In fact, I, you know, kind of embarrassed. I remember kind of putting my Bible like this and putting my fist back like this. Like I bet something really bad is going to happen.

And then this guy walked up and he wasn’t anything like all the stereotypes that I had in my mind. And he began to ask a couple questions. I invited him to sit down. I listened as I heard how he’d just broken up with his life partner. He was devastated.
And in the next hour and a half I began to talk and share with him that there was a person that would never let him down, that would accept him, love him, forgive him, and give him a new life - like He gave to me.

And as that sun was going down over the ocean, we bowed our heads together and he prayed to receive Christ.

And it was a pretty amazing experience for me and I turned to him and I said, “You know, there’s two other guys that are, they’re Christians and they’re pretty new too and this was, sort of, an exploration trip. I’d love you to meet them.” He said, “Well, great! I’d love to do it.” I said, “Well, my car is here.” He said, “Well, my car’s over there.” I said, “Well, why don’t you meet me?”

So we got our cars and we met together and I said, “Just follow me. It’s just three or four or five blocks. We’re staying at this little place near the beach.” And so he got in his car, I got in my car, and now the lights are low and it’s dusk and my lights are on and his lights are on and we move together and we get to the first stop sign and we move through the stop sign and I noticed he slows up a little bit. So I slow up.

And then we move through the next stop sign and the next light. And then I noticed, well, so I slow up more. And then I look in the rearview mirror and he turns off.

And I thought to myself, “I think of all the probably Christians he’s ever met, he was afraid.” Just like I was afraid. That was a long, long time ago. But some things, unfortunately, haven’t changed much. An awful lot of Bible believing Christians who really, really love God, when it comes to homosexuality, and the homosexual community, are really afraid and a lot of people in the lifestyle are really afraid of Christians.

And that’s sad on both ends.

And so as we start, maybe a little bit differently than you think, I’d like to offer to the homosexual community and apology. I’ve been around this block for a while. I lived in Santa Cruz, I’ve lived in places where large segments of the population are lesbian or gay.

And here’s what you need to understand is that in the name of Christians, because they don’t know who, you know, what our labels are, we have one group
that have so emphasized what they feel is the truth that they have held signs, and called people names, and screamed at them, and told them, “You’re on your way to hell!”

And the only experience people in the homosexual community have had is with these very angry, crazy people, some who have been very violent, in fact. And the absolute love of God has been completely missing.

And I can understand why they’re afraid.

Under the banner of Christianity, as well, there are other groups who say to the homosexual community, “It’s not even sin. You’re not only welcome but we will ordain you as our priest, or our pastors, and don’t worry about it and, you know what? God…”

And they don’t tell them any of the truth. When you learn that the life expectancy of the average homosexual male is half that of heterosexual males. Forty-two to forty-three years old. To not tell them the truth about what that lifestyle does to them is not loving.

And so we have one group that pounds on the truth without love and another group that pounds on love without truth. Here’s what I want to do. I want to walk with you on a journey, first and foremost for us to understand and so that we can be a church, and individuals, who speak the truth in love.

I want to walk through the two basic positions. You need to understand. So often we have emotions and there’s heat, and heat, and heat and very little light. And so what I want to do is I want to walk through the basic presuppositions of the homosexual community. And then I want to walk through the basic presuppositions of Bible believing Christians.

And then what I want to do is I want to take those things and look at those seven premises and say, “Let’s look at what the Bible says, science says, research says.” Which of these most line up most accurately with the facts?

And so with that here’s the presuppositions of the homosexual community. It’s a moral alternative sexual orientation. Why? I was born gay. Therefore, homosexuality is an identity. It’s who I am. And if it’s who I am, and I’m made this way, then it’s normal and it’s natural.
And if it’s normal and it’s natural, you may have a different idea about sexuality, but this is just an alternative way to live in your sexual practice.

And finally, if I’m made this way, if it’s normal, if it’s natural, it’s a civil rights issue. Genders, people of different races, they’re protected by civil rights so we, in the homosexual community, should be protected as well.

Now just sort of lean back for just a second and ask yourself if you believe, with all your heart, that those presuppositions were true, can you see why you might be pretty angry at people who call you names, or say that everything about you is invalid, or even that you need to change?

See what I want you to get, just let’s walk in their shoes just for a second here. That’s a way of thinking that produces certain attitudes and behaviors.

By contrast, the Bible would teach and Bible believing Christians would say homosexuality is an immoral, prohibited sexual lifestyle. That you’re not born that way but it’s learned or developed. And so what’s prohibited is homosexual or same sex behavior.

The Bible doesn’t declare that people may not be tempted; they can be tempted with same sex attraction. But the Bible says same sex behavior is prohibited. So it’s not something that you are, homosexuality is something that you do.

And if it’s something that you do as a learned behavior that’s prohibited by God, for your protection and for your good, then it’s abnormal and unnatural and, far from being an alternative lifestyle, it’s a destructive lifestyle. It’s destructive relationally, and physically, and emotionally, and spiritually.

And finally, then, it’s a moral issue. So turn the page with me and let’s go on a journey together. What does science say? What does the research say? What’s the Bible say?

I want to go through seven premises. Premise number one is: I was born this way. In 1991 and 1993 Newsweek came out with a big splash and the whole article was, Are You Born Gay? And the first study that made national prominence was by Simon LeVay. Simon LeVay was, actually 1993, the biological basis for homosexuality. And basically said that, we now know there’s a genetic link, which causes homosexuality.
And he had thirty-five men who had died, they thought that they were all, sixteen were heterosexual, nineteen were homosexual. And they found a different size in the hypothalamus. Now, as they did intensive research they found that they never verified whether the nineteen men were really heterosexual or not.

Both doctors who did this were homosexual scientists and they were, by admission, said, “We’re looking for a link to help people deal with all the guilt and the shame, and make a link of why people are homosexual.”

The study did not gain any scientific credibility. It was deeply flawed. They had exceptions in a very small group of three people in the homosexual group had larger hypothalamus and three people in the homosexual group had smaller.

And so this was a first link, and it’s not held up scientifically, but if you read the research what you’ll find is this is an often study that is quoted.

A second study was supported by Dr. Michael Bailey of Northwestern University, Dr. Richard Pillard of Boston University. And they reported in male twins when one is homosexual the other, there’s a three times more likelihood to be homosexual than fraternal twins.

And again this will be sited, this was in that big Newsweek article and it’s interesting, it says, “The flaws of the study where the sample size was small, forty-eight percent of the identical twins were not homosexual.” So the point is if it’s genetic, identical twins have exactly the same genes. So it ought to be a hundred percent.

Here’s what I can say about the genetics. Other research has been done and in terms of all the literature that you read, although there’s a desire to make links, there is no correlation between genetic, absolute in any way, to homosexuality behavior or origin.

Studies by Johns Hopkins University, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, a pro-homosexual scientist, Evelyn Hooker, and Masters and Johnson all deny that there’s any genetic link. They agree that the connection between genetics and homosexuality is a myth.

Now what you need to understand, though, in the popular culture and if you’re a young person, is that if you say something long enough and loud enough, this is what most homosexual people are told.
Or this is what young people in a Bible teaching church who go to school and talk to a friend are told. You know what? Those feelings, that attraction you have. You’re a homosexual. You were born that way.

We’ll talk about this a little bit later because I want to look at the developmental factors. When you do all the research you find there are five or six developmental factors. If it’s not genetic then how do people have these alternative sexual attractions?

Sexual identity, the father’s role, is huge here. You find an absent father, abusive father, disengaged father, or smothering mother. Early sexual abuse. Last night I talked to a young man who just recently came out of the lifestyle and had a drug addiction and homosexuality and, you know, he just talked to me and we had a great conversation.

He said, “I never made the link between my early childhood abuse and my drug addiction and homosexuality.” And he said, “I just, I thought God hated me. And I couldn’t understand what happened or why because of what I’d been through.”

That’s not the case in all family conflict issues. Low self-esteem, failure to bond with the same sex parent. As you do the studies, there are lots of developmental reasons. And, by the way, every little boy and every little girl, if you notice when kids are small, boys hate girls and girls hate boys.

Correct? Right? They have cooties. Agh! I hated girls. Until puberty sets in. And then we don’t understand what happens but those little girls you hated, something happens inside.

It’s during that time in those pre-teens, pre-puberty times and during puberty that when some of these developmental issues and there are needs or there’s not a bonding and there are different experiences that kids have, some kids don’t go through the whole developmental process and it’s not like they make some choice. They can be six, seven, eight years and have an attraction to the same sex and need to be nurtured and bonded.

When that happens if they’re told, “You’re born this way,” or if they are in a good Bible teaching church, or a not so good Bible teaching church, that just hammers people, hammers people and equates a same sex attraction with homosexuality, I’m telling you, there are thousands, and thousands, and thousands of people in churches who grow up with these kind of feelings and attractions and there is no safe place to tell anyone and there’s no place to get help. And they’re sort of, “Oh, you’ll get over it.” Or, “Date a girl.” Or, “Here, watch this movie.”
And we’re going to talk about how to solve that problem. But it’s developmental.

Third is beyond that, the environmental factors, the media has normalized. I mean we’ve gone to the media in terms of TV, reality shows, you know, programs now, new show coming up, The New Normal.

Or Modern Family have three different couples, one’s a gay couple. You have reality shows. You have music, culture, videos. We, everywhere what we see is this is just an alternative lifestyle and the blaring in the media is, “This is normal.”

Well pretty soon that gets to be accepted. Music, a comic book I just read last week, one of the star, Northstars, Marvel Comics is now marrying his male lover. Now think about who reads comic books.

Well, if people don’t hear the truth or if church people are uncomfortable with talking about these kind of things little boys and little girls, they just hear what they hear.

Another thing you need to understand is there are some people that, you know, the whole bisexual movement? This has nothing to do with how you grew up. It’s just, “I want to get off. And if I want to get off with a woman or with a man, it doesn’t matter.” There are people that are just, I mean, sexually charged and want to have experiences.

I mean, it’s the Dennis Rodmans of the world. You know? It’s, “You know, I’m a basketball player by day, and I put on a wedding dress by night, and I’ll have sex with anybody, anytime.”

There’s a part of this vile side that’s scary, that’s not to do with just, you know, people that have been through difficult times but people that are taking advantage and seducing.

I have a very close friend who lost his wife tragically. And he had a daughter in college who was very close to her mom. And there was an older woman, she was an athlete, and there was an older woman who happened to be a part of that athletic program who consoled her. And she was a lesbian. And she consoled her and nurtured her and met some very deep needs and introduced her to the lesbian lifestyle.
So there are lots of different ways but an awful lot of it has to do with the very legitimate, heart needs that we all have, and people wanting to get connected, and wanting to be loved.

Now the fact of the matter is this. Some of you, in this room, and some of us, when we wanted those needs met we got involved in drugs, or alcohol, or promiscuous heterosexual sex, or workaholism, right?

You know what we did? We just tried to solve those needs by different temptations.

Premise number two: ten percent of the population are homosexuals, or how could so many people be so wrong? That statistic comes from a 1948 Kinsey Report. It later became the Project 10. So throughout public schools when my kids were in school, in Soquel over in Santa Cruz, that the triangle speakers came in and told our elementary, junior high, and high school students that ten percent of you are homosexuals and said the only way to really find out is to do some experimentation. There’s nothing wrong with you.

So it’s in our educational system. But what you don’t understand is the Kinsey Report, which was quoted in that, kind of, blockbuster, 1993 Newsweek Magazine, was a flawed study. It was done by volunteers out of a prison population.

Later on a little bit more careful research, 1991 University of Chicago did a nationwide survey and found that about 1.7% of the population are homosexuals. In the 1990 census only one percent of the people reported to be homosexual.

Now I think to be fair, I think a lot of people are not going to report that one. So I think that one’s a little skewed on the low side.

But the most exhaustive study done in the nation, American Survey, is that 2.7 males and 1.7 females are homosexual in America.

And so all I want to say is that this mantra of, “You’re born this way,” and that “Ten percent of the population, how could ten percent be wrong?” They simply don’t line up with the best scientific research, even done by those in the homosexual community, or the best research we know about what’s happening in the population.

But so some of those premises need to be gently and lovingly removed.
Third premise is that the homosexual lifestyle is a normal, healthy alternative lifestyle. Now key words: normal, healthy. The pictures that are portrayed is that, “I love this person very much and, you know, you can love your heterosexual partner and I'll love my homosexual partner and, you know, it's just a difference in how we express our love.”

I want to share some medical statistics. I want to share some, couple things that are fairly graphic but we need to say them if you really love people you tell them the truth.

Seventy-eight percent of male homosexuals have or had a sexually transmitted disease. Two thirds of all the AIDS in the US are a direct result from homosexual behavior. Fifty percent of all homosexuals have gonorrhea. Homosexual young people are twenty-three times more likely to get a sexually transmitted disease.

In San Francisco, the sexually transmitted disease rate is twenty-two times higher than the national average. Lesbians are fourteen times more likely to contract syphilis, four times more likely to have scabies, and three times more likely to get breast cancer.

Only three percent of homosexuals are fifty-five years and older. And only one percent die of natural causes, a la, old age. The life expectancy of a male homosexual in America is forty-two years old.

How do I say to someone I really care about, and the premise is you really care, that, “Oh, whatever you want to do is okay.” You only live half as long. And like a domino, what happens to you, you will infect other people. By the gay’s report, forty percent of homosexual men have between one to five hundred partners.

Now are there monogamous, loving, caring homosexual relationships, as purported on TV and other areas? Of course there are.

But the idea that that’s just the way it is isn’t the way it is. And there are a lot of young people that are taken advantage of. And if you believe that you’re born this way and ten percent of the population is this way and it’s just a normal alternative.

But I don’t know about you, those are scary statistics. And these people need to be understood. And they need to be loved. And much of their behavior, and their acting out, isn’t any different than your behavior or my behavior in acting out.

As we'll learn later such were some of us.
The sexual practice of homosexuals and I'll be very brief on this but it’s really important because, again, it's, we have these ethereal pictures and we’re not honest and clear about how homosexual practice works.

The high rate of disease among homosexual males is due to unhealthy sexual practice. Ninety-eight percent of homosexuals engage in oral sex, ninety percent practice sex with their partner in anal sex. This is biological suicide since the rectum was not designed to accommodate a thrusting penis or sex toys.

During such activities the anal wall is torn and bruised, giving sperm and germs direct access to the blood stream. Since the anal wall is only one cell thick, sperm quickly penetrates the wall, causing massive immunological damage to the body’s T and B cell defense mechanisms. This doesn’t happen during vaginal sex because of the multi-layered construction of the vagina.

Very graphic, very clear. But you just need to understand that when men have sex with men, or women have sex with women, it is destructive. It violates God’s design. And that’s that passage where it talks about terrible things happen to their body.

And those things aren’t often very talked about.

Logically it’s a lifestyle that has the inability to reproduce. And historically we are living in a time where there has never been, to date, a culture that has survived, a society that has survived, when homosexuality became mainstream and accepted by all.

So it’s a death-style. And we, but we need to say that in the same way, with the same kind of compassion we would with someone who has cancer. I mean, when you think of the massive amount of money and research that goes into people that are dying. You need to care about people that are dying. You need to look at what they do, and why they do it, and understand where they’re coming from.

But we need to let them know that, you know what? The best research is there may be a predisposition. I read at least one study, there may be a predisposition. The evidence is far, far smaller than alcoholism. We know that almost sixty-seven to seventy-some percent of alcoholics, there’s at least a genetic predisposition toward becoming an alcoholic.
But what we tell them is, “Well, then, you know, just get drunk all your life,” right? There’s a predisposition for some people for stealing or lying. Even if there’s a genetic predisposition it’s a fallen world. What people need is loved, understood, and it means they’ll have temptations in areas that maybe you don’t.

But some of you have areas of temptation in other areas. And the same grace is available. But we need to get this on the table, and care deeply about people, so the truth and the love come in the same package.

Premise number four is that the Bible may condemn lustful, indiscriminate homosexuality but not loving, committed homosexual practice. This has been the position of a lot of mainline churches and is sort of moving in to more evangelical circles.

And what I want to do is just go through some very clear, direct, what’s the Bible actually say?

You see from creation the intent of God, “Let us make man in our own image,” we looked last week, “male and female.” The inferred, clear design is heterosexuality. When God wants to solve the aloneness problem of mankind, those deep needs that everyone has to be connected, and loved, and affirmed, and understood, Chapter 2 verse 18 says He creates Eve - heterosexual relationship.

There are certain things that only a woman can bring out of a man and there are certain things that only a man can bring to a woman. And that’s by God’s design.

In Genesis 19, we have the first sort of beginning experience of homosexuality being endorsed in a whole culture. And you have the judgment of Sodom. In the literature by people who say, “I’m gay and Christian” and there’s sort of a movement to revamp sort of some biblical views they would say, “No, that’s not homosexuality. That’s an issue of inhospitality.”

But as you study the passage very clearly you see Jesus quoting this passage. The issue there is wickedness as evidenced, in one way, not exclusively but in one way by sodomy or homosexual practice.

When you get to the Old Testament you have the Levitical law. But the Levitical law is more than just ceremonies. In the Old Testament, in Leviticus, you have ceremonial law, you have dietary law, you have laws for the priests, and then you have just moral laws.
God says certain things. He took this people who were living in Egypt, with all these vile practices, and He takes them into this place called Canaan and in Canaan these people are worshipping in ways that are just unbelievable with all kind of sexual practice, offering their kids to idols.

And so in Leviticus God’s going to lay down some laws about, “I don’t want you to be like these nations that I’m going to kick out.” And He goes through a number of very specific things that has to do with a violation of character. Not just ceremonial law, but it’s moral law, that’s taken into the New Testament.

And I’m going to read through Leviticus 18:21 to 25 because often when I hear Christians quote this they just pull out one verse. And what I want you to get is the context. I want you to hear, “Homosexuality is egregious sin that’s very serious but it’s not just because it’s in the Old Testament.”

It says, “Do not give,” verse 21, “do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of the Lord your God. I am the Lord. Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

“Do not defile yourself in any of these ways because this is how the nations that I’m going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”

All I want you to see is that God’s really strong on this because of what it does. It’s detestable. Leviticus is about, "I want you to be holy. I want you to be pure the way I am."

In chapter 20, He’ll list yet another consequence of these kind of behaviors and all I want you to see is, guess what? Adultery is in there. God is saying to the people, “I don’t want you living the way these other nations are. It is unholy. It’s destructive.”

“If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” That’s pretty strong. “If a man sleeps with his father’s wife he has dishonored his father, both the man and the woman must be put to death. Their blood will be on their own heads.

“If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. What they have done is a perversion. Their blood is on their own heads. If a man
lies with another man as one would lie with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable, they must be put to death, their blood will be on their own heads.

“If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it’s wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire so wickedness should not be among you. If a man has sexual relations with an animal he must be put to death and you must also kill the animal.”

Now you need to understand, God sets up a nation, it’s a theocracy, these laws and these punishments are for the nation of Israel during that time, and there is a New Testament era that is different. But what I want you to get is how serious this is, in terms of the moral standard, for God.

By the way, that’s how serious adultery is. That’s how serious other sins are.

Finally, the unequivocal and clear passage in Romans chapter 1, Paul, living in cities that make even our sexual promiscuity mild. Corinth, where on every corner there are idols, and there are male prostitutes, and you could probably get involved in an orgy every night, or every day of the week.

The ancient world, that Christianity was birthed at, was just sexually explosive. There are no rules. No boundaries. So Paul would write, in response to that, “Because of this God gave them over to shameful lust. Even the women exchanged their natural relations for unnatural ones and in the same way men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty of their perversion.”

You almost get to the point where you think, “Whoo, I mean, this is strong.” And it is strong. But just before I read the next passage I want you to, I want you to do something. I want you to think about, “How am I feeling right now? What’s my view and my convictions about sexual purity, homosexuality?”

You know, what’s going through your mind right now as I kind of read these passages? Because here’s what I want you to get. In the next passage, Paul is going to talk to a church that he loves very much.

And he’s going to tell them that those who have certain habitual practices, that they are unwilling and won’t repent from, are evidence that they won’t enter the kingdom of God.
It's not, this isn't people that fall off the wagon. This isn't people that want to do what’s right. This is people that by their habitual practice say to God, “I don't want any part of You.” And as I read this, what I want you to notice is that homosexuality is one of the issues. But when I’ve heard Christians teach on this, I hear them read this very carefully and then, in bold, “See? Homosexuality!”

What I’d like you to do, to be fair, is to read this and as I read it think about the sins that you used to be most guilty of. He writes to this church giving them hope but laying this bar of righteousness. That’s the apostle Paul does, that’s what the Bible does. There is a bar of righteousness for our good, and for our welfare, that’s out of the love of God to provide for us and protect for us.

But that bar of righteousness is covered in the velvet kindness of His love and compassion. And so the apostle Paul would write, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither sexually immoral, nor idolaters, or adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy or drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

So he’s just saying, “Look. The bar doesn’t change.” But you know, I wondered what would happen if instead of homosexuality being, like, “Oh, the most terrible sin someone could ever get involved in.” And Christians are super uptight and really afraid. What if we just made it fornicators? Or people that have been divorced? Or, how about, some of us, idolaters. If you worship work, or worship money, or worship your kids, God says that’s idolatry. What about people that are sex offenders? What about people who log onto internet sites? Heterosexual sites?

The apostle Paul is saying those things. Guess what? Those are in the same category. Those things will harm you, bring death to you. They will crush your soul, alienate you from God, alienate you from yourself, bring death into your relationships and into your body.

And what he says is all those, as well as homosexuality, are things that He can’t condone. That’s the bar of righteousness. But what you’re going to see in just a minute is there was a velvet, kindness and love as he’ll say to that church, “But such were some of you.”

Forgiven fornicators, forgiven adulterers, forgiven homosexuals. In fact, notice the next premise.
Emotional feelings and attractions to the same sex must mean that I’m a homosexual. Nothing could be farther from the truth. As you study developmental psychology, as you study how little boys and little girls grow up and how there’s this period of time when we don’t like the opposite sex and then puberty kicks in.

There’s a developmental period where we have this attachment to the same sex and there are role models and when certain things happen and whether it’s abuse or whether it’s an absent father, or dad’s away at war, or mother is afraid, or someone else has been abused, there are all kind of reasons.

But for some little boys and some little girls, during that season, they have a same sex attraction. They didn’t sign up for it. They don’t know why. But for most of them, in the church, they’re scared to death. And they don’t know what to do with it.

And especially if they’ve been in a church where, “Homosexuals! You want to talk about a big sin, that’s the big one!” Of course, we don’t talk about a lot of the other ones.

Do you remember thirty years ago when this was the attitude of the Church about divorce? Remember that? If you’ve ever been divorced for any reason, a biblical reason, you know what? You know, like, there was a scarlet “D” on your chest. You know, it didn’t matter if your husband or wife walked out on you, it didn’t matter if they left you for another person.

If you had the big “D” word you were a done deal. And it’s interesting, two things have happened. Same thing’s happening with homosexuality. The church, by and large, we blow it on the truth side and the grace side. So today, wow, who do you know that hasn’t been divorced or some family member?

It’s like the bar of righteousness has been removed and people think that you can get divorced to anyone anytime. And just sort of, “Let’s glance over that one.” Bible is very clear on that one. It’s sin. There are some biblical reasons.

And the flipside is, you know what? Where’s the love, and where’s the compassion, and where is the acceptance? And working through the hard issues with people. You’re seeing the same exact same thing happen in our day.

We’ve gotta create a place where boys and girls, not so old and not so young, can say, “I know different people are tempted and struggle with different things.” Some young men are tempted with pornography. Others with same sex attraction. Some young people in their twenties have struggled in lots of different areas and met someone who has been nice and kind and nurturing and began to introduce
them to thoughts they’d never had. And then pretty soon they reframe their background and where will people get help and get loved if they don’t get it at the church?

The sixth premise is: once a homosexual, always a homosexual. You can just write, “Not true.” Not true. Remember the I Corinthians passage? I want to read it one more time. I just want to kind of get some ramp. Because I love this passage.

I love this passage for me, and I love this passage for people that are struggling, and I love this passage for brothers and sisters in Christ who have come out of homosexuality.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” Paul, I got that one. “Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, or homosexuals, nor thieves, nor coveters, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

I got it. You can’t habitually practice that. I love the next line: “Such were some of you.” Such were some of you. Such were some of me. “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God.”

Once a homosexual, always a homosexual simply isn’t true anymore than once a sex addict or once an alcoholic, or once a workaholic you always stay there. It’s a sin. It’s a serious sin like all the others in this list.

And such were some of us, right?

A young man who was with us last night, his name was Tim, he said I could use his name and I was just walking up and down the aisles before the service and saying hi to people and I said, “Hi, how are you doing?” He goes, “Hey!” And he just stood right up and he took the notes and he goes, “See this?” You know, it was, you know, “The Truth About Homosexuality.”

He says, “That used to be me.” I said, “Really?” “Yeah,” he goes, “I’m glad I’m here. This is my sponsor and, you know, I came out of a drug situation as well. That used to be me but I’ve been washed and freed by the blood of Christ.”

And then listen very carefully. He said, “But I’m on a journey.” And he said, “You know, you know that where it says, ‘Take up your cross and follow Jesus,’” he goes, “I take up my cross and I follow Him, and my cross is the homosexual
temptations and thoughts, that still come to my mind. I’m not acting on them. But it
doesn’t mean I still don’t struggle.”

I’m a workaholic. Okay? I’ve been there, done that. I mean, I’ve done crazy work.
And I had to realize something deeply was broken inside of me from my alcoholic
dad and my family.

Guess what? I didn’t, you know what? I’ve overcome that. But under pressure I’m
tempted to be an alcoholic. Under pressure I’m tempted to be a workaholic. I’ve
seen that in my family. I’m afraid to go to any of those places. I run from those
places.

But those thoughts, now, if you’re honest don’t some of you have some of those?
Does anybody here struggle with what you used to struggle with? Don’t we all?

Well, would someone who has come out of a homosexual lifestyle be safe to tell
you, “Hey, I just want you to know, I’ve been washed like you. But I’m still
struggling with some same sex attraction.”

And you know what all the research says? You know what brings deliverance?
Same sex, non-sexual, deep, loving relationships where that nurture, where that
broken part gets healed and loved.

But you know what average people in the Church do? You hear something like
that and your body language, whoo. What if that happened to us idolaters, and
us fornicators, before we came to Christ? And swindlers?

God is calling us, as a church, to a new day.

The Masters and Johnson study talks about a remarkable success rate among
homosexuals. 79.1% have immediate success. 71% stay celibate out of their
homosexual lifestyle.

The research and the Bible both say, “This is not a life sentence that cannot
change.” Interestingly enough, my experience with the homosexual community
and most of my research comes from people coming out of the lifestyle.

I mean, in Santa Cruz, that wasn’t hard to find. We had a church full of people
that used to be in the lifestyle. And it’s interesting, here’s what they say, “You
know what? When you’re in the lifestyle, when you say, I don’t want to be this
anymore.” You talk about non-tolerance. Other gays come down, whoo.
And you know what? What do you do, if you come, if God speaks to you and you say, "You know what? This is wrong. This is the bar. It's true." But it's out of love. And you want to step out of that and you come to a church and now you're alienating yourself from the community and the people that did care about you.

And you come to a church. Here's what I want to ask you, are you willing to love the people that God will bring? In fact, are you willing to love the people that are already in our church, that are already in this service, that either struggle, or have come out of, or presently in, the homosexual lifestyle?

Because what I'm telling you is that we will never be God’s Church until we address this one, first, with our own sexual purity and secondly, with a heart that says, “You know what? We’re not changing the bar of righteousness.” God’s Word says it’s a sin just like all these other things are a sin and we're going to hold ourselves accountable.

But this will be a safe, loving place not just for adulterers, and fornicators, and liars, and swindlers. This will be a safe place for people coming out of the homosexual lifestyle.

And my question is: are you willing to go there? Because we’re going there. We’re going to love everybody here. We’re going to love everybody here. And will that make you uncomfortable? Of course. Of course. Duh. Makes me uncomfortable. It makes you uncomfortable until you get those stereotypes out of your head, until you see God’s grace, until you see people grow.

I just, I can’t tell you the most delightful conversation I had with Tim last night afterwards.

In fact, when he did that before the service and I told him when I got done, I said, “Tim, when you, when I get done I’m going to preach on this and I’m hoping it’s going to go well. I’m trying to balance this truth and love and I know I can’t do it but I think God can. So I’m going to give it my best shot. When I’m done, will you come right down afterwards and would you tell me, because, I mean, this is so recent, would you tell me what was clear, what was honest, what was helpful, what did I miss, what should I change?”

And I took notes. He said, “The turning point for me was a man looked at me and said, ‘God doesn’t hate you, He loves you. And don’t you think, if this was something He would want for you, that somewhere in Genesis when He talked about how relationships work, this would be there? And it’s not there. He hates
the sin but He really loves you.’ And a light came on. And I quit fighting it. And I began to investigate what it means to follow Christ.”

The final premise is one that I’ve touched on. It’s that all Christians are homophobic and could never fully accept me if they knew I struggled with homosexual feelings, fantasies, or practice.

And what I can tell you is that we have a very poor track record here but it’s going to change. It’s going to change in one church and, by God’s grace, we pray it will change in many churches as He allows us to partner with them.
It’s near quitting time, you’re at your office and you’re packing some things up and there’s a light tap on the door. It’s Debbie. She’s twenty-nine years old, she’s an up and coming executive. She’s on the fast-track, huge potential. And she asks just before you leave, “Could I, can I get a moment? I need to ask you something.”

You kind of stop unpacking, go to your desk, invite her to sit down. And the second that she needs ends up forty-five minutes. Debbie begins, through tears, to talk about the man that she thought was going to be the answer to her dreams that was in her life and is now gone and she’s three months pregnant.

And she’s on the fast-track and she doesn’t know what to do. And she turns to you and says, “I know you’re a good person. And you’re my boss. What should I do?” What would you tell her? And why would you say that?

Scene number two: you sit down to eat dinner and, just, wow, the day is over, it’s great, the phone rings, you look down, you press the button, you’re not going to take it right now. And within seconds a text pops up and it says, “Amy – I really need to talk to you tonight.” Amy, wow.

It’s a sixteen year old girl that you’ve known her since she’s four or five years old, great family friends, you vacation with their family. You’ve seen her grow up and be this amazing student. She has a volleyball scholarship ahead of her. And she said, “I just gotta talk to you.”

She comes after dinner and you go into the study and close the door and spend some time and she relives that moment that she was so excited about three months ago when that guy that is so popular and so cool asked her to go to the prom. And the dream of going out with that super good looking guy turned into the nightmare of her life. And she became a statistic of date rape.

But she felt so overwhelmed and so ashamed and didn’t know how to handle it she just shut it down. She has told no one, not her mom, not her dad, not her sister, not a girlfriend. But you’ve been in the high school ministry and a family friend and you’re safe.

And with tears flowing down her eyes she goes, “What can I do? I mean this will ruin my parents’ reputation. My dad is a leader at the church. My mom teaches women’s Bible studies.” What would you tell her? Why?
Scene number three is June. She’s forty-one years old. You really like her, she’s real rough around the edges. She’s been a Christian about eighteen months. She kind of doesn’t know the social graces of when to talk about what. She’s a little bit loud. She has four kids, comes from a difficult, drug background, has four kids by two different guys.

But it’s so exciting to see what’s happened to her life and she’s really changed and she’s growing and she’s got a great job now and supporting the kids by herself.

And she pulls you in the hall and people are listening and you know this is inappropriate and she goes, “Look, I gotta ask you a question. You remember my husband when he came back, I tried to work it out, and then he left, and he left for good? While he was here … I found out just yesterday I’m pregnant, and I’ve got four kids, and I can’t miss a day of work, and I sure can’t handle five. You’ve been a Christian a lot longer than me. What should I do and why?”

Regardless of where you find yourself landing on the issue of abortion it’s one of the most pivotal, volatile issues in America today.

And it’s an issue that just isn’t out there. It’s not like this is a theological issue. We’re going to address sixty-five percent of all women who have abortions self-identify as Christians. This is what happens inside of all kinds of churches. So what would you say to that person? Not just what do you think but what do you believe and why?

When this topic comes up, usually it’s like missiles being fired at two different groups. I mean there’s heat, heat, heat, heat, anger, often violence. And so we’re going to take a little bit different approach and lean back and do a thoughtful analysis.

We’re going to look at some research. We’re going to look at what Planned Parenthood says and what the Right to Life groups say and we’re going to evaluate where they’ve been, where they are now, look at the evidence.

Because I’ll guarantee, in the next few years, either you’ll have an experience where you’ll need to know the answer to those questions or someone will ask you or you’ve already had one where you really need to know, “Where’s God in all of this?”
So open your teaching handout if you will and to begin I want to frame the issue. And as I frame it, it’s very interesting; I need to do sort of the then and a now. Because if you don’t get the history it won’t make sense to you.

Ten, twelve years ago the issue of abortion, when you looked at Planned Parenthood’s information or Right to Life information it was very, very clear, the issue was very clearly addressed. Planned Parenthood, this is from their literature, basically had three premises. Premise number one: as you read the literature they talked very little about the pregnancy, they did not use the word “baby,” the focus was on the mother, her rights, her feelings, her needs, the quality of her life, and the unborn fetus. Not baby.

Premise number two was the anguish she was going through, the pain, the numerous reasons why an abortion was a live option for her. And then third: the basic reasoning was the “who” of the mother versus the “what” of the fetus and the fetus was a mass of tissue, an appendix, if you will, and it’s not different than getting your literal appendix out or a wisdom tooth. And who’s to tell a woman what to do with her body?

That was the Planned Parenthood statements of ten to twelve years ago.

The Right to Life position, on the other hand, was very simple. This group believes that life begins at conception. The developing fetus is a full-fledged human being. It’s just not fully developed. And so at conception the Y and X chromosomes come together and a human being will never get any more, it will just develop more, and more, and more and so, in essence, the conclusion is very simple. To kill a human being would just be the legalization of murder.

So that was ten or twelve years ago. So the issue became this, the core issue became: is the fetus a human being, just not fully developed human being, or is it a mass of tissue, not unlike some other parts of a woman’s body, that she should have every right to do with as she pleases?

Now that was the core, in fact, I have a statement here from Planned Parenthood that specifically states, “To call the fetus a human being is arrogant and absurd.” So that was then. And you need to sort of know the history because what you need to understand is that times have changed.
Technology has transformed the argument completely. It used to be, you know, when you got a sonogram, a lot of you ladies have seen those and guys you’ve seen those, and, you know, they were sort of a black and white, kind of grainy and you could see a little baby moving in there and something.

But technology moved up to 4D. It’s no longer there is a baby that you can feel and you can see and moving and arms and legs. You now have, with technology, a photograph of your child. This is, I mean, it’s very clear. Eighty-five percent of all women who see this picture when they have an unplanned pregnancy decide to keep the baby.

This is not a fetus. This is a baby.

So the argument, then, began to shift. Let me give you a read from Planned Parenthood. “The pro-abortion position now is that we all have many important decisions to make in life. What to do about an unplanned pregnancy is an important and common decision faced by women. In fact, about half of all the women in the United States will have an unplanned pregnancy at some point in their lives. About four out of ten women with an unplanned pregnancy decide to have abortions. Overall more than one out of three of all US women will have an abortion by the time they are forty-five years old.”

So when you read Planned Parenthood’s information now it is no longer “fetus,” they talk about a baby, they talk about a pre-born baby, and so the message is: This is the new normal. It’s unfortunate. We wish there weren’t so many abortions but for very specific reasons we need to keep this as a real option.

And so it will go on to say, then, that the real issue in abortion is simply a matter of timing, viability, and what method that you use.

Interesting, the Guttmacher Institute is the national and international authority on abortion research and status and statistics and so this is how they frame, listen very carefully, this is the messaging of Planned Parenthood.

It says, “The reasons women give for having an abortion underscore their understanding of the responsibilities of parenthood and family life.” So in other words, it’s being responsible and understanding the impact.

So three out of four women site their concern for taking care of another person in the family as a reason to abort the baby. Three fourths state that they can’t afford
another child, three fourths state that it would interfere with their work, their school, or their ability to care for a dependent. And over half say that this abortion is necessary because they do not want to be a single parent because they’re either unmarried or have conflict with their husband or wife.

Now with that, then, what I want you to do is take a deep breath and I want to reframe, this is the abortion debate today. And I’m going to walk through this and I’m going to use Planned Parenthood’s actual material, I’ll use Right to Life material, we will look at some medical evidence, we'll look at the history of abortion, which probably will really surprise you. We'll look at what God says from Scripture.

Because here’s what you’ve gotta understand. Those three stories that I gave, the names were changed to sort of protect the identities of those people. That’s real.

If you haven’t already been faced with that you will be. And you will need to have an answer that’s not what someone else thinks, not what someone else believes. This is a real issue, a core issue of life for all people but especially followers of Christ.

Since 1973, this real issue, fifty million, not fetuses, pre-born babies have been killed. Fifty million people. Both Planned Parenthood and Right to Life would agree these are pre-born babies.

And it’s not just some number or statistic that’s why this is important to talk about, this is real.

Last night, and I don’t know how God works this but it was just before the service and I was walking up that aisle. And as I walk up the aisle a guy stopped me and said, “I just want to say something. I’ve looked at the notes, I see what you’re going to speak on tonight.” He came pretty early, was sitting next to his wife.

He says, “If I get up and leave I just want you to know it’s not, you know, it’s not you.” I said, “Well, what do you mean?” He goes, “Well my mother was fourteen years old when she was pregnant with me and her entire family and everyone wanted her to abort me. And this fourteen year old was just like a crusader who refused to have me aborted. And every time this subject comes up…” and he just started to cry. He goes, “It is so emotional for me.”
And what I want you to get, this isn’t about sort of statistics or numbers or theories or political views. This is about life. And then it was very interesting, his wife sitting next to him, she said, “Well I’m sure glad she did because I don’t know where I’d be without him.”

And all I want you to know is you listen as we weigh the evidence, as you evaluate how you would answer that question. It’s easy to answer it hypothetically. It’s real different when it gets down to a real life situation. And so with that let’s look at the issue. The issue today is that does the pre-born baby have an inalienable right to live, under any circumstances, or does the mother have the right to terminate her pregnancy to care for her family and her welfare, both present and future?

The Right to Life position hasn’t changed. If the pre-born baby is human life then it’s inconceivable to take the life of an innocent human being. It amounts to murder.

The pro-abortion position has changed. If a pre-born baby negatively impacts the mother’s mental or physical health, or that of the welfare of her family or future, then safe, legal, abortive options must be kept available to that woman.

So all I want you to do is realize these are polar opposite views that people are deeply passionate about. Often so passionate they’ve not only been vocal but violent with one another.

And we need to understand what’s the evidence? What’s the medical evidence when you look at this? What’s the historical evidence and then what’s the biblical evidence?

Let me go through and give you a little medical evidence or background on what happens inside of a woman as she’s pregnant. The heart begins to beat between the eighteenth and the twenty-fifth day after conception. Brain waves have been recorded as early as forty-five days.

The baby’s movements can be felt by the mother as early as six weeks or forty-two days. At eight weeks the baby possesses the fingerprints that it will have the rest of its life. All the bodily functions, all the systems are present by eight weeks and they’re functioning by eleven weeks. And at eleven to twelve weeks a baby can suck its thumb.
So there’s the medical evidence - what exactly has happened in those early weeks up to eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve weeks.

Now interestingly, someone did an evaluation. Harvard Medical School has a criteria for, “How do you know when someone is dead?” Right? I mean, you know, how do you know for sure when someone is dead?

So Harvard Medical School has four criteria to determine whether someone is dead. And so I’ll give those to you and then what I want to show you is that if you reverse those it tells you something about when someone is actually alive in the womb.

According to Harvard Medical School, the four criteria are, one: no response to external stimuli. In other words they don’t respond to pain. Two: no spontaneous movements or respiratory efforts. Three: no deep reflexes. And four: no brain activity by a flat electroencephalogram.

If you would say to someone, based on that criteria and did not tell them the age of a pre-born baby at eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve weeks, they would say, “It’s alive. This is a human being.” Fully human just not fully developed.

So there’s the medical evidence. We’re not disagreeing on this anymore.

Historically then. What’s the background on abortion? You might think that, like I did, several years ago the first time I ever heard the word “abortion” I have a sister who is a nurse and I think I was a senior in high school.

I’d never heard the word and she said something about it and it was right around the Roe versus Wade and all of that. I graduated from high school in 1972 and so ’73 maybe I was a freshman in college or so.

And she gave me all this information and I did not know what she was talking about. Later, like you, I’ve seen what’s happened in America and so I thought abortion is, like, this big issue in America right now.

False.

Three different eras of abortion. The first is the Greco-Roman world. Okay? Aristotle, Plato, all the way up through the first three hundred years of the Church. Abortion and infanticide were just normal. It’s just the way it is.
And so they had, there was a time of quickening - a woman could feel a baby - and they said that if you could feel the baby and it was thought to be a girl, you could kill the child forty days and under. If it was a boy you needed to wait until ninety days.

So what you’re going to find about the whole abortion issue, it’s been exploiting women from all the way back to ancient civilization.

If you would take a brand new baby that’s born, similar to like in China today, you could take that baby to the father in the Roman world and if it was a girl instead of a boy, often it would be automatically killed.

If there was some defect for any reason or the father just didn’t want it he had absolute legal right to kill the child, both in or outside the womb.

So what changed? What changed was something called the Church was birthed. And the sacredness of life. And it took a few hundred years but three hundred years later you find that abortion is almost completely eliminated. It becomes a moral code that because of the Church’s stand on life.

In fact, right after the apostles, there are the Church fathers and writings, the Didache, and they passionately argue for the sanctity of human life at every level, post and before a child was born.

Well, for about fifteen hundred years you don’t have much to say about abortion. I’m sure there were some done, you know, secretly or illegally but it was never mainstream at all until, are you ready for this? The next time abortion gains huge popularity is in the middle of the 1800s in America.

1840 was like a super promiscuous era in the life of America. Most women before that time averaged about seven children, large families. Fifty years later they’re averaging 3.5 children by the turn of the twentieth century.

What, if you get a magazine, the New York Gazette at the time, had page after page after page of advertisements for abortions. They predict as many as a fifth to one third of all babies were aborted.

So what stopped abortion then? Two unusual groups. One, the American Medical Association, which was just developing. And the early feminist movement. The doctors realized they were getting these women who had been
through these abortions, and think of the technology or lack of it that they had then, and half of the children that they were delivering so there was economic reasons and professional and moral reasons.

So the AMA came and then it was a time of huge promiscuity in our country. And so as is today, men were covering their tracks or women were covering their tracks of promiscuity, and so abortion was basically birth control.

Those two groups came together and by the turn of the century there were laws on the books where there was absolutely no abortion in America.

It was about 1967 to 1969 there was a sense that there was a need for therapeutic abortions, in other words, if there was a case where maybe the child versus the mother’s life… and so they argued for a law to allow therapeutic abortions.

Well you turn very quickly, that moves to the Supreme Court, Roe v. Wade and we now have the last multiple years with about fifty million pre-born babies that have died. So that’s the history.

It’s kind of interesting to me I had no idea. And I didn’t know this year, this year in the world forty-four million pre-born babies will be aborted globally. Globally.

We’re an interesting species that is destroying itself. Now, this final era has added a new twist, at least for me, I just learned this two weeks ago. There is yet another group that has become pro-life, at least a portion of it.

This is Elisabeth Cornwell, she’s the executive director of the Richard Dawkins Foundation. Does that ring a bell? Richard Dawkins? The famous atheist? She says, “There’s a war on the womb. As a secular pro-lifer, I believe my case is scientifically and philosophically sound. Science concedes that human life begins at fertilization and it follows that abortion is ageism and discrimination against a member of our own species.”

So we now have atheists who are pro-life. In fact, the late Christopher Hitchens when asked, “Are you pro-life?” said affirmatively, “Yes.” He repeatedly defended using the term “unborn child” against those, these are his words, on the left who say an aborted fetus is nothing more than a growth, an appendix, or a polyp. “Unborn child seems to me to be a real concept. It’s not a growth,” he says, “you can’t say that the issue of rights don’t come into question.”
Now, I don’t know about you but when atheists are pro-life, and they’re adamant that it has nothing to do with God, they’re adamant it has nothing to do with religion, in fact, they have harsh words to say why they think religious people are pro-life.

But what they’re saying, logically, is how could a species kill itself? How do you remove fifty million people? I mean, a part of you wonders, you know, as I met that man it just struck me last night. He’s forty-eight years old and you think about what if his, whoo, life wasn’t there?

Well then that wife wouldn’t be there and if the wife wouldn’t be there then their kids wouldn’t be there and if their kids wouldn’t be there then…

You know, you start doing the dominos and you start thinking, “Whoo.” This is, in all likelihood the most important moral issue, not just of our day, but in all history.

I remember as a young Christian, I didn’t grow up as a Christian, I never read the Bible, I didn’t understand it when I started to. I read the New Testament a couple of three times before I could ever try, you know, like the big part, the early part, the Old Testament.

But I’ll never forget reading the Old Testament and, you know, in some of those obscure passages it talks about the Canaanites and these weird people and God is judging them. And then it actually said some of them would take their children and they would sacrifice them, which, by the way, still happens today. That they would sacrifice to Molech, was a false god, and they thought they would appease the god’s anger by putting their babies in the fire.

And I remember thinking, I mean, I’m like nineteen years old. I’d been a Christian a year. I’m thinking, “That’s insane! How could anybody be so, I mean, how could anybody kill your own baby? How bizarre. How barbaric.”

And then I just think about we’ve got it in spades. But we just have different gods. Our gods are the gods of convenience. The gods of, “Gotta finish school.” The gods of, “Can’t afford this.” The gods of, “I don’t want my life messed up.”

This is a profound issue for God’s people and I would remind you it’s not out there.
As I prepared this, and tried to look at things objectively, the thing that shocked me was sixty-five percent of all the women that have abortions self-identify as Christians.

In between services it seems like God keeps wanting to bring people that have an issue and there’s a very cute, young gal. She looked to be nineteen to twenty-three, twenty-four. And I learned from my research that fifty-six percent of all abortions are done, women in their twenties and another eighteen or twenty percent are done by teenagers.

So about seventy percent of all abortions are going to be women thirty and under.

And she said, “You know when you were talking about it and sharing about it something I think you need to say that didn’t come out very strongly.” I said, “What’s that?” She goes, “Well, you know, I come from a very good home, a very religious home, I mean in the good way. And, you know, my parents really had high standards and I left home and I found that I missed my period.

“And it was this three weeks and I thought I was pregnant.” And she said, “I was thinking of what my options were.” And she goes, “You know, I grew up in a Bible teaching church, I know what’s right, I know what’s really true, but when I thought because I’ve heard so much growing up, ‘Premarital sex is bad, it’s wrong, we’re moral, this is what’s right,’ I thought I would be marked for life by my parents.

“Will you please tell parents that they need to make sure their kids know, ‘Yes, premarital sex or sexuality outside of God’s boundaries is wrong,’ but will you remind the parents to let their kids know, ‘but no matter what you ever do I will love you, I’ll support you, and we’ll go through this together.’”

She said, “I was so glad and relieved because I wasn’t pregnant.” But she said, “I would have made a decision completely against everything I believe because I felt like I would have lost my parents.”

Sounds like the Church, we need a little work, huh?

Well what does God say? I mean, we’re followers of Jesus. What’s God say? I would say to you, will you please turn in the Old Testament to First Abortion 1:9? But that does not exist. The Bible, now I don’t have, you know, the eleventh commandment is, “Thou shall not abort.” Although there’s one very close.
But what I will say is that there are two premises in Scripture that I think we can get God’s view on abortion. It’s by deduction. And the first premise is this, all through Scripture. The first premise is that all of life is sacred and that human life is the most valuable, precious commodity in the world.

And I wish I could have, like, a visual where I could have one of those huge scales, you know? And there’s a big thing over here, you know, where they’re like this. And I would take all the money in Fort Knox, and all the money in the New York Stock Exchange, and I would put it over here. And then over here, I would have you standing on the scale.

And what I want you to know, from God’s perspective, if you were a week old, if you were two weeks old, five years old, eighty years old, forty-five years old – when God sees your human life, over against all that wealth, that doesn’t even come up on the scale.

You are more valuable. You are more valuable. Every human life is more valuable than all the money, anywhere, in all the world.

And you say, well, where do you get that?

Let me give you the lines of reasoning. Value is determined by three things. Its creator and design, the protection afforded it, and by the value of its cost.

If you are a lady and I don’t know much about this. But I’ve traveled enough to know that if you have one of those really cute bags with a V and an L-type thing on it? Louis somebody? That if it’s a for real one, and not a knockoff, if Louis designed it, you got some, you got a few bucks in that one, right?

I mean, you might find one that will hold as much at Wal-Mart, at Target, right? And I don’t know who designed those but the Louis Vuitton ones, they cost a lot because of who made them.

Who made us? The Bible says, “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female.” He created them and God says, “You have infinite value and worth because I, the Creator of all things, made you and I made you in My image. You can think, you can feel, you can respond, you can create. You were made to have fellowship with Me.”
The second basis of value is the protection afforded something. If you have kind of a junky car you can kind of leave it outside in the rain, the snow, the sleet. Doesn’t really matter. If you have, like, a refurbished classic car, worth tens of thousands of dollars, it goes right in the garage.

If you have jewelry that you get that’s called, I think, costume jewelry and not that it’s not nice but, you know, it’s in the twenty to thirties, maybe even a few hundred dollars. You kind of lay that out on the dresser.

If you have diamonds and expensive jewels it goes in a safe. You see, the more you protect something the more valuable it is.

In Genesis 9:6 God says, “Whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God has God made man.”

After all the violence in the world and God judged the world through the flood Noah comes out and God says, “There’s a new parameter in the progress of revelation. I’m going to put a box around human life and I’m going to protect it. You take human life and you’ll sacrifice your life.”

And God’s saying, “Because My mark, My image, is on the soul of every human being and so I’m going to protect it.”

The third value is by cost. If I told you outside there are two cars, one costs seventy-two thousand dollars, the other costs seventy-two hundred dollars. Which one would you like? I’m running to that door, I don’t know about you.

See, the more something costs the more valuable it is. The Scripture says in I Corinthians 6:20, “You were bought at a price, therefore honor God with your body.”

And if you ever wondered what that price is, how much did you cost? Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give His life,” and here’s our financial term, “a ransom for many.” What are you worth? What’s the life of every single person worth, in the eternal mind of God? You are worth the death of His Son, to pay for your sin, to allow relationship with Him.

So pretty logical. We know that who designs something, how well it’s protected, and the cost of it, determines value. What if we could go to Scripture and, by
deduction, find out that all the same things are true of the pre-born child or in the old days, the fetus?

And what you’re going to find is that’s premise number two. Premise number two is: Scripture affords the same sacred value on the fetus, or the pre-born child, as it does all other human life.

Listen to Psalm 139. This is an amazing passage. Listen to this about, this isn’t, like, this is like early on. This is the embryo stage. This isn’t week six, week eight, week nine. This isn’t even fully bodily functioning.

And David would write, inspired by the Holy Spirit, speaking to God, “For You created my innermost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I’m fearfully and wonderfully made and Your works are wonderful; and I know it full well. My frame,” or literally, “my skeleton was not hidden from You, when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body,” or literally, “my unformed substance.”

Hebrew scholars say a good rendition of that, “my embryo.” “All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.”

See the Bible says is that the creation of who you were, and who I was, was taking place long before all the systems were on go, and long before the fingerprints were there, and long before in the womb you could suck your thumb.

A passage God is really speaking to me about right now is in Jeremiah. And as I was reading Jeremiah chapter 1 He calls Jeremiah, in the midst of a moral slide, totally away from God, to step up and make a real difference and take a very unpopular view.

And so Jeremiah is afraid. In fact, he says, “I’m a child. I can’t do it. I don’t have what it takes.” Listen to what God says to Jeremiah and think of the application for our subject.

God speaks to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” Now most of all us are not going to be appointed as a prophet to the nations. But when someone is afraid and says, “I can’t do this,” God’s answer is, “Before you were ever born, I knew you. I appointed you. I wove you together. The DNA you have, the history you have, the family you were placed in, the baggage that you
have, the color of your eyes, the gifts that you have – you are My masterpiece created,” Ephesians 2:10, “into Christ Jesus, for a good work that God, before the foundations of the earth wants you to walk in.”

And so God says, “I’ve been creating and designing, not just full-fledged human beings at any week or stage, but even before conception.” It’s an amazing thought.


Well Exodus 21, and 22, and 23 begin to expound on the application of not stealing or don’t commit murder. And so as we pick up the story in Exodus 21: 22-25, we don’t know the details.

But it says if two men are involved in fighting and we don’t know whether a woman comes to try and rescue her boyfriend or her husband, or why it would be. But if there gets to be violence between a man and a woman and the woman is pregnant, listen to, very carefully, the protection afforded both the woman and the unborn baby.

“If men are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there’s no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows.

But if there is serious injury, the antecedent is, to the woman or the baby, you’re to take life for a life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for a hand, foot for a foot, burn for a burn, wound for a wound, bruise for bruise.”

And so God affords the same protection to a pre-born baby as He does to you and to me.

And finally Psalm 51:5, the price, the cost. David has found himself in a situation that probably some in this room are feeling right now. For many of you, sitting in this room, statistically, that have had an abortion. For many of you men who were the one who nudged them to have an abortion.

Or for some of you men who you wanted that son or that daughter and for whatever reason your wife or girlfriend said, “Not now. We can’t afford it. I can’t handle it.” And you didn’t stop it.
We are a people that have sinned greatly against God and as we look at the medical evidence, and as we look at history, and we look at the Bible, some of us followers of Jesus find ourselves sitting here realizing, “I killed a human being.”

And there’s a sense of overwhelming guilt, and shame, and remorse. For some of you it was ten, or fifteen, or twenty, or thirty years ago and you’ve pushed it down so far but the thought, when you walked in and even looked at the notes it was like, “I wish I could run out of here.”

But I’m glad you didn’t.

Because God did not bring you here to shame you, He brought you here to say, “Many other people whom I love deeply have made very deep mistakes. David committed murder, Moses committed murder, the apostle Paul committed murder. I forgave them, I cleansed them, and I used them. “And if you would draw near to Me, I will even take the painful parts of your past and I can even use them for good. I brought you in this room today to love you and to forgive you.”

And in Psalm 51 if you ever want to find a prayer of someone who is so broken and realizes. He was in denial for a year and God sends a prophet who tells him a story that brings him out of his denial.

And then Psalm 51 is David’s prayer of confession for murder and adultery. And when he gets to verse 5 he says this, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

See the false theology is thinking somehow that sin only occurs when we act and do a sinful act. The truth of the matter is we’re in Adam. And so we’re born in Adam. In the womb we’re in Adam.

And so the price of Christ’s blood paid for all people, of all time, those inside the womb and outside the womb. And so, again, value by design, value by protection, and value by cost.

The Bible is real clear.

Now, to be fair, I think if I was at this point and I was having a debate I would ask someone from Planned Parenthood to come and say, “Okay, you’ve heard what I’ve said. There’s a very obvious bias. I believe the Bible. I’m a follower of Jesus.
I would like you to give me the top three or four reasons why abortion on demand must not be made illegal. And then after you get done with yours I’m going to come over here and I’m going to ask someone from Right to Life to respond to you because all of these people in this room, they either have made, or are ready to make, or will make a decision about life itself.

“And now they know what accountability brings with knowledge. They know medically what’s inside the womb, they know historically where we’ve been, and they know what God says. So Planned Parenthood, give it your best shot.”

Planned Parenthood would say, “Here’s the four reasons why we must have legal abortive options. Number one, when the woman’s life is at stake with the baby. If we didn’t have abortion how could we save the woman’s life?”

Issue number two: rape and incest. “How can we punish a person for being violated by someone else? They should never have to live with the horror and the memories of this child because they were raped or incest.”

Number three: “If we abolish abortion then all the women will go like in the past and they’ll have butchers doing illegal abortions and they’ll be killed or maimed.”

And number four: “It would eliminate the best technology that we have. We live in a day where we do realize now, because of technology, that it is a baby. But there are times that it’s just impossible for a woman to be a good mother, or a future, or it would put so much stress on her life, and her family, we now have an abortion pill and it can be taken early on and it’s very simple, it’s not painful, and RU486 is being used around the world. If you eliminate abortion it would eliminate this new technology for those that have to have abortions.”

And that would be what they’d say.

And so I would say to the Right to Life person, “Well how would you respond?” They would respond by saying, “Well, number one, C. Everett Coop was a surgeon general, in pediatrics for thirty years, and his testimony is that in all of his time himself, his colleagues, or any medical understanding with the technology we have today there has never been a time where the life of the mother and the child had to be chosen between. So that’s a straw man.”

That’s a very emotional argument it just doesn’t happen.
Secondly, of all the people that are raped not one percent but .06 of one percent of those who are raped ever get pregnant. But, you know, it doesn't take meeting too many guys like I did named Don that whether his fourteen year old mother got raped or whether is was by incest he's pretty happy that he’s here. So two wrongs can't make a right.

Third, the thesis that back alley abortions are going to occur, eighty-five percent of all abortions were done legally before Roe versus Wade. Only fifteen percent were done illegally and in a given year it was recorded three hundred deaths of women.

In the early days of abortion, it was 1.6 million abortions a year, we’re down to 1.2 million abortions now. And three hundred a year would not begin to tip the scales of the hundreds of women, when you’re talking of that many, who’ve died in legal abortions.

Finally, this pill that sounds so easy and the new technology. It's not like you get a pill, take it, and everything goes away. You have one visit, followed by a second visit, by a third visit to a doctor. And when you go through all that then you, as a woman, will find yourself alone in your bathroom aborting your little baby.

And you will find yourself in one of the most traumatic situations in your bathroom you’ve ever had as this small, little child comes out of your human being and you live with the reality of that the rest of your life.

In fact, what this Right to Life person would say is, “What’s never mentioned is the trauma and the pain that women go through, years after sometimes, the post-abortive syndrome.”

I have in my hands a young girl that wrote this. She said, “At the age of fifteen I became pregnant and my mother panicked seeing only one solution. She took me to get an abortion. I spent the next twenty-five years keeping silent. I didn’t recognize that my subsequent cries for help were in the form of suicidal thoughts as being the consequence of my sin.

“Turning to drugs and alcohol for refuge only postponed my pain. A double life earned me something that was very odd. Straight A performance by day, rebellious, mind-numbing behavior by night.
“Eventually I married and sadly learned I could not bear children. And despite the inconclusive medical evidence I couldn't help but blame the abortion.”

Where do we go, Church? Where do we go from here? Get your pens out. I want to give you four specific applications. Number one, find forgiveness and healing. Find forgiveness and healing. It's available, it's available here, it's available today.

The Psalmist would pray, “God, you are forgiving and good, O Lord, you're abounding in love to all who call upon You.” And then he cries out, “Hear my prayer, O Lord. Listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble, I'll call to You for You will answer me.”

And I would just, with all my heart, whether you’re a man, whether you’re a woman, if this is a part of your past, God brought you in this room, on this day, not to condemn but to forgive and to heal. But you have to cry out.

The Scripture is absolutely clear. If we confess. It means “agree with,” own our stuff, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Forgiveness is a step in time, healing is a journey and a process.

Second, we need to take responsibility. Proverbs 24:11 and 12 says, “Rescue those being led away to death. Hold back those staggering towards slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who guards your life know it? Will He not repay each person according to what he’s done?”

We can’t be passive. This can’t be, “Oh, abortion, it’s political.” Abortion isn't political. Abortion is moral. It's just become political. We can’t know this is happening, first of all, we gotta model this in our church. And that means that there’s gotta be a safe place, in safe homes when people have unplanned pregnancy, even if it’s a result of sin where you say, “Yeah, that was wrong, but okay, we’re going to love you, we’re going to walk through this together.”

It needs to start in your homes, it needs to be taught in our youth groups, as it is, and then we have to be people who say, “We’re going to take responsibility.” If atheists are stepping up to the plate and saying, “Life matters!” shouldn’t the Church of Jesus Christ?
Are you kidding me? We gotta wait for the likes of Dawkins and Hitchens to say, “Only a species illogically and insane would kill itself.” Let’s get out of all the stuff that’s around this, and all the guilt, and all the shame, and all the issues.

It’s among us. And let’s confess our sin and then whether you need to volunteer, or whether you need to pray, or whether you need to give money, I don’t know what you need to do but there’s probably nothing more important that you’ll do than stand for the cause of life.

And that’s why we partner with organizations right here in our community who do that.

The third application is setting limits and I’ve put a passage you can read carefully. Romans 13 says, “The government will enforce certain laws.” Violence, name calling, abusive speech, so much on the pro-life agenda has been done in ways – shooting doctors – we absolutely deplore all that. Absolutely deplore.

More wrongs don’t make a right. We need to be winsome, loving, bold, treat people with dignity and respect, though you may disagree with everything they believe.

It’s love that never fails. The Bible says it’s the kindness of God that leads to repentance. It will be our bold, clear, “I totally disagree but I care and we’ll treat you with dignity,” not yelling, and screaming, or shooting, or bombing.

And finally, the application is acting in love. Ephesians 4:15 says that we’re to speak the truth in love. And I would just encourage you that no matter what we do in this area, we must have our message and our methods tell the same story.
There are few topics that I’ve ever encountered that cause as much controversy and polarizing opinions as when you say, “What do you think of the environment? What are the issues? What’s the problem?”

And I’ve read a lot and in my research I’ve found people that will give me amazing statistics and tell me exactly who to blame and then I read some more and I find there’s a different group of people or multiple groups of people that will tell me all those people are wrong and they give me a whole different set of statistics and I mean it is like, heat, heat, heat.

In fact, as I read I started to jot down sort of some major different perspectives that different groups have. I mean just to get my arms around this. And I’m just going to go through. These are actual perspectives people have on the environment.

And then as I kind of read through these I’d like you to think about, “So what’s mine? What do I really think?”

One group says, “The real issue with the environment is whether global warming is happening or not. That’s the deal.” Another group says, “No, no, no, no. Tree huggers and environmentalists, they're liberal, New Age folks seeking to thwart economic progress and prosperity.”

Another group says, “No, that’s not really it. The problem we’re in today is a direct result of the dominion dogma taught for centuries from Genesis chapter 1. It’s those Christians and they’re teaching and what they’ve said that has caused this idea of subduing the planet. We’ll they’ve subdued it alright.”

Another group says, “The whole environment debate is overblown.” This is a religious group. “The Bible says it’s all going to burn anyway so don’t worry about it.”

Yet another group says, “The earth is our sacred mother and it’s the equal giver of life of all species and so all species should be protected equally.” And so this is sort of the pantheistic, the earth is, in fact, god.

And then, finally, the sort of the skeptic or pragmatist is, “The ‘Going Green’ movement in business and government is just a sham to exercise undue control and increased profits.”
Now I don’t know about you but if you would just read through those and realize they’re all over the map and they conflict one another radically. And so I would ask you, “So if I put a microphone in front of you and then they put a camera and we were going to broadcast this to the world and I said, ‘Okay, those are a lot of different views. What do you believe about the environment? What are your convictions? What’s true? What’s false? What’s right? How should we live? And why?’”

And your answer would be…?

Well, here’s a confession. Up until recently, although, you know I’ve sort of had a general position, I know God made the earth, I recycle, I put my thermostat high, you know?

When I looked at all these different opinions, what I realized, maybe what I needed to do and so I thought might be good for you too, maybe I need to really ask and answer the question, “How, as a follower of Jesus Christ do I need to think, and act, and respond, with regard to the environment?”

And maybe the best place to start, other than all those heated views is at least just do the basics and back up and say, “What does God say about the environment?” I mean, what does the Bible actually teach about the environment?

And then kind of take that for sure truth and apply it to all these different issues that we’re faced with day in and day out.

I want you to go on a journey with me and I’m just going to tell you, it’s a fairly recent journey. I have never done, I’m a little bit ashamed to say this, I’ve never done a study of Scripture just for the environment all by itself. I’ve alluded to it in different things over the years.

And so as I began to read I thought, “Okay if I had to boil it down to six absolute things that the Bible says for sure about the environment, about our responsibility to it, here’s six things I know for sure, as kind of the basis, or the grid, to make wise decisions in terms of how I’m going to respond to all those different views.”

Number one is the earth belongs to God. It’s foundational. Psalm 24:1 and 2 says, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it, for He founded it on the seas, He established it on the waters.”
In essence when you start with Scripture and the truth God says, “The earth is Mine. Everything in it is Mine. And, therefore, since I’m God and I made it it’s spiritual and it’s important and it matters and you can’t just blow off this issue.” This really, really matters.

The implication is we’re to honor God’s creation. We’re to honor God’s creation. Now, if you would, open your Bibles because we’re going to be there in just a second. Just the very, very first page. Alright? Genesis chapter 1. Just how it opens.

The very first thing we learn from the Bible is, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And it goes on in chapters 1 and 2 to talk about that process. And keep your finger there because we’ll be back there in a minute.

But we’re to honor God because He made it. He created it. Not only did He create it but as He created He said, “It is good. It is good. It is good. It is good.” And then later He will take the pinnacle of creation, which is you and me and He’ll say, “It’s very good.”

So how do you honor God? He’s the greatest artist and He’s the greatest architect who is infinite, who is all wise, who is all powerful, and who is all knowing. And one of the great ways we honor Him is we respect what He has made. We study what He has made. And we give Him honor, and credit, and praise for the beauty and the provision that He’s made for us.

The earth is valuable, it is precious, it’s irreplaceable, and here’s a word you might jot down: it’s sacred. It’s not just a piece of land. It’s not just air to breathe. God made it. It’s sacred.

A trite illustration but it kind of brought it into focus for me. Early in our marriage I was working for a guy and doing some part time jobs as I was doing some other things and Theresa and I were going to have a getaway weekend. And we were very poor and he was my boss and he was pretty wealthy.

And he knew all about it and so the day that I was going to get away, it was like a Friday for a weekend, he pulls up and he goes, “Hey, I have a little gift for you to really enjoy your time.”

And this will date me but that’s okay. And so he pulls up and if you can remember it was like the first or second year the 280Z came out. And it was a silver, hottest sports car going at the time.
It was super fast. It was like being in the cockpit of an airplane and he hands these keys to me and goes, “I want you and your wife to have a really good time.”

My first thought was, If I wreck this car I’ll die and it’s my boss.” And then the second was, “I probably should test this to make sure it’s going to be okay for me and my wife on this trip.”

And so, boy, I punched that thing a few times. It was like, whoa, this is, like, way too much fun.

And so then, you know, so she gets in and we, you know, “Wow, here I am!” and going down the road, and I feel really cool, and so then we get to this little place and I think, “I gotta park where someone’s not near it.” You know? What if a door hits it or…

Here’s my point. My boss gave me something precious and sacred that I, it was for me for my pleasure but I felt a tremendous weight of responsibility to both enjoy it and not mess it up.

How much more, how much more God thinks that way about the earth and the planet that He’s entrusted to you and me?

Which is the second point. God appointed mankind dominion over the earth. Psalm 115:16 says, “The highest heavens belong to the Lord but the earth He has given to man.” Underline the word “belong” and then circle the word “given.”

He’s given to man. So God says, “I’ve created this but I’ve created and the highest heavens and I’m the Creator. I’ve given this to man.” Well what’s that mean?

Here’s the implication: we are the earth’s vice regents. We’re the caretaker, we’re the managers, we’re the stewards. He says, “I’ve created all this but I’m putting you in charge.”

If you’re still in Genesis 1 skip down to verse 28. It says, “God blessed them.” speaking of mankind, “Be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth, subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Those two key words are “subdue” and “rule.” They’re very strong Hebrew words. They’re used elsewhere for taking absolute control. They’re very powerful words.
It’s, God says, “I gave you this earth. You are the executive vice president of this planet, you’re the vice regents, you’re the caretaker. You’re in charge.”

And so there’s a real sense of authority and power and, “Do well with this earth - cultivate it; develop it; grow it; tame it…” is the idea.

Now, unfortunately, those strong words, taken out of context, by some of our ancestors and some present day have made it out that we can just do with the earth whatever. It’s just made for us and we can treat it any way we want to meet our needs for whatever we want to do.

And so some of the worst offenders, environmentally, have been Christians, in the name of God, using that passage. Because any verse that you don’t get in context is usually a wreck.

Skip to chapter 2 because He’s going to define a bit more about what it means to subdue. In chapter 2 skipping down to verse 15 He says, “The Lord God took the man and He put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it.” Or literally to cultivate it and to take care of it.

It was to steward. It’s the idea that He would take something and you have this huge opportunity and authority over this precious possession, and you have this huge responsibility to care for it the way I would care for it.

Again, early, early days Theresa and I were on this journey. And we took everything we owned and we put it in a Ryder truck. We put our car in the back of it, and then we went to Texas to prepare to go into the ministry, which was very new for me. I was a basketball coach.

And I didn’t, we had seven hundred dollars to our name. We did not have a place to live and I didn’t have a job. But other than that we were really set for this new adventure.

And so there was a missionary there who said, “Look, we’re going to be out of the country for six to eight weeks. You can put all your stuff,” because it was in a truck, we had to unload it, put it in his garage, “and you can just live in my house. You can have dominion over my house. You can use my refrigerator; we have some fruit trees in the back. You have complete dominion over my house. My car is there if you need to use it, it’s yours.”
I had this huge opportunity. And it was fun and, you know, I found a bunch of part time jobs and we eventually found a place to live and it all worked out well. But during that time to get all of our stuff in his garage I had to take his car and park it on the side of the road.

And it was parked at an angle and I think that was part of it. And the Texas sun was really hot and I didn’t ever think about one of those shade type things. So for six weeks his car didn’t move with the sun coming at a certain angle.

Well when I went to take the car and put it back in the garage, you know the part that does the windshield wiper? And all that was melted together.

We have a very big problem because I started with seven hundred dollars to my name. Well, I don’t have seven hundred dollars now and I’ve gotta make a payment to get in that apartment that we’re going to have and I checked on it and I found out it’s a whole part. And it’s like a hundred and thirty-nine dollar part, which back then was a lot of money.

And then I’m thinking, “What am I going to do? I can’t leave this messed up.” And I had a miracle. It’s one of the early miracles of my life. I went to a junkyard and I showed them, I actually took, I got screwdrivers out. It was scary. I’m not mechanical.

And I pulled this thing off and I took it to a junkyard filled with all these wires and I said, “I need one of these.” And the guy went out and pulled one of these off and I brought it back and I had no idea what I was doing but I thought, “Well, I bet the red wires go with the red wires and the green ones go with the green ones.”

And I’m serious! And I put it all together and I stuck it back and it worked and it was like, “Lord Jesus, after...” I mean, and my wife probably said, “There was the Red Sea and there was Chip doing that.”

But here’s what I’m going to tell you: it never entered my mind that after he gave me dominion over his home that I would leave his car in a way that didn’t work after I left.

Are you starting to get…? I want you to get the emotion and the feel of how your heavenly Father feels and thinks about this environment and this planet that He gave you dominion. You have power to subdue but to cultivate and to care for it.

You’re a vice regent, you’re a co-creator, you’re a caretaker.
Third, we learn from Scripture that the earth has intrinsic value and reflects the character and the beauty of the Creator. Underline the word “character” and “beauty.”

The earth. Nature. It has intrinsic value.

Notice what the Scripture says in Psalm 19. “The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they reveal knowledge.”

Look at the verbs there. Look at the verbs of communication: “They declare. They pour forth. They proclaim. They reveal.”

Yes, the earth is a gift from God with oxygen, plants, four-footed creatures that can become food, creatures that you can put heavy weights on so you don’t have to carry it. Creatures that you can learn to cultivate.

God gave us, “Subdue, develop, use your mind, be a co-creator.” We started out as just gatherers and hunters. And then we cultivated. And then we learned about seeds and then we planted things. And then we took animals and realized that some of them we could actually create livestock on a regular basis.

And then, years later, we would learn through our minds, and subduing, and technology that there are things inside the earth that were valuable like metals. And God knew when He gave all of this that there were fossil fuels.

And He knew that we would have the ability to extract as we learned and grew, and because we’re made in His image, that we would constantly develop this thing called technology.

But He says, “Those are to meet your needs but what I created I didn’t, it’s just not utilitarian. I created it in a way where there is beauty, nature, the earth, what you see, what you observe, in and of itself, reflects who I am.”

It’s like if you see a great painting, or you see a great sculpture, or you go to a building that’s just amazingly made, how that building is made tells you a lot about the architect. That painting tells you a lot about the artist. That sculpture tells you a lot about the sculptor.

God says, “I made this in a way to reveal My character and My beauty. I didn’t have to have over, you know, two or three hundred kinds of beetles. I didn’t have
to make billions of galaxies. The Alps don’t have to be that beautiful. The Grand Canyon doesn’t have to be that breathtaking.

“I didn’t have to make an ecosystem that is so delicate and so amazing that I had these little bugs that fly around and insects that take the pollen from here, to here, to here, to here, to make everything work.”

I can go thousands of feet down and see things at the bottom of the sea that look like creatures from outer space and I can see breathtaking views of redwoods that are almost three hundred feet high, were here for thousands of years…"

He says, “All of those things are to reflect that I’m God. That I’m wise. That there’s beauty. That I have power” … of falls and Victoria Falls in south Africa that just, the roar and the rush, and the beauty… see God has made this for us to reflect who He is.

Look at the implication. The implication is we’re to explore but not exploit. We’re to enjoy but not worship the earth. We’re to explore that. Are you ready for this? Some of you, and especially some of your kids, you need to get outside. We’re living in a world! We’re living in a world where some of your kids, and some of you, this is your body posture most all the time.

Some of you, there are stars at night. Trust me. They’re out there. There are flowers. Or I watch people now. “Let’s get out in nature.” Here’s how people take walks. There is something that will shrink your soul when you don’t explore what God has made.

There’s a part of what He’s made to comfort you. There’s a part of the power, and the wisdom, and the beauty, that gets soaked into your soul through nature. He speaks through His Word, but He speaks through nature. He speaks to your heart.

And some of that you need to be exposed to, where you get this overwhelming sense of a God who created all those stars and billions of galaxies, do you think He really has the power to help me in my marriage? To help me get a job? To give me the grace to forgive someone who hurt me?

What do you think? You think, as I see the rotation of the seasons, and how things die and they come back to life that, regardless of a big failure in my past or what I’ve done that, isn’t God trying to tell me there are seasons of winter and death, but there’s new life in spring?
See it’s made to teach us, to renew us.

The danger, however, is we can get so involved in nature that we begin to worship it. It’s from the beginning of time. Of all the things He said to Israel, worshipping idols, worshipping idols and the sun, and the moon, and the stars. In fact, if you will turn to Romans - just middle of your Bible - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, then hit Romans.

Romans chapter 1 - A second critical place where He talks about creation. Because here’s what happens: when you focus on creation, creation, creation, creation after a while you lose the Creator.

So places like Santa Cruz, Sedona, Arizona; Boulder – I could take you to a number of other places in the world that are just spectacularly beautiful – they always gravitate to New Age colonies.

Because people who begin to worship the creation, pretty soon lose sight of the Creator. But when you begin to focus on the Creator, and see His creation, you get an accurate picture of His greatness, and His wisdom, and His love, and His beauty.

Notice what the apostle Paul would write, Romans chapter 1, picking up, go down to about verse 19. It says, “What may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them.” Well how? How did God make truth plain to them? “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities,” well, like what? “His eternal power, His divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from that which has been made so that people are without excuse.

“For although they knew God they neither glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

And what God is saying is, “Enjoy, but don’t worship it.” The earth is not your mother. The earth is a created, beautiful gift from your heavenly Father, to reveal His character and to provide for you.

And so He says, “Okay, I made it. It belongs to Me. Second, I’m going to put you in charge of it. You are a co-creator, you are a vice regent, you’re a caretaker, you’re a steward, and a manager of this creation that belongs to Me. And third, don’t get utilitarian. It’s not just getting wood out of this and it’s not just a piece of dirt. It’s just not rocks here. It’s just not food to do your own thing. I want you to pause, and stop, and explore the wonder of who I am, through what I’ve made.
“Fourth,” he says, “mankind is placed in the middle of the created hierarchy and is uniquely responsible to God above, and for the animals, plants, and resources below.”

I’d like you, if you would, circle that word “hierarchy” and underline the phrase “uniquely responsible.” God made the planet and the earth. He said, “It’s good.” And it’s interesting, we read it, it says, “By His finger he created the galaxies, the moon, and the stars.”

But when God talks about creating you and me it says, “He formed us with His hands and He,” whoooo, “He breathed life in us, into our flesh.” There’s the Creator.

A little bit lower than the Creator, there is mankind, made in His image, unlike any animal or any plant, you can think, and feel, and reason. Stamped in you is the very image of God. You were made for a relationship with Him.

Then there are animals. Animate living things that have breath with purpose. And there are inanimate things like plants and trees and rocks. And right in the middle of that are you and me, mankind.

And we have a responsibility, and a stewardship upward to our Creator, and we have a responsibility downward to treat animals and plants and the rest of the creation, with this delicate balance of using it for our good – productivity – and also preservation and restoration.

So notice the passage here: Psalm 8. He says, “When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place.” And then he ponders. And the awesomeness of God. “What is mankind that You’re mindful of him? Human beings that You care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels,” and notice the role that mankind has in the environment.

“And you crown them with glory and honor and you made them,” what? What’s your role? “Rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet, the flocks, the herds, the animals, the wild things, the birds, the sky, the fish of the sea, everything that swims in the ocean.”

Message: all living things have value, but not all living things have equal value. The earth is not God. It is not our mother. It is a created thing. Whales and babies do not have equal value.
And yet when we think wrongly about the environment, we kill babies and we save whales. Think of it. That’s a theological issue.

Should we save whales? Absolutely. But we have movements in the environment, some of the environmental communities that, you know, your dog or your cat or this lizard has the same rights because it is a living species and you’re just part of the living species, and all of the earth is god and, therefore, when there are priority decisions you have no greater priority than a dog, or a cat, or a lizard.

That is not true. And what we’re going to see is God will call us to be good stewards of those things. But animals don’t have the same rights as humans.

By contrast, here’s the implication: we are to use, not abuse, animals, plants, and resources to glorify God.

See the Bible is so amazingly balanced. Over here it says, “Don’t do that.” And then over here it’ll say, “Yes, you’re above the animals.” And then Proverbs will say, “A wicked man is cruel to his animals but the godly are kind. Wicked people abuse the land but godly and righteous people are good stewards of My creation.”

So the Bible is very clear about the balance of how we treat things. But waste, the things that we’ve done, and often just we just need to own our stuff, as Christians, we have been some of the slowest to be responsible in the areas of stewardship of the environment and concern for it.

Lake Erie, when I was a kid, I remember Lake Erie got to the point there was no living thing in it at all. Think of that. It was dead. The entire lake was dead. All the pollutants, all the stuff put in it.

Because, see, at the heart of pollution is greed, and ignorance, and carelessness. At the heart is speed. At the heart is money. At the heart is, “We don’t really care about other people. We don’t really care about the planet. We don’t really care about long-term implications.” It’s, “What can we get now? How much can we get? How fast can we do it?”

And those things always lead to not taking care.

Now, on the other hand, God says very clearly, “Hey, you know what? You should be productive. Take things wisely out of the ground. There’s energy to be had. That’s why I put it there.”
But we’ve been very poor stewards since the Industrial Revolution. Strip mining, clear cutting. And many believers, we either don’t have a position on it, or we just hope it all goes away. And we view people on either side as radicals or extremist.

It seems to me the Bible has quite a bit to say about our role.

Here’s the exciting thing. I was thinking about Lake Erie and the experts said it would take fifty to a hundred years for any life to be regenerated in that lake. After five to ten years when the pollutants stopped, fish were flourishing.

This amazing, amazing planet, the wisdom of God. The oil spill that was, what? Multiple times the Valdez that was in the ocean and all that we went through. It has been amazing, you know, we good humans got as much out of there as we could.

It’s amazing what God has done. All the organisms, and responding, and self-cleaning. But, boy, we’ve gotta be good stewards of that. You can use it but you can’t abuse it.

Fifth, God commands environmental stewardship to protect the land, animals, and vegetation for the common good. So He says, “Yes, man, you’re above it. I own it, you’re a steward, given you dominion, authority, responsibility. Don’t worship it. Enjoy it. You’re above the animals but here’s the deal: you are a steward. You have a responsibility to care for the land, the animals, and the vegetation.”

And you say, “Well, where do you get that?” It’s very interesting, all the way back in the Old Testament when God was preparing His people to be a great people. He took a group of slaves over here out of Egypt, completely uneducated in a world of all these multi-gods, demonstrated by the ten different plagues His superiority.

Every one of those was a polemic. Every one of those was a god of Egypt and God did that and He takes them out, and then He brings them to Sinai, to reveal who He is, and then He gives them laws about His holiness in Leviticus. And then the rest of the Pentateuch is, “This is the kind of nation I want you to be.”

And He starts giving them rules, and decrees, and He talks about those so that the world would know there would be no other nation with laws as beautiful, and perfect, and amazing.
We read that and we just think, “You know, what do you mean?” They didn’t know about bacteria. And they had ceremonial laws to wash their hands at certain times. They didn’t know about the blood clotting the eighth day, from a Purdue study, and that’s the best time to do circumcision. But that’s when God commanded them to do it.

They didn’t know anything about nitrates out of the soil and rotating crops. And in Leviticus chapter 25 God says to them, I mean, they’re just coming out, they’re becoming a new people. He says, “Okay, every, after six years leave the land fallow.”

They didn’t know why, it was just a command. “Don’t plant anything.” And God planned in, in His law, restoration.

Then He says after every seven-year period, seven times seven, forty-nine years, on the fiftieth year it’s the Year of Jubilee. All the land goes back to the original people.

God knew that with no limitations the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, some by opportunity, some by bad decisions, some by sin. So what He says is, “Okay, every fifty years we’re going to reboot.” If your family had owned this land, you can never sell it - or this tribe, or this tribe, or this tribe.

And so He does it in such a way that even the loans, and financial things, were done on how long you had to the Jubilee. And He says – why? - because the land belongs to Me.

Later in that Bible study, He’ll talk about Deuteronomy 25. He’ll say, “Here’s what you need to understand: animals matter. So when your ox is out working for you don’t you dare muzzle it. I even care about the animals. Treat them well.”

In Deuteronomy 20, He’ll say, “When you find yourself in a battle and besieging a city don’t you dare cut down the trees that have fruit on them. You can use these kind of trees.” Have you ever thought, have you ever stepped back and thought about, “Is that amazing?” I mean isn’t it amazing that God would give rules and provisions for, quote, what we would think a very low technology group of people, to preserve animals, the soil, and the economic system?

Here’s the implication. The implication is consumption and productivity must be governed by the boundaries of conservation. Are we going to be consumers? Of course we are. Do we need to be productive? Yes! Be fruitful. Subdue. Authority. Yes. But responsibility, with conservation.
With our track record on air, our track record on the water, our track record on what we've done in terms of with plants, and all the time what is it? It's always to produce more, in a short amount of time, to get more money.

And what God would say is, “You know what? Let things cost a little bit more, let them take a little bit more time, and start balancing out the consumption, and the productivity, with the conservation.”

There are certain beautiful things that always need to stay beautiful. There's a way to harvest trees where you replenish. There's a way to get things out of the soil where you don’t ruin it forever.

I remember, I was a boy about nine or ten years old, and that was, in my house, when you got old enough to go see grandma and grandpa for a week by yourself.

Well, I was a pretty adventuresome little boy and, I mean, like hanging out with grandma and grandpa after about two days was pretty boring to tell you the truth.

And so they had a little brick house and then there was a hill, a real steep hill, probably three - four hundred… thousand feet, you know, like three or four football fields.

And so I wondered, “I wonder, you know, what's up on the top?” And, of course, grandma said don’t go up there. So of course I had to figure out what it was. And so I went up there and I remember getting up to the very top just like this and looking out and it looked like a very bad science fiction movie where a nuclear blast had occurred or I had just landed on the moon.

Now I didn't know anything about strip mining, I’m nine, ten years old. And I began to walk, and I began to walk through and it was just like, I mean, it was sort of this sandy, brownish color, big rocks, no trees, no vegetation.

And we just went for miles, and miles, and miles. There were no animals. There was no vegetation. It was literally like, I’ve never walked on the moon, obviously, but if you ever walked on the moon it would be like, I think this is what it would be like.

The land was raped. And you know what? That’s a violation of what Scripture says. But, boy, it was fast. People made money.
Now, just before you lean there, then God would say, “Now wait a second. I want to take care of men.” So in response to that now we have situations where, you know what? This salamander that we may lose, it’s very important. But we have, you know, two million people that need water, and farmers who are going to produce for the whole nation, but we can't give them water because we don't want to lose this salamander.

Those aren’t hypothetical situations. And so we have people on one side that are so environmentally sensitive that every species, there are about two or three a day that we’re losing. We’re blowing it big time.

On the other hand, our response and the pendulum can’t swing to where we forget there are people. And there’s food required. And there’s water. And there’s technology and it needed to be harnessed with wisdom and balance.

And that’s why when I prayed about this whole series I thought, you know what we need? We need a biblical view of the environment. Because there are a lot of specific things, there’s going to be tension. I don’t know what the right answer is.

But I know that if I understand it belongs to God, I’ve been given dominion, and I’m to appreciate and enjoy it but not worship it, and I really get that I’m going to be called and account to be a steward of it, and I am to use it but never abuse it, it begins to give me a grid or a perspective about how do we honor the planet, and how do we make sure that people’s needs get taken care of?

And behind some of this is some of the just pure consumption has to stop. Some of us just have to say, “Wait a second. What’s fueling all of this?”

Number six, Christ’s redemption and redemptive work includes the earth. You might remember one of the perspectives and this is a bad theology. But some Christians have purported this.

And if you can imagine being a very strong environmentalist and hearing a “Christian” say this, this is where we’ve said some of the dumbest things in the name of God. Well, this is one.

“Well, it’s all going to burn anyway so what the heck? Just, you know, get rid of those rainforests. If we need the trees and do what you ever need to do and it’s all going up in smoke. In fact, I read the Bible, and it says it’s going to get worse before it gets better. I guess this is how it gets worse. So jump in, have fun, consume, consume, consume. Don’t worry about it. Put your head in the sand.”
It’s a very interesting perspective - far from biblical.

Now, you know that when the Fall occurred, when sin occurred in Genesis chapter 3, a major break happened between our relationship with God. A major break happened, as we saw, in our relationship with one another. We started to hide and to feel shame. And then a break happened in our relationship with ourselves.

But maybe what you don’t realize is that there was an impact on the actual creation. When God made Eden there were no tsunamis, there were no tornadoes, there were no earthquakes. God, a perfect God, an all wise God, made a perfect world.

But when sin occurred it introduced the imperfection into the world. Look at your notes. This is a very interesting passage in Romans 8 verses 19 to 21. Notice how the creation is personified here as looking forward to and yearning for the day when redemption is going to occur.

Just as sin impacted creation, redemption impacted. When Jesus died on the cross, and rose from the dead, and paid for your sin, and He bought you and bought me, and bought whoever would turn to Him in faith, bought you out of the slave market of sin and paid for it, He redeemed you. It impacted our relationship with God, our relationship with others, our relationship with ourselves, and the planet.

It says, “For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration. Not by its own choice but by the will of the One who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself would be liberated from its bondage and decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.”

That is a sharp contrast to, “Well it’s all going to burn anyway.” The fact of the matter is, here’s the implication: we must treat the earth with the same priority that God does.

The earth matters. We want to see, just like your life is changing, like you want to see a marriage restored and redeemed, someone who’s out to lunch and struggling with difficult things, you want to see them restored and redeemed.

We want to be a part of restoring and redeeming the earth in appropriate ways. The earth matters to God. But the concrete… Eden was a real place and a great
idea, gave us freedom, but God's game plan supersedes Eden and part of His game plan was to take us to a new Eden – a very physical place.

I think the problem with a lot of Christians is our view of heaven when people say, "You know, I'm going to, Jesus paid for me, I'm going to go to heaven." And you ask people down deep, "So, what's that going to be like?"

And I think the average Christian thinks, "Well, you know, I've read some of those storybooks. I think there are clouds. So you float on clouds. You can order either iced tea or lemonade probably. Nothing stronger. And then there's a lot of singing, because I hear they worship."

So you're idea of heaven is, "Oh, thank God, someday, someway I'm going to float on a cloud, drink iced tea or lemonade and do a lot of singing. But, I mean, I do get it. I mean, God's there, Jesus is there, it's gotta be really great. But that sort of sounds like it's what it's going to be like."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Nothing could be farther. The moment a believer dies you come into the immediate presence of Christ. But God has a game plan. And His game plan is not some ethereal place.

His game plan is a new heaven and a new earth. An actual earth with, like, trees and fruit trees. And there won't be a sun because His presence will supply the energy. And He will be with us and we will be with Him. And you will have jobs and there will be culture, and there will be music, and there will be sports, and there will be animals.

And it'll be just like Eden was supposed to be. And you will have responsibility. And the responsibility, or a lack of responsibility, and the role that you have in that new heaven and that new earth will be commiserate with your faithfulness here, and what you did with what He gave you.

Your sins are completely forgiven by the grace of God, by Jesus' accomplishment on the cross, received by faith. But there is another judgment for Christians about reward. And reward is about, you know, all those talents and now I give you charge over these cities.

There's a big, some of us would live way different if we actually believed in a new heaven and a new earth and a real eternity as opposed to, "this is all there is."

You gotta see this for yourself. Please, you know, we looked at the first page of the Bible. This is going to be one of the most amazing sermons we've ever had.
together. We’re going to look at the first page. Turn to the last page in the Bible…
or at least almost.

Revelation chapter 21. Of course, it will come on the screens and all that sort of stuff, but it’s just there’s something about touching and seeing. Last page of the Bible. This is why the earth matters.

I hear those pages flipping, it’s a sound of beauty. Now listen. Redemption impacts the earth. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne of God saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them and they will be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new.’”

God’s future new earth, just like we are changing and being conformed progressively to the image of Christ, and when we see Him we’ll be just like Him as He is, so God’s agenda for His co-regents here on earth, is to be a part of bringing the earth and restoring, whenever possible, the beauty of what happened at the Fall.

And so, as Christians, we’re the agents to make a difference in the environment. There are few things in all the world where we line up with people that probably disagree with us on almost everything else, as environmentalists. Is there a balance? Of course. But the most conscientious, lovers, care-ers of the earth, as the steward and co-regents of a holy God, are the followers of Jesus.

How do we live that out? Let me give you a couple ideas just as we go. First, I think we just have to focus on the seven or eight verifiable issues. I understand, we’ve just, you know, this is a top level view. I understand that we could dig down into global warming, and we could look at issues here, and issues in plastics in the sea...

Candid. Here’s what the deal is: we can argue about stuff, that I have very little or no control over, until the cows come home. Or I can look at what I know for sure and I can act on that today. And I can make a difference.
And when thousands, and then millions of people, who call themselves followers of Christ, do that it makes a big difference.

And so some of the things that we would all say: clean air, clean water, balanced land use, preserving the beauty, productivity and progress, with constraints for conservation, eliminate waste, limit non-biodegradable plastics, and recycle. I mean, okay? Those are things we all agree on. Those are things we can all really do.

Write down these three words because the root of not doing those things, we can intellectually say that, or just sort of float by, or let the culture tell us what to do. You know, “I guess I’m environmental now since I can’t buy a bag in San Jose.”

Well, maybe we should have been bringing our own bag before they told us. Maybe we should be on the cutting edge rather than responding to the culture of people who take the earth that God made way more seriously than we do, His children.

And so greed, ignorance, and carelessness are why all of us are not more conscious of taking care of God’s earth the way He wants us to.

It’s greed. “I want convenience. I want to consume. I want it now. I want it fast. I want it packaged.” Ignorance. How many people, you know, you don’t have to raise your hand but it would be nice if you did. How many people have heard a message on the environment in your lifetime in church? Wow. Fifteen hands out of a thousand. So part of it, we don’t know.

And then, finally, it’s just carelessness. I mean it’s just careless. We just don’t think about it.

Let me give you some practical steps. I call them the four Es of just sort of getting started. The first E is explore. And I mentioned this but I really mean this. Get outside, go see the redwoods, go sit in front of the ocean. Just take a walk without an electronic device. Put a lawn chair out and stare at the sky for fifteen minutes, without interruption, and just stare at the sky on a clear night.

Second, educate. Learn about nature. I mean, it’s fascinating. All the different stuff we’re putting in our mind. Read an article about whales, and about birds, and watch the Discovery Channel. I mean, just do some stuff where you think and read it saying, “What does this tell me about what God’s like?”
Explore, educate, and then engage. Recycle, conserve. I mean, just say, okay, you know, put the dial up from, you know, seventy-six to seventy-eight or eighty and just get specific.

I mean, confession, this is, believe me I’m going to take further steps but just from this passage I have a habit, when I shave, I’m old school so I still use a razor. And, you know, the water is running and you just, on and off, on and off, on and off. And there’s something about kind of hearing that water that’s sort of therapeutic.

So, the confession of my public sin before all of you, is for the last thirty or forty years or so I have been, I turn the water on and I do this and it just runs. Then I rinse it and it runs. And I rinse.

And I’m, and you know as I’ve studied this I thought, “You know what, Chip? That’s wasteful, that’s ignorant, and that is you being a consumer and insensitive to what God has provided for you.”

And after all that it’s also stupid. Like it takes, okay, here’s the energy. Like, the last two days I’m practicing. I’m getting it down. What, do you, are you with, what could you do? There are whole states that don’t even recycle. What do your kids think about this?

And then finally after you engage let me encourage you to empower. I think we need to jump on beautiful day and for some of you that are a little bit more bold go to Earth Day. Go hang out with people that maybe you think they’re a little over the top and say, “I’m here on Earth Day too. I want to help preserve the world. Not because it’s my mother, not because it’s God, guess what? This is my Father’s world. I’d like to help you out on this. What could I learn from you?”

What would happen if we were open and embraced? Is there going to be balance and disagreements? Absolutely. But what would happen if the most environmentally sensitive people on the face of the earth were followers of Jesus?

I think a lot of people might open their ears to more than just the environment but maybe about a God who cares about them.
Well, I have to tell you, in all my years as a pastor, there is no single issue that has caused more controversy, more hard feelings, more anger, or more Christians mad at one another or mad at me, than the issue we’re going to talk about.

We’ll talk about the Church and politics.

As a very young, naïve pastor many, many years ago there was a moral issue that became political, people were talking about it a lot. And so I remember teaching on this thinking it’s just right out of the Bible. I should say what God says on this.

And, up to that point, the letter that I received from a lady was the most scathing letter I’d ever received. I mean it started like this: “I can’t believe you were talking about political issues in church. Why don’t you preachers keep your nose in the Bible and out of political issues? When I come to church this is what I want to hear. You should be excommunicated from the Church. You are not to be a pastor. It’s the worst, most horr…”

I mean, it went on, and on, and on, and on, and I’m just thinking, “Oh my lands.” Now, I did learn later that she wasn’t in the services, which may have been good or bad. But just the fact that she heard from a friend that we talked about that topic, that from her lens was completely political, because people were talking about it over here and yet it was a very core, biblical, moral issue.

But I learned something. That’s a hot button of people. I mean, basically she said, “How could you say that you love God and talk about that in church?”

Now, on the other side of the spectrum, I have been greeted in the hallways, or in malls, or in my office, with people whose eyes get very big, their face gets really red, and the veins are bulging, “Now don’t you understand that this is a crisis right now and if you don’t take a stand, if we don’t interview those candidates, if we don’t put flyers out, if we don’t tell people how to vote, America is going to hell in a hand basket and you gotta not compromise and step up. What are you going to do?!”

And, um, some of them have been very disappointed. But all I want you to see is that when you start talking about the Church and politics you have two very distinct groups and most people in between.
You have some that are what I call “separatists.” In other words those things should never be talked about or communicated ever in the Church when it’s gathered.”

And there are others who would feel just the opposite or they’re activists that say, “You know what? This is the time to mobilize God’s people around these certain issues or candidates.”

So what we’re going to try and do is bring a little light instead of heat. And so I put a teaching handout together. Open it up if you will and I want to examine those two positions.

I’ve put a little picture on the bottom. You’ll notice it has the Church and politics, and on the left hand side is the separatists, on the right hand side is activists, and there are just some people who think there should be no involvement and others, high involvement.

So when someone comes to me and says, “How can you say that you love God yet talk about politics and the Church,” here’s what I want you to get. Here’s their position and then I want to give you the presuppositions. I want you to understand why people sincerely and passionately think that way.

The position is: Any subject or issue that is directly or indirectly political should never be talked about in the Church. Three presuppositions behind that thinking.

Number one, there’s a clear distinction between what’s sacred and secular. Faith is a privatized issue, there is a sacred moment of your relationship with God. Out there in the world, in politics and other things, is secular. Those things should not cross. You have some whole groups, actually, who will live completely apart. So they have no government involvement as much as they can.

The second presupposition is the confusion over our understanding of a pluralistic society versus pluralism. A pluralistic society basically is everyone has the right to champion our ideas, to say, “This is right, this is true, and let’s talk about them and the best ideas and the truth will win out.” That’s been sort of the history of America, traditionally.

We’re moving more and more towards pluralism. Pluralism says that every idea has exactly equal value, and for you to say that one idea or one position is better than another is intolerant.
And so, especially in the Church, if someone says, “This is an issue and this is right and that is wrong,” well, my lands, that’s the most intolerant thing you could do. And so those things shouldn’t be talked about.

The third presupposition is what I call functional separatists. This is often the younger generation but some who have just, you’re burned out and worn out. This is a group of people who say, “You know what? We’ve been through a lot of presidents or I’ve heard a lot of people talk. I’ve been through the local politics. Here’s what I know. All government is corrupt, when you peel back the onion I don’t care which party it is, it doesn’t do any good. My vote doesn’t matter, my participation doesn’t matter, I’m just going to live my life and I’m not involved completely. I’m totally disillusioned.”

So, those are the reasons behind the position of never talk or deal with politics and the Church.

The second position is, “Well how can you say you love God and not take a stand on political issues in the Church?” Here’s the position. The position is: The Church is a tool in the hand of God to turn a secular culture back to God. And as such it must exert vocal and active support for candidates, and issues, and laws that bring our government, and our culture, in line with biblical values.

Now there are three presuppositions behind that. The first one is that America has a covenant relationship with God. Not just that there was a biblical worldview and there were some Christians and some Deists and this was sort of the sense but there’s actually a covenant relationship with God exactly like, or much like, Israel.

Therefore, the goal of the Church is to bring America back to God and what better place than in the Church to be a tool in God’s hands to do that.

The second presupposition is that moral and cultural change is the primary mandate of the Church and the political process is one of the primary ways to achieve it.

In other words, the goal of the Church is to change the culture. It’s to get people, and laws and things, in such a way that they reflect biblical values, and the political process is the primary means of doing that.

Therefore, use the bully pulpit. Use the Church, when it’s gathered, in a way to champion those causes.
The third presupposition is that when the Church, when I say the Church gathered, when we’re together as a group and what comes from the pulpit, the official teaching of the Church and individual Christians that the calling of those two things are exactly the same.

Now that’s going to be really critical later so remember that one. The idea that whatever we’re to do when we’re gathered, as an official position and focus and future of the Church, is the same calling as each individual Christian.

So with that, turn the page and we’re going to go on a journey together because I will tell you for sure there are a lot of people in this room that have a lot of opinions about what I just said.

And as I just laid those positions out some of you went through a little moment in your mind and said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, well that’s what I believe.” And others were over here going, “Yeah, yeah, that’s what I believe.” And a lot of you were in the middle going, “I never really thought about it that way. I’m not sure exactly what I believe and this is going to be an interesting morning.”

So here’s what I want to tell you. Rather than talk about, okay, should we interview candidates? Should we put flyers? Should there be voting guides? How much, how long, which things?

I just want to, whoa. Whoa. Whoa. I want to back up and I want to say, “Wait a second.” What does the Bible actually say? What does God actually say about the role of the Church? And when I use the word “the Church” I’m talking about the Church gathered. Not individual believers, not just the body of Christ. But what does the Bible say about the Church and politics?

And then what does He say about the role of government in politics? And what’s He say about the role of individual believers?

And what I can tell you is I think the Scripture is really clear. There are four biblical absolutes that, before we get into the particulars about how that should be applied in this church, or how churches in general should, let’s just build kind of what I call a theological framework. Kind of a grid.

And say, “This is what the Bible says. Now, let’s look at those individual things.” And I think, actually, it gets pretty clear.
So are you ready? Roll up your sleeves. If you have a pen pull it out and then
turn in your Bibles, if you will, to John chapter 18 and here’s absolute number
one.

There are two kingdoms in conflict. That’s the first thing you need to know. There
are two kingdoms in conflict. There is a spiritual, eternal kingdom that Jesus, the
Son of God, the Messiah, came to the earth and is championing and still
champions. And there is a temporal, concrete kingdom that we live in.

So notice, as we pick up the story in John chapter 18, we have Jesus on trial
before Pilate and He’s being interviewed. Verse 36 Jesus said, “My kingdom is
not of this world. If it were My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the
Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place.”

And Pilate looks at Him and says, “You are a king, then?” Jesus answered, “You
are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born and for this I
came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of the truth listens
to Me.”

And so He’s being interviewed, and He’s been accused, and He’s been turned
over by the Jews to Pilate, who is the official government of the day, and
basically He says there’s a different kingdom. And My kingdom isn’t of this world.
My kingdom is rooted in truth.

Now the story is going to go on. Flip the page, you know, just go over to chapter
Chapter 19, because Pilate is going through some internal issues about, “Where
is this guy coming from?” And “He says he’s a king.” And we know a little bit
more about the story. He gets a note from his wife and so we pick up the story in
chapter 19 and Pilate is frustrated.

He says to Jesus, “Do You refuse to speak to me? Don’t You realize I have
power either to free You or to crucify You? Don’t You understand I hold the
sovereignty and the power over Your life?"

And listen to Jesus’ response. Jesus answered, “You would have no power over
Me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed Me
over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”
And here’s all I want you to get: You and I, as followers of Christ, are living in two kingdoms that are butting heads. There’s an eternal, spiritual kingdom and there is a temporal, physical kingdom and they’re at odds.

And the summary of Jesus is that He’s building a spiritual kingdom of love and justice that will ultimately be consummated when He returns but until then human institutions and governments will continually be at odds with His spiritual kingdom.

So it raises the question: How do you live in two kingdoms? I mean there are some values and issues of following Jesus, but I live in the United States, or some of you actually are citizens of other countries.

Absolute number two: Every believer has dual citizenship. Every believer has dual citizenship. You might jot in your notes Philippians chapter 3 verse 20. The apostle Paul says, “Your citizenship,” if you’re a born again believer, a follower of Jesus, your citizenship is in heaven.

And what we’re going to learn is you have dual citizenship both in heaven and a responsibility to the world and the government that you live in. If you will, in your Bible, flip back just a book or two to Mark. And this is a very interesting story.

Jesus’ popularity is mushrooming. He’s threatening the religious leaders. So, in fact, two groups of people that don’t like each other, I mean, this was the far left and the far right, theologically, okay? They don’t like each other.

But what they now have is a common enemy and the common enemy is this Jesus and throngs are following Him and His teaching and His power and they get a, they realize their position is going to get usurped, we gotta get rid of this guy.

And they’re very intelligent people so they come together and say, “You know what? We’ve got our differences but...” Sort of in the back room somewhere they came up with the great way to trap Him so that no matter what He says we’re going to discredit Him.

We pick up the story in Mark chapter 12 verse 13. “Later then some of the Pharisees,” right wingers, “and the Herodians,” left wingers, theologically, “came to Jesus to catch Him in His words.

“They came to Him and said, ‘Teacher, we know that You’re a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men because You pay no attention to who they are, but You teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And so we have a
question. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay, or shouldn’t we?”

And you can picture the crowd. And by the way, they don’t care how He answers. I mean, we gotcha. If you say we should pay to Caesar the Jews are now against you. If you say, “No, we shouldn’t pay to Caesar,” now you’re going against the government. So we don’t care how you answer. We’ve got you. Notice Jesus’ response. Because aren’t those two kingdoms in conflict? There’s the Jewish view and there’s the political view.

And Jesus says this: “Knowing their hypocrisy, ‘Why are you trying to trap Me? Bring a denarius and let Me look at it.’ And they brought Him the coin and He asked them, ‘Whose portrait is on this and whose inscription?’ ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.’”

It’s interesting, when they used this word, Greek, there’s a Greek word where, “Who should we pay?” it means, “just give something.” To pay. Jesus, in His answer, uses a different Greek word for “pay” that means, “to fulfill a debt.”

And so He says, “You actually have an absolute debt or obligation to the government, Caesar, to give him whatever,” and we’ll learn about that in a minute, “and you have an equal and more important obligation to give to God whatever He asks of you.”

And so what He wants you to know when you think of the Church and politics is, number one, there are two kingdoms in conflict. And every single follower of Jesus, you have dual citizenship. And so you are to be faithful to your citizenship in heaven and faithful to your citizenship here on earth with the government that’s there.

Which raises another question. How can you be faithful to an evil government? How can you be faithful when there’s such corruption and difficulty?

He answers that question in absolute number three. Human governments are ordained by God to restrain evil. Now I want, as I ask you now to flip over a couple books to Romans chapter 13, I want you to know that this is a difficult time for the Church.

The Church is persecuted, I mean, you talk about corruption in government, you talk about injustice, you talk about laws that are just, I mean infanticide is just a
normal part, women are bought and sold, slavery. Anything you can think of. Immorality is an all time high.

And so the apostle Paul is going to get some instruction to followers who live in these dual kingdoms. This is how you respond to the kingdom on earth. This is how you respond to the government.

Follow along as I read. Romans 13 beginning at verse 1. “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from the fear of one in authority? Then do what is right and he’ll commend you.”

Now listen to how the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, describes the government from God’s sovereign perspective. “For he, the government, is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong be afraid for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He, the government, is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on wrongdoing.

“Therefore,” here’s the application, “it’s necessary to submit to authorities not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.” In other words you do it as an act of worship and obedience to God. He’s saying God has sovereignly either allowed or placed this government at this time, in this country, where you live.

Now think about being a believer in Communist China. Think about being a believer in one of the states of a harsh dictator. Forget that, think about what it was like when you received this as a Christian in Rome.

Okay, I need to follow and obey God but he’s saying that I’m actually supposed to submit to the rules, as far as they don’t violate God’s Word, of this government?

In fact he goes on to say, “This is also why you pay taxes for the authorities are God’s servants who give you their full time to govern. Give to everyone what you owe them. If you owe them taxes, pay taxes. If revenue, revenue. If respect, respect. And if honor, honor.”
Here’s what you need to understand. The role of government, from Scripture, is very simple. It’s to restrain evil. The government doesn’t have the power to change people’s hearts, the government doesn’t have the power to make cultures shift in directions.

We can create laws that limit evil but the government doesn’t have the power to bring about major cultural change. God says the role is to restrain evil.

Which raises another question. If the government doesn’t have the power to bring about the kind of world that we believe God wants and the kind of relationships where there’s justice for people, and love, and equality, and real concern, how’s that ever going to happen?

Well, now we learn what he says about the Church. Absolute number four: The Church is ordained by God to make disciples. And before you just listen to that and say to yourself, “Oh, yeah, make disciples, my mind goes to Bible studies. I go to church.” No, no, no, no, no, no, stop. Let’s get this in context.

I mean, we’re talking about people throughout human history that have given their life, that have submitted to absolutely evil and terrible governments but lived such supernatural, amazing, winsome lives that they fed the poor, or during the times of the plagues were the people that picked up the bodies and pushed them on carts.

And people who, despite all the problems and ills in the society what they were were little Jesuses, they were salt, and light, and leaven. And you say, “Well that’s overwhelming.” Well when Jesus sent them out there was only a hundred and twenty and he says to them, “All power or all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me.”

Now here’s the assignment, “As you go I want you to make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them everything that I taught you. Teach them to obey.

“And by the way, when it gets crazy, and when you’re afraid, and when you think it’s impossible, and when you’re worn out, remember, ‘Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age.’"

The making of a disciple, think of that rather than of some class that you’ve had, or some little thing that happens. He says, “I want you to be the kind of people that it’s like, Jesus living inside your body, in your arena of influence at home, at
work, in the private, in the public, in the government. And I want you to penetrate and infiltrate in ways.”

And the way you do that, your role with the government is you submit. You realize God has sovereignly put this Communist ruler, or this dictator, or He has sovereignly placed you in a place, by the way, America is not a democracy. That shows up nowhere. We’re a republic. Democracies just mean the majority rules. Republics have a clear constitution of participation that says, “These are the values and the core behind what rules and why.”

And God says, “In the midst of that I want you to be used by Me in ways beyond your wildest dreams.”

I have a good friend that I’ve known him probably twenty-five years. Twenty, twenty-five years and my joke to him is when we get together is, “I knew you before you before you were famous.”

And so we, you know, we have the same birthday, we married wives with very similar personalities, we both were discipled by the same para church group, we’re exactly the same age. It sounds kind of weird. Except I was born in Ohio and he was born in Beijing.

And then he came and did his education in America, went back to Hong Kong and eventually ended up, probably to his surprise and certainly to mine, the chairman and CEO of one of the largest corporations in all of Hong Kong and then later, China.

And so he’s running this, it’s a financial firm, it’s an accounting firm and then when China opened up he finds himself in charge of all these offices, all over China, and all over Asia, and he’s the head guy.

And I mean, this is a guy that gets up, reads the Word, he’s always asking me what verses have I memorized lately, he’s got a Bible study. I mean, this is a core, make-it-happen guy who understands, “I’m supposed to help change the world and God put me in this position.”

And then so I was in Hong Kong, I guess about a year ago, and we were having lunch and I said, “Well David, you know, tell me how’s it going?” He goes, “Chip, just, it’s, uh…” I said, “How do you do it? I mean all the persecution and China…” He said, “You know, Chip, it’s amazing when Christians live like Christians and we’re the very best citizens it’s amazing the favor that we now have.”
He said, “I was having lunch with the head of the Minister of Religious Affairs,” in other words, the person in China, of over two billion people, in charge of anything religious that happens. My friend David and he are talking. And this is what this guy says.

He said, “Look, all your accounting and all your financial people - in every hotel, when you come anywhere, I will allow you to gather up to a hundred people. You can pray, you can worship, you can invite people, do whatever you want, but don't get noisy about it. And don't try and make it big.”

He said, “What we don’t want in China is destabilization.” Now are there, is there persecution in the provinces and things? Sure. But listen to this. He said, “The reason we’ve been given such access,” he said, “is that as we’ve come in and as we’ve allowed and really promoted, you know, the believers in our firms and the kind of work, they’re honest. They tell the truth. They do their work on time.

“So the favor that we have, what China wants is, I mean, they want to be the strongest economic power in the world. What they know is they can trust the kind of people that work in our firms.”

And then he just told me outright, he goes, “We gotta tell you, we don’t, we do not want to see some big destabilization but every province where there’s this swelling, and this growth of house churches, and people infiltrating the three self-churches,” he goes, “what we see is prosperity. And they actually obey the government except for, you know, the stuff where they can’t pray or read their Bible. And it’s loosening everywhere because what we want to do is we want to harness Christianity but we don’t want to destabilize our power.”

And you know that’s a really interesting picture, isn’t it? It’s a very interesting picture of how, when Christians live like Christians, and they make the focus what it is God uniquely called them to do, the impact that they have.

Because, see, governments have the power to restrain evil. Governments do not have the power, laws don’t have the power, Supreme Court justices don’t have the power, to create righteousness in people’s hearts.

Now with that said, okay, there is a little Bible study. Alright? Four absolutes. Quick review. We live in two kingdoms that are in conflict; every one of us that are followers of Jesus, what do we have? We have dual citizenship. So what’s the role of the government? The role of the government is to restrain evil. What’s the role of the Church? Is to make disciples, internal transformation. The government is external control.
With that said I’d like to just say, “See you next week. I hope that’s real helpful.”

But I don’t think that’s going to work because you still have to ask the questions.

November is coming. Well, who do you vote for? What’s the role of the Church?

Should there be things done in the Church, outside the Church? So what’s the role of the government? What’s the role of, you know, should be, what should be said or not said from this pulpit, and in pulpits in churches all over America, and all around the world?

How do you figure that out?

That’s the next question. So let’s dig in. Next question, simply put, is this: How do you move from a theological framework to the specific application of these principles in real life?

And I’m going to suggest there are three principles that flow out of these four absolutes. And here’s the key: If you understand the role and the responsibility of the Church, and when I say “the Church,” gathered, the role and the responsibility of government, and the role and the responsibility of us as individual Christians, when you clarify that from those four absolutes all of a sudden you will be able to make the kind of decisions, in all the specific areas about anything from voting, personally, to what the Church should do, what the government could do, and what we should do.

So with that let’s talk about first the role of the Church. Principle number one: Let the Church be the Church. The Church’s highest calling, the Church’s purpose for living, is to fulfill the spiritual, eternal, invisible kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Church’s goal is to exalt Christ and to preach, teach, and model the message of redemption, over and above, and more important, than anything else.

That’s the goal of the Church. So let the Church be the Church.

Well what’s that look like? How does the Church be the Church when it comes to the area of politics? Three specific ways Scripture says. First way, are you ready for this? Is to pray. The Church, when we’re gathered together, is to pray.

I Timothy 2:1 says, “I urge you, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and those in authority that we may live,” notice the purpose for the prayers for political powers and people that be, “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is
good and pleases our God and Savior who wants all men to come to a
knowledge of the truth."

See the Church’s first priority is we pray for the government, not so the economy
gets better. We pray for the government, and for candidates, not so our lives are
happier or easier. We pray, first and foremost, for those in authority so that there
would be peace in the land so the gospel could go forth by what we, not just say,
but the freedom to live in a way that people could see the reality of Christ.

Now I’m going to have a little experiment here, are you ready? Put your pencil
down just for a second.

I want you to think of the candidate, that if you were pressed for this next
presidential campaign, that you’re most excited about and let that name pop into
your mind. Okay.

Now I want you to think of the candidate, in this next presidential election that
you have the most distaste for. I’d like you to have that person come to your mind.
Have you got it?

Now what I can tell you, in Christians all across America, those would be two
different faces.

With that said, are you ready for this? For every time, let’s go to the person that
you distaste, that you think is the wrong person, that you’re very, very concerned
about, could become the next president.

For every time that you have spoken, criticized, written, or said something
negative about this person to another believer or someone else at work or in your
community, how often have you prayed for that person?

Just flat out convicting, isn’t it?

What the Bible says is that person, whoever they’re going to be, will be
established by God. And that the requirement of the Church gathered and for
individual believers is to pray for them and to pray for them from the heart, “God,
will you bless them? God, will you give them wisdom? God, will you draw them
closer to you? God, will you enrich their family relationships? God, will you cause
there to be...help these justices. Help these people in congress. Help our mayor.
Help our city council. Help the Board of Education.”
See, my observation among Christians, Christians tend to be often the most negative, critical people who blog, and email, and send little things to one another that you open with these little ads toward one another on both directions.

And I just wonder what would happen if we prayed, and cared about the souls of those people, and asked ourselves, first and foremost, if there’s a kingdom of heaven that’s spiritual and eternal and my allegiance is first to Christ, maybe that ought to be my priority first and foremost.

Especially, as we’re gathered together.

The second priority, when the Church is gathered, let the Church be the Church, is to preach and teach the truth of God’s Word, so that God’s people would be informed and have a biblical worldview about His values.

I have news for you! God is not looking for a democratic vote or a republican vote. In fact, I have news for you! God is neither a Democrat or a Republican. Shocking. And when He wants you to vote a little bit later on and we talk about your individual responsibility, He’s not looking for you to say, “Well this is the, my republican or my democratic…” He’s looking for a kingdom vote.

He’s looking for the children of God, who understand these worlds will always be in conflict, and you have dual citizenship and the government doesn’t have the power to change the world but only restrain evil. But you have the power, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to make a difference.

Oh, God, I am your child. I am your son or your daughter before I’m a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent. What do You want me to do, what do You want me to say, and how do You want me to vote on these issues and these people that would honor You?

So how can Christians know what those issues are unless we teach? That’s the role of the Church gathered. It’s with intentionality that this is the last message and it’s with intentionality on what I’ve taught the last five weeks.

None of these were political issues. These are issues about kingdom and truth. Did you notice when Jesus was talking to Pilate He said what? “Everyone who listens to the truth listens to Me.”

You notice when they came to catch Jesus and what He says, “We know you’re a man of integrity because You live according to the truth.”
So the question is, is there absolute or relative truth? What’s the truth about human sexuality? What’s the truth about homosexuality? What’s the truth about abortion? What’s the truth about the environment?

That’s the job of the Church gathered. After we pray, this our best understanding of the truth.

Now we’re going to learn in just a minute you have a moral responsibility to participate, to know the facts, to examine, and say, “I want to be a kingdom voter. And my first allegiance is first and foremost not to what I think will make life more comfortable. Not even do I think it’s going to have more or less impact depending on what I do. But it’s to be faithful to God.”

And so prayer is number one, preaching and teaching, and the third is modeling. The Church is to model truth, and justice, and righteousness. The world changed because of the Acts 2 verses 40 through 47. That picture of those people, how did they live?

They lived in a corrupt culture, with a corrupt government, where there was tremendous injustice, amazing immorality, and all kind of gods and they came together and they loved each other and they followed Jesus and they made sacrifices and they met the deepest needs in the community.

So that’s what we do. You help runaway teens, and you figure ministry is to help sex trafficking, and help people that are HIV positive, regardless of how they got it. You don’t judge. You care. You feed the poor. You live in community. You don’t talk negatively. You don’t gossip.

When Christians live like Christians you’re the most winsome, powerful group on the face of the earth.

But what’s happened? Jesus’ Church has been hijacked by the Right and by the Left. And what’s come out of pulpits across America for the last twenty years is, “This group” or “that group.” And so the props of the state and the agendas that people think...

You know, at the end of the day, who wins? Who wins presidential elections? I’ll tell you who wins. Whoever the populous believes can make the economy better. You just go, do all the history, we have all these, you know, “Uh, these are my views and these are my values.” Or, “These are my views and these are my values,” and “I’m an Independent,” and “I’m a swing person.”
It’s about the economy, stupid. It’s about the economy, stupid, which means what? At the core, people, far more than kingdom voters, we’re materialists. And what we’re asking, not, is, “God, what do You want in this country, and what do You want me to do?”

What we’re asking is, “How do we get this thing moving in a way that makes my life better, and my future better, and my personal economy better, and my prosperity better?” That’s not a very biblical or godly role but it’s how most people vote.

And so let’s let the Church be the Church. Let’s radically live out and model, not subservient agendas around smaller issues, but the big agenda of Christ and him crucified. That’s the role of the Church.

Well what’s the role of the government? And by the way, as I say that, there’s a role for activism but what you’re going to find it’s not when the Church is gathered. The role of real activism is going to be placed squarely, specifically on each individual.

Because you’re not just a citizen of heaven. You are a citizen of this country. And God has a calling and specific responsibility. But that’s on you, not the Church gathered.

Second principle: Don’t expect the government to achieve what only the Church can accomplish. See that’s, so often, it’s subtle. If we could just get the right guy in the office, whoever “we” is. By the way, the “we” when we say “Christian” could be very, very different politically. Very, very broad.

This is another “a-ha.” I think God, since He’s not a Republican or a Democrat, is absolutely committed to having born again, kingdom-minded servants of His in both parties.

And that they’re commitment to the King would superimpose any shallower commitments to their political parties. And yet, over time, we’ve thought somehow, it’s a subtle presupposition, “If we could just get the right guy and then the Senate, and then the Congress, and then the Supreme Court justices, and then the governors, and…”

We unconsciously believe that the political process has the power to change the culture and to change people’s hearts and make, quote, the world the way many Christians believe the world ought to be.
That's a deeply held view. The Bible says the government doesn't have that power. So it has the power to restrain evil. Now when you make certain laws that punish unrighteous things, God says the, what's the foundation of God’s throne? Justice and righteousness.


Let me ask you this, just relax a little bit. Some of you are getting really nervous. In the last forty years, isn't it true that both parties have had a season of time where their party had the president, the majority in the senate, and the majority in congress? Right?

If you know your history both parties have had seasons where, “So, how’s America looking to you? So everything’s okay, right? It’s really working?” See, unconsciously what happens is the Church has fallen into thinking there’s some messiah and whether it's a governor, or a president, or a Supreme Court justice, that if we can just line those people up, the government has the power to bring about righteousness, and justice, and change, and they don’t.

They can restrain evil.

And by contrast, there’s a very important role for government that's amazing and we live in a world where we the people get to help make those things and can be very active in bringing about change.

I often hear people say silly things like, “Well, you can’t legislate morality.” And if they mean by that, you can’t change people’s hearts, to have them do the right thing for the right reason, I totally agree.

But what you need to understand is what laws are, is legislating morality. It’s morally wrong to drive drunk. Puts you in jail. Morally wrong to kill someone. Puts you in jail. Morally wrong to steal or not pay your taxes. We put you in jail.

Those are moral issues. And then sometimes the laws change - and it used to be illegal to kill a child under this age or that age. The laws change, it’s now legal. Well, I mean, the laws, they draft morality. But the government just is, it just creates these boxes but they can’t bring about righteousness. They can’t bring about change. Our hope can't be in candidates or the political system.

Well then you should be asking, “Well then where is our hope?” The role of the Church: Pray, preach and teach the truth, model and live this out in radical ways.
The role of government is limited political limitations. I love what Chuck Colson has said.

He says, “The danger with Christian political movements, per se, is that they tend to make the gospel hostage to particular political agendas. You may wrap the cross in the flag and make God a prop for the state. And this is a grave danger.”

I would say that has happened on both sides of the aisle to the Church and for reasons I can’t quite get, Christians seem to be among the most naïve of all people and are used and abused by both political parties and what we’ve lost is our greater and most important message. And we’ve been tagged because of how we’ve behaved, especially when gathered, that we’re really the people that are just for this or against that.

And that’s happened on the Right and it’s happened on the Left. This is not a Liberal or Conservative issue.

So what’s the answer? Principle number three: Don’t expect the Church to accomplish what only individual believers can achieve. See what a lot of people want to do is say, “If you would do this, if you preach on this, if we do that, if we interview candidates, if we do that, if we take a stand on proposition 1, 4, 7, 9, 2, 13, if we have flyers, if we have voting guides, if we do…”

Don’t ask the Church to accomplish what only an individual believer can achieve. All those things are too low and too small a priority of the overarching message of exalting Christ and the message of redemption, when we’re gathered.

However, the Scripture is clear, believers have dual citizenship and we’ll be held accountable before God for faithfulness in both arenas. Separation is not the answer. Activism in the Church gathered is not the answer. The answer is one word. Are you ready for this? Individual penetration.

At the end of the day, you know, we want the government to change things, we want the Church gathered to change things, and here’s what Jesus would say: “You are the light. You are the salt. And you are the leaven.”

Changing in laws, changing in Boards of Education, changings in values, changing in the greatest needs, that’s not the Church gathered, that’s you and me, individually, saying, “You know what? I’m going to be informed. You know what? I’m going to vote. You know what? I’m going to find a calling on my life to meet the deepest needs and I’m going to engage. I’m going to get off of talk radio
and blogging about stuff and I’m going to get out and do stuff that brings about real, concrete change in hurting people’s lives, in laws that need to be changed.

“I’m not going to ask the Church to do that. I’m not going to just be a mouth that talks about, ‘We ought to do this and we ought to do that and can you believe how terrible things are?’”

I love what my friend, Tony Evans, he wrote a tiny, little book called How Should Christians Vote? And he has one chapter, I loved it, it’s on, “Is God a Democrat or a Republican?” Classic.

And what he says in this is probably different than you could ever imagine. It’s very insightful.

Tony writes, “The Scripture clearly states the role of the believer, in the midst of society,” and then he quotes a very famous authority on what our role in society, individually, should be.

“You are the salt of the earth but if the salt becomes tasteless how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under-foot by men. You are the light of the world. You are a city set on a hill, a city that can’t be hidden. Nor does anyone take a light or a lamp and put it under a basket but they put it on a lampstand and it gives light to all who are in the house.

“So let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Does anyone recognize that authority? It’s Jesus. He’s quoting Matthew 5. And then I love the paragraph:

“Our job as Christians is to infiltrate where the bacteria of unrighteousness and darkness have permeated and made themselves at home. It is our job to act as salt and light in both parties and offer the kingdom’s point of view. One way you do that in a constitutional republic is through your vote.”

See at the end of the day I think what’s happened is that many of us want someone else to accomplish what God says is your job. My job.

What’s your calling?
Now for all of us – informed. All of us – registered to vote and vote. Are you ready for this? If we believed in dual citizenship, how in the world do we have sixty million evangelicals in the United States, and in the last presidential election only twenty million voted?

The research I did on very specific propositions, on very specific judges, on very specific candidates, often the swing of who wins is by a few hundred or a few thousand votes. Two thirds of all the people say, “I love Jesus with all my heart,” and listen to talk radio, and probably blog about how terrible things are. Two thirds of them don’t participate. See, I think you’ll be held personally accountable, and I’ll be held personally accountable.

Now, if I was in Communist China I don’t get to vote. I get to be a citizen, I get to live out my faith, and the moment they tell me I can’t do something that God says I have to do, then I exercise civil disobedience.

So I might be a Daniel and say, “You know, I’m sorry, you know something? You can tell me I can’t pray. I’m going to pray. You put me in jail, you put me in jail.”

But there’s a role for participation. And then there’s a calling. There are some people in this room that you ought to be on a Board of Education. There are people in this room that you ought to be leading the precinct in your party.

There are people in this room that are probably younger, you should be asking yourself, "Does God want me to be the governor of this state?" For some of your kids you ought to be training them saying, “You know what? We’re going to need a godly, Christian president someday.” And maybe one of your sons or one of your daughters…

We’ve retreated and we’ve said, “The government solves the problems or get the Church to be a big political bully.” Both of those are wrong. The government can restrain evil and the Church can make disciples and we are the salt and the light and the leaven.

And we gotta be careful about how we talk. And we gotta be careful that we don’t get pictured as, “Oh, you’re that hardcore Republican.” Or, “You’re that Democrat.” Or, “You always look at these things and you’re the person who sends me these emails.”

People need to know you, first and foremost, as a man, a woman, or a student of God. Humbled by your love for God, humbled by your winsome, holiness.
Humbled by the tactfulness in which you share what you believe and why you believe it.

And then they ought to watch a life that’s making a difference. And who participates. And lovingly, tactfully, caringly shares, “These are my convictions about these issues that are going to frame our culture for the next fifty years and this is why.”

That’s what the early Church did. Turn the clock back fifty years. Christianity was almost foreign in Korea. And then what you saw the birth of the Church that created an entire system where laws got changed and different people, the president of Korea right now is a born again Christian. I have a friend that meets with him on a regular basis.

Think of Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe and the Wall didn’t fall out of political, external. The Wall fell, and if you understand the story of what happened among the believers, and the prayer movements, and the… all of a sudden the people said, “We can’t live under this anymore.”

Can I tell you something? The Bay Area doesn’t have to stay the way the Bay Area is, and this country doesn’t have to stay the way it is, but it'll only change when you change.

It’s not going to, you know what? I don’t know who’s going to win the next election. But I’ll guarantee, we’re not going to have, “Chhh, chhh!” But I know whoever wins I’m commanded to pray for him.

But I’ll tell you what, it can change in your neighborhood, it can change around here, and as it changes with believers, that’s how God’s always worked.

I have a word to the separatist. Do not ask others to do the work that God has called you to do. Okay? You have dual citizenship. Don’t you say, “Well I don’t want any involvement in politics in any way, someone else take care of that.” Sorry. That’s not one of the options.

And my word to the activist: Please don’t demand that your personal calling and your personal passion in your views, politically, become one that all of us have to share and be promoted from the Church gathered. Okay?

I’m glad you know more than anyone else, you can Facebook all your friends, you can help people learn, you can run for office, you can make a difference. But we have different people and different calling and more than anything else you
need to sit next to people and realize that your commitment as a citizen of heaven and a brother and sister in Christ must override any of your strong, passionate political views that would cause division in the body of Christ.

They'll know us, according to Jesus, by our love, not our political activity. Should you have political activity? Absolutely. But that's your personal calling. Do what God shows you to do. Don't demand that when we're gathered that that becomes the agenda.