DANGEROUS ATTRACTION
HE SAID WHAT?!
Matthew 5:27-30 // Craig Smith
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CRAIG: Welcome to Mission Hills. Let me tell you something about what I always want from the way we do church. I tell our guest services team this a lot. I want people to be comfortable enough here with the way we do church that they can be made uncomfortable with the truth. So, I hope you’re comfortable, because it’s about to get uncomfortable. If you got a Bible, I’m gonna ask you to turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew. We’ll be picking up our study in Matthew 5:27, and we’re gonna find some uncomfortable truth here, but it’s important truth. This is what Jesus says, chapter 5, verse 27,

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28)

Anybody uncomfortable yet? If you’re not, it’s because you don’t know what lust is, and that’s the first place we need to start. We need to make sure we understand what Jesus means by lust. Because here’s the thing, I think we have a tendency to think about lust as sort of, like, it’s like attraction on steroids, and so when we think about lust, we think, you know, if somebody’s got their tongues hanging out and they’re panting, right? And because of that, we have a tendency to go, “Well, that’s definitely something other people struggle with.” But, biblically, the concept of lust is it’s a little bit more personal. It hits home a little quicker, and maybe the best way to think about lust is actually to think about a very literal translation.

This is one of those places where a very literal translation, what Jesus says here, is helpful. Because what Jesus literally says this, he says, “Everyone looking at a woman with the intent to desire her,” with the intent to desire. Notice he doesn’t say with the intent to commit adultery. He says with the intent to desire her. In other words, he says everyone who’s looking at a woman for the purpose of feeling attraction to her. Really, what he’s talking about here is what I would call entertaining attraction. And then that’s a little bit more personal way to deal with it, right? Because, again, lust, we can go, “Well, yeah, that’s this big thing, and I don’t deal with that,” but this idea of of allowing ourselves to entertain an attraction to somebody, that’s a little closer to home. But what Jesus is really doing is he’s warning us about the danger of entertaining attraction to anyone other than your spouse. And in the same way we saw last week where he said, you know, “Murder is just the last stop on a road of devaluing other human beings.” What he’s saying today is adultery is just the last stop on a road of allowing ourselves to entertain an attraction to somebody other than our spouse, and God doesn’t want us to just stop short of that last stop on the road. He wants us on an entirely different path. So, again, Jesus’s warning us about the danger of allowing ourselves to entertain an attraction to anybody other than our spouse. Okay, but what does that mean? What does it mean to entertain attraction?

Well, one of the things I think we have to understand is that entertaining attraction is different than experiencing attraction. We don’t necessarily have a lot of control over when that we experience an attraction. It’s what we do with that experience. It’s how we handle it that becomes the issue. I mean, in very simplistic terms, it’s the difference between going, “Yeah. You know what? She’s gorgeous,” “He’s a good-looking guy, and I’m gonna change seats so that I can get a good look at that gorgeous person right there.” That’s where we begin to entertain attractions, where we begin to make an intentional decision to allow that attraction to rest, to find a place in us and to begin to do its work. I mean, this is probably a pretty good rule of thumb. When it comes to entertaining attraction, the first step is often the second look. Does that make sense? When It comes to entertaining attraction, the first step is often the second look. It’s that moment where we decide to take the second look. Or maybe, honestly, maybe sometimes it’s the decision to get the first look. It’s when you pick your seat at the Nuggets game based on where you know the cheerleaders are gonna be doing their stuff, or it’s when you tune in to a particular show because you want to see that guy or you want to see that woman. And you might tell yourself, “Well, it’s about the plot. The characters are so great,” but the reality is, if we’re honest with ourselves, and actually I kinda wanna get another look at him or her.
Entertaining attraction is what the Bible means by lust. And while lust might feel like a big thing that we can kinda distance ourselves from, this business of entertaining attraction is something that we all have to deal with. And what Jesus is trying to help us understand is that whenever we make a choice to entertain attraction, we’re on a dangerous road. Whenever we make the choice to entertain attraction, no matter how innocent it might seem to take that second look and to begin just sort of, like, just entertaining it ever so slightly, He says, “You’re on a dangerous road.” And we all know that the end result of that road might be adultery, but all along the way it begins to do its damage. It reminds me of a story that I heard. I think I probably heard it when I was a kid growing up in church, and I know I used it as a youth pastor. It’s a story of a man down in South America who was given the job of disposing of an x-ray machine, and so they loaded the old x-ray machine in his pickup truck, and he drove to the place where it was gonna be disposed of. And it was rough roads, and so, you know, everything was kinda bouncing around a lot, and as he was driving over these rough roads and this x-ray machine was bouncing around, part of it kinda broke open, and these little ball bearings slipped out of the machine. They’d been part of one of the swivel mechanisms, and they spilled into the bed of this truck, and when he got to the dump site and he got rid of the thing, he didn’t think much about those balls, so he drove back to his village.

And the little kids in the village found those little balls, and they were a lot of fun to play with, because they were attractive, you know, they were pretty, they were shiny, they were round, they had a nice weight to them. That was fun to deal with, but what they didn’t know was that the working in the x-ray machine over the years had made those little balls radioactive. And so they played with these things thinking there’s no harm in this until several years later the cancer rates in that village just went through the roof. What they thought was innocent actually was incredibly harmful, and Jesus is dealing with the same kind of thing here. He’s dealing with this business of entertaining attraction that, we honestly, we allow ourselves to do on a pretty regular basis without giving a second thought, because we don’t recognize the kind of damage that it’s doing. And what Jesus says is, “Listen, I don’t want you to just stay off the last stop on that road. Don’t just, you know, draw your journey to an end abruptly.” He says, “I don’t want you on that path at all.” Because whenever we make a choice to entertain attraction, we’re walking a dangerous road. And I realize that on some level, what I’m saying here, it feels a little daunting, right? Because we go, “Yeah, I think I can avoid committing adultery,” but like avoiding the second look, never allowing myself to entertain any attraction at all, that’s a whole lot harder, and it’s okay if you’re feeling that it’s harder, because as part of what Jesus is doing here, as we said last week throughout this whole section, what Jesus does is basically three things.

He gives us an Old Testament commandment in order to clarify the spirit of that Law. With murder, He said, “The spirit is that we would be the kind of people who always remember and treat others with the value that they deserve as the image of God.” Here He says that the Law against adultery, the spirit of the Law was really about learning to live, refusing to entertain attraction to anybody but the spouse that God’s provided to us. So Jesus clarifies the Law but the second thing he does is that he demonstrates that living out the spirit of the Law is impossible without transformation, that this isn’t a question of something that we can just do by trying harder, that something has to change inside us. We have to become different kinds of people, and to become the kinds of people that the Law is pointing us towards, only God can accomplish it. He has to come in, and we have to give Him the space to do what we cannot do to transform us from the inside out. And so Jesus doesn’t say, “Hey, Listen, you can’t ever entertain attraction, and that’s all on you.” He says, “Listen, that’s the direction I’m moving you.” But, as we said last week, when we begin to look to God to do this transforming work, there’s several ways that we can respond to it. One way is that we can resist it. We can resist that work that God’s doing. We can hold on to something, and in this case, you know, maybe we hold on to pornography. We hold on to an attraction to somebody at work. We hold on to a TV show. We hold on to any number of things, and we go, “I’m just not ready to let go of this,” but we need to understand that what we’re doing at that point is we’re resisting the work that God is trying to do in us. There’s another stage, and at the very least we need to get to this point, and that’s where we stop resisting, where we look at that stuff and we call it what it is. We call it sin, and we go, “I’m not holding on to that anymore. I’m not gonna allow this to chain me to where I am when I know that God’s trying to move me down this road.” But there’s another stage, too, that we ought to be moving towards,
and that is where we not only stop resisting but where we actually start moving in the direction that God is looking to move us. We actually begin cooperating to His work by moving in the same direction. And what Jesus does throughout the section is he gives us some very practical advice about what it looks like to begin moving in the direction that he’s calling us to move. And so here he gives us some very practical advice about avoiding this temptation to entertain attraction.

He says this, “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.” Yup. “It’s 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, throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matthew 5:29-30)

It’s hard to imagine anything more practical than that, right?

So, as a support to today’s message, we set up a surgical booth out in the lobby, and I think most people understand that Jesus’s speaking figuratively here. But here’s the thing, I think most people think that Jesus’s speaking figuratively rather than literally, because they’re just really, really hoping that he’s not being literal, right? We actually do a little bit better than that. We can actually speak to why we have confidence that Jesus is not speaking literally. The first reason we know Jesus doesn’t literally want us to cut off body parts or gouge out eyes is that that wouldn’t solve the problem. Doing this wouldn’t solve the problem. You can still entertain attraction. You can still lust after somebody with just one eye. You can still commit adultery with just one hand. Jesus talks about the right hand, the right eye, because that’s kinda considered by most cultures to be the dominant side of the body, so what he’s basically saying is, “Listen, get rid of the part of you, even the one that you use the most in order to avoid this thing,” but what we recognize is that literally doing that doesn’t actually solve the problem. Honestly, if we got rid of both eyes, we could still remember, we could still lust. Even if we got rid of both hands, we could still commit adultery. This wouldn’t solve the problem. The second way we know that Jesus didn’t mean this literally is that Jesus didn’t require physical mutilation for people caught in sexual sin. Jesus spent a fair amount of time interacting with people who were guilty of sexual sin. He interacted with prostitutes.

He interacted with people caught in adultery immediately, and yet he never required any of their hands to be cut off, their eyes to be gouged out. Third reason we know he didn’t mean this literally is that the Bible actually prohibits physical mutilation. In the Book of Leviticus, there’s specific commandments that say you will not cut your body, you won’t maim yourself. And there’s also plenty stories of pagan tribes that worship their gods and goddesses by maiming themselves in various ways, and the Bible always speaks dismissively of that. So we know that Jesus didn’t mean this literally. The question is then why use such strong language? And the answer is Jesus uses this incredibly strong language because he loves you. He loves you too much to allow you to find yourself walking down a road that even if you never get all the way to the end of it will cause more damage along the way than you can even begin to realize. He loves you too much to allow that to happen, and the reality is that what Jesus is saying is this is so damaging, you gotta wake up. You gotta wake up. We play around with this stuff all the time, and we think nothing about it, and all along the way it is causing damage to us that we don’t even see. I mean, entertaining attraction to people other than our spouses, there’s a number of different kinds of things. One of them is that it destroys our relationships. Entertaining attraction destroys our relationships. You know, it creates standards that our spouses can’t live up to.

If we take it all the way to the extreme, obviously, adultery, it destroys marriages, and there’s almost certainly people in here in this room that have seen marriages destroyed by adultery. It creates a dissatisfaction with the spouses that God’s provided to us. It creates, you know, a lack of intimacy in those marriages. It destroys our relationships. Here’s the other thing, though, is that entertaining attraction also damages us. It damages us personally. It does something to us spiritually, psychologically, mentally, emotionally. This was brought home to me really vividly several years ago. I had a young man who was in my life. I was his youth pastor back east. He loved Jesus. He was in the process of going into ministry, and so he actually came out to Colorado, and he served as an intern at my last church. And not long after the internship, he just kinda fell off the map. He sort of went out of contact and took me a while to re-establish contact, and when I did, I heard just what’s really a heartbreaking story. What he told me was, “I got into pornography.” And not just got into it, he didn’t just dabble. He said, “I got deep into it. I
became obsessed with it. It became the thing that my life revolves around.” But he said something I’ll absolutely never forget. It’s heartbreaking as all the other stuff was. This probably hurt the worst to hear. He said, “And I woke up one day and I realized what had it done to me.” He said, “I realized I have lost my capacity to give and receive love.”

He said, “I no longer have the capacity to give love to others or to receive love from others.” He said, “It’s like there’s a receptor in me that’s been burned out.” It’s not just what it does to our relationships, it’s what it does to us. Entertaining attraction damages us, and at the end of the day, too, entertaining attraction, it drives us away from God, okay? Because here’s the thing, you cannot embrace sin and Jesus. You cannot embrace sin and Jesus. It’s just not possible. Hear me, I’m not saying that you can’t sin and embrace Jesus, because we all sin, we all fall short of the glory of God, but there’s a huge difference between going, “I know what this thing is that I’m doing. This is sin, and I’m sorry that I did it. Please forgive me.” And the blood of Jesus has purchased our forgiveness, and as long as we confess our sin, He’s faithful and He is just to forgive us. It is entirely possible to sin and embrace Jesus. What I’m saying is that it is not possible to embrace sin and Jesus, to say, “I am going to hold on to this. I’m gonna do it regardless of what God says.” You can’t embrace sin and Jesus, and Jesus says very clearly, “It’s not just adultery, it’s this business of entertaining an attraction to anyone other than your spouse.” It is sin, and you cannot embrace that and Jesus, and so ultimately it drives us away from Jesus. And so he uses this really dramatic language. He uses this, an incredibly dramatic language, to say, “Listen, here’s what you’re gonna have to do. You’re gonna have to take some radical steps.”

You have to take radical steps to stay off this path of entertaining attraction. That’s the hand and the eye language. That’s the being thrown into hell language. He’s saying you gotta wake up. You have to take radical steps to stay off this path of entertaining attraction to anybody other than your spouse. Okay, but if that doesn’t mean cutting off hands and gouging out eyes, what does that mean? What does it look like to take those kinda radical steps? I’m gonna give a few examples of what that might look like, and I’m gonna phrase them for three different groups of people, for married men, for married women and for unmarried men and women, which I think covers everybody. Yeah. And it may be that what God calls you to do in terms of radical step may look a little differently than this. It might be to take this step and another step or a different kind of step. This is something that you and the Holy Spirit have to wrestle with, but you need to listen to the Holy Spirit, because this is serious business. But I want us to be thinking in the right direction, and so I’m gonna give some examples of what this looks like it. And we’ll start with married men. And I’m just gonna go ahead and deal with the elephant in the room, because the number one temptation to be entertaining attraction for somebody other than our wives in our culture is pornography. It is rampant in our culture. Unfortunately, it is rampant in the church.

And I’m not gonna say anything different about pornography than you probably already know. My guess is there’s nobody here today going, “I think pornography could be a good thing.” Like, I don’t need to convince you of that, so I’m not gonna say anything radical about pornography itself, but I am gonna be radically clear. I’m gonna say this as clear as I possibly can. Pornography is poison, and it has no place in your life. Is that clear enough? Pornography is poison, and it has no place in your life. It will destroy your relationships. It will destroy you. It will drive you away from Jesus. And, again, that’s probably not new. Maybe it’s a little blunt, or maybe it’s a little clearer than you’ve heard it, but it’s not new, and yet the reality is as much as we know that there are men here that are absolutely caught trapped drowning in a sea of pornography. I know that, because it’s true in our churches across the country, and I’m telling you you’ve got to take radical steps to get it out of your life. And, honestly, it’s not even just technical pornography. That might be where you’re struggling, but you can’t just go, “Hey, I don’t look at those websites. I don’t have the Playboy Channel.” You also have to deal with the fact that there’s a lot of media that does really the same kind of thing. It moves us to entertaining attraction. It may just be your Netflix account, and I’ll tell you what I have to do. I have to constantly check myself when I go, “Yeah, I wanna watch that show, or I wanna watch that series.”

I have to ask myself the question, “Why do I wanna watch that show or that series?” Because it’s real easy to convince yourself, “Man, the character development is just awesome.” I like when things explode, which I do, but it’s really easy for that stuff to become a smokescreen for, “I actually wanna watch that show because of her. I just wanna see her a little bit more.” You just gotta call that what it is. That is entertaining attraction. And, honestly, it may not even be media. I mean, it can be the gym,
can be the women at the gym. I work out a 24-hour fitness over here just off of Broadway, and I know the importance of not entertaining attraction, and so I find myself when I go in I kinda know which machine I wanna workout, and I have to scan the room and go, “Who else is around me?” I am not gonna be working out over there today, because I know the temptation that there’s gonna be to take a second look. You might go, “Wow, that’s a lot of work.” Yeah, it is, but Jesus says you gotta take radical steps to stay off this road of entertaining attraction to anybody over your spouse, other than your spouse. All right, let’s make the women uncomfortable. Men are uncomfortable enough. Let’s go for the women. Honestly, there’s a whole bunch of women here going, “This is not an issue for us.” Yeah, it is. It may look a little different. Man, and I realize that a lot of women go, you know, “Pornography is not really a problem for women,” but actually it is.

Pornography use among women is definitely on the rise. In fact, a recent study shows that, for women under 40, 65% of women under 40 say that they use pornography at least a couple of times a year. Okay, so just because traditionally, you know, it’s men that have been attracted to pornography doesn’t mean that women don’t have to listen to what I just said to the men. You may be here today going, “Actually that’s a problem for me,” and you need to do exactly what I said about men needing to do. But I wanna go a little bit of a different direction, because traditionally at least, and I think it’s often still the case, that the on-ramp for entertaining attraction to somebody other than your husband has been a little different for women, because, you know, for men, the on-ramp, it’s often visual. For women, the on-ramp is often relational. It’s not so much about what a guy looks like as it is how he acts. Seeing a lot of nods actually. And you know what that means? It means that there is a female equivalent to the Playboy Channel. You know what it is? It’s the Hallmark Channel. It’s Nicholas Sparks movies. Because I hear it all the time from women, “Pornography, it just creates these ridiculous standards,” you know, “My husband watches this. My sons watch this. The men around me, they watch this stuff, but the reality is that real women don’t look like that.” And it’s true.

But I see this stuff that shows up on the Hallmark Channel, and I go, “Real men don’t act like that.” Because those guys, they’re always romantic, they’re always ready for a soul-searching conversation, they always have just the right thing to say, Yeah, because they got a team of women writers writing their dialogue. But you see what happens is a very similar thing, and I know it is funny, and I intend it to be that, but I also intend the humor there to actually just communicate some truth, because it does a very similar thing for women, and I’ve seen this after 24 years in pastoral ministry quite a bit. What happens is women begin to go, “I wish my husband were like, fill in the blank, that guy,” and that’s the same thing. It’s entertaining an attraction. And, honestly, it may not even be the Hallmark Channel or Nicholas Sparks movies. It might be one of your friend’s husbands, or it might be that guy at work or that guy at the gym. That moment you begin to go, “I wish my husband were like, fill in the blank, that guy,” and you’ve begun to walk that road of entertaining attraction to somebody other than your husband. So, here’s what I think is a pretty good rule of thumb for women, it’s this, “Never compare what you don’t know about those men to what you do know about your man.” That makes sense? Never compare what you don’t know about those guys to what you do know about your guy, because, see, what happens is we just see snapshots of people in the media, we see snapshots of people at the gym, we see snapshots.

We see people kind of at their best, and then we assume they’re always like that, but my guy isn’t. I got news for you, neither is that guy. Neither is that guy. We just see the best. We see these fake images, and I’m not saying that there’s no truth to them at all, but the reality is that nobody can be like...and even if you got rid of your guy and you got that guy, there’s a pretty good chance that guy is gonna turn out to be somebody you really are disappointed by. Because reality is we’re all a whole lot messier, but entertaining attraction creates a dissatisfaction with the relationships God has given us. So women, you, too, you’ve gotta take radical steps to avoid that. Now, one other thought, and that is if you’re a single guy or girl, there’s two different reasons why you might be a single guy or girl, okay? One reason is that you’re too young to get married. The other reason is because you’re old enough to be married, but for whatever reason God has not provided you with a spouse yet, okay? And what I’m gonna say to both of you is basically the same thing, and it’s this, you need to live now in a way that will foster any healthy marriage God gives you in the future. You need to be living right now in a way that will prepare you to thrive in a marriage that God gives you in the future, which means that a lot of what I’ve said to the married men and women really holds true for you as well. You can’t be entertaining an attraction to somebody in a way that will actually create dissatisfaction when God gives you a spouse. You can’t.
Now, there is one difference, and that is, if you are unmarried, it’s okay to entertain an attraction to a potential spouse. It’s okay to entertain attraction to a potential spouse. Because here’s the thing, like, if you never give anybody a second look, you’re probably never gonna get a first date, okay? So it’s okay to entertain an attraction to a potential spouse, but that potential spouse phrase is really important, because what happens right now is people who are unmarried, they’re entertaining attractions to all kinds of people who are not potential spouses. You see that girl on that show or that guy on this program, and you entertain that attraction, but here’s the thing, you’re never gonna get those people. I’m sorry to burst your bubble. It’s never gonna happen. And, quite honestly, even if you got them, you probably wouldn’t be happy that you did. You can’t be entertaining an attraction to somebody who’s not a potential spouse. But, yeah, it’s okay to begin in a healthy way entertaining an attraction to a potential spouse, but even there, you can’t allow that entertaining attraction to go to sexual thoughts, and you can’t allow it to go to sexual behavior certainly. And, again, I’m trying to keep this PG today, but still I wanna speak truth, and, unfortunately, this truth doesn’t seem to have any place in our society today. Sex is good. God invented it. God is not capable of inventing something that is not good, but all good things are only good as long as they’re kept inside the context in which they’re intended to be enjoyed, and that context for sex is marriage.

Sex outside of marriage is not only not good, it’s damaging, and study after study shows the reality of that. So it’s not just what the Bible teaches us, it’s what we see confirmed over and over again in our everyday experience. So, as a single person, you’re absolutely able to entertain an attraction to a potential spouse, but there are limits to it. And, at the end of the day, whether you’re a married man, a married woman or a single guy or girl, you have to deal with the same reality, and that is that Jesus says, “You can’t entertain an attraction to anybody but the spouse that I provided you.” So, two questions for you, two questions to wrestle with this week. Question number one, “Where am I most tempted to entertain an attraction to anyone but my spouse?” That’s where it starts. We have to recognize the places where we’re most tempted to walk onto that road and begin walking down it. Maybe it’s at work. Maybe it’s in church. Maybe it’s your Netflix account. Maybe it’s websites that you visit. I mean, there may be any number of places, but you gotta wrestle with the question, “Where am I most tempted to entertain an attraction to somebody other than the spouse that God has provided?” Question number two is, “What steps do I need to take to stay off that path, that path of entertaining attraction?” Jesus calls us to take radical steps if that’s what’s required, because it’s that important that we stay off that path. I’ll tell you about a radical step for me.

I decided really early on in my marriage that I understood what Jesus was teaching here and that I wasn’t gonna damage my marriage, I wasn’t gonna damage my relationship with my wife by entertaining attraction to anybody else, and so we made this pact together where we actually tell each other if we’re finding ourselves attracted to somebody else, which happens occasionally. Again, there’s a difference between experiencing attraction and entertaining it, which means that, and this is full honest disclosure, there have been a couple times in my marriage that I’ve had to go to my wife and go, “I’m feeling an attraction to this person.” It’s not like it happens every week, just so you know, but we’ve had that conversation. And I know a bunch of you are going, “Okay, that is probably too radical. That would not go well in my marriage.” I understand that, but I’m gonna suggest that actually suggests that your marriage needs some work, because I can tell you there is nobody who is able to hold me accountable better than my wife. And if I can’t trust my wife with what I’m struggling with, that says that I need to dig in and I need to do some more more work with my wife. So, yeah, we’ve had this conversation. She’s told me a couple times, so she said that that’s a radical step, and you may find yourself here today going, “I don’t think my marriage is quite ready for that. I’m not sure it could handle that.” Okay. Then do what’s necessary to get your marriage to the point that it could.

It might take some work before you get to that point, but maybe you go, “That would be a hard conversation to have, but I think our marriage could take it,” in which case, that’s your radical step. If that’s a little too radical, I’ll give you a slightly easier one. We actually brought in some resources this weekend, and I’m gonna encourage you to pick one up before you leave today. For men, we’ve got a book called “Every Man’s Battle.” You may have heard of it, fantastic resource. It will help you unpack, not only the importance of what we’re talking about, but some potential steps that you need to take to stay away from this temptation to entertain attraction for somebody you shouldn’t be entertaining it with. So I’d love for you guys to pick up one of those books. We actually have a female version of that book called “Every Woman’s Battle.” It deals with some of what I’ve talked about, which is the on-ramp to entertaining attraction’s often different for women than for men, and it gives some radical steps to begin putting
into practice in your life to keep you from getting onto that road. If you're under 18, there's actually a youth version of both of those, so “Every Young Man’s Battle” and “Every Young Woman’s Battle.” And so maybe the radical step that you take today is actually just to pick up one of those books and begin putting into practice what it teaches you, and you go, “Well, that’s not really a very radical step, but I understand that it absolutely could be.”

Because if you go out there and you actually buy one of those books, you’re gonna be going, “There’s lots of people watching me.” And that sounds scary, and I know it sounds scary, but maybe that’s the radical step that you need to take. And let me tell you something, listen, going and buying one of those books does not say to me that you have failed in this area, that’s not what it says to me. What that says to me, if I see anybody buying that book, what it says to me is this is a person who refuses to fail in this unbelievably important area. I don’t know if you’re struggling with that at that point. What it tells me if you buy a book is you are not willing to fail in this, and I’m proud of you for doing that. Besides that, you’re probably buying it for a friend anyway, right? Pick one of those books up on the way out. That’s your radical step. But actually, at the end of the day, what Jesus is telling here is an incredibly simple but profound truth, and here’s probably the way I would say. If you remember nothing else from this weekend, here’s what I hope you take home and take to heart. Entertaining attraction stirs up dissatisfaction with God’s provision. You hear me? Allowing ourselves to entertain attraction, it stirs up dissatisfaction with God’s provision. It stirs up dissatisfaction with the man or the woman that God has put into your life as a blessing. You cannot walk that road. It’s not just about stopping the journey short of the final stop. It’s not refusing to walk that road at all.

It’s about refusing to allow our entertaining attraction to make us dissatisfied with God’s provision. Before we close today, I do wanna say one other thing. This is that I know many of you are gonna walk out of here feeling convicted, and if that's all it is, then that’s the work of the Holy Spirit, and I’m glad for that. But I also know that many of you are gonna hear what’s being said today, and you’re gonna walk out of here feeling a tremendous burden of guilt, because you’re going, “I have failed in this area. I have screwed up. I have done this, and I’m experiencing the damage,” even if you’re not experiencing in the relationship, you can see the beginnings of those bitter seeds growing. And I want you to hear something very clearly today. I do not want anybody walking out of here feeling guilty. Convicted, yes. Convicted, moving to change, absolutely, but guilty, no, because God loves you. No matter how many times you may have failed in this area, God loves you. His Son came to forgive you, and I want you also to hear, in addition to the fact that God loves you, I want you to hear that you cannot do enough damage that God cannot redeem it. No matter how much damage you may have done to yourself, to your relationship, it’s never beyond God’s redemption, and I don’t want you to walk out here feeling guilty. I want you to experience freedom today. I want you to be set free from the bonds of pornography or whatever other way it is that you find yourself entertaining attraction to somebody other than God’s provision.

I want you to be free today. I want you to experience the joy that comes from being free from the sin and being reoriented to the life that God’s intended you to live all along. And I want you to know that that’s possible, and it’s exactly what God wants to do in your life today. Would you pray with me? Jesus, we understand your word. It’s pretty clear. We understand that we have no business walking a road where we find ourselves entertaining an attraction to anybody but the spouse that you provided to us. But some of us are here today, and we need to say we’re sorry, and so we say it to you right now. From our hearts, we say we’re sorry, and we ask for your forgiveness. We receive your mercy, and your grace and your forgiveness. Lord, let your mercy and your grace invade our souls today, not only cleansing us from our guilt and from our sin, but setting us free from its chains, setting us free to live a whole new kind of life right now and from this day forward. Jesus, we thank you for your death on the cross that we know accomplishes our forgiveness, but not just forgiveness, also this hope of new life, and not only in eternity, but right here, right now. Lord God, would you give us strength through the power of your Holy Spirit to root out these sinful entertaining attractions? Would you make us new today? Would you change us from the inside out? We thank you knowing that you rejoice to do exactly that. In Jesus’ name. Amen.