

The Seven Stone Ring

Dating and Discipleship

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Thank you fellas. That's the Warehouse Quartet or the tenth version of it anyway.

I'm going to begin encouraging dads and granddads again and I thought why don't I just read the text out of Deuteronomy that we look to so often when we talk about maybe the right way to build these things into the hearts and lives of our children. In Deuteronomy 6, the writer says beginning in verse 1, of course, it's Moses who is the human author. He says, "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you," so Moses said, "I got it from God and I'm giving it to you," and it's kind of like your preacher gets it from God and gives it to you. "That you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it," verse 2, "so that you and your son and your grandson," so he makes it very clear, "I want you to be thinking about the next two generations." So that you and your son and your grandson "might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it," in other words, you don't just hear these things when they're preached, let it go in one ear and out the other, make some notes. Get these things in your hearts and minds. I'm not talking about a real structured formal understanding of these things but the principle is enough in your heart and mind that you can speak of them to your children as opportunity arises.

Verse 3 again, "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart." That's the key, these things in your heart. Now, notice the methodology, verse 7, "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Just, I think, a general principle that's true in all generations for the people of God to teach our children the things of God as we live our lives out with them. There is a time

for formal settings, I just think in the home environment that should not be the main way we teach because there's going to be a great temptation to turn it on for 15 minutes or an hour, then turn it off versus putting it in our hearts and making sure as we live out our lives, we're speaking of these things.

Now, to kick off what I call "The Seven Stone Ring," I want us to look at Proverbs 7 and beginning in verse 1. The writing of Proverbs is the writing of a wise father to his young son, most likely a teenage son, and one of the main things he hits on is protecting that son from the pitfalls of the sins of sexual immorality. So in Proverbs 7, Solomon writing to his son purposing to give him wise counsel says this, Proverbs 7:1,

"1 My son, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you. 2 Keep my commandments and live, And my teaching as the apple of your eye. 3 Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' And call understanding your intimate friend; 5 That they may keep you from an adulteress, From the foreigner who flatters with her words."

Notice what he's saying: I'm giving you practical truths that I want you to live by, my son, and one of the major objectives that I am driving at is to keep you from this foreign woman, from the adulteress. The same person: the adulteress, foreign woman, same thing. In verse 5, he talks about so that you will be kept from the adulteress. The King James version says "from the strange woman." I actually like that translation. The strange woman means it's not the person, you can be male or female here, strange woman or strange man, it's not the person God has ordained for you to establish your life with, for you to share your sexual enjoyments with as God has ordained. The strange woman is the lie. The strange man is the counterfeit. It's the cheap. It's the one that's going to lead you into destruction.

It's true that all of us fathers and grandfathers and maybe even great-grandfathers have the commission to teach our children with wisdom that we might keep them from the strange man or the strange woman. In my case, of course, it was always the strange man because I have three daughters and we know that falling into the wrong relationships in the wrong way most certainly will lead to sin against God, the dishonoring of God and destruction brought into the lives of our young people that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. So, years ago, many years ago, I wrote out some things for my oldest daughter and I repeated the same teachings with my second daughter and then three years ago with my third daughter and I developed a ring, a purity ring, around those principles and that's what this message is built upon. I always begin it by saying that when my daughters turned 13, each of them went on their first date with me, certainly you wouldn't think I'd let them go out with anybody else at age 13. What we did was we would have a nice dinner together, put on nice clothes, dress up a little bit and go out to a nice dinner and there at that dinner I would present them with a seven stone ring and the message that I'm going to share with you is the message that I would share with them. I think maybe with a couple of them we studied some of it before we went to dinner and studied the rest of it after we came back but it's been very beneficial to me in the

pilgrimage of training my children and I think for many others now training your children.

Let me say this: I've only had daughters so I've only thought of a ring but I've had pastors and others who followed this who said, "What about boys? We're not going to buy them a ring I don't think. It's not quite fit. We want guys to have masculine stuff." We're actually going to have a little conference next year in 2013 called "A Return to Biblical Manhood or Biblical Masculinity" and the subtitle will be "Because the church has too many effeminate men already." So, we want guys to have manly stuff and I think it was Coach S. that said that he had thought about a knife, a knife with seven blades. I even thought if we could find a nice, good quality pearl-handled knife or at least pearl colored, probably couldn't afford a pearl that big to make a knife handle but a pearl-handled knife would have the same principle that the girls have and then six blades for the remaining principles. It might be a good idea because a knife represents when a boy is becoming a man and he's responsible and that's a manly thing so do I have to do everything? Some of you guys with boys can think that one up and let me in on how it works, okay? That's something we can keep around for our fellas.

But in this seven stone ring that I would present to my daughters, in the very center there's a beautiful white pearl and Pam actually had, I think, some earrings that had just the right size pearls and that made it even more special because I think that had been in the family for some time and the first two daughters got those special pearls. I told my daughters that, "That pearl there in the center represents you. I want you to think of it that way. You see the pearl in the very center of that ring, that's you." Two thoughts about that pearl now: first of all, a pearl represents something of great value. A very significant value is attached to the pearl and it has been from time immemorial. In the ancient world, kings and queens and princesses of the land adorned themselves with pearl because they were very costly, they had great value. The gospels, for example, refer to Christ as the pearl; he's a great treasure. In Matthew 13:46, "upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." Now, I don't want to argue about the theology of all of this but whatever else that includes it means Christ is the one and the salvation he presents to us is of great, great value. So, Christ is the one, of course, of infinite value and whatever it takes to purchase him, the Bible is saying, he is worth it, he is of such great value.

So I'm telling this to my daughters, "You are one of great value to your father and, of course, to your mother." Doing a little research on pearls, we know that pearls come from oysters and the scientists tell us that a little grain of sand gets inside the oyster's shell and the oyster begins to produce layers of nacre, and layer upon layer of nacre continues to form around that tiny grain of sand. Actually, nacre is made up of thousands of tiny crystals but it's tiny crystals in something of a liquid form and after layer after layer, as a matter of fact, they tell us it takes about seven years for a decent sized pearl to be formed. After seven years of layer after layer, out comes this pearl so you can see the very great value of a pearl because of all the effort and the work that little oyster puts in to making it the beautiful thing that it is. If you look closely at a pearl you can see the beautiful iridescent glow that a pearl has. Nothing on earth looks like a genuine pearl.

So, I want to say to my daughters and you'll want to say to your daughters or even your sons, "You are of such value to us, you remind us of a great pearl." But also a pearl not only speaks of great value, a pearl also speaks of great purity. Purity. When you look at a pearl and you see the iridescence of it and you see that glow, you understand why the pearl has been used as a symbol of purity for many, many generations. The Bible says in Revelation 21:21, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." What does it mean that the gates to heaven are made out of one solid pearl? I think it means many things but above all I think it means that this is a pure place. This is a clean place, it has no corruption, no evil and no sin therein.

So I'd say to my girls, "I want you to know that you're a pearl and you have great value and as a pearl, I want you to stay without corruption and without sexual immorality in your life until that day, of course, that God gives you in marriage and then it's not sexual immorality, it's sexuality blessed by God, encouraged by God and celebrated by Christians and by God's church." So the first stone in the seven stone ring represents your son or your daughter because it speaks of great value and it speaks of great purity. Then now there are six diamonds which make the seven stone ring complete. The first diamond, I'd say to her, is a diamond that represents God. He's got to be first because, after all, everything we're going to talk about and everything we understand about staying pure is centered on him. He's God. He has first place. Everything comes together in him and I wanted to remind them of how we are made for God and for God's glory. God is the one we ultimately answer to, he is the one we ultimately submit to. In fact, if we ever have any real purity and any real value, it must come from him. Our righteousness is not our own, it comes from God.

Some subpoints under this first point that the first diamond represents God and that is God owns us by creation. You know, that's maybe a common truth that needs to be talked about, though. It's a great time to talk about it, 13 years of age, "Remember, God put you here, sweetheart. It was the Lord God who made you." You know, that's why from time immemorial Bible believing Christians have stood against all forms of abortion because abortion is terminating a sacred act of God. There is indeed a sanctity to human life; it's different from all other lifeforms. We must not ever cheapen that sanctity by giving our blessing to some form of abortion. God made us and made us wonderfully. Psalm 139:13 says, "For thou hast formed my inward parts and thou didst weave me in my mother's womb."

You are God's. The first diamond represents God and you belong to him. He owns you by creation but secondly, he also owns you by recreation. Just as your birth and your coming into this world was a miracle of God, wrought by God himself, it's my prayer that you'll be born-again. Now, maybe your child is already converted, maybe they're not. You have to word it appropriately for them, whatever fits, but when you're born-again, then God owns you a second time and in a second way: creation and now by new creation or recreation. I love Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus." The word "created" is the same idea of speaking something into existence out of nothing.

When you were saved, God created you brand new over again; a brand new being; a new creation comes into place. He created us in our mother's womb the first time and then under the preaching and the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he sends forth his Spirit and we are recreated a second time into a new man. The Bible says this is the workmanship of God so we are his property. We belong to him. He's the first diamond outside of that pearl. In the letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul uses a different metaphor to emphasize God's ownership of us. In 1 Corinthians 6:20, he says, "For you have been bought with a price." He goes from God created us, he owns us, God recreated us, he owns us and even he goes to the slave market environment and says, as a matter of fact, he bought you as his own. So he says: God's purchased you and owns you in every way you can imagine. We've been purchased from the dominion of darkness, from the slave market of sin, from the dominion of Satan, by the death of Christ.

So, I would say to my daughter, you should say to your son or daughter, "I want you to be pure and chaste so that on your wedding day, you can be presented to your spouse as one who is pure." If you're a girl, to your husband as a pure bride that pictures the bride of Christ. He makes the bride, the church, pure by his own precious blood and when you come to Christ one day, if they're not yet saved you'd say that, then you are his property by both creation and recreation. Another thought under the first diamond and that is that your body was made for his glory. Your body was made for his glory. Now, God gave you hormones. They didn't ooze into you as a result of millions of years of evolution, they're the creative act of God himself. But we have to understand that sin has affected all aspects of our body and all aspects of our human drive but it's natural and it's good to have sexual desires. It's natural, good and right to have a desire for the pleasures of the opposite sex but you must realize this is not the purpose of your life. Boy, that's something this generation sure needs to learn. You would almost think the animalistic base drives of procreation and sexuality that you see in the animal kingdom has come over into the human kingdom as if that's the ultimate end of reality, sexuality. But that's not the purpose. The real purpose of life is the glory of God and everything comes under that.

Listen to Romans 6:12-13, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but," now he's talking to a Gentile culture of the day that was filled with promiscuity, "but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead," in other words, you have a new birth to a new kind of life, "and your members," your bodily instruments, your organs, "as instruments of righteousness to God." Here the Apostle Paul pictures our body as instruments and all the organs of the body as aspects or tools that are the instruments to glorify God. Your ears are a tool and an instrument to glorify God. Your eyes are tools and instruments to glorify God. Your feet, they are tools and instruments to glorify God. And your sex organs are tools and instruments to glorify God. "Not to be used in lustful passion," he would say, "as the Gentiles who do not know God." Our bodies were made for God's glory and then one day later in the marriage relationship, our bodies and all the sexuality that God has put in our bodies will bring great glory to God but not until then. He made them for his own glory. Your body is for God just like all parts of your being are for God and his glory.

Then the Scripture makes it very clear: your body is his temple. It's his temple. A very interesting truth here as he's writing to the Corinthians when he says this and the pagan temples in Corinth were filled with thousands of prostitutes and to worship the pagan deities, you actually had relations with temple prostitutes so he's making an interesting parallel from their thinking when he says in 1 Corinthians 6:19, he says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." Interesting. He dwells within us so when I ask where on earth this God lived, he lives in you, he lives in us. So, whether Paul's writing to the Romans or the Ephesians or the Corinthians, it's all the same, they all lived in a corrupt and immoral culture not too unlike the one we live in today, one that was filled with illicit sexuality and sensuality, they made gods out of sexual impurity and there was just great frolicking and flaunting of the most debased and immoral things in that culture. So, in this kind of culture, Paul writes 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?" Your body now is indwelt by God. It is to be served by God and to honor God. God wants you to remain pure because God dwells in you. Once you become a child of God, that can never change. Your body is not for sexual immorality, it is for God. It is a temple, the dwelling place of the most holy God.

Now, we want to be very balanced here as we're teaching our sons and daughters, whether you're a father or a grandfather or whoever you might be, please be positive, even enthusiastic about the joys of sexuality and marriage. If you're just all negative and all critical, you will not bring your children to the right understanding of what God means for their lives and it will not be a help to their moral purity. It's all good and all wonderful in the way God made us and the way he made our desires to be expressed and to be practiced.

Lastly, I know this first one is a long one but it is the primary one because this diamond represents God: our bodies are to be given to one person or you might say, one spouse. Is that the way I word it there? One partner. I didn't want to use the word "partner" because in today's culture that includes homosexuality which is an absolute abomination to God. To one spouse. Sometimes we call it a one woman man or being a one man woman but we teach that God has ordained one woman for one man or one man for one woman for one lifetime. You need to hold that as precious and you need to hold that as special. The reason for that is because we serve a God of superior wisdom. All this stuff going on today about helping kids be immoral and give them contraceptives, all that is the earthly wisdom of this world but we hold God's wisdom as superior. He's designed things to work in a special way and it just doesn't matter what the world teaches: it doesn't matter what the television teaches; it doesn't matter what the novels of the day teach; it doesn't matter what they're saying over the radio; it doesn't matter what you read on the internet; it doesn't matter what the politicians are saying as they celebrate and enable. By the way, it is an absolute low point, low point in a country when the father of the country, the President, instead of calling people to restraint and calling people to moral virtues, he applauds and encourages immoralities. It's just an awful thing to not have – the Bible says "where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained" and it means you need the truths of God to go out from the leaders so that people will be held in check, there will be

moral restraint within the culture. The last thing you need is a leader who promotes immoralities and corruptions in the culture.

So we have a superior wisdom and that superior wisdom says, "God wants you to give yourself to one man or give yourself to one woman in one lifetime." Exodus 20:14, the Bible commands and it's very simple, "You shall not commit adultery." You shall not commit adultery. God who owns us by creation and God who owns us by a new creation or a recreation, says that sexuality outside of marriage is a sin and it is to be avoided. It's amazing how much the Bible has to say and how very practical the Bible is on these subjects and we've always purposed in our house to be very frank and to be very open. It is kind of an interesting education when you're the only guy and girls talk about everything, I mean, just everything so frankness and openness was just kind of there. In 1 Corinthians 6:15, he said, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall we then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?" Wow, that's powerful. He says, "May it never be. Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her for," he says, "the two shall become one flesh. But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. Flee immorality." Here's a chance to reaffirm what we've talked about I think a couple of times already and that is the Bible does not say to be strong in tempting settings. Now, certainly it does say that, that's not our primary point of attack. My point is this: he's not saying get yourself in bad situations where you'll be tempted and then be strong, he says flee the settings that may tempt you. The key to sexual purity is to make sure you don't get in situations where the God-given desires may be exercised in an ungodly way. He says, "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and that you're not your own for you have been bought with a price, therefore, glorify God in your body." He says you're not to be given to immoralities. I have made you not for that, but I've made you for one woman, I've made you for one man.

2 Timothy 2:22 reaffirms this, "Now flee from youthful lusts," once again, don't be strong, stay out of the settings where youthful lust can take over and you fail and that's why we teach and encourage the principles of courtship. Not everyone does it the exact same way and we're not going to get into judging the minutiae of details about the way this family does it or that family does it but basically courtship is guiding our sons and daughters that they will not put themselves in places where they will be tempted to indulge in what the Bible calls youthful lust. 1 Corinthians 7:2 says, "Because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband." Those are singular. God has made every man to be a one woman man and every woman to be a one man woman.

So that first diamond, I say to my daughter, you say to your son if it's a knife blade, "It represents God. He's the God who owns you by creation. He's the God who owns you a second time by recreation, he recreated you when he saved you in Christ. He's the God who made your body his very temple, his dwelling place and he didn't make your body for sexual impurities, he made your body for his own glory. He made you for one spouse.

And we rejoice, sweetheart, in this superior wisdom of God that he has given us.” The second diamond, third stone overall but the second diamond, I would say to her or to him is a diamond that represents your parents. This is one of the areas that I think our church has been able to recapture to a good extent over the years and that is the principle of respecting God-ordained authority. There is overall a glaring deficiency in respecting authority in the church today. There are so many evils, a multitude of weaknesses and problems that could be alleviated in the professing church if the church would reclaim a commitment to God-ordained authority and realized that God's will is revealed through his authorities that he has placed over us.

So, as we're talking about this third stone representing parents, I'm now going to talk about specifically that parents are God-ordained authority for young people. This is something we teach in our home and this is something that we hold high, that parents are given to you by God to oversee you. So, moms and dads don't have some inherent superiority, they're sinners like you are but they have a superior office or an office of responsibility you do not yet have. Romans 13:1-2, Paul talking about governing authorities says, “Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.” He's generalizing it here and he says, “For there is no authority except from God,” including parents, the government, whoever it is, pastors, whatever, “and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority,” including parents, “has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”

I think that it's very important here that we might have a time to humble ourselves as dads or granddads in front of our children or grandchildren and say how we want to recommit ourselves to honor the God-ordained authority in our lives whether it be the policeman, whether it be the city magistrates, whether it be the church elders, whether it be my employer at work but, “God has people that we want to strive to do a good job to be under and so, sweetheart, I want you to understand something. I want you to commit yourself to be faithful under the authority that God has given me as your parent over you.”

So, this second diamond is representing the parents. Proverbs 1:8 says, “Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching,” and so that's the will of God for all children to stay under God-ordained authority. Let me say something to dads in particular: if it's the pattern of your life to sneer and snarl and be demeaning about your employer, don't expect your children to honor your authority. Wives, if you're always trying to maneuver around your husband's headship, don't expect your children to honor your headship. They need to see that you fear God and that you reverence the God-ordained authority that's over you because if you do this, you'll minimize this in your children's lives and they will always be prone to make the same excuses that you make.

A second thing about that third diamond, the third stone overall, the second diamond about parents is that parents are our protection from evil. That's what we would talk about for a few moments. Now, I'm not asking you, by the way, as you teach this you have to be as thorough as maybe I would be but I hope that you could get all of this and you

could certainly get the cds or the dvds, whatever you want to get and jot down. I think it's a lot better for you to kind of put it in your own words and teach it your own way than just mimicking exactly what I'm doing but Ephesians 6:1-2, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise." Well, what's the promise? "That it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." There is a protection in that, that's what he's saying. If you will do what the Scripture says here, your life is going to be better and longer. How many mistakes and how many wrong decisions are made when we resist the protection God has given us and the authority that he's placed over us?

So I would say to my daughter, "Sweetheart, I don't want you just to remain pure, I want you to remain pure with your Mom and Dad helping you and guiding you in these areas and we're going to be very, very active in your courtship years. This is not going to be a thing if you reach a certain age and you begin to inform us what you're going to do socially. We're going to be very active. Not only do you have the responsibility to submit to authority, we have a responsibility to protect you from what Proverbs 7 said, that strange woman or that strange man that could lead you into immorality. Protect you even not only from the strange man or strange woman but from your own tendencies to sin and rebel and involve yourself in things the Lord would say are evil so we want you to stay under the protection of our leadership." Now, there's a reality here. There's a time when a child reaches a certain age and you have to handle them a little differently unless you chain them to the bedpost in their bedroom. I mean, they're old enough to begin to make some of their own decisions and as I've told my girls many times, "I'm going to be very active. I'm going to be very involved but at the end of the discussion, you must treasure Christ and love enjoying Christ so that you desire these things in your own life. I can't be there enough. As much as I want to be all that I can be, as you get to certain ages, you're going to have to have that in your own heart." I think for us fathers particularly, we've got to be very sure that we are the real deal. We've got to be genuine in our Christianity, not perfect at all, never will be that but genuine. In other words, if we just reel off a bunch of rules, then likely they will follow the rules until they get old enough that they don't have to any longer and we need to make sure that we're more than a rule enforcer but a God-lover who loves God and God's precepts and God's principles that we have a few rules based on that. Don't exalt the rules, exalt the God of the rules. I think it's good for us moms and dads to be transparent about our own weaknesses and how we need a Savior and make that very clear before our children.

Well, we talked about the pearl, the center of the seven stone ring, that represents the child. The pearl speaks of great value and great purity. We talked about the first diamond in the seven stone ring. That diamond represents God because it all starts with him, it's all about him and it's about his glory. The second diamond includes your parents who want you to be pure to honor your parents and be protected by your parents. Now, the third diamond in the seven stone ring represents the church family. The church family. You know, I found that this is quite novel to a lot of people because a lot of people don't assume any responsibility for the church family. They just kind of say, "That's the place I go and as long as they keep it interesting enough, I'll keep coming." No, it's not that at all. You see, you don't just join a church, you belong to a church. There is a belonging in

a church family. You have responsibilities and your brothers and sisters have responsibilities. You know, I'm a church guy, I'm a local church guy. Do you know why? Because I'm convinced God is a local church God. I just don't have much time for people who have a light interest in God's local churches and there's a lot of that going on today but I wanted my children to grow up with a devotion in their hearts to God's church and one of the things I wanted them to know, that you are staying pure so that you could be that good example to that church family. That is part of your service. If you honor God's truth concerning moral purity, that's a part of your service to the church and that's the first subpoint: being a good example.

There is a lot about this in the Scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, the Apostle Paul talks about how he disciplines his body because he didn't want to, after he's preached the truths of Christianity to others, to do some kind of foolish sinful thing and then ruin his example. He wouldn't be a good example and he would be disqualified as an effective minister for the Lord's glory. That's the way we all want to be and that's what we should teach our sons and daughters. In that setting, I would say, "Sweetheart, you want to make sure that you do a proper service and be a proper example to the church you're responsible for." In 2 Thessalonians 3:9, the Apostle Paul referring to his voluntary refusal to receive financial compensation says this, he says, "Not because we do not have the right to this but in order to offer ourselves," here's the word, "as a model for you that you would follow our example." I had a man one time that said, "You know, you shouldn't talk about being a model or example." The Bible is full of examples commanding all of us to be a model and example one to another and so we say to our teenage son or daughter, "You know, you want to repeat this convictions because you have a responsibility and will be held accountable by God to be a good model or example for the church that you are a part of."

You know, not everyone in the church will have a struggle with sexual immoralities. Now, that type of temptation is common to almost all people of any age. Some people would like to say that there's an age you reach where that's no longer an issue. Well, 127 or so if you reach that but these kinds of temptations are common but it may not be and the Bible points that out, the same type of difficulty as the teenage years but teenagers, as you assume your responsibility to honor God in that area, then you're a great encouragement to so many other church family members in all the areas they might struggle with as they look at you and say, "Those young people are honoring God and living pure and we can see that and we want to honor God and live pure and resist the temptations that are peculiar to our particular place in life."

The second thing under the church family that not only do you want to be a good model and a good example, is that you want to welcome the church's accountability. Accountability. I can't say the number of times I have had a decision to make and I've talked to some men in the church and asked them, "Would you hold me accountable? Do you see anything here? What do you think? Can you give me some guidance in these areas?" And I can tell you, it's been a great source of blessing and a great protection for me in my own life. I think that's part of what Galatians 6:2 is referring to when the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Galatia and he said, "Bear one another's burdens, and

thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” When you live in joyous accountability to your brothers and sisters in your local church, you're bearing an important service, ministry and burden one to another. He says, “When you do this, you're fulfilling the law of Christ.” What is the law of Christ? Well, if you love the church and love the folks in the church, you will love them so that you would want to be an encouragement to them to live for God and so we want a reciprocal accountability in the body of Christ. We should welcome that in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and it comes not from rules, it comes not from a cold and harsh law, it comes from a heart of love for God and if you love right, you fulfill the law every time.

Let's go to the fourth diamond, the fifth stone overall and the fourth diamond I would tell her, or the fourth blade in the knife perhaps for the young man, I would say, “That represents your siblings, your brothers and sisters.” Now, if it's an only child, then I would suggest at this point that you talk about this representing your close friends: your close friends at church; your close friends in the neighborhood; your close friends you play ball with. Whatever it may be, however, you have an obligation to your brothers and sisters or close friends to show them the truth of Christ and the truth that Christ is in your life by remaining pure. I love the devotion Andrew showed to his brother in John 1:41-42, “He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah,'” he finds his brother, takes care of his brother, “(which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).” I love that phrase “he brought him to Jesus.” He's making sure his brother is taken care of. I can think of no better way for a young person to influence to their own siblings to even come to Christ than to remain pure because they know the temptation there and they know the difficulty there and when they see that in your life, they're going to be challenged to walk with God and seek God also. How powerful that is and what an impact that can be on your brothers and sisters. By the way, you do have that responsibility to be that example, not just to the church family at large but your brothers and sisters in our own household.

The fifth diamond in the seven stone ring and the sixth stone overall represents your future spouse. The whole time you're living your young life, the whole time you're going through your teenage years, you want to be serving your future partner, that future husband or future wife. We remind ourselves, again, that God designed us to be a one woman man or a one man woman and you have a service and an obligation to that future one person to be pure for them and to be able to say to them one day, “I've done what the Lord has asked me to do and I'm presenting myself to you on our wedding night a virgin because I have kept you in my heart all these years and my service and devotion to you was in all those years even way before I knew you by keeping myself pure for this day with you.” God founded marriage in Genesis 2. Sometimes we need to look back at those most basic truths and we need to renew them in our hearts and minds. In Genesis 2, beginning in verse 18, “Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.' Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.” Verse 20, “The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and

to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper,” that's singular. One helper. One specific person promised for Adam here. “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.' For this reason a man,” singular, “shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife,” singular, “and they shall become one flesh.” That's God's plan: one man, one woman, one lifetime. So, I'd say to my daughter, “Sweetheart, when you think about this fifth diamond, I want you to know that by staying pure you're serving your future spouse, saving yourself for them.”

We need to remind ourselves that in back of all of it, we're glorifying God. We need to stop and realize that there's not this that serves God better and this area over here that pleases God better, the totality of our lives serves and glorifies God and are about God if we obey him and honor him in all the relationships of our lives. You know, it's amazing what the culture tries to teach us about sexuality and how maybe God's not involved in that as if that's something that you have to keep away from God. You don't have to keep that away from God, God is in the center of all things. He blessed it, he made it, he glorifies himself through it so let's don't let the society teach us that this is dirty or this is wrong or even perhaps the church has been very guilty of this. It's not dirty and it's not wrong. Sexuality is a beautiful God-given gift. We just don't want it to be misused and we need to teach our sons and daughters the positive principles and not just be nay-sayers about everything. Hebrews 13:4, the Bible says, “That marriage should be held honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled.” I'm not exactly sure all that the writer meant there but I believe it means that the marriage bed has no defilement in it. You can enjoy the pleasures of human sexuality that God has given under the glory of God and God has put his blessings upon it.

So I would say to my son or daughter, I'd say, “Sweetheart, when you have a marriage bed ordained of God with that special person, it will be a great glory to God and you should look forward to that with anticipation. The writer of Proverbs even said he was intoxicated with the joys of sexual relations with his wife and on your wedding day, you will give yourself to that one spouse that you've been remaining pure for all of those years and knowing that in doing so you're bringing great glory to God.”

Then I'd say “There's the last diamond. The last diamond, the seventh stone overall in the ring represents your future children. You should hold them in your heart as you go through these courtship years. What a testimony and what an encouragement and what an edification to be able to look at your own children and say by God's grace, I kept myself a virgin. Sweetheart, I want you to be a virgin when you marry too. See, in remaining pure during your teenage years and young adult years, you're actually serving your future children.” Ephesians 6:4 says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.” “It is true that what you're doing right now as a teenager or young adult will serve as a training manual for your

children one day.” Did you hear that? What you're doing right now as a teenager or young adult will serve as a training manual for your own children one day.

Now, I want to say this again, perhaps you've blown it and perhaps you haven't been what you ought to have been, here's the question: have you repented? Have you confessed it to God and admitted to him that his wisdom is superior and your ways foolish and wicked? Then you claim that forgiveness and you charge on and let's teach the next generations a better way. Let's don't wallow in the guilt of the past. Let's go forward in the cleanness and the new life that God gives us and the purification he offers us in full forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I'm convinced, Dads and Granddads, if we will be genuine, if we will teach our sons and daughters in God's wisdom with a humble and pure heart, sharing our own failures and battles, not specifics, God knows you shouldn't do that but sharing that we struggle and that we've had our share of failures and asking their forgiveness when we have them. I believe we will see our sons and daughters grow up to respect us, to listen to us and to honor our God.

You know, years ago, one of my daughters and they'll have to forgive me, I don't remember which one now but one of our daughters wrote me this on Father's Day and here's what she wrote. She was quite small. She said, “I love my Daddy because he loves me. I love my Daddy because he loves God. I love my Daddy because he tells the truth. I love my Daddy because he takes me four-wheeling. I love my Daddy because he takes me fishing. I love my Daddy because he's nice to me. I love my Daddy because he finds time to play with me. I love my Daddy because he's nice to people and our animals. I love my Daddy because he checks on people to see if they're alright. I love my Daddy because he takes care of me. I love my Daddy because he and I have fun when we play basketball together. I love my Daddy because he teaches me how to cut grass. I love my Daddy because he teaches me how to cook some things. I love my Daddy because he helped build my house. But the best thing about my Dad is, he's mine.”

You're the only Dad or Granddad she's got or he's got and you'll never know how valuable and how powerful you are in their lives and if you can sit down and do something like this with a pocketknife maybe for the guys or a seven stone ring for the girls, you've got to realize – listen to me – nobody else can do that like you can. Nobody else.

In closing, depending on where your child is, I would just ask you to appeal to them for their souls. In Matthew 13:44-46, the Lord gives two parables. In the first parable, he says finding the Lord and receiving the gospel is like man finding a treasure in a field. When he finds the treasure, it's so valuable he sold everything he had to get that treasure. Then there was a second parable of the pearl of great value and a merchant searched for a pearl like this and when he found the pearl of such great value, he sold everything he had, he gave up everything to gain that pearl. And what I'm saying to my son or daughter at this point is that that's how valuable Christ is. Nothing else matters beyond him. “None of this is going to matter, sweetheart, if you don't know Christ.” Having a son or daughter

that makes it to the marriage altar a virgin because they are a self-righteous Pharisee and just kept a bunch of rules is dishonoring to God. Did you hear that? It's dishonoring to God to remain a virgin just because you kept rules. You're to remain a virgin because you love and honor God, not kept a rule. But to make it to the marriage altar treasuring Christ and joying in Christ and loving Christ and remaining pure for him, that brings God great glory so whatever else we want for our sons and daughters, we don't want a bunch of little robotic arrogant Pharisees who walk lock-step following a bunch of rules.

So let's teach our children to love Christ and to joy in Christ and to treasure Christ and the best way to do that is to let them see that you love Christ and treasure Christ and joy in Christ and that because of our love for Christ, we want his name and his fame to be known and a great part of that for a young person and a very important part of that, is remaining pure until the wedding day.

Let's stand together in prayer.