

Bumper video: Cast away trailer video

Good morning Southside Church!

Have you **ever said to yourself**, I am done with relationships, I think I will **run away to a tropical island?**

While this **idea may seem attractive in a moment of frustration.**

In reality, it would not take long for you **to be longing for some company!**

20 years ago, the movie **Cast Away** was released.

This movie was about a **pilot for Fed Ex** whose plane crashed and **he found himself stranded** on a tropical island.

The movie **chronicles his experience of survival** and details what **happens to humans** when they find themselves **stuck in isolation.**

Tom Hanks who played the main character **held on to the hope of survival primarily because of the relationships** that were near and dear to him.

At one point in the movie, he even **took a volleyball with his own handprint on it** that looked like an **outline of a face and called it Wilson.**

He would talk to Wilson and share his experiences with Wilson.

He even **cried when Wilson was separated** from him during his escape from the island....**proving isolation can be devastating.**

We may **at times long for isolation** but the reality is - **God made us to be in relationship with other people.**

In fact **God made YOU to be in relationship** with other people.

You were **not meant to live your life in isolation.** There is a well-known proverb. **“No man is an island.”**

We were not created to live in isolation by ourselves, alone and away from others.

It's true sometimes we need **“down time”** or alone time because we are frustrated and tired.

Sometimes we want isolation.

Sometimes we need isolation!

Sometimes we want everyone to leave us alone for a while!

Some of you enjoy **hunting or fishing** - I know that part of the enjoyment of these activities is **being alone** in the woods to hunt or on the lake or river being quiet as you fish.

Sometimes we wish that we could be on an island!

While this **feeling is okay for a vacation** or a short time of solitude, it is not the **way we were designed** to live.

In fact it is not healthy for us to be alone.

Research supports this:

The Cigna insurance company did a survey of 20,000 people:

They gave **20,000 people, ages 18 and up**, a 20-question survey that **tested feelings of loneliness**.

It's called "**The UCLA Loneliness Scale.**" Their findings were quite alarming!

- **Half the people!** – in this case study 10,000 people reported sometimes or always **feeling alone or left out**.

- **One in four** felt that there is **no one who really understands** them.
- **43%** felt that their **relationships are not meaningful** and that they are isolated from others.
- **20% never feel close to people** or have someone they can talk to.
- This study also revealed **the youngest generation, Generation Z**, that's people from 18 to 22 is the **loneliest generation on the planet**.

This loneliness is not good for us **mentally** as it can lead to more **depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and even hallucinatory delirium**.

It's also not good for us **physically** either.

One study followed **3.4 million people over seven years**.

They found that **lonely people had a 26% higher risk** of dying.

So, **God knew what He was talking about** when He declared in the first chapters of the Bible.

Genesis 2:18 (NIV) *The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."*

It is not good for you and me to be isolated.

For Adam, **living with the animals was not good enough.**

It was **not** sufficient for human health and happiness.

Humans love animals, but humans need human relationships.

God did not make us to be islands; we were made to be in relationship with others.

That is one of the **benefits of being in a church family.**

To be clear the **only way for you to leverage this benefit is to take some risk.**

One way that you can do that is to attend one of the **Southside Start group gatherings.**

It's a chance to **meet other new people** and learn about this church and how to **begin your journey of transformation.**
(Online or at the welcome station)

My dad used to say: "You have to be a friend to find a friend"

The church is a place **where you can build real lasting relationships.**

The Church was **meant to be a family of families** that will help make you a healthier and happier person.

When we are **real with each other**, opening our lives to Jesus together, **we can find healing.**

Taking this step **will produce spiritual health** that leads to better **mentally and emotionally healthy experiences!**

Relationships are God's provision and protection against loneliness and isolation.

God wants you to be in relationship with other people.

God **has much to say about how to have good relationships** with others.

Relationships are so important that we want to have a **series of messages** beginning today that will **help us explore how to experience relationships the way God intended!**

In fact we want to **clear up some confusion** about relationships that seems to be **prevalent in our world.**

This confusion exist **because we have drifted further and further way from God and His guidelines** for having healthy relationships.

There are many different kinds of relationships.

There are **family relationships, friendships, associates at work, marriage relationships, and of course romantic relationships.**

Today I want to consider **confusion that has multiplied in recent years concerning romantic relationships.**

You have heard the phrase **“Facebook Official,”** it means you are not **really in a relationship until it is indicated** in your Facebook status.

This **phenomenon has made its way into commercials, cartoons; they have even made a television show and a movie about this.**

These shows, **point out the reality of the cultural pressure to define and validate a status** of any relationship.

There’s also **pressure to be politically correct** in the way we identify our status.

Let’s look at how confused our society has become:

Facebook lists the following categories:

- (blank) - unspecified
- single
- in a relationship
- engaged

- married
- it's complicated
- in an open relationship
- widowed
- separated
- divorced

- in a civil union
- in a domestic partnership

This list **is sure to expand because there are Hollywood stars like Gwyneth Paltrow** who created the term **“conscious uncoupling”** when she divorced her husband.

Then when announcing her new engagement to another man she deemed herself as **“conscious re-coupling.”**

Then you have Emma Watson who declared a new status **“self – coupling.”**

The pressure to **define our status according to our preferences** is a **growing pressure!**

And it's not just our **relationship status that is confusing**, there is a **broadening of acceptance for labeling romantic relationships that add to our confusion.**

- **“Friends with benefits”** – this is a non-committal relationship only for sex.

- **“The side piece”** – this means that you are cheating and one person knows and one doesn’t.
- **“In an open relationship”** – this is a relationship of multiple people where everyone involved in the relationship is consenting to having others join in.
- **“Talking to someone”** – this means that you’re interested in someone enough to talk to them but nothing more.
- **“the placeholder”** – this is when you continue a bad relationship until someone better comes along.
- **“the backup”** – this is a relationship that you hold on to “just in case” you need them.

Why is there all this confusion?

Because **we have allowed ourselves to define**, our relationships status based on our:

DESIRE rather than on our DESIGN.

When we refuse to accept God as our DESIGNER, then our DESIRES become our only guide.

When **desire defines relationships** - confusion is the result.

You might say **what is wrong with desire**, and the answer is - **nothing when it is guided by God, the designer!**

The **problem we all deal with is that many have rejected Him**

God's original plan was for mankind **to bask in perfect community with Him and others.**

But mankind wanted more... we wanted knowledge

It was this desire for knowledge that opened the door for our confusion.

Adam and Eve, as detailed in the opening chapters of the Bible, gives us a window into our origin of confusion!

This **origin story reveals that man and woman chose to go against God's clear command and offer of life.**

And chose rather knowledge of **Good and Evil** even though **they were told by God** that it would **allow death to enter the world!**

With the knowledge of Good and Evil mankind is **now prone to confusion in every area of life.**

This **confusion permeates all of our relationships** especially relationships that **involve romance and sexuality**.

Let me be clear here, we are not to hate those who are living in confusion.

We are **ALL** trying to come out of confusion as we move toward God.

We are living in a fallen **world filled with people who without intervention will remain confused!**

What Adam and Eve introduced into the world is known as the Original Sin and all of us have been affected by this event!

And Sin has two primary parts. There is **sin's origin and sin as an act.**

The origin of sin is from the Original sin of Adam and Eve.

Their **original sin has polluted the entire human race** and has been **breeding confusion from the beginning.**

And the number one target - is relationships!

We have broken views of ourselves and skewed perspectives of others that is now affecting how we interact with one another.

When we choose to live **in this state of brokenness**, it will **shape our desires - pressuring us to define** our relationships around our **Desire rather than design!**

You could say the original sin pressures us to choose sin!

I know the word sin is not a popular word, what it means is to choose to go against the known will of God!

At one time or another, we have all **voluntarily chosen to go against the known law of God.**

Sin injures us, sin injures people, sin breeds confusion and sin ruins relationships.

It **promises freedom and fun with no consequences.** But it only delivers **on the “fun” for a season.**

While giving into **sinful desire seems fun at the moment** in the end **it leads to death.**

Sin **does not deliver on the promise of freedom** with no consequences.

Instead of bringing freedom, **sin brings bondage that ensnares us and enslaves us.**

Sin does not **deliver on the promise of “no consequences.”**

The law of physics can not be escaped.

We all have the **freedom to jump off a roof**, we will all also deal with the potential consequence of making that choice.

Choices have consequences.

The Apostle Paul explained it this way:

Galatians 6:7-8 (NIV) ⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

When we allow **desire guided by a sinful nature to steer our ship** don't be surprised **when you end up shipwrecked on the rocks!**

(Personal – I'm not sharing this with you as someone with now experience here, I have been ruined by sin)

This is where the Love of God becomes so clear.

Because in the **midst of our sin** God sent His son to **break the curse of original sin and make it possible to be forgiven of all the sins we have committed.**

Through Jesus we can find the cure to our curse!

Jesus can **Heal our broken nature**, and teach us how to live more healthy life **that will improve our relationships.**

In fact, Jesus desires to **restore our relationship with His father** then **guide us to make better choices that bring better consequences that will become evident in our relationships.**

God longs to teach us how to live according to His design!

Jesus want to take you on a **journey away from our sinful desires that bring confusion**, to God's design, which brings peace.

We need to experience this for ourselves.

Then we are to pray for and **love others who are on their journey from confusion to peace.**

This is why we open our arms wide to a world living in confusion while pointing them to the way to life!

We are called to help **every man woman and child experience Jesus and by His grace**, they can find their way out of their confusion.

One of the **biggest areas of confusion the world faces today in relationships is centered around our sexuality.**

The Bible details how **we specifically created in the Image of God as male and female.**

That means **our sexuality is an inherent part of our design and identity as bearers of God's Image.**

We become **more like God when we live out the fullest expression of what it means to be male and female** working together for the good of each other.

This is also **why our sexuality is about more than just sexual acts or the romantic parts of our relationships.**

Sexuality **provides the framework by which we understand all human relationships.**

Right down to our very DNA we acknowledge that **males and females are different.**

Designed by God to **come to the table with their unique differences** and find ways to work together for their common good.

On one hand, Celebrating our differences and **unique design according to God's plan adds value** to every relationship.

On the other hand, **pretending our differences have no value or that God's design is irrelevant**

Diminishes the value of our relationships and our unique contributions to the lives of others.

This is just as true in a marriage as it is for those who choose to remain single.

Yet we must acknowledge **Human Sexuality took a big hit in the original sin.**

Before the original sin, **Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed**; after they sinned, they covered up and were ashamed.

You can read all about it in Genesis chapter 3 in your Bible.

Human Sexuality is **an area that must be addressed in our belief system before we can ever help others out of confusion.**

Our denomination, **the church of the Nazarene** has produced a **very clear biblical stance on human sexuality** and all of the confusing issues surrounding it.

This stance was recently featured in a publication called Holiness Today.

I want to make this publication available to you today, **every person, every parent and grandparent needs to read this publication.**

It is one of the ways **we can educate ourselves to speak the truth in love and integrity in the arena of human sexuality.**

When you read it - if have questions!

I want you to **reach out to me our one of our pastors** because we must become clear about God's clear design for human sexuality.

If we want **to move out of confusion**, we need to shift our focus from **desire to design.**

God's purposeful **design and guardrails on human sexuality** are clear.

And rather than **following our unbridled desires**, we need to **follow God's original design**.

God's design for sexual expression is clear in Scripture.

God designed is for a man and a woman to **commit themselves to each other in a marriage for a lifetime** and that their marital bed remain pure.

This is the original design.

This is clearly stated from God in the first chapters of Genesis.

Genesis 2:24–25 (NIV) *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

Not everyone is called to marriage, **but if you are going to engage in a sexual relationship** then it must be within the context of a committed marriage.

Any expression outside of HIS design will eventually cause pain and injury.

God's **design shows us our sexual identity**. It's not our choice to make, it is **God's choice in our design**.

Desire can be misdirected and cause confusion.

God **wants to lead us OUT of confusion**.

By meeting us where we are and **teaching us how to have healthy romantic relationships**.

God will not change His design to accommodate our desires.

Instead, He changes our desires to complement His design.

God does not **condone our confusion**; instead, He wants to **lead us out of our confusion and into health and wholeness**.

There is so much confusion in our world today around human sexuality.

One of the challenging realities we face today is our culture is **pressing us to let Desire be the dominant voice for defining our romantic status!**

On one side, you have this pressure to define, declare and celebrate your relational romantic status.

Like Hollywood star **Demi Lovato** who declared, that she is **“sexually fluid.”**

Additionally, you have **our government caving** to this pressure **declaring that anyone who tries to redirect a child** confused about **sexuality is harming the child.**

And anyone who speaks against sexual confusion is promoting hate speech.

Our culture is **full of people wanting to shout and fight** over this aspect of our relationships.

Rather than being swayed by the shouting or shouting back.

Let's **lean in and find ways to educate ourselves** about exactly what **God's desire for our sexuality is and how to communicate God's design in a way that graciously** invites dialogue.

Proverbs 15:1-2 (NIV) says... “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.”

We have the power **to speak truth in love with wisdom** that can **stir up meaningful conversation**, but we have to **educate ourselves about God's design in order to do that.**

If we continue to allow **desire to be our primary lens** by which we approach this issue.

Then we will push God completely out of the way and continue to **escalate the confusion!**

God has **hardwired us for healthy relationships** and has a clear **plan for our sexuality.**

Since God created us, **He knows what our original design is** and He wants to **reshape our confused desires into healthy desires.**

Doesn't it make sense that **a creation should look to the Creator to understand the way to live?**

When we follow the Designer - we will experience relationships the way He designed, and after all **God wants us to have abundant Life!**

With God's design as our guide, **we can live out our design instead of rebelling against ourselves.**

We can come to the table with an understanding that we are all created with gender differences.

And that those **differences are to be respected** and seen as a **gift to contribute to our relationships.**

We can come to a place where **we feel free from shame** and are able to **enjoy expressing who it is God created us to be.**

Marriage is the safe place where sexual intimacy is to be enjoyed.

Other options end in sexual abuse or exploitation.

Instead of **retreating to a tropical island** lets run to our **designer who wants to help us live according** to our design.

Let's commit ourselves here today to love everyone.

Let's commit ourselves **to help everyone find Jesus** and get in **right relationship with Him.**

Then it is **God's will to lead them and all of us into His perfect will in every area of our lives.**

Don't you want God's perfect will in your life? Don't you want that for everyone?

If you **know someone who is confused by sin** and experiencing broken relationships, then **join me as we pray for them** to find their way **out of confusion**.

Let's **Pray**.

As your heads are bowed, I wonder if you would join me in thinking of one person you know who needs to know Jesus and is confused and needs to be healed. Would you then join me in raising your hand toward God as we agree together in prayer for them.

Response:

- Say yes to Jesus- begin a relationship with Jesus
- Pick up the Resource – begin educating yourself on human sexuality
- Friendship that needs restored – pray for them
- Marriage that needs healing
- Sexual brokenness you're dealing with!