

The Harlot – Part 2

Father-Son Retreat 2014

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As we've been talking about all these different kind of people, we need to recognize that they all have different dangers and beneficial qualities about them and that when you meet the harlot, you are meeting the one who will have the most impact on all your relationships. When you meet the lion, you will meet the one that will have a great impact on your productivity. When you meet the bald man, you're meeting someone who will have perhaps the greatest impact on your maturity. And when you meet your father, you probably are meeting someone who will have the greatest impact on your success. And when you meet a shepherd, you're meeting someone who will perhaps have the greatest impact on your salvation.

We're going back here to the harlot, the most dangerous person that you'll meet. There are many beneficial and wonderful people that you meet in this world and God is so kind to bring them to you, but there is this one that is so masterfully dangerous, the harlot, and so here is now part two of this message on this person that you probably have met many, many times and will meet many, many times for the rest of your life and that is the harlot. In part one, we said that the greatest defense against the harlot is very clearly and explicitly spoken in Scripture, that the Bible really does tell you how to form a defense against the harlot. By the way, it's not accountability software, it's not an accountability group, it is something that you possess in your heart and that is love for God. If you love pure things, if pure things attract you, if you believe that the devil is a destroyer of your soul and you truly believe deep within your heart that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, there you find your defense in all of these things. If you believe in your heart that his ways are pleasant ways, his commands are wonderful, that he's the only source of happiness, then you will be able to resist to the extent that you will love his commandments more than you will love the impurity and the allurements of the one who would desire to destroy your relationships and perhaps even your soul. We also just made it very clear that you always reap what you sow. If you sow in impure things, you will always reap in impurity. No one can escape that and so there are degrees of success that we can have based on the sowing that we are engaged in in our lives.

So that was part one. We talked about the most important thing you need to know about the harlot. We talked about the myth of secrecy and the harlot. We talked about these primary texts of Scripture on the harlot. We walked through chapters 5 through 7 in the book of Proverbs which I think are some of the most important texts for a man to

understand how he ought to have success against her schemes. Now I'd like to complete the outline that I hope you might still have in front of you. We're going to cover the symptoms of seeing the harlot. Secondly, the technology related to that harlot. Thirdly, the strategy against the harlot. Fourth, the effect of the harlot. Then finally we'll wrap up with the beauty of holiness which is our greatest hope in resistance against the harlot.

So let's talk about the symptoms of seeing the harlot. Now, we've said already that to be attracted to the harlot is characterizing a life of refusal to treasure and drink in the waters of life but it has symptoms. I'm just going to name a number of the symptoms and I pray that if perhaps there are any who are experiencing these symptoms and they are related to harlotry, that this would cause a turn, would cause repentance and turning to the Lord. I'm just going to click through a number of them that either are absolutely symptoms of this or they possibly could be. Number 1: staying up late, later and later. Doing things later in the night. Very much like the image that God gave the prophet Ezekiel when he took him by the hair and he lifted him up above the elders of the house of Judah and he saw what the men who were in his house were doing in the darkness of night. Being up late can be a great danger to you. Secondly, wasting time surfing aimlessly. Subject after subject that just strikes your fancy but without clear, direct, righteous motivations. Number 3: openness as evidenced by your eyes wandering. They might wander in different ways. It might be to sort of try to find yourself in harm's way with an Internet connection or a certain place that you might go. Another evidence is spiritual dryness. Another evidence is prayerlessness. Another evidence is listlessness in spiritual things. Another evidence is reduced family discipleship activity.

Does anybody think that there might be a connection between a loss of walking beside your son and discipling him? Or your daughter? And perhaps the distractions that you have in your life in the background that perhaps no one knows about. Does family discipleship somehow find itself tied with a harlot? I think it does. The loss of moral authority when a man can't speak as boldly and clearly to his family and his children and his friends because he too is entrapped. Passivity. Worthlessness. Men who are engaging in worthless things. This is what Solomon meant when he talked that a harlot reduces a man to a loaf of bread. It reduces him to the cheapest thing he can get. The cheapest kind of food out there is bread and it just makes you worthless. It turns you into something as worthless as a loaf of bread. Then there might be deception. You might be one of those people who quickly clicks to close a screen that really is lighting the fires of passion in your life and you are deceptive. It may be when your pastor or your friend asks you how you're doing with this matter and you lie to him about it. If you've lied, you know about that. Faithful pastors really ought to be asking their men about critical matters and often men will lie. Have you lied? What does that mean? This is just one of the symptoms of the problem. Compromise. Masturbation. Considering other relationships. Maybe there is someone you went to high school with and you connected with them on Facebook or something like that and you're on the way to becoming one of those legendary victims that everybody is talking about today. What's the common denominator of a large percentage of divorces today? Facebook relationships from the past. It might have to do with flirting. Is there anyone that you're flirting with? Or is there anyone that you are contacting or texting or emailing or even touching or actual fornication physically or

adultery? These things lead to incest and homosexuality often, not always. But these are just symptoms, symptoms of dealing with the harlot. Symptoms of the refusal to reject it. The symptoms of refusing the sweet and flowing waters of the Lord Jesus Christ. Symptoms of thinking that there's some pleasure in this world that is worthy other than Christ Jesus.

Now, let's talk about technology. Those are some symptoms. Technology is a critical matter. I often get calls from fathers or I have tearful meetings with fathers and it often goes like this: my son is doing his homeschooling on his computer. I thought my computer was bulletproof to access to the Internet or access to unprofitable things. You have this man who thought he took the right precautions. He thought he dealt with the technology in a responsible way and he found out that it didn't work, that the workarounds, worked around and there were exposures that he wasn't aware of. I've received a number of calls like this and so technology is a challenge. We need to talk about technology. I said earlier and I'll say it again: I don't think you fix this problem through technology. I think it is dealt with from the heart. But at the same time, we have to recognize that technology has an impact on us. There are technical issues, there are hurdles. We need to recognize that the world has changed and as the world changes, men have to respond to it. As we take dominion, we have to understand how we take dominion over technology before it takes dominion over us. And we live in a time where technology is changing pretty rapidly. We'll talk about that a little bit more later but I think that we need to recognize the forces that are upon us, that there are a number of technical hurdles that we need to recognize. The problem is not so simply solved from a technological standpoint for the Internet's design, its structure doesn't lend itself to the perfect blocking of objectionable content.

Secondly, all technical solutions can be worked around and if a child is skilled at computers or maybe just determined and wants to find out a method to get around the block, then there is almost nothing that can be done to stop it. The heart that desires evil will find it. That's just a reality that you have to recognize when you're dealing with any kind of technology. Also, in general, a child can install programs on computers and tablets. If they can, they have sufficient privileges that they can get around other protections that you might have in place. Then you have the whole challenge of mobile devices like phones and tablets. These can be very, very difficult. They are different kinds of creatures than personal computers. While personal computers are difficult to create a perfect environment, mobile devices present even greater challenges to that.

Let's talk about some terminology. Let's talk about content-based filtering. These are filters that exclude websites or parts of websites based on requirements that are entered in to process the content. You identify the kind of filtering that you want to have on your computer and these are error prone and they frequently block things that they should not and at they same time, they don't block things that they should. There are some terms, there is the term "blacklists." Those are sites that you don't want anyone to go to. You can blacklist certain sites or you can whitelist them, these are sites that you can go to. You know, one of the problems about blacklisting is that the listing of objectionable content is not always going to fit the biblical standard. It's not going to fit the biblical terminology

that needs to be paid attention to. We've been talking about how important it is that you don't go near her house and you don't let her come to your house. When we think about the Internet and computers, we have to think in terms of that command of Scripture. How do we do that as men and as families?

The idea of filtering is a very biblical idea. I just want us to understand that. Filtering is a very biblical idea. Well, I don't think it's your salvation. It is a biblical idea that you figure into the calculus that you're dealing with in terms of understanding, you know, what your final results are in terms of what you do. I think Philippians 4:8 is one of the most helpful filtering passages of Scripture where the Apostle Paul says, "Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things, the things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me. These do and the God of peace will be with you." There the Apostle Paul gives two things: he says first of all, here is the kind of language that you should use in terms of your filtering of things. Then he says, "You not only have this, you have me as an example. Look at my example. Watch how I was discretionary in the way that I conducted myself." He says, "Listen to what you heard. Look at what you saw in me and do those things." The Apostle Paul holds out both of those things. Filtering is a biblical idea. It's a principle from Scripture that we need to recognize.

There are different kinds of operating systems that have different challenges. Computer operating systems are sort of the background software that tells a computer how it functions and you have laptops and desktop systems but they're different operating systems. You have Apple iOS. My understanding is that the Apple operating system is a little bit easier to get around. That's probably a discussion for somebody a lot more competent than I am. You have Windows operating system. Those have have all kinds of filtering systems that are useful on that platform. You have Linux, you have virtual machines. You have android OS. You have Windows mobile OS. You have operating systems on smart phones and gaming consoles and things like that so you can see how complex it is. When you say that you should figure out how to not let the harlot come to your house, I just listed almost a dozen different ways that the harlot can show up at your house through various kinds of operating systems. So it's not a simple matter to consider.

Recommendations: my opinion is that some of the accountability softwares are really helpful. We use in our office Covenant Eyes. What Covenant Eyes does is it allows you to have a partner and that partner can see where you have gone and if there is objectionable content and vice versa. I think those are helpful and in using those, there have been times I thought, "I don't think I want to click on that. I don't think I want my partner, I know I shouldn't be going there and I don't want my partner knowing that I went there either." And even when we're not even talking about pornographic things, we're just talking about a lot of the lurid garbage that is just generically all over the Internet and it gets thrown up in everybody's face every day. You know, there are just so many places that you can go and one of the more dangerous places that you can go is YouTube. You see some cute, funny, godly even, YouTube clip, some pastor or

something and there are several things on the site that are absolutely despicable and they will take you down into the gutter and flush you down the toilet and that harlot will stab you in the back and put the poison pill in your mouth. That's where it leads.

So there are tremendous dangers but I think things like, you know, there are a number of these softwares: you've got Covenant Eyes; you've got Safe Eyes; there is one called Net Nanny. I don't know anything about those. I'm with some people on Safe Eyes. I'm not an expert in any of these. There are probably a lot of people here that know a lot more about the relative pluses and minuses. Some are advocates of Open DNS, the family shield of functions. It's a solution. It's free and if you set it up on your family router, you can establish passwords and if children have a limited user account, then they can't install things or things like that but here's the deal: it's not foolproof. Maybe someone is far more competent in this matter than I am but from what I understand, nothing is foolproof and I think that's why Solomon in Proverbs 5, 6 and 7 says that the solution is that you love the Lord your God with all of your heart. That is the solution. It's the final solution.

And there are helps that I think we should consider. My view is that computers should be facing the public. That's the way we always did it in our house. We never let computers go into bedrooms and things like that. Maybe they did and I don't know it but in the culture of our family was that you don't do that. You don't take your computer and hang around it alone. You stick it out in front of the whole world so that it can be seen. Again, I don't think that's the final solution either but it's a helpful solution. It does constrain evil and it's a blessing.

I think another matter that should be considered is monitoring communications with your children. First of all, checking histories. Fathers, have you checked the histories? Have you picked up your children's phones randomly and checked? Are they erasing all the places they have gone? Here is my perspective: make it a rule that they cannot erase it. If they erase it, they lose it. Have you checked the histories of your children's computers? Are you checking regularly enough to know what's really going on? How about texting? Do you allow your children to erase their texts? If you do, you're in danger, you really are. You have no idea where your children are going or who are going to your children and what kinds of conversations and what kind of lives they are living in the secret background just like the elders of Judah were leading a secret life in the dark of night. Don't underestimate what that can look like. In our church, we found you should not underestimate what that can look like. There are fathers who get copies of every text and every email that their children send. I don't think that's a bad idea. Let's be very clear about this: you don't owe your children privacy. You don't owe them privacy and if they're offended that you have intruded into their privacy, then you should worry about them because they are not walking in the light. When a child is offended by that, he is not walking in the light. Do you understand that? What's the impact of not walking in the light? Some of the things that we've mentioned.

Let's talk about some strategies. That was technology, kind of a quick, scattergun flyover which was probably not all that helpful, probably more frustrating and discouraging than helpful but that's the situation that we have right now. Strategy: I'd like to just talk about

three parts of the strategy that I think may be helpful. The first part is to adapt; the second is to prioritize; and third is to protect. So let's take those one by one. To adapt and keep adapting. Let's acknowledge that in an era of history where there's kind of a new battle that's being waged. It used to be that you used to have to go and get it, now it goes and gets you. You used to have to go find her, now she is all over your case whenever you open up your computer. The world has changed, brothers. It really has. You can have the most innocent person opening up a personal computer and find the most despicable pornography pop up on it with no passwords, with no money changing hands. It's just right there and if it's not that, it's something that's just a gateway that just clicks you one click at a time to that same despicable place. The world has changed and I think we should just acknowledge that it has changed so much that when you hand yourself or your children a personal computer or a phone, it's the equivalent of handing them perhaps some of the most despicable pornographic material and putting it right in their face because it will pop up in their face. Brothers, we have got to somehow grapple with that.

I'm standing here and I'm giving you my best understanding of how you protect yourself from these matters but let's recognize that things have changed really, really dramatically. That's why adapting and keeping adapting is really critical. Acknowledging that because we're in a new battle, we have to improvise. The battle lines are changing and as the battle lines change, you need to change. Fathers, don't live like you were living in the days of dial-up? There are a lot of fathers that are living like that. They are acting like they're living in the days of dial-up and they don't. Back in those days, the capability was far, far different than it is today. You know, it's interesting, how many of you threw out your TVs some time ago, in the last couple of decades? We had no idea that what would be replaced by those TVs would be far, far more dangerous because throwing out the TV didn't actually fix the problem. The problem just got worse, like by order of magnitude worse. While people say, "Well, we don't have a TV in our house," and they've got six personal computers that are 100 million times worse than a television ever was.

So adapting. Keep adapting. The content will chase you down now and so godly men need to figure out how to keep that content from chasing them down. Thankfully, there are people who have worked on it. There are these various technical helps in the form of accountability software and things like that. I think that's a blessing but it is a battle, it's a lifelong battle. The battle lines are going to change and what we're saying today may be in three or four or five years, we might be saying some different things because the battle lines are always moving. Amen?

Second, prioritize. Again, I just want to make sure we're very clear about this. The most important part of resisting the harlot is the heart condition. The beauty of Jesus Christ in your heart, the adoration of God, the love of his commandments is your most important weapon against all these things. This is why Job said, "I'll make a covenant with my eyes," because he knew that the harlot would show up. He had to make a covenant with God deep within his heart that his eyes would only rest on pure and beautiful things. He had to make a covenant with his eyes. So we have to ask: do you see him as all-beautiful? As all-satisfying? As all-good? Do you love the pure things? Do you walk in your house with a pure heart? You know, Ephesians 5 in the first six verses really helps us to

understand the importance of this. It's really about beholding the Lord and imitating him and banishing all manner of impurity. Ephesians 5:1,

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma."

Again, the Apostle Paul very much like Solomon, he begins with the greatest help to anyone in their battle against impurity. It really is the desire and the longing to imitate God, to walk in love and to be an offering and a sacrifice, a sweet smelling aroma to God, to cherish the perfect offering of Jesus Christ and to desire to be like Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul begins Ephesians 5 in that very same way but then he says in verse 3,

"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you."

Notice what he's saying: fornication, uncleanness and covetousness, those are the things that a man of God must protect himself and his family from. And the world is full of these kind of things. Don't play games with these harlots that are always at your doorstep. My view is that the Christian community is far, far too insensitive to very explicit biblical commands like this one and they let fornication and uncleanness and covetousness come into their houses every day through their personal computers and their video screens and all kinds of things like that. He says, "They shouldn't even be named among you." In other words, you shouldn't look at them to go and get education about how things are. They are not that helpful in education. They are harmful rather and the apostle was explicit about that. But people are so free, they say, "It's only a little unclean. It's only a little covetousness. It's only a little foolish and coarse jesting." He says,

"It's not fitting for the saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

I just want to stand here and say: don't let your friends deceive you with empty words saying that it's okay for you to allow those kinds of things in your homes. They are empty words and they lead to these things that the Apostle Paul is explaining with such perfect clarity. The language is not hard to understand. You don't have to be a rocket theologian to figure out what he's saying.

So this matter of prioritizing holiness and purity in your life and in your family life and recognize that his ways are pleasant ways. The third is to protect. To protect. It's right for fathers to protect. Now, the critical assumption that I am operating under here is that in God's great design for fatherhood, he has called for the father to be a protector. This is an assumption. The purpose of a father among many of the purposes of fatherhood is that of

a protector and God places fathers in the door posts of their house to protect them, to protect those houses from what comes in and for what goes out and God holds the men responsible for that and in that assumption is the whole matter of privacy and your children do not have a right to privacy. They do have from you a responsibility to guard them from seeing things that would light fires, that would start addictions, that would cause love-killing influences to enter into their thinking, that the visualizations that would actually work not only to kill their love but to kill their prosperity, to even kill their reputations in the community. You have a responsibility to protect your family from those things.

Privacy is something we need to consider. We live in a world where everybody thinks that they have a right to their privacy. Well, God doesn't think so. You don't have a private life. God sees everything. There is no such thing as privacy before God and when God lays a mantle of leadership on a father, he lays the mantle of observation upon him that he would look into his flocks, he would observe his flocks and see what's happening there. The Bible says, "Look unto your flocks and see what is happening." Every father has to understand what's going on in his flock and God gives very different sheep into flocks. They are all different but fathers have to be very wise to understand the nuances of what's going on in the flock. If you don't know what's going on in your flock, your flock is in danger and privacy is something that has to do with understanding what's going on in your flock.

Here's another matter of protection: limiting opportunity so that there is government. There should be government of everything. Everything should be used for the glory of God. Everything should be used for the profit of the kingdom of heaven and fathers should be very careful to limit and open opportunity according to proper priorities. I think we should always beware of the unmonitored technology or the unmonitored technology and recognize what that means. Hey, a wise man sees danger and he delivers himself from it. He looks at the various categories of opportunity that are out there and he says, "This is dangerous in this way. That's dangerous in another way." And a father has to be distinctive. He has to think differently. You know, don't be a stupid father who just thinks that everything is just sort of out there and you don't have a responsibility to evaluate the vulnerabilities that are there. You do have a responsibility for it.

I think another matter of protection is talking to your children. Not talking to your children is deadly. I was speaking to a young man recently who had been caught in a terrible fall, a terrible and despicable result of his looking at pornography on his phone for a number of years. He entered and he got deeper and deeper and deeper and it ended in some of the most despicable activities that you can imagine and this is a boy who grew up in a Christian home. I asked him about it the other day. I said, "What have you learned?" He said, "Two things. The first thing is you can't, you cannot touch this without it destroyed you." That's the first thing that he said. The second thing he said was, "You know, I'm not saying this to dishonor my father, I don't want to dishonor my father but my father never one time brought up the subject." He said, "I wish he had." He wasn't using it as an excuse and neither should any boy use that as an excuse but let's just recognize that God gives fathers to sons and daughters in order to speak to them. The

Bible says to speak to your children, ask them questions, be part of their lives, understand what's going on.

I'd like next to talk about the effect of a harlot and I'd like you to open up your Bibles to Ezekiel 34. Now, you'll turn to this passage and you'll say, "What does this have to do with a harlot?" Well, it actually has to do with purity but it has to do with the purity of a shepherd because Ezekiel 34 is addressing shepherds, the shepherds of Israel. Most people believe that when Ezekiel was speaking to these shepherds of Israel, he really was speaking to those who were the jurisdictional leaders of the nation and they could have been those who served in judicial capacities, they could have served in law and many believe that he was really speaking of this, anybody who is involved in shepherding which could include fathers so he's speaking of those who lead, those who have those under them. And every man that has a family is a shepherd in some way so I think in that sense, the principles that are here really do apply. What I want us to understand is that the life of a shepherd has an impact on the sheep. Where the shepherd walks has an effect on the sheep. What the shepherd drinks has an effect on the sheep and so in verse 17 we read,

"And as for you, Oh My flock, thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, as I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture – and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet.'"

What he's saying is the that what the shepherd does with his feet fouls the water that the sheep drink. You get that? Where the shepherd walks and what he does fouls the water and then the sheep drink it.

Then in verse 19 he says,

"And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: 'Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad.'"

Now he's talking about the sheep. The sheep are battering one another, they are pushing one another around. Really, they're acting like their shepherd, that's what's happening to them. The sheep are now acting like their shepherd. The shepherd is fouling the water. They drink the water and as a result, they treat one another poorly and they are butting one another. Like shepherd, like sheep. It's the whole principle that things flow down from the top and don't think for a minute that there is genuine secrecy or confidentiality about what you're doing. It is having an effect on your flock. Where you walk can either foul or purify the waters that your flock is drinking. Where are you walking? You know,

as a pastor, I'm very well aware of this. Where I walk matters. The places that I go with my feet, where I put my feet matters because where I put my feet creates who I am and who I am will either foul or be a source of purity and love and grace. I have got to go to grace. I have got to go to purity. I have got to go to the law of God. I've got to go to the holiness of God. If I don't, I foul the waters for maybe dozens or maybe thousands of people. It doesn't matter, but it's far more than just me and a shepherd has to realize that his life is not about him. It's not about his own life and his own pleasures because God has given him a position in order to be a blessing and it's the same thing with fathers. As it matters where shepherds walk, it matters where fathers walk. Fathers are shepherds and in the same way that you would want me to only walk on the purest pastures and through the very clearest waters, you would only want me to breathe the very best air, you would only want me to eat the very best food, you would not want me to eat pornography. You would not want me to eat worldliness. It would hurt you. You know what it would do to you unless maybe you are a profane person and you would want me to walk there because that's where you want to walk. It does sometimes work that way. But I'm very well aware that I cannot walk anywhere I want and that I have a responsibility before the people of God to only eat in the best pastures and drink in the best waters, to walk on the highway of holiness. I have a responsibility for that and it grieves my heart that the worldliness and the impurity that exists in my soul, the distractions and the foolishness that tempt me every single day, the misuse of everything that I've ever been given in some way and not only for me but also the people that are around me, particularly my wife, particularly my children and my grandchildren, particularly the church at Hope Baptist Church and the people that I have connections with around the nation. It matters where I walk and, brothers, it matters where you walk. I pray that you don't think for one second that you are any different than I am, that it matters even one sliver any differently than where I walk compared to where you walk. All of us are priests in the kingdom of heaven under the New Covenant. We have all become a kingdom of priests and because of that, your life is no different than mine in many, many ways.

So we have to recognize this very important issue of the effect of the harlot. You may think that things are being done in secret but they're not because where you walk will always foul the water of those that are in your flock. Be very careful where you walk. Walk on the king's highway. Do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly but walk in the ways of the Lord. Walk in the pleasant ways. Walk on the highway of holiness. Like Psalm 101 says, "Walk in your house with a clean heart and set no unclean thing before your eyes."

You know, I was reading along with some young men just the other day, Proverbs 25, "A righteous man who falters before the wicked is like a murky spring and a polluted well." A righteous man who falters before the wicked. I'll just change up the language a little bit: a man who claims to be a Christian who finds himself among the fellowship of believers, when he falters before that wicked harlot who comes after him day-by-day, when he falters, he is like a murky spring and a polluted well. His feet foul the waters and he creates a murky spring and a polluted well. Don't think for a minute that these things done in private are really private. They're not private. They are certainly not private before God but guess what? They are being felt by those around you. Brothers, could we

walk in the clean streams? Could we eat only the purest and best of bread? Could we only rest our eyes on the things that are full of light? That's the kind of life that God is calling us to and we as shepherds need to recognize how important it is that we do that and that we do not muddy the waters of those who drink after us.

Finally, I just want to remind us of the beauty of holiness and the ugliness of impurity. I'm reminded of Psalm 27, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." Beholding the beauty of the Lord, longing to see the beauty of the Lord is without question your greatest weapon against the woman who comes to you with her beautiful looks and her poison pill and her dagger that she will put in your back.

Just this week, I sent something to our church that John Piper wrote that I think bears on this and I'm going to read it. He titled it "Is my boyfriend's porn a marriage deal breaker?" Here's what he writes in answer to that question, "Porn is destructive to a man's capacities to love a woman purely for herself. He is training his body to need increasingly different strange erotic situations and bodies and he is making it harder to be content with the real body of the woman that is going to be offered to him as his wife. And her body is at its best, is not going to be the airbrushed body of pornographic sites and when she is 50, it isn't going to be that either. And if he hasn't cultivated a kind of pure love for his wife, for herself as she is, then his eyes are going to be cruising continually beyond what she has to offer him at age 40 and 50 and 60. A woman needs to be able to trust a man. A woman feels profoundly compromised when a man says to her, 'No, I really need more than you can offer me.' That is tragic for a man to say to a woman. So porn is destructive to his capacity to love her for who she is and here is the fourth and last thing I will say why it is wrong for a man to do this: porn is destructive to a man's soul. His capacity to see God in the purity and the greatness of his glory is shriveled. It is compromised. The soul shrinks to the size and the quality of his pleasures." The soul shrinks to the size and the quality of his pleasures. This really is the heart of the matter. What does a man find pleasurable? What does a man find beautiful? What does a man find alluring if it is not God in his holiness, the beauty of Jesus Christ, the goodness of his kingdom and the value of a soul saved by grace. I pray that God would give us great hunger for holiness. I think that is the greatest antidote to the poison.

Would you pray with me?

Lord, all of us here are very vulnerable to the times that we live in. We live in a present age in which the temptations are constant like never before and, O Lord, I pray that you protect these men. I pray you protect me. That you would give us such a longing and a hunger and a hope for pure things. Amen.

