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Queen of Hart Interview



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the importance of forgiveness and maintaining positive relationships in his talk. He suggests that choosing not to be offended can lead to inner peace and healthier relationships, and emphasizes the value of maintaining good relationships instead of becoming estranged from loved ones due to offense or bitterness. Gregg also touches on topics such as the importance of living with a clear conscience, the purpose of marriage, and different views of hell, ultimately arguing for the restorationist view as the most loving.

Transcript

Hi, good morning, everybody. This is Christine Joanna Hart. It's the Queen of Hart Show, going out from London across to America, all over America, and you're just waking up over there.

It's very early in the morning, and hopefully you're just pouring down your coffee and hoping for a good show. I'm going to bring you a really good show this morning. We have an author of fantastic books, some really fantastic books, and also the man that runs my very favorite website that I use as a constant resource whenever I'm feeling depressed, whenever I'm feeling overwhelmed, when I don't know what to do about something, I'm dealing with an unpleasant person, I don't know how to deal with a situation I don't know how to deal with.

This man's website is just fantastic. I just go there, it's like a menu, it's like going to a restaurant, it has a massive menu, and I think, okay, what one do I need? What do I pick? I just look, pick, and then you have a teaching. The teaching is normally an hour to two hours, and it's just fantastic.

Sometimes at night time, I should do it every night, but two or three times a week, I do it, listen, put on one of his lectures, and just lay there, and just let it wash over me. Fantastic. I nearly always wake up the next morning and just feel nourished and feel then in a positive state of mind.

I always feel that what you put in your head just before you go to sleep is so important. I

often watch TV, and I'm watching Mad Men, or I watch a good film, go up, go straight to bed, but it's important to do something for your mind, feel it something, like write a gratitude list, what you're grateful for, or listen to something that's really spiritually nourishing. Then in the morning, you'll wake up in a positive frame of mind, be ready to face the world.

It's getting harder out there. Today, I'm really honored to have the author of this fantastic website with me to discuss how we can improve our life, Mr. Steve Gregg. He's waking up really early in the morning.

It's 3 a.m. where he is. Steve, are you with us? Yes, I am. Can you hear me? Yes, I can.

Really nice to have you on. Whereabouts are you living? You're in Oregon, aren't you? I used to live in Oregon. I live in California, in Southern California now.

Oh, you're in Southern California. Fantastic. Whereabouts? Los Angeles? Further south.

I live in Temecula, which is between San Diego and Riverside. Oh, lovely. San Diego.

God, gorgeous. I lived in LA for a while, and I didn't get down to San Diego, but I know Santa Barbara all around there. Just fantastic.

Is the weather good out there at the moment? It depends on what you call good. It's hot. It's sunny and hot all the time.

Oh, my gosh. That is paradise. Here, it's freezing.

It's really, really cold. I did the school run this morning, and I was like icy, and now I'm in the house. He did an awful blast, but I still feel cold inside, and pretty much like I've got flu.

It's horrific there. I'm going to plunge straight in. I was using your website this morning, Steve.

You have a lecture on the ... There's quite a few topical lectures. You had a lecture on refuse to be offended, and I listened to it once. No, the first time I listened to it, and I was like, wow, this is amazing.

It really made me look at the way I deal with people. If I have an argument with someone, or there's someone at work that I can't deal with, or a relationship difficulty, I always get very offended by what they say. Then, of course, I react.

My son, when he's dealing with other kids at school, he always tends to slap back verbally if he's attacked. Just listening to your lecture about seeing everyone in a certain light, and just listening to what you shared on that particular lecture, refuse to be offended, it's really good. I was trying to work out what it was about that affected me

so much, and I actually don't know.

It's like eating a cake and not knowing what went in it, or not being able to make it myself, which I feel is the whole point of listening to you saying it. I don't know why it's so effective, but it is effective. Can you explain to me and the listeners how you did that? Why is it so effective? Well, I'll tell you.

You mentioned my website, and you know there's about 900 lectures at my website. Of all the lectures on the website, that is the one that gets the most comments. Most people say, I have to listen to that over and over again.

I think it's because it strikes at a problem that exists in all relationships, and it really identifies what the key is to having peaceful relationships. Nothing is more important than our relationships. As a Christian, I believe our relationship with God is foremost, and then our relationship with everybody else is secondary, but at the same time they're both among the most important things, certainly more important than any possessions we have.

And yet, relationships often go bad, or go sour. I mean, certainly marriages that fail, friendships that fail, and what this lecture identifies is the one thing, the one thing that destroys relationships, and as far as I know, nothing else does, and that is offenses. That is, one person does something offensive, and the other person takes offense, and holds offense.

You see, if people routinely either absorb or forgive offenses other people do, there's nothing to cause friction, nothing that causes a relationship to go bad. Now, I mean, I know that sometimes marriages go bad because people just lose interest in each other, or something like that, but that's not a legitimate reason to give up a relationship. I mean, if somebody's being kind to you, then you should, of course, you know, you know, give them credit for being kind.

If they're not being kind to you, then you have a choice to either be offended, or not to be offended. And it's not just a matter of being thick-skinned, not, well, I mean, there is something, depends what one means if they talk about being thick-skinned, but it doesn't mean you're callous, and it doesn't mean that you don't feel the sting of the offense. It means that you regard that other person to be as valuable as you are, after all, they are, and to realize that they probably make about as many mistakes as you do, and that, you know, it's the old golden rule, what you want others to do to you, do to them.

And when you're being offensive, when you're being a jerk, you want other people to give you a pass, you want them to forgive you, you want them to think well of you, even though you're not really earning it at that moment. And so, that's what you need to do with others, too, when you forgive others, and you just say, well, this, the main thing I

think that people have gotten from this refuse-to-be-offended lecture is that you're not obligated to take offense. There are some people who just never, never occurred to them that they are in charge of their own attitude, but they feel that if somebody's done me wrong, what can I do but be angry? What can I do but have my day ruined? Well, there's an answer to that.

You can do something else. You can say, well, okay, this person did something that I find offensive. There are two possibilities.

They intended to offend me, or they didn't intend to offend me. Now, if they didn't intend to offend me, then I'm particularly small-minded if I take offense. That is, if someone said something that rubbed me the wrong way, but they had no idea that it would.

They meant no ill. They were not hostile. They just were clueless.

They didn't know that this would bother you. Well, then it's pretty immature to be carrying an offense toward somebody who didn't even know they bothered you and didn't intend to. So, that's one possibility, that they didn't intend to.

The only other possibility is they did intend to. They tried to get your goat. They did want to offend you.

Now, if that's the case, all the more reason not to let them. All the more reason not to let them control your inner climate, your mind, your attitude. Why let them decide if you're going to be feeling good today or not? What do their actions toward you have to do with the way you're going to live your life or feel? Being offended is an interruption in your happiness.

Being offended is an unpleasant state of mind. True, some people become addicted to it. Some people carry offenses all the time and refuse to release them.

They almost live on their resentment, but they're not happy people. You know, the happy people are the ones who don't carry a resentment, don't carry grudges, and yet many people don't know that they have an option about that. They say, well, what can I do? That person did things offensive to me, so I guess I'm just stuck being angry.

No, that's not necessarily true. If you're a strong person, the Bible says, actually, it's a glory for a man to overlook an offense or a transgression. It says that if someone does something against you, you have the choice to not be offended.

It also says in the book of Proverbs that it says a person who does not rule his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Now, in biblical times, a city was protected by its walls from invasion, but occasionally, a city that had suffered an earthquake or maybe in a previous invasion had its walls broken down, and now they can't defend themselves. So, a city broken down without walls was basically vulnerable to being conquered and

ruled by hostile parties, and that's really what you're like.

If you can't rule your own spirit, then you can let other people rule your spirit. If you don't say, well, I don't have to be offended, actually, I can forgive that person. I can choose to love that person.

Jesus, after all, did say, love your enemy and do good to those who hurt you and who persecute you. So, it's normative, at least for someone who believes that Christ is correct. It's normative to forgive and to say, well, that person's no more perfect than I am, apparently.

And since I've done my share of offensive things to other people, but I give myself a pass, I really ought to give them a pass. They're just human. And in the famous chapter in 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, which says love is patient and kind and all those things, it also says love does not take offense or love is not provoked.

If I can be provoked, then someone else can control my spirit. And the Bible says I need to control my own spirit or else I'm like a city broken down without walls. Someone else will control it, and that will not be usually a friendly party.

So, why in the world would I want to surrender the control of my spirit to a hostile party? It was Will Rogers who said, I'm at the mercy of anyone who can make me lose my temper. And that's pretty much what I'm talking about here. You don't have to lose your temper.

You don't have to be angry. You don't have to be resentful. And I'm not saying you just kind of have to psych yourself into thinking, I will not be angry.

I will not be angry. I will not be angry. No, you have to actually proactively say, you know, I'm being the best I can.

My conscience is clear about what I'm doing. This other person is behaving subnormal. They're subpar.

They're not acting as I wish they would toward me. I can't control the way they act, but I can control my inner attitude toward them. And I'm not going to let them control me.

I'm going to say, well, if I forgive them, if I actually am charitable towards them, if I realize that their misbehavior is only hurting their relationships, and therefore their life is being damaged by it, I can pity them and not pity them in a condescending way. Like, oh, I, you know, I pity the fool, you know, it's more like I really do feel sorry for them. If this was the way they conduct their relationships with people, they're going to end up old and with a history of broken relationships and not very many deep ones remaining.

At the end of your life, the relationships you've kept intact on good terms are going to be

the wealth that you will be rejoicing about on your deathbed. The relationships you've broken, especially people you've loved and then become alienated from, those are the things you'll be regretting. A lot of times people are thinking that way, you know, on their deathbed about their children.

They've alienated them or spouses that they had they were once happy with, and now they're not, or now they're not with at all. Maybe they're very angry with enemies they've made. I mean, no one wants to die, you know, reflecting on how many relationships they had that were opportunities for mutual advantage, mutual happiness, mutual enrichment, but which were just damaged by being peevish and thin-skinned, when a person could have just reacted more maturely and said, well, you know, I never did expect everyone to treat me right.

So the fact that this person isn't treating me right really isn't too surprising, and it shouldn't have any impact on my peace, my inner peace. Yeah, I think sometimes we do come into the world and think that people are going to treat us really good, and if they don't, we don't forgive that. We don't ever look at it because we want to be treated really well, especially if we haven't had it in the past.

Well, of course we want to be treated well, and we want to always eat well and be warm and comfortable in cold weather, and we want everything to be nice and comfortable in our lives, but we're not really very much in touch with reality if we think that's the way life is going to treat us or people. Of course they should, but there's a lot of things we should do that we don't do too. We're living in an imperfect world in imperfect personalities, our own and those in our relations.

All are imperfect, and, you know, if we were living in a perfect world with perfect people, maybe we could set our expectations higher. But realism tells us that this is a world that didn't invite us and didn't welcome us and isn't going to accommodate us. You have to kind of, you got to work for most of what you're going to get.

Not only people, but time will take things from you that you wish you could keep, including your youth and your money and things like that. I mean, the world is not a friendly place. That doesn't mean that life can't be good.

It just means we have to know how to respond to the world and it's negative. You said the world doesn't welcome us. Don't you think it welcomes us? I suppose it matters on who your parents are.

Hopefully, when you're born, your parents welcome you, although some people don't even find that to be so, you know. But the world at large pays little heed to you when you're born. It's what you make of your life that's going to determine whether the world even notices you were there.

Today I was answering people who had been trolling me on, well, not trolling me, leaving comments on YouTube underneath interviews that I've done, various interviews. Someone was a little bit critical and I did leave it for a while. I did think I'd get around to listening to that particular lecture of yours.

I refused to be offended and I didn't have time. I went back to it and I left some abusive comments myself back to this particular person. I am pretty good at responding in quite an aggressive way.

I am good at finding out people's weaknesses and putting them down. I did do it but I didn't feel better afterwards. I did feel a little bit dirty inside.

Yeah, I mean you know that when you've done that you haven't improved the relationship. Well this is someone I don't know. Well that's the point but I mean I dialogue online with people I don't know too.

But in a sense there's a relationship, there's a communication going on and at the end of it there can be ill will between myself and somebody I had no ill will toward before and they had none toward me. Or there can be goodwill and that can be so even if they had ill will when they first contacted me. I can often, I mean I think we all can.

I'm not talking about my skills. I'm just talking about how human beings when somebody is hostile to you in many cases, not every case, it is possible to improve that relationship by your own response in a different spirit. One of the Proverbs says, I keep quoting the Proverbs because they are wisdom.

It's the wisdom of Solomon, the wisest man alive in his day and it's worthy of consultation you know. But it says in Proverbs a soft answer turns away wrath but grievous words stir up strife. Now what that means is that if somebody is angry at you or unkind to you, it's a soft answer.

That means a diplomatic, unemotional answer. In other words, you don't get caught up in the spirit of their anger or their abusiveness. You just answer back from the standpoint of your own strength you know.

That says it turns away wrath. A soft answer turns away wrath. But grievous words, that would mean you know words that are irritating, they stir up strife.

So here's what it's talking about. If somebody is angry at you or somebody is speaking unkindly or abusively to you and you answer back in a different spirit, in a different way. It can appease their wrath or it can make them feel ashamed about their wrath.

I've had people write me very scathing letters but when I write back in a friendly way, they write back often in a totally different mood you know, a better mood. Sometimes they even apologize for their first mood. But what people are accustomed to is they poke

you, they expect you to poke them back.

They throw mud at you, they expect you to throw mud back at them. I mean this is the way humans who are immature behave. And Jesus said no, if someone strikes you on one cheek, you turn the other cheek to them.

If they want to sue you for your coat, give them it and give them your coat too. In other words, what a different, if someone wants to sue you, they're pretty hostile. If somebody strikes you on a cheek, they're hostile.

And Jesus said well, you know, turn the other cheek to them. You know, be amenable to them. Now some might think that you're just being a doormat.

No, you're taking charge of the situation. That's, you see, this is the irony. Behaving in the way Jesus said to behave or even that Solomon said to behave will sometimes look to others like you're just being a doormat.

They won. They won. You're the one who didn't let them conquer you.

So when someone comes at you nastily, they want to fight. If you come back and, I mean, you can certainly say things very pointedly and very clearly and point out how wrong they are. But if you do so humbly, kindly, you know, gently, then they, it's kind of hard for them to stay angry.

And if they do stay angry, that's their smallness of mind, not yours. But what happens is when someone's trying to irk you, trying to get a rise out of you, and they can't do it. You're the winner, not them.

I can see I'm going to have to go back and forth. I left them abusive. I sat with it a while and I thought, well, come on.

It just made me feel that, you know, I'm doing radio interviews. I haven't done that many, but I'm doing them voluntarily. And I have worked on Fleet Street.

So I'm used to interviewing, but it's been in print, not on radio. And to get criticism, you kind of think, well, I'm doing this for free, you know, and to get criticized, it does make me feel a little bit, it's quite hard to take, really, you know? Well, it's quite unjust, isn't it? I mean, if someone's criticizing the quality of your work in a new endeavor that you've never done before, that's kind of stupid of them in a way. But I mean, I guess when somebody does something stupid, that tells you that you're dealing with somebody who's got something of an inferior, either inferior intelligence or inferior social grace.

And either one, maybe even the second lack is the worst. A person who's not real smart, but who's easy to get along with, is probably going to be the happier person in the long run than a really smart person who isn't easy to get along with. The wealth of your life is

going to be your relationships and the quality of your relationships, not how smart you are, how much money you make or whatever, or how much you can, not even how much you can impress people that you got the last word in an argument.

What's going to make you feel rich in the later years of your life is that you've got a lot of relationships that are meaningful to you and have been maintained on not only peaceful terms, but loving terms. There's lots of people who feel like you've enriched their lives and feel indebted to you. That's the goal.

That's got to be the goal in relationships, is that not that you came out on top in the sense that you show them who's got the sharper tongue, but that you basically you have maintained as many positive relationships as necessary. I mean the more friends you have, the better your life will be. I think in this day and age people don't have many friends, not like they used to in the old days.

It's very much, everyone's talking about it, there's a lot of, you know, people are loners, people are isolated, you know, they talk on Facebook, but they don't really go out. That's true, yeah, and that's one problem. I mean there's two reasons people are alone more.

One is, you're right, they don't get out much. The other is that they alienate the people they have friends with, that they have friendships with, because they don't have relationship skills. Part of that is that they don't have extremely good character.

Character is, you know, the quality of your maturity, the quality of your relationship skills, really. I mean if character is being honest, being kind, being merciful, being just, so you don't trample upon other people's rights, I mean this is what people of character are like, and people with good character make a lot less enemies than people who are self-centered. I guess the epitome of bad character is being self-centered and narcissistic, because then you see everyone in your world as something to exploit for your own happiness, and it never works that way, because the world doesn't agree with you.

They think you are there for them to exploit for their happiness. Everybody who is self-centered is in competition with everybody else for the control of the whole circle of friends. You know, if you want everybody to be a contributor to your happiness, well, they may not feel like that's their mission, just like you don't think it's your mission to be a contributor to their happiness.

That's the problem with narcissism, is it basically assumes that I'm kind of the most important person, at least to me, I'm the most important person. I'm number one, and I've got to look out for number one. Well, that's a natural way of thinking.

It's not a very smart way of thinking if we want to have a good life. The better way to look at it is there's no reason I should be number one. I'm about the same as anyone

else, but I know that everybody else, like me, wants to be number one.

They want to be number one. They would like to see me as somebody to enhance their life, not them as someone to enhance mine. So, what if I agree with them? What if I agree that God put me here to make their life a little better, and maybe it'll cost me a little something? So what? Anything of value costs something, and that relationship will cost something.

Maybe God wants me to accommodate their need for someone to make them happier, and it may be that I have to do that by not demanding my rights all the time. After all, if everyone's demanding their rights and no one yields, there'll be a lot of competition, and where there's competition, there's usually hostility, where when you say, okay, I hope I don't get abused, certainly, but that person across the street that I don't even know, they also don't want to be abused, but I might be able to have some input into their life that would make their life better. If so, my life has become better, too.

You mentioned that when you have a conversation where you feel like you've been too harsh, or maybe you don't feel you've been too harsh. Maybe you've been justly harsh. Maybe you've been as harsh as that person demanded, yet you go to bed at night, and you don't feel that clean.

It's just not a great feeling to feel that you've made some new enemies. Yeah, even the fact that I didn't feel that I'd made an enemy, I didn't really feel that I made an enemy. I just feel that by answering back in that way, I felt dirty.

I think what you were saying about thinking that the world demands you, I used to work as the head investigator for the News of the World. I was head investigative journalist there, and they kind of pushed me to one side for someone I'd brought in, and this person I brought in started doing the hacking and the phone hacking. When I found out, I was so angry.

Even though I was working for their sister paper, The Sun, I turned around, and I grasped up that person. It was illegal what they were doing. They shouldn't have been doing it, but I grasped them up.

Through doing that, it crashed the newspaper. Then, of course, The Sun let me go because they didn't want to use anyone that knew about investigation. So, I lost my job because of my anger.

I do feel sometimes that I move through life with a certain anger that does. I don't want to be. I don't want anyone hurting me.

I don't feel that they've disrespected me. If I feel disrespected, I do use anything I can possibly lay my hands on to teach them a lesson, really. You end up with nothing.

I've ended up struggling now, whereas I had a six-figure salary. Had I carried on just working for The Sun, I would have been fine, but I thought, well, they've disrespected me. I didn't want that to happen.

I wanted to teach them a lesson. Well, when someone disrespects you, obviously, that hurts. You always have a decision to make.

Do I want to escalate this? I mean, they don't want to be disrespected, so I can get back at them by disrespecting them. Their disrespect toward me is the beginning of a provocation. This can grow into a feud, or it can just die right here.

It can end right here. It can dissipate by my saying, you know what? I'm not trying to flatter myself, I think, but I'm big enough to handle this. I'm mature enough to absorb this.

I don't have to retaliate. There is a God, and He will set all the scores straight someday. I mean, that's the answer to one of the great philosophical mysteries of life, is why is there so much injustice? Why are there people who are abused when they didn't deserve it, children who are abused, nations that are overrun by other nations and abused that way? I mean, just in personal relationships, people don't get what's fair in many cases, and sometimes very good people suffer a great deal and are never vindicated.

Other times, very wicked people seem to prosper and seem to die comfortably and seemingly happy. You think, that doesn't seem fair, and that's why, I suppose, various religions exist. They try to explain these hard questions.

Is there no justice in the universe? And, of course, in Eastern religions, like Buddhism and Hinduism, the answer is, there is justice. It just comes around in a cycle of lifetimes. Karma, you know, if somebody is very wicked and they die happy, that means they had a lot of bad karma that's going to have to re-exist them the next time around, in the next incarnation.

If someone has been very good or very kind and they've suffered terribly and have never been rewarded for it, well, they've got a lot of surplus of good karma that's going to come around next time. They're going to have a better lot eventually in another life. So, I mean, this is, of course, the way people of the East speculated about why there can be what we see in the world and yet maintain that there is some ultimate justice.

If good people are never, ever rewarded and bad people are never, ever punished for what happens to them, and that often seems to be the case with many people, then there's no justice in the universe. So, the Eastern religions have come up with the idea of karma. Christianity has a different answer to that, and that is not that there is a cycle of lifetimes where people gradually, you know, collect on all their karmic bills and all their debts are paid.

It's rather that you live once, the Bible says it's appointed to man once to die, and then comes the judgment, and that judgment is where every human being stands before a perfectly just God who does not make any mistakes. The human courts do, but God does not make mistakes. He knows every thought.

He knows every action. He's aware of them all, and they all come up. Jesus said every careless word a person speaks, he'll give account of it on the day of judgment.

So, you know, every word you speak that's careless and unkind or whatever, well, it's on record somewhere, and there's an adjustment. So, there is justice, ultimate justice, not in the world, but in the next life. So, these are actually two alternative views of, you know, how justice can ultimately prevail when it doesn't seem to prevail in this lifetime.

Either you keep going around, around, around in reincarnation over and over again, until finally all your bad karma has been worked off, and you've got nothing but good karma, it's, you know, you've paid your debt, as it were, for past lives, or you live one time, you get one chance, you do it right or you do it wrong, and you answer for it before a just judge. Some people are more attracted to the karma idea, but the question is not which is more attractive, but which is true. And as a Christian, I'm already committed to believing that Jesus knows what he's talking about, because he's a son of God.

So, I go with the second view, that there is a reckoning. And the Apostle Paul said in Romans, he says, don't avenge yourselves, but leave it to God to avenge you, because God has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. That's what Paul said in Romans 12.

And so, I don't avenge myself if somebody, and when I say avenge, you might think of something like big issues. Well, there are big issues, but there's little issues too, where I want to make sure that I, you know, settle the score. I want to avenge myself.

Somebody said something bad about me, well, I'm going to balance those scales myself. Well, that's what the Bible says, don't do. Don't avenge yourself, leave it to God.

He'll handle things in due time. Why ruin your tranquility? Why ruin your peace, when you can simply leave it in God's hands? And that's why, that's why on the Christian view, you can refuse to be offended. You don't have to hold an offense.

Lots of people, when they've been terribly wronged by somebody, just spend years plotting their revenge. And those are years wasted, not only wasted, but not very well enjoyed. Whereas if somebody, and I've been wronged a number of times, I've suffered tremendous injustice from a great, actually several people that I've been nothing but generous toward.

I've helped them when they were in need, and helped them get into housing, you know, done all kinds of things for them. And then for, without any provocation, all they just decided to take sides with someone who didn't like me, and to, you know, gossip and

defer my reputation if they could. That's happened to me more than, more than a handful of times.

And these were people that were definitely treating me very unjustly. But I felt, you know, my love for people has got to be unconditional. Because if it's not unconditional, there's gonna be very few people I can love.

Only people who earn my love, if that's the only ones I'm gonna love, I can have a pretty small heart, because there's not that many people interested in earning my love. That is, making sacrifices to make my life better. But if I love unconditionally, then I can be happy all the time.

Love is a happy feeling, you know. I know you've been in love, and when you're in love, there's hardly anything that makes the world a brighter place to be. Of course, that's, we're talking about romantic love in that case, but any love, loving somebody and saying, I want their good.

I want to make their life better. I want to bless them. I want any contact they have with me to enhance their short stay here on earth, rather than diminish it.

You keep that attitude, and you'll be a much happier person. But you should keep that attitude, not with the selfish idea, I want to be happy, so I'll do this. You should do it because it's the right thing to do.

You should do it because people need it. That's the most important thing. One reason you love, of course, Christians love, because God tells us to, but that's not the only reason.

He tells us to because people need it. And so, we love people, not because they earn it or deserve it. In fact, they may deserve much worse.

They may deserve a swift kick in the rear. But we don't love people because they deserve it. We love people because they need it, just like our children.

When our babies are born, they don't do anything to earn our love. We lose sleep. We will sacrifice.

A mother will fight a rabid dog at the risk of her own life to save her child. A person will make every sacrifice for their child because they love their child, but the child has done nothing to earn that. But the child needs it.

The child needs a protector. The child needs a hero. You know, the child's living in a dangerous world, and the mom's going to be there, or the dad's going to be there for him.

And that's what love is about. You love somebody because they have need of it, not

because they've earned it. And if you really have that attitude, then you'll find that the people who are treating you the worst are often the most unhappy people.

They need love. They need someone to say, you know, and not in a condescending way, but basically to act toward them with this attitude. I know that you're hurting.

I know that something's bugged you. You know, maybe you haven't had a very happy childhood. Maybe things are not going well for you right now.

Maybe you're just a person who's never learned any social grace. But whatever it is, you're a human being who needs to be loved. And I guess I'm willing to be here to help you get some of that.

It's hard when we ourselves have a sort of ice stock in our hearts through some kind of big thing that someone has done to us. You know, and I was listening to somebody on YouTube who was talking about his friend asked to borrow money off him, and he borrowed £100,000, and he didn't give it back. And this guy knew that he hadn't had any intention to give him back.

And he felt bad that he was going out to work every day. And he wouldn't have to go to work every day if this man hadn't have stolen this £100,000 that was something he'd saved and worked for. In cases where they can make the heart close down and have ice in it, don't you think where it's hard? Well, they can if you let it.

You know, when Jesus said, lend expecting nothing in return. Now, that doesn't mean you should lend to everybody and just get ripped off. I think what it means is you shouldn't lend anything to anyone unless you're willing to lose it.

That is you lend to people because you think they have a legitimate need. And it's something you want to help them with. And if they end up not being able to pay it back, well, then you want to be able to say, well, I helped them anyway.

Now, a lot of people who want to borrow money don't need it. And I don't really see that. I don't think it's a wise thing to lend money to people who don't need it.

If people are, you know, having trouble feeding their family or housing their family, I think, and they want to borrow money from you, then I think, okay, I'm going to lend this money to you. But you know, in my mind, I don't tell them this necessarily, but in my mind, they may possibly not be able to ever pay it back. But if I understand that it's not their intention to pay it back, like your friend said, I thought they might not pay it back.

Well, if someone wants to borrow, and I think it's not their intention to pay it back, I'll just say, why don't we just be honest? Would you like a donation? Would you like a gift? I can't afford it, or I can, or I don't think I'm not quite, you know, willing to underwrite this particular project you have. I mean, it's not my project. It's not one that I think is the,

you know, the money I have available to donate to projects, I'd rather donate something that I believe in more.

In other words, you don't have to lend money just because someone asks you to. And lending 100,000 pounds to somebody is a huge vulnerability. And you should never do that, unless you really believe in what that person needs the money for, and you're willing to invest it yourself and maybe never get anything back.

Otherwise, I wouldn't recommend people to be foolish enough to lend. Lending money is one thing that destroys relationships. I guess what I'm saying, why I related to this guy, because I had a friend of mine who'd stole my business clients.

And this chap was saying he found it hard to get over that forgiveness with a man who stole my business clients, who was a boyfriend as well. I spent, and actually when he stole them, he brought in this phone hacking, which led to the destruction of my newspaper, led to the destruction of my career and put me in the position I am in now, losing my career on Fleet Street. But it took me seven years to get over hating him.

I would literally wake up every morning and hate him and think, look at my life. And I had this fantastic life with a sports car, a penthouse flat, so much money. And now all of it's gone.

And it took me seven years to stop hating. It's hard to stop hating. And it's hard to find something in the Bible that would help you stop hating when you've been betrayed that much, I think.

Well, yes, except for this idea of refusing to be offended. Because the real question is, all those years you spent hating him, did that ruin his life or yours? Mine. Right.

He didn't care. It didn't hurt him a little at all. You thought you were punishing him by hating him.

It's like you're giving him free rent in your brain. You know, he was able to be able to ruin your life day by day from the day you woke up to bed year after year. And he's out having, he's probably out enjoying his life.

Or if he's not, it's not because you hate him. It's other issues going on. But the thing is, your hatred for him is ruining your life.

It's not ruining his. And this is the foolishness that we have in us. We assume somebody has wronged me, even very greatly.

So, you know, my life will be better if I hate him. Why? Why would that make my life better? You know, how does that change things? You know, now it may be that in a business where it's a cutthroat business and there's competition, and somebody has, you

know, unjustly done something to put themselves ahead of you in the business, that you could maybe, by similar actions, put yourself ahead of him. If competing with somebody else in business is your main objective.

I've never really been in that position, but I know this, the reason I am not, because I wouldn't be interested in bettering myself over somebody else. It's just not what I'm interested in. To me, having a penthouse suite is not any consolation for having ruined relationships.

But the real wealth, as I said, of life, it's not your standard of living. It's the quality of the relationships that you have and maintain. And even people who are wrong, do wrong to you.

That person may not be the kind of person who's going to be a real valuable relationship to maintain, but it's better for you, at least, to not be eaten up with resentment over him. This is the problem. We let people live in our brains for free at our expense.

And I suppose it was setting a high value on the money I'd lost, I suppose. I was just thinking, wow, I really want that sports car. Of course.

And of course, growing up in the world, we have this impression, the measure of our success is going to be our prosperity, our wealth, the luxuries and the comforts we have. He who dies with the most toys wins. That's one measure of wealth.

And those who follow that measure are going to be always in competition with other people. The sad thing is, if you make it your goal to be wealthy, you may or may not succeed. I mean, if you don't succeed, you wasted a lot of effort pursuing an elusive dream that never came.

But it may be even worse to actually to have achieved it and realized, oh, this didn't make me happy as I thought it would. Now what? You know, life is empty because I've got everything. And again, Solomon was there.

Solomon in his day was the king of the richest nation in the region. And he was the richest man in the region. He had power.

He had respect. He had a lot of women, more women than he should have had. He had like a thousand women, the Bible says.

And, you know, he was not the best man out there. But he learned by his mistakes, because when he wrote Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, he was one who had found out by pursuing the wrong goals that there's no happiness in. And he said that when he got rich, when he had everything that he wanted, when he was, you know, the most enviable man in the world in terms of material things and status and fame, he says, he thought it was like, like emptiness.

He used the word emptiness numerous times speaking about his life as a successful king. He said, it's all emptiness and striving after the wind. Reminds me of that old song, I might as well try and catch the wind, you know.

He said, it's like striving after wind, trying to catch the wind. Satisfaction. We're not made to have that in material things.

We're not simply material beings. If we were like animals, just material beings without a spiritual side, then I guess having enough food, having a warm shelter, having, you know, enough to take care of ourselves and maybe even to be prominent in our circle, that would be satisfying. And some people find no more satisfaction than that.

And so they just live with the assumption, I guess that's what satisfaction is. I haven't found much, but it must be all there is. But it isn't all there is, because we're not just physical beings, we're spiritual beings.

And as spiritual beings, we have spiritual needs to fulfill. And those spiritual needs are going to be found in God and in relationships with other people. And so, I mean, I wouldn't trade my life of having important relationships with people for, well, I mean, I'm comfortable, but I've actually lived most of my life very near the poverty line, most of the time.

And basically, I've chosen to, every time my income increases, and it's been increasing fairly regularly over my lifetime, I continue to increase the percentage that I give away to the poor, because I find there's more joy in that than there is in, you know, reveling in some shallow material things that are going to be taken from me anyway. So I don't know, I'm a happy person, and I'm pretty invulnerable to people's abuse. Not that they don't abuse me, I've been abused many times, but I just don't care to let them order my inner climate, you know, in my mind.

Is there a correlation between that, between living near the poverty line and giving away to the poor, to feeling invulnerable to people's criticisms and offenses? Is there some kind of correlation? Well, there might be. I mean, after all, if you feel like you're being generous, you realize that you're not being selfish anyway. And when you know you're not being selfish, and somebody else comes against you, well, I guess you feel like your conscience was clear.

You know, I'm not trying to hurt anybody. In fact, I'm trying to live my life to help other people. So, if this person treats me like I'm a bad person, but I know that's not the way, I'm not a bad person, then my conscience being clear gives me, you know, I guess, inward strength to know that regardless of what somebody may think of me, you know, the one who's judging all my thoughts and my actions and my words on the last day knows very well what I'm living like, and my conscience is clear.

I don't think there's much to keep a person happy other than a clear conscience. If you have everything the world has to offer, but your conscience is not clear, that is, you're living with guilt, and you have no way of knowing how to get rid of it. You just feel like, I'm kind of a bad person.

I'm not really the person I should be, and I'm, yeah, I'm not even, I mean, I could be so much better, and I haven't bothered to be. You know, having a conscience nagging you about things that you've done wrong, or relationships that you've destroyed and have never resolved, that can definitely foul the waters of your happiness, no matter whatever, you know, circumstances are positive in your life. Your inward life is really going to determine whether you're happy or not, and one of the things that damages the inward life most is a soiled conscience.

Your conscience simply means, of course, your awareness of right and wrong. That's what the conscience is. Animals don't seem to have conscience in that sense.

They don't have moral sense of what's good and evil. They do things instinctively. Sometimes they do things that we think would be good instinctively, like sacrifice themselves for their children and their offspring.

Other times they do things that we would call bad, like eat their offspring, you know, or do other things that would be barbarian for humans to do, but the point is, animals are neither commended for their good behavior or blamed for their bad behavior, because they do it all instinctively. They don't have free will, and whatever they do, they do because it's in the nature they were born with, but that's not true of us. We're above the animals in that respect.

We have choice. We can choose to do the right thing or the wrong thing, and we've got this inward barometer telling us which one we have done. If we know that we've done the right thing, our conscience is clear.

If we know that we've done the wrong thing, our conscience nags, and the conscience is in touch with reality. It's one of our senses. I mean, we have the five natural physical senses, and that's how we know whether it's light or dark, or warm or cold, or whether something tastes good or bad, or whether music is pleasant to the ears or obnoxious.

I mean, we have these senses that draw in information from our atmosphere, from our surroundings, and inform us of reality throughout it. Well, the conscience, although people often ignore it, is very much a sense also. It's a sense of right and wrong.

That's a reality too, but lots of times, just like if you listen to music too loud and it's damaging your eardrums, but you do anyway. I mean, I played rock and roll in a rock and roll band when I was young, and I stood on stages in front of piles of amplifiers as tall as myself and taller for years, and my ears are not as good as they used to be,

because you damage them. You overload them.

You damage them. You make them hurt, but you ignore the hurt, and eventually they find ways to not hurt anymore. It's your sense of hearing dulls.

It's like the sense of feeling in your fingertips if you're a guitar player. When you first start playing the guitar, your fingers are on your left hand, because the strings are cutting into them as you hold the chords on the neck, on the fretboard, and you feel like, well, I'm damaging myself, but if you keep doing it, your fingers will stop feeling it, because you put calluses on them, and so also your conscience is that way. It's another one of your senses.

If you damage it and don't attend to it, it's going to get calloused too. Now, calloused fingers can be an advantage if you want to play the guitar. You want those calluses, but if you want to be a good person, having a calloused conscience is not a desirable thing, because what it is, of course, is a diminishing of your sense of right and wrong.

When your conscience is in good repair, then you do something wrong, and it bothers you. If your conscience is calloused because you've been doing the wrong thing, and even though you felt bad about it, you just kept doing it, you've damaged your conscience, you've cauterized it, you've calloused it, and then, of course, that's how a person becomes a sociopath, eventually. Not everyone becomes that by this process, but that's the end of that road.

You get to a place where you don't sense right and wrong anymore. That means you can do the wrong thing, you don't feel bad about it anymore. How does that fit on what Christians know as Judgment Day? Do you think there are people that have their souls completely crunched out and burn in hell forever? I think so.

I haven't met many that are that bad, but I think I've read of them. I think I've heard of people like that. I'm sure they are there.

There are people who have just gone so far as they don't have much of humanity left in them at all. They've just become more like a demon than a person. Now, on the Judgment Day, you say, how's that going to shake out? Well, God knows.

God knows what he needs to do. Certainly, people are responsible for the management of their conscience, and the purpose of your conscience is to let you know when you have done something wrong. It's like the purpose of sealing in your fingers is to let you know if you're leaning against a hot stove and need to stop doing that.

I mean, pain in your nerves protects you from doing things continually that damage you. If you stub your toe a few times on a certain place, you'll stop doing that. You'll watch your feet.

You'll step more carefully, and you won't damage yourself. The purpose of sealing pain is to warn you off of certain things that will damage you if you keep doing them, and that's the same as the pain in your conscience. If your conscience is feeling, I'm not doing the right thing, but I'm going to keep doing it, you're doing damage, and you're responsible not to.

If somebody mismanages their conscience and their life, and cauterizes or calluses their conscience so they don't know right from wrong anymore, yeah, they're responsible for that. I think we're going to advert. Steve, can you stay with us? Sure.

Thank you. Hi. Welcome back for our last with the author Stephen Gregg.

Steve, you're still with us, I hope. Are you there? Yes, I'm still here. Excellent.

Okay. I won't spend the last hour talking about your book, and also the website on how to use it. As I was saying earlier, I just go to it, and whatever mood I'm in, I pick a typical lecture.

But you were saying to me last time you were my guest that I have difficulty reading the Bible. I think probably because it was around my neck at Catholic school, and my parents were fairly abusive, my adoptive parents. I was very anti the Bible, and I still to this day struggle to read it.

Of course, it's quite difficult to read. I tend to lose my patience with it. But I do find you go through the Bible verse by verse.

On your website, you can go to whoever you want, like Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, or click on the Gospels. I did see you have a sermon on the Mount there as well. You go through it verse by verse, which is really, really, really helpful.

I did start, you did say to start on Matthew, I believe. But then I thought, well, I want to start on Genesis. So I did listen to Genesis, and I did find it a little bit confusing when you said that God said that man and woman must be married, because you didn't really have churches back in those days, did they? No, no, there was no church in Old Testament times.

Eventually, there was the Jewish synagogue in the Old Testament times. But no, there was nothing like what we call the church today. But you said that God intended us to be married.

How is that so? Well, I mean, marriage is not related to church per se. Maybe in Western civilization it has been, but you can go to countries that have never heard of Christianity, they have marriage. Marriage is not dependent on the church.

Marriage is a covenant made between a man and a woman to enter into a lifelong

relationship and start a family and remain faithful to each other, and to make whatever sacrifices are required to rear children and make some contribution to the next generation. That's what families are. That's what marriage is.

We, of course, in cultures around the world, there are different assumptions about some issues in marriage, although those ones are pretty much universal. That is, historically they have been. In modern times, especially since the 1960s, there's been a radical revision of what Western society thinks of as marriage.

And I think the reason that we have done that is partly because we don't know that God is the one who created marriage. When he made Adam, he said it was not good for a man to be alone, so God took initiative of making a wife for him, bringing her to him, and that was the first marriage. And ever since then, human beings have gotten married in general.

Of course, some people don't. Isn't that making an assumption, Greg, that, sorry, Steve, isn't that making an assumption that he meant them to be married? He might have not meant them to be married. He might have said, you can have Eve, but if someone better comes along, you can have them.

Well, Jesus is the one who defined that arrangement between Adam and Eve as marriage. And so, we'll see, when the Bible says that God brought Eve to Adam, it says that he said, and this is Genesis 2.24, he said, for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Now, that's actually in the story of Adam and Eve, and Jesus quoted that when he was asked what marriage was in Genesis 19.

He quoted, he says, have you not read that when God made them, he made them male and female, and said, for this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh? And then he said, now, playing on the statement that the two become one flesh, he says, well, what God has joined together, meaning what God has made into one flesh, he says, do not let man separate. So, Jesus made it very clear that his idea of marriage, and since I understand Jesus to be the Son of God, this would be God's idea of marriage, is expressed way back in the Garden of Eden, when God made that statement about a man clinging to a wife and being one flesh, and Jesus basically commenting on that, was saying that, well, when God said they become one flesh, that means you're not supposed to separate that. That's something God put together, you don't put it apart.

So, yeah, Jesus did confirm what I'm saying, and actually, he based it on what it says back in Genesis. Of course, a person can say, I don't believe in Genesis, or I don't believe in Jesus, but that's not me. I do believe in Genesis, I do believe in Jesus, and therefore, I'm, of course, assuming him to be correct.

But, he might have meant you can live together and stay as one flesh, but you don't have to go to a registry office or a church, right? Well, there's no reference to getting married in a church, or at a registry office in Scripture. In some cases, marriages were contracted between the families of the bride and the groom. In fact, in ancient times, that's how it always was done.

In fact, a lot of times, they were arranged. The Bible doesn't advocate arranged marriages, but it doesn't forbid them either. It's just that in the culture of the ancient world, this was the way families joined together.

A guy or a couple who had an eligible son, and they found another family had an eligible daughter, and often would make the arrangements for their daughters and sons to be married. That sounds pretty undesirable from our point of view. If we lived in a society where that was always done, and we knew of nothing else, it might not seem as undesirable.

It would just seem like the way life is. But, of course, we now get to pick our own spouses. But, the point is, the marriage was made between the families, not with the state giving a license or with a church.

There was no church. It was really the case in the ancient Mesopotamian society, which is some of the most ancient we know about from archaeological record, that when a couple got married, it was simply a matter of they made an agreement between the two families. The man said to the woman, you're my wife.

She said, you're my husband. And that was it. They were married.

But, you see, regardless of licenses or churches or what ceremonies are or are not followed, what marriage is, is not about that. Marriage is that two people have made a lifelong commitment that they are not willing to break. At least, they promise that they won't.

Of course, a lot of people are dishonest and they make promises they don't intend to keep. Of course, no one should do that, but there are people who do that. But, people who get married are promising that they are forsaking all others and going to cling only to their spouse.

Now, some might say, well, that's pretty restricted. Yes, it is. There's a lot of things about life that are restricted.

Like, gravity restricts me from jumping to the moon, if I'd like to do that, or flying like a bird with a flap in my arms. There are things in life I can't do. There's a lot of restrictions that reality places upon me.

And one of them is, if I'm going to be married, which I don't have to be married, I can

stay single and celibate, but if I'm going to be married, it's for life. That's what marriage is. I can't change that definition, just because I prefer to.

And the reason that it's for life is that it's understood that the two parties are giving up a huge amount of their life for each other. They are, first of all, giving up the best years of their lives, if they're young and healthy and attractive when they marry. If they say, well, okay, now we've been married 20 years and we're old and unattractive, or at least my wife is old and unattractive, I think I'll find another one.

Well, what she's done, I've taken the best years of her life. She's not as eligible for marriage as she was when I got her. If I dump her, then I've stolen from her, because she entered into the arrangement assuming I was telling the truth when I said I'd stay with her.

And she would not have made that investment of her life if she thought she was just renting me, not owning me. And probably people would not have children in many cases if they knew that their spouse was lying when they said they'd stay there. Because I realize there's tons of dysfunctional families, and there's tons of single families, single-parent families, and so forth.

And this is reality. But this is not what marriage was made to be. I mean, we can limp along with other forms than what God intended.

But if we ask, what did God intend for marriage? He intended for two people to love each other, to sacrifice for each other, to bring other people into the world through them, and to stay together to raise and to nurture those other people. And even when their children are adults, to continue to stay together. Because frankly, we have so much divorce, we may have lost sight of this fact.

People have just gotten numb to it. But divorce is traumatic for children. Even for the adult children, when their parents get divorced, it's often traumatic.

I mean, there's been a lot of studies on that to show that. But even without the studies, we could know from what Jesus said, that divorce is destructive to our psyches. Because what it involves, divorce is basically a breach of contract, which means that somebody made a contract with me, and then they didn't keep it.

And that means that whatever it cost me to enter that contract, they robbed me of that contract, because they breached it. You see, when two people get married, they're saying they're going to stay together for life. They may not be promising their children, but in times past, especially before there was birth control, it was assumed, okay, our marriage is probably going to, unless we're sterile, probably going to produce children.

And that's the norm. We're going to have a family. We're going to raise these children.

We're going to hopefully make good citizens and people out of these kids, so that they can go on and make the world a better place, or at least not a worse place. And then they can have children that will be our grandchildren, who will hopefully also be raised well. These are the assumptions behind marriage when it's understood properly.

Of course, we have lost track of what marriage is, because our society has decided that it's not God who created marriage, it's society that did. And if society created it, society can redefine it. Now, that would be a reasonable way to think.

If society created marriage, then society can define what they want it to be. They can change it any way they want to. But if God created marriage, then people, no number of people can outvote him.

You know, if the majority of people on earth say, we want marriage to be defined as, you know, six people living together in a mutually sexual relationship. Well, that's not what God defines it as. I mean, society may decide that that's what they want it to be, but that doesn't change what it is.

Because, you know, I can call a chair a bathtub if I want to, but it hasn't really changed its nature. It's still a chair. So, are you against gay marriages, men marrying men? I'm against any marriage that is not what God designed.

That would mean I'm against men marrying men. I'm against men marrying somebody else's wife. I'm against men marrying their daughters.

I'm against men marrying multiple women. In other words, it's not that I'm against gay marriage as a special subject to be negative toward. It's that I have a positive idea of what God made marriage to be.

Anything that isn't that, I don't think we should call it marriage. Now, if two men love each other, want to live together, and do that, that's between them and God. But to change the definition of marriage, well, we didn't define it in the first place.

We can't change its definition. Does it say in the Bible that men aren't supposed to sleep with other men? Is that in there? Yes. Oh, it is.

Where abouts? It says that in Leviticus. It says that in Romans. It says that in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 and 10, Romans chapter 1, Leviticus chapter 18, and again in chapter 20. How does it predict? Pardon? How does it predict? In different ways. In Leviticus, it says for a man to lie with a man.

Now, you have to understand the euphemism. Lying with somebody refers to having sex with, in the Bible. For a man to lie with a man as he lies with a woman is an abomination,

it says, twice.

In the New Testament, it says it gives a long list of behaviors. You know, homosexual sex is one of the things on the list, but there's many other things on the list that have nothing to do with homosexuality. There's just a long list of behaviors.

How does that put it in the New Testament, then? Does it say the same thing? I'll read it. I have to turn to it in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Give me a second here. Verse 9 says, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God. Now, see, we live in a politically correct and spiritually confused age, morally confused age, where someone will say, well, that's a homophobic statement. Well, then we might as well say it's also phobic of extortion and theft and thieves and revilers and adultery, because, you know, the homosexual stuff is just mixed in with a whole bunch of other stuff that's unrelated to homosexuality.

This is not singling out. It's only in our political climate that we single out and politicize homosexuality. It's not a political issue.

At least, it doesn't belong in that category. It's a question of moral issue, just like any other sexual behavior. But I don't think that sexual behavior should be politicized.

I don't think that I should be telling or making laws that forbid people to commit adultery, can forbid them to have homosexual acts, and I don't think they should be making laws to say that I have to approve of them doing so. Everybody has their own right to have moral judgments that they make based on whatever they choose. Christians choose their moral judgments based on what God said, what Jesus said, and always have.

You know, the fact that pretty much Western civilizations decided they don't care what Jesus said or what the Bible says, and therefore they want to change things. Well, they should have the political freedom to do that, but I should have the political freedom to say, you know, I'm going to stick with what I believe is true. You know, I don't have to change with society.

I'm not a lemming. I don't follow the crowd just because they're going that direction. I'm going to look at the thing objectively and say, well, what is the basis of marriage? What is the definition of marriage? Who says? You know, well, if it's God that says it, then I'm not going to disagree with him.

Is a sodomite the same as a homosexual? Is it the same thing? Excuse my ignorance. You know, the word homosexual, the word sodomite were used in the translation I was

using. Actually, the two Greek words there refer to the active and the passive partners in homosexual relations.

Yeah, they're two different Greek words. Homosexual and sodomite are not the very best translations because they don't distinguish what the Greek does. The distinguishes, I mean, you'd think they're the same thing, but they are actually the passive and the active member.

Now, you know, is one worse than the other? Oh, I don't think so. I don't think so. And I don't think that I don't think being a homosexual, I should say, I don't, I should make something very clear.

We use the word homosexual simply to refer to somebody's orientation. The Bible doesn't forbid that. The Bible doesn't forbid someone to be tempted toward one or another sex partner.

But temptation is not sin. Everybody has temptation. If I'm tempted by my neighbor's wife, well, that's just because I'm a man and temptation is there.

If I sleep with my neighbor's wife, I'm committing an infraction against my own wife and against my neighbor. In other words, it's one thing to be tempted. It's another thing to sin.

Everybody's tempted, but not everyone, not everyone acts on every temptation they have. If, if I were oriented differently than I am, I might be tempted by my neighbor's wife, but by my neighbor's husband. But it wouldn't be any different.

That person is out of bounds for me. And, you know, it's not mine to say, well, who can tell me who I'm allowed to love? Well, no one can tell me who I'm allowed to love. But certainly, I shouldn't be allowed to steal, uh, you know, my neighbor's goods or my neighbor's wife or, or something else, or my neighbor's children.

You know, uh, there, there's bad behavior and there's bad ideas. No one should be able to enforce right ideas. People should have freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and no one should be able to tell me what I, what bad ideas I'm allowed or not allowed to have.

You mean, tell me what bad things I'm allowed to do. Yeah. You mean, if I was to feel sexually attracted to another woman, it's okay to feel that, but not to dwell on the thought or to do it? Well, the main thing is, uh, we live in a society that has so deified sex that people almost identify themselves by their sexuality.

And that's only because they've lost their spirituality in many cases. I mean, if we identify ourselves by our spirituality, then we realize that our sexuality is a subcategory, just like our, our race, just like our gender, just like our nationality. These are things that

are accidents of birth.

Uh, we might've been born, uh, you know, with a tendency to be attracted to men or to women. We might've been born with certain skin color or certain nationality or frankly, certain genetic factors that we don't like, you know, the shape of our nose or the height of our stature or whatever is often genetic. These are just accidents of birth that we don't have any control over.

And God doesn't hold us accountable for things we didn't have any choice about. But once we recognize what our challenges are, we have to discover what God has asked us to do with them. Um, the truth is I could easily be tempted by, uh, you know, women other than my wife, but, uh, but if I have such a temptation, it's not very wise for me to think much about it because I'm not going to do anything.

Why frustrate myself? You know, I, I am not allowed to, to cheat on my wife and I'm not going to. So what's the point of me dwelling on it? So yeah, when you say, if you have an attraction to somebody that's not really, you know, available to you as a sex partner, it'd be wise to put it out of your mind or else you're just going to be tormenting yourself. Hmm.

Interesting. Also in, in, in marriage, if I were to meet the man, move in with him, he committed to me, I committed to him. Surely that is a marriage, isn't it? Although people call it living in sin or they did in the sixties, that would be a marriage if we were committed, wouldn't it? We wouldn't have to go to church or registry office if we didn't feel like it.

Well, biblically, there's nothing that says you have to go to church or a registry office. It's, it is the commitment. But, um, I guess what I would say is that many people who say, well, we don't need to go to city hall to get a piece of paper to keep us tried and true.

Like Joni Mitchell said, well, she's not still with that same guy she was thinking about. And in other words, she says, I don't need the registry office to keep me true to my guy. Well, that may be true, but she wasn't true to her guy.

You know, I mean, not for life. And a lot of people might just say, well, we love each other. And, and so we're committed to each other, but too many people don't go so far as to say we're committed for life, no matter what happens.

In other words, uh, if, if my wife becomes paralyzed in an accident from the neck down and she can't do anything and I have to serve her hand and foot and I say, well, you know, I'm not a young man anymore. And my wife isn't doing much to satisfy me because she's frankly an invalid. Uh, therefore maybe I want to go off and find another woman.

No, I can't do that. I made a commitment for life. But if, if I haven't made that commitment for life, then I'm going to stay with someone while I find it enjoyable.

And as soon as I don't find it enjoyable, or maybe someone more interesting comes within my radar range, then I'm going to bail and I'm going to do the wrong thing. Now, marriage, a marriage license doesn't keep people faithful because the same registry that gives you a marriage license can give you a divorce and often will. And that's really not as it should be because it's marriage is a contract.

Like I said, people, when they get married, they invest years of their lives. They sometimes make them more emotionally vulnerable in that situation than any other situation in life, especially if they have children together. I mean, marriage is not a play thing.

It is, it affects the very core of our being. And it's, it's not a small investment. If you and I entered into a business agreement, and I said, listen, give me all your life savings, I'll publish your works for you, and you'll get half the profits.

And you gave me all your life savings, and I didn't publish your works. I just used the money. You could sue me for breach of contract if we had made a contract.

And all you've lost there is money. But if, if you make a marriage contract, you're promising your life and somebody's promises theirs to you, and they're giving up their, their availability to others. They're bypassing other options.

Every, every year they stay married to you, they bypass other options that were around that it could have taken, but they're doing it because they're keeping their word. They're keeping their contract. But as soon as one of them says, you know, I'm not happy with this contract.

I'm just going to bail out of it. Well, that's a breach of contract. And what you stole is more than money.

You stole years and innocence and trust, and you may have damaged children that came from it. I mean, it's, divorce is one of the most damaging things for children. It's, you know, children of divorce are in a much higher statistical risk group for crime and drug abuse and alcoholism and suicide and depression and so forth.

I mean, no one can argue that divorce isn't hard on children. It's one of the hardest things in the world on children. So, I mean, divorce is an extremely selfish choice to say, I know I made a promise, but you know, I'd rather not keep it.

I don't care who I hurt, and I don't care who I rob, and I don't care, you know, how much I've damaged someone by making a promise I'm not keeping. That's just, I mean, that's what divorce is, is a breach of contract. So, the question that you ask is, do you need a

license? No.

If you're a person of integrity, you'll keep your contract without any legal papers, and after all, the registry office won't make you keep it anyway. If you want out, they'll give you a divorce. But integrity, personal integrity and a conscience toward God should cause someone to say, I'm in this for life because I said I'm in it for life, and no matter how hard it gets, I'm going to go to my graves keeping my promises, because it's more important to have integrity than to have a fleeting moment of happiness that I think is happiness with another person, and then live knowing that, and die, and go to face God, knowing that I've cheated somebody who was faithful to me, and who counted on me, and who I'd made a promise to, but I didn't keep it.

Now, when people say, well, we're committed, but we're not married, what do they mean committed? Do they mean the same thing as getting married? Or do they mean we want to, you know, we want to sanctify or justify our relationship together, so we're going to call it a commitment, but we're really not committed for life. It seems to me if somebody really is committed for life, they'll have no objection to getting a license that says so. That license won't keep them committed, but it's a declaration that you are committed, and you know, if people are living together and they haven't gotten that license, they're not necessarily sinning, but one has to ask, why are you avoiding getting the license? Is it that you're not really that committed? You're just saying you are? That's what I always wonder.

If a person says, I'm in, I'm in for life, I'm all in, you know, I don't mind telling the world that this is so. In fact, it's a lot safer thing for me to tell the world that, because if I don't declare it publicly, then other women may think I'm still available, but you know, I've got a ring on my finger that advertises that I've made a decision. I have a, you know, a certificate of marriage that says I have.

I did it in a public ceremony. None of those things are absolutely necessary. You don't need to have a ring.

You don't have to have a public ceremony, but I guess I'd ask if somebody has the kind of commitment that marriage really is, why would they object to doing it that way? Yeah, I see what you mean. There's always this thing about calling children bastards if they're not born in a church and that kind of thing, which I find offensive. And people have said all that.

That has to be, it's wrong to refer to children that way, because it's a stigma, and a child should never be stigmatized for something they didn't do. People have said that that's in the Bible. That's not in the Bible, is it, bastards, calling children bastards? Well, the word bastard is used in the book of Hebrews.

It's not talking about actual children. It's talking spiritually. It's talking about people who

are falsely claimed to be God's children, falsely claimed to be Christians.

But it's making the point that if they're claiming to be God's children, but they really aren't, they're like bastards. But it never uses that term of actual children. And in the sense that it uses there, it's using it in the way that society uses it without necessarily endorsing it.

Everybody knows what it's meant by the word bastard. And, you know, you wouldn't want to call a child a bastard. But if somebody is claiming to be spiritually a child of God, but they're not, then it's more of a shock value statement, I think.

It's basically shocking in reality, you're not really a child of God, more like a bastard of God. But yeah, no one, no Christian should ever refer to any other person as a bastard in the sense of, you know, they're the child of an unwed couple. Because you shouldn't stigmatize anybody for something they didn't do.

Exactly. I grew up with that with my parents, calling me, you know, yeah. We're sort of getting tight on time.

So I just want to go over your books. Is there one called Four Visions of Hell? What are the titles of your books? There's two books. One of them compares four different interpretations of the book of Revelation.

And the other one compares three different views of hell. Yeah. Right.

Okay. And what, the three different versions of hell, what happens in there? Where have you got these different versions of hell from? Well, until about the year 400 AD, in the Christian church for the first 400 years, there were three different, very different views about what happened to people who are not God's people at the time they die. That is, people who die against living their lives, ignoring or opposing Jesus Christ.

When they die, they're on bad terms with God. So where do they go? Well, we've all heard, I'm sure, the traditional view of hell, which is that they go to a place where there's fire, and they're conscious forever in torment, being burned forever, but never dying, and so suffering eternally. This is what we call the traditional view.

But the traditional view was not really always the view that Christians held. Back in the first four centuries, there were three different views. That was one of them.

It became the traditional view around the year 400 through a man named Augustine. This view that we're all familiar with, people suffer and are tormented forever and ever in hell, it existed before Augustine, but it was only one of three views that were all permissible. None of them was considered to be a heresy or out of bounds for Christians to believe.

Christians were capable of having their own opinion about this, because the Bible doesn't speak explicitly about it. And, I mean, there are verses in the Bible that people think teach this view or that view of hell. But obviously, the Scriptures are capable of more than one interpretation, and therefore different Christian leaders in the first 400 years of the Church had different views of it.

But Augustine took one of those views, and he was the most influential man on the thinking of the Church in history. There's no man other than Augustine who had more influence on the way the Church thinks about things, and I don't think he was right about some things. Of course, I think he was right about some things, but not a lot of them.

Some of the views that the Church holds today, I think, are not really those that the Bible teaches, but they are those that Augustine taught. So, the traditional view, as we call it, existed from the early days of the Church, but it wasn't until 400 AD, four centuries after Christ, that it really became sort of the established view. Before that, there were two other views, and these other views were held by Christian leaders of equal stature and equal respect in the Church, and none of them were considered to be teaching a heresy or anything like that.

One of them was the view that when people go to hell, they're not tortured forever, but they are punished. There is punishment in hell, but they get exactly what they deserve and no more. You see, the argument is that people don't really deserve to suffer forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever eternally for trillions and trillions of years, and that's just the beginning.

How could it be that sins or crimes committed in a finite lifetime could really deserve infinite punishment? That'd be disproportionate, be cruel and unusual, and many people object to that doctrine, and there were some Church fathers who thought that that's not what the Bible teaches. I have to agree with them. I don't think it's what the Bible teaches either, but they taught that when people are judged on the last day and sent to hell, those who are are not punished forever.

They're punished proportionately. The very wicked people are punished more. People who are only moderately wicked are punished moderately, but each one receives, even if our own courts, when they're functioning at their best, will give the serious penalties to the most serious crimes and the lighter penalties to lesser crimes.

I mean, God is not stupid. He knows that some people deserve worse than others, and on this other view, the idea is that people will be punished as in any just penal system. They'll be punished proportionally to what they deserve, but at the end of their punishment, they'll just be put out of existence.

They won't suffer anymore. They won't go to heaven, but they won't be suffering in hell either. They will have suffered what is just, and then they'll just disappear.

They will have no consciousness of anything. They will have served their time, and there's nothing more for it than for them to just pass out of existence. It won't be a huge crisis for them, because when you're not in existence, you're not suffering.

You don't even know you're not in existence, obviously, just like before you were born. So, the idea is that after somebody has suffered as much as really justice demands in hell, they'll simply pass into a state similar to before they were born, non-existent, and so that view is sometimes called annihilationism, because they think of it in terms of the person is annihilated, and essentially they don't exist anymore, and that was a view of some of the early church leaders, and that's actually a view that has some biblical support, too. There's a number of places in the Bible that say the wages of sin is death, or in the day you eat of that tree, you'll die, God said to Adam and Eve, and there's many things that suggest that death or perishing is what is the fate of the unbeliever.

The Bible says in John 3.16 that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, so that whoever believed in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. So, it seems like the two options are you either have everlasting life by believing in Christ, or you perish. Now, the word perish in the Greek New Testament means to be destroyed, and so there are some who believe, an increasing number in our day, but there were some in ancient times, too, who also believed that what the Bible teaches is not that people are tormented forever and ever, but they're simply punished as much as justice would require someone to be punished for what they did, and then they'll be non-existent.

So, that's like a second view. Now, there's a third view that was also held by very important church leaders in the first three centuries, and that is, we could call it Restorationism, and that is that when people go to hell, God isn't done with them yet, that throughout this lifetime, God is trying to bring people to himself, that God's whole goal in creating the world and people is that he might be in a proper relationship with them, and all of our problems in this life are due to the fact that we are not in a proper relationship with God. We're putting ourselves and our interests ahead of God and his interests, and we weren't made to do that, so things get out of order in our lives when we do that, and so God is always trying to bring us back into that right relationship, which will bring our lives back to an orderly and proper state, a healthy state.

We resist it to our own detriment, but we do resist it. We're very selfish and rebellious and tend to not want to surrender to God, and because of that, God's dealings in our lives don't always bring success. Sometimes though, God has been trying to bring us into right relationship with himself.

We've resisted and resisted until the day we die, and we die on bad terms with him. But this third view of hell is when people are put in hell, God is not finished trying to reach them, and hell is simply a place of unpleasantness, a place of discipline, but it's more

like a rehab than a punishment. It's like we have died addicted to our selfishness, addicted to our sins, addicted to our rebellion against God, and we didn't take the opportunities we had in this life to be reformed and to be brought back to God's good graces, and therefore he's not done with us.

He wants everyone to be saved, and therefore even after death, it is said that he continues to deal with people. It might be a little more severe. It might last a very long time.

It depends on how stubborn we are, but that God's goal, both for us in this life and in the next life, is to rehabilitate us, to restore us, to bring us to true repentance and healing in our relation with him. And on this view, which was taught very strongly by especially Clement of Alexandria and origin of Alexandria, but also many, many other Christians in the early days, held that this is what hell is. Hell is not eternal punishment, and it's not even annihilation.

It's rather God's continuing to try to draw people to come to him, because he wants everybody to be saved. And so we call that restorationism. That's the word, the Greek form of that word, it's what origin used in the third century for the view, but the point would be then that hell is a place of rehab and restoration.

So you've got really, really different views. I mean, these views of hell are like diametrically opposed to each other. One view holds that God's just so mad at people when they die in sin, that he just wants to pour out his wrath on them forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

And yet the other views say, well, God isn't really like that. God isn't that kind of a person. Even if human beings were like that, we'd consider them some of the worst people.

When we hear people being tortured at Guantanamo Bay, we think, how barbarians can we be? Torture is below our dignity, below our civilization, below our humanity. And yet to think that God tortures people forever and ever and ever is a slander against his character, if it isn't true. Now, if the Bible says it's true, then I guess we just have to live with it.

But the question is, does it? My book, *On the Three Views of Hell*, actually presents all the evidence in the Bible and all the philosophical evidence for each of the views, and it also presents all the evidence and all the philosophical arguments against each of the views. So my view doesn't advocate one view. My philosophy of education is to tell people all the evidence for all the views and let them think for themselves.

I've never been interested in indoctrinating people to agree with whatever I think. And on this particular point of hell, I'm not sure what I think. I'm pretty sure that the

traditional view doesn't have a strong scriptural case, and that surprises people.

But of the other two choices, both of them have pretty good biblical evidence for them, too. And the main thing is not even, you know, what are the texts that prove a point, although that has to be considered. But what is the character of God like? Is God the kind of person who hates his enemies so that if you die on bad terms, he's going to torture you forever just because he hates you? Well, then why did Jesus say that we should love our enemies and bless those who curse us and do good to those who persecute us so that we can be like our Father in heaven? In other words, Jesus named God is that way.

God loves his enemies. God blesses those who curse him. So, how can we have this picture of God that Jesus taught and still believe that God has this relentless hatred for sinners after they die? The irony of it is that almost all Christians would agree that no matter how sinful a person is, if they come to God in the end of their life before they die, God will happily receive them, like that thief that was on the cross next to Jesus.

He'd been a thief and a robber all his life, and some some versions about it say he had been a murderer. But he turned to Jesus and said, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said, today you'll be with me in paradise.

This man was saved in the last hour of his life, even though he'd lived a horrible life. And Christians believe that no matter how evil somebody has been, that the grace of God is such that if they genuinely and wholeheartedly turn to God, even on their deathbed, he will forgive them because he loves them. He loves people.

He even loves sinners, just like we love our children when they're going the wrong way. God loves us. He does have to punish us, just like we have to direct our children and discipline them.

But he does it because he loves us. He's not a God who just can't handle it when people don't love him. And he flies off the handle.

He goes crazy and just has to torture them all the time. That people who would do that are rare, and we would call them to be, you know, monsters. And if God is like that, then it's really hard to argue that he loves his enemies like he tells us to love our enemies.

And Jesus said that we should love them because that's what the Father is like, he said. So, in other words, this traditional view of hell doesn't really make a lot of sense if God is the kind of God that Jesus said he is. Because any God that would just torture his enemies forever and ever and accomplish nothing by it, but just has no reason to do it except to ventilate an unrelenting wrath that never ends, is a certain kind of God that isn't the God that Jesus talked about.

Now, of course, if the other two views are correct, the one being that God will punish

sinner only as much as they deserve, and then they'll pass out of existence and they'll suffer no more, that could be consistent with a loving judge. Just like, you know, a man who's a judge in the courts of law. He might be a very loving man, a very merciful man.

He might be very generous and a good father and even have compassion on the criminal that's before him, but he's got to send him to prison if the guy's guilty. A judge is not unloving if he gives out a proper punishment to criminals, and God is not unloving if he gives out a proper and proportionate punishment to unbelievers, to sinners who rebel against him. So, the idea of annihilation or extinction of the sinner in hell is not in conflict with God being a loving God.

But the last view, the restoration view, is, seems to be the most loving of the options, and it sounds like it agrees with the character of God the way Jesus taught it. Jesus taught the prodigal son story, he taught lots of stories, that the shepherd that lost his sheep, you know, the sheep was wandering away and the shepherd went out and looked for him until he got him back. And there are a number of places in the Bible that say that God wants to restore everything to himself, that he wants all things to be returned to their pristine and original state before the rebellion.

And that would mean that the third view of hell, that hell is a place where God actually does continue to bring people to himself, rather than just punish them out of anger, makes him more like a loving parent, like a parent who, you know, displeases the child in order to give them consequences for bad behavior, but with the desire that they'll be good, and that they'll become a good citizen, a good adult. So, that's the three different views of hell, and there are arguments, philosophical and biblical arguments, for all three, but there are also biblical and philosophical arguments against each of the three. And so my book actually just presents all the evidence for and against each view, and leaves it to the reader to make up their own mind.

Excellent. And have you written any books on following Christ? Not following, I don't mean following Christ by following the rules, but ways of following Christ joyfully, or is that to be on the website? Well, I certainly have many lectures on that subject. I, like I said, there's about 900 lectures at the website, but I've not written very many books because it's so time-consuming to write a book, and I could have written many more, but I've committed most of my teaching to lectures.

And that's because I ran a school for 16 years, and had opportunity to do a lot of lectures. I didn't have the same amount of freedom to write everything down in books. I'm kind of a perfectionist when it comes to writing books.

I try to be a kind of a perfectionist in my lectures too, but I'm a little more willing to let a lecture go out there online. That's got ways I know it could be improved, but I'd let it go out there anyway. Whereas if I go into writing, I don't like to release a book unless I feel like this, I could not do this better ever, you know, this is the best I can do.

And I don't know why, I just feel like, you know, the printed page somehow deserves to be reserved for the very best stuff that'll, you know, that'll stand through the ages, you know. Whereas a lecture, I hope that everything I lecture will stand through the ages too, but I'm willing to be more, I don't know, imperfect in my presentation, you know, use colloquialisms and things like that that I wouldn't necessarily use in writing. So, it's easier, it's less time consuming for me to give a lecture, partly because I know all the stuff I'm lecturing on, so talking about it is simple, you know, it's simple and quick.

Writing it down, editing it, rearranging the material, editing it again, that's so time consuming, that's what prevented me from writing more books, but I've certainly got many books worth of material on the website in mp3 lecture format. So, what lecture would you point us to for how to follow Christ joyfully? Which one would that be? Well, there's one series of lectures on there called Genuinely Following Jesus, and that could be possibly the one that most fits what you're asking. You've already heard the Kingdom of God series, right? No, not yet.

Okay, well that's one that would be very valuable too, and there is some overlap in those series. I think the Kingdom of God series might have eight lectures, I'm not sure. I think maybe the other one does too, I think Genuinely Following Jesus.

Some of my lecture series have four or six or eight or ten or twelve or fourteen or sixteen lectures. And what are the Kingdom of God? What's that about? That is about what Jesus and what it is he's calling us to be a part of. The Kingdom of God, in popular parlance, is often mistakenly thought to be a reference to heaven.

The Bible does not use the term Kingdom of God as a reference to heaven anywhere. But the term Kingdom of God refers to the movement that Jesus came to bring, because it was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In the Old Testament, God promised that he would establish a kingdom on earth under a king who is called the Messiah.

And when Jesus came, his announcement was the Kingdom of God is near, the Kingdom of God is at hand. And everything Jesus taught was about the Kingdom of God, but most of what he taught wouldn't make any sense to apply to heaven. For example, when he teaches us to pray, when you pray, say, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Well, if the Kingdom of God is how are we asking for heaven to descend on earth? Isn't that an earthly thing, an earthly phenomenon? It is. When the Jews, Jesus' critics, asked him in Luke 17, asked him when the Kingdom of God would appear, he said, it's not going to come visibly as you think, but it's already here in your midst. And so Jesus indicated the Kingdom of God was something that was already begun in his presence.

And he described it as something that would start small, like a mustard seed, but would grow huge. And that's, of course, the case. What a kingdom is, is not a place, but a

political arrangement.

If there's a king, and he's got subjects, then you've got a kingdom. His subjects are his kingdom. It doesn't matter if they're in exile, like in the Robin Hood stories.

Was it King John that was in exile? Or King Richard? I guess King Richard was in exile, his bad brother John. But King Richard was still recognized as the king by Robin Hood, even though he was in exile and his evil brother John was reigning. Similar in the Old Testament, when David was chosen to be the king of Israel.

Oh, Steve, I'm going to have to stop you there. We've run out of time, actually. I want to let everyone know that your website is www.thenarrowpath.com. Excellent.

Thanks very much for being my guest.