
JESUS BRINGS REAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN.

Today, we're going to be looking at what the Bible says about relationships between men and women. But we're going to do things a little differently. We're going to have TWO sermons. First, I'd like to speak directly to the men, while the ladies head outside for a bit of morning tea on the front lawn. And then in about 15 minutes, we're going to swap over and I'd like to talk directly with the women. Now, this is UNUSUAL, but both talks will be available on line so you can listen to both during the week if you like. But I do think that it is worth trying something a **little** different to help us focus on specific gender issues for this topic, in an environment that may make all of us a little more comfortable.

This will also provide us with an opportunity to talk with each other as men and women. If you're visiting today, I do apologise if this might make you a **little** uncomfortable, but I am confident that you will be looked after well by our regular members during this time. But if you do need to hide(!), there is a cry room just opposite the kitchen, or you're welcome to sit at the back of the hall and enjoy the children's C4K service, as long as your promise to come back!

I'll ask the ladies to head out now to the foyer for tea and coffee, and the front lawn for some morning tea. And when you see a large group of men heading towards you in about 12 or 13 minutes, please head back in so we can swap over. Then men, we'll call you back in so we can join in the end of the service together!

(LADIES EXIT – welcomers to direct people)
(320)

SERMON 1: Men

Men, we don't have long, so let's get straight into it.

Today, in Australia, pornography is used by at least two thirds of men on a regular basis. Australians spend **billions** of dollars a year on porn. Recent figures show that tens of thousands of Australian men can spend up to 5 hours a DAY watching porn. And recent figures also show that Christians are just as bad with pornography as non-Christians. It is an issue for women as well, but it is mostly a male issue.

Do you know **when** the porn problem starts for Australian men?

'The average age of a child's first exposure to pornography is 11. A total of 90 per cent of children ages 8-16 have viewed pornography online.' (Jerry Ropelato , *Internet Pornography Statistics* <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>)

On average, at 11 years old. And the result is that pornography changes the way we view our sexuality. It slowly *reprograms* our brains in the way we view women and the way we interact with them.

Australian Medical Association president Steve Hambleton, says: "*Girls feel they have to act like porn actors and boys think they want to be treated that way.*" <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/parenting/australian-children-in-danger-of-spending-more-time-in-front-of-screens-than-at-school/story-fnet085v-1226756092880>

That's right. Our children are often learning how to have sex from internet pornography. Your children. Your grandchildren. Your nephews, nieces – most of them will probably first of all find out about sex from internet porn – a place where **most** sexual acts involve some kind of violence towards women, and where women are treated, for the most part, as objects to be used by men. So girls learn to act like porn stars, and boys think that's normal.

You may have heard that on average, 1 or 2 men are killed by coward punches (King hits) every YEAR. There are lots of ads now trying to break this cycle of violence among men.

But did you know that today, in Australia, **1 woman a week** is **killed** by domestic violence events. Either by a partner, or an ex partner. ONE woman a week killed by a male partner or ex-partner. I heard one surgeon this week say that 40 of his

suregries a year are reconstructions of women's faces from domestic violence. One surgeon. 40 a year.

Why tell you all this?

Because at the heart of these issues, men are the problem. Look around you now...

Two thirds of the men in this room use porn regularly. (Let's all try not to make eye contact!!!)

And we have all been shaped in our views on women by the society we live in. And we are the only ones who can bring about change. In our families. In our church. In our society.

Proverbs 5 is a warning against adultery. A warning to walk away from temptation (verse 3) A warning not to "drink from someone else's cistern". (verse 15) A warning that, verse 22:

22 The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast.

Pornography, adultery, wandering eyes, unfaithfulness, violence – they ensnare us. They hold us captive. And they distort the real relationships God wants us to have with the opposite sex. It affects our relationships with ALL women. Mothers, sisters, friends, wives, girlfriends.

We need to get back to REAL relationships. Turn with me to the second reading – Titus 2. How do we have **real** relationships with women?

2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

Older men, mature men, this is for you: temperance, respectability, self-control, faith, love, endurance. Older men – being older, you've made mistakes. You know what happens when you go down the wrong path. You have experience in these things! You have the wisdom of years. And you, older men, are the examples for the younger men. Like it or not, you are examples of faithfulness, of respectability, of self control. Like it or not, the younger men are looking at YOU!

The younger men need you to **talk** to them about life. Whether you're single or married, with or without kids, our younger men need you. Because **you** know what they're up against. A world of porn, a world focused on money and wealth and power. A world where married men are often more in love with their jobs than they are with their wife and children. A world where single men are constantly challenged by their singleness and their sexuality. A world where

young couples are increasingly facing challenges with having children and fertility issues.

Titus 2, Verse 6:

6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned...

Young men need to see examples of lives of integrity. Seriousness. Sound speech. What does that look like? Turn with me, back just a few pages in your bible, to page _____. 1 Timothy 5:1-2. Paul writes to Timothy:

5 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

That's a very simple model: Treat older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

This is a **family** model of relationships. This is what Jesus wants us to have in our church. This is the way to have REAL relationships. Jesus wants his Church to be the model of a perfect and loving family. And let me focus especially today on that last bit – *treat younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*

That attitude alone, I think, would put a significant end to the hold pornography has in people's lives – if men could treat all women like sisters, with absolute purity.

Our society has a big problem. And it's us. Men drive the porn industry. Men drive violence towards women. We are not doing well in setting examples. We have failed on many levels over many generations, because we have enslaved ourselves and been held captive to denigrated thinking about women.

But under God, we have the perfect example in Jesus. He is **the** example of temperance, self-control, respect, faith, love and endurance. He is the perfection of integrity.

If you want to have REAL relationships, the first step is to get to know Jesus better. How did **he** speak to older and younger men? How did **he** treat women? How did **he** face struggles and temptations and trials? How did **he** endure?

This week I want you to read a gospel – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John – and just focus on the person of Jesus – who he is, what he did, the things he taught, how he

lived, how he related to people. Men and women. That's our homework this week. Let's do that.

And next week – you older men are to ask a younger man – “What Gospel did you read this week?” And you will talk to them about what they learned about Jesus. You will encourage them, and be their example. And together, we will build this church to be a church of men who are faithful, loving, self-controlled, and worthy of respect.

Let's pray.

(Question time if there is time)

(Off to morning tea. Women to come in.)

(1238)

Sermon 2 – Women

Welcome back ladies. And let's get straight into it!

Today, women are getting married later in life. Having children later in life. More women pursue life-long careers. In many households, men are working 9am – 5pm, whilst many women are working more like 5am – 9pm while they balance a household and a career.

In some households, men are becoming the primary carers of children, and are taking a step back from careers. There have been many changes in our society but there are still many areas of *frustration* between men and women and the way we relate to each other.

Pornography is accessible by anyone on the internet. The marriage debate rages over same sex unions. Paedophilia has been uncovered everywhere. And nearly every image we see of women is airbrushed. These are all signs of our society's deep sickness when it comes to our sexuality.

Proverbs 5 outlines one of our problems – sexual unfaithfulness. It basically says: Unfaithfulness destroys relationships. One of the major issues that damages relationships between men and women, is sexual unfaithfulness – both in thought and action. And there are consequences from this that affect our whole society.

But unfaithfulness is not JUST sexual. It's about broken trust, disloyalty. Unfaithfulness happens in marriages, but it also happens in non-marriage relationships. There are many ways deception and lies creep into our relationships.

So what do we do?

Titus 2 gives us wisdom on how, as God's community, we can help each other in these relationships. (Titus 2 is also printed in the newsletter today.)

Some of these things may seem a bit cultural from the times when they were written, but they're very relevant today, and give us a good starting point.

Let's start at verse 3: Timothy says to the pastor, Titus...

3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4 Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

The answer is a community model – relationships based on the idea of a family – the older women teach the younger. A young girl needs encouragement from an older sister or mother or aunt or grandmother or friend. A young wife needs some support from the veteran woman who's had 30 years of marriage. The new mother needs help from the mother of 3 teenagers. The family model means that older women have a responsibility to the younger.

And **teaching** isn't about saying: "Back in my day, women stayed at home and looked after the kids!" Teaching is "How can I help?" Good teachers don't lecture. They teach by being good examples, and by giving encouragement and support and love and grace and understanding and empathy.

When you were younger, were there times you wished there was an older woman you could have talked to about your struggles, without being judged? Were there times you struggled along, thinking you were all on our own and felt like a failure – as a woman, as a wife, as a mother, as a daughter? Are there times when you just needed to know that what you were feeling was normal and OK? Times when you just wanted to be encouraged in what you were doing?

Maybe you had a great mum or sister or someone who was there for you all the time. But not everyone has that.

So how do you teach the younger women? How do you set the example, and encourage and support them?

Live reverently. A life of humble worship to God. Every moment. How do we do that?

Think about how you speak, how you interact on social media, how you use your words to encourage or tear down, to slander or gossip, or build up. Consider your every day behavior - is this honoring to God and the community? How you speak about your family, how you deal with stress and frustration and tiredness, how you balance your life. Younger women need your example in every part of their life. And it's hard, but they need your example.

Titus also says something specifically for the married women: older women are to urge – or "train" is probably a better translation for that word – to **train** the younger women to love their husbands and children.

Isn't that odd? Why would you need to be **trained** to love your husband? Because living in a life-long relationship is not something we just "do". It's something we **learn** to do. Something that requires training. Living in **any**

relationship takes skills, and skills are taught and learned. Older women – teach these skills. Whether you’re married or not, you **have** wisdom of life to pass on. You’ve made mistakes. You’ve also made some good decisions. You’ve experienced pain and joy and everything in between and you hopefully you’ve gained wisdom along the way. Young women, married or single, need guidance and support to love men in a faithful and godly way – as brothers in Christ, as friends, as husbands, and as fathers.

In a male/female relationship, this is often counter-cultural and, and it’s very hard! There are times when a wife wants some time out for herself (so I’ve been told ☺) – but often women are made to feel very guilty about this. Caring for your husband is not about forgetting about your **own** needs. It’s about being aware that male/female relationships were created by God to be partnerships. Sometimes, the loving thing for a wife to do is to tell her husband that she’s not feeling supported. Or that she needs a break.

One example, something that often frustrates me: When a husband says to his wife: “I’ll help you with the kids tonight”, sometimes the loving answer is “They’re your kids too! You’re not “helping me” with them. They’re yours - every night and every day and every weekend! This is a partnership.

Older women, help younger women to love their husbands enough to remind their husbands, in a loving and gentle way, of their responsibilities!

All of this – it doesn’t just apply to marriage. EVERY woman needs help in relationships with men. Many women have been involved in difficult relationships with men. Through times of war, through economic depression, through divorce, through remarriage, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence, struggles with fertility or pregnancies. Women often suffer silently through great struggles in their relationships with men. And men have a lot to answer for. That’s what **we’re** working on as Christian men. So, older women – train the younger women. Train them in love and purity, self-control and kindness. Don’t let them struggle on their own.

I want to finish by pointing us to Jesus – in particular, his relationship with His Church.

Jesus calls himself the **bridegroom** of the Church. (e.g. Luke 5:34). The Church is his body. His wife. Jesus is perfect. But his relationship with his Church was far from perfect. There were always struggles. There was unfaithfulness. There was rejection. Betrayal. Loss of trust. And eventually, his own people crucified him.

We live in a world where relationships between men and women, which are meant to bring us great joy in our life, often bring great pain. But by taking on

this Titus model of being a supportive ***family***, teaching each other about love, kindness, purity, self-control – these things don't make relationships ***perfect***, but they do make relationships ***possible***. Just like the relationship between Jesus and his Church – not perfect, but possible. And what WE need for relationships is not the world's model, but the model of Jesus himself.

And so I have some homework for you: This week, read a gospel – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Pick one and read it right through. What do you learn about the relationship between Jesus and his church? Look at the way he relates to men and women. Look at how he talks about the marriage relationship. And consider how YOU can train, or be trained, in your relationships with men.

Let's pray.

Question time if there is time.

(Then men to return for final song)

(1387)

BIBLE READINGS

Titus 2:1-8

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. 2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4 Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Proverbs 5:1-23

My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my words of insight,
2 that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge.

3 For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil;
4 but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.

5 Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave.

6 She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not know it.

7 Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say.

8 Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house,

9 lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel,

10 lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich the house of another.

11 At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent.

12 You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction!

13 I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors.

14 And I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God's people."

15 Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.

16 Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares?

17 Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers.

18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

19 A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

20 Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?

21 For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths.

22 The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast.

23 For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly.