



281.890.1900
TheMETonline.org

Jones Road Campus
13000 Jones Road | Houston, TX 77070

Fry Road Campus | Hopper Middle School
7811 Fry Road | Houston, TX 77433

[*Introductory video*: Circus-like oompah music accompanies pencil sketches of various items increasingly filling up to overflowing a lined sheet of notebook paper: television, car, laptop computer, house, stacks of school books, wall clock, incline weight bench, briefcase, soccer ball, and wheeled suitcase. All these items that fill our lives suddenly disappear leaving a clean sheet of notebook paper which then fills with the series title: MARGIN printed in handwritten, outlined letters that pulsate to the music. When the lights come back up at the video's end, Pastor Sal Sberna begins.]

Well, good morning, everybody. How're you doing here at *Jones Road*—well, I hope? [Waving in greeting:] *Cypress Campus*? Hope you have your [favorite team] colors on. As you know (as your pastor) I'm wearing black today because—well, I love everybody. I'm really not partial to any one team at all [unfolds and displays from the podium a bright red tee shirt with the slogan: *The Cougar Revolution Starts Here*]. So I wasn't going to cause division or anything today within our congregation. [Looking down at the tee shirt displayed:] Oh, did that say *U of H*? [Do] you know why I did that? My son went there, and I sent all my money there. So I'm glad that they're doing well. [Removes the tee shirt.]

I'm so glad you guys are here. If you're listening online, we're going to take a survey in a moment. So I too want you to raise your hand if you can participate in the survey. It may feel (kind of) weird because you're probably all by yourself; but still I think it'll help you. (All right.)

We're going to talk about *Moral Margin* today and the reason we need some *moral margin*. I think in light of recent breaking news of all the sex scandals that have plagued us recently—really they're not recent—they're around us all the time (half of which we don't know about). Because of that, it's probably good for us to put some barriers in our [lives] (put some protection inside of our lives).

So just so you know how rampant this is, we're going to do a survey. (All right?) Don't raise your hand yet; but at the end when I go through these different things...

- If you know of somebody who has experienced this (or)
- Maybe you (yourself) have

...I just want you to raise your hand. So if you know somebody who has been wrecked by the following sexual sin (in a moment) I want you to raise your hand at our *Cypress Campus* and right here at our *Jones Road Campus* and those of you that are watching via the Internet or our iPhone app:

How many of you know somebody that:

- Has been so hooked on pornography they cannot get away from it?
- Had premarital sex and got pregnant, got an abortion, and are living with the guilt of that?
- Had to marry the jerk—and didn't stay married very long—that got her pregnant?
- Maybe [is] a single parent because of premarital sex, raising a [child] on their own now?
- (Somebody who) had contracted a sexual disease after a one-night stand?
- (Somebody) maybe who had a marital affair and their marriage is in a wreck now?
- (Somebody) maybe that's contracted HIV because of some type of sexual sin?

How many of us know somebody? (I'm going to include myself in that.) Now look around, Church. (Look around. Keep your hands up for a second; keep your hands up.) Every one of us in this room is affected by this. (You can put them down now.)

So what I have to share with you this morning is very, very redemptive and very preventative because God knows us. He made us. Let me begin by saying:

- Nobody ever has a plan in their life to catch a sexually transmitted disease.
- Nobody's like: *Do you know what?*
 - *I think this year—along with getting a new job—I'm going to get AIDS.*
 - *I think I'm going to get a sexually transmitted [disease].*
 - *I know, I'm going to have an affair this year.*
 - *Oh wait, do you know what? I just want to get pregnant out of wedlock so I can be a single parent.*

No one does that, do they? Nobody gets up in the morning and says: *Okay, I think this is going to happen to me today.* But yet it happens all the time. (It happens all the time.)

Every time that I get an opportunity to minister to somebody who's been affected by some type of sexual sin (and just about all of us have been)—one thing that they always say—one thing they have in common is they always say: *I never thought it would happen to me (never thought it would).*

If we're in this building this morning and we think: *We know somebody, but it's not going to happen to us*—just let me remind you what the Bible says: "Pride comes before...a fall." [Proverbs 16:18 (New Life Version)] I know we are all flesh.

- There [are] all types of temptation raging inside of us
- There are all types of an ability in our culture today to...
 - whatever fantasy (or whatever thing) that's in our heart and mind
 - that we find locked away
 - that we don't think anybody else knows about

We can act that out somewhere.

So let's all (with the grace of God) this morning say: *Okay, God, speak to me on this. Speak to me on this.* Because it isn't just my neighbor, it's all of us that need to hear what God has to say to somebody today. All right.

So *moral margin*, what is it?—very simply: ***It's putting distance between you and sexual sin,*** which you're going to find is very difficult today. But there are some things that you can do.

MORAL MARGIN:

PUTTING DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND SEXUAL SIN

Here's a question I often get from students (especially)—or maybe younger singles that are dating. It's this: *If I'm dating somebody, how far can I go? How far is too far?* Well let me tell you. If you're asking that question, chances are you know there's a line out there, and you want to know: *How much can I do before I cross that line?* In other words: *How close can I get to something that would actually hurt me without it actually hurting me?*

Do y'all watch reality shows? (Let me see your hands.) How many of y'all watch reality shows?—yeah. Did you ever watch the one where they show the world's dumbest people? (You know) they go: *Okay, this guy is an alligator wrestler.* Think about that. He wrestles the alligator, and he holds the alligator's mouth open. What does he do? *Look at me. I can put my head...* [pantomimes putting his head in the alligator's mouth while holding it open]. You know one day it's going to be: *Oops!* And it's happened. I've seen it on TV. He gets his head out, but his arm didn't get out all that

quickly. But yet he's the best that's ever wrestled alligators in spite of the fact he doesn't have fingers on this hand, he has a nub over here and scars all over his body. *Wow! But look what he did.*

So why would we...

- Take what we know to be something...
 - that is devastatingly powerful (and)
 - can wreck our lives (and)
- Do everything that we can to get as close to the most dangerous thing in the world and think it's not going to hurt us?

Let's get God's perspective. I want to frame up some things, then I'm going to give you some very practical things that we can do (that I believe) that'll help us build some moral margin.

1. GOD'S PERSPECTIVE (HIS WILL)

So, *1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 3 through 8*: "For this is the will of God..." (All right, are you ready?) This is an easy one. Because when the Bible says: "This is the will of God"—you say: *Oh yeah, that is the will of God for me.*

- There're a lot of things that [don't] say "the will of God"
- There's a lot of permission in there for you through...
 - The power of the Holy Spirit
 - The Word of God
 - The desires that God put in your heart
- There're certain things that you could do that aren't black and white.

But here's a black-and-white one that we all can get right. (Ready?)

For this is the will of God, {even} your sanctification; that is, {Ready? Can you say this with me?—that is—ready?} [that] you abstain from sexual immorality;

1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NASB)

Do I need to tell you what *abstain* means? Don't do it; abstain—

- Clean
- Break free
- Don't get close to it

—because it is a very, very powerful thing. And then he goes on to say:

[that] each of you {should} know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1 Thessalonians 4:4 (NASB)

In other words, you ought to know yourself well enough that you have built some margin into your life where you can be "sanctified"—that means holy, set apart for God's use—and "honor." That word "honor" is a very, very interesting word. It's the word *timē* [transliterated Greek], which basically means: *It is a valuing by the price that is fixed of the price paid or received for a person or a thing bought or sold.*

Do you know why we should honor our bodies and honor the vessels that God has given us to live in?—because God bought them. He says: *Man! You are so valuable. I spent the life of My Son on you.* Then He says:

⁴ ...in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 (NASB)

This is—ready?—the big differentiator in Christianity right now. This—beyond any other thing that we can do to bring attention to the life-transforming power of Almighty God and what Jesus Christ can do in the life of a person—is that we can be sexually pure.

Now the world can't be—

- Never expect the world to be
- They have no power inside of them to be

That's why (if you're dating an unbeliever)—

- That's why they always want to go to bed with you
- That's why they always want to commit sexual sin

—you feel under pressure. They can't stop it; [but] you can because...

- Jesus Christ is inside of you.
- The power of the Holy Spirit is inside of you.

What he's saying is: *Look, don't act like people who don't know God; act like people in whom God actually lives.*

1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 18 through 20—first two words—we're going to read these together. (Are you ready?) The first two words that come up on the screen (ready?)—one-two-three: "Flee" [congregational response: "immorality." *1 Corinthians 6:18a (NASB)*]

1(A) FLEE IMMORALITY

Now here's the most interesting thing about those two words. Nowhere else in the Bible does it say "flee" from any other sin.

- It doesn't say: *Flee from gluttony* (thank God).
- It doesn't say (you know): *Flee from gossiping*.
- It doesn't say: *Flee from lying*.

It says those things aren't right and you ought not do them. But nowhere else did He say:

- Run away
- Depart quickly
- (To) shun
- (To) escape
- Distance yourself

Put some margin between you and the possibility of these things happening to you.

Now why would he say, "Flee sexual immorality," [*1 Corinthians 6:18 (NKJV)*] but he wouldn't say "flee" anything else? Because there's a difference between sexual sin and every other sin that we commit. The difference is the consequence of sexual sin.

Now, there's some sin that you can do and seemingly get away with it (except with God Who knows everything, right?)

- You can tell a little white lie and get away with it. (No one knows it but God)
 - You have to repent toward Him and get right.
 - (You know) it doesn't cost too much.
- (You know) you can be speeding down the road—not many of you do because I've passed you on occasion. (Not many of you speed.) What's the consequence for your speeding?
 - Man, (you know) you get pulled over and you get a ticket.
 - It'll cost you a little bit of money—but that's all.
- If you gossip a lot...
 - It may cost you some friends (and)
 - You may get a little reputation, but it's not going to cost a lot.

But when you sin sexually, listen to what *1 Corinthians 6:18* says:

...Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18b (NASB)

Do you realize if you sin sexually...

- It could cost you your job.
- It could cost you your family.
- In our day and age it could cost you your life.
- It could cost you the way your children view you.
- It could cost you so many different things.

...not to mention the stain and the guilt and the shame, and all of that stuff that comes with sexual sin.

But, before we go any further, there's good news. Because I don't want to be Debbie Downer up here saying: *No! No! No! No! No!* Because God does say: *Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!* It's just context:

- Outside of the context of marriage: *No! No! No! No! No!* Why? *You're going to hurt yourself.*
- Inside of the context of marriage: *Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!* All the time, all right?

Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians—I'm going to read it in *The Message* version, and then you can read it later when you get home—together...alone.

¹ Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me {the apostle Paul was writing}. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations? {That's what they asked him—they're asking him, all right? Paul

says:} ² Certainly {thank God}—but only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong...

1 Corinthians 7:1-2 (The Message)

And every man said? [Silence from the congregation] Come on, really? And every man said: [congregational response: *Amen!*]

² ...but marriage {—Men—} is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. ³ The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband.

1 Corinthians 7:2-3 (The Message)

Since that's Bible I want to say that again, "the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband."

⁴ ...Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. ⁵ Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting {Ugh! There's no headache clause in this one} —but only for such times.

1 Corinthians 7:4-5 (The Message)

Now listen to what he's saying. Now why is this? Now listen to me.

⁵ ...Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it. ⁶ I'm not, {listen to what Paul says: *I'm not*} understand, {I'm not} commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.

1 Corinthians 7:5-6 (The Message)

In other words, if you are married and you're not going to have sex together, then you have to say: *Okay, we are going to be praying and fasting.* That's the only reason; and Paul says: *I'm not even commanding that. I'm just saying if there's a time [when] you're not, that's what you ought to be doing because God has designed the marriage to take those strong desires and have them fulfilled within the marriage—because it's not going to hurt you there.*

In fact, God says in *Hebrews 13: The marriage bed is pure and undefiled before God.* [*Hebrews 13:4* (paraphrased)] He's saying: *Help yourself.* That's good news, isn't it? So when God says *No*, He's saying: *Don't hurt yourself.* (Thank you, Men, for finally getting with me on that. I need to check on you *Cypress* guys, too. All right? I'm just making sure here.)

(All right.) So, "Flee immorality." [*1 Corinthians 6:18 (NASB)*]

- Flee it.

- Run away from it.
- Run away from the bad ways that the world says you need to fulfill yourself. You don't. You do it in marriage, and it's a beautiful, beautiful thing. All right?

Second thing, *verse 19*:

¹⁹ [Or do you not] know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?
²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God [in] your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)

1(B) GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY

(All right.) Now, if you're a believer (you are worshipper of Jesus Christ, Christ lives inside of you)—guess who owns you? Not you. Within the marriage, the second person who owns your body is your husband and/or your wife—not anybody else. So, inside of me (and inside of you)—those of us who are believers—inside of us, God says: *You're My house. You're a temple. I bought you. I live inside of you. And I don't want you to do anything that's going to defile the temple. I don't want you to hurt yourself.* "Glorify God in your body."

Do you remember earlier in *1 Thessalonians* it says: *Control your vessel. Keep yourself "in sanctification and honor"* the same word for *honor* is the same word that's used right here [meaning] *bought with a price*.

And finally, in *Ephesians 5:3* the final setup for these practical applications is this:

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality...
Ephesians 5:3 (NIV)

Do you get the picture? God says: *Not even a hint of it, because I know how powerful this is.*

1(C) NOT EVEN A HINT OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Look, we are fallen, and every man and woman that I know—even if they are believers—have a fallen flesh inside of them that is so rotten and so bad [that] it cannot be redeemed, and we will leave it here and go to heaven one day. If we listen to that, it will do nothing but continually corrupt us.

So he says: *Don't even get around this stuff.* Now, how many of us believe that God loves us and cares for us? *Cypress*, let me see [your hands] up here. Now, would He tell us anything that would keep us from good? And the answer is: *No!* I didn't hear you, *Cypress*. The answer is... [*Jones* congregational response: *No.*] (Well, this isn't *Cypress*, but I'm glad, *Jones*.) Ready, *Jones*? The answer is: *No!* That's why He said:

- *Get married.*
- *Help yourself.*

- *Every time*
- *Every day*
- Blah, blah, blah, blah.

(Right?)

- Outside of marriage?
 - Not even a hint of it.

You see the dichotomy we're looking at here? (All right, so...)

How do you, then, ensure margin? First of all, you know the word for sexual immorality in *Ephesians 5:3*? Literally [it] means: *Anything that causes arousal outside of marriage. Anything!* It's the word *porneia* [transliterated Greek] where we get our word *pornography* (porno). Anything that causes sexual arousal outside of marriage. Hey, don't get around it. God knows: *I know what it's going to do to you.* All right. So how do you ensure margin?

First of all, let's redefine what *normal* is about sex. Normal about sex is just what we talked about. That is normal for the believer.

- Healthy
- Normal
- Satisfying
- Gratifying
- Wave-after-wave of pleasure
- Deeply drinking of one another's love

If you want the tape, there's one way back there that I did on that. It's R-rated—not X—your kids can't listen to it; but you ought to get it—on marriage. Because that's the way God designed it.

Now, in our day and age, what's normal is to walk by a magazine rack as you're checking out of the store and look at *Fifty Different Ways to Drive Your Boyfriend Sexually Out of His Mind*. Your kids are with you, and they're looking at it, too; and they think: *Well, this is normal.*

- *It's normal to have shame about sex.*
- *It's normal to feel guilty about sex.*
- *It's normal to have regret about sex.*
- *...be insecure because of sex.*
- *...have fear because of sex.*
- *...have these great stains in my heart because of sex.*

Because (you know what?) we just think there's a line out there somewhere, and as long as we don't cross that line, that everything else is okay. But what we don't understand, there's lots of other lines that we cross before we get to the final line that does a lot of damage inside of us.

It's really, really important that we understand you just don't wake up one day and decide:

- *I'm going to have an affair.*
- *I'm going to be sexually immoral.*
- *I'm going to get pregnant today.*

(I mean) that just doesn't happen.

Lots of things happen. Let me give you a little scenario. Here are some questions:

- Is it really wrong to enjoy being with somebody (other than your spouse) who is the opposite sex?
 - (You know) just somebody to talk to. Wouldn't that be all right?
 - (Because) the line of adultery is (like) way over there, and that's not committing adultery. Is it?
- Is it bad to share personal stories about my husband and/or my wife with somebody of the opposite sex?
 - Because (you know) they really seem to understand.
 - It's not adultery (I mean) it's just—the adultery line is way over there. This is nowhere close to adultery.
- Is it wrong for me to anticipate spending time with somebody of the opposite sex (other than my husband or my wife)
 - Because it makes me feel good inside?
 - It's not adultery; the adultery line is way over there.
- (You know) flirting may be—(yeah) a little closer to the line, but flirting isn't adultery.
 - So really, it can't be all that bad, so I want to...
 - Adultery is way out there; flirting is way back here.
- What about having some emotional bonding with this person:
 - Because they really understand me (and)
 - I can share things with them (and)
 - It's not adultery. The adultery line is way out there; this one has got to be way back here somewhere.

Then before you know it, you're having this kind of conversation: *You know I shouldn't be attracted to you, but I just can't help myself. My heart tells me we belong together, and I have to listen to my heart.* Right?

Then what happens? Consequences of which you don't like. Because we stepped across a lot of other lines before we ever stepped across the *adultery line*. I know that it's difficult for some of us to hear. But this is not to make anybody feel shame or guilt or anything; it's to prevent it from happening—ever again.

Do you know what we say after all of that happens? *I never thought it would happen to me.* You hear it of other people. You say it never would, and when it happens: *I thought it would never happen to me*—but it did, because you have no margin.

There are better places to draw the line. Ready?

2. HOW TO ENSURE MORAL MARGIN—DRAW THE LINE

Here are some places to draw the line that will help us from ever getting there. All right?

2(A) DRESS TO IMPRESS DAD

I think you got that one already. When I was in—gosh! How old was I? I was young. I was in Pop Warner football. I had a coach and his son was a quarterback. I was a center. We were inseparable. We were very good friends. I used to spend the night—even during the week, two and three days at his house—because we were just good friends. He had a sister (an older sister). We were in junior high, but she was in high school.

Back then it was the days of miniskirts and hot pants. How many of y'all remember hot pants? (Aptly named—by the way.)

She would get dressed in the morning for school and my buddy Clay would look at what she was wearing. He'd scamper downstairs and say: *Dad, I think you need to put her to the test today.* His dad would say: *Oh? Well, good! Thanks for letting me know, Clay.*

He would call Joann down: *Joann, come down here. Bend over and touch your toes.* If he didn't like what he saw, she didn't wear the dress. She had to dress to impress dad. Dad was teaching her something.

So, anytime that you dress to highlight your assets—that is good—highlight them to your husband. Because if you do that in general, it's like wrapping your body in nice, hot, greasy bacon and walking by guys expecting them not to want a piece. (All right? I don't know how else gently to say that, but that's what came to my mind. You don't want to be bacon. Let's move on. I'm going to get emails on that one—billnorman@themetonline.org.) [Bill Norman, *Lead Pastor: Administration, Operations, Missions*]

2(B) KEEP YOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR

Keep your feet on the floor when you are with the opposite sex—especially those of you that are not married. What does that mean? When your feet are on the floor, guess what can't happen?

- Can't take your clothes off
- Can't cuddle

Do you know what cuddling leads to? Something else.

Kristi and I—by the grace of God (and I thank God that Kristi and I saved sexual relationship with one another for marriage) everything was okay while we were dating to the point where I first kissed her. Then I had to continually peel her off of me day after day. It was amazing. I said:

- *Where's your self control?*
- *You're going to be in the ministry.*
- *You're in Bible [school].*
- *What's wrong with you?*

Man, we knew—we knew if it [were] not for the grace of God and for the fact that we made that commitment and put a few boundaries in—I'm telling you, it would not have happened. Look, we were committed, Bible-college-going kids.

It happens to everybody. You've got to not...this is what I call the law of—(what do I call that?)—the law of depreciating values. Because whatever you're doing now (and it's not the actual sex act) after a while: *Man, there's diminishing value in that; let's do something else*—until ultimately you cross the hard boundary way out there called *sexual immorality*. But you cross a lot more before you get out there. Keep your feet on the floor. All right?

2(C) NO SLEEPOVERS OR PLAYING HOUSE

Do you know what sleepovers and playing house are for? Are you ready? *Marriage*. Because after you sleep over for a while you may be saying: *Yeah, I don't like sleeping-over or playing house with you anymore*. But in marriage—guess what?—you've got to work it out, baby. You've got to work it out. All right? No sleepovers. No playing house.

2(D) AVOID DANGEROUS PLACES

Now what are those dangerous places? I don't know what they are for you; I know what they are for me. You ought to know that if you go to certain places, certain things start to happen inside of you. You're going: *Okay. I cannot go there; I cannot go there*. Because if you go there, you've crossed lines that are leading you to cross the ultimate line (whatever those would be).

- Maybe it's going out clubbing.
 - You just can't go out clubbing, because you know what's going to happen
- Maybe it's hanging out with certain people after work
 - You just can't do that
- Maybe it's chat rooms that you get into (or)
- ...Facebook (or)
- Whatever it is that you know: *I'm going to get in trouble and I know what's going to happen when I do that*.

Don't do that. Stop that. Avoid dangerous places.

Ready? Now this one I know you'll remember:

2(E) IF IT TURNS YOU ON TURN IT OFF

If it turns you on, turn it off—outside the context of marriage. Why? This is biblical. Remember what the definition of *porneia* is? It is *anything that causes arousal outside of marriage*. If it turns you on turn it off. That's: Click!

- Not gonna watch it.
- Not gonna listen to it.
- Not gonna dial it up.
- Not gonna do any of those things.

When I was a kid, do you realize how difficult it was to find a pornographic image? (I mean) there [were] (like) *Playboy* magazines and stuff like that. Every now and then (you know) you'd stumble onto something that you shouldn't have seen (but you did)—but (I mean) you had to stumble onto it. You really had to go out of your way (accidentally or on purpose) to find something.

That ain't true anymore. Right here, in this phone [holding up his *iPhone*] right here, I can see anything that I want of sexual content and nature at anytime that I want to. Right here—on my phone. And so can your kids. And so can everybody else. Man, if there's some places that you can't go—if it turns you on turn it off—don't do that.

2(F) AVOID TIME ALONE WITH THE WRONG PEOPLE

Here's what I hear a lot:

- *I just couldn't help myself.*
- *He was so sweet and charming and nice and so good looking.*
- *And before you knew it....*

No! No! No! No! You knew it before it happened.

- *I just couldn't help it.*
- *She was so fine and so good looking.*
- *I just had to have...*

No! No! No! No! Long before it ever happened, you knew the moment that you were with that person, that was going to happen.

You can't be with that person. Do you know why? Because that is going to happen. Avoid people in intimate situations—being alone with them, if they are going to make you cross the lines that you are having in your life that will keep you from sexual and moral failure.

Finally, guard your eyes, your mind and your heart.

2(G) GUARD YOUR EYES, MIND AND HEART

Watch what you read. If you read material because it arouses you and it's not with your wife or with your husband, then what are you doing? Don't read that. Watch what you watch. I know that's a difficult and hard thing and that's extreme. But listen, aren't these extreme times?

We all said: *Yeah I know somebody. It might be me. I know somebody.* These are extreme times. They require extreme measures. "Flee sexual immorality"...

- Don't flirt with it
- Don't think about it
- Don't get near it

...because it will get you.

I never met anybody that I was counseling because of sexual sin and the consequences they were experiencing, who ever said to me: *All of this started when I created moral margin in my life.* None of them have ever said that. They wished they'd have taken extreme measures so they didn't have to deal with what they were dealing with. But I know a lot—just about 98 percent of them—that said: *I never thought that this would happen to me.*

You may not need moral margin in your life. You may be doing okay. But we all should want moral margin in our lives. Do you know why? Because I want to be the type of dad that...

- My son knows what it's like to be a real man.
 - He knows how to be godly and honoring to his mother.
 - It's creating an environment of security and nurture for my wife.
 - So my son will know how to do that and how to be a one-woman kind of man—even if it's difficult.
- I want my daughter to know that men think of women [as] more than just sexual objects.
 - I want my daughter to marry somebody like me—that's who I want her to marry.
 - I don't want her to marry some of those idiots that are out there. (A lot of you are idiots if you're listening to my voice right now. Don't think that you're not. When it comes to my daughter, you're an idiot. I don't care where you went to college.)
- I never want my wife to wonder: *Is he faithful to me tonight?* (Oh! Can you imagine having to live with that?)

But do you know what mostly I don't want?

- I don't want to dishonor God. (I really don't want to dishonor God.)
 - He saved me from the most rancid filth that you could possibly imagine.
 - I want to honor God with my mind and my body and all of my heart.

If you want to do that—at our *Cypress Campus* and here at our *Jones Road Campus*—let's commit to God in prayer that that's what we want to be like. Let's pray together—both of our campuses, if you are joining us via the Internet or Smartphone app—would you just bow your heads with me?

A few moments ago all of us said: *I know somebody*. But I also know that sometimes those somebodies—they're us. Oh, God, this is a wicked, sinful, dirty, dark world without Christ that uses us and it makes us feel guilty and ashamed. I want to tell you, that's not God's will for you. God's will for you is that you would live a shame-free/guilt-free life, enjoying all the pleasures that He has made for you—including the pleasures of sex within marriage.

All of us who are believers at our *Cypress Campus* and our *Jones Road Campus*, and those that are joining by Internet, I just want us in our heart right now just to recommit to be men and women who have moral margin in [our] lives. So join me in this prayer, and let's just do it out loud and everybody on both of our campuses. I know that it may be feeling a little bit uncomfortable; but let's let the devil know just how serious we are about this. Would you repeat after me?

Dear God, I want to be pure. I want to be holy. Help me have moral margin in my life. Fill me with Your Spirit. Forgive me by Your blood. Give me grace to do these things that I am committing to.

And, Father, that's all of us (that's all of us). None of us wants to be in the position ever again where we have to say: *I can't believe this happened to me*. Protect our children, God. Protect our grandchildren. Allow us to live this differentiated life morally pure.

Some of you are here today and it's more than just sexual sin. It's just an overwhelming sinfulness that you feel, and [you're wondering]: *How could God love me?* As our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed at both of our campuses, maybe you're listening to me and you're by yourself. You just think: *I don't think God could love me. I have done so much junk. There is so much sin in*

my life. How could God actually really love me? Even if I got the sexual stuff right, there is so much more.

You know what? There is! There is so much more that He knew you could never get anything right—so much [so] that He was the only one that could make you right. He loves you so much [that] He doesn't think of you as a dirty rag somewhere. He thinks of you as valuable—so much so that Jesus Christ, God's son, shed His blood for you to let you know how much He loves you.

He wants you to be free today—not just from sexual sin—from all kinds of sin. If you're here this morning (on either one of our campuses) you're listening and:

- You don't know Christ.
- You want to be free of sin.
- You want to be free of guilt and shame.
- You want a life built on love and acceptance from God.

You just raise your hand right now. (No one is looking around.) Just [put them] up in the air, really, really, really, high and keep them there. Let me see. High, high, high, high, everywhere.

Cypress: high, high, high, high. Keep your hand up and pray this prayer with me.

Dear God, I need You to forgive me. I ask You to cleanse me from my sin.
Love me, Jesus. Protect me, Jesus. Come into my life and rule and reign
inside of me. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

The MET
Metropolitan Baptist Church
13000 Jones Rd
Houston, TX 77070

Sermon Transcript Ministry
resource@TheMETonline.org

¹⁴³ **As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands.** ¹⁴⁴ **Your laws are always right; help me to understand them so I may live.**

Psalm 119:143-144

(New Living Translation, 2007 edition)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*