

Colossians #7 - Living Kingdom Down Not Culture Up

- I'm Pastor Mark Driscoll here. The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, really excited to provide for you the series of sermons based on the book of Colossians. It's an amazing book of the New Testament, where the apostle Paul is writing from prison to a newly planted church. And we took a few months here at the Trinity Church to go verse by verse through this book of the Bible. I've had the honor of preaching and teaching, perhaps a few dozen books of the Bible in my career. And this is the first time I've ever been through Colossians and I'm really excited that you can join me. It's always interesting when you experience another culture. I could still remember when I was a little boy, my dad was a Union Drywaller, and we lived right next to an international airport. So the planes would fly overhead and shake the windows on the home. And what would happen is people would move to the United States of America seeking oftentimes a better life for themselves and for their family. And they didn't have anyone that they knew. They didn't have a job awaiting them. They didn't have a lot of money or possessions with them. So the plane would land. They would get off the plane, the plane rather, and then simply just sort of land wherever they were and live there for awhile. And we lived right next to the airport. And so in our immediate neighborhood, the number of cultures, people from various nations, languages, it was almost unbelievable. It seemed like every house that I went to when I was a little boy, that family, the parents of my friends spoke a different language than I did. And I remember as a little boy going to one friend's home from East India, another from Africa, another from an Asian country, another from a Latin American country. And every time I would go to their home to be with my friends, I would realize I just stepped into a completely different culture. The language was different. The customs were different. The furnishings were different. The holidays were different. The foods were different. The religions were different. Everything was altogether and totally different. And as a little kid growing up, I just realized that what's normal to me is not normal to everyone. And that as I experienced life, other people are living in the same proximity as me, but they're having a completely different interpretation of the events that we're experiencing. And this was even heightened. I don't know how many of you have traveled internationally. And if you'd done that, you get off the plane and ask yourself, what are these people doing? They live life completely differently than you. And we had this experience traveling as a family internationally over the years when the kids were little, all of a sudden you're in a completely different culture. The way they think, the way they act is very, very different. And it takes a while to adjust and for a while, you feel a little bit disoriented, you're not sure what is happening or how you should be responding. And if you had this kind of cross cultural experience, it's like that when you become a Christian. It's as if you grow up in a culture with a set of assumptions and presumptions and ideologies and perspectives. And then all of a sudden you meet Jesus and you start reading the Bible and the Holy spirit takes up residence in you. It begins to transform your understanding. And now all of a sudden you realize that your citizenship isn't here, your residence is here, but your citizenship is there. And as a result, all of a sudden, you're starting to learn about this new culture that you're a part of called the kingdom of God. And it's starting to affect how you see the culture that you were a part of previously. Well, that's the experience that those in Colossae are having. And if you're new, we like to go

through books of the Bible and study them verse by verse. And we're in a book called Colossians. And this week we're in chapter three, verses one through 11, learning how to live kingdom down, not culture up. And the first thing it's gonna tell us is that our citizenship is ultimately in Jesus' kingdom. The Bible uses this language that we're pilgrims and we're sojourners, that we're on a road trip through this world to ultimately get to our home. And our home is ultimately the kingdom of God. And this really changes how we see our life and our culture, because ultimately before we know the Lord Jesus, we don't think of ourselves apart from our culture. This is our identity. This is our value system. This is how we behave until we meet Jesus and then everything goes upside down. So he says it this way, Colossians 3:1-4, "If then you have been raised with Christ." So what he's saying is if you're a Christian, so my question to you is today, are you a Christian? Have you turned from sin, trusted in Jesus Christ, received the new life that only Jesus Christ can give? So this is him raising the question, are you a Christian? And if you are, then there are some implications and applications. Seek the things that are where? You can read, you can do it, come on, you can do it. Seek the things that are where?

- [Congregation] Above.

- Above. This is really important to understand these two big concepts, above and below, where Christ is. What he's saying is Jesus lived on the earth and He died and He rose and then He ascended back into heaven. And I need you to know that Jesus is alive and well right now and He is seated in His kingdom. He is seated in His kingdom, so that's where Jesus is. We're down here on the earth. Jesus is up there in the kingdom, seated at the right hand of God. That's the seed of prominence and preeminence. Set your minds. What should we think about? How should we consider life? How should we perceive the world? Set your minds, and this is an issue of focusing, of intention. This is something that takes a bit of self discipline and motivation. This is something that doesn't just happen. This is something that we need to concentrate on. We need to make an attentive effort toward. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. You see the difference. Culture is down here on the earth. Kingdom is up there with Jesus. We live down here on the earth. We need to get our minds to peer into the kingdom and to see things as Jesus would had them. For you have died, so when you become a Christian, the old you is dead, it's gone. Who you were is changed at the deepest and most fundamental level, and you're dead to your old way of life, and your life, your new life, your eternal life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, Jesus is coming back. He's gonna take the kingdom and bring it to the cultures of the earth. Then you also will appear with Him in glory. That's the end when God is done and all of His work is ultimately completed. What he's talking about here is a Christian approach to culture. There's a lot that I could say on this. Let me just give you a few brief summations of a couple of concepts. When it comes to how Christians should engage with culture, there are a few different perspectives. The non-Christian looks at culture and says, I don't know what you're talking about. The kingdom of God, eternal life, Jesus ruling and reigning as a great king with a throne, I don't even know what you're talking about. I don't acknowledge the kingdom of God. All I know is the cultures of the earth. Now there are some that we call more progressive or liberal Christians who would say we

have our cultural vision. We have our way of doing relationships, identity, and sexuality. We have our way that we believe life should be on the earth. And we believe that God should bless that. That God should honor that. That God should take our vision and make it happen. And so then they'll proof text or cherry pick the Bible. God is love, God serves. So God, if you love us, you'll serve us and give us our vision for our life, our identity, our relationships, our sexuality, for our view of how life should be. Your job is to bless our vision. Then there is what I would call the more traditional Christian view. And that is that God doesn't really help until you die. So it's often said give your life to Jesus and then when you die, you can go to heaven. Is that true or false?

- [Man] True.

- That's true. But what do you do before that? So let's say you're 17 today and you meet Jesus and Jesus is like life insurance. He doesn't really kick in until you're kicked out, right? Until it's all kick the bucket. So til all this kicking is done, it's not really time. Well then what happens is you don't really think that Jesus or Christianity really has anything to do with your life. That you just live your life and Jesus kicks in when you die. So Jesus has two jobs. He forgives you for all the mess you make, and then He takes you to heaven when you die. He doesn't change your life so that you stop making the same messes. Now you do die and go to heaven if you belong to Jesus. But the truth is that ultimately the kingdom of God begins, not the moment you die, but the moment you meet Jesus, okay? It begins the moment you meet Jesus 'cause it's eternal life. That's not just that it lasts forever, but it begins the moment that you meet Jesus. So what he's going to give us here is a fourth perspective. And that is simply this. There is the kingdom of God and the cultures of the earth. It's above and below, it's above and below. It's above and below. And we are not to live culture up, but kingdom down. Understand that? What that means is this world is wrong. I'll just let you in on a little secret. This world is wrong, this world is confused. This world is corrupted. This world is not the way it was made to be. It's not the way it will eternally be. This is the way that we have made it and God needs to fix it. And so as we look at whatever culture we are in, we have to compare that culture to the kingdom of God. Now what happens is we're citizens of that kingdom, but we're residents of our culture. Theologians will use this language of already, but not yet. So God sees things in eternity. God sees things in completion. So when God sees us, He sees us all saved, heaven and hell, the kingdom come to the earth, everything done. He sees it in completion. So that's already completed in the sight of God, but it's not yet experienced by us. Here we are, we're in the middle, we're not at the end. God's not done with us. We're still in process and so we are waiting patiently and hopefully growing continually. Now, that being said, when it comes to this issue of the kingdom of God and the culture, two things I need you to know. Number one, that ultimately that kingdom is coming to change all cultures. See, we live in a world where people don't have any concept beyond their culture. As Christians, he says to set your mind on things that are above the earth, above the cultures. That ultimately that kingdom is coming to the earth and that king will rule over all cultures. Therefore we are to live as citizens of that kingdom and residents of this culture. This is how Jesus taught us to pray, thy kingdom

- [Congregation] Come.

- Come, come. Thy kingdom come. So we are to think of ourselves. We are to consider ourselves in light of God's kingdom. What that means is in God's kingdom, people tell the truth. So we're supposed to tell the truth. In God's kingdom, people love each other. So we're supposed to love each other. In God's kingdom, people forgive each other. So we're supposed to forgive each other. In God's kingdom, there is justice. So we're to pursue justice. In God's kingdom, God is most important, but human life is incredibly valued. So on the earth, we are to honor God above all and also hold human life in great dignity. See, that's how the kingdom is. So as citizens of the kingdoms and residents here, we get to know the kingdom culture. And then we want to live in such a way that we're inviting others to get a foretaste and a foreshadowing of our great king, the Lord Jesus, and what His kingdom is like. This is a little complicated, but let me give you something that's really encouraging. If you belong to the Lord Jesus, in the kingdom of God, you will be perfect. It'll be a perfect you. How many of you have ever thought of yourself after the resurrection of the dead and the coming of the eternal kingdom? Have you ever asked yourself, what am I gonna be like? Now you'll still be quirky 'cause your personality will go with you, amen. But it'll be a perfect you, fully healed up from all your hurts, fully reconciled with all those relationships with other Christians, fully settled in your mind of who God is and His affection for you? No more sin, no more suffering, no more shame.

- [Man] Amen. And I want you to start to think of yourself in that final state, because here's the truth, God is working on you, but He's not done with you. When you are resurrected like Jesus was, and you're in the kingdom of God forever, it's gonna be the real you. I need to be careful with this. Who you are today is not yet the real true you. It's you with sin, it's you with pain, it's you with regret. When God is done with you, that'll be the real you, that'll be the true you, that'll be the eternal you. And as you look back on this life, a few million years from now, this life will seem like a very short time. And who you really are is the person that God has for you to be forever. Here's why I tell you that, I want you to be encouraged. I don't want you to just look back at all of your faults, failures, and flaws, we need to acknowledge those. I don't want you to just be discouraged by where you're at today. I want you to be hopeful and encouraged that He who began a good work in you will see it through to completion. That the God who loves you will keep loving you. The God who has changed you will keep changing you. And that God ultimately has an eternal plan in His kingdom where the Lord Jesus is ruling and reigning. And all of the cultures are subjected to the culture of the kingdom of God. And there'll be a perfect you forever. I want you to think of yourself in that way. Now some you realize we're not there yet, amen. If you're married to someone, you say, I can't wait to be married to that person. Okay, that's gonna be awhile. Let's just be honest, that's gonna be a while. But what He does for us here is He wants us to start to think about what is the kingdom like and who will I be in the kingdom? Now as a citizen of the kingdom today, I want to live in light of the culture of the kingdom, not the culture of the earth. And I want to start to live like the person I'm going to be eternally, not like the person that I used to be. You understand this? Okay, well, we'll continue. Either way, whether you do or don't, and hopefully it gets clear. But he's gonna then ask how do we then see ourselves and conduct ourselves relationally, sexually, and regarding our identity? And so he then gets into three particular issues. Sex in Jesus' kingdom. According to the

kingdom of God, how are we to conduct ourselves when it comes to the issue of intimacy? Now, how many of you would agree that our culture is a little confused on this issue, true or false? I don't care what your political view is. We all agree there's a problem, amen. We just disagree on what the problem is, but we all agree there's a problem. That what happens is when you don't understand who made you, when you don't understand who you will give an account to, when you don't understand who you will be eternally, you don't know how to conduct yourself on the earth and the first place that it often shows up, or sometimes the most painful place that it reveals itself is in your sexuality. So he says it this way, Colossians 3:5-7, "Put to," what, "death."

- [Congregation] Death. "Put to death therefore, what is earthly in you." What is down here, what is cultural, what is lesser than, what is base, what is more animalistic. "Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, what's coming? The wrath of God is coming." We'll talk about this. "In these, you too once walked when you were living in them." So you know what? Before you met Jesus and you became a citizen of the kingdom and you had a vision for who you would be at the end, there's just this parade in human history. We're all perverted and drunk and tolerant and confused and depressed and naked and celebrating. Just we have parades so that if we're filthy, we're filthy together and that makes us feel less filthy. What he's saying is this is just how it is. This is just how it is. You leave milk out in July, in Phoenix, it goes bad. That's just the way that it is. That's just the way that it is. And what he's saying is when you meet Jesus, this part of you changes and you need to understand that it is changed. So what he says is that apart from the kingdom of God, when it comes to issues of intimacy, he has this little list: sexual immorality. The word there is the same word that we get pornography from. This is all kinds of sexual sin. This is all kinds of impurity and infidelity. And then he talks about impurity. This is anything that's dirty or gross. Perhaps you've done something, you say, yeah, that was dirty, that was gross. Passion, this is out of control desire. It's a good thing to be passionate, but this is passion going in the wrong direction. Evil desire, these are longings, cravings, fantasies, addictions, compulsions, longings that are more animalistic and they're less Godly. This is you on your bad day, in your worst moment. Covetousness, this is wanting what is not yours? I wish I had their spouse, I wish I had their body. I wish I had their experience. They got to do X, Y, and Z, I wish I could do that. And let's just be honest that a lot of marketing and stuff that's on the internet is just to open your eyes to things that other people are doing to get you to covet what they have or what they do. And then the last thing that he lists here is idolatry. Now we tend not to see idolatry in our culture. We tend to see it in other people's cultures. How many of you have walked into another culture, like these people are so confused? And you walk into your culture and it's just how we see gender, how we see marriage, how we see sexuality, how we see family, how we see recreation, how we see holiday. Tell you a story, some years ago, one of my first experiences cross-cultural, I took a missions trip to India. Got off the plane, was out in the middle of literally nowhere. I felt like I stepped back into national geographic. There's a dude behind an ox with a plow. I mean this is for real happening on the earth? I didn't know this still existed. I'm in the middle of rural India. It's the same as it was 6,000 years ago. And I'm walking along the road to go preach under a thatched hut, to a pastors conference, through a translator, and every so often I see

these little shrines and in them, there's a little god that's worshiped and they leave a little bit of money and fruit and there's blood and chicken feathers all over because they made a sacrifice, murdering a chicken to the local fertility god. And I thought these people for real need Jesus, amen. And then I got to the pastors conference and I talked to one of the pastor's wives and she's like, "Oh, how are you liking India?" I was like different, it's for sure different. I said, have you ever been to the States? She said, "I went once, but I'll never go again." I said, why is that? She said, "I can't stomach all the idolatry." I was like, hey lady, I just passed the murdered chicken to the fertility god. I said, what do you mean? She said, "I went to the stadium and everybody worships athletes." She said it was a temple bigger than what I've ever seen. I was like, oh, yeah, and we're all wearing their jersey. Holy smokes we're all pagans. And she said, "Yeah, and you guys dress up like chickens and roosters and sea hawks and eagles." I'm like, ah, oh my gosh, I just thought it was football. I didn't know it was a stadium where we were gonna go in and murder our own birds, I didn't know that. You see what I'm saying? For us, it's entertainment, for us, it's culture. For us, it's just how we do life until we have a cross cultural experience and then we realize that culture, we can see their idols, but they can see our idols. And so he's talking about here is idolatry. What is idolatry? Idolatry is worshiping anyone or anything other than God. Romans tells us that they worshiped and served created things rather than the creator, God, who is forever praised, amen. But ultimately, God is creator, everything is created. We're to worship creator, enjoying steward creation. An inversion happens where someone or something becomes like God to us. It becomes the center of our life and it establishes our identity. As a result, for some people, their gender, their sexuality, their freedom to do whatever they want with whomever they want, becomes for them a god-like commitment. That's why they will evangelize others to join them. That's why they have a religious devotion and zealotry for their sexuality. That's why a lot of pagan religions have, as part of its action, illicit activity. It's just the way that it goes. So when we see life on the earth, we just see people just doing things that are pleasurable. God looks down and He sees people doing sacred things, doing worship things, doing idolatrous things. That's why worship, we're told in Romans 12, is to offer your body as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Whatever you offer your body to, that is your object of worship. So when God looks down and He sees two 20-somethings move into an apartment together, He sees that as a temple, He sees the bed as an altar and He sees what they do as a religious act and sacrificing of their bodies unto their ultimate god, which is not Him. How many of you have your minds just exploded? Your minds just exploded. What he's just done for us is he's taken us from the culture of the earth, he's pulled us up into the kingdom of heaven. And he said, take a look at it from God's perspective. It looks very different, it looks very different. How many of you would say that sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry, pretty much explains America. We could just summarize that as America, amen. Every culture has a problem. Ours has a particularly pronounced problem. So what is the answer? Well, he gives us a great encouragement. Put to death. Kill it, how many of you have tried to wound your sin? How many of you have tried to leash it? How many of you tried to cage your sin? What he's saying is kill your sin, whatever it is that is in the process of killing your relationship with God, you've got to put that to death. What you don't wanna do is keep your sin alive because invariably it comes back to harm you. And so you could put it to death. Here's why, Jesus died

for your sin so you can put your sin to death. Jesus died for your sins so you could put your sin to death. Now some of you would ask why, because here's what... I'll tell you a little secret. I know you didn't know this. Sometimes sin feels good. Did you know that? That's why it's so popular, amen. That's why we keep doing it. We're like, well, I liked it. Well, put it to death, why? Because, here's a little motivation, the wrath of God is coming. You gotta say it like that otherwise nobody pays attention, but the wrath of God is coming. So let's talk about the wrath of God. Now, most of the time, preachers won't talk about the wrath of God. We'll read it really fast and then collect the offering. But because we're going through a book of the Bible, let's look at the wrath of God. Now the wrath of God is coming. That means it's not here yet. I was reading a story recently where some people were playing on train tracks until the train came and then it was a problem, amen. And so we were like, everything's fine. The train's coming, get off the tracks. I've been here three days, I haven't seen any train. It's coming, it's coming, get off the tracks. The world doesn't believe that it's living between the tracks. The world doesn't believe that God is actually going to do anything. God is not negligent, He's patient. And He's wanting to give everybody an opportunity to get off the tracks before the train comes. Now, when it comes to the wrath of God, this is inextricably connected to the holiness of God. When it comes to the God of the Bible, it speaks of Him in terms of His attributes, love, grace, mercy, patience, kindness, justice. The number one attribute of God in the entire Bible is God's holiness. That means He is pure, He is different, He is other. That we are earthly down here in the culture, that He is heavenly up there in the kingdom. And that as a result of Him being holy and us being unholy, God has a problem. And that is that we have sinned against Him, that we have rebelled against Him, that we have declared war on Him, that we have committed cosmic treason against Him. And as a result, that problem that we have created must be resolved. And that is done so through the wrath of God. Now God is not capricious, God is not just short-tempered. God is not unjust, but the punishment always fits the crime. But the wrath of God is where the justice of God comes in absolute proportion to whatever the offense was. Now, we all like this when we're the person that has been offended. So let's say someone steals \$10,000 from you. How much do you want back? Say 10,000. If somebody comes, says a dollar, we'll call it even and you're like, nope, that's not justice. If someone does something, you want the consequence to be equal to the crime, that's justice. We feel this very clearly when we're the offended party. Now we tend to change our mind when we're the guilty party. You notice that? All of a sudden you're like, ah, come on, man, forgive me. Let me off the hook, let it go, brother. And that's what we do. So we gotta look at it, not from the guilty party, but from the offended party, look at it from God's perspective. And so what God determines in things He will do is He sends His only son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to live without any sin, the life we should have lived. And to go to the cross and to pay the debt that we should have paid. And on the cross, the wrath of the father is poured out on the son. So on the cross, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That's where the wrath of God is poured out on the son of God. So if you belong to the Lord Jesus, the wrath of God is diverted away from you. The Bible uses the word propitiated, it's diverted away from you and it's pointed to Jesus. It would be like you stole \$10,000, it's your day in court. They say that you gotta repay \$10,000. You don't have \$10,000. And Jesus shows up and says, here's \$10,000, I will pay their debt. And He loves you and He forgives you. And He pays the penalty that you should have paid. God does that for us at the

cross of Jesus. So the wrath of God is poured out on the son of God and it's diverted from us. Now, how about those who never received Christ? How about those who never belong in or belong to rather or believe in Jesus while the wrath of God remains on them? The wrath of God remains on them. Ultimately, there'll be a sentencing, there'll be a judgment and there'll be an eternal state. The Bible references that as hell. It says at the end of Isaiah that the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. You know how long forever and ever is? It's forever and ever. It says in Daniel 12:2 that those who sleep in the dust of the earth, they will arise to everlasting life or everlasting death. That everybody's gonna live forever. The only difference is where, this is justice. This is the wrath of God that also at the cross of Jesus, we experienced the love of God, the grace of God, the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God, the patience of God. But for those who reject those things, the wrath of God remains for them. Now here's the little key about the wrath of God. The wrath of God comes in two forms. There's passive and active. Passive wrath is described early in Romans where God hands people over to do whatever they want. It's like God let's go the leash and we go do whatever we want, that's passive wrath. And what passive wrath does, it allows you to do whatever you wanna do until God's active wrath shows up. And then God's active wrath stops you, judges you, and has a consequence for you. I'll read it for you in Romans 2:5, same author. "Because of your heart and unrepentant hearts, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." We could scream tolerance, we can stream diversity. We could scream I get to define who I am. And God says only for a little while. And ultimately, I'm sending my son back and there will be a judgment of the living and the dead. There'll be eternal consequence and there will be wrath. And I know this isn't popular. I probably shouldn't preach it right after Easter. We just had such a fun time. We had lilies, everybody was dressed up. The choir was clapping. I probably should hand you a water bottle and give you a series of good feeling stories. But here we find ourselves in the wrath of God. And it's really important to know what you're saved from so that you're grateful for.

- [Man] Right.

- It's really good to know what you're saved from so you know what you're grateful for. I really love Jesus. I'm very grateful that I'm not going to hell. I'm very grateful that I don't have to sleep with a helmet on and one eye open. I am grateful, I just am. 'Cause the wrath of God has already been taken care of for me at the cross of Jesus. But the passive wrath of God is where God just lets you do whatever you want until the active wrath shows up to deal with you. I'll give you an analogy. Let's say you live in a home that has a very small, very minor gas leak. And you think to yourself, mmm, it's not a big deal. And I've lived in this house with this minor slow gas leak for a long time and nothing's ever happened, I'm fine. All you're doing is storing up gas for the day of explosion, flame, and fire. Every human being who's living apart from Jesus Christ is living that way. If you're here, you're not getting... Let's say, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you. And I wanna warn you, warn you, warn you. If you don't know Jesus, you're not getting away with anything. You're storing up everything. I need you to know that, I need you to know that. It's like you're living in a house with a slow gas leak and every day there's more gas in the house. And you tend to think that every day you're just getting away with more and nothing will

happen. It feels that way until the match is struck and the flames begin. And that's the exact kind of language that the Bible uses for hell, which is the ultimate expression of the wrath of God and the justice of God and the place that the Lord Jesus speaks of more than anyone else in the Bible. Here's what I'm telling you. We take ourselves way too seriously. We don't take God seriously enough, we don't. Especially on these issues, on these issues. I've never seen a group of people get together to protest themselves. We are nasty and we need help. We take ourselves way too seriously. We don't take God seriously enough. And what he is saying is, okay, think of it this way, what you're doing right now, are you gonna be doing that in the kingdom of God?

- [Man] No.

- No. In the kingdom of God, boyfriends and girlfriends will not rent apartments, amen. Just so you know that, just throwing it out there, right? In the kingdom of God, a man will not have a husband, excuse me, well, we won't have that either or a wife. I will check all the boxes. So in the kingdom of God, a man will not have a husband and he will not have a wife and a girlfriend or a wife and a husband, amen. It's just there's too many people at the top of the cake. You see, his world is wrong.

- [Man] Amen.

- Let's throw it out there. Now I just made sense of everything, amen. And when it's all said and done, you're like, well, what will it be like? Well, it won't be like that. Okay, then here's the big idea, then stop doing that. Because that's not normal, that's not right. That won't be forever. You won't stand before the Lord Jesus and He's like, bring it here. It's not like that. You're like, well, we're not gonna be watching that in the kingdom. Well, then stop watching it. We're not gonna be doing that in the kingdom. Then stop doing it because the point is, you're gonna stop doing it forever, may as well start today. Okay, might as well start today. Now here's what I want you to know. This is actually good for you. This is where most people disagree, this is the objection. Oh, there you go again. You know what, God says where He sets you on fire. Yeah, just always say it like that. Ooh, I was supposed to be scared like we're in a Scooby-Doo episode. Okay, I do want you to be a little bit scared, okay? 'Cause hell is hot, forever is a long time. And I just think you should factor that in to all your decisions, okay? But in addition to that, the Bible says that it is filled with good news. And what this means is when God warns us against something, it's because it's bad for you. Now we don't believe this. How many of you are parents and you raise children who, when you tell them something don't believe that you're telling them for their good, amen. You ever raised a child? This is what children... You tell the kids, don't do that. They're like, ah, ah, you're just domineering. Lot of rules, trying to keep me from lighting off fireworks in my bedroom at 3:00 a.m. while I drink Mountain Dew. 'Cause that's what kids do unless you tell them otherwise. Say no, no, that's not good for you, Johnny. That's not good for you. Parents make rules to protect their children from harm. God is a father like that. So what we have here on the earth in our culture, our highest view is sexuality. That's not God's highest view. In fact, God came to earth and He was a virgin until 30. And then He went into public

ministry and He was still a virgin and He died a virgin and then He went to heaven as a virgin. He's coming back as a virgin. And I think He's pretty great guy. And I think He actually lived pretty great life. And I think that He was able to live a full human life without any, any sexual experience, including that, which is sinful. So if we're gonna take the king and we're gonna take His kingdom and we're gonna make that the standard for normal, then we need to understand that self control is a good thing. And that even singleness is not secondary, though marriage has to be honored by all. And ultimately, we need to realize that if God tells us not to do some things, it's for our good, not because He's withholding something, but because He's protecting from something. And what's very, very curious is that the Bible doesn't have, as its vision, sex. That's the culture's vision. That's the culture's view of heaven. What the Bible has is a deep, meaningful, purposeful, passionate relationship with God that is satisfying at the soul level. And then chastity before marriage, you can Google that word, it's important. Chastity before marriage means nothing. And then fidelity in marriage, that's God's vision. That's the kingdom vision. So when the kingdom comes down, there's chastity before marriage and there's fidelity in marriage. If you see anything else, what you're seeing is earthly and something that when Jesus comes back will be put to death. Something that's so bad that Jesus died for it and something that's so bad that we need to put it to death. Now what's interesting, I'll tell you why it's good news. If you give the sciences time, eventually they catch up with the scriptures. So what is happening now is biopsychologists, those that work in the field of brain study and of addiction treatment, they realize that chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage, actually safeguards people and is for their good. This is the latest brain science. So I'll share a little bit with you. When someone has an intimate experience, there is released, in the brain, something called an opiate. It affects the same segment center of the brain as heroin. You ever seen anybody on heroin? People are into heroin, can we all agree on that point? If you try heroin, you're into heroin because it affects neurochemically, biologically, a part of your brain that brings you such pleasure, that ultimately you become addicted to it, bonded to it, desirous of it, consumed by it, can't stop it. Intimate experiences affect the same part of the brain and produce the same kind of chemical, neurological, biological reaction. Some sociologists and psychologists, they'll call it a biochemical love potion. Now here's what that means. The purpose is to bond you to the thing that gives you the experience. I'll give you an example. When I was a little boy, we were poor. So you got one pair of shoes. And if they wear out, you still had to wear them. So the front came off of my tennis shoes. So I had to repair my shoes. So I found super glue. I was a little boy, I didn't know what superglue was. First, I tried regular glue and it rained a lot and that didn't work. And so I was looking for a little better glue. The superglue came in a little tiny tube and I read it and it said, do not ingest. And I thought, hmm, that's weird. But I obeyed it, and it's why I'm here today. And then it said something to the effect be very, very cautious because this stuff really works. Well, everything says that. So I put it on the shoe and I held the toe together and I held it for a really long time until it seemed dry. And then I let go of the shoe and it was totally stuck to my fingers. And I'm like, oh my gosh, I and the shoe are now one. But at the wrong part of my anatomy. You know what I'm saying? I got the shoe stuck to my foot. And I literally had to pry the shoe off of my foot. And it took some of my skin, it was that bonded. Sex is like that. It's a bonding agent because in the Bible says that a man and a woman shall be one flesh, and it's saying that this experience bonds them together as one. Okay, married couples. Single people,

you could weep bitterly, but married couples, you can answer this question, okay? True or false, this is a good thing.

- [Man] True. Okay, two guys said true. We don't have a movement, but we have a humble beginning. So what this does is it's a bonding agent that God intends to bring a husband and wife together so that they're one. They long for each other, they enjoy each other. They desire one another, they're into each other. What happens if I go around bonding myself to lots of people? What if I go around bonding myself to lots of things? And then I have to rip myself apart over and over and over. Some of you, I love you, I'm your pastor. I'm glad you're here. The Lord Jesus Christ can and will heal you, but it hurts, amen. And it leaves scars at the soul level because you were bonded and then you were ripped apart and then you were bonded and you were ripped apart and you were bonded and you were ripped apart. And God loves you and that's not good for you. And when He tells you not to do something, it's not just because He's trying to kill your joy. It's because He's trying to protect your soul. That's how God works. And so whatever you're into, you're bonding yourself with. And so when He says, put it to death, what He's saying is, you used to bond every day. Now you bond once a month, stop bonding all together. It's just not a good idea. It's not good for you. When we hear the commands of God behind it, we need to understand the father heart of God, which is to protect His children from harm. The next one is relationships in Jesus' kingdom. Colossians 3:8-10, "But now you must put them all away." He gives this little list: "Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth." And I would say today, that includes from your fingers or just your thumb. "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator." What he saying is don't be like you, be like Jesus. Don't get up every morning in the mirror and say, I gotta be true to you. Look up every morning and say, I gotta be true to you. I wanna be like you. I wanna be increasingly Lord Jesus, like you 'cause eternally, I'm gonna be like you. So I wanna start being like you today. So here's how relationships happen on the culture below. Anger, this is where you're frustrated. You're annoyed, you're grumpy. You're getting a little agitated, right? Wrath, now you could see it. They get the crazy eyes, right? Some of you are married to the crazy eyes. You're like I know where we're at now. There's the crazy eyes, okay? They're boiling now, they're upset. Malice is where now I'm not gonna sit here anymore. I'm not gonna take it. I'm gonna say something, I'm gonna do something. Slander, now I'm gonna attack your character. You blank, you never blank, and you always blank. We do that at my house. Have you ever done that at your house? You blank, you never blank, you always blank. That's slander. I'm guilty of it too. We all have something to work on here, amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Well, you're very excited to amen my sin but earlier, when I was talking about your stuff, I didn't get that degree of enthusiasm. Just pointing something out here, just trying to help. Obscene talk, obscene talk is, this is where we speak ill of others. This is where we gossip. This is where we invite other people in, who are not part of the solution, which means we're making them part of the problem. And then lying, lying is where you make stuff up or you rewrite history. Like that's

not actually what was said or done, but that's your spin on it? How many of you would say that this pretty much describes our entire culture right now?

- [Man] Yeah.

- Let me just throw it out there, just as hypothetical. Politically, socially, morally, spiritually, put out any issue and just watch this happen. Just fire up the carnival music, pop the popcorn and just watch the parade. I mean, it's crazy, amen. And what you could think is, well, this is just how we do it. They attack us, we attack them. They lie, we lie. They stab us, we stab them. That's just how we do. Well, that's stuff that needs to get put away. That stuff from below, not above, true or false. We get into the kingdom of God, we're not gonna do relationships like this. You know how many lies you're gonna tell in heaven, zero. You know how many people you're gonna gossip about in heaven, zero. You know how people you're just gonna be bitter and seething and plotting to harm in heaven, zero. Do you know where your citizenship is? It's in heaven. Do you know where your residence is? It's on earth. So while your residence is here and your citizenship is there, make sure that you stay loyal to your king and His kingdom and you don't get sucked into this corrupt culture. And this is one of the ways that we do ministry and we live as a witness. And what we try by the grace of God to do is to say, I'm gonna try and treat you the way God treats me. I'm not gonna treat you the way you treat me, 'cause ultimately I come as an ambassador, a citizen, a resident, ultimately of the kingdom. And I'm here to tell you about my great king and His great kingdom. And what he's talking about here is your old self. And he goes on to talk about your new self. Your old self is completely driven by emotion. Your new self adds a will. Some of you've heard me say this before, your emotions are like the engine in your car, combustible, powerful, but an engine without a steering wheel is a problem. How many of you have ever lost your steering? I had an old car. I had a 1966 Volkswagen Squareback lowered like a California surfed mobile. I repented and sold it. But I was driving at one time and the steering went out. And I'm on the freeway going very fast and the steering went out. A motor without a steering wheel is very dangerous because you're going and you have no control over where you're gonna end up. What he's saying is your old self was just completely driven by your emotions. How many of you have said or done something and your excuse is your emotions, like, well, I got angry. We know, we could tell, crazy eyes. We could tell you were angry, right? Well, I was hurt. Well, yeah, we could tell you were hurt 'cause you kept saying you hurt me over and over and over. We sort of picked that up. So what happens is the emotions are strong drivers in our life, but your old self only had the emotions, had not the will. Your new self has a will. And it's being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator. What that means is as your emotions would normally drive you, now it's the will that is holding the steering wheel and saying, okay, this is what I'm feeling, but okay, in the kingdom, how am I gonna respond? In the kingdom, what will I say? In the kingdom, what will I do? How has Jesus treated me when I did something like this to Him? 'Cause the truth is everything we do to somebody, we've done something like that to Jesus, amen. And it's your will going over your emotions. So you're still driven by your passions, but they're directed by your citizenship in the kingdom of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in your life. This is something that God gives the children of God. So here's what you need to do, you need to know rather when

you became a Christian, you became a new self and you could put off the old self and put on the new self. And this is like changing clothes. So when we changed clothes, we tended to note, well, something is ended and something else has begun. So for example, you got up this morning, you took off your pajamas, and put on your clothes. Thanks for doing that by the way. I've seen some guys at the airport who don't know you're supposed to do that. I don't understand people who travel in their pajamas that are over the age of six. But anyways, you took off your pajamas and you put your clothes on, amen. What happens when you join a sports team? They give you a uniform. You take off your clothes and you put on your uniform. Now I have a different allegiance, a different role and responsibility. Let's say, well, we're at the point of graduation. You graduate, what do they do? They change the way you dress. They put a goofy, flat hat that doesn't stay on your head and they put a dress on you. And then you walk across the stage and pretend like you're comfortable. That's what they do. They change your clothes to show that your life stage has changed. Ladies, when you get married, you get a wedding dress. And it shows this is a transition in my life. When you joined the military, they give you a uniform. When you join the police department, they give you uniform. When you join the fire department, they give you a uniform. What he's saying is this, Christians need to understand spiritually every day, we gotta put the uniform on. When you meet Jesus, literally, you gotta think of yourself as being a different person, joining a different nation, serving a different king. And as a result, wearing a different identity, that's ultimately where He is. He is going, so you put off how you used to do things and you put on how you will be doing things. You put off things that are earthly. You put on things that are heavenly. You put off things that are in your past and you put on what God has for you in your eternal future. This is why I need you to know when you meet Jesus, it's not just so that you can die when you go to heaven, but you could start to live as a citizen of heaven every moment until you die, so that your life makes progress toward perfection. That you can learn and grow. That you can be renewed in knowledge after the image of your creator, that you can become increasingly more and more and more and more like Jesus. Let me tell you this. The real you, the true you, the eternal you is the one that you're becoming. And some of you, I was praying for you and this image came to mind from the Bible. There was a guy named Lazarus, close friend of Jesus. He died. The shortest verse in the Bible says Jesus wept. Jesus went to see His dead friend, Lazarus. Jesus called him forth, "Lazarus, come out." He called them out of his grave, called him out of death. Lazarus got out of his grave and he's alive. He's alive, but what's he still wearing? The grave clothes. So if you looked at him, you'd see the same old Lazarus, same old Lazarus. The Bible actually says in the King James, he stinketh. He stinketh. You look at him and you say, there's just the same old stinketh Lazarus, there he is. But underneath, something miraculous, something supernatural, something extraordinary had happened, he was made alive. So what he needed to do is he needed to take his grave clothes off. If you're a Christian, I promise you this, something supernatural, something miraculous, something wonderful has been done. And you're new, you're new. And you're gonna be like Jesus. And you're gonna be with Jesus forever. And sometimes we just need to take off the burial wrappings. That's how I used to think, I don't think like that anymore. That's how I used to respond, that's not how I respond anymore. That's how I used to act, that's not how I act anymore. I'm putting all of that off 'cause that's the old grave clothes and it's time for me to live my new life as the new person that Jesus intends for me to

be. You can do this and God wants to help you. And it culminates within understanding your identity because once you know who you are, then you know what to do. That's gonna be his last point in chapter 3, verse 11. Once you know who you are, then you know what to do. He says it this way, Colossians 3:11, "Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all in all." What he's talking about here is where we go to get our identity and who we think we are determines what we do. This is why, if you tell somebody you're a soldier, there's your uniform, they go fight. That's what soldiers do. A woman has a nurse walk into the hospital room and say, you're a mother, here's your baby. She's gonna love and feed and care for and tend to the baby 'cause she now has the identity of mother. She's gonna do things for the child that she's not gonna do for anyone else because her identity now is mama. When you know who you are, you know what to do. And the problem is when it comes to our identity, it's usually defined down here, not up there. And what these are, these were various groups that would fight with each other. Today we'd call it the young and the old, the culture wars of a generation. We call it black and white or rich and poor, Democrat and Republican or suburban and rural, or urban and suburban, whatever it is, whatever it is. This is my group and that's your group. And my group is right and your group is wrong. And what happens is we idolize and we demonize. The greatest theologian, I think, in the history of the nation was Jonathan Edwards. And he says, if you idolize your group, you'll demonize that group. We're good, you're bad. And then they're over here saying, actually we took a vote and we'd found a completely different result. You're bad and we're good and that we'll fight, which just proves that you're all bad, amen. So how do you get out of this issue of identity? Idolize your group, demonize that group. Your identity is in Christ, your hope is in Christ. Your eternity is in Christ. Your righteousness is in Christ. Your joy is in Christ. Your citizenship is in Christ. And what happens is when we get our identity from up there, not down here, Jesus becomes the center. And we look at ourselves with humility and say, man, I've got some real problems that God needs to change and fix. I'm part of a group of people, whatever that group of people is, we got some real problems that Jesus needs to change and fix. In fact, I'm not like Jesus, and we're not like the kingdom. I'm not like Jesus, and we're not like the kingdom. So as Jesus is the center, as all peoples and groups are invited around Him, they all see where they need to change and their group needs to change. This leads to humility. I've done and said things wrong. This leads to empathy. I understand how you guys got messed up. We got messed up too. I understand how you've created pain in your life. I've created pain in my life. It creates humility, it creates empathy. And what it creates is a center, that the black and the white, the Democrats and the Republicans, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the urban, suburban, and the rural can all get a little closer together because none of them is the center, Jesus is. And the goal is to become like Him and to be citizens of His kingdom and to live in His love and to become like Him and to see His kingdom come and transform all of our cultures. And so ultimately my dear friends, I love you. That's the whole point of the church. The church is supposed to be the beginning place of the kingdom of God, where everyone is invited to have Jesus change them. And for them to see the ways in which they are thinking and acting, sexually, relationally, and in regards to identity in a way that is earthly and not heavenly, in a way that is temporary and not eternity, a way that they were and not as a way, in the presence of Jesus, they will be forever. If you don't know the Lord Jesus, the whole point is this. You need a

new King. For those of us who belong to the Lord Jesus, we're citizens of a different kingdom, which means we do things differently. We do relationships differently because ultimately, we see our identity differently. It's not down here, it's up there, and everything that's down here is gonna come to an end and everything that's up there will be forever, amen. And we're gonna celebrate that in a moment with singing and celebrating, because in the kingdom, you know what we're gonna do, we're gonna worship. So we worship here because we're kingdom people. We're also gonna partake of communion in remembering the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, 'cause in the kingdom, we're all gonna sit down together and we're gonna have a great feast and meal. And when Jesus had communion, the Last Supper, with His disciples, He said that we would eat and drink with Him in the kingdom of God. And so the reason we're gonna worship now, the reason we're gonna take communion now is that's what kingdom people do because the kingdom comes down to be with us. And we're preparing ourselves for that eternal destiny. Lord Jesus, thank you for the scriptures. Lord Jesus, thank you for this change of mind. And Lord, I'm just reminded of Paul's words, not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Lord, this is a mind-renewing message. Lord God, we tend to think in terms of culture, not in terms of kingdom. We tend to think in terms of how other cultures should be like our culture, not how all cultures should be like kingdom. Lord, in the kingdom, there's love, in the kingdom, there's forgiveness. In the kingdom, there's justice. In the kingdom, there's holiness. In the kingdom, there's truthfulness. In the kingdom, there's generosity. So I pray for us, Lord Jesus, as your church, to be kingdom people, with kingdom relationships and kingdom self control of our emotions and kingdom perspective on marriage and family and gender and sexuality. And Lord, I pray for my friends today. Those who have felt discouraged. Those who have felt shame. Those who have felt condemned. Those who have felt like they're stuck. I pray that they would know, like Lazarus, you have done an amazing supernatural thing in them through the Lord Jesus. You have made them new. You've brought them from spiritual death to spiritual life and they can put off the old grave clothes and they can put on the new life in Christ, the life that is filled with joy and the life that never ends. So Holy Spirit, we invite you to bring your kingdom presence among us. As we sing and celebrate, as we partake of communion, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. And let us look forward to the day when we see our king returning to the earth. And until then, let us remember that we are citizens of your kingdom and your kingdom never ends. And we thank you for this in Jesus' good name, amen.