

I. Introduction

- A. We believe in this supernatural force of God called Grace. It is a pulsating power in the heart of God. It is a doctrine, and it is a teaching, yes. But grace is more than that.
- B. Grace is the ultimate, peerless, matchless, utterly free gift from God to his children.
- C. And it is above everything else, the outflow of the crucifixion of Christ. If Jesus had not died on the Cross, there could be no grace in the world, and no grace for sinners, and no grace for you and for me.
- D. **Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind because of the death of Christ on the Cross.**
 - 1. Grace stands opposed to legalism, performance-based salvation, works-based salvation and works-based Christianity.
 - 2. It is the work of God, not the work of you.
 - 3. It is the work of God through you, through Christ in you.
 - a) God breaks the sweat.
 - b) And God pays the price.
 - (1) Look at Calvary.
- E. Grace is the power of God in you to do what you can't do for yourself: to heal you, empower you, bless you, guide you, mature you, fortify you, and make Christ-in-you shine forth in this dark and messed up world.
- F. Grace.
- G. We're wrapping up our summer series called Grace Powered Living. I have two talks left—this one, and one more for next time.
- H. Today, I want to talk about one of the most amazing gifts God has given us. This gift is one of the most powerful ways God delivers grace to the deepest parts of our being.
- I. Think with me please today on the topic:
 - 1. **The Laws of Righteous Bonding**
- J. You might have heard me talk about this before, or maybe not. I think its one of the most ignored and yet super-important truths for Christians and for the whole world today.
- K. God says you were fearfully and wonderfully made. God wove into you all kinds of machinery and processes to experience Him, and to know real love.
- L. One of those little machines is the part of your being that creates bonds.
 - 1. **Bonding is a process by which your soul creates spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and physiological interconnections with another person, held together by affection, and enabling a genuine experience of grace.**
- M. God gave you glue for your relationships. He gave you the internal machinery to help you go deeper into love, deeper into intimacy, deeper into friendship, and deeper into relationships.
- N. He gave you a little engine that keeps you from exploding relationships with the people who matter most.
- O. Bonding.

II. Bonding

- A. Let me give you a simple way of understanding what this is. When a baby chick or duck hatches, they do this thing called imprinting. The first animal they see — and usually that's their mother hen — they form this attachment to that animal. They follow their mother hen around, and the copy her. If she pecks bugs off the ground, they peck bugs off the ground. If a mother duck waddles into a pond and swim around, the baby ducklings waddle into the pond and swim around.
- B. There's an attachment; it's an emotional and psychological bond.
- C. That drive is so strong that if a baby duckling doesn't see it's mother, but sees a human, and the human tends to the baby duckling... who do you think the duckling imprints upon? Right. It imprints upon the human, and follows the human around, and copies it.
- D. It's a kind of emotional bond that takes place, and it is very strong.
- E. In the same way, humans can create bonds too.
- F. When babies are born, they learn to feel safe, and warm in a loving mother's arms. In a loving father's arms. Babies bond through gentle touch. Through the soothing sound of mom and dad's voices. Through nursing. Through cuddling and hugging.
- G. God designed you to form strong, emotional bonds of attachment and affection. When you do it right, these bonds create a lot of happiness for you. They make grace real in your heart, real in your psychology, real in your experience.
- H. I hope and pray my message today can give you the wisdom you need for a lifetime of good choices leading to a lifetime of real, lasting, deep-rooted love in your life.
 - 1. *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection [maturity].* (Colossians 3:14, NKJV).
- I. See that word perfection? It means maturity. When you are a truly mature individual in the eyes of God, then you will experience the truly deep, truly bonded-love that we're talking about.
- J. I'm hoping that I can give you a shove in the right direction today, and that if you keep going in that direction, God's own supernatural love will be brought to maturity in your life, and friendships, and your marriage and family and mission in the world. Mature love. Love is the bonding agent of those who are mature.

III. Marital Bonding

- A. There are different types of bonds that people form.
 - 1. Parental bonds.
 - 2. Marital bonds.
 - 3. Animal bonds.
 - 4. Friendship bonds.
 - 5. Sexual bonds.
- B. Not all bonds are sexual. Most of the emotional connections that you form are not sexual, and should not be sexual.

C. But today we'll be focusing on the sexual bond which is the marital bond.

IV. Twelve Stages

A. Experts have said that a couple will go through 12 stages in creating a healthy, lasting, sexual bond. I want to mix these 12 stages, which come from anthropologists with 7 Spiritual Laws, which come from Scripture.

B. Here we go:

1. *Eye to body...* you see the person, and you are interested and intrigued in finding out more. Just noticing another person can help building a bond. this is not staring at a person in a way that is creepy, it is noticing the person. This is not undressing the person with your eyes in a way that is lustful or scary... this is seeing the whole person with appreciation and then focusing on the face... and treating the other person has a human who is sacred to God.
2. *Eye to eye...* this is when she notices you noticing her, or he notices you noticing him. When you make eye contact, and smile, sometimes it feels like sparks are flying... and they do. You are starting to bond.
3. *Voice to voice...* What's your name? Do you like stuff that I like... If you want to build a lasting bond, you will spend large amounts of time just talking with each other.
 - a) This is where you explore beliefs... and see if you are compatible.
 - b) This is where you explore values, and make sure that what's important to you is important to this person before going on.
 - c) This is where you find out if your dreams and the other person's dreams can go together. Do you really know the other person? Can they hold down a job? Do they have a record of violence? Have they been jerks to the people they've dated in the past. Don't move on without knowing the other person, and that takes talk.
4. Now, like I said, as we go through the twelve, I want to pause and give you some abiding principles of sexual bonding, okay?

V. Laws of Bonding

A. 1. THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL HARMONY:

Before you go any further in a romantic relationship, you need to find out if the other person is genuinely saved, and loves Jesus like you do. If not, hit the breaks.

1. Date Christians only — and by Christians, I mean a person who is truly saved, loves God, and wants to serve God with their lives. I have seen it a thousand times the other way, it it brings a lot of heartbreak.
 - a) *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?* (2 Corinthians 6:14, NKJV).
2. *Hand to hand...* I still remember the first time I held Margi's hand. We were at my brother's house with a bunch of people, and we were walking to a park for Fourth of July fireworks, and I reached out and took her hand... and it was fun and natural. It was a way of telling others that we were forming a bond, and it was really nice.

B. 2: THE LAW OF DIMINISHING RETURNS:

The first time you experience each stage, it's exciting. The more routine it becomes, the less exciting it feels.

1. The first time you hold hands with your boyfriend or girlfriend, it's a big deal, and you tell your friends. But after a hundred times, it's no big deal. It can feel kind of boring. And this pushes you to move to the next step.
 - a) The Bible says you can be hardened (Heb. 3:13) and your heart can be come calloused (Eph 4:18).
2. But here's the problem... after step 12, you run out of steps? Then what? If you don't save some steps for the future — for your marriage day — you're going to have a harder time creating a bond that lasts forever.
3. Let's go back to our 12 stages.
 - a) *Hand to shoulder...* this is when you put your arm around the girls' shoulder. There's some commitment here, but there's still a lot more to come. When your arm is around the other person's shoulder, you are both facing the same direction, looking at the same things, and doing that together. This is a normal action outside of romance too. Friends will do this, athletes do this in a huddle... it's about facing an opponent together, or sharing a mission together, and being on the same page.
 - b) After a while, you might move to stage 6.
 - c) *Hand to waist...* This is when it really starts getting romantic. Couples walking through the park together. Smelling flowers. Sharing little jokes and little secrets. And this leads to another principle:

C. 3. THE LAW OF SPEED:

The faster you create a bond, the weaker it is. The more slowly you create a bond, the stronger.

1. Three times, in the Song of Solomon, you read these words:
 - a) *Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.* (Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4).
 - b) Go slow.
2. If you skip steps, your bond will be weak.
3. Your bond will be unsatisfying.
4. Your bond will be confusing... you won't be sure what the other person is really thinking and feeling.
 - a) *Face to face...* this is when you lean in for the kiss. Gazing into each other's eyes, hugging, kissing... and what happens here is crucial. All the other laws kick in...
 - (1) The Law of Spiritual Harmony... if you are both following Jesus, you will have talked about pleasing him in your relationship, and this is as far as you will go until your wedding night.
 - (2) The Law of Diminishing Returns... makes it hard to stop at this point. See, the law of Spiritual Harmony tells you to press on the break pedal, but the Law of Diminishing Returns is screaming for you to press on the gas pedal! Floor it! Come on already, floor it.

(3) The Law of Speed is saying... if you go too fast, you'll hurt your bond and hurt the other person's heart, and you'll damage your future relationship...

(a) So look... if you're a Christian, and you're dating or going to date, stop here. Nothing beyond a gentle kiss every once in a while. No make-out sessions. No touching each other's body. No stimulating sexual desires you can't fulfill without sinning.

(b) Make a plan to get married. Then get married. Then AND ONLY THEN should you move on to the last stages which are as follows:

b) *Hand to Head*... it's really rare for one person to touch or caress another person's hair or head unless there is romance in the air, right? Some of you are rushing ahead thinking, how's he going to deal the stages to come? I know, it's exciting, isn't it.

(1) Don't get too excited though, because it's all for married people, okay?

c) *Hand to body*... touching the other person sexually.

d) *Mouth to breast*...

e) *Hand to genitals*... (touching below the waist)

f) *Genital to genital*... (going all the way).

5. Here's where our culture gets radically messed up. Our culture makes sex about physical pleasure, more than about lasting bonds of affection and love. So you go from one sex partner to the next sex partner... or you make out with one person and then go to the next person and the person after that.

6. And it's physically fun and physically pleasurable... no doubts about it.

7. But what is it doing to your heart?

8. I will tell you. It is training your heart to do sexual actions divorced from emotional bonding. Instead of using sex to draw close emotionally, you shield yourself from the emotional closeness. It's just another sex partner, just another physical act. It's not face to face. It's not person to person. If you have a lot of sex partners, the person really doesn't matter.

D. 4. THE LAW OF HAUNTING:

Every time you do bonding actions, create a bond, and then rip it apart, you feel pain, cause pain, and you damage your ability to bond in the future. Broken bonds from the past can haunt your future.

1. *But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul.* (Proverbs 6:32, NLT).

2. You're splitting apart sex from love. Sex from bonding... and every time you do that, it becomes harder for you to form attachments at all. You're too shielded, too guarded, too wounded. Your bond can be broken. And deep love is hard to find.

3. It's like putting on a bandaid. You can put it on, rip it off, and it hurts. Put it on, rip it off. Put it on, rip it off. Do that enough times and it won't stick any more.

4. That's what happens with sexual bonds every time you change partners.

5. Sex has the strongest bonding ability the first time, so wait till you're married and make your honeymoon the first time.

6. This is why someone far more loving and wise than me has said:

a) Run away from sexual sin. 1 Corinthians 6:18.

b) There is good news. There is redemption. There is healing. You can start over. I'm going to talk about that.

c) But there is also responsibility, and that is law 5.

E. 5. THE LAW OF RESPONSIBILITY:

You are responsible for the bonds you have created. They are not mysterious forces of love that "just happened."

1. When my kids were little, and they made a mess, they came up with a brilliantly creative excuse.

a) I asked, "Who made this mess?"

b) They said, "Mr Nobody. Mr Nobody made this mess."

2. I cannot tell you how many conversations I've had where a married person did the twelve bonding steps with someone other than their spouse, and surprise, surprise, they "fell in love..." and cheated on their spouse. And they say, "It just happened."

3. And I say, there is no "it." Quit blaming Mr. Nobody.

a) When you say, "I don't know, IT just happened," you're saying you're not responsible for the bond you created.

b) When you blow up your marriage, and you say, "It just happened," you're actually making yourself into a victim of forces beyond your control. Really?

(1) *Can a man heap fire into his lap and not be burned?* (Prov. 6:27)

(2) *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.* (James 1:14)

c) When you say, "we just fell in love, I don't know how," you're acting like love is a mystery.

(1) You know very well love is not a mystery.

(2) The fact is love—and here I mean an emotional and sexual bond—bonded love is a choice. It is a big choice that is the totally predictable outcome of the hundreds of little choices to look, and listen, and talk, and touch, and share, and spend time, and kiss, and more.

(3) You do that stuff, you're going to create a bond.

(4) You do that, not "it." You do that, not Mr. Nobody.

d) Take responsibility.

4. Which also means:

F. 6. THE LAW OF MAINTENANCE:

Mature Christians prioritize the care and maintenance of their primary bonds. The way to keep bonded-love strong is to keep doing bonding actions. The way to make bonded-love fade is to stop doing bonding actions.

1. *Husbands, love your wives [keep on loving], just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,* (Ephesians 5:25)

2. Why do couples drift apart?
3. Couples drift apart because they stop doing the bonding actions with each other. And that tempts them to start doing the bonding actions with someone else. And that makes it all worse.
4. On the other hand, other couples don't drift apart. Couples keep their ember of affection glowing when they keep doing the bonding actions. It's the little stuff... looking, listening, touching, talking, hugging, sharing.
5. Do you want to know who is the best bonder in your house?
6. Your dog.
 - a) Who is the most excited creature in your house when you come home? Your dog. They want to see you, touch you, be embraced by you, and hear your voice, and they are thrilled about it. Dogs don't just create a bond, they maintain a bond.
 - b) And so should you. Take notes. From your dog. (Not your cat.)
7. I don't want to judge you or make you feel horrible or load you with guilt or shame.

G. 7. THE LAW OF REDEMPTION:

Because of Jesus and his Cross, you can start over.

1. Your bonder can be healed.
 - a) *Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.* (Hosea 6:1)
2. Because of Jesus you can have your past forgiven. You can have your heart healed and made whole. Nobody's perfect. We're all haunted by memories of the past.
3. But Jesus shed his blood and redeemed you so those memories don't have to control your life.
4. The redemptive power of Jesus Christ applies to every area of your life, including sexuality.
5. You can start over sexually... and going forward, you can be pure. You can find more love, more joy, more happiness, more affection, more closeness, more acceptance, more of a warm embrace than you ever thought possible if you will only do your life God's way.
6. Don't be embarrassed because you are pure or because you've decided to become pure starting now. God is pleased. Heaven is proud of you... and your love life will be stronger because of it.

VI. Wrap Up

- A. If you are going to live as a Christian in your sexual life, you are going to be radically different from the world.
 1. Yes, this will make you different, and odd, and distinct, and wildly unlike your unsaved friends.
 2. You will be the opposite.
- B. For so long we have been told that to reach the world, Christians must be like the world.
 1. But that is only partly true.
- C. When it comes to the language, and the styles, and the music of the world, it's okay to be like the world to reach the world.
- D. But when it comes to the world's values, and morals, and sexuality, that's where the likeness ends. It comes to an abrupt halt.
- E. Why? Because...
 1. **The Christian way of life is the ONLY escape from the painful worldliness of a graceless existence.**
- F. People are looking for a way out. They've tried the world's way. It doesn't work. It hurts. It breaks hearts. It numbs the soul. It leaves heartache and pain in its wake. Why would anybody want more of that?
- G. They want an alternative. They're desperate. They're looking for a different ethic, a different model, a different path.
- H. And when they see you... and when you are living on the grace of God... and part of that is a holy, righteous, and virginal bonding and sexual life...
 1. You become to them a living testament of God's truth and a giant pointer to the way of life they've been groping in darkness for all their days.