

Sexual Desire and Spiritual Formation, Special Reference to Pornography

By Dallas Willard

Announcer:

Todd Pickett and if there's one person that would be responsible for uh guiding this whole thing um it's my director of chapel, Lisa Ishihara, so please let her know that you're thankful, Lisa can you stand up.[Applause]well, before president Corey comes up, I want to um open us with prayer on Hebrews 4:12 and 13\ . Pray with me please. Father thank you, um, that your word is living and active, that you are here now, that you are present in this room, that you are present in our hearts. Thank you that your word, which is to say, your immanence, your presence in our life, your speaking to us. Thank you that that can penetrate us. As far as the division of Soul and Spirit into our joints, those things that hold us together. Father what are we using to hold us together? A self-image, our achievements, our successes, our addictions. Lord what are we using as joints to hold us together today. Well Lord, we ask that this sword of the Spirit, the sword who is Jesus in revelation would come into our joints and cut away all else that is holding us together and replace it with your love and your healing. Lord we thank you for the word of God that cuts into our marrow, the marrow, the deepest place in our bones.

Who we are, the thoughts and intentions of our heart. Lord we pray that you would come into those deep places, that you would help us guard over our hearts from which flows all of our

behaviors. Thoughts and tensions. The place of our deep beliefs. Lord we ask that your spirit would cut into the Marrow, into our hearts, and Lord we know there is no creature hidden from your site, but to you all things are open and laid bare, and so father, we want to lay bare what is already laid bare. We want to open ourselves deeply. Father we cannot change ourselves, but we can open. We can lay ourselves bare to you who already sees our need for you and so father we pray at this conference would not be just a conference, but there would be an invitation for us. So lord this morning we just open to you, maybe just gently to begin with, and we ask, what is it going to be for us this week. Perhaps you will address an attachment that we have. Some in-ordination attachment to which we are bound.

Perhaps you will call us to some kind of confession, a confession that we need you, a confession that opens a compartment in our heart that we had previously kept closed. Lord perhaps you will invite us to an intention or perhaps a vision of what you would have for us or our community. Lord perhaps you will invite us to trust you, that you are the abundant life when we have been seeking it elsewhere. Lord perhaps it would be an invitation to love others or love a particular other. Lord perhaps it will be an invitation to worship, simply to present our whole self to you. Lord always your ways. And so father we open our joints, our marrows to the word of God, which is not just a book, but it is you to speak deeply into our hearts. Give us eyes to see the work of your Spirit that we might cooperate with it. Give us eyes to see the needs of others that we might love them. And we pray all these things in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. It is my pleasure now to introduce to you president of Biola University, Dr. Berry Corey. [Applause]

Dr. Corey:

I love Todd Pickett. I really do. Thank you Todd for all your work, putting this together. Good morning, wow. What is it? A little after nine. Guys are up and going. [Laughter] you know, you probably heard me talk um on occasion about proverbs 29:18, in that passage it says "Where there is no vision a people perish" in what God's word really is saying there is where there is no revelatory input of God's word. People come undone, people come unraveled, and that means where there is an input of God's word um people ravel. If we can do that. Can you ravel? You know this is going to be a conference when we are going to ravel. We are not going to unravel. There is something to be said about Biola University 73 years later, still suspending business as usual for a few days each semester to take upon ourselves a cohesive nature of a biblical worldview as it applies to the very real issues of our life, and this is a proud tradition for Biola. So, the next few days we are just going to ravel together around Gods word.

We got some wonderful speakers, it's going to be kind of a provocative time in many ways as you know the theme or title for this year's conference is "Sex and the Soul" We need to talk about this as a community. We need to talk about attitudes towards sex, desires, behaviors. It was last Spring I this very chapel where we had a couple faculty interacting on a Q and A time. I think it was Dr. Muehlhoff and Dr. Thoennes and I remember 1 if not 2 of you stood up and said "You know, something that we need to talk about is the click accessibility of pornography, because it's an issue that we grappling with as a university, and where going to grapple as we ravel these next few days together, and while this conference um does focus on sexual themes, um in a number of different ways, this conference in ultimately about us and Jesus and the light of God's word shined upon us. It is about Spiritual development. It is about Growth in Christ like conduct in character as we walk along this journey of life. So I want to see all of us this time

together abiding more deeply in Jesus. That is my desire, that we can live genuinely as children of God impacted by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in our hearts, in our minds.

This is a good time for us to be honest with ourselves, to pause, to spot thing for a while about what course work you have done, and to allow these issues to deeply penetrate our hearts. Some of you um need a time to be mended by Jesus, and I think this is going to be one of those mending times. It's good to see you this morning. Bright eyed on a Wednesday morning in middle of October and so delighted to be able to introduce to you our, our kickoff keynote speaker this morning, Dallas Willard. Dr. Willard is going to be offering us some insights on spiritual healing and growth and transformation with his vision intention in means formula, which you'll have a chance to hear about in just a moment. We love Dr. Willard and Dr. Willard loves Biola. He had served on this institutions board for a number of years. He has pretty much a closed schedule for meetings with all of the writings and activities he's involved with. Teaching at USC department of Philosophy there, but he readily agreed to come and talk to you and to me today about something that we all need to hear about. Many of you have possibly read some of the work of Dr. Willard, Renovation of the Heart, divine Conspiracies, working on a new book now that will come out the end of next on the disappearance of Moral Knowledge. We have a lot to learn this morning as we listen to our dear brother in Christ, So without further of due, let me welcome you Dr. Dallas Willard to Biola University. Let's give him a good Biola welcome.

[Applause]

Dallas Willard:

Thank you, Thank you very much, you're very kind. I love to come to Biola it has a very special place in my heart with many personal connections and uh I'm thankful you're here, and that you're doing what you're doing and I believe that you can make a great difference in your

own lives and in the lives of others in the world. Now I want to go right into my talk. I always feel a little sympathy for a group that has a speaker introduced as a philosopher. [Laughter] but you have some good philosophers around here and perhaps they can set a good model, but I will be uh rather carefully laying things out. I'm going to try to lay out rather carefully some ideas that are in the scripture and just like the verse that taught gabus from Hebrews. Uh for example, when it says that the word of God separates between soul and Spirit what does that mean? And how would that help? Right? What is the difference between the soul and the Spirit? And this is a conference dealing of the vital question of the relationship between sex and the soul. So let me start out by saying what the soul is, k and ah then we will move on to spend most of our time talking about sexuality.

This your soul is that part of you which integrates all of the other dimensions of your life and if it is a whole soul, not a broken one, that will mean that the other dimensions of your life will work well. Just to illustrate on of the most prominent manifestations of a troubled soul is self-control. Now self-control is simply the ability to do what you intend to do. You intend this evening to write an essay, but something comes us and you don't write it. See that's lack of self-control. Self-control is the ability to do the things that you intend to do. Ah the paradigmatic lack of self-control is the passage in Romans 7 which everyone knows without memorizing it. The things that I would I do not and the things that I would not that I do. See that is a messed up person and the problem is in their soul. The soul is that part if you that integrates all of the other dimensions of your life and makes you a complete and whole person, if you have a whole soul. Very few people do, and one of the primary effects of redemption in Christ is to restore your soul. The law of the lord is perfect the psalm says "restoring the soul" and it does, but you'll need some grace to go with it, but when you put yourself in the realm of law and grace then your soul

comes together around the goodness of God's law, because there is also the good shepherd. And what does the good shepherd do? He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake, see that? The Bible, and I'm so glad to be a part of the Torrey Memorial Bible Conference, see the Bible of all resources has the most important information about the most important topics in human life. That's why it's so important, so it's so important that we study it, that we study it intelligently. It was written by intelligent people for those who wish to really understand what goes on with God and man and between God and man. And so we have to read it with that understanding.

And when we come to the topic of sex or sexuality, we are dealing with a source of incredible suffering in human life, do you know that's true? I mean if you; when you are in a position of someone that has people coming to them, as a faculty member, counselor or just a friend, and they unburden their lives to you. You see what incredible suffering there is around this topic. and I would, I would hope that today, in this talk, I can say a few things that would help us deal with that in a way that we can be whole in our soul sexually. So now I want to start from a text. This is a bible conference. Does anyone have a bible? [Laughter] Ah good, good for you. Now if you just look at Colossians 3 we look at the first five verses and we will use that as a way of opening up our topic. This is the apostle Paul. He's writing to a group of Christians that he never personally knew, one of his associates had started a church in Colossae. One of the great things about the church at Colossae was that Paul spoke to them sorta the whole council of God in a letter, and that's why Colossians such a gold mine is he just poured everything right into it. and now as he does that uh he come to the issue of Christian life and ah so he says and I will look at those first 5 verses and now we have so many versions I'll just quote the one I know best, " If you then be risen with Christ seek those things that are above where Christ sits at the right

hand of God. Set your affections on things above not on things on the earth. For you are dead," and you might right there, surprise, surprise "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" and that's a statement about where you stand.

You stand in a hidden life. A life in the kingdom of God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then you also shall appear glorious. Now then, with that as the foundation your next ford is therefore, and the therefore is there to refer you back to what he just said. "Because of this therefore mortify your members which are upon the earth. And then he gives a list of these members which are upon the earth. "Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection" and then something in the old language that would make you want to stay away from it "Evil concupiscence" wouldn't you like to avoid that. Well that's contrasting with desires that are out of order and now he's talking about desires which are just wrong, just evil. And then he adds "and covetousness, which is idolatry." Now I want to stop there though I hope you will look at that passage in context and get its full meaning. But I want to concentrate on verse 5,"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth;" I like the American standard version best because I think it does the best job of getting to us ah what the text says, but sometimes there theology overwhelms them and this is true in the way they translate verse 5 and it's an important difference so I want to call attention to it.

The American Standard Version verse 5 of Colossians 3 says, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead." Now, see they just gave us there thoughts about it rather than translate it. But one of the great things about the American Standard Version is their conflict afflicts them and they translate it in the margin and they do here as you see. They ah sorta give up and just translate it. "Put to death the members which are upon the earth" you notice it doesn't say anything about the body and the reason for that is it's not about the body. It's about the

natural abilities of human beings and doing things in which they require no help from God. If you are going to commit fornication you don't need any help from God. That's a member or part of your life. That is upon or of the earth. If you are going to covet, you don't need any help from God. If you are going to indulge in violence of any kind God is going to help you. Those are the members that are upon the earth. Paul is telling us to kill off you know that's what mortify means, you know the word mortgage? Mort-gage, it's something you kill off by degrees. [Laughter] It's what it is, you kill it off by degrees and then you just take out and burn it. Paul is telling us to kill off or let die those common aspects of earthly life that are independent of God and expression of merely human powers.

He was a keen observer of human preoccupations and knew well the outward and inward manifestations of human desiring and lusting and he knew it well in his own case as he mentions in Romans 7:8, that he was alive before the law came and then sin revived and he died and what got him was many of the versions translated covetousness but actually it's lusting. Now, evangelical people generally, partly because they have a high view of scripture, have a hard time reading it as a sober analysis of fact, but you had to understand that when you read Paul, you're reading someone that you should read like you read a textbook. This is a master of his subject. He is giving sober truth in language that is clear and forceful. We don't do justice to the scriptures if we don't read it in the way way we read serious people trying to tell us the trust about important things. Sir William Ramsay the Christian scholar of another age said that, "In the apostle Paul, Greek thought takes its first step forward since Aristotle." Now that may shock you, I hope it will shock you into looking into it, because actually what Paul is dealing with here are the standing issues of Greek civilization that they could not solve and so they talked to find line and did beautiful things, but they could not deal with human desire.

The writers of the New Testament, on the other hand, deal with this constantly. Paul and the other New Testament writers have a very clear perception of the role of disordered desire in the disordered soul, and they speak repeatedly to us about it. Listen to these words from James. James chapter 4 "What is the source of quarrel and conflicts among you. Is it not the source, is not the source you are pleased that wage war in your members?" Now if you you're going to go a long ways to find a better description then that of many many people. A war is waging in there members. Notice that word member again, that was in Colossians 3:5\ . You are members which are upon the earth. "Wage war in your members." You lust and you do not have, you commit murder, and you are envious and you cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. A very famous song of some years ago was "Give Peace a Chance". How do you give peace a chance?

You give peace a chance by ordering your desires under what is good. That's how you give peace a chance. You cannot have peace unless you deal with the sources of war in our members. Peters also speaks at length about the role of desire. We use the, we use the old word lust uh because somehow epithumia is is stronger than wanting a glass of water, or something of that sort. Ah really what they are talking about are desires that obsess you. That keep your mind in a place and agitate your will and stir up the relationships you have to others. That's what epithumia is and that word lust is used in our translations often to try to come to grips with that. In first Peter 4:2, "he who has suffered in the flesh" that is has come to understand the limitations of the flesh "has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lust of men, but for the will of God." in second Peter chapter 1 verse 4 ' "for by these wonderful promises He has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises in order that by then you

might be partakers of the divine nature" okay that's the first 4 verses in Colossians 3\. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

And then in first Peter 5 first Peter 2 verse 11 "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lust, which wage war against the soul. "Fleshly lust which wage war against the soul because they are essentially, will try to spell this out as we go along a bit more. They are essentially disrupting, conflicting, and unless they are ordered under what is good they will ruin your soul. That is to say, your soul won't work right. You will not have a life that is full of peace and strength and harmonious direction towards what is good in your own life and your society. That's why Paul says in Galatians 5:24' "they who are Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts there are. Now, all of this may be starting to sound pretty grim at this point, okay. Crucifixion and all of that, but let me tell you, I'm talking to you about the easy way to live.

What I'm talking to you about is the easy way to live, this is why Jesus said "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." and we have to understand how desire works in the personality in order to appreciate these things that Paul is telling us. About cross, mortification and so on. Uh if we don't understand how desire works then we won't see the point and particularly sexual desire in terms of human life life and soul, sexual desires one of the deepest and most powerful impulses in human life. As a purely physical phenomenon it is essential to the propagation of life and so we share it with plants and animals and no doubt that is the wisdom of God because desire and sexual desire has a fundamental roll in human life. It is a gift of God and we always want to understand this. Now, in human beings sexual desire is directed toward personal intimacy. It is directed towards the sharing of souls and the sharing of lives. Physical pleasure is

subordinated to love where things are as, are as they should be between human beings and especially between sexual partners.

It is the high degree of intimacy that drives sexuality in human beings that require uniqueness in the sexual relationship. We live in a day where this is seriously questioned. To state it very mildly. That is uniqueness in the sexual relationship and we need to understand that that is there in order that the degree of intimacy, with another which the human soul hungers for could be met. It can't be met in other ways. The degree of intimacy and uniqueness in the sexual relationship uh can only be developed and sustained by a Godly love and that is by God, and thus marriage is a sacrament. That is to say it is a divine work, it is a grace. In the absence of intimacy and uniqueness that agape love makes possible, the desire for a physical Union remains. Sexual desire, unsubordinated to agape love, then runs amok across the human lives, intermingling with many detentions of rage, contempt and malice often drawing upon the brutal and he disgusting for the sake of increasing sensuality.

As Paul says in Ephesians 4:19 "then they having become callous". Callous means you don't feel and feeling is absolutely vital to the human soul. and so they become "callous, and have given themselves over to sensuality for the the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." and that's Paul's very concise picture of what happens when people chose to live at the level of sensuality and one reason why our marriages are in such trouble today is because we have people who are living at the level of sensuality. They often don't know it, No one has ever walked it, walked up to them and said "Hey, you know you are living at the level of sensuality?" they might not even know what it meant if they did, but we live in sensual culture. We live in a culture where feeling is exulted above everything else, and it's very important that we understand that. If we are going to understand how things go today.

Now, the primary problem, which spiritual formation, the direction of the self towards goodness and Godliness faces, is the subordination of desire, lust, but not just sexual, to the settled embodied will for what is good and what is right. That is you want a person who is settled in pursuing what is good and what is right, peacefully with the power of God accompanying them and if you have that then if you have that's what you want come out of spiritual formation and where that happens then of course the desires are not inordinate they are in place. There are no evil concupiscence in your life because you have eliminated that through the process of spiritual formation and we will go into that more in just a moment. So here's a case that is interesting in this connection. Jesus promises deliverance from the power of desire to the poor beaten up Samaritan woman at the well, and you have to do a little ah ignition, spirituality here and get into that situation with Jesus and that woman at the well with your imagination.

Um you have to think about a woman in that culture who had 5 husbands and was now living with a live in boyfriend. You have to look at that woman and think what she had suffered in her course of life, and Jesus comes to her and says "whoever drinks of the water I shall give him, shall never thirst again" Now I want to ask you please to take a moment and just think about what do you think it means when he said, "you will never thirst again"? Now obviously he was referring to something other than H2O wasn't he? What do you think? Cause what matters when you read these scriptures is what do you take them to mean, and when Jesus said "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give the, shall never thirst again" what is he referring to? Again what is he referring to? He says, "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life. I suggest to you that what he's saying is, that if you take of the life of Jesus, the life of the trinity through Jesus. You will never again be governed by the power of unsatisfied desire. I think I better say that again. Okay.

When Jesus says "they will never thirst again" he's saying that if they take the life of Jesus the trinity, the kingdom of God and they take that into them. They will never again be governed again by the power of unsatisfied desire. Now you see, you hold onto that thought now, because we are going to come to talk about specifically about pornography in a moment and you have to think about what is going on in that situation of engagement with pornography in relation to desire and how that then comes to control people and become, people become terribly addicted to it. They can't, as they say, they can't get away from it. This is the same thing I believe that Peter is saying when he says, "We become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust, desire, intense desire. Now, uh we have to do something about this. We can take verses like Romans 9:16 where it says, "It is not of him that willed, nor of him that runneth, but of God who shows mercy." You have to be careful with that. I was in dealing with these issues ah, it's certainly a God who shows mercy, but if you don't willeth and runneth nothing is going to happen.

So, in thinking about spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines, you have to understand that what is required here is the intelligent direction of action in the light of God's word. What are we to do? And in the details of this you don't get a lot of directions from reading the scriptures, you have to look at the examples, and you do get some direction as helpful. So Paul is saying to us now, it's up to us, mortify therefore you remembers that function without Gods help. Mortify, means kill all. How do you do that? Oh yes, if God doesn't work with you you can't do it. That's true. As Paul says in Romans 8 ah 13 I think it is, "if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you will live." so you see again now, I hope that coming out of all these verses you get to decide there's two kinds of life. There's the life of the

one risen with Christ, that's the person who's drinking of the water that Jesus gives them, that's the person who is interactive with the spirit of God.

If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeps of the flesh then you get to live, and then there's the life where your just down here where your natural abilities struggling along trying to put your soul together, ah which is broken, and using only your own resources and whatever good they come that's wonderful, but it doesn't really do the job of putting that soul back together, and uh sexuality then can take a person and dominate their life. We need to understand that sexual desire is not a bad thing, it's not a sin any more than any other desires that have a natural role in our life. Like the desire for food, or entertainment, or ah many others. It only becomes a problem when our will becomes devoted to its fulfillment. That's when desire becomes a problem when it captures our will.

Many people in our culture do not know that they have a will distinct from their feelings and desires, but the will is a power that God has put into our personality to direct actions, sometimes independently of desire, and when our will is captured by desire then it also captures our mind and then our mind becomes focused on our desires in such a way that we can only think of them and of how they might be fulfilled. So there's an order here that you have to respect. When the will comes back to its alignment with God, then it has the capacity to no do what it wants to do and to do what it doesn't want to do. You know that's the secret of all ethical teachings in general, is to give people a place to stand against what they want to do or don't want to do. That's the nature of the ethical side of the human being and then moral teaching would come into help us with that and Christian teaching comes in to help us understand that we are helpless without God, but with God then we can, want to make an A in your course, you need a vision.

You need to think it would be a real good thing for me to make an A in this course, and if you don't have that vision not much else follows. Ah if you do have that vision then you can form the intention, I'm going to make an A in this course, and once you have that intention then you will find a way to do it. That's means. Vision, intention, means. Help me hold that in your minds as we go along here. Vision, intention, means. That's what governs. Now sometimes there extort, extensive things, like I had a Greek teacher in College who never gave an A on the general principle that no one could translate Greek into English and English into Greek without making some mistakes and if he couldn't find it he knew they were there anyway.[Laughter]

And so quite seriously he never gave an A. he give an A-. I don't think I ever made an A- but uh you might run into a teacher like that and the vim would fail you in that case. But in nearly every case that you consider like saving money, losing weight or gaining weight. Uh learning how to converse with other, Uh learning to speak French, Uh all of those things are things where if you have the vision and you form the intention and you'll find the means and it will work. Most people go to the means and they don't work. You cannot accomplish at the means level what only can be accomplished at the vision level and the intention level. And that really comes home to us now as we begin to talk about this issue of uh pornography. You start with this, spiritual formation is not something you take a vacation from.

Spiritual formation is happening to everyone all the time and they are living in a vim model oh whether or not they make a project of it or not. Spiritual formation is like education, you get one it's just a question of which one do you get. Spiritual formation you get one. The pornographer has had a spiritual formation. They have a vision of what is good and that vision is very encompassing. It has to do with their world, with themselves, with women or men the opposite sex or, in our day, even the same sex, and it has to do with how they think about them.

And uh because of their vision and their intention they find the means and then they are hooked into pornography. That's a phenomena of desire and a person who has come to that place where they cannot not engage in pornography or other dimensions of sexuality or other dimensions of life, the person who says they can't stop eating doughnuts. Yeah, you can stop eating donuts, but you haven't decided to because you don't have an alternative vision of wellbeing that would enable you to decide not to eat donuts. So the pornographer has a vision and if one wants to get out of such involvement, you don't try real hard not to do it. Now this is a place where I need to stomp my foot and yell at you. [Foot Stomp] Hey, [Laughter]

Trying real hard never works. You cannot win fighting feelings head on. You cannot do it and if you or you have a friend that is troubled with something like pornography or donuts is the case may be, you want to be sure and tell 'em, you can't win by fighting the feeling. That's, that's the level at which your will will be defeated. What you have to do, is to change your vision. You have to work on the mind until it sees a different good, right, now so, what's the alternative to eating the doughnut. Well now you see, you probably can't think of an alternative. [Laughter]

That's the way this works. Okay. Desire obsesses the mind. That's the way it works. Desire gets you to just, all that is before your whole world is the doughnut. [Laughter]

Right. Now you're dead at that point, and that's true of looking at a salacious picture of some sort. Of two people having sexual relations or something like that in pornography, and if you are going to deal with any of those things you see that, V in the vim is the key. That's why the person is a pornographer, it's because he has a vision of men, women, oh his own body, and really it always gets back to God. Because the truth of the matter is, pornography is rooted in a vision of God and Gods world as a place of bitter disappointment where human beings have to scratch around and get what they can, even if they are disgusted by it, and we can say that the

wrong vision of God lies at the foundation of pornographic practice. Okay, so now go back.

Don't try to do it by will-power, you don't have the resources. Change your vision. Your vision of yourself and your body, your vision of God, your vision of other people of women involved in pornography. What's going on here, look at it as it is, a very effective video of a man who was engaged in a pornographic parade, he made it, and the title enough, the title alone is enough to just turn your head around. The title is simply "somebody's daughter" now you see, that's where you stop looking at the flesh of this woman or the picture and you see something different.

Now, let me tell you a generally, okay, the answer to any temptation is to broaden your view. Any temptation, and this is deeply built into the nature of your soul, we are talking about soul. Hmm, that you deal with temptation by broadening your view, and you broaden your view the next thing you're going to do is to get out of temptation. You don't want to live there. You remember there's a difference between the thought of something, the temptation to it and the engagement of the will. The thought of something is not wrong, to have a thought of a of a sexual relation that would be wrong, that is not a sin. That's not what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5, where he says if you look a woman to lust, this is a propulsive action that he is talking about here. Temptation is where you not only have the thought but the inclination. That's where you don't want to be and when you find yourself there get out.

And the way you get out basically is to broaden your view, and then sin is the point at which the will is engaged. And that's what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 5. The pornographic I in the video, the intention is the intent and decision to use sexual sensuality as a major source of gratification. That's a decision. That's an intention, people who are engaged in pornography intend to be engaged in pornography. This is the point where we have to recognize what the bible speaks of as the amazing duplicity of the heart. The heart is the will, I don't have

time to argue with you about that, but just try it on. The heart is the will, and when the prophet speaks of the amazing wickedness of the heart, something that human beings cannot plum. It is this capacity to fool oneself about ones intentions. What are our intention? the person engaged in pornography is apt to say "well I intend not to do it, but I did it." that is a piece of mental manipulation you want to work though very hard on if you want to be free, not just in this area, but in any area of temptation. Come to terms with what you really intent to do.

Now you can't do that unless you have taken care of the vision thing, because in order to work the intent and the decision clearly you have to have a clear vision of what is good and what is not. You have to see what is wrong, what is bad, what is harmful, and what you're contemplating, you have to see it clearly, and then you can turn away from it. Then you can form the intentions to get out of it, but the correct intention and vision can be formed and when it is formed then you can find the means to carry through, but I repeat the primary work is at the vision level. Now, that's why Paul says in Romans 12, you all know the passage where he says, "Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." That's where the vision is and that's where the intention is formed. Anyone can deal with these issues if they deal with it at that level. Then there are some issues of means and um, again, that's the m. V-I-M I hope you write that on your bathroom mirror. One of the main means is taking a kit, making sure to see pornography, for example, for what it really is.

Think about the people that are involved in it. Think about what their life is like. Think about, do you really want to contribute to that, do you want to be a part of that. Um, for many people just to see the terrible degradation of others and one's self, involved in pornography will strongly bolster their will and they will have no involvement with it. That's very important and again it is an application of the general truth, I've tried to lay on you today that temptations of all

kind is defeated by broadening the view. See that's what the will is designed to do, is to consider alternatives. Desire overpowers the will by obsessing the mind and you must refuse to go along with that. Identify it when it is happening. Discuss it with others, be wonderful if your teachers could talk about these things in a very good scholarly way to help you get the right understanding. We may think that what we're dealing with is inevitable, but it really isn't. It's not like gravity. It is something that we can step out of and when the person has coincided the right to rule to their desires, then they're locked in, but once they take that back then minds, then means are available.

The primary means is to see things differently and we have to do what we can to do that. That would include things like, memorizing scripture is a wonderful thing to strengthen you, by that I really mean passage and not just verses, but uh take the passages that deal with these things like I referred you to Colossians 3:1 through 17. I actually give that to people in retreats and make sure they memorize it, because it so changes your mind, but there are other means. Two others quickly are uh openness to others, whatever the temptation might be including sexuality and pornography. Openness to others in situations uh that are appropriate are very helpful. Confession to appropriate persons, sharing with others in the same difficulty, a buddy or accountability system with a small group, and I really recommend that you have a small group where not everyone else is dealing with the same battle, you need some people who are not in the same place. Another measure that could be taken is to kneel down publicly and pray out-loud for deliverance from your temptation. You might do that in church. Perhaps they could stand it, you know, what is church for? Alright, church is not a place we go a couple of times a week for some carefully calibrated distance from other people. Church is a place where we are supposed to really come together.

Now, you might say that seems a little extreme to kneel down publicly and pray out-loud from your deliverance from your temptation, well, St. Benedict threw himself into a briar patch up on the occasions of salacious thoughts and it seems to have done wonders for him. [Laughter] and I have seen a lot of people who would have done well to have found a briar patch and thrown themselves in it rather than do what they did wind up doing, and at this point you might or someone with the problem, "are you serious" and my answer would be "are you." if you are serious. Now, resolute avoidance. Make sure that pornography is not within your reach, or doughnuts or whatever you are struggling with. They just get away from it, and people might say, "well I just can't do that" but anyone who says that has not decided to break the involvement.

So we pushed back now up to the I and we may need to go up to the V before we can finally look at and say, "You know, I am not going to go near a doughnut, much less look at one, I'm not going to have pornography within my reach. none of it in the house." and you say, "well but I'll go get some" and well that's when you call your friends or go to your church or do, whatever's needed to help you to deal with that. let me just say this to you that pornography involvement is a sure indicator of the impoverishment of life and what you need to do with reference to any kind of temptation, that is a desire that is overwhelming you, is to make sure that your life is filled with good things and that's why Paul and his advice over you, remember he says, sitting in a prison he says, "whatever's true, whatever's lovely, whatever's a good report, == and so on think on these things." Now that's a guy who's sitting in a miserable prison and saying things like, I have learned that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens. How did he do that? By turning to Christ. It is the enrichment of life that is the answer to the impoverishment of Spirit that leads to the triumph of lust.

Love of good things of right things is what sets lust aside you cannot engage in lusting for another person if you love them. Now the only exception to that is of course the one made by marriage. But in general dealing with the problem of lust love is the answer. So we have to learn to fill our lives with good things. Sexuality can be governed by personality under God that is set on what is good because Agape love is in charge of the whole life. Thank you very much.

Announcer:

He has agreed to stick around for about 30 minutes of questions here. He teaches at noon at USC so he's going to have to jump in the car at 10 40 and go over there and then he flies off to Minneapolis tomorrow. So we're very grateful that he made time for us today. There are two microphones here. Our session here will end a 10 40 30 minutes but we do want to have a time of Q and A. There are two microphones one here and one here. I think he's hooked up now. It will be in a second. But while you're thinking of a question let me ask you one there's a sense in which culturally it feels like we've lost the battle when it comes to things like a disorder view of sexuality. Somebody said the other day we have 3000 ads coming at us every day. In other words we're being given a tremendous vision that is not the vision of God and you said it's not inevitable but sometimes to us it feels inevitable.

So powerful is the vision we're being presented with or visions. So let me ask you about forming vision an alternative vision. What would you say are the practices of forming an alternative vision? If this is what we do and maybe you cover these in some of the means but it feels to me like something rather radical needs to happen. If we're to contend with the vision that we're being presented with 3000 times a day about multiple things what are the practices of someone who has decided I want to cultivate God's vision. What does that look like?

Dallas Willard:

I don't think it's working [the microphone]. Thank you. That's really a good question. Let me say that you're going to have a hard time if you're just out there on your own trying to deal with it. Where we need to start is with the teachers in our churches. They are they have the responsibility and the opportunity to address these issues. Basically they need to talk about desire and the soul in detail so that we will know we'll understand what's happening. See what happens in desire and temptation is we are not prepared to identify before it comes to us. I like to use the old song she'll be coming around the mountain when she comes to teach you something very profound about desire. It's always coming slowly it doesn't jump on you. Unless you're not taught and not thoughtful but when you learn to recognize what is approaching you then you can take another option to the one that might be your customary one. Let me illustrate this in very personal terms.

I was once a young man actually. I'm now as old as the Tory conference as a young man I experienced very strong sexual temptation and I learned that if I would. When the opportunity began to present itself. If I would at that moment take that as the cue now I almost hesitate to tell you this because you're going to think it's corny. I took. I learned to take that as a cue to pray for God's blessing on this girl that was coming into view or if I was tempted to take initiative to make sure that she came into view. To take that occasion to pray for the blessing of God on that person. Now that's just you see you take the same cues. But now they cue you to do something different. Now I recognize that many people are so deeply into things that they can't do that. Sometimes people need counseling. They need medical care.

They may need deliverance ministry all kinds of things but most of us are in a position where we can do that and that's what we have to learn to do that involves general things like teaching about sensuality, what is sensuality? Why are feelings so powerful? You even have a song you know you hear in elevators anymore "feelings whoa whoa whoa feelings." See that's where we are culturally and we just have to say I'm not going to live there. I recognize feelings. I'll deal with them as appropriate. But I don't live by my feelings. I live by my vision of what is good that has come to me through love from Jesus Christ. I know Agape love is and that's how it governs my life not feelings. Here we have a question over here on the left.

Student 1:

Hi. I just wanted to ask you if you thought that morality uh should be enforced by the government, why or why not.

Dallas Willard:

Morality is enforced by the government constantly. Kill someone and see what happens. Now now don't go away. Don't go away. I don't mean to dismiss you with that but it's important to understand that they say you know you can't legislate morality. We don't legislate much of anything else. That's like if you listen to the discussion in the current election about who's going to tax who for what you will see very quickly that they're making a moral point out of them. So morality is so important that the government cannot neglect it, it must take care. But much of

morality cannot be legislated and St. Thomas Aquinas and his treatise on law distinguishes the various kinds of laws and talks about why in addition to positive law which is what we're talking about here you have to have biblical law teaching about the inner parts of the heart. That's what that's the part of morality you cannot legislate which is what's in your heart. So we have a part of our legal doctrine is the doctrine of you can't indulge in prior restraint. You have to wait.

Someone does it or it's clear they're going to do it before you can prosecute them. So it's a mixed thing. Now only the church can teach a morality that will enable a government to function as it ought only the church can do that. Nothing else can. Because the government depends upon the character of ordinary life in ordinary people and that's something that has to run from the inside.

Thank you very much. [Applause]

Student 2:

You spoke, you spoke about the way of the easy life. Dr. Willard Can you talk a little bit more about that because if you say that it is the easy way to change our vision to fall after the life of Christ I don't find that easy. And I'd like you to speak more on that.

Dallas Willard:

Notice, I didn't say the easy way to change I said it's easy way to live and it is. Now the change will have some difficulty to it. But actually it's not at all as hard as people often seem to think what it does require is vision intention and means. One reason why people find it so hard is they always start with the means and if that's all you've got like it'll be like all the wonderful exercise equipment that's sitting around in houses and never used. And so there is a difficulty and

there's no question about that. But what I was saying was that once you enter into it, the life you live it is the easy way to live.

See what we want is to come to the place to where the things that Jesus did and taught just come naturally so that I could look at a salacious picture or I could see a beautiful person and not even go there in terms of wrong desire and wrong looking and it would be with attitude of Who needs that. All all addiction and temptation is based on neediness and that is why Jesus said If you drink the water I give you will never thirst again because he is going to meet the need of the soul so that when I might to say oh I missed that chance to lust well you know what am I really deprived. If I don't have a rich life with God I am and that's why the language that's used for example in the 16th Psalm the Lord is my portion. The Lord is what I've got. Now you can't just do that with empty words you have to live that then as you live that and your whole life has caught up into it then you're in a position to easily and routinely do the things that Jesus said. Uh the mic, holler.

Student 3:

Can I have a donut?

Dallas Willard:

You want a donut?

Student 3:

I do.

Dallas Willard:

Come and get them. [Applause]

Student 3:

Dr. Willard, thank you for coming out here this morning Doctor- Oh she's getting a donut, the whole box.

Announcer:

Now we don't want anyone to rush the stage please so just stay calm. The doughnuts will be here.

Student 3:

I appreciate a lot of your work in philosophy Dr. Willard. I appreciate all that. I think I just want to get some clarification on some of your terms that you use. You talk about the will and the desire it seems if the desire is good which I think you said at one point it's good in nature desires not a bad thing-

Dallas Willard:

We couldn't live without desire.

Student 3:

If the mind is obsessed by desire, would that not be a good thing if desire is not a bad thing but our mind is obsessed by it. Is that a good thing or do you think it's kind of bad.

Dallas Willard:

Let me just tell you that's a good question helps me clear up something very very important. Desire never considers alternatives. That's what's wrong with it. Desire simply says I want that I want what I want when I want it as song goes. It doesn't consider alternatives and that's why it is not good for the person to be obsessed with any desire with any desire. Well what about desire for God. Yeah but you still need eggs and biscuits. [Laughter] And you still need human relationships. So it's a matter of order. That's the deal with desire. It's good in its place. It's irreplaceable in its place but it alone will not stay in its place. And so we have to have a larger vision a vision of life in the kingdom of God of Christ. What he's doing on Earth and how we are a part of it and that helps us.

Student 3:

Do the will and the desire work together?

Dallas Willard:

Well well yes that's the ideal situation is that the will would be set for what is good and desire would be under the direction of the will see the culture that Todd was referring to that we live in is one where people really don't know they have a will. They think that their feelings and desires are their will and the will is your capacity to initiate and control events always within limitations. But still that's what must direct our life not our feelings. And that's a part of biblical teaching that we really need to lay a hold of. Now if we if our lives are directed towards what is good by our will then we will have wonderful feelings. We will live a dramatic life and that will provide healthy feelings to move us and motivate us. And so on.

Student 4:

I professor well my two questions were just answered but I have a third one.

Dallas Willard:

Good.

Student 4:

That's something along the lines of-

Dallas Willard:

A man for all seasons.

Student 4:

Yeah they're good questions. This question is pertaining to your example of the woman at the well Jesus comes and satisfies or offer satisfaction for her deepest desires. You use the example in your talk. I was wondering if you would unpack that a little bit because I'm having trouble seeing how that links in...

Dallas Willard:

Well this woman was beaten up by desire which no doubt led also to beatings by men. See that's the violence that is involved in personal relations comes from frustration of desire. This is another thing that you will notice about anger is that it is when you find an angry person and you find someone who has had their desires thwarted and that's why they're mad. And now this woman was living in a context where pretty clearly I mean in that day a woman did not dump a man. I mean it it happened but it was. And the Mosaic Law made provision for it but it was not the everyday thing. So what this woman had received was tons and tons of rejection. And she was now down to the point where she couldn't get the man to marry her. He just just lived in as we say. OK.

Dallas Willard:

That's a bad life.

Student 4:

This still on? Cool. Well in that regard I was wondering where Jesus seems to offer us this deep rooted satisfaction. But it seems like in my life and I dare say otherwise at times I feel profoundly unsatisfied. And I'm wondering how that applies to-

Dallas Willard:

OK let me ask you this. Does your profound dissatisfaction dominate your action so that you wind up doing things this may be a little too much too confessional here but the issue is not just that you as I put it in the talk. It isn't just that you have unsatisfied desires it's that you're not dominated by them they don't exercise a controlling influence over your life. Now I don't encourage you to have unsatisfied desires myself. I think you ought to find satisfaction in your life with Christ in your world. And I believe everyone can; know that it does take some growing and some working. The issue is is your action dominated by intense unsatisfied desires and you look in pretty good shape. So I think you're. You're not too bad off.

Student 4:

Thanks professor.

Student 5:

I guess I would like you to clarify more about pornography um I think about art art history, Greek and Roman history and that's not considered pornography that's considered art. Maybe it's a high art and maybe pornography is a low art. So would you clarify because I think we see that in general broad terms about pornography and then we get into a slippery slope because we might look at someone as being beautiful and not desirable necessarily.

Dallas Willard:

That's absolutely right.

Student 5:

You know we look at something in pornographic terms and say that's wrong because it's bestiality and it's other things and that's wrong, so just bring clarification and I'll take the answer to my seat.

Dallas Willard:

Pornography, um the word itself is derived from the word for prostitutes porni is prostitute graphein is drawing um the intent in pornography is the solicitation of sensual feeling and possibly sexual release. Now you could imagine a person so pure of heart that they might be able to see something done for pornographic purposes and just enjoy aesthetic pleasure in that. It's very hard because the frame around pornography says something different. Christians have

often been caught up in prudery for example covering up Michelangelo's figures in the Sistine Chapel and other cases of hiding genitalia in statues and so on. So it's it's a situation where there are two different purposes but in the particular case one might view the paintings of Michelangelo and do that for sexual stimulation and so that's the purpose that is involved in Michelangelo's case it did not involve the degradation of people to produce it.

So there is quite a different setting that is there. It's a real good question and I do believe that we as Christians need to understand that there is a thing of beauty that is good and that God has made us beautiful. One of the sad things is today that people are made to feel not beautiful and we need to understand that beauty is a good thing. It is a part of what God has given us. Beauty is the sensible representation of what is good and we need that to help us pursue what is good. So that's a very important question. I hope that makes a beginning on answering it. Yes sir.

Student 6:

I was wondering if you can explain your view Matthew 5

Dallas Willard:

Of Matthew five?

Student 6:

Isn't that, I believe that's a passage that you-

Dallas Willard:

Yes you're talking about what Jesus said when he is dealing with fair sacrificial righteousness and people who say I didn't I didn't commit adultery so I'm fine. And so he then turns to the case of the person who is using people to excite their lust. They are looking to lust. This is verse 28. I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust see the will is engaged at that point. This is a purposive action to look upon a woman to lust for her has committed adultery. Why. Because he has engaged his will and his will has been engaged in that direction and that's the level at which sin occurs not at temptation, not at thought but at the level of the engagement of the will. This is what I call in various places cultivated lusting. This is a situation where someone is using another person to excite their lust because they enjoy that and still adultery in the heart doesn't have all the consequences of adultery. Indeed. But what Jesus is talking about is something that is still unloving and I'll guarantee you you can't do this with people at random and love them. It is unloving and harmful because of what it involves.

So I think that's what he's talking about. You have to. You're here. You do your Greek here and see what it says because many translations have translated it looks at a woman and lusts and lusts that's disastrously wrong to translate that way that amounts to saying that you can't even have the temptation without sinning so you need to think through those stages and look at the language here and I'm sure you have professors and colleagues that would be glad to work on that with you. Yes.

Student 7:

Hi. I was wondering, in your model for change how does that work in the process of suffering and deliverance and healing? Does your model for change work in conjunction with healing or is that...

Dallas Willard:

Well you mean like healing prayer or deliverance? Well that would come under my M you see. Like suppose you find yourself in such deep water with some desire that you really are not able to form the intention and take the steps to get out of it. Well that's why you need help and help comes under the heading of means but the means then go back may go back up to the vision because sometimes the most helpful thing that can be done is people get clear with their vision or maybe someone help helping you really come to an intention and decision not to do something. Now this is often very hard on people because they've tried things like tried to quit smoking or whatever and it defeats them and it seems harsh to say well now look you have your vision and your intention. What are those and work them out. Now on the basis of that you can find ways of carrying out your intention but you know there really isn't anything else that's helpful to say. Now if we discern that or if an individual discerns that they need deliverance or some sort of healing prayer then they should go for it. Even if medication use it and so that's where that comes in is under means.

Student 7:

Thank You.

Dallas Willard:

And our churches should be busily engaged in this all the time.

Student 8:

Yes my question is in regards to what you had to say about vision, specifically I was wondering what is the process for the individual, the Christian who is seeking to gain restoration.

Dallas Willard:

Yeah well I'm glad to have that question this is where the whole array of spiritual disciplines comes in solitude will do wonders for your vision. Silence again worship. Genuine worship not necessarily of what we do with the band because believe it or not worship is possible without a band can happen with one too. Those are the things that you want to do to transform your vision. And as I mentioned the real problem in temptation is always our vision of God and if we are to have a big enough vision of God that will actually lead us through the rest of it and worship at least in the moment of worship is the perfect and most powerful discipline. So that's the way we go.

Student 8:

And also, one small second part. Were there writers in Christian classics who dealt with this subject in terms of the restoration of vision to the [inaudible]?

Dallas Willard:

I'm sorry I didn't get the first of it.

Student 8:

Were there were writers in the Christian classics who dealt with this subject in terms of-

Dallas Willard:

Oh absolutely. Oh yes St. John Cassian institutes is the oldest piece on this St. John Cassian. If you come up later just read book 3 of Calvin's Institutes St. Thomas `a Kempis, Imitation of Christ, the most powerful modern writing on all of this is William Law's book a serious call to a devout and holy life. But you on some of these you need someone to hold your hand because it will set your hair on fire. These guys they didn't they weren't messing around and the gals too. One of the gentlest of all is St. Francis Descales book An Introduction to the devout life. There's a sea of literature on this and thank God you have an institute here that teaches about this and makes it available to people. But it's somehow manages not to be known. I do retreats in which I introduce people into all of this and one of the main things they say to me is why hasn't someone told me about this before and probably the Left Behind series won't do it.

Announcer:

This next one will be our last question, why don't you let him know that.

Dallas Willard:

Yes. Last question Todd says and he's the boss.

Student 9:

On behalf of Biola I want to apologize for all the microphone tricks we played on you today.

Dallas Willard:

Oh no no no don't worry about it.

Student 9:

But um basically you know there's a lot of like distance between hitting puberty and getting married. And I was wonderin- [laughter]

Dallas Willard:

Yes. You're telling me.

Student 9:

For some people more than others right.

Dallas Willard:

I have been there.

Student 9:

So I was wondering, in terms of sexual desire like I know it drives us towards marriage. But what's the vision as a single person. What is our vision at that point besides like yeah praying for the girl and eventually getting married in this time like how do we satisfy that desire how do we you know how do you appropriate it what are some healthy ways to...

Dallas Willard:

You know I really I really would like to've talk about that because it is a really important topic that if you are not having sex you're still sexual and if you don't get married you're still sexual and that's an important dimension of your life and it will always be there. So you learn how to live that out in your vocation in community under God. But it does mean you're going to be a man. You're going to be a woman and that's different. One of the most confusing things in

our current culture is that people want to in some context talk as if somehow there's no difference between a man and a woman.

That's the basis of what we what is called homosexual marriage. That that amounts to saying there's no difference between a man and a woman that you can get married if you're a man you get married to a man just like you get married to a woman. Well I mean that's something that if you are blind to that it probably won't help anyone help you to point out the differences. It isn't the same at all but that's one reason why homosexuality is a perversion of nature is because it says things are what they aren't. And that's that's not a good thing. We have many ways here. See here's another one. What do you do if you are older your mate passes away or nowadays leaves you. How do you handle that aging and sexuality is a dimension all on its own that we don't talk much about it but everyone has to deal with. So being a man being a woman is larger than engaging in sexual relationships and we learn how to form that as a good thing as we live our lives in community under God. [Applause]

[End]