

Transcript: Biblical Sexuality Session 01

Well good evening everybody we're gonna go ahead and get started if I could have your attention well good evening if I don't know you my name is Morgan I'm one of the pastors on staff here the pastor of Christian formation which is kind of hosts conferences and does certain things like an SMC Connect which we'll have Sunday so I've been organizing this and we're really excited for this this conference so thanks for being here or this is the first time we've done this but something I think we've wanted to do for a while and we're calling this the beauty of Biblical Sexuality and really just big picture of why we're doing this and what we hope you'll get out of it is we hope that this conference will give you God's beautiful vision for who we are as humans which includes our sexuality and our gender and we hope that you'll live by that vision and catch an imagination for that from this conference or that this conference will help inform what you already know which are you living according to because we live according to some vision of the good life even if we don't think about it like that even if we haven't articulated that vision or that narrative we live according to we all are thinking there is a meaning of life here's who I am as a person here's who God is even if we just assume that and we're all getting different authorities vying for our attention on what that means what that good life is who we are as humans what sex is what sex is for how to use that what is a gender is that different from sex we're getting all these questions from all humanity has been asking those questions but especially in this time it's a it's a hot topic and our in our cultural moment so we hope that this conference will reframe help encourage your biblical imagination or vision for what it means to live in God's world as a person created in the image of God so again we hope that this will give you a biblical vision for for sexuality and gender and I'm being so encouraged that this many people came to this conference apparently a lot of you signed up maybe this week or late I think about 50 people signed up late so that's really encouraging that this me I was like man we're gonna have about 30 people at this conference be great be a small group but so encouraged that you all are here and I just want to say something to the youth or the teens in the room this is probably the we're exactly where you want to be on a Friday night and a Saturday morning on a your parents probably dragged you to a conference on sex probably not the most ideal thing but I do and I want to say something real quick I wish I had something like this when I was in high school I wish I really would have heeded the words of someone like Robert when I was in high school and really taken seriously what God's Word says about gender and sexuality and I think I mean for a lot of us if we're being honest I think something like this again it's not going to be the silver bullet that solves every problem or ask every question in one conference but I do think something like this if I would have paid attention to it in high school probably would have saved me from a lot of confusion about what it means to be a man and how that how I ought to relate to women what it's probably saved me from a lot of sin and pain and sadness that comes from that sin and also would have just encouraged me in who I am in Christ what does it mean that I'm created in God's image with we all are embodied creatures and what does it mean to live in God's world regarding sexuality and gender so again I know this is probably not the place you want to be on a Friday night but I hope these words will encourage you as you're in high school maybe going to college these are these are issues are already dealing with so I hope that Roberts words will they you'll listen to them but thank you for being here we're really encouraged to have this conference and really glad to have

Robert here so I'm going to outline basically what we'll do this tonight and tomorrow big picture wise there are three sessions each session has a Q&A as well so each session lasts about 45 minutes with a 15 minute Q&A session one is tonight so dinner Q&A or dinner in session one is basically tonight and then tomorrow we'll come back and there will be breakfast from 9 to 930 and then session two will start at 930 and then we'll also have session three after that and after each session I'll come up and ask Robert some questions not a word about those questions on your tables there's this little sheet of paper and I like a in a little frame there's a QR code on that sheet if you go to the link that that QR code goes to it'll take you to a Google form and on that form you can submit questions it'll be anonymous I'll be getting those questions throughout the talk and in the Q&A and I'll have those questions as I ask ask Robert so if you want your question answered follow the QR code and ask it ask it through there and I think it's basically wide open regarding this this topic so some please submit questions to the QR code at the center of your table and that'll lead to our Q&A so to introduce our speaker though Robert Cunningham he's actually been here before about a year ago he came and we called it Theology of the Body we did SMC Connect which he's doing one of those this Sunday and that was really encouraging really helpful very well received by our church and so we thought why not have him come back and do a more full conference and unpack a lot of those themes that he mentioned about a year ago so here we are we're super excited to have Robert here with us he is the founder and director of Christ for Kentucky and that's a resource for public theology in the state of Kentucky he's a former senior pastor of Tate's Creek Presbyterian Church in Lexington Kentucky where he served for 17 years he went to covenant theological seminary he's currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Leicester and his writings have been featured in Christianity Today World magazine and the New York Times he's also the host of a podcast called every square inch he's married to Abby and they have four sons so Robert let me pray and then we'll we'll have you come up our father in heaven we are so privileged to be able to call you father that we can be your sons and your daughters thank you for creating us and your image of likeness and we pray that the word said here tonight would show us what that means to be created in your image and that we would we would glorify you and enjoy you because of the the bodies you've given us because of the relationships with others you've given us please impress upon our minds and our hearts who you are and who we are in you we pray all this in the massless name of your son Jesus Christ all right you're clearly not a front-row church can I do this this is okay it really is a joy to get to be with you all yeah so I was here I guess it was like a year ago where your leadership kindly asked me to take all three of the lectures I'm going to be giving this weekend and somehow condensed them into like a Sunday school class which is nice of them and so I was here and you got a you know a cliff notes version of that so there might be a little bit overlap particularly this first talk this evening a little bit of overlap I mean I'm flattering myself to think that you all remember a word that I said a year ago but if you were here a little bit overlap tonight but really excited it was really interesting when I was with you when was with your church a year ago the the amount of follow-up that I received from within your congregation was more than usual and it was very clear that that there was a real palpable desire for information but maybe more so formation in this like vitally important topic and I think that might reflect I think that might reflect kind of the the nature of what it what it looks like to do life in a city like this and how pressing the issue of human sexuality and gender is in a city like Nashville I just think there's a real need it was clear from the response a year ago that there was a desire for more and so I'm really thankful to be invited back to kind of give you the fuller picture of this content but let me let me begin just being upfront and honest about my intentions with you this weekend what you might expect from a church conference on sexuality and gender is maybe a well-reasoned

argument defending the historic Christian sexual ethic all of Western society right now is arguing over this issue and so perhaps you might expect or maybe even want this to be something that further equips you to engage that cultural contest and kind of apologetic training ground to to win the culture war and I just want to be honest with you and say these are your expectations for the weekend I want to be upfront and say that I'm going to be a very disappointing speaker because I'm really not here to argue and I'm not here for arguments because I think it's important for us to be honest with ourselves that in many ways the argument is over it's effectively been decided and as I will demonstrate tomorrow morning we are living in a historical moment that has been building for literally centuries and the outcome of that movement is a near monopoly on the Western moral order that's that that that's a little bit of an overstatement I do think I'm a student of culture and I do think the cultural tide is turning in some way specifically in the area of the gender ideology and I am noticing that the T and the LGBT seems to be proving a step too far for the the public moral imagination but the LGB has become an undebatable fixture of society as has casual recreational promiscuity as has pornography consumption which has moved from a taboo fringe society participation to a mainstream experience as has the the degradation the destruction of marriage is a bedrock social institution and on and on and I could go with the way in which the moral order has been reordered into what we Christians would call disorder Christian ethics particularly Christian sexual ethics once revolutionized the world into a world worth living in but now post Christian sexual ethics has in a sense repaganized society and we view it as progress but it's actually regress back to a world before the Christian revolution redefined sex marriage gender and all that and I just think we need to be honest with what has transpired outside of a cultural revival which does have this unique power to quickly reframe culture morality but outside of revival which we pray for and we labor towards outside of that we do need to come to grips that the argument kind of is over and what Christians have always believed in practice is officially now marginalized at best persecuted at worse and we are not going to be able to argue ourselves back into cultural plausibility in a city like Nashville if you hold to a historic Christian sexual ethic at best you are weird and at worst you are a bigot and that is just the nature of the new world that is upon us what encouraging way to start our weekend right so then then what are we here to do well I I have come from Kentucky to tell a story I am NOT conceding here I'm not giving up on the Christian sexual ethic I am just suggesting that we need a more compelling way forward and I would argue that beauty I love the way you entitled your conference I would argue that beauty is more compelling because beauty uniquely compels us Scottish political philosopher Andrew Fletcher said it like this let me write the songs and the stories of a nation I care not who makes its laws meaning this the songs the stories the art the beauty of a nation is actually more powerful culturally speaking than the laws of a nation beauty as an apologetic possesses this peculiar power that is able to transcend all the cultural arguments and debate and I want to suggest that the argument might be over in our society but the story is not so that's what I'm here to do with you this weekend I'm here to tell a more beautiful story about human sexuality about masculinity and femininity not just any story but a love story not just any love story but an erotic love story the English language vainly attempts to use one word to describe that which cannot possibly be contained with one word but the Greek language the of course the original language of the New Testament has four words to describe what we call love the most well-known of these within Christianity is agape divine love perhaps a more understandable way to describe it would be our religious love God's love for us our love for God the Christian tradition believes that this is the highest form of love to which all other lesser loves point meaning this there is storge love affectionate love this is the type of love that we experience when we take delight in something and most notably the love between a parent and a child I

love my children but not like I love my wife right I love them with a deep storge affection the storge is used for many forms of delight we use the word love to describe enjoyment all the time don't we we say I love that film I love that song I I was I was driving in I was driving my wife into Vanderbilt I was on the phone with her I was driving in and and she's like I'm just so jealous I just loved Nashville there's just a storge and I love national I love visiting well I used to until the entire human species decided to move to the city and it took me three hours to be three hours to drive 200 miles from Lexington to the outskirts of your city and then one hour to drive 18 miles to my hotel from the outskirts of your city so you're I still love your city but it's becoming a struggle but my point is that we use love all the time to describe our delight in something and the point is that that storge love of enjoyment points to the ultimate enjoyment that we find in agape love God takes delight in us and we find our ultimate delight our ultimate pleasure in God all of our earthly delights rightly understood give us a glimpse of God then there's phileo friendship love the love we experience within community I tell my closest friends all the time that I love them because I do again not like my lot my wife I don't love them like I love my wife but I do love my friends with a phileo love and phileo likewise points us to agape the ultimate friendship that we find in God's love communion with God through Jesus Christ the friend of sinners our friendship this church community rightly understood leads us to God gives us a glimpse of God but then there's one more Eros from which we get the word erotic love this most sacred love reserved for the most sacred act a love so powerful that God withholds it from us until we are developed enough to handle it children enjoy storge and phileo the children cannot handle Eros and if it's introduced too early in their development its power can actually be traumatic Eros is a love so strong that it can decimate our souls with pain anger righteous jealousy I celebrate Abby's my wife's name's Abby I celebrate Abby's storge love of art museum I celebrate her phileo love for her friends and community but if she had Eros for another I would come undone what are we to make of Eros this love that that leads us where no other love has the ability to take us into heights of ecstasy and depths of intimacy and most remarkable of all a love so singular in his power that it can actually create new life what are we to do with the erotic and more importantly what has the erotic what does Eros love have to do with God I said that phileo gives us a glimpse of God I said the storge gives us a glimpse of God and we had no problem with that we see that these uniquely human experiences are a glimpse into the nature of God whom we image but what does Eros teach us of God as I was going through all those different loves that we experience I kept on saying but not like my wife I love my kids but not like my wife I love my friends but not like my wife well what does the love I share with my wife the most powerful love I will experience in this life have to do with God and I got they love the answer that question is the love story I want to share with you I believe it is a story that is so transcendent in its beauty that if properly proclaimed and more importantly properly embodied and practiced every competing story of love in our culture will collapse in the presence of his beauty between 1979 and 1984 Pope John Paul II delivered 139 lectures that eventually would become his magnum opus entitled Theology of the Body John Paul was a a more conservative Pope and he foresaw the distortion and disarray of sexuality that was emerging in Western cultures sexual revolution and so with prophetic foresight he authored more than a Christian critique but a different Christian way to consider sex versus the sexual revolution that was emerging now let me be very very clear here at the beginning of this weekend I am assuming there are elders in this room and so please I don't want to get brought up on charges after this weekend so let me be very clear I'm a Protestant yay Martin Luther yay John Calvin I'm a Protestant not just a Protestant I am a reformed Presbyterian Protestant I subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith I believe in the Presbyterian form church government and I embrace a covenantal

structure of Scripture Calvinistic view of salvation all five points if they made up a six point I'm sure I'd believe it too I Robert Cunningham and may Protestant Presbyterian okay but I do try to hum to be humble enough with my theological convictions to be curious and consider the scholarship from other Christian traditions and so I was curious about this conservative Pope fervently contending for the traditional Christian sexual ethic I was curious about what he had to say and his Theology of the Body unveiled the beauty of God's design for sexuality and gender in a way I never saw coming obviously there was much I disagreed with but after sifting through those disagreements the core tenets of his scholarship I found to just be stunning and his beauty and then I turned to the Reformation tradition curious whether anybody from my world has ever spoken of sexuality with such depth and beauty and I was amazed to find similar beauty that I had never noticed or ever read from our tradition John Owens commentary on Song of Solomon it will make you blush John Calvin's commentary on Genesis 1 & 2 and most significantly Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics teaching on sex all these reformed theology theologians were echoing the beauty that I had discovered in John Paul's Theology of the Body without the Catholic dogma that I disagree with and then C.S. Lewis's book for loves which I had read but upon rereading was floored he C.S. Lewis wrote this in the same era as Theology of the Body and it is Lewis's Christian philosophy of love critique of cultural development surrounding sexuality and he has an entire chapter on Eros that I just saw with new eyes but most of all and most importantly I began to see it within Holy Scripture it made sense of so much so many biblical oddities that I had never fully considered or appreciated it didn't just make sense of them it made them come alive it beautified them all that to say Theology of the Body no doubt awakened my theological curiosity into human sexuality but it's been a long theological journey through trusted scholarship and biblical study that has unveiled the beauty of God's design for sexuality that I believe evangelicalism is desperate to recapture in this moment so I want to share God's beautiful love story the story of Eros and the story follows the familiar pattern that you're probably aware of creation fall redemption which is how I'm going to organize my three talks but for reasons that will become apparent I'm going to iterate it with revelation redirection and then resurrection revelation redirection resurrection let's begin tonight with the glorious revelation of Eros Theology of the Body is structured around three seminal passages from Jesus and and I would like to do the same with us this weekend the first is for Matthew 19 when Jesus is questioned about the issue of divorce and Jesus says yes Moses granted divorce because the hardness of heart but quote from the beginning it was not so and that little phrase is central to the beauty of human sexuality our first response to every form of sexual brokenness in our lives and in our society must always be but from the beginning it was not so the Christian says to every form of disordered lust the pornographic images on our screen the casual hookup culture taking place all across the city the illicit affair indeed to the seemingly innocent lustful glance and fantasy of the mind to all of it we Christians begin by saying with Jesus yes but from the beginning it was not so our theology does not start with the ugliness of fallen creation but with the beauty of God's original creation so let's start there back to the beginning to explore the original revelation of love revelation of Eros one of the things that convinced me the most that John Paul might be on to something is that his his scholarship made sense of again so many of these oddities that I never really questioned what's that about specifically within Genesis 1 through 3 these three chapters are of course foundational to our faith but have you ever noticed or wondered why nakedness sex the first thing image bears do in the Bible is have sex the emphasis on genitalia both before and after the fall the curse of female childbirth the promise of a coming seed all of these things are so prominent in these foundational chapters of Genesis but I'm getting himself let me let me start at the very beginning Genesis

1 26 then God said let us make man in our image after our likeness on a most fundamental level the image of God means that we are icons of the divine we are these special creatures who tell the story of God in unique ways these special creatures that God shares certain communicable attributes but they're called he shares his likeness with us in some way so unlike animals we are moral creatures we are conscious decision-making creatures we are creative creatures artistic creatures we are creatures on a quest for truth beauty and goodness animals know nothing of these endeavors we are the only creature who shares in the likeness of our Creator now animals mate and reproduce but there is more to it for image bears for example why do we cover what we have labeled private parts and why do we view these as private parts in the first place my dogs million bear just go about our house a neighborhood flaunting their stuff without a care in the world why not us because there's something sacred about these parts and we know it they are the physical instruments of Eros within us with respect to the the bloodhound gangs hit song from the 90s I'm dating myself here they're they're big hit for the 90s you and me baby ain't nothing but mammals so let's do what they do on the Discovery Channel every every one of us knows that's a lie that's a lie even those who deny it even those who try to approach sex like animals on the Discovery Channel even still the scars of their regret are these painful reminders that human sexuality is different we weren't created to mate we were created quite literally to make love nothing is more unique to image bearers than erotic love a love foreign and inaccessible to all other creatures now here's my question is that the one part of humanity that is not created in the image of God is human sexuality the most powerful intimate desirous pleasurable compelling part of the human experience exempt from God's image again we have no problem with phileo or storge love reflecting in some way the image of God but then we treat Eros as this strange taboo exemption from God's image but truth be told the reason why sexuality holds such unique prominence within every image bearer of God is because our sexuality is a unique window into the deepest mysteries of God's agape love explore that mystery and show you what I mean the verse I read is a fascinating one then God singular and the Hebrew said let us plural make man in our plural image meaning the Trinity is there in the first pages of Scripture and and what this is emphasizing is that we are not just image bearers of God we are image bearers of a Trinitarian God God is God is one God in three distinct persons Trinitarian math is 1 plus 1 plus 1 equals 1 make sense no it does not make sense God is by definition incomprehensible and yet despite the admittedly incomprehensible nature of the divine Trinity only this Christian doctrine allows for there to be a one monotheistic God who is complete and sufficient in himself meaning because God is three and one the Creator is not in need and incomplete without creation the scriptures say that God is love he is love he does not need love but a non Trinitarian God cannot be loved within himself for example consider storge love the love of admiration I love that movie well it's not like God was previously bored and needed to create to admire because God is a Trinity he has forever reveled in admiration of his own beauty and glory consider phileo love love of friendship and community God was not previously lonely and needed to create to experience community and friendship and fellowship he has forever existed in perfect communion within himself well does that love we say God is love does that love he has forever enjoyed himself somehow include Eros far more than including Eros the reason why God designed Eros with this unique power and preeminence and significance within image bearers because Eros is the closest we come to grasping what we cannot grasp the heights and depths of God's love the Trinity is an eternal exchange of love forever God has been sharing and receiving love and when I say love I mean love I mean love in its fullest and highest form not some generic boring stoic conceptual love I mean ecstasy I mean rapture I mean an eternal intoxicating exchange of endless blissful love now this is going to be

tough for us to hear and I understand that but I'm gonna say this so many times this weekend because I don't want us to slip into heresy okay we are made in God's image not the other way around meaning we dare not ever sexualize the Trinity instead the Trinity has given us sex as an icon a living picture a physical taste of a higher spiritual reality we cannot fully comprehend the degree of divine Trinitarian love but rightly ordered human sexuality was ordained by God as a glimpse and the glimpse is this an eternal exchange a forever sharing and receiving of love's highest ecstasy so we believe the scriptures to be the infallible revelation of God right we we how do we get to know God we read our Bible again we're Protestants here and the Bible is our ultimate authority well why is Song of Solomon in your Bible have you ever wondered that may I make us all uncomfortable and read to you some excerpts from God inspired word you can't get mad at me for reading the Bible right so here we go Solomon says to his lover how delightful is your love my bride how much more pleasing is your love than wine and the fragrance of your perfume more than spice your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine your waist is a mound of wheat and circled by lilies your breasts are like two fawns like like twin fawns of a gazelle may your breasts be like clusters of grapes on the vine the fragrance of your breath like apples in your mouth like the choices of wine she says to Solomon awake north wind and come south wind blow on my garden that its fragrance may spread everywhere let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choices fruits my beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts I am a wall and my breasts are like towers my beloved thrusts his hand through the latch opening my heart began to pound for him I opened for my beloved and my hands dripped with myrrh on the handles of the bolt let him lead me to the banquet hall and let his banner over me be love the word of the Lord I thought y'all were thanks be to God Church are you not not with that one God inspired in the canon of holy writ the description of lovers intoxicated with the erotic why because Eros within us is a window into the eternal exchange of love and himself and even a picture of God's love for us as we will see tomorrow let's return to Genesis 1 show you what I mean God said let us make man in our image after a likeness of God created him man in his own image in the image of God he created him male and female he created them there is something uniquely significant about male and female when it comes to the image of God more specifically it is the uniqueness of male and the uniqueness of female that unlocks the mystery of God's image so let's turn to Genesis 2 and see God fashioned this uniqueness of the genders it starts with Adam then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground so by fashioning Adam from the earth God did nothing different with Adam that he did not do with every other living creature thus far and so there absolutely is much that we find in common with the animal kingdom which is obvious to the science department at Vanderbilt Lipscomb Belmont and so forth but what is not obvious to the science department but is very obvious to the arts and humanities department is what God does next and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life the breath of God fills this newly formed animal and the animal ceases to be an animal forevermore he is henceforth forever imago Dei the image of God or is he because it would seem that the image is not yet complete as we already read Genesis says male and female he created them in God's image which is why after Adam is formed God says it's not good for man to be alone verse 21 so Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up his place of flesh and the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man now what is so interesting about that is if God wanted to make another image bear he could have just repeated the process dirt female body breath of life but Eve is the only living creature created not from dirt but from another creature and that is profoundly significant listen there is no perfect illustration of the Trinity because the Trinity is unfathomable and unable to fit neatly into the clean comprehensible

illustrations of limited creatures anytime somebody says the Trinity is like this and they give you an illustration they're illustrating heresy you literally cannot you can't he is inscrutable so you can't scrutinize him you can't illustrate God but what is unfolding in Genesis 2 is the closest we get to Trinitarian comprehension remember the Trinity is one in essence and three distinct persons well Eve taken from Adam is now the same essence of Adam and yet a distinct person and notice the bodily emphasis in Adam's response then the man said this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh he sees in her body something of himself not just the biology of her body but the theology of her body the meaning of his body the story of his body makes sense only in the presence of her body and the story that he discovered is found and the fact that she is simultaneously similar yet different than him he says bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh and yes her bones and flesh are the same as his except in one and only one area there's only one area where Adam's body doesn't make sense by itself there's only one area where Eve's body doesn't make sense in itself each body bears one part that in essence is made not for that body but for another's body and standing face-to-face naked and without falling shame the glorious mystery of their bodies is unveiled when Adam says at last he is essentially saying finally I make sense because he discovers something that could only be discovered in the presence of Eve's nakedness Adam did not need Eve to understand his body in every part his eyes his hands his feet his ears he under everything made sense but there was one part that didn't make sense until he met Eve's nakedness and he saw this one part was created to give to another I'm talking about genitalia here if you if you haven't put that together friends in discussing these parts of our bodies we are on holy ground and we instinctively know it we instinctively know it again we call them private parts because we know that they are not trivial they are sacred if indeed our bodies are as the Scripture say a temple then these parts of our bodies are like the Holy of Holies bearing sacredness to be protected power to be guarded indeed a holiness not to be trifled with and God designed them with this unique significance because they uniquely testify to the heights of God's eternal love and that testimony of love is declared when they come together as one the next verse after creation of Eve and the two became one flesh the one flesh union of male and female when God's image participates in its own exchange of love there in that sacred act the mystery of Trinitarian love is unveiled actually there's one more step to the mystery God is one in three one essence three persons Eve was taken from Adam thus the same in essence yet two persons perhaps you're wondering how male and female as two can accurately image the three persons of the Trinity well who said male and female are alone in their one flesh union they won't be for long the final and fullest expression of Eros is that glorious moment when the only incomplete cells of the male unite with the only incomplete cells of the female and behold a new image bearer of God is conceived you wanna talk about sanctity of life in that microscopic moment that we cannot see we actually see eternity's love again no illustration of the Trinity is flawless but this is the closest we now have three distinct persons sharing one essence enveloped in love and so when God immediately says to Adam and Eve be fruitful and multiply that multiplication is not just this byproduct of Eros love it is a completion of Eros love by the way I know that may be difficult to hear for those of you here who might be struggling with infertility a very real pain that I do not mean to be to minimize or certainly be callous towards may God be near you in that struggle a struggle that is actually at the forefront of Scripture as we will discuss tomorrow when we get into fallen Eros but even the struggle the unique pain of that particular unmet longing testifies that the sexual union is not created exclusively as an end but is designed to overflow into new life so putting it all together and then we'll come to a close with this first talk and and and take some questions the problem with much of Christian teaching is on sexuality is that it begins after Genesis 3 it allows our

experiences with fallen sexuality to dictate the terms of discussion and in this way our starting point rests on the assumption that sex is gross or taboo perhaps even traumatic we will have none of that this weekend the one flesh Eros union is literally in the creation narrative that unfolding crescendo of glory the one flesh union is literally the culmination of creation's glory and beauty it stands alone as the high point of God's sacred order the Trinity has forever existed in an eternal exchange of love and the Trinity have given us his image bearers this tangible icon into what he has forever enjoyed when male and female within the safe confines sacred boundaries of nuptial vows are once again naked without shame intoxicated by the unique arousal that only that site will afford joining together in a one flesh union as ecstasy rises to heights nothing else in this world can offer culminating and climactic euphoria and that sacred exchange literally creates a new image bearer of God that brothers and sisters is the closest we will ever get to comprehending the incomprehensible love of the Trinity we say blessed be the name of the Lord for his glorious and I would say beautiful gift of sexuality and gender now leading us to our next talk you probably know that in chapter 3 of Genesis an enemy enters the story to wage war against God via God's image bearers and that enemy is described as crafty we'll consider this if indeed Eros is the high point of God's created order if indeed Eros is a unique picture into God's eternal love then I ask you where would you suppose a crafty enemy is going to direct his attack the enemy wants no one to know the love of God and therefore the enemy seeks to destroy Eros this icon of God's love therefore nowhere are the consequences of the fall and in and sadly I'm I can I can say I know this from personal experience and I'm assuming many of you know this from personal experience if it's the highest pleasure it also can be the the greatest pain nowhere are the consequences the fall experience more than in our sexuality our deepest regrets our saddest pains our most difficult traumas we see that in Scripture we have seen that in history and certainly we see that where we find ourselves in this unprecedented age of disordered Eros if you want to know what is most sacred to God find what is most desecrated by the enemy and tomorrow morning we will explore this desecration of Eros yes in the life of our culture we will get into that but more significantly in your life and mine all right let me pray for us and then if there's questions we can wait through those or if you're exhausted say I need to go home we can do that too but we'll take questions if you have them let me pray or we bless you for the more beautiful story and design of sexuality of male and female Lord it's very easy it is very easy to quickly do what they wanted to do with the adulterous woman woman caught in adultery and cast stones I pray that you would surround this discussion this weekend with the words of our Lord who would look at us and say you who are without sexual sin you are free to cast the first stone and so I pray that this this has so many implications for our society and our neighbors in the world around us but Lord let the first application be our own sexual repentance our own sexual brokenness our marriages our celibacy and singleness let the applications begin at home within the household of God so that we can become a people who proclaim but even more so embody and practice a more beautiful sexual design and story that you have written and so I pray that that we would resist the temptation to look everywhere but in the mirror when it comes to this issue I do pray for an extra measure of grace to surround this discussion and if it is so powerful as we just discussed and like I said nothing nothing is more painful than our failures in this area and it would just be so easy for the enemy to enter into this discussion with condemning shaming regretful unworthy thoughts towards those that you Jesus who can make the foulest sinner clean you Jesus who purify us from all unrighteousness the enemy will try to in this area in particular the enemy will try to let this weekend lead to shame and regret rather than freedom and beauty and so we pray that you would guard this entire weekend from the evil one and that Your Spirit would guide the discussion and would reign in this room so we trust you with

a discussion and thank you for these brothers and sisters and their willingness to give up a Friday night to hear and celebrate a more beautiful story thank you Jesus for our sexuality thank you Jesus for men and women and teach us how to be faithful through Christ we pray. Amen.