

PREACHING TO A PROMISCUOUS GENERATION AND THEIR VICTIMS

Did you know that the young couple sitting down in the front seat of the church on Sunday mornings is laying down in the back seat of the car on Saturday nights?

One of your ushers was also quite busy last Saturday night! He missed church because he just couldn't stop clicking on all those adult websites that he browses.

And your Choir Director happens to conveniently miss the Mother's Day Service because she does not want to be reminded about her abortion so many years ago.

Betty will never attend the Father's Day Service because she doesn't want to be reminded to "honor and obey" the man who molested her for ten torturous years.

And Susie will never attend an Evening Service any more because she doesn't go out at nights now, ever since she was raped one night in a nearby parking lot.

And Wayne always misses the Men's Monthly Breakfast because he doesn't feel comfortable around men who don't know about his struggles with homosexuality.

Mary lost her interest in missionary work about the same time she lost her baby in the abortion. She remembers your sermons about how much God hates abortion.

And Rod remembers your sermons about how much God hates the homosexual. His attempt at suicide happened to be a direct result of your attempt at preaching.

Carole in your church continues to silently struggle over her recent miscarriage because she thinks God is punishing her for her promiscuous teenage years.

Janet's husband struggles too. He doesn't understand that his wife is now terrified to have sex with him ever since her boss raped her at work one night.

And don't be too quick to judge Mrs. Jones for wanting a divorce! Ask her about her being forced to act out the sexual perversions and porn her husband watches.

Tim's parents don't know why he is so aloof now. After he told them his teacher touched him, they told him to stop making up stories and just be quiet. So, he did.

Michelle and her daughter are also quiet. They refuse to go back to the house after she caught her husband fondling their stepdaughter while tucking her into bed.

Lilly won't volunteer for helping out in the church nursery. She's uncomfortable being around children because they remind her of the baby that she once aborted.

But that's fine since Tom fills in! He loves to be around little children since they remind him of the ones that he sees in the dirty movies he rents every weekend.

Amy is one of those children. She runs away from you when you offer her candy at the door because that's what "teacher Tom" offered her before he touched her.

You didn't know that the real reason that Deacon Bill resigned was so that he could spend more time with his son, who recently told the family that he was gay.

You might not have known that Paula, your most zealous pro-lifer at church, is desperately trying to prove to God how sorry she is for having had that abortion.

Did you know that Sheila, who pickets the pornographic stores, is trying to erase her childhood memories of being forced to watch the exact same kind of movies?

Did you know that your newest church member is also a lesbian? Ask her about the gang rape after her prom night and why she now prefers women over men.

And no one knows why Kim doesn't come to any Youth Group Events. Her dad limits all her social activities at church because of his sexual activities at home.

Who's in your pews, churches, chairs and classes?

All the above are true stories, except for the change of names.

There are more people in your church than you probably realize who are silently struggling or suffering from sexual sin – whether it be their own or someone else's.

Mother Teresa said, "You can see Calcutta all over the world if you have eyes to see." I want you to have the eyes to see and also the words to say to these people. We are called to preach to a very promiscuous generation and their many victims. The numbers (and their stories) are astounding. They're your church members, visitors, volunteers, and leaders. They come in all shapes and sizes, genders and ages - men, women, singles, teens, grandparents, and even our precious children. **It's time to open our eyes not only to the harvest but also to the wreckage.** They sit in our churches with superficial smiles, monstrous memories, hidden hurts, mixed motives, and agonizing addictions. Don't be fooled by the firm handshakes. Many who come dressed up for church were dressed down naked the night before. Some chose to be, some did not. Some have sexual habits, some have sexual hurts. And they don't have a living clue on how to get the true peace, forgiveness, purity, victory, sanity, wholeness, or freedom that God alone can give them. And the last person they'd come to for counseling on such serious topics..... is their preacher.

Why?

They won't come to us because of what - and how - we preach about sex. It's our own fault that people will run the other way before they will confide in us about these hidden secrets. We rarely preach about sex in a way that communicates warmth and yet wisdom. We raise our voice and never lower it. Would you want to privately meet with someone who does that? Would you not be rather intimidated? We rarely display competence and compassion to those who are listening to us. As a result, people in your church go down to Egypt for help and not to you.

Why?

When it comes to preaching about sex, we do one of two things: ***ignore*** or ***abhor***. We are well known for our complaining about sex but not communicating about it. I now offer you a third alternative in how you'll soon preach about sex: ***RESTORE***. These people must be restored to the wholeness God intends for them.

Is this a topic you've rarely addressed from the pulpit? Or instead, have you only preached about sex using verses on God's wrath? Do you tend to ignore or abhor? Be honest. When is the last time you preached something soothing, balanced, compassionate, comforting, hopeful, or healing when you talked about sex? You're not just talking ***about*** sex; you're talking ***to*** people with sexual sin or pain. That is a huge difference to remember as you approach this "topic" from the pulpit.

It's not an issue; it's about individuals.

If we're utterly honest, we'll quickly admit that we don't feel very confident or comfortable talking about or tackling this topic that could cost us our entire careers. We say things that turn people off and turn people away. We don't plan our words. We don't rehearse this section in our sermon and we don't listen to how we sound. Preachers can say the most insensitive things without realizing what we have said. You'll have to control your emotions and choose your words carefully as you address people who have seriously and sexually damaged others and themselves. Can you help both the child molester and the child who has been molested by him? Do you know what to preach to men who rape and to women who have been raped? Some will need to be convicted yet others need to be consoled, in the same sermon. Can you do both? Can you communicate hope to men addicted to porn and also to their wives who have been taught to feel inferior as a result of their husbands' porn?

But you've never been trained or taught on this topic. Seminary probably did not prepare you to know how to preach to a promiscuous generation, did it? This Paper is intended to help you improve your preaching ministries to the sexually confused or sexually consumed people who happen to be all around you. You need to know why people commit sexual sin AND why some people feel angry, ashamed, or worthless as a result of sexual sin done to them. You need to minister to BOTH.

He is the God of HOPE (Romans 15:13) who is able to make ALL memories and lifestyles new (Rev.21:5). There is not one emotional hurt or sexual habit in this world that lies beyond God's transforming and healing grace! Do we believe this?

The wise church leader knows the huge need to address the difficult topic of sex from the pulpit in order to be faithful to the Scriptures and our current generation. Indeed, this Paper is in sync with our Conference Theme of **"A Future Focus and A Backward Glance"**. We'll be equipped for more effective pulpit ministries to millions of sexually wounded and addicted people in the future by carefully looking back at how God dealt with past generations who had the exact same problems. God has included everything we need to know to address a promiscuous generation. He uses sexual language from the very first (Genesis 1:27) to the last chapter in the Bible (Revelation 22:15). He made us male and female. He knows of the mysteriously woven connection that exists between the physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual parts of our being. He knows our bodies and souls and how the two influence each other. The birds and the bees and the Bible are blended together.

As pastors and preachers, we are the ones who should be the least judgmental and most understanding since we know about "the sin that so easily entangles us" (Hebrews 12:1). We know about King David, Samson, and Solomon. More than anyone, we know about our tendency towards temptation - especially with our eyes (Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3-8; 119:37; Proverbs 4:25; 6:24-29; 27:20; Eccl.1:8; Isaiah 3:16-25; Matthew 5:8,28-30; 6:22-2; 2 Cor.4:18; 2 Peter 2:10-19; and 1 John 2:16-17). We know that Jesus was subject to all, yes all, types of temptation (Heb.4:15). He teaches us how fragile and beautiful sex really is, along with how damaging and enticing it can be. Like all gifts from God, sex is abused then idolized. Gifts become gods; that's what we do as part of our fallen nature. Awareness of our own depravity is what John Newton has called "the root of perpetual tenderness."

Not only should we especially be more compassionate but also more competent. Those who really know God's Word should be today's experts on the topic of sex. Why? Because God is. We must not be afraid to follow where He has already led. Quite frequently and frankly - He uses sexual language and describes sexual stories. God is not at all embarrassed by this one taboo topic that we are. Talking about sex is not sin. Without apologizing anywhere in the Scriptures for His sexual language, He is light years ahead of today's preacher when it comes to publicly or privately dealing with the most difficult topic of sex. In Genesis alone, He tells us about Adam and Eve, Lamech marrying two women, Noah's youngest son doing something to him while he was drunk and naked, Lot sleeping with his daughters, Abram sleeping with his maidservant Hagar, Jacob sleeping with his female servants, Pharaoh's lust for Sarai, Lot's daughters sleeping with their dad, Sodom and Gomorrah's rampant homosexuality, Abimelech's sexual desire for Sarah, Isaac's physical caressing of his wife Rebekah, Shechem's forcible and painful sexual assault and rape of Dinah, Judah's secret one night stand with his daughter in law Tamar, Onan's spilling his semen during sex, and the infamous story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife - all found in Genesis! Who said that God was embarrassed to talk about it from the beginning? Why do we ONLY preach sermons about pre-marital sex about Joseph in Genesis 39 but we ignore all other Genesis chapters dealing with so many other sexual topics?

Today's horrifying headlines of sex offenders, rapists, adultery, promiscuity, incest, fornication, and childhood molestation are Old and New Testament topics. These are NOT topics that Americans invented in recent times. Sexual sin and pain within the world and church was a no-brainer for the apostle Paul in his inspired writings (1 Corinthians 7:2; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). He expected it in ministry. He knew that the newly converted saints needed urgent help with their sex life; this was one of the top priorities for the new believers (See Acts 15:28-31; 21:25; Ephesians 4:17-24; 5:2; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-8). How often do we find this topic in all our printed materials for the brand

new believers? Paul talked seriously about controlling one's sexual desires in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7. He speaks about incest, intercourse, immorality, adultery, prostitutes, virginity, lusting, and even homosexuality to the Corinthian church. The apostle Paul was definitely not afraid to preach about sex in his sermons.

Other New Testament writers bring up sexual topics in their sermons as well. Peter spoke about people whose goals in life were committing adultery and seducing others (2 Peter 2:14-19). Hebrews 13:4 mentions the marriage bed being kept sexually pure. Jude was fully aware that lustful and immoral people secretly slipped into the congregation. John warned His people about a woman who tempted others into sexual immorality in Revelation 2:20-25.

Now remember that children were listening to these words, too! The New Testament epistles were publicly read out loud to the entire congregation which included children. Whatever was written - was read - out loud - to the whole congregation to hear. They did not feel the need to escort the young children out.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses also tells parents to teach their children ALL the stories that happened before and we've already seen how many were sexual.

Leviticus 18 and 20 discuss sexual intercourse with other family members, neighbors, and even animals. God is not afraid to speak of having sexual relations with animals (Exodus 22:16-19; Deuteronomy 27:21). He talks about men wearing women's clothes, sexually seducing someone, testing for virginity, adultery, rape, and incest in Deuteronomy 22. Judges 19 describe a gang rape and sexual abuse. Amos 2:7 speak of a father and son sexually using the same woman while 1 Samuel 18:24-27 mention one hundred foreskins with simplicity and no apology. Deuteronomy 25:11,12 speak of a man's privates, Deuteronomy 23:9-11 openly talk about nocturnal emissions. 1 Samuel 24:3 and Deuteronomy 23:12-14 describe bodily excretions and a person relieving himself.

God is not prudish and engages in both bedroom and bathroom talk in the Bible. We must adopt a new mindset about sex that is neither Corinthian nor Victorian.

Proverbs 5:19,20 tell the husband to be captivated with the breasts of his wife. Job 31, Proverbs 6 and 7 describe a steamy sexual seduction and adulterous affair. 2 Samuel 13:1-21 is an account of a horrifying rape scene, leaving Tamar lifeless.

If you're still not sure, Ezekiel 23 shows that God is not nervous about sex. Here, He speaks of men's genitals like those of donkeys, seminal emissions like those of hung horses, lusting for and fondling young virgin breasts, nakedness, and finally using a woman for all that she is. Yes, this chapter is meant to symbolize the unfaithfulness of Israel but it is noteworthy that God uses intensely sexual language here and elsewhere through the Scriptures without any apology or hesitation at all.

Throughout the Bible, you find a consistent pattern in putting sexual sins in the middle of "sin lists" but they're NOT at the top of such lists, as we tend to list them. Sexual and non-sexual sins are listed side by side (Deuteronomy 27; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 5:3-7; Galatians 5:16-21; Colossians 3:5-10; 1 Peter 4:2-5; Jude 4-16). Fornication and covetousness are mentioned side by side in 1 Cor.10:7-14 and Revelation 22:15. Both are idolatry. Sex, like money, can become one's god. So, why then are we so vocal about sex but so silent on greed when we choose to preach from these and similar texts? What you do with your money is just as important as what you do with your body. Jesus, in fact, talked much more about money than He ever did about sexuality yet we do the opposite today in our preaching. According to Jesus, sexual sin is NOT that unpardonable sin He talked about so why do we preach it as if it were? Sexual sin was not at the top of His list. His harshest words were directed to the religious leaders, not the sexual sinners. Sexual sinners didn't repulse Jesus more than any other sinners. He chose to socialize with the sexually active people of His own day. His ministry to the promiscuous was a major sore spot for the religious leaders of His day and often got Him into a heap of social gossip amidst the other church folk (Luke 7:36-50; John 4; 8:1-11; Luke 15:1,2). He didn't think He was too holy to hang out with these people and He was

not afraid of what others thought of Him. If you are to have an effective ministry to the sexually wounded and addicted in your area, you have got to get over what others might think of the company you might keep. You'll have to train your church members and leaders to want to have the same kind of ministry that Jesus had. He had this unique drawing ability that we need to imitate. He knew how to lure the sexual sinners to Himself. He looked beneath the outward surface and questionable lifestyle. He perfectly perceived that they too are weary and burdened people who need to find rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28-30). Sexual sinners felt quite comfortable around Him and He likewise felt quite comfortable around them. Is that true of us today? Jesus came to seek and save those who were lost (Luke 19:10) and we have somehow forgotten that also includes sexual predators, child molesters, serial rapists, abortion activists, known prostitutes, gay newlyweds, porn stars and smut producers. The list could go on. How do you feel about having them in your presence or pews? Do these people think that you're someone with whom they can confess their past or present?

We need to remember that sex is just another one of those broken cisterns that people try to use to fill up that emptiness that they feel (Jeremiah 2:13). We make a much bigger sin of it today than God does about it, as we preach about sin today.

Sex is the main topic in only one out of God's Ten Commandments so why does something that gets only 10% attention from God, happen to get 90% of ours?

Did you know God mentions King David's murder of Uriah more than his affair with Bathsheba, as He recorded the sins of his past. David is called "a man of bloods" and not a man of lust as the reason for his being barred from building the temple (2 Samuel 12; 16:5-8). God was not pleased with what he did to Bathsheba AND to Uriah especially. Why do we speak of David's sexual sin, mostly? Do we mention that God was forgiving to David and still had the highest remarks about David, in spite of his sexual sin (1 Kings 11:4)? Being called "a man after God's own heart" was given to a lustful adulterer and a sneaky murderer, lest we forget.

The Song of Solomon is one of the most fascinating and illuminating stories where God employs a variety of sexual situations and words to highlight His point. How unfortunate and unbelievable that this book has been allegorized, symbolized, and spiritualized to mean something God never intended to mean! We laugh at Origen at allegorizing the Good Samaritan story but we do the same here. Yes, this book can and does symbolize the marriage relationship the believer has with Christ. Yes, we're to keep ourselves faithful to each other and pure as a symbol of what God desires in our relationship with Him (Isaiah 54:5; 61:10-11; 62:5; Jeremiah 2:2; Hosea 2:14-23; Romans 9:25; Ephesians 3:11-13; 5:22-31; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3) but you can not avoid or escape the obvious point that God intends here.

It is a beautiful book but it is not an easy book to understand with the shifting of speakers, a lack of chronology, an abundance of symbols, and some sudden interruptions by a chorus to make transitions from one scene to another. Reading several commentaries on this book easily makes one's head dizzy and perplexed!

I do believe that a Victorian mindset of modesty has muffled a careful exegesis of Song of Solomon! When you look into the original Hebrew language He uses and compare it with how those exact words are used elsewhere, you'll be utterly amazed at how openly and beautifully God speaks about male and female sexuality here!

Male and female genitalia are described metaphorically and euphemistically, as in Proverbs 5. Our sexual organs are described as plants, vines, stalks, fruits, gardens, doors, streams, wells, walls, and fountains. God describes sexual married interaction with poetic visual words, not physiological or medical ones. This book describes sexual marital love in erotic words that are light years ahead of our time! One thing for sure: Solomon and Shulamite did not have a boring bedroom life.

They took their sex seriously, not as something to be toyed with or taken lightly. You don't see them engaging in premarital fondling, necking or petting; they are satisfied with nothing less than the sheer ecstasy of total sexual release through consummation. God wants the husband and wife to be sexually aroused by each other (Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4) and save that sacred act of intercourse for each other. Shulamite was SO excited at the thought of sexually giving her body to her husband (4:12,16; 5:1) and they both describe and delight in the erotic acts of entering, enjoying, and even tasting the body of their loved one. They compliment each other on their sexual skills and her sexual aggressiveness, abilities, and enjoyment is evident. She verbally encourages and actively participates in their love making here. She yearns for him to fondle her breasts and he is overwhelmed by their beauty. She invites and wants him to enter her moistened and scented vagina (4:10 -5:1). Have you ever preached a sermon on that text?

It's about time the church started saying POSITIVE things about sex. It should be taken seriously but thankfully. It is a gift God gave to us, just like other gifts. He created us male and female and it was GOOD. God's people need to remember that the human body and sexual intercourse were beautifully ordained by God, not man. The only thing we ever hear today from the pulpit is totally negative about sexual expression before marriage and it's about time to hear some good preaching about sexual expression within marriage. The time is long overdue.

God is not eager to address sexual topics but neither is He reluctant. His sexual language is not prudish but neither is it prurient. He did not post a red stop sign as we erroneously think but He gave us a yellow light to proceed slowly - with caution. Now, let's incorporate all the above information into our future preaching ministries.

A travel agency was upset that their local Yellow Pages advertised that their agency specialized in "erotic" tours when their ad was supposed to say "exotic". Oops! Just a difference of one word (in fact, one very small letter) resulted in a huge flood of interested but disappointed callers and eventually a lawsuit.

As Mark Twain once said: "the difference between the right word and *the almost right word* is the difference between the lightning and the lightning bug!"

"Choosing the right words" is the toughest job for today's preachers who want to effectively preach to the sexually wounded and addicted people in their church. When it comes to preaching about sex, most preachers are like a clumsy bull in a delicate china closet. We just don't see how hurtful we can sound to other people. I counsel people all the time who tell me they would NEVER go to their preacher for help after hearing what he/she said about sex on any given Sunday! There is NO way! Review your past sermons. Our voices get louder and our gestures get more forceful whenever we mention pornography, fornication, abortion, or homosexuality. You might hear some "Amens" from some of the more vocal people but did you also notice those who slid down in their seats, too? Would you want to talk to someone who said what YOU just said? Would you seek help from someone who screams out loud about your particular sin or pain? You'll never have an effective counseling ministry to sexual offenders or victims in your community if your preaching content and communication style continues to be cold. I want you to preach in such a powerful way that your people WILL be drawn to you and not away from you! They'll learn that you really do understand and can help them! You ARE the best expert in their world for how to properly deal with guilt, anger, shame, fear, self-esteem, helplessness, pain, temptation, or bondage. You are as good as it gets!

Here are some practical principles and biblical patterns to learn:

1.) Plan ahead to write out your pulpit sexual language.

Go through the painstakingly slow but important process of writing down your sermon words about sex so that you will hear it out loud before others will hear it. Discard and replace your words over and over again so that they sound just right.

Privately practice and act out the exact words, tone of voice, and pulpit gestures. As you practice your preaching, most importantly practice your hearing of your words. Do not trust yourself to casually or instinctively “wing it” with the wisest words.

I remember a preacher describing a woman in his sermon who had a wild past before she was a Christian. She fell in love with a godly man and the pastor was giving them pre-marital counseling. He wanted each to know the other’s sexual history and used these words in his sermon: “I wanted the man to realize that he was getting a used car and not the new car he thought he was ordering.” Ouch! The pastor meant well but it sure didn’t come across well. How many people instantly and silently felt like a used car, just then? Is that how God views me now? Should everyone who has had premarital sex view themselves now as a used car? What about the woman who was raped or the child who was molested by her uncle? Is she a used car, too? Will you seek help from someone who thinks you’re a used car?

2.) Your goal is personal ministry, not public controversy.

Don’t pause and profusely apologize for the sexual content in your sermons. God doesn’t apologize in the Scriptures for using sexual language; why should you? You answer to God and not to the older Methusaleh’s in your church. Your goal is not to scratch itching ears but to stir people’s hearts. A sermon’s sexual language is to be constructed like you’re building a bridge to reach hurting people. Don’t draw attention to what you say; instead, spotlight why you say these words. It’s all about people, not politics. Sex is not an issue you preach about; it’s about individuals you reach for. Have these sincere motives and your words will follow (Matthew 12:34).

People won’t be inclined to criticize your message when they can see your motives.

3.) Use an accurate but contemporary Bible translation.

Don’t use a Bible translation that has lots of unknown, antiquated, and strange sexual words that you’ll surely have to explain sooner or later on in your sermon. The more you have to explain sexual terms, the greater chance you’ll hang yourself. Compare Genesis 26:8 in the King James Version (“Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife”) to Genesis 26:8 in the New International Version (“Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah”). Why take the time to try and explain what “sporting” really means in our language when you don’t have to? Compare the KJV of Deuteronomy 25:12 describing a woman “who putteth forth her hand and taketh him by the secrets” to the NIV translation where “she reaches out and seizes him by his private parts.” Compare the wordings of these two translations for Genesis 39, especially. There are many other examples in the Bible that could be given. You see my point.

Why should you become an easy pulpit target when you don’t have to? Let the accurate modern translations do the work for you here and make your job easier. Use the exact same words that God uses so that you won’t be wrongfully accused of using dirty language from the pulpit. You do want to keep your job, right?

4.) Use sexual euphemisms and alternative language here.

When you preach about sex, be careful with those words that you choose. You don’t want to be accused of saying something that will stick out in people’s minds. Review the Song of Solomon again in His wise usage of euphemisms. We also read that “Adam knew Eve” but not that he had sexual intercourse with her. We read that people “fell asleep” instead of the fact they had died. God sometimes uses euphemisms to gently soften a harsher wording. Here are some suggestions for alternate sexual language from the pulpit:

Penis or vagina: Reproductive organs.

Condoms: Male contraceptives.

Sexual intercourse: They became intimately involved with each other, they had relations together, they did what husbands and wives are supposed to do.

Fornication: They lost their virginity, they gave into temptation, they comprised their standards, they didn't wait for marriage.

A woman's breasts: Her bosom.

Pornography: Sexually explicit materials of a more intense nature.

Rape: He sexually assaulted her, he took advantage of her, he forced himself upon her, he violated her, he overpowered her.

Masturbation: Self sex or solo sex.

Homosexual: A same-sex person, sexually confused, a gender identity crisis.

Molested: He tricked her into doing something that husbands and wives do.

Incest: He treated her like a wife instead of a daughter.

Interchange many different sexual words at different times in your sermon. I'll use the softer language in a gentler tone of voice at first but usually I'll end with the stronger and most commonly used word in a louder voice so that they understand. She is not telling herself that she was assaulted, she knows that she was **RAPED!** A violent act sometimes needs an equally violent word sometimes to get their attention and interest. Let them know you DO understand what has happened.

5.) Brevity and quality are much better than quantity.

Be wise but not wordy when it comes to your sexual language from the pulpit. Rarely do you ever need to preach a whole sermon addressing any sexual topic; instead, target certain sermon sections where you can insert appropriate sentences! Use a pause or change your voice to reinforce your point and let it truly sink in.

When it comes to sex, you don't have to say a lot but you do have to plan a lot. Believe me, people DO REMEMBER those few words or sentences mentioning sex. You said something that your people have probably never heard from the pulpit. You tenderly touched them in their most painful, sexual, and vulnerable spot. A wound that is deep or fresh only needs a gentle *touch* and pain is quickly felt. You will be amazed that the Holy Spirit will use your few but wise words to do His work.

Another reason to say little is because God does. You don't have to go into a lot of sexual detail because God doesn't! Even the most famous sex scene in the Bible has very little detail! In describing David and Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11:4 says that "she came to him and he slept with her" (NIV). That's it, no more facts were given! He also left out all the details about King David's sexual sin in Psalms 32 and 51. 2 Samuel 13:14 (NIV) describes Amnon's rape of Tamar as "he raped her". Judges 19:25 (NIV) says "they raped her and abused her throughout the night." God could have described these rapes more graphically but He purposefully chose not to. Little is ever said about the sexual attraction between Samson and Delilah. Do we really know that much about Joseph and Potiphar's wife? God said little about the incest and homosexuality in the church at Corinth. He doesn't describe the type of sexual immorality in the church in Thyatira. The list could go on. God could have said SO much more but He didn't. He purposefully omits the sexual details as He directed the writers of Scripture what to include or not include (2 Peter 1:20,21). Just imagine what steamy details that today's television or movie producer would include within these Bible stories! God did not describe the bedroom scenes, what they were or were not wearing, the seductive tease or sensual nature of the actions, the physical orgasms they experienced, or the performances they gave. His ways are above our ways; so why do you think He leaves the sexual details out of these?

6.) Your goal is to teach, not tempt, in mentioning sex.

God does not dwell on what happens before - or during - the sexual scenes in Scripture but He does dwell on what happens later on as a result of these scenes! That is His pattern

and it must become ours as we address any sexual topics, too. He wants us to learn, not lust. Education, not imagination or titillation, is His goal.

After describing (briefly, of course!) the sexual immorality in 1 Cor.10 which was taken from Exodus 32, we're told why it was mentioned here in verses 11-13: God wants us to learn from their mistake! He didn't describe Rahab's life as a prostitute (He could have) but instead He describes her obedience afterwards in Joshua 2. The same is true of the woman in John 4; we're told of her new life and testimony, not her old life. We're not given any details about the ex-homosexuals in 1 Corinthians 6 but only the fact that they were changed by God's power. And we're not told about the nature of the incest in 2 Corinthians 2 but only about the proper treatment of this man. *Even some of the most sexually graphic Bible chapters (Ezekiel 16 and 23) are mentioned by God in order to teach spiritual life lessons (see Ezekiel 16:30ff and 23:28ff).* Earthy, raw, and sexual language found in Deuteronomy 23:9-13 ends with the spiritual lesson found in verse 14.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were removed by God. The incest of Lot with his daughters produced two nations of wicked people who troubled Israel. Revenge on Shechem's rape of Dinah resulted in the murder of every man in the city. The sexual sin of Reuben in Genesis 35:22 is exposed and punished later in 49:3,4. The lust of Potiphar's wife sent an innocent man to prison and the lust of Samson brought his and his nation's downfall. David's adultery led to the death of an innocent man and also of his infant son. Amnon's rape of Tamar prompted Absalom's murder of Amnon. Solomon's sexual partners caused him to stray from God and bring judgment on the nation. Do you see this important biblical pattern?

Any and all sexual language from the pulpit should be used in the same way and for the same purpose that God uses it: to stimulate our holiness, not our hormones. As you keep that in mind, your new sermons will be on solid ground, not thin ice!

7.) Use emotional words to draw out sexual memories.

Now that you are beginning to formulate a new preaching pattern about sex, what types of words shall you use? How shall you preach? What's the next step? I want to teach you something that revolutionized my preaching and counseling...

People have EXTREMELY good memories whenever their sexuality is violated. Chemically and emotionally, these memories are deeply implanted in their minds. Sometimes their pain is SO intense that they will try to forget it or even create alternate worlds to live in so that they won't have to deal with the horror of it all.

Again, a slight touch of a fresh wound is all that it takes to get someone's attention.

Target the emotional effects, not the sexual activities, that have taken place. Study a concordance, commentary, or lexicon to discover how that particular Hebrew or Greek word that God used to describe that painful emotion or sexual action is used elsewhere in Scripture and in other non-biblical texts. It's definitely worth the work as you understand the depth of that emotion from your study! Once you understand the reasons for and repercussions resulting from rape, sexual molestation, homosexuality, promiscuity, pornography and abortion – you'll see preaching opportunities springing up from so many non-sexual topics or texts!

Here are emotional phrases I've found helpful in drawing out sexual pain or sin:

- No matter what someone has done to you or what you've done to them...
- No matter what difficult, painful, physical, or sexual experience you have had...
- No matter what you struggle with, what habits you have, who your master is...
- No matter what pain or injustice you've suffered that you did not deserve...
- No matter how angry, dirty, or guilty you now feel now because of what you have done to someone or because of what someone has sadly done to you...

"JESUS understands your feelings of shame, anger, pain, filth, hurt, loss, betrayal, and humiliation. You are not alone. He gives you the comfort or strength that you need to make you whole again, regardless of your past."

Sexually wounded or addicted people (regardless of which ever sexual topic) all share those common emotions that Jesus did as He *became* sin for us on the cross. A great place for you to start is to carefully study the emotional effects that Jesus experienced from Isaiah 53, Hebrews 4, and while He suffered on the cross. The more I study of Jesus, the more I know that He totally understands the people that have experienced the worst injustices, violations, physical and sexual humiliations. I also know that He can release sexually addicted people from ANY deep attraction or habit. In my preaching and counseling, I encourage people to lay down all of their sexual sin - or pain - at the cross of Jesus, who can bring healing like none other.

8.) Communicate hope and healing, not just hatred.

Preachers happen to say some of the short-sighted things when they mention sex in their sermons. One that I wish I could personally undo was a what I casually said about homosexuality. I said "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." My congregation chuckled and of course, I felt kind of proud of myself. Looking back, I now ask God to forgive me for how I said what I said. I was not thinking of how it was heard by some who struggle with that temptation who were listening. What was a homosexual person feeling inside when my congregation now laughed at them? Did I offer any hope? No, I offered a simplistic and negative comment. Would they have come to me for counseling, based on what I blurted out casually? No way. Do you blame them?

Most sermons on abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, or pornography leave the impression that God is totally and utterly disgusted with the person who does it. Rarely is there any mention of mercy for molesters, forgiveness for fornication, purity after pornography, or hope after homosexuality. It's usually only harsh.

Yes, Paul told the church to expel the man guilty of incest but also to forgive him once he repented and that they were still being too harsh on him (1 Cor. 5 and 2 Cor. 2:5-11). In 1 Corinthians 6, remember how the Apostle Paul reminds the church that there IS mercy and victory available for those who were willing to repent from sexual sin. Sexual sin never has the final say in a person's life. Only God does and He offers complete transformation to those who trust in Him.

Do we preach this gospel of hope, change, and forgiveness for sexual sin, too?

Never preach against any sexual behavior without equally sharing the wonderful hope, grace, mercy, pardon, and victory available for those who are in Christ Jesus. Always be aware that whichever sexual sin you preach about was probably done by people who are hearing your sermon. Did they hear any message of hope from you?

Here is a personal checklist to consider as you prepare your sermons:

Your voice? Listen to *how you preach* and ignore the content for now. Do you have to speak so loudly and convey no affection? Or is your tone of voice so soft that you communicate no God-given authority? Are you prone to only one style? You must be able to equally preach comfort and conviction, depending on the text. Your voice can help achieve these lofty purposes here. George Whitfield said "Every minister must be a Boanerges, a son of thunder - as well as a Barnabas, a son of consolation." Can you do both, in the same sermon? And don't forget to smile.

Eye contact? Look directly into people's eyes when you're preaching on a more emotional tone or sexual topic. Make it easier for them to confide in you, later on. Ask others if you tend to look away from or directly towards people, in preaching.

Gestures and posture? If you look uptight, your people will be uptight too. Smile. Lean forward towards your people. Extend your arms and reach out with open hands. You don't have to clench your fists; that doesn't make you look very approachable. You communicate so much by your body language in preaching.

Leave the pulpit area? Since some people get upset at any sexual language from a pulpit, leave that fortress and walk towards or amidst your congregation. Get a lapel microphone and let people see that you are quite casual and down to earth.

As a preacher and pastor who is delicately dealing with such difficult topics, your main goal is to help your people get past the hiding of their sexual suffering or sin.

They have gut-wrenching stories to tell! As one woman told me: "What they did to me is not even done to dogs!" Preach in such a way that these wounded people will come to you and express their hurt, shame, anger, fear, or guilt to you. It was so exhilarating and liberating for David to finally come clean in Psalms 32 and 51. People **NEED** to confess their sin or pain to their preacher. Help them to do that. They have silently suffered long enough and gave up hope that they could ever be normal. Their lives were turned upside down by someone else's or their own sexual sin. Like the women who were sexually violated and abused in 2 Samuel 13 or Judges 19, there are women in your church who weep bitterly and feel they are worthless and disgraced. Like the sexual assault and humiliation described in Genesis 34, there are men and women in your church who are consumed with grief and utter rage. These people hear you every week but will they actually and finally hear you say that God can help them in their deepest need of sexual confusion?

May you be freshly anointed now in your future preaching or pastoral ministries to preach the good news of healing for the broken-hearted (Psalm 34:18; 147:3) and freedom for the prisoners (Luke 4:18) who have been deeply affected from the never ending sexual revolution, which began way back in the book of Genesis!

The world knows the problem but not the solution.

The church knows the solution but not the problem.

Hopefully, no longer.

(THOSE WHO ATTEND THIS SESSION CAN RECEIVE A PRINT COPY OF DR. SERIO'S UPCOMING BOOK FROM WHICH THESE MATERIALS WERE TAKEN.)