

“The Sexual Captive” // John 4:1–24; John 8:1–11 // *Can’t Believe (Gospel of John)*

Announce:

Small groups... are not the only form, but one of the primary forms, of discipleship at the Summit Church. It’s a great way to put your spiritual growth into overdrive (we believe that real discipleship always happens in relationships); small groups are one of our primary vehicles for mission, here; plus, it’s a great way to get to know people—to make this big church feel smaller.

We have over 300 small groups going here at the Summit Church, and we are launching 56 brand new one *this weekend*. So get into one of them. Otherwise we are going to have 56 awkwardly empty homes next week.

Introduction:

We have begun a series called “Can’t Believe” in which we are looking at **7 kinds of people who can’t believe**. All of them are found in the Gospel of John. “**Believing**” is a major theme of the Gospel of John. The word occurs 99 times in the book.

Some of these people *couldn’t* believe because they had blind spots or a secret prejudice; some because they had difficult questions; some of them wanted to believe but, for whatever reason, just felt like they couldn’t. We’re going to see how Jesus engaged each of them. In the coming weeks we’re going to talk about the **distracted**; the **hurt and disappointed**; the **coward**; the **skeptic**; and the **moral failure**, just to name a few.

This week, we’re going to discuss those who can’t believe because they are sexual captives. (And by “sexual captive” I am not referring to the sex-trade, as evil as that is, I am referring to people who are so captivated by their sexual lusts that it keeps them from entering into, or even considering, the Lordship of Jesus. Or, those held captive by the sexual mistakes of their past such that they feel like they can no longer come to Jesus—they are too damaged; too far gone.

Jesus deals with this group at least twice in John; we’re going to look quickly at both stories.

But let me just say—of all the stories we’re going to look at over the next several weeks, this one seems the most relevant to our culture:

- I’ve read that there are two main reasons people lose their faith in college. The #2 reason is the problem of evil—if there is a good God, why is there such pain in the world? (and we’ll deal with that in a few weeks), but the #1 reason why people depart the faith in college is a desire for sexual freedom.
 - If what you want to do conflicts with your beliefs, you can either live as a hypocrite or change your beliefs! Many in our culture have opted for the latter.
 - **How this for interesting: Aldous Huxley**, the philosopher who coined the term “agnostic” 75 years ago, said, *“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning... For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation... liberated from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom... There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our... erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever.” – Aldous Huxley*
- **Furthermore, we have what anyone would have to conclude is a cultural obsession with sex:** I don’t mean just that people enjoy it; of course... but, we’re obsessed with it.

- **You see this in the supermarket aisle, can't you?** Seems like every magazine has "10 ways to drive your man wild," "30 ways to shake your bed across the floor." Even magazines that have nothing to do with romance, like *Field and Stream*: "How to get your girl in the blind."
- Then there's the shocking success of books like "*50 Shades of Gonorrhea/Grey*." Barnes and Noble released a report to their shareholders last month saying that the foot traffic in their stores had increased substantially in the last 4 months, credited to 1 book: *Fifty Shades of Grey*.
- It's a trilogy, *50 Shades of Grey*; *50 Shades of Gross*; and *Fifty Shades of Gonorrhea*. The trilogy right now dominates the #'s 1, 2, and 3 spots on the *NYT Bestseller's List*, and it is what writers at CNN and the *New York Times* have both called, essentially, "mommy porn."¹

There is nothing that will destroy your faith and dull your spiritual appetites faster than captivity to sexual lusts.

- Now, let me start off by making clear that God is the Creator of sex. He designed it. He wasn't surprised by how much we liked it. He designed it that way. It is a good gift given to his children for their enjoyment and his glory.
- But all of his gifts can go wrong. And the greater the gift, the more capacity it has for damage.

So, let's look at how Jesus dealt with two people for whom sex had gone terribly wrong, and done all kinds of damage. Both of them happen to be women.

John 4:4 And he had to pass through Samaria. [5] So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [6] Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as

he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. [7] A woman from Samaria came to draw water.

- **A little context here...** The Samaritans were a small, hated community of people in Israel. The animosity stretched back to a conflict nearly 1000 years prior. The Northern part of Israel had seceded from the South, and they went their separate way and grew really unfaithful to God. So, in 722 B.C. God punished them by allowing the Assyrians to conquer them.
 - Now, in those days, when you conquered a people, you didn't want them repopulating themselves and rising up against you to avenge their parents, so what they would do was twofold: 1. They would carry off the majority people into exile, where they would make them slaves and concubines, causing them to lose any distinct culture identity; And 2. They would send a bunch of their people into the conquered land to mix with the remnant left there to do the same thing.
 - Well, the Northern kingdom of Israel didn't resist this integration at all; they freely embraced the Assyrians, marrying them and integrating their culture and religion into their Judaism. They became the Samaritans.
 - So, the Southern kingdom of Israel, which thought of themselves as the only real Israel left, viewed the Samaritans as compromisers and half-breeds.
- Well, around 100 B.C. a renegade Jew named Manasseh defected to Samaria and established new places of worship around some ancient historic sites in Samaria, places like Jacob's well, claiming the Jewish temple was corrupt. So the Samaritans were like cult. The Samaritans used some of the OT books, like the Pentateuch, but they omitted several that they thought were too pro-Jewish, like the Psalms.
- There was so much animosity between the Jews and Samaritans that if you were trying to get to the Northern part of Israel, rather than going through Samaria, Jews would walk round it. It added about 6 days to their journey, but they did it, for 2 reasons: a) you might be killed going through it; b) you would feel defiled after you did.

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/29/opinion/alliston-greenfield-50-shades/index.html>;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/10/business/media/an-erotic-novel-50-shades-of-grey-goes-viral-with-women.html>

- **This woman was a Samaritan. And notice the detail about it being the 6th hour when she goes to the well. That's noon.** Have you ever been to the Middle East? You don't go outside at noon. The reason she is going then is because she can't go at other times. She's hated by the other women. She is the outcast of the outcasts.

Which is what makes this whole story so shocking, and especially Jesus' next statement:

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) [9] The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

- Now, that looks like only a small pause in your Bible between verses 8 and 9, but it was probably like at least a 10 minute, awkward silence, because (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jews, you see, have no dealings with Samaritans. So finally she says, "Why are *you* talking to *me*?" I just see this woman with a New Jersey accent.

[10] Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Now, at this point, she, of course, thinks he is talking about H₂O, so she says to him:

[11] The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"

[12] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

- You hear that "edge" in her? "She don't like him."

[13] Jesus (ever unflappable) said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water

that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

[15] The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

- (you can see the first evidences of faith springing up in her, but she's still clueless)

[16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

- If you were writing the musical score, this would be the "dan-dan-dah" moment.

[17] The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." BOOM ROASTED

- But then, I think, it all made sense... this water discussion.
- You see, just like this woman daily came to get water, drank it, but then woke up the next morning thirsty again, and has to go back continually to get water, she has gone to the well of romance to satisfy the thirst of her soul.
- And it would satisfy her temporarily, but ultimately left her thirsty. So she got out of one marriage and into another. This time, she thought, she'd found what she was looking for. And again, it worked, but she'd wake up the next morning still feeling thirsty. So she turned to another. And another. And then she gives up on the institution of marriage altogether.
- What she does everyday with the water pot for her physical thirst she is doing with sex for her soul thirst.

[19] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

- See what she is doing? This is getting uncomfortable for her. So she asks a controversial worship questions. She doesn't want to go 5 marriages down to what's wrong inside of her. She'd rather fly around up in the intellectual with hard, theological questions.

- I see this all the time. I'm talking with someone about Jesus and they start saying,
 - *Oh yeah, well what about those who have never heard? Or what about homosexuality... or abortion?*
 - Great questions, but these are not the issue right now.
- You're never going to get anywhere with Jesus until you let him ask the important questions:
 - Where are you going in life? Why *aren't* you happy? Who is Lord.

So, Jesus calls her out on that, which leads to a long conversation that ends with Jesus telling this woman that God wants to know her in spirit and in *truth*.

- This woman hasn't lived in truth for a long time. For years she's lived a lie, covering over her shame and hurt with more sex, like a bandage, a way of papering over the void.

There was a part of her that was dead and had been so for a long time. Her sexual shame and her hurt kept her living in truth or knowing anybody in her spirit—she lived shut off from others, from God, from herself. So she had chosen the easier path to deal with her void: just find a new lover; find a new thrill.

Jesus would heal her by giving her the assurance of his love for her, the love of her heavenly Father, the love that she had craved all her life—a love she looked for first from her earthly father; and then from a boyfriend; and then from marriage; and then from an affair; and after it all was still thirst.

But Jesus' love would give her the two things she craved: a love where she was fully known and completely loved.

- I've told you often about the human dilemma: known *and* loved?
- How can we get close enough for someone to know us?
- Jesus would give her that love. He knew everything about her, and spoke complete acceptance to her.

From here we go to **John 8**

- (*Notice: brackets? This footnote will explain why they are there and why I think you can use this, if nothing else, as an illustration of how Jesus engaged in people.²*)

[8:3] The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in (the Greek syntax here implies “the very act of”) adultery, (*which had to be awkward... and which is why some commentators say she was naked here, or half-dressed... I think that might be a stretch; regardless, she had been caught in the act; she is shamed and humiliated. We're not sure where the guy is.*) and placing her in the midst [4] they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. [5] Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” [6] This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus' response: writing in the dirt. “Let him who is without sin...”

When it's just her and him left, Jesus says, [10] Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned

² Scholars point out that the most reliable manuscripts we have don't include this story. It looks like someone wrote it in in the margin. Which means that it might not have been in the original. Or it might have been and someone forgot to write it and then added it in later. Or it might have just been a story floating around out there that wasn't included and somebody inserted it as a good illustration and the next guy who copied just added it in as a part of the text. You say, “Uhh... how many of the other stories are like that? Only this one and the last verses of Mark 16, and this is something theologians have acknowledged for years, going back 1000 years ago—this wasn't something New Testament critics discovered 5 years ago. **Here's why I use it:** *Even if it wasn't part of the original narrative, what Jesus says to this woman is so typical of Jesus' message that you can use it, if nothing else, as an illustration of how he engaged the adulterer.*)

you?" [11] She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

What captivates me about Jesus' response to her is the order of what he said. "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." We would usually reverse those: "if you go and sin no more, then I won't condemn you."

- He was telling her to change not in order to be accepted, but to change because he had already accepted her. Religion usually tells you change comes first, and acceptance second. But the gospel reverses those: it tells us that change comes from acceptance, not for it.
- **You see, Jesus knew she'd never have the ability to break free of the idolatry that led her to adultery** until she see felt the embrace of a God better than what she had sought in adultery.
- *Listen:* this is very important: **God's acceptance is the power that liberates us from sin, not the reward for having liberated ourselves.**
 - **Salvation is a gift given to undeserving people, like this woman, which lifts them out of their captivity to sin.**
 - Which means when I talk to a high school girl who has lost her virginity, I don't just tell her about the dangers of VD or the shamefulness of her act or that she's messing up her marriage, I also tell her that there was a God who cared about her so much that he left heaven to come after her, took upon himself the shame of her sinful actions so that he could wash her in His blood and make her pure and holy in his sight! Because the only way she'll ever break the stronghold of idolatry that led her to those disastrous decisions is by seeing that there is a Father whose attention is better than what she searched for in a man.
 - **Or to the guy (or girl) who has fallen again to pornography... I tell them, yes, how damaging pornography is to them, but I also tell them, according**

to **1 Cor 11:7** that, as a man, you are "the glory of God." *You are not an **animal**. You are the glory of God. You are not a **pervert**. You are the glory of God. You are not an **addict**. You are the glory of God. You are not a **victim**. You are the glory of God. You are not a **fool**. You are the glory of God.*³ Jesus purchased you to make you such. Now live that way.

- And his acceptance is given as a gift to you regardless of how you do in your struggle with pornography.
- **Jesus liberates you from the power of sin not by holding out a reward in front of you for liberating yourself (your captivity to sin is too great for that);** Jesus liberates you by becoming sin for you and suffering it's consequences in your place.
 - *That's how "HE BREAKS THE POWER OF CANCELLED SIN; HE SETS THE PRISONER FREE."*
- His blood not only releases us from the penalty of our sin, it also releases us from its power.
- The gospel is that Jesus would pay the full penalty for the sexual sin of both of these women.
 - In him they would be fully known and fully loved.
 - Because he would become their shame; he would be displayed naked; exposed; He took their shame, so that they could become his righteousness.

So, from these stories I have 3 revolutionary ideas for those whom sex keeps you from fully following Jesus:

The first is that you have to understand that

I. Sex is not just a physical thing

In the pagan world, they thought sex was just for the body. Biology, like eating a meal or taking a nap. The Bible takes a much higher, and more exalted view, on sex:

³ Mark Driscoll, *Porn Again Christian*, http://theresurgence.com/books/porn_again_christian/index

1 Cor. 6:18, Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

The Bible presents sex as a covenant relationship in which physical oneness is accompanied by oneness in every other area: financial, spiritual, emotional.

- Think of even the posture of sex: the two become interfused as one body
- Sex outside of marriage is half human, like a zombie.

God designed us as psychosomatic unity: which means body and mind and emotions and soul are all interconnected. Physical oneness was to be matched by oneness in every other area, united by a lifelong covenant.

- Having sex outside of that full-person covenant unity tears apart the integrity of the person. It literally dis-integrates you.
 - I've been reading a book recently called *Hooked*—it is a scientific study written by a couple of neurologists showing what multiple sexual partners, especially when you're young does to your brain—it actually rewires your brain in a way that makes genuine, lasting, selfless relationships much more difficult. BTW, it's not a Christian book and the writers appear to have no Christian agenda. It's just a scientific study.
 - They say, **"The individual who goes from sex partner to sex partner is causing his or her brain to mold in such a way that eventually accepts that sexual pattern as normal... The pattern of changing sex partners therefore seems to damage their ability to bond in a committed relationship."** (New slide) **"The kind of attachment damage that occurs after repeated sexual encounters is, in many respects, more pernicious than pregnancy or STD's, because it typically goes unperceived by affected**

individuals while causing ongoing difficulties in establishing a lifelong and satisfying relationship."⁴

- The authors use the metaphor of **"tape"** which you have probably heard.
- They say, "You can no more 'try out' sex than you can 'try out' birth. The very act of sex produces a new reality that cannot be undone."⁵

There was an article last week in *The Telegraph*, which is like London's *NYT*, which was praising the sexual revolution was saying that we needed to finish it. The author said, *"Sex is no more a moral issue than eating a good meal. The fact that we eat most meals at home with spouses and partners does not preclude eating out in restaurants to sample different cuisines and ambiences."*⁶

- Is that all it is? You and me baby, ain't nothing but mammals...?

Intuitively you know that is not true. A couple of weeks ago Helen Gurley Brown died. She was one of the leading voices in the sexual liberation of the 1960's, and became the editor of *Cosmo* magazine. The *Atlantic* ran an article on her last week which said, *"She... was a living contradiction, who argued that being the single girl was the ideal, but then married; and that married men were fair game for adulterous affairs, but then drew the line at her husband."*⁷

- C.S. Lewis said one of the ways you know people are wrong in their view is when they are never living up to their own ideals and borrowing from other people's systems of morality to go through life.

The Bible presents sex as a profound union between two people.

⁴ McIlhenny and Bush, *Hooked: How Casual Sex is Affecting Our Children*, 48. The non-italicized portion of this quote is from the a review in the *Journal of Human Sexuality* by Christopher Rosik: http://narth.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/JournalofHumanSexuality_Vol2.pdf

⁵ Tim Chester in *Closing the Window*, 123.

⁶ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/relationships/9486351/The-recipe-for-happiness-And-enduring-marriage-and-an-affair-with-lots-of-sex.html>

⁷ <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/08/why-the-sexual-revolution-needed-a-sexual-revolutionary/261492/>

- Girls, C. S. Lewis said that when someone wants to have sex with you outside of marriage, they are saying to you, “I want union with your body, but not you...” He said that the **guy who wants to have sex with a girl without marrying here is like person who likes to taste food but then doesn’t want the calories from it so regurgitates it.** Girls, when a guy wants to have sex with you and not marry you, it means that he looks at the real you like you would look at the saturated fats and empty calories in a bag of Doritos.
- Now, before I go on to our next point, I want you to see that I’m trying to show you that God’s rules are never arbitrary. But at the end of the day, we do things because God commanded it and He’s in charge. A verse we saw in Hebrews a few weeks ago **“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is undefiled, but the sexually immoral and adulterous God will judge.” (Heb 13:4)**
 - I’ve often said that if you are the kind of person who has to be persuaded Jesus is right about something before you’ll obey him, I think you may need to rethink how you understand the concept of Lordship.
- *I say this as you pastor, having seen this multiple times: There is nothing that will destroy the work of God faster in your life than sexual sin.* It blinds the eyes. Dulls the heart. Corrupts the motives.
- I mentioned earlier *50 Shades of Grey*. Could we just have a heart to heart, here?
- I see on *Facebook* that many of you are reading it (I don’t have my head in the sand). *I don’t see any possible way you could fellowship with Jesus on one hand, and immerse yourself with that on the other.* Jesus died for the kind of sin that is lauded in *50 Shades of Grey*. It’s hard for me to see how you could immerse yourself in something that cost you the life of your Savior without extreme torment of soul.
 - CNN calls it female porn. They’re not condemning it, of course; they’re just calling it what it is.
- One of the valid complaints women bring up about guys looking at porn is it distorts how they look at women—it creates unreal expectations. The guy’s wife can never match up

to that airbrushed beauty queen. The same way. You are reading about these unnatural things that are so disconnected from the reality of true covenant faithfulness that it’s destroying your capacity to be involved in a real marriage.

- “Oh, yeah, well... I’m just reading it because I like the story and so I can understand what all my friends are reading.” Yeah... and your husband looks at *Playboy* because of articles written in it. Get real.
- ***This is serious.*** Sex is not just a physical thing. The one who sins sexually, Paul says, whether it is sexual sin in the mind or you actually carry out the act, sins against their own body! Sexual sin destroys your walk with God, tears apart your soul, and your capacity for a healthy, committed relationship.

II. Sex is driven by soul thirst

- At the heart of sexual sin is idolatry. Our craving from sex comes is often driven by the vacuum left by the absence of God. That’s what you see with this woman at the well in John 4.
 - **Josh McDowell: sex is not the answer; sex is really an expression of the question.**
- The state of our soul is thirsty.⁸
 - We **thirst for love**. We want a perfectly accepting, unconditional love. We look for it first in our parents and when we don’t get it from them we develop all kinds of dysfunctions.
 - We **thirst for purpose**, to know that we are important and matter to someone.
 - We **thirst for peace of conscience**. Everyone struggles with guilt. We’re like the man in Kafka’s *The Trial*, who wakes up under sentence of death, but no one will tell him what the charge is. We feel guilty and we want someone to tell us we’re ok.
- We look for answers for all these things in romance and sex. But they can’t provide it. The only one who can give us **perfect love is God**. The only one who can give us real **purpose** is God. The only one who can **declare us innocent** is God.

⁸ Tim Keller, message on John 4.

- We can do like this woman in John 4 and keep giving ourselves away to more people, but that just compounds the problem and multiplies our guilt, because there is a deep, innate part of us that knows it is wrong. Whenever someone says to me, “I struggle with guilt about my past,” it is always sexually related.
- Sex God’s way is a profound statement of covenant loyalty in marriage; sex outside of marriage is often a quest to find something you can only find in God.
- Much of our sexual sin is driven by soul thirst.
- **Now, before I go on to our last point... sometimes guys say to me, I get how girls are driven to sex by deep soul needs.** But not us guys, it just feels good to us. **Fraternity guy** said that to me. I don’t buy that **for two reasons:**
 - Many guys do find identity in it. Guy goes through 3 phases of defining his identity: athletic prowess; sexual prowess; earning potential.
 - But also, an idol is anything that commands your obedience! **Esau:** “If I don’t eat this, I’ll die.” He served the god of his stomach, which made him forfeit his soul!

III. The gospel liberates the sexual captive

- If you’re familiar with your Bible, you can’t read John 4 without thinking of **Jeremiah 2:13**, “For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”
 - **He’s telling them they have drunk from wells that won’t, can’t satisfy.** Not everything you drink will satisfy.
 - Imagine dying of thirst and grabbing a glassful of pancake syrup. It’s sweet and it tastes good, but it would just leave you thirstier.
 - They say that when you are dehydrated at sea you have this incredible desire to guzzle **seawater**. Satisfies you for just a moment... but a split second later it leaves you thirstier.
 - This is how bodily pleasures, like sex, work when they are done outside of God.

- Things of earth can’t fully satisfy you because you are not just made of earth; you are made of heaven too, and when you pursue earthly pleasures *at the expense of* heavenly ones it is like drinking saltwater.
- **And I love the contrast here between a cistern and a spring.**
 - Cistern: If it fails to rain, it dries up. Throw mud and dirt in it, it clogs up.
 - A spring. When you throw mud and dirt in a spring, eventually, the spring bursts through.
 - Jesus doesn’t just give you new water in a new cistern; he puts in you spring that just bubbles up continually. When life and people throw dirt and junk at you the joy in you just keeps pushing through.
- The gospel liberates you from the downward cycle of sin
 - It shows you a love that is better and more sustaining than what you’ve sought in sex. The love you are seeking does exist, just not in *50 Shades of Grey* or *Twilight*. It exists in the love of the Father.
 - To the one that feels like they have no more worth because they have given themselves away to too many people, or maybe because they have been abused, or raped. The gospel shows you are incredibly valuable. Worth enough for Jesus to die for you.
 - I fly a lot, and I usually fly DELTA. DELTA rewards my loyalty for flying with them by constantly losing my luggage. My new name for DELTA: *Don’t Expect Your Luggage to Arrive*.
 - You ever go down and complain when they lose your luggage? Sometimes you talk to someone who just doesn’t care. “We’ll keep our eye out for it and send it to you in a week or so.” Great. As long as I don’t need *underwear* for a week that will be fine. And my 4 year old will totally understand that daddy got her a gift that is floating around in the atmosphere somewhere.

They lose my luggage because they place no value on it.

- I've heard this from girls: "I've already gone this far. Why not keep going?" I hear in that "I no longer value my body."
- Jesus valued your body and soul so much he died to cleanse it and make it new.
- For you guys: it is the gospel gives us power over our desires:
 - Puritans: Expulsive power of a new affection.
 - Tim Chester says, *"Porn is a sin of imagination. We need to counter it by enlarging our imaginations. The answer to porn is to believe the truth. But that's so much more than an intellectual process. We need to let the truth capture our imaginations: to meditate, ponder, wonder at, and sing the truth. We need to feel the truth, glory in the truth, delight in the truth."*⁹
 - The way to be freed from sexual captivity is by gazing at Jesus. The problem is not that your desires for sex are too strong, it's that your love for Jesus is so weak.
 - Your love for Jesus grows as you see the glory of what he did for you. *So look at him!* See him crucified for you. See how great a price he paid to redeem you, and learn to think it a small thing to bring bodily desires under control for him.

Conclusion:

- Many of you "can't believe" because you are sexual captives.
 - Some of you are obsessed with it and feel like you can't give it up.
 - Others of you are captive to the guilt and shame of your past.
- The gospel liberates you from both.
 - The gospel provides you with the love that satisfies the thirst of your soul, and gives you power over your passions even for things like sex. It releases

you from the shame of past mistakes by washing you clean and making you new.

- The message of last week was "look and live;" this week it is "come and drink!" Many of you are thirsty. It's like you are thirsty in the rain.
 - Come and drink! Drink until your soul overflows.
- One last objection: I hear people say, "I know God forgives me, but I can't forgive myself." That sounds humble, but it's really disbelief in the gospel.
 - It's saying, "Jesus did not suffer enough. I need to suffer, too."
 - Or, you have some standard you feel like you have to reach before you have any worth. But Jesus said that he gives you his esteem as a gift, and has plans to make you perfect and worthy.
 - When you say, "I've got to become this in order to have value," you are saying, "I need something besides Jesus' finished work and God's acceptance to have worth."
 - You're an idolater and you're failing to believe the gospel of grace! In Christ you have the absolute approval of the only whose opinion matters.
 - If you say, "I know that God has forgiven me, but I can't forgive myself," you are saying that your opinion of yourself is weightier than God's, which makes you an idolater.

⁹ Tim Chester, *Closing the Window*, 64.