

# LAUNCH: Strategies for Launching Your Career & Family

## Guarding Your Heart and Mind

Rough Transcript

Featured Speaker: Marcos Peres

Brett Clemmer:

Good morning, guys. It's great to be here. It's like he said, the best place to be on a Friday morning. I'm super excited. We are in week 6 of Launch, so we're going to jump into the in just a minute. I got to hold three things here. Before we do that, though, let's do our shout-out. Our first shout-out is to a group of guys in Alberta, Canada. How cool is that? They are using the Bible study, the "Iron Men of Lethbridge", a group of 15 guys who meet on Tuesdays at 7 o'clock at night at The Miz City Church in Lethbridge. Their purpose is to know who we are in Christ, to become more like him as we grow in relationship with each other. Mike Ritchey and Jim Leitch in Alberta, Canada. Welcome, guys. We're super glad that you're here with us.

Then, we've also got a shout-out for our Area Director, who is in Corning, New York. This is Pete LoPresto, and I lost Pete's bio. There we go. Pete LoPresto, who is been around with us for several years. Pete's happily married, as he says, "long enough to have four adult children and more than a handful of grandchildren, most of whom are potty trained," which he's very happy about when they come to visit him. Pete's a formal postal, post office, mailman. He got out before it got to him. Pete's got a great heart. I've actually been at Pete's house, and stayed with him and his wonderful wife, gone and seen the churches that he's impacting in the Corning area. Pete's doing a great job as an area director for us, helping churches and leaders build discipleship pathways for all the men in their church. Hey, let's give a big welcome to the guys in Alberta and to Pete, to the Man in the Mirror Bible Study.

All right. Well, hey, I'm really excited at this, for our speaker this week. Marcos Peres is joining us, and Marcos has been in the Bible study for a while now. He's a full-time real estate agent, a leader for Men's Ministry at Church in the Sun, and the Demand Prevention Coordinator for Florida Abolitionist, an anti-human trafficking non-profit organization on a mission to end modern-day slavery. As the Demand Prevention Coordinator, his role is to organize and facilitate trainings and accountability groups to help educate, equip and empower men to find freedom from their sexual bondage or unwanted sexual behaviors.

Marcos, in the last four years, has shared his testimony and message at universities, churches, non-profits, companies, conferences, on TV, on podcasts. He's been everywhere, man. How did we get you? Man, thanks for coming. He's

been doing this for several years now. In 2018, he helped pass the resolution to declare pornography a public health crisis in the State of Florida, and he's actively working to raise up the men of Orlando to take a stand against pornography, and now through this Bible study, the men of America, even the men around the world. Guys, please welcome Marcos Peres as he come and shares with us this morning.

Marcos Peres:

All right. I used to run a 4.3 back in high school, so I was accustom to being put as the anchor in a leg of a 4x1 relay. Being the last guy in this series, I feel right at home to bring this series at home for you guys. Hopefully, I don't trip at the finish line here for you. That would not be good. Now, so today's ... Actually, let me start off by thanking, first off, Man in the Mirror's ministry, Pat Morley, Brett, and all of you for inviting me in here today to share with you all a little bit from my heart. I think it's incredible. Has it not be in an amazing series thus far?

I mean I was absolutely mind-blown after each speaker. I still to this day'll never forget John Crossman's illustration of jet-fueled fire in the mind. That stuck and resonated with me. I know it has with you guys, probably. But, today's topic, is going to be Guarding your Mind and Heart and Maintaining Sexual Integrity in the World of Sexual Dysfunction. Whether this is your first time here today, or you maybe weren't aware of what today's topic was going to be, or maybe you were and you totally forgot and therefore forgot to call-in sick for today's Bible study. It's too late now, the doors are locked. Bathroom call was five minutes ago. Don't worry about, but you're probably on the inside maybe feeling like this guy here, like, "Oh, my God, what are we going to get ourselves into here today." Don't worry. Stay calm. In fact, turn to your neighbor and tell him, "It's going to be okay."

I actually applaud ministries like Man in the Mirror, who are actually bold enough to address this topic because I feel that organizations and principally, churches that are not addressing this issue are actually part of the problem. We live in a culture today where society isn't afraid to tell you what their version or doctrine of sexuality or marriage should look like. Without truth being put out into society, we're spiraling down to a very dangerous track. I really applaud Man in the Mirror's ministry for putting this on. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share a little bit about this. Speaking of problems, how is it that sexual immorality is a problem in today's society? How many of you guys would agree that we live in a culture today that is more technologically advanced than any other time in history?

Right? Therefore, we're venturing into new frontiers, blazing new trails, right, we're in a space and time that is unlike any other, therefore we have no point of reference to look back and compare it to. Okay? We're discovering things as we go. When you combine a context of ... Now, sexual immorality's been around since the dawn of time, since the fall of man. That hasn't changed, but the context and the method how we engage in it has changed. With technology the way it is today, combined with, what I call, the triple-A threat, the anonymity,

accessibility and affordability to engage in this said destructive vice or behavior; it can put us into very dangerous waters.

There hasn't been much research, but thankfully, in the last few years, some research has come out, and I decided to gather a couple stats here for you. Now, I want to preface, also, that I know that sexual immorality had a pretty broad spectrum of things covering from homosexuality to bestiality, masturbation, sex, adult, I mean there's, fornicate, the whole thing. Right? But for the purposes of today's talk and for the sake of time, I want to focus on predominately what a majority of men, in both the church and culture, struggle with, which is really pornography, which is what a majority of my, if not all my stats, here, focus on.

Porn actually has a major ramification on the individual, on relationships, and on societal scale. For many that you know, there's actual research that has come out that on the impacts that porn has on the mind because it actually has the same effects as hard-core drugs. It engages the limbic system, the dopamines that get released. It's the most powerful chemicals that can get released in your brain, in the pleasure centers of your mind, which can be very addictive and can help, or actually, deter you into a path of very destructive, unwanted compulsive behavior.

Relationally, obviously, as someone watches pornography, it bears negative burdens and weight on a relationship because you start becoming less attractive to your spouse or significant other. You learn to objectify other people and view them as nothing more than a summation of body parts, just simply there for your own pleasure, you don't see the dignity that they carry or the image that they are in God. Obviously, on a society scale, you see the impact as I'll get into the last point there on the impacts it has on human trafficking. Also, it may even impact you at your job. You may lose motivation, drive, your performance may go down, you may feel insecure against others and start comparing yourself more often. It has a lot of negative tolls, nothing really positive.

Some of the impacts that it has is that 56% of marriages end in divorce because of a spouse's addiction to pornography. 51% of pastors, 64% of men, 15% of women in the church struggle with porn addiction. In fact, porn is the number one reason that men seek counseling in the church. However, only 7% of churches are actually equipped with the proper resources or counseling to be able to address and help these individuals that are seeking help. In fact, pornography fuels the demand for human trafficking, which is a \$150-billion industry, second only to the drug trade, but it will quickly surpass that. That's just from obviously what we know because it pretty much operates in a dark web and stuff like that.

What leads people down this path? I know the previous slide provided a birds-eye view of the scope of the problem, but it's more stats depicting the symptoms if you would agree, right? I think that the core root of the problem is really this here. What it really boils down to at the crux of what the root of this

issue is, is the fact that we don't fear God. Since the very beginning, since the fall of man when we chose to replace or dethrone God off of our hearts; put ourselves, our ambitions, and our own hunger to worship creation; and to serve the god of our belly and our passions; ever since then, we've been seeking for something that can ... only God can fulfill us.

We are so hardheaded, we still haven't gotten it yet. You know? Even as Christians, sometimes it can be a struggle. Right? It's a daily fight to be in surrender to the Lord, and to fear him, to have reverence with him, of course, to have relationship with the savior, and to have your identity be placed in him. I think that that is the ultimate foundation, and without that, there's really no shot of living a free life.

Of course, a lot more practical things that can maybe drive an individual down this path of unwanted sexual behavior is a lack of instruction or model for healthy relationship in a household growing up. Maybe you didn't have the healthy marriage to look at in your parents. Maybe there was an absentee father in the house; it wasn't stable; you didn't have instruction, correction, boundaries, or accountability in place. Perhaps you just maybe innocently stumbled upon sexual implicit content growing up as you were doing homework or maybe some friends showed you and you weren't even prepared for it.

Others, on the other hand, may have been actually forced, coerced or lured into watching or maybe even engaging in some sort of pornographic content, usually through a friend, relative, or authority figure, which are usually the closest people to you that tend to abuse you in regards to this, unfortunately, which, of course, can lead to a history of sexual abuse. Or maybe someone just flat-out seeking a go-to way to medicate a wound, fulfill a void, or maybe fill that need that they're seeking to get by so that they can obtain that high and escape the reality that they're in, right?

Now, let's see. A little bit about my backstory, so you can learn a little bit more about who is speaking to you today. I'm not just spewing stats at you and coming off as if I'm holier than thou, and provide a little bit about context. That's me on the far left over there in Brazil. I'm actually from Brazil. You can't get more Brazilian than that, a Speedo, flip-flops, and the beach. That's me when I was probably five-years-old.

Moved to the States, here, when I was six. That's me and my parents, we're at Busch Gardens. I was probably six-years-old, there, in this photo. Grew up in a very good home, loving parents, still together to this day. I'm very thankful for that example in my life, hard-working, definitely models for me in my life. It was an authoritative household, meaning they were sensitive to my emotional needs that I had in the house. However, very high standards. Over time, my dad and I bashed heads a little bit, tension grew in that relationship, so we became a little bit distant.

Also, in terms of religion, we weren't really devout religious people. We had a Catholic background, but we were pretty nominal or secular, if you will, growing up, so I didn't really have input from the Church to recite to me what a properly ... how to engage in relationship; what marriage, love, sex, all that was. The context of the sex talk that I got from my parents, at least from my dad, was, "Just make sure you use condoms." That was the extent of my sex talk. Not much to really go off of there, so really what groomed me was what I was exposed to through friends, peers, and obviously, through media.

At the very early age of seven-years-old, but actually, prior to that, when I was six, I was actually sexually molested by my cousin, female cousin. She was babysitting me and molested me. I fell into the stats of one out of five boys before the age of 18 that get sexually abused. I think it's two out of five for women. Of course, you see the parental advisory there, didn't think it'd be wise to use other imagery.

Started consuming sexually explicit content at the early age of seven. It would spiral on to a 15-year addiction for me. It would be devastating as it would condition my mind to objectify women, other people; be self-serving, self-seeking; I mean full-on in the world. Right? That mindset would spew into just about all my relationships that I would engage in from that point forward in middle school, high school, et cetera. In fact, it deeply impacted my relationship with my ex-fiance. We were together for eight years, engaged for two, living together for two, again, we're in the world.

Now, mind you, I gave my life to Christ in 2010 at a business conference. I had a come to Jesus moment. But, really from 2010 and 2015, I don't know if you can relate, but I had one foot on the world and one foot in the Church. I just kind of wanted to get close enough to Jesus to receive the benefits, but have to sacrifice anything on my end. Right? For me, I was still clinging on to my porn addiction behind the scenes. She was the only one that knew about at that point in time because I had fessed up to her. There was a lot of tension in that relationship.

It ultimately got us to the point where we were working together for her father in real estate. We're living together, we're around each other 24/7. There's plenty of tension in our relationship. I'm sitting at work one day, guys, as if things couldn't any worse, but wait, there's more. I had a Damascus road experience if you will, where I get friend requested by some girl on Facebook, and you probably know where this is going. I add her thinking nothing of it.

She immediately proceeds to message me because I'm such an intelligent man, I reciprocate. We're engaging in discussion. She entices me to hop on Skype with her through some Kik app, which, by the way, I found out a week ago is being shut down because of all the sexual abuse that's going on through that app. But, this is 2015, and she entices me. Again, I'm walking with the Lord for five years now, and literally, this is my justification, "This girl obviously needs prayer." I

said, "I have to make sure that she's a real person, so let me hop on this camera real quick and just verify this for myself."

There we are. It didn't take but two minutes, guys, she's there doing her thing, and there I am like an idiot. The live feed cuts off. I don't see her any more. I see myself, but it's not a live feed. I quickly realize that she had recorded me in the act, literally, and then threatened to extort me, that if I didn't send her money, that she was going to blast this video of me to everybody on my social feed, which is what she proceeded to do over the next couple minutes. It's a Saturday. I'm thinking this would be another quick moment of indulgence for me like any other time I've done it before, only this time this was the first time I had done this, and I'd be on about my way. Wham, bam, thank you, ma'am, be on.

But, here, tables have turned on me, and for somebody who is overly concerned with image, success, money, what people thought about me at that time, and to have only one person know about what my dirty little secret was, to now have it exposed on the world's social media platform was traumatizing to say the least. That's what she proceeded to do. Phone calls start pouring in. People are asking, "Hey, man, did you make a new page? Did you make a video? Is this you? What's going on?" At that point, I'm beyond myself. Try to navigate through the errands of the day that I stopped to do, as I'm trying to keep my life from imploding and make this thing go away. I had to get past the fact that this got out. At that point, I was just concerned about saving my relationship with my ex-fiances. Mind you, I said ex-fiance. We're no longer together.

I recall that night, laying in bed at my parents' house and thinking, "What the heck just happened today?" I was wise enough to cry out to God and do one of these, "Lord, please speak to me," through my Bible app. Kid you not, he takes me to Proverbs 7, which talks about, "Beware of the adulterous woman." I'm like, "Lord, I needed that this morning." Nevertheless, it provided some comfort because I knew that he was at least listening to me. I somehow managed to go to sleep that night after my whole world imploded because I'm thinking, "Man, I lost my relationship of eight years, I lost my career because I'm working for her dad, all my reputation's gone." I'm thinking, "All this is out the door," right?

I'm like, "I don't know what hope is in store for me," but I was wise enough to go to church the next morning, go down to the altar call when they gave the altar call, and I literally felt God's presence washed over me, down at that altar. That's kind of when my journey began, 2015, not knowing I wasn't the only one struggling with this issue. As I learned to fellowship a little bit more, I learned to have the immediate benefits of accessing fellowship.

I got connected with a couple guys at church, and one of which, in particular, Kevin was on me for a straight month to go to this thing called a Men's Encounter at Church in the Sun. I'm like, "What is this God Encounter?" It's actually a ... We're actually having one next weekend from 18th to the 20th. If you guys know Jeff Taylor, here, contact him for that. I highly encourage you

guys to go. It's really a day and a half, Friday night, all-day Saturday, Sunday morning.

Encounter with God, where you get to create a relationship with the Father or restore one if you've already had one; find inner healing; deliverance and an infilling of the Holy Spirit. It's a jam-packed weekend. You get to meet some awesome guys in the process. It was at this event where I actually got to meet some of my spiritual fathers and mentors. For the first time in my life, got to hear the purity talk that exposed to me the enemies lies that I've been buying into my entire life and that in the design, that God had predestined in his owner's manual since the dawn of time.

In fact, in Genesis 1:26-28, 31, I'll quickly go through this, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, let them have dominion,'" so on and so forth. "God created them in his own image, God blessed him, and he said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'" How many of you guys know he's not talking about planting a fruit farm here and doing calculus? He's talking about sex. God created sex. It was for procreation because anything that God creates is good and he wants more of it. Right?

Covenant marriage relationship is the context for which sex is supposed to be in. It's for pleasure, obviously, but not for yours, it's for you to give pleasure. Everything with God is to serve. Right? Believe me, if you serve, you will be served. Now, I don't know that. I'm a single man. That's what I hear. Bonding, sex is such a powerful force that it bonds two individuals in such a way that nothing else in life does, which is why it makes it so devastating when you're in some sort of extra-marital relationship or recreationally sleeping around and you break up with somebody. You feel like you've lost a part of yourself because that's literally what happens. As research, scientifically, actually shows. It still is a design for God today.

Now, to take it a little bit further, 1 Thessalonians, "This is God's will for your life, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the gentiles, who don't know God; that no one may transgress and wrong his brother." "Transgress and wrong his brother," excuse me, I lost my place here, "in this matter. Because the Lord is an avenger in these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man but God, and he who gives his Holy Spirit to you." Again, it's taking it back to your not primarily sinning against yourself or your brother, even though those are definitely impacted. You're primarily sinning against God.

Joseph back in the Old Testament got this. Before Jesus even came onto the scene, when Potiphar's wife was trying to do a hard-cord press on him, he said, "How can I sin against God and do such thing?" He understood that. To take it further, Colossians 3:5 says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed." In case

it wasn't clear enough, 1 Corinthians 6:18 tells us to run from sexual immorality. Don't sit there and try to negotiate and maybe if I ... Leave. Move yourself away from that situation or circumstance. Don't put any stock or confidence in your ability to overcome that thing because, "every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexual immoral person sins against his own body."

What does it look like to walk this out? A battle plan would be to abide in the Father, first and foremost. We have to regain that reverence for God. Right? I know Ed Kobel talked about this. I'm not going to go into that too much, but I believe that humility and vulnerability is key. First step for breaking free, for humbling yourself before God and before man; confessing your sin, receiving prayer so you may be healed, and then you can walk this thing out in victory.

I believe that the biggest misconception that a man has ... We had this whole toxic masculinity thing in culture about you not being able to show your emotions or show your vulnerabilities or weaknesses, and that's so toxic. At the end of the day, a godly man isn't afraid to show humility or vulnerability because that shows true strength. I think what we find is that when we actually show that, we are actually surprised. As opposed to getting judgment and rejection, we find that it tears down walls and we actually encourage other men to say, "Hey, you know what, me too."

Because there's no sin common in men that you haven't gone through uniquely yourself. You're not in some void going through everything that you're going through like you're the only one in the world in the entire span of time. Something happened to someone else beforehand, it's happening to someone else now, and it will continue to happen in the future. The key is to engage in authentic community like we have here, a safe space and environment; to be unwaveringly authentic with the person before you; and then to practice self-giving love after the fact.

Shame dies when stories are told in safe places. Guys, remember that. Of course, practice full disclosure, it can be hard on the onset, but it's rewards are so good. There's nothing like walking out freedom and knowing that you're not hiding anything from anybody. We have a tendency to have self-preservation where we do this stagger disclosure, and we only reveal a little bit. We retain a little bit in secret as if trying to preserve this opportunity in the future to continue to act out. But when you bring everything to the light and it's exposed, you take back the power that the enemy's stolen from you.

Cover, quickly, preventative theology over corrective theology, both of which are good, by the way. Corrective theology says to, "Confess your sin and pray for one another, the Lord is faithful to forgive." But, I prefer preventative theology that says in Romans 6, "Let no sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions." Just don't present your members to be instruments of sins period. Don't do that. Just remove yourself from that possibility. I think that we repent enough to be forgiven, but do we surrender enough to be changed? The key is to surrender and for obedience, to have this reverence for God, so



that we have this disposition to want to honor him, not that we're in this thing of striving and trying harder to having to be perfect cookie-cutter Christian because that's going to spiral you deeper into addiction, I'll tell you that. Your right perspective needs to be, "I need to honor God and surrender to him."

Here is how it manifested in my life. Here are the spiritual fathers in my life at the Encounter. On the far left is Allen Rejohnness. He was actually the one doing a purity talk at the God Encounter when I first went. He was the one that delivered to me the powerful message. That's him and I the day I got baptized. He baptized me. Amazing spiritual guide in my life. I actually got to live with him nine months and see a godly man lead his family, lead his kids, live out his life. That was an amazing opportunity for me. Next to him, you have Joe. He's actually my mentor in real estate, and also a godly man. Pastor Alex from Church in the Sun, we're under his covering and anointing. Then on the far right, that's a group of us serving a church out in Tennessee with the God Encounter. Pastor's Jeff's in that photo. I think it's the only photo I have with me and him. It's not the best one, but ... Those are the four men in my life. I don't know where I'd be without them.

Accountability is huge. Again, there's Allen in the center, you have my armor-bearer, John Sal who's actually my roommate. We don't model often like that, actually. We actually were helping a friend out who was aspiring to be a photographer, so we said, "Use us, whatever." You can tell we're pretty shy. But, on the right side is my uncle, he's a pastor in Madrid, in Barcelona in Spain. That was actually a few weeks ago. I think it's funny how you can actually see the progression of my hair growing over the span of time. I think after I got back I was like I just want to take this like Jesus thinks seriously.

But, listen, guys, even though that these things are in place and accountability helps and boundaries, having a proper perspective and reference to God in your relationship with him; it doesn't mean that you still aren't going to come under attack. Temptation is still out there. You can leave here and see a billboard, see something on the commercial, see some girl jogging. It's just like all of a sudden you're triggered. What do you do? Apart from having a relationship with God and being empowered and infilled with the holy spirit, first of all, there's no shot. Of course, having community and fellowship helps, but what happens, how is one sustain being in bondage?

Well, first of all, again, I'm going to beat this into your head, fear of God, isolation. There's a difference between solitude and isolation. Solitude's actually a good thing. Jesus actually went away a couple times for solitude to be with the Lord. I think it's good. It's intentional seclusion so that you can engage in productive and constructive benefits and behavior. Isolation is when you intentional seclude yourself to engage in destructive behavior. You don't want to isolate yourself.

Shame is something so powerful, but like I said before, it dies and is destroyed when we can openly share our stories and safe places. There's a lack of

accountability in your life, you don't have any purpose of vision, you have a lack of healthy intimacy in terms of relationships in your life or stagger disclosure, which I've covered before. Sometimes you're so caught up in trying to pursue a feeling that you forsake healing to pursue a feeling. I want to foot that and encourage you, men, to pursue healing no matter what that cost is, to surrender and lay down your life and forsake the temporary feeling you can get in any single moment. Don't be Esau, exchanging your inheritance for a meal.

I want to encourage you, men, as I close, with this, that in this difficult walk as Christian men, that we have our hope in Hebrews 2:14. It says, "For since therefore the children share in flesh in blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things," this is Jesus, "that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." Isn't that crazy, that we're subject to lifelong slavery because we're afraid of dying?

I don't know about you, but Christianity is an invitation to come and die, to die to self, to die of your own ambitions and to lay down your life for your brother, for Christ. That's what Jesus is inviting us to do because that's, funny enough, the key to life but not only eternal life but life abundantly here and now. I encourage you, men, to come and die with Jesus so that you may live. As I close with this, it's not about striving. It's about resting in his presence, resting in his word, abiding in him, being empowered through the holy spirit, indoctrinating your mind, washing it clean with his truth so that you can be set free from every bondage of lie from the enemy. He is our hope.

Here are a couple resources that over the years have helped me. If you take a picture, we can make this slideshow available to you afterwards. These are a bunch of great resources. I don't have time to get into right now, but I just wanted to thank you guys for the opportunity to come and share with you briefly this morning what's on my heart and what I feel is so, so important, to address the biggest issue that I feel is coming against society and our Church today, and that us, as men, have the opportunity to be light in a dark world. It starts with not doing it alone, but having a relationship with the Father, who has been after your heart since the beginning of time, who loves you, wants to embrace you, not have you doing anything before you get to him, but just to come as you are, and be received in his arms. Let him change you and transform you, and to partner up with other men who are like-minded and do the journey together because this is no man's an island. You're not designed to do this life in some sort of vacuum or to do it alone.

I'd like to pray with you all now before I close out. Lord Father, we just thank you, God, for this morning. Thank you for your love and your truth, Lord God, the Gospel message that is such good news, Lord God, that sets us free. Every captive, Lord God, that has been in bondage to lies, sin and stronghold, Lord God Father, we just declare in the name of Jesus, that this morning, those yokes be broken over each and every one single one of these men. Any condemnation, shame, and guide, Lord God, just be destroyed right now; and that your perfect

love, grace, and peace can just wash over these men; that they can come to you, and come to one another in true surrendered hearts and spirit; to have a renewed reverence for the Lord, Lord God, and that they can if they have no already established a relationship with you, that they open up themselves to do today. For that, in lie their key to freedom, Lord God. Father, I just thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to share your word and your truth this morning. I pray that the seeds that have been planted, Lord God, that you provide the increase for them, Lord, and that you deliver each and every single one of these men this morning. We give you all the glory and praise, in Jesus' name. Amen.