

TEACHING OUTLINE

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BIG IDEA

Sexual desires are an appetite that grows. So what appetite are you feeding?

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Proverbs 7; James 1:14-15; 2 Timothy 2:22

Outline:

Why is the word, "just" so dangerous?

Myths from Proverbs 7:

1. I'm just going to get close → I can control it.
2. It's just this one time → This is unique.
3. I'm just going to think about it → I won't actually do it.

Our desires are an appetite that grows. What appetite are you feeding?

→ Jesus: Take extreme measures now to deal with sin and temptation!

Next Steps:

- Run from
 - Get out
 - Build in guardrails
- Run to
 - Renew your mind
 - Invest in community

Introduction:

Tell a story about something you did—or a bad choice that you made—because you were “just curious.” Better if it is from childhood, and humorous!

(This was my story) Growing up and picking on the neighbor boy. I convinced him to step into a big mud hole with his new shoes on. When my dad heard about it and confronted me, I said, “I just wanted to know if he would do it.”

As if using the word “just” would make it all better.

How much do we find that word “just” coming up today?
“I just...” you finish the sentence.

Our culture has bought a whole bunch of myths about love and sex that aren’t helping us. And we may not always realize the impact these myths are having on us because they can be subtle and pervasive in our culture.

Think with me about the word “just.” *Why is the word JUST so dangerous?*

When it comes to our sexuality, we hear this frequently...

It’s just sex.

It’s just hooking up.

It’s just fantasy.

It’s just for fun.

It’s just pornography.

It’s just for now.

It’s just online/social media.

It’s just a picture.

The truth is, we can use the word just to justify just about anything!

We are going to take a look at a story in the Bible where we see three excuses, and this word, getting a young man into some serious trouble. We can learn from his story today!

Turn with me to Proverbs 7.

Proverbs was written by King Solomon. He was a man to whom God gave the gift of wisdom, and we see his wisdom on display in this book. His insights are as relevant today as they were 3,000 years ago when he first wrote them!

But he didn't always follow his own advice!

READ Proverbs 7:6-7

Sometimes it is easier to see foolishness through the window in the lives of others than it is in the mirror of our own life. But here is Solomon looking out his window, and he is going to describe for us what foolishness looks like, based on what he sees in a young man.

READ Proverbs 7:8

You can almost picture the scene. A young man, out on the town—he's dressed nice and looking for a good time—and as he walks along he sees "her" house. Everyone in town knows whose house it is and what kind of activities take place there. For the person looking to be pure, this house represents danger of every kind!

But he says to himself, "I think I'll cross over to her side. I'm not going to go in. I'm not going to go too far. I just want to catch a glimpse. I'm just going to get close."

And this is the first myth, or justification, we are tempted to believe today:

1. I'm JUST going to get close.

Partnered with this myth is the idea that I can control how far I go. I won't go too far. I can control it.

- Maybe we say this about drinking: I can go to the party because my friends are there, but I'm not going to drink. Or I won't drink too much. I can control it. I just want to get close.
- Or maybe we say this about relationships: I can go out on dates, and get physical, but I won't go too far. I'm just going to get close to the edge.
- And many are saying it about how they use the internet and social media: I just want to look a little, these videos aren't too bad, it's just profile pics—I won't go too far. I just want to get close.

But let's see what happens next!

READ Proverbs 7:9

There's no one else around to see. It's quiet and the streets are empty. He's all alone and the environment is setting him up for failure!

READ Proverbs 7:10-14

Vs. 14: We probably feel like, "So? What does that mean?" But 3,000 years ago, the meaning of this was significant. The woman in Solomon's story is saying, in essence, "I have fulfilled my religious obligations. When it comes to God, we're good! We can push Him off to the side. So now we're free to have a little fun." She is luring him in.

Now listen to this.

READ Proverbs 7:15

He's special! He's the ONE she has been looking for. She's buttering him up and making him feel good about himself.

This is so often the case with sexual temptation. **The temptation is truly NOT about sex** or pornography—it's about how it makes us feel. To feel special. Or seen. Or wanted.

READ Proverbs 7:16-21

She now paints a picture of what can happen next. She gets him imagining what it will be like. She makes it clear that they have plenty of time, and no one will interrupt them.

In all of this, the young man buys into the second myth, or justification, that we are tempted to believe today:

2. It's JUST this one time.

The powerful deception linked to this justification is that this time is special—it's a unique circumstance that justifies my excuse to give in. It's not what we expected. We normally would say "no," but this one time is special and so we say "yes."

For many who struggle with sexual sin, this is a huge battle we face. We feel like we have found 1,000 different ways to fall into the same struggle because every time it's a little bit different, and we justify the behavior one more time. Or one last time—so we say to ourselves.

This can drive temptation—that if we don't say "yes" to this pleasure, we are going to miss out! And all of us, every single one of us, has been wired by God to be a pleasure seeker! Don't beat yourself up for wanting to seek after pleasure—God made you this way! Your brain is wired to function this way. But we need to see how this desire for pleasure, and not missing out, can lead us to very unhealthy, sinful choices and places.

Maybe we've said this in other ways:

- If I don't say "yes" to this boyfriend/girlfriend, I'll never have another one or never get married.
- If I don't take this drug or drink with these friends, I'll be rejected and left out.

For this young man, it seemed too good to be true, and so he said “yes” to what would ultimately destroy him.

READ Proverbs 7:22-25

Solomon is calling us to see it's not a “JUST” at all—it's life and death on the line! But the young man doesn't see it. That's why he's called “foolish.”

This leads us to the third myth, or justification, that we are tempted to believe today:

3. I'm JUST going to think about it. (But I won't do it.)

We think we're just letting our thoughts drift in a direction, and we can always pull it back. We justify, “It's no big deal if my mind goes there. I won't really do it.” But Solomon says, “No, this is an issue of the heart!” And Solomon knows that where the thoughts and the heart go often enough, soon the body and the feet will eventually follow!

We might hear these three justifications and think, “O come on. I'm not foolish! I wouldn't do that. I won't go too far. I'm not like this young man at all!”

If you're feeling this way, consider that NO ONE sets out believing they will be this person—the one who gets addicted to porn, or ends up getting someone pregnant. NO ONE thinks they will become this person.

So why does this happen? Because no one thinks they'll be this person...until the moment they are this person. We may spend a lifetime saying, “It's just a little. It's just this once. I'm just going to think about it.”

Solomon gives us a clear and compelling outcome of this story, and of this way of thinking.

READ Proverbs 7:26-27

The young man thinks he's unique. He's special. And Solomon says, “No, this is a highway, and MANY have traveled down it before.” It's not a small dirt path few have found—this is a freeway leading many to destruction and death!

We think it's a “just,” but Solomon calls us to see, “No, it's a pathway to death.” Death of a marriage or relationship. Death of a career. Death of a dream. Death of our future.

(Depending on time, the teaching could end here, or jump to the big idea or the application.)

In the New Testament, the author James, the brother of Jesus, picks up on this theme in his letter. Listen to James 1 and what he says about temptation.

READ James 1:14-15

We think temptation is “out there” in what we see, or what’s on TV or the internet. And we just need to stay away from all that temptation “out there.” But James says, NO, the temptation isn’t out there, it is in here—inside of each one of us. And this is dangerous because of the pattern—that temptation gives birth sin, which grows and gives birth to death!

Easy to see through the window; again, harder to see this in the mirror of our own life.

Sin that goes unaddressed continues to grow until something dies—a relationship or a marriage, a career, a dream or a future. But often we don’t see it coming until death occurs, and then we look for help!

Until then, we might keep calling it a “just.”

All of us have desires that we don’t necessarily want or have the ability to explain. The danger with these unwanted desires is what culture tells us about them—culture says all these desires are all legitimate. That if I feel something, I am something. The desire defines me.

And James says, no—these desires are part of our old, sinful nature.

These desires are an appetite that grows!

Do you know how to make an appetite grow? Feed it.

For sugar? Keep eating sugar—the more you eat, the more your body craves it. Why? Because you fed the appetite.

Whether it’s food, sex, alcohol, or sugar, we might miss that it’s an appetite we are feeding.

So what appetite are you feeding? It’s a desire that grows.

Until we see death coming because the desire has grown beyond our ability to control it.

The place to work on our behavior isn't when we see death coming—it's when we realize we have desires and temptations that are leading us astray.

So what do we do?

What would Jesus say we should do?

He gives us crystal clear direction in Matthew 5. This is so clear and helpful (say this with a bit of sarcasm).

READ Matthew 5:27-30

Well Amen, end of sermon! Let's pluck out our eyes!

What is Jesus saying here? Clearly, the whole of the New Testament would show us that Jesus does not intend to build a society of people with missing hands and eyes, for who among us is without any sin? So what is Jesus doing here?

Jesus is using a style common in his day called hyperbole. Hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration used to communicate or underscore a deeper meaning.

His point—the deeper meaning—is not to cut off hands or gouge out eyes, but to take extreme measures now to deal with sin, rather than stand before God and face extreme consequences for eternity. Jesus calls us to be extreme in dealing with sin and temptation in our life. It is his antidote to the word “just” and our justifications.

So, this feels serious. Isn't God all about grace, love and forgiveness? Yes, all of this is true. But do we at times, say or think things about God that he hasn't said about himself? We might think, “Well, God will always forgive me so it's okay.” We even use God to justify our behavior.

But Jesus in his teaching said so much about repenting and hell and narrow gates, separating the wheat from the weeds, and sheep from goats, and people being sent away in surprise that they were not found among the righteous. So yes, Jesus is all grace, but the one who is all grace had MUCH to say about being extreme in how we regard and treat sin because of the reality of coming judgment.

Yes, he was quick to forgive, but he was also quick to say, “Go and sin no more.”

We ought to at least pause and ask, “Am I being too casual about sin and destructive desires in my life when Jesus calls me to take extreme action to deal with it?”

Have I bought into the myths?

- I'll just get close.
- It's just this once.
- It's just my thoughts.

Or can I see that it's an appetite that grows?

Do you know what action you need to take for sin to grow in your life?

Do nothing. Ignore it. Hide it. Because when we do, it grows. And it's only a matter of time before it leads to some sort of death.

So, how can we take action in our life?

NEXT STEPS:

READ 2 Timothy 2:22. Paul's advice to a young man, Timothy.

When it comes to sin and temptation, we need to run FROM (flee) and run TOWARD.

1. Run FROM...What stimulates youthful lust and evil.
"Flee the evil desires of youth."
 - a. By getting out.
 - i. If you're in a relationship consistently leading you into sin, get out
 - b. Building healthy guardrails so that we stay out!
 - i. We put the guardrails where technically it is safe to drive, but it keeps us from going over the cliff. We need to define our cliff, and then decide on some guardrails we will follow.
 - ii. Give examples here.
 1. Not taking our cell phone into the bathroom
 2. Keeping our computer screen visible to others
 3. Not watching movies/shows with R ratings or nudity
 4. Limit the websites we visit/time surfing the net
 5. Put internet accountability like Covenant Eyes on all our devices, and make sure someone other than our spouse (or girlfriend/boyfriend) sees them.
 6. We must identify what "her house" has been in our story, and unlike this young man, we must take proactive steps to stay far away from it.
2. Run TOWARD...what are we headed toward? Running away isn't enough. We must run toward health.

"Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with all those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

- a. Renew your mind
 - i. Romans 12:1-2
 - ii. Through prayer, time in God's word. By pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
 - iii. This shapes our desires!
- b. Invest in community
 - i. Find healthy people you can be totally honest with.
 - ii. You know the best way to empty sin of its power? Tell someone about it. Bring it into the light.
 - iii. Find a recovery group. Find accountability.

Our world will keep calling it a JUST.

Could we be wise enough instead to see that it's an appetite, and appetites grow when you feed them?

If you take extreme measures to run from and run toward, you won't regret it. I have never heard someone say they regretted having strong guardrails in their life.

But we hear the opposite all the time, don't we?

- I wish I would have been more careful with my boyfriend/girlfriend
- I wish I would have guarded my eyes and thoughts
- I wish I would have dealt with those sinful desires

Our justifications will lead us into sin.

And sin will always take us farther than we meant to go, keep us longer than we meant to stay, and cost us more than we ever thought we would pay!

But facing our sin, and desire, before God and others, will lead us into life.

May we be wise enough, and humble enough, to take extreme measures now, so that we might enjoy the goodness of God and deep relationship with others for ALL eternity.

Let's pray.