

(Spiritual Dangers) Danger of Losing Your Passion for Christ

by Don Currin

The danger of losing our passion for Christ is often due to the presence of high places in our lives, which can lead to spiritual decline and apostasy.

Duration: 1:15:34

Scripture: 1 Kings 11:1, Matthew 5:28, Matthew 5:30

Topics: "Lukewarmness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of buying a movie for his family. However, upon previewing the movie, he discovers that it contains profanity and takes God's name in vain. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having a standard for the movies we watch and listen to, based on biblical principles. He warns against compromising our values and defiling our conscience, as it can have negative consequences on our lives and the lives of our loved ones. The speaker urges listeners to be mindful of the content they expose themselves to and to consider the long-term effects it may have.

Transcript

Well, thank you, Pastor. It's a real blessing to be back again tonight. Thank you for your presence.

It's always an encouragement to see God's people return to the house of God on Sunday evening. I agree with what Pastor just said regarding preaching and just the nature of true revival. It's Jesus all over again.

Falling in love with Him all over again. You know, I don't know about you, but I'm real concerned these days for the dearth of anointed preaching across the United States. And anointed preaching is biblical preaching.

And anointed preaching to me is very confrontational type preaching. So sometimes, you know, perhaps you sit under my ministry and you say, well, that's a bit hard or harsh or maybe a little bit too rigid for me. Well, that's the way God has gifted me.

That's the way God has anointed me. And I trust that the Lord may use His Word to do a deep, penetrating, and lasting work in the hearts of His people as well as the life of His church. Now, Pastor Ron mentioned a moment ago, we do these cutting-edge conferences periodically.

And we're getting ready to do our ninth conference this fall. We have speakers come in that will address issues that we feel like relate by and large to the entirety of the body of Christ. And in the last year or so, we've done a men's conference and a women's conference.

One is Becoming a Woman After God's Own Hearts. And a tremendous speaker. As a matter of fact, I understand, Ms. Susie was telling me that next year, Carol Trahan, you've invited her to come.

I tell you, you'll not meet a woman that is more word-centered in her sharing and there's such a sense of anointing upon her message than Carol Trahan. We've had her twice. We look forward to having her again next year.

Tremendous. This features her on this set of CDs and she's dealing with various issues that relate to the needs and the lives of women. And then to the praise of His glory, men's conference.

What we did is we took various things, areas of struggle in the lives of men, and what we want to do is tie it all into the glory of God. So, here were the sessions, the glory of God in motivation, the glory of God in meditation, the glory of God in mortification, the glory of God in marriage, the glory of God in moral purity. Boy, that's a big one in the lives of men these days.

Excellent. The glory of God in mentoring, the importance of discipling others around us. The glory of God in mastering the moment, what it means to redeem the time for the days are evil.

And then such issues as the glory of God in ministering to the Lord and the glory of God in revival or His manifested presence. So, we just want to give these to you as a church and we hope that they will benefit you. I hope they'll be a blessing.

I tell you, we got some tremendous feedback and testimonies from men and women who came to these conferences. And I think you'll be refreshed as well to the content of what's spoken. Immediately following the service, as Pastor mentioned, we have a fellowship gathering tonight.

And during that fellowship gathering, we're not asking everybody to direct their attention over to the TV. But we've got a DVD set up over there and we have two of our mission trips. Another part of our ministry is my wife and I, we will take young people to the mission field.

And normally 16 years of age and up, right through college and career age, we take them and we do a lot of work. I mean, they're not going to sightsee. They're not going to globe trot.

They're not going to see the sights and sounds of various parts of the world. But they're going to work. And they're going to pray.

And they're going to seek God's face. And they're going to minister to others. And so last year, we did two mission trips, one to Guatemala.

And we took about 26 young people with us down there. And then, of course, in the summer, we had a mission trip to the Apache and Navajo Indians in Arizona. So you'll see this.

It's about a 10, 15 minute clip on each DVD. And I hope you'll be blessed because it's your investment monetarily, financially as a church that makes these mission trips possible. So I hope there'll be an encouragement to your heart.

All right. Pastor has asked me if I would share a message that I shared in your church a number of years ago this evening. He said, I just want you to pray about it.

I'm not telling you what to preach. But would you pray as you come up to minister to our congregation about preaching on this particular subject? And so I did. And I sensed that God would be pleased for me to share with you tonight some thoughts along the lines, once again, of the danger of high places.

Now, I want you to take your Bibles, if you would, and look with me in 1 Kings, once again, 1 Kings and chapter number 11. 1 Kings and chapter number 11. Verse number 1. I want to read just a few verses here.

I'll not take the time to read the text over again completely. But I want to continue to read beginning in verse number 9 after I read a couple of verses here in the first part of 1 Kings chapter 11. Follow along with me in your Bibles, if you would.

Verse number 1. But King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites, of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go into them, neither shall they come in unto you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon claimed unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his heart and his wives turned away his heart.

Now, you'll note as you read on that he builds, in verse 7, a high place for Shemosh, the abomination of Moab. The Bible tells us that he's given over to idolatry. And in verse 8, Likewise did he for all his strange wives which burned incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

Now you see the Lord's reaction in verse 9. And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel which had appeared unto him twice. As you continue reading, you find that God stirs up three distinct adversaries against this man as a manifestation of his disapproval and his chastisement upon Solomon's life. And now what I want to do for the next few moments is I want to speak to you on the subject of the danger of high places.

And I suppose that a subtitle that I could give this message would be the reason our victories are so short-lived. I don't know about you, but there have been times where I've been in the midst of special conferences or perhaps God had his hand on my pastor's message and God spoke to me in a very unique and a very powerful way. And out of that came confession and repentance and renunciation.

And beyond that came some holy resolves that from this day forward things are going to be different. I'm going to really grow in this area. They'll never be the same again.

I really want God to be glorified in this area of struggle in my life. And you know perhaps that would last a day or sometimes a few days, maybe at best a week, and suddenly I found myself back in the muck and mire of that particular area of struggle. Well, you know, I can't explain to you why our victories are so short-lived.

At least give you all the reasons. But I believe that one of the major reasons why we have difficulty in continuing is because we allow a high place or high places to continue in our lives or in our homes. Now you say, well, Brother Curran, what is a high place? It is a provision for the flesh.

A provision for the flesh. It may be in our bedroom. It may be stuff between our bed mattresses.

It may be in our stereo cabinet. It may be in the glove compartment of our car. It may be in a relationship with someone else that we know that God disapproves of.

But because we allow these high places, these provisions for the flesh to continue in our life, we find ourselves, during moments of weakness, going back, gravitating back to former gods, former idolatry. So tonight, this is what we want to talk about. And let me just draw some things from our text in the way of exposition again that will sort of lay a foundation for where we'll be going this evening.

In 1 Kings 11, notice in verse number 1, the Spirit of God says, But King Solomon loved many strange women. He was passionately in love with these women that were consumed with their own idols. They were foreign women.

They were women given over to their own passions toward other gods rather than Jehovah. And here is a man that loved these women. He became emotionally attached to them.

Now, the first thing we learn in this process of spiritual declension is you find that in Solomon's life, his spiritual decline began when he allowed the sensual to prevail over the spiritual. When he allowed the sensual to take precedence over the spiritual. And may I say to you tonight, that any time stretching our sensual itch is more important than our obedience to God's truth, we will find ourselves on the threshold of maxlighting.

Somebody said years ago that the world is littered with the debris of what flesh has promised but been unable to provide. His beginning of his declension began when he allowed the sensual to prevail over the spiritual. But you'll notice something else.

In 1 Kings 11, verse 6, it says, And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord. Now watch this. And he went not fully after the Lord as did David his father.

He went not fully after the Lord as David his father. Someone said years ago that partial obedience is total disobedience. Paul's prayer for the saints at Colossae, there in Colossians 1, verse 10, is that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

You see, no doubt, here was a man that was becoming another Amaziah. It was said of Amaziah that he did that which was right but not with a perfect heart. And as you study that word perfect there, it means not with a whole heart.

He had a division of affections. He was seeking to serve two masters. And so it is in the life of Solomon.

He went not fully after the Lord as did David his father. But you'll notice something else. In verse number 7 now, his desires, his passions constrain him to build a provision for the flesh.

A high place for this God, Shemosh. Verse 7, then did Solomon build a high place for Shemosh. His desires, once again, move him to make this provision for the flesh.

Now you find as you read on that God was angry with him in verse 9. There was a loss of privilege for his own son in verses 11 and 12. And also in verses 14, 23, and 26, what we alluded to a moment ago, God stirred up adversaries against this king. Now I want to begin tonight by giving you a definition of a high place in Israel.

What was a high place? Let's be very specific about this thing of high places. Well, a high place in Israel was a ridge, plateau, or elevated platform where cultic objects were placed for the purpose of pagan worship. It was a ridge, a plateau, or an elevated platform where cultic objects were placed for the purpose of pagan worship.

You see, it was an altar where both Baal and God could be worshipped. You see, oftentimes these worship places, these centers, if you would, of worshipping God would be used by others to worship a foreign god, an idol. And all types of sordid activity would be engaged in, would be exercised as an expression of worship to another god.

But both gods could be worshipped on these places, these high places. Now here are some significant things to note about high places. Number one, kings were often rated by their attitude toward high places.

Now it's interesting in the culture in which we live, if a man or a woman is aspiring to a position of political power or influence, we might do some investigating to find out what they believe concerning various issues that would affect the outcome or the welfare of our society. In other words, we might find out, well, what do they believe concerning foreign trade? Or strong military defense? Or how about the issue of a balanced budget? Certainly no conscientious Christian would go without seeking out an answer as to what a person who aspired to a political position believed concerning a moral issue such as abortion. And depending on what that person believed, what they taught and what they reinforced, we would vote accordingly, right? But not so in Solomon's day.

Kings and spiritual leaders were evaluated oftentimes on the basis of their attitude toward high places. Secondly, high places were the foundation of mental images. They always served as a reminder of former idolatry.

You see, imagine with me, there is this field. And in the field there, my eyes wonder, and they begin to lift up. And as I look into that field, there is a small mountain.

There is a large hill there. And on that hill, there is a high place. And as I look at that, now I'm converted.

But before my conversion, I used to go to that place. I used to worship another god or gods. And my mind races back.

It flashes back to the details of that worship experience, the god that I worship, the sacrifices that were made. You see, when high places are permitted to remain in our life, they always serve as a foundation, a reminder of mental images. Furthermore, high places were known for immorality.

Can you believe that people would engage in sexual acts as an expression of worship to their god? Oftentimes, adultery, sordid, perverted acts of even sodomy were exercised there. On high places. They were known for immorality.

Here's another thought. Children were often sacrificed there. Can I tell you something tonight? There are many children and grandchildren today that are being sacrificed in the living rooms of the homes of professing Christians.

The things that they are permitted to watch on television, the things that they are permitted to view via a DVD movie, or some type of a video presentation, I tell you, friend, is horrific. It's unspeakable. It's interesting, years ago, the Time Magazine, they had a big article, big spread entitled, Kids Without a

Conscience.

Kids that had done hideous things. Some had murdered their parents. It all could be traced back to compromises that were made by parents or loved ones, allowing children to sit there and watch repeated acts of murder.

And butchery. Children are often sacrificed on high places. Also, you'll notice something else.

They presented the temptation to always serve another master. Listen, friend, if I allow a high place to remain in my possession, if it's under my jurisdiction in some way, whether it's in my bedroom or in the living room, wherever it may be, as long as that thing exists, it always presents the enticement, the strong, powerful temptation to be drawn away to serve another master. And then finally, high places provide the potential for apostasy.

A turning away from the Lord altogether. And I tell you, I believe that when God saves a person, they are saved to the uttermost. And I believe they're saved for eternity as long as they're saved.

But there is such a thing as perseverance that comes out of the new birth. And if you're in Christ, you're going to persevere. You're going to continue with Christ.

You're going to pursue after Christ. You're going to walk with Christ. But there are a lot of people who have made professions of faith, and they're not yet in the kingdom.

So they begin to make all these little moral compromises and spiritual compromises allowing high places in their life. And the first thing you know, their heart becomes dull and hard and insensitive to the things of God. And they turn away from the Lord altogether and say, Christianity is not for me because there's no reality in it.

I was telling somebody today, I read a sermon by Spurgeon back some months ago on Harden Not Your Hearts. There's something very simple you find in the Scripture that there are repeated warnings about hardening not your heart, but you never find what the Bible tells us that we can tenderize our heart once it's hardened. It's almost a point of no return.

And see, these high places, these provisions for the flesh will harden your heart. They will dull your spiritual senses toward the things of God. They will so dwarf your faith if you have any faith at all.

And if you have no faith, what faith you think you do possess may not be faith at all and ultimately just diminish altogether. And you forsake the Lord God and apostatize. Listen to this.

The basic problem one man said with high places was that they easily provided areas where the religious practices of Canaan could creep into Israel's worship experience. And can I tell you tonight, brethren, the basic problem with contemporary high places is that they easily provide opportunities to creep back into our own worship today and can snuff out the life of God. If they exist, they ultimately can be the very detriment of our spiritual life.

Well, let's be very biblical here about this matter. Have you ever noticed this in the books of Kings and Chronicles? Of all the leaders and all the kings that are mentioned, there were only two that went all the way with God. It was said of so many of them that they would confess sin.

They would acknowledge abomination. It says of them that they would level the groves where these very idols were placed. They removed the idols themselves, destroyed them, demolished them.

And they even put the Sodomites out of the land. But the Spirit of God says, but the high place or high places were permitted to remain. For example, in 1 Kings 15 and verse 14, Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, verse 11, but the high places were not removed.

In 1 Kings 22 and verse 43, Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of Asa his father, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away for the people offered and burned incense yet in the high places. Listen to this one.

In 2 Kings 12 verses 2 and 3, Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, but the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places. In 2 Kings 14 verses 3 and 4, Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, howbeit the high places were not taken away.

How about this team? Azariah in 2 Kings 15 verses 3 and 4, and Azariah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, save or accept that the high places were not removed. In 2 Kings 15 verses 34 and 35, and Jotham did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, watch it again now, howbeit the high places were not removed. You see, friend, seemingly these guys went all the way in their obedience before God.

It was nothing short in the eyes of men of being radical. I mean, listen, here they are leveling the groves. They did away with the idols.

And they extracted the sodomites from their regime. But, the high place or high places were permitted to remain. I mentioned a moment ago, there were two kings that went all the way with God.

One is in 2 Kings 18 verse 4. It says of Hezekiah, he removed the high places and break the images. You know what the result of that reformation was? The Scripture says the result was that God was with him and made him to prosper militarily over all his enemies. The other man was a man by the name of Josiah.

In 2 Kings 23 verses 13 and 15, the Bible says, And the high places that were before Jerusalem did Josiah defile, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat had made, both that altar and the high place he break down. What does it say? It was a reward of his obedience. God came and showed himself strong on this man's behalf.

Now, you know friend, when I read these things of how God blessed these men so profoundly and showed himself strong on their behalf, I don't know if that does anything for you or not, but I'm just foolish enough to believe that God being no respecter of persons, if He would honor those men because of their radical, thorough obedience, certainly He would do the same for us. Have you ever put Him to the test? Have you ever done a house cleaning? Have you ever rid your home of music that you know God doesn't approve of? Have you ever eradicated from your very existence movies or videos or DVDs that you know are despicable in the eyes of God? Have you ever taken and burned to the glory of God any magazine or book or poster or anything that you know that God looks upon with abhorrence? I ask you tonight, are there high places existing in your life? You say you want revival. You say you want God to minister to your heart.

You say, God, I want you to show forth your glory in my home. But I want to ask you something, friend. Is your obedience, is it thorough, is it total, or is it only partial? You confess things all the time.

I know I ought to do better. I purpose in my heart to do better. But I ask you, friend, do you have provisions for the flesh remaining in your life, in your home? Listen to this.

Let's make it very practical. Now, let's shift gears and let's talk about our present day culture. What is a contemporary high place? What is a contemporary high place? Now, listen carefully.

It is in the area, thought, or relationship that I permit to remain in my life as a provision for the flesh to satisfy the sinful desires of my heart. It is in the area, thought, or reasoning, or relationship with another human being that I willingly allow to remain in my life to satisfy the carnal, sensual desires of my heart. Let's break these three things down, these three categories.

First of all, any area. Areas can be high places. I'm speaking in a general sense, but let me just give you a partial listing.

You know, you could go on and on and make a lengthy list of high places. But I just give you a few things that I think that most people could relate to. The psalmist said in Psalm 101 in verse 3, I will set no wicked thing, no thing of Belial, no thing of Satan before mine eyes.

The first thing in this list is television. I know the first question that some of you would ask is, Brother Curran, do you have a TV in your home? Yes, we do. Do you watch it regularly? No, we do not.

How often do you watch it? Sometimes we might pick up a documentary. Sometimes I might watch a ball game like I did this past week, March Madness. Sometimes we might glean a news report.

But by and large, it's not news to tap into the media to entertain us. I tell people all the time, if you can't control your television set, it's best that you get rid of it. It will be the demise of your spiritual life.

It will be a detriment to your spiritual welfare. Television can be a high place. I think one of the most dangerous things is to allow children to be left in front of a television set depending upon that TV as a babysitter for children.

And yet today in homes, many Christian homes, it was amazing, even an evangelist this past week said that he took a survey. He had a few hundred young people in a Christian school he was ministering to. And he said over half of those young people raised their hand when he said, How many of you have a television in your bedroom? Over half of them said that they did.

TV can be a high place. Music can be a high place. Music.

We can be drawn away of our own lust and enticed through the medium of music. I remember a fellow years ago, he repented and he said, You know, he said, I held tenaciously to my country music. I love that stuff.

You know what country music is, don't you? It's a soap opera put to music. And he said, I love that stuff. He said, I would watch it.

He said, I would listen to this music all the time. And sometimes he said, I'd watch videos, you know, with some of these stars on there. The country music realm.

And he said, I enjoyed that. And he said, God was convicting me. And he said, I held on to it.

And he said, one night, he said, I'm watching Johnny Carson. And he's got one of my heroes on there. He talks to this guy for a while.

And the guy makes all these lewd comments. And suddenly he introduces this female star. She comes out.

She sits down beside this country music star. And he makes a bunch of filthy comments to her. And they laugh about it.

The next thing he knows, he said, this man is doing something very inappropriate with this woman. And even as desensitized as she was, she was embarrassed. And he said, it's like God put the icing on the cake and said, now see where it's going to lead you.

You see what's happening. And he said, I repented. And he said, I haven't been back.

I haven't listened to it since. There is videos, movie videos that can be high places. There are books or magazines, such as high school annuals, such as romance novels, such as, sadly, in homes where there are medical encyclopedias.

How many young people's minds have been led astray and their very consciences entrapped in moral impurity because what they did is they went on a curious search in their home and finding something that would exploit the human anatomy. And even though it was justified in most minds as simply being a medical encyclopedia, yet it was enough to defraud and defile that young person's heart. Diaries, old diaries can be high places.

I'll tell you where God found me. And I think I may have shared this before with you, but I had to get rid of my Christian pornography. You say, what do you mean Christian pornography? You see, in my library, and I have about 3,000 to 3,500 books, and in that library there, I had some certain books written by leading evangelical leaders that would talk about the very act of marriage.

You could never open those books and read the content or see certain diagrams without being greatly defrauded. You know, as I've shared that before, I've had pastors and I've had laymen say, I had to do the same thing, preacher. Had to do the same thing.

It's a high place. Sports can be a high place. By the way, I love sports.

I really enjoy sports. I don't like it like I used to. I believe it's because of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in my heart.

I don't have time for it anymore. But I still like to watch basketball and especially college basketball. And I'll flip on the TV to watch a game.

Our teams got beat, Duke and North Carolina in the final four process. But I enjoy watching it on occasion. I always like sports.

There's only three sports I never could get into. One was auto racing. Another was Canadian curling.

And the other was rattlesnake roundups. Believe it or not, I was in Texas years ago for a series of meetings about 40 miles from the border, and there were two guys in the church that caught rattlers for a living. I can't get into that.

I wouldn't make a good snake handler. So I guess my worship experience would be terribly dwarfed. Sports, though, can be a high place.

By the way, there's only one thing that kept me out of the NBA. Many of you asked, well, how tall are you, Brother Don? I'm six, seven and a half. Only one thing kept me out of professional basketball, and that was ability.

Materialism can be a high place. How about this one? How about the internet on the computer? Had a man tell me up in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, he said, for the last six and a half years since I retired, he said, I opened up my own business to recover lost data on computer hard drives. Whether it was personal hard drives or corporate hard drive, he said, most of the time, he said, I can retrieve that information.

Then he looked at me and he said, Brother Kern, he said, almost without exception, the last six and a half years of all the computers I've worked on, almost without exception, every computer that I've gone in and tapped the information, the data, I found pornography. There's the area of thoughts. In 2 Corinthians 10, verse number five, you remember after Paul says, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God are the pulling down of strongholds.

Then he says he is casting down imaginations, and every high thing, high place is the idea there in the thought life, every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Now, listen to this. High places can be manifest in our thought life.

Concerning this area of sensuality and sexual impurity, the Bible says in the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 23 and verse 19, she multiplied, listen to this, she multiplied, referring to Jerusalem, her whoredoms in calling to remembrance the days of her youth. Can I tell you, Knight, that there are individuals that are in constant bondage to sexual immorality because they cannot control their thought life? That during the moment of weakness in their life, when they feel a measure of rejection from a member of the opposite sex, perhaps their own mate, what they do is retreat into a fantasy world to fulfill the lustful appetites of their own sexual desires. I'll give you a few examples here.

Unrealistic dreams concerning sports. My boys played high school basketball. They could jump, they could move, they could shoot.

They had all the ability. They must have taken after mom because dad didn't have a great deal, but they did well. And I watched them.

I'd sit up in the bleachers and watch them. But I tell you, friend, times I would watch other dads, it was as if they were living their sports fantasies to their own children. And the incredible pressure they would put on them, the way they would yell at their kids and the way they would yell at the officials and then they would pull them aside there at halftime and they would rake their kids over the coals and say, you could have done better.

You should have done this. And I wonder how many kids have been lame physically or perhaps even ruined spiritually because that father had an idol, a high place in his mind of sports. And now, because he never could achieve what he dreamed to have, he tried to live his dream through his children.

And I tell you, years ago, I was in Pennsylvania and sat there at a lunch table one day on Tuesday. We had a Sunday through Wednesday meeting and the pastor came and had lunch with my family and I. And we're sitting around the table and I said, brother, I said, I noticed your family wasn't here last night. I said, where were they? Oh, he says, well, he says, my wife took my little boy to his baseball game, to his little league baseball game.

The whole family went to support him. And I said, well, brother, I said, you know, I just want to caution you. I said, I'm not opposed to sports, but I said, when you've got special services, if you feel like these things are of the Lord, I think your children, I think your family need to be under the sound of God's Word.

And then I said, brother, I said, you know, when you start compromising the things of God, such as church attendance and listening to the Word of God in the context of those church attendance services, when you start doing that, I said, you're going to open your children up to apostasy, turning away from the Lord and serving another God. And you know what he looked at me and said? He said, well, I don't believe they'll lose their salvation. I said, that's not what I'm talking about.

But I said, perhaps even though they pray the sinner's prayer, they made a profession of faith, they may not yet be in the kingdom. But I said, if you cultivate these desires to say it's all right to miss church, it's all right to miss the preaching of God's Word, to go out and serve another God. What's that telling them? It's all right to serve two masters, but in the process, friend, it may cost them their soul.

How about revengeful thoughts? I'm addressing this small congregation like some of you that in your mind, when a certain person's name comes up in conversation or their face comes up in your mind, you cringe because there are certain powers within you that rise up to seek revenge against that person that has hurt you or harmed a loved one. And you can't control it. You can't seem to block it out.

You can't seem to overcome it in your mind because you're always imagining what you'd like to do to this person or what you'd like to see done. And nothing would delight you any more than for this person to be hurt in some way for what they've done to you or done to somebody that's very close to you. It's a high place.

It's a revengeful thought of a high place. But I want to give you another area, and that is relationships. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 33, the Bible says, be not deceived.

Evil communications corrupt good morals. It does matter, friend, who we associate with. It does matter who you pal up with.

I ask you tonight, is God honored in your relationship with others? And I mention a couple of areas here. First of all, is this matter of sedition that we talked about in Sunday school this morning. You know, it's sad to say, but in many churches today, some relationships are built on a spirit of mutual criticism toward authority or toward a certain person or party in the church.

It seems like the only time that their fellowship with this individual is enlivened and they really enjoy talking to them is when they share the latest about what so-and-so has done or what Sister so-and-so has said. Years ago, I was up in Blaine, Maine. The lady and her husband was visiting the services, and they came Sunday morning and Sunday night, and Monday night I made a statement.

She said, I want you to know about the importance of being under authority and honoring the authority of God in your life. And I elaborated on that for a few minutes. And after the service was over, this lady, I

guess I was probably in my late 30s at the time, she was in her mid-50s, and she came to me and she said, Brother Curran, is there any way that I could have some time with you this week? And I said, well, I'd be glad to talk to you.

I said, as long as you bring your husband. She said, no problem. So he had been there in the services, and so the next day we had an appointment there at the pastor's office at 2 o'clock, and she came and she sat down there in the office, and he sat down in another chair, and I was there at the pastor's desk.

And she began to share her heart with me. And she said, you know, she said, I have a real problem with authority. She said, because in my opinion, the authorities that I've been subjected to are very spiritually immature.

She said, at times I'll get a word from God. God gives me clear direction, and I feel like this is a word for the church that will benefit everybody. And I go to the authority in the church, and they're not open to it.

She went on in the process of sharing her heart with me. She said, we have moved to five different churches in the Presque Isle, Maine area, because she said, all the leadership is very spiritually immature, and they will not listen to what I have to say. I said, five different churches, five different pastors, five different leaderships, and you're saying that all of them are wrong? Well, she said, I know it sounds strange, but she said, yes.

Well, her husband's sitting there the whole time, and she talks on for a good 45, 50 minutes, and he never says a word. She told me during the process of conversation, she said, you know, there's a young man over on Grand Manan Island, a Canadian island who started a youth ministry, and he can't get the leadership to get behind what he's doing either. And she said, either I call him once a week, or he calls me, and we compare notes.

You know, it's a growing concern of ours today that these people are not spiritually minded enough to listen to people that really want to do what's right and obey God. So finally, when she finished, I looked at her, and I said, well, I've got a word, I believe, for you. She said, what's that? And I said, first of all, I believe you need to renounce this relationship with this young man.

Cut off your relationship with him, and don't ever talk to him again. She said, why is that? I said, because you are no good for him, and he is no good for you. When you speak to one another, all you're doing is fueling one another's fires of sedition.

You're undermining the authority of God in your lives even more. And my recommendation to you is no longer, no longer counsel him, no longer talk to him because you're poisoning one another. I said, Lania, I bet you have a hard time.

You talk by your own admission saying that you have a hard time submitting to authority. I said, I bet you have a difficult time submitting to your own husband. Man, when I said that, he just dropped his head between his legs there in his chair.

He was leaning forward. He's dropped his head down, and a smile broke out across his face as if to say, boy, have you ever got that right? You see, what did that relationship become? It became a high place of sedition. And I ask you tonight, friend, are you under the authority of God? And if you're not, do you have people that you've drawn around you? Do you have relationships that you know it's dishonoring to God because they have become high places of insurrection and rebellion against authority? Let me give you

another example here, and that is the area of sexual relations.

I would pray tonight that I'm not addressing anyone here, but perhaps there may be one or two or three or four. But maybe it's somebody in your neighborhood. Maybe it's somebody you work with.

Maybe it's somebody you go to church with. You've gotten too close to a member of the opposite sex. It's not just a matter of casually talking and fellowshiping at a glance.

But it's as if at times when you're around this person, you find yourself saying things or speaking in such a way with such a tone that you're trying to solicit the affections or the approval of a member of the opposite sex. Years ago, I was sitting in the pastor's home, living room, and he told me when he was in seminary that he was really struggling to make it. He said academically the load was great.

And he said I was working a full-time job 40 hours a week. And he said my hours were, he said, I would get up early in the morning, have my devotional time, and he said I would leave at 630. My first period class was at 7 o'clock.

I would go to classes from 7 until 12. Then he said I have about 15 minutes to make a mad rush to get in my car and drive across town to the newspaper where I was working. And he said I would work till 7 to 830 in the evening, and then I would come home and have to study and try to minister to a wife and minister to a little one.

And then he said my wife was pregnant with our second child. He said it was tough, day in and day out. He said I went through that grueling schedule.

He said in those days, he said the load at work became so great, he said I was a rover. They provided for me a company car, and they would give me a list of different assignments. And I would go out from the newspaper, and I would either deliver things or I would pick up advertisements or various other items for the newspaper.

And he said the paper began to grow. It became so demanding that one day they hired a young lady to work with me. She was my age.

She wasn't married. She was a very attractive young woman, and she was a very easy person to talk to. After about three weeks, we became very close friends.

And he said Brother Curran said the way she would talk to me, the way she would show so much enthusiasm about any good news I had, I really thought she was coming home to me. I thought she was making a pass. And certainly, he said, I thought she would delight if I were to just drop everything and ask her to run off with me.

He said during those days, my wife and I, our marriage was terrible. Almost daily, we would have verbal battles. The emotions would get into it, and oftentimes, I would leave for school or work without reconciling.

He said one morning, he said I got up. And normally, she did not get up, but she got up that morning. And something came up in our conversation, developed into a full-blown argument.

She got angry. I got angry. And he said I walked out the door, slammed the door behind me with no intention of reconciling with her.

I got in the car, and I drove to school. When I walked into my first period class, the professor gave me a test that I was not prepared for. He said I took that test, and I flunked it royally.

He said I drug myself from class to class that morning. I was thinking, what's the use? I'm not going to make it. I'm probably going to flunk out of seminary.

And he said I finally left seminary that day, and en route to work, he said I determined in my heart I was going to ask that girl to run off with me. I knew she would eagerly accept. He said when I got to the place and got over in the company car there, here she comes bouncing down the steps, and she's got our assignment list, and she jumps in the front seat beside me, and down the road we go.

He said it takes me three different stops to get up enough nerve to pull that car over on the side of the road and ask her to leave with me. And he said finally I do. He said I pulled it over on the side, and he said I made my appeal.

I want you to leave with me. He said I've got a little money on the side here that I've been saving for a while, and says you and I can make it. We'll do all right.

And he said this girl looked at me wide eyed, her mouth dropped open, and after I made my appeal, she looked at me and she said I cannot believe what I'm hearing. And he said Brother Curran, this girl was lost. She was unsaved.

And here I am, not only a Christian, but a minister of the gospel, aspiring to ministry. And she said I cannot believe what I'm hearing. Do you mean to tell me that you would leave your wife, your children, and your ministry for a few minutes of pleasure? She said you don't know what you're asking.

She said I'll not leave with you. He said Don, I felt that, that size right there. He said I felt like crawling under the floor mat and the floorboard of the car.

I was devastated. God had used a lost girl to reprove me and save my marriage and my ministry and my testimony. But what had the relationship become friend? A high place.

Can I tell you something? It'd be best to leave all the job security and all the big bucks and all the affluence in the workplace and go and find a blue collared job somewhere. Then disgrace the name of the Lord by staying in a situation that you know you will inevitably fall in. Let me close with this tonight.

I want to give you just four steps in dealing with high places. Listen to these biblical exhortations. Number one, if you're really seriously minded enough to go all the way with God, the first thing I would encourage you to do is to remove the high place ruthlessly.

Ruthlessly. Now I want you to take your Bibles if you would and look with me in Matthew chapter number five. Matthew chapter number five.

Look at this. Don't miss this now. Look at Matthew chapter five verse twenty eight.

How does our Lord tell us to deal with sexual high places? Verse number twenty eight of Matthew chapter five, But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Verse thirty. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Now let me ask you a question, Finn. Was Christ saying the way to deal with these sexual strongholds, these sensual high places was to pluck out eyes and lap off hands literally? Well, we pray He wasn't. But no, in all seriousness, I don't believe that that's the emphasis there.

But here is what He is encouraging us to do, passionately, is you deal with anything in your life, any provision for the flesh in your life, you deal with it nothing short of ruthlessly if it leads you down the road to moral destruction and subsequent eternal destruction. As a matter of fact, William Grinnell says, what lust is so sweet or profitable that it is worth going to hell for. Are you with me? Listen to this.

Years ago, I was in Goldsboro, North Carolina, living there at the time. I got a phone call late at night, about 1130, from a layman in a church over near Zebulon, North Carolina. He says, is this Don Kern? I said, yes sir, it is.

He said, are you an evangelist? Yes. Were you over here at such and such church last year doing a series of meetings? I said, yes sir, I was. He said, listen, you talked about demonic activity.

You talked about oppression. You talked about possession. And I was wondering if I could come to your home tonight and talk to you.

He said, I'm in a desperate strait. And I said, you're over near Zebulon? Yes, but I knew it was an hour away. It was 1140 by this time.

He said, I've got to talk to you. I said, what's the problem? And he hemmed and hawed and shared in a generic sense for about 15 minutes, and finally I knew in his desperate condition and what he was saying to me, the bits and pieces, I finally said, and I interrupted him. I said, you've got a problem with sexual lust, don't you? Yes.

I said, well, sir, I said, I'm not going to have you come over tonight. I said, I will meet with you in the future. But I said, tell me what's going on.

And he told me the whole story. When he finished, I said to him on the phone, long distance there. I said, you really want victory in this area of moral purity? Yes.

Oh, yes. I really want to get a handle on this creature. I said, I want you to do two things.

I said, first of all, I said, you got a television in your home? Yes, I do. I said, rip it out of the wall. You throw it in the trash can.

You bash it to bits. I said, if you're struggling in your area, in the area of sexual purity, you will never gain victory in that area if you have a television in your home. Never.

That's not what he wanted to hear. You see, friend, the truth of the matter is he wanted to come to my home because he thought he had a demon. And he wanted me to cast out this demon where he would be totally delivered and no more problems from that day forward.

You see, a lot of us, we want a quick, instantaneous zap, but we're not willing to deal with a high place ruthlessly, with a repenting heart, with a broken and contrite spirit. And then I said this to him because he

told me during the conversation that he had been seeing a girl. And I said, have you morally defiled her? Yes, regularly.

I said, you want victory? Yes. Don't ever see her again. Break off the relationship.

You shake that thing from your hand like Paul shook that snake, that viper from his that came out of the fire. And then he made an appeal. He said, the preacher, she's been coming to church with me, and I believe she's right on the verge of being a Christian.

It wasn't safe. And I thought to myself, how deceived can a man be to think that God is honoring his witness while all the while he's defrauding and defiling this woman's body? I said, you want victory? Yes, sir, I do. Get rid of your TV and break off the relationship.

That's not what he wanted to hear. You know how he hung the phone up? Thank me, despondently, for my time. But then he said this.

He said, well, I do appreciate you spending some time with me over the phone. In his last remaining words, it was such a pronounced grief in those words that it was the same type of spirit that you glean from the rich young ruler who in response to our Lord, who said, go and sell everything that you have and give to the poor. He walked away very sorrowful in his heart.

You see, people want a quick fix. They want a subjective zap. But they don't want to deal with this thing day in and day out by not making provision for the flesh.

My recommendation to you tonight, if you're serious about your soul, not fruit, not a life of consecration, but your soul, friend, is deal with the high place ruthlessly. Ruthlessly. Secondly, deal with the high place thoroughly.

Thoroughly. Listen to this. 2 Corinthians 10, verses 4-6.

Remember we quoted a little while ago, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. And listen, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And listen to what Paul says beyond that.

And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Listen, friend, you're not in a position to set the battle in a ray. To conquer this problem that you have until your obedience is fulfilled.

Unless you're willing to go all the way with God. There is no victory for half-hearted people. You've got to deal with the high place thoroughly.

Take no prisoners. Take no prisoners. Is it a movie? Is it six or eight movies? Is it certain CDs? You know one guy up in Canada? We saw a touch of revival a couple of years ago.

This boy that had a huge bonfire. Nobody initiated it. A bunch of kids got together and said, we want to have a bonfire.

College-aged kids. They were throwing books on evolution and humanism in the fire. The girls were throwing their scanty clad attire, their sensual attire, their bathing suits into the fire.

And one boy brought 800 music CDs and burned it to the glory of God in the fire. Now that's revival. Purge from your home every wicked thing.

Do not settle for partial obedience. Let me just share out of my own heart. I won't preach this long the next few nights, but I just want to share the rest of this message with you.

But I'll tell you where God found me in the process of putting this message together. Many, many years ago now, I was standing in a fast food restaurant one day, and they had a poster there right to the side of where you place your order of a motion picture video. And they had a promotion going on that if you bought a certain value meal, you'd get this certain motion picture video for \$4.95. So my boys had told me at the time, they had gone to the Christian school just for a brief season.

They went there, and the boys were telling them, saying, hey, you need to check this movie out, man. It's great. So they said, Dad, we ought to rent that movie sometime.

I said, you know, this guy's a real adventuresome sort, you know, a lot of action-packed stuff in the movie, and I like that sort of stuff. And so they told me about it. I didn't know a whole lot about it, but I saw the movie advertised there, \$4.95 if you bought this value meal.

So I got my lunch, and I gave them \$5 for the movie. And I brought it home. It was Friday night.

It was family night. Normally, we do something special as a family. So when I showed it to my wife, she said, well, Don, you know, you've got to preview it before you see it.

And I said, yes, I know. So I went downstairs, you know, while she's fixing dinner, you know, and I pop in the VCR, and I didn't have time to watch this two-hour movie, you know, but I'm just hitting a few of the highlights. Well, I start fast-forwarding, and I stop and listen.

First thing I know, man, the guy uses God's name in vain. Now listen, our criteria for the movies that we watch or listen to, with the exception of historical novels, historical movies, where it might have some profanity in it, but here is our standard. This is our guideline.

Number one, we won't listen to anything that uses God's name in vain. Nothing that uses the name of God or the name of Jesus Christ in vain. Number two, we watch nothing with occultism or witchcraft or Satan activity in it.

Number three, we do not watch anything that has graphic violence in it just for the sake of graphic violence. There's a couple of movies that we've seen before, that are historical movies, that has some of that stuff in it. But even then, we try to tone it down and become very moderate in what we watch.

And then number four, there's no sexual content, no sensuality in the movies. You say, well, Preacher, that's your guidelines. I mean, what is there to watch out there? Not much, but there are some movies.

I put that thing in the VCR, and friend, before you know it, I mean, I'm just pausing here and there to watch a few things and listen to a few things. He uses God's name in vain. That should have been enough right there for me to eject it and take it to the garage and bash it to bits with my hammer.

But I fast-forwarded a little bit more, and then he used God's name in vain again. Next thing you know, they use Jesus Christ's name in vain. Then there's something strongly implied, while it doesn't show anything, it's strongly implied that he has a sexual encounter with a female star in the movie.

Something that we were very protective in not allowing our children to see. And then here comes the graphic violence. Graphic.

And the Holy Spirit's saying to me, you wouldn't dare let your children watch that. You wouldn't dare subject your family to the content of that movie. But friend, listen, I'm going to try to be funny when I say this.

I'm just being transparent with you. You know how difficult it is for a Baptist preacher to throw away \$4.95? I mean, that's the wrestling match. That's in my flesh.

And I'm thinking, well, you know, the least I can do, you know, is I'll bring them down, we'll watch the movie. But when it comes to those words, what words I've heard, I'll mute it. When it comes to that scene where it's strongly implied that they have a sexual encounter, I'll have everybody turn their head and I'll fast forward it.

There's a graphic violence when it shows up, you know, I'll have them turn their head during that too and I'll fast forward it. I say this with a broken heart. I was a compromiser.

I was a compromiser. And if you sit there in your home, even though you may not have a loved one or children or grandchildren around watching, and you sit there and you watch that stuff and defile your conscience, I declare unto you, you are a compromiser. And friend, one day you will give an account for what you subjected your life as well as the lives of others in your home to.

You don't think you're going to pay a price at that moment. And you won't at that moment. But down the road you will.

It will desensitize and ultimately destroy the hearts and lives of your children. Now, listen to this. Number three.

Give you two more. Number three. By the way, you say, well, whatever happened to that movie? I finally took it to the garage.

Friend, the peace and the sweetness of the presence of God did not return to our home until I took that movie to the garage and I bashed it to bits with a hammer. There was an influence of the presence there that had not been there before time. When I had not brought that movie in my home.

Number three, exercise debilitating accountability by getting radically honest. Exercise, I said, a debilitating accountability by getting radically honest with a member of your own sex that you feel spiritually compatible with. Now, listen, people.

The ideal accountability partner is your mates. But there are some men that cannot be transparent with their mates. Because their wives couldn't handle it.

And there are some women that could not dare share what's in their heart with their husbands because their husband couldn't handle it. But you find somebody that you feel spiritually compatible with of your own sex. Men with men, women with women that you can be transparent and said, brother, hold my feet to the fire.

Byron Pollis from Life Action Ministries. We talk periodically almost without exception. The last thing he'll ask me before we get off the phone is to say, brother Don, how are you doing morally? How are you doing

morally? I appreciate the question.

I don't know if you read this before, but here are seven questions used periodically by a group of pastors to challenge each other when they meet each week. This would be something good for a woman's group. It'd be good for a layman's group.

But I want you to listen to these seven questions that these men ask one of these preachers. First of all, have you been with a woman anywhere this past week that might be seen as compromising? Number two, have any of your financial dealings lacked integrity? Number three, have you exposed yourself to any sexually explicit material? Number four, have you spent adequate time in Bible study and prayer? Number five, have you given priority time to your family? Number six, have you fulfilled the mandates of your calling? Number seven, have you just lied to me? We need to hold each other accountable, don't we? That's a church that's in love with Christ and in love with one another. And then number four, deal with the high place, but don't forget this, to put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's an act of faith. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. We desperately, in the hour in which we live, need a theology of replacement.

And God's dress code. You want to know God's dress code? Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, when you put on Christ, ladies, you're going to dress modest.

You know nothing of putting on Christ if you dress immodest, if you dress in a seductive way to provoke men sensually. William Law said it like this. This is what it means to put on Christ.

From morning to night, keep Jesus in your heart. Long for nothing, desire nothing, hope for nothing, but to have all that is within you changed into the Spirit and the character of the Holy Jesus. Friend, in other words, it's a worshipful meditation of Christ.

I fix my heart upon Him. I meditate upon Him. And we behold Him as in a glass.

The glory of the Lord. We are changed into that same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. You know, I oftentimes wonder why God used Spurgeon so mightily.

Yes, I think he had some gifts that most men do not possess. But I tell you, friend, I believe that the greatest reason that God used Spurgeon so greatly, and even today his sermons continue to be published at a rapid rate, you know, to accommodate the needs. People love Spurgeon more and more.

They appreciate Spurgeon. You hear people quote Spurgeon all the time. But you know what? In his diary, what he recorded toward the end of his life, he said this, that in forty years, forty years of being a Christian, he said, I can never recall there ever being any more than fifteen waking moments that I have not thought on Jesus.

And friend, you can't read a sermon of Spurgeon without seeing Christ. I mean, Christ is central. I asked your buddy, Brother Ron Reisinger, I said, who would you motivate me or encourage me to follow after to learn how to preach? And he said, Bunyan and Spurgeon.

Because he said, they unveil Christ. That's pretty good counsel. I was asked to speak at a men's conference not long ago.

And they had workshops. And they asked me to speak the same message twice, two days in a row. And they said, would you please preach on moral purity for men? And so we had a large group of men the first day and another large group of men the second day, a whole entire different group.

And in my study, my preparation to address these gentlemen, I was reading and studying very closely three articles by my brother John Piper dealing with sexual purity. And there was one quote, I tell you, it's what I shared with the deacons tonight before we came in here. I tell you, it just stood out to me.

And you know, it's the key to overcoming sin, not allowing sin to put you in a chokehold and strangle the very spiritual life out of you. And it's this quote right here. He said, fight sin or fight sexual impurity by feeding faith with the knowledge of an irresistibly glorious God.

When we find our superior satisfaction in Christ, why should I stoop to try to satisfy only for a season, just for a few seconds, the pleasures of sin? When I can find my superior satisfaction in him that loves me and gave himself for me. But I tell you, friend, we've got to deal with the high places before we can put on Christ and know the superior satisfaction in him. Well, once again, it's kind of scattered tonight, everything I've shared with you, but I pray that God might use it directly to your heart and it might be a benefit to you and your spiritual life.

Shall we pray together? Thank you, Father, tonight for the reality of sustained victory in Christ. Lord, we know all these principles. They're inspired.

They're good. The Word of the Lord is perfect. It's adequate, more than sufficient to give us victory.

But Lord, sustained victory is not just in a principle. It's in a person. The Lord Jesus Christ.

So, Lord, I pray that in the upcoming days, may our hearts be ravished by the love that we experience in looking to Christ. And Lord, may we be changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Lord, I pray tonight for believers.

If there's anything they need to change, judge in their home, in their very possession, Lord, they need to rid themselves of as a high place. I pray, O God, move them to do that, Lord. May they resolve to go all the way with You and deal with these things radically and ruthlessly and thoroughly, Lord, to Your glory.

So, God, we know that judgment must begin at the house of God. And Lord, I'm more convinced than ever. You know my heart, Lord, that there will be no revival until there's a reformation.

A reformation, Lord, of our moral life, of our spiritual behavior, our conduct, Lord. May we be willing in our heart of hearts to go all the way with You, because, Lord, this is well-pleasing in Your sight. Lord, we'll give You all the praise.

Thank You for speaking to our hearts now, Lord. May You be glorified through what we have received in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let me just say this before a pastor comes tonight. You know, the Bible said, as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him. And some here tonight, you've never received Christ Jesus the Lord.

You've prayed prayers. You've made professions. But there's no reality of His person in your heart.

Can I tell you tonight, seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near. Because some of us have been too haphazard about this thing of conversion.

You prayed a prayer one time, an impulsive prayer. You prayed, but there was no godly sorrow. There was no seeing of Christ.

There was no willingness to part with your sin. You just prayed a prayer. You made a decision.

And everybody lauded you, and everybody applauded that decision. But in your heart, when the smoke cleared and the emotion wore out, there was no reality of Christ's presence living in you. But let me tell you something tonight, you can't put off the old man.

You can't destroy high places. You certainly cannot walk in Christ unless you have received Christ. And this Savior who shed His blood and gave His life for sinners, if you'll come tonight as a simple child and receive Him, He'll show Himself strong by His power to save you.

You look to Him. Look to Him. It's a look that not only saves, but it satisfies and sustains us in life.

God bless you.

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