

## **When Desire Turns Dangerous**

### **10 Ways to a Better Life series**

**by Chris Famisaran**

All right. Good morning, everybody. How are we all doing this week? Better. Horrible. Blessed. You survived.

All right, well, this last month we've been asking—we've been intentionally going through, I guess, an initiative called Shine to Serve: help inspire, nurture, and engage. And I had asked, hey, does anybody want to submit any stories, or do you want to come up here? I've got some submissions, so I'm going to share some experiences. But I want to let you know, if something has happened in your life and you feel that it would be a blessing—because we want to see faith lived out and hear stories—let us know, and we'd love to have you be able to come up and share that experience.

But this week, I want to just share two quick experiences. Virginia recently shared a story of how, unfortunately, one of her friends' mother passed away, and they got together and they were at Olive Garden. And, you know, Virginia had known this woman as well, close to her, and as they were at Olive Garden, her friend, who kind of tends to be a little more stoic, somehow they started to laugh. It was a little bit unusual. And actually they were laughing so loud that they had to actually say, "Okay, we gotta try to compose ourselves. We're in a public setting. We don't want to ruin somebody else's lunch."

But as they got to the funeral, her friend decorated her mom's casket a certain way, with all kinds of goodies that she had liked. And, you know, her husband had kind of been, eh, let's not do that. But she was like, "No, we gotta do this." And throughout this whole time, you know, Virginia's wondering, how can I shine for Jesus? And simply put, as I was talking with her, I realized you practiced the ministry of presence.

When somebody passes away, do you ever struggle to think about, what can I say to that person? And you feel like there's nothing that you can say. And sometimes there is nothing you can say. But what I would encourage you—

and just be like Virginia—sometimes you don't need to say anything. Sometimes you just need to be there, just to show up.

In many cases, you know, in one case, you know, Job's friends—what did they do? They showed up. Now, were their intentions pure? Not exactly, but at least they showed up. So there's one positive that we can take from the story of Job: just be able to show up. But how you conduct yourself—let's not be so critical. Sometimes you don't need to say anything. Sometimes you just need to be able to show up. And so that's how she shined recently.

As well, Natalie—she started attending the church within the last couple of months. She wanted to share her experience, and so I'm going to share a few highlights, okay?

And essentially, her experiences with church and faith have been painful and confusing and challenging at times. You know, growing up, she had to learn how to repeat the right answers, but not necessarily what did the—what did scripture really mean? And so as she started to ask questions, what did she find? She found resistance and challenges.

You know, we're all about being honest here, and sometimes in our faith we have questions, and sometimes they could even, dare I say, lead to doubt. Unfortunately, her husband as well passed some time ago, and so there was depression and anger against God—feeling abandoned, understanding why, trying to understand why.

Recently as well, she met an individual through an Adventist group who offered to study scripture with her, and simply just listening—teaching without any judgment—helping her to understand the basic spiritual beliefs and truth: that God—to love and trust God perfectly. And for the first time, she had hoped that God's grace is actually bigger than my questions—her anger, her fragile faith, and the hope to one day be able to be reunited and see her husband again.

It didn't come from a pastor or a church, but somebody who took the time to sit down with somebody, to reflect a love—a selfless love—that she'd never experienced in a faith setting. She didn't know where her friend's care may

end or end God's work, but through him, and so she's here to see that. She can see she's finding healing, she's finding the ability to be vulnerable, to be honest.

Sometimes all you just need to do, again, is just to listen and be a friend. How can you serve? How can you help? Be attentive and listen.

Those are just a couple stories. If you have one, let us know.

Then last week as well, after last week's sermon, a number of you reached out to me, and I was so appreciative of the stories that I heard. A couple of you immediately, right after church, had to call somebody, and you did, and you took that step. You took that challenge literally. I can't tell you how heartwarming that is for my heart to see you all step out in faith and to challenge the fears that maybe you've expressed, or the hardships and the anger that you've been experiencing, and just say, "You know what? It stops today."

So keep at it. Be faithful, all right?

Last week we talked about murder and anger. Today we're going to talk about adultery.

Let's pray.

God, grant me the words of wisdom to know what to say. Lead and guide us as we move forward. Help this, Lord, to not just be instructive, but also that we can apply it to our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

Over the years, as a faithful husband, I have tried to do my best to be able to organize and put together all the things that my wife buys from Target or Ikea. And when I get a cabinet, when I get whatever it is that needs to be assembled, I will literally pull everything out of the box. I will lay it literally in rows, according to the instructions—all the screws, all the boards, whatever it may be—in order so that, as the instructions are laid out, I can easily follow.

And what I think is going to take sometimes, you know, maybe 15, 20, maybe 30 minutes turns into what? An hour or two, all right? And so, yeah, I feel like marriage is a lot like building Target or IKEA furniture.

And, you know, when you start, you're genuinely excited. You spread everything out, okay, start to put stuff together, but then you realize, wait—there's a tiny peg missing. Where is it? There's a screw that's missing. And if anything is missing, especially structurally, will that furniture hold up strong and immaculately? No, it's maybe going to be a little loose. And if you have loose furniture, to me, that is unsettling—I have to fix it.

But furniture only works when everything is connected. All of the pieces are connected the way they're meant to be. You cannot say, eh, I don't need this.

When we look at marriage, marriage isn't two people living separate lives under the same roof. Marriage is building up piece by piece over time. And when we look at this, we see that there, in marriage, there is a oneness.

Now, God's idea of oneness isn't perfection, okay? Because we're all broken people, but it's connection. And when we think of wholeness, we don't think of, well, we don't think of how can I win, but how do we grow and stay together?

Sometimes maybe some people think that in marriage you're going to lose who you are, and that's not really the right frame of mind. How do we grow together?

So marriage—can marriage work if we're building separate lives but staying under the same roof? No. We have to come together.

When I think about oneness, there's actually a couple passages that I think of. I didn't put it in the notes, but let's just go to Deuteronomy chapter six, okay? I want to go to Deuteronomy chapter six.

And it's here that we see one of the most faithful, biggest parts of Scripture is displayed, okay? And there's a decree that's to be made. Deuteronomy 6, verse 4, all right? We all there?

Okay. “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is”—what is—“one?”

We think about this: the Lord is one. I thought God was one. When you think about God, though, what is God made up of? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And where else does the Trinity—where does this oneness show up? I think of John 1, when Jesus creates. But was the world created by just one person or one thing? It was God working together.

I think of the Last Supper, or the last discussion that Jesus has with the disciples later in John, where he talks about the Father, the Advocate, him also being the Son, working together throughout the book of John.

I also think of earlier in Genesis as well, where if we read in Genesis 1, verse 5, just real quickly, “God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning—the first day.”

There's this word, echad, okay? Everybody say, one, two, three—okay? You can use echad when you need to clear your throat so you can be wholesome, whole, complete—that's just a joke. Echad, meaning one.

Genesis describes this light and this darkness coming together as one. We also see, too, later on in chapter two, that Adam and Eve—a man shall leave and come together with his wife, and they will be what? One.

Imagine Adam, you know, he lays down, God takes his rib, creates a woman. When everything was set together, I think of—this is how I responded—I would hope he would have responded much like the great Keanu Reeves: “Whoa.” And it was good.

Togetherness, wholeness, this sense of wholeness.

Malachi also argues and reflects in Matthew—I'm sorry—Malachi, chapter 2, verse 10, that marriage is a covenant based on the basis of the oneness of God. Since God is the sole creator of the material world, human beings also.

Malachi echoes the Genesis ideal of the one Father who created man and woman to be one flesh.

And so, as we dive into our lesson study today, we can't look at the Ten Commandments without looking first to where—the previous chapter, chapter 19—God has called them to be a priesthood of all believers and to be an example to those that they're going to come across.

And so now let's go to Exodus chapter 20. Exodus 20, verse 14, okay? Exodus is the second book in the Bible, okay? Exodus 20—Exodus 20, verse 14. All right, we all there?

Okay. Verse 14. It says, “You shall not commit adultery.”

You can also find the same commandment that Moses had to reiterate with everyone also in Deuteronomy chapter 5: “You shall not commit adultery.”

And when God says something, should we not take it seriously? Okay, obviously, yes.

And here we see that we're confronted with this idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a sacred covenant, okay? Marriage isn't just a written document, but it's an agreement that you make with one another—you make with someone—and you also make before God.

In order to have a healthy relationship, should we not have God also in the picture?

And so marriage is not just a contract, but a sacred covenant. But also, Exodus 20:14 reveals that God desires that we have a faithful and committed relationship with our spouse.

If the Israelites are to be an example to those around that they're going to meet, should they not also reflect God's ideals?

And we see how the first four commandments deal with the vertical relationship. The last six deal with the horizontal aspect—how we deal with one another.

And the first couple of commands in the Ten Commandments deal with what? That we should solely devote ourselves to God, to not have anything that comes in between us and God.

But then, if you also want to reflect and see that this oneness as well, when you choose to live life with somebody, you should be fully committed to that person in everything. Amen.

So one of the things that I—a quote that I came across recently—is this: “Faithfulness is built long before temptation arise.”

Faithfulness is built long before temptation arises, as you're going to learn, as we're going to go through later as well.

Now, this was just something that God is having to try to reframe. The Israelites—they just left Egypt. How long ago? Roughly a couple of months.

And growing up in Egypt and having to reframe everything, they'd been in slavery for hundreds of years—the people. Now God is setting an example: this is how I want you to live moving forward.

And so adultery, though—it's not just an external act that we can commit, but something that begins where? From our heart, our desires.

Last week we talked about anger. And where does anger flow from? Comes from inside.

God is not just worried about the external, but also about the internal.

And, you know, let's just—I think there's a few ways that adultery isn't just having a physical affair with somebody. It could also be emotional. Do you confide with somebody about things that maybe you should not confide in with somebody else other than your spouse? Or do you turn to comfort to

somebody else instead of your spouse? Do you share secret dreams or desires or struggles when it should be reserved for your spouse?

Somebody once said, “You don't have to touch someone to give your heart away.”

But also maybe spiritually—do you love to go and pray with somebody other than your spouse? Do you lead spiritually everywhere except in your own home?

And sometimes even little things—maybe having inside jokes that you reserve only for somebody, maybe, perhaps, when it should be reserved for your spouse.

Or maybe a common thing that we're dealing with but we don't want to acknowledge is, what about our digital infidelity? Is your phone—I've shared this before—my wife can take my phone, be able to open it. Not that she's done that, but she knows the password to my phone. She knows the passwords to all my computers.

Is there anything on your phone that you might have cause for concern? Or do we have to instantly remember to delete our history?

Now, Jesus in Matthew 5—let's go to Matthew 5, okay? Matthew 5. Matthew 5.

And I love this passage. I don't know why I didn't realize this before, but as I was reading and as I was reading a couple commentaries, they made light of this, okay?

Matthew 5—there's six examples that Jesus shares. In verse 27, okay: “You have heard it was said”—meaning Jesus is reminding them—“you've heard of this before. I'm going to bring it up, but I'm going to add a little bit of something to this as well.”

Okay: “You have heard it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Now, last week I shared a very interesting dramatic example. I had Alex come up this week, and I stabbed him a couple times. This week it's going to be Gustavo—so I'm kidding, I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

And ultimately, where did it lead? Where did that anger and that murderous intent come from? It came from here.

But as we started to unravel, it wasn't just the stabbing motion. It was somebody—that somebody should do that to him. That person is not worth living. I am angry with that person. That person is not aligned with my values. That person is a threat—and so on and so on.

And you have to what? You have to justify that action.

Just like when you try to justify saying, look, I am already in a committed relationship, but there's a few cracks, there's a few things that I don't like. I'm going to avert my eyes elsewhere.

So we try to justify. And it's not just the act, but it's also what is coming from—where does it start? And it starts from the heart.

Jesus, again, is not looking at the external, but also the internal.

And also, though he gives some examples—though he gives a very, very graphic example—if you're, verse 29: “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.”

What—is Jesus being literal here? “It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”

“And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Now, is Jesus being literal here? I think if that were the case, there would be a lot of blind people and a lot of cut-off hands, all right?

I think Jesus is using this opportunity to emphasize the seriousness of what he's trying to share with the people, okay? I don't think Jesus is being literal. There'd be a lot of people who'd be missing eyes.

But I think that Jesus is being intentional, because he's saying, hey, be honest with your situation and maybe set boundaries.

I indicated a couple of weeks ago, the hardest part sometimes is confronting and acknowledging the truth. We sometimes want to think that I want to keep this idea, this dream or this fantasy, or remember things the way that I want them to be remembered rather than what was the truth.

Because it forces us to realize that either we've made a mistake in the past or what we had hoped growing up would be—the ideal—is not the truth.

And I think that if we're being honest with ourselves, if we tend to get a little careless, those cracks and fissures can grow deeper and widen and allow us to get into a situation where it could be very troubling and very challenging and perhaps may not be able to get out of.

So a thought is, you know, I make choices—am I the same person at the mall or the gas station, the grocery store, as I am at home? Or am I the same person when I'm outside versus when I'm by myself?

Do my choices reflect Christ, or do I need to hide parts of my life?

Years ago, my family decided to go up into the mountains, and it was snowing. And so in Southern California, anytime there's a hint of snow, what does Caltrans and CHP require? You put chains on, okay?

So we put the chains on. The only problem is, I think we were in Forest Falls—we put the chains on, and you can't just go zooming up the mountain. It's very slow and very tedious—very frustrating—because you want to go play in the snow as a child. I want to go play.

But I also noticed that on the front windshield was what? A crack. It was sort of a little small crack.

And by the time we got to the destination of where we could play, I could see the crack getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger—to where, instead of it being a little crack, it was a big crack by the end of the day.

And how many of you realize, hey, there's a crack here, but I hope it will go away? Is hoping going to do anything? No.

You have to fix the windshield, in a sense. You have to replace that windshield. Otherwise, it's never going to be fixed. You can paint over things, but you can't fix a crack in a windshield. You cannot just hope that the crack will be gone.

So I've looked at this, and it feels very negative and very unhappy. Let's look at things a little bit more positively.

You know, I titled this sermon, When Desire Turns Dangerous. Should you desire your spouse? Absolutely, okay?

But it gets dangerous when we turn that desire elsewhere where it doesn't belong.

Do you desire your spouse? Do you desire your husband?

And oftentimes, you know, when people get together, what do they immediately do? They immediately desire the physical. “Oh, that person is so beautiful. That person is so handsome.”

But then they don't do the hard work of figuring out, are we compatible? Do our values—do our beliefs—are they aligned? And if they're not, is this a make-or-break?

Because as you grow older, as you grow together, if you're not aligned, cracks and fissures, or cracked windshields, can appear in your relationship. And if you don't address it also—

You know, Ephesians—oftentimes a lot of people will say this phrase: women should what? They should submit to their husbands, right? But that sounds so one-sided.

What does it say before that? What does it say in Ephesians? It says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” It's not one-sided.

In fact, it just says, “Women, submit to your husbands.” What does it ask later on? What does Paul, a couple of verses later, say? Men—are you willing to die for your spouse, for your wife?

Submit—death. Are you willing to submit to one another? Are you willing to trust, to listen, to respect, to care for, and influence one another?

If we hold to Exodus 20:14, what are some of the promises we can experience? We can experience trust. We can experience security. We can experience unimaginable love and deep intimacy.

But we can't do that if we don't have the ability to trust one another.

As you build relationships, just like we've talked about before as well—trust, listen, respect—can you trust the one that you are trying to talk to? When disagreements come up, are you a person that is willing to take the ability to listen and hear where your spouse, your person, is coming from and respect it?

Maybe you don't always agree, but can you try to find common ground?

If you can trust, if you can listen, if you can respect, you can influence. And ultimately your spouse, your person, will know that you deeply care.

And from there, you can find trust, you can find security, you can find unimaginable love and deep intimacy.

We tracking? So it goes both ways.

To submit means to set aside our ego and our demands and truly listen to one another and hold space to have the tough conversations.

So this week—reflection: do my choices strengthen and build trust, or slowly dissolve or erode it? Okay?

Do my choices that I make, or my desires—do they strengthen and build trust, or slowly dissolve it?

This week, you're going to write down one thing that's been a stumbling block, okay? What's a stumbling block in your life? And write down the steps you will take to address it.

I don't want you to just think about it—I want you to write it down. Because what does that do? It means we're acknowledging it.

So write it down, address it, and go follow through with it. Or as Bill says, go do it, okay?

I hope and pray, my friends, that you take these examples—trust, listen, respect, to care, to influence—will deeply enrich your relationships, especially for those who are married, to make it grow.

May God bless you and lead you.

Father in heaven, marriage is a wonderful blessing, and we pray, Lord, help us to be faithful—not just in our marriage, but in all aspects of life. May we reflect you, especially through our relationships. Lead and guide us. In Jesus' name, amen.