

# FamilyLife Today<sup>®</sup> Radio Transcript

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## Empty Pleasures

Guest: Paul David Tripp  
From the series: Sex and Money (Day 1 of 3)  
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**Bob:** Our culture places a high value on two very important things—money and sex. Paul David Tripp says, “Those important things can also ruin your life.”

**Paul:** If you’re a Christian man—and you’ve begun a flirting relationship with a woman at work, and are beginning to sort of touch her arm, and those kinds of things—move that direction—you are not doing that because you’re ignorant that that is wrong. You’re doing it, at that point, because you don’t give a rip of what’s wrong because you want your pleasure. God is out of the picture.

That’s why it’s only that greater pleasure that will protect me because—guess who I need to be rescued from? Not my culture. I need to be rescued from me.

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today* for Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. Our host is the President of FamilyLife<sup>®</sup>, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. Author and speaker, Paul David Tripp, joins us today to talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly when it comes to sex and money. Stay tuned.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. We’re going to talk this week about two really, really, really good things that can destroy your life.

**Dennis:** Like anything else that God made, it can become an addiction. It can become an idol. And we’ve got a very wise man joining us on *FamilyLife Today* to equip both—individuals, as they struggle with these issues—but also moms and dads, who are, I think, preparing the next generation for facing issues like this and others in an ever-increasing way. Paul Tripp joins us on *FamilyLife Today* again. Paul, welcome back.

**Paul:** It is great to be with you.

**Dennis:** For those of you who don’t know Paul—he is a pastor, an author, a speaker. He is President of Paul Tripp Ministries—lives in Philly with his wife Luella. They have four grown children.

**Paul:** That’s right.

**Bob:** And if you have been to *The Art of Marriage*<sup>®</sup>, you will know Paul as the mustached man. [Laughter] That's—listeners go, "Who's the guy with the mustache?"

**Dennis:** Looks a little mysterious, really, in there.

**Bob:** My kids have seen it and go, "I wish I could get a mustache like that because he's got the coolest mustache."

**Dennis:** He's written a book called *Sex and Money*—subtitled *Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies*. These two subjects—our culture is all over this. I mean, you can't go anywhere—either driving, or on TV, or on the internet, or at work—wherever you go, you are going to find these two subjects.

**Paul:** This was a book I could not, not write. Sitting in the middle of this culture—watching my culture go completely insane—I had to write this book.

**Dennis:** And you said, at the end—after you'd written it—that you were grieving about yourself—

**Paul:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —at what you had to come to grips with about your own soul and who you are, as a man.

**Paul:** Because you realize how greatly you've been influenced and shaped by the insanity that's around you.

**Bob:** And when you talk about the culture being crazy—and you do throughout the book. You keep coming back to just how insane this culture is on these two subjects. It's almost like we don't need illustrations of that, but it is a little frog in the kettle for us. We don't realize just how crazy we've become; do we?

**Paul:** No. I think it's the coursing of culture that has happened over the last few decades—that if you could watch it on a sped-up film, it would shock you. You watch something like the Oscars, or you go to a mall, or whatever—and you are assaulted all the time. And the openness of sexual talk, and sexual humor, and the kinds of things that are norm for young people—they are just shocking. They are insane. It's a view of sexuality that can't possibly work. It's destructive from the get-go. Yet, we don't act like it's destructive.

**Bob:** Right.

**Dennis:** You also talk about money. Somehow, I don't think, in our minds, we want to put sex and money together as assaulting us; but in this materialistic culture and such—well, somebody has described as affluenza—

**Paul:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —like the flu.

**Paul:** Right.

**Dennis:** We're covered over with being told—what we have is not enough and “You need to accumulate more.”

**Paul:** See—and I think that the sort of culturally-correct way of talking about the downturn of our economy is that it's bad banks and predatory Wall Street. It actually is much deeper than that. It's a culture that has become quite accustomed to living way beyond its means—that doesn't have a sensible view of money. We're paying the price for that.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Paul:** People living in houses that are *way bigger* than they can afford, taking vacations that no one should be taking at their income level. I mean, you just multiply examples of that. If you look at our culture and say, “What are two obvious places where we've just gone crazy?”—these are it.

**Bob:** And you're not down on either sex or money. You think they are both good things; right?

**Paul:** Oh, absolutely. And one of the things I argue in the book is that God created a pleasurable world—pleasure, in and of itself, is not evil. What's dangerous is when you ask of that pleasure things that you shouldn't ask.

**Bob:** So, the person who says: “Here is how we're going to deal with this in our family. We're going to not have a television. We're going to filter our internet, and we're going to put the boundaries up around our lives so that this doesn't become an issue for us.” Is that a good strategy?

**Paul:** Well, the cross exposes that strategy because, if all you needed to be pure and to be out of debt was a set of regulations, Jesus wouldn't have had to come. That's the problem with the conversations that the church is having—that it tends to be: “Don't do this. Don't do that.” I mean, I think budgeting can be helpful. I think accountability can be helpful, but they've got to root at a deeper level where this stuff actually gets us.

And you talked about parents talking to their children—that is the kind of conversation I want to see parents—talk about the hearts of children / talk about “the things that magnetize my heart that give me a sense of identity,”—that's where the battle takes

place. Because if all you say is, “Don’t do this and do that,” you haven’t really dealt with the deeper issue.

**Dennis:** Don’t you think that we think that the subject of idol worship is something reserved for Old Testament saints—Old Testaments Israel who struggled with these issues—and we don’t think we have our idols today?

**Paul:** Oh, I think that’s exactly right. In fact, sometimes, when I’m teaching on these things, I’ll start with a term like, “What are your functional God replacements?” It’s a way of—

**Dennis:** I like—

**Paul:** —moving toward the concept of idolatry because people have this weird Old Testament view of idolatry that isn’t practical to the kinds of issue that we’re talking about.

**Bob:** They’re thinking statues. An idol is not a statue, necessarily. It might be a statue; but an idol can be anything that, as you said, is a “functional God-replacement.” If you are counting on this to do what God said He’ll do, you’ve got an idol; right?

**Paul:** And that’s where the conversation needs to begin. It needs to begin with my identity. My identity is “I’ve been created by God to be a worshiper.” It’s not just that I worship on Sunday. I worship every day—all the time, wherever I am—because I’m always giving my heart to something. I’m always in pursuit of some kind of dream. I’m always magnetized by something. I’m always after some kind of treasure.

Let me give you one example. We taught this very young to our children. My youngest son is a gifted athlete. He is now a sports broadcaster. He would come home from basketball practice—great eye-hand coordination—and he’d go out back. He’d shoot foul shots—sets of a hundred—trying to raise his percentage. I was in the kitchen, and I was making dinner. I was hearing the dribble of the ball—sort of the rhythm—and it stopped. He came in the back door, ball in his arm, and sweat on his face. He said: “Dad, I have a question for you. How do you know when a good thing, like basketball, becomes a bad thing in your life because it rules you too much?” I ran across the kitchen. I threw my arms around him. I said: “Praise God! Praise God! Praise God that you are asking that question!” Nobody is asking this question. I didn’t ask that question until I was 45.

**Bob:** Right.

**Paul:** That’s the level you want the conversation to have with your children, so they begin to understand: “This is who I am. This is why these things—these good things—are potentially dangerous things for me.”

**Dennis:** So, money, sex can replace God in our hearts. It's that simple.

**Paul:** And the way they do that is you ask them to give you what only God can give. So, we're looking horizontally for what we only can ever get vertically.

**Dennis:** What you are talking about is, really, how much we, as men and women, love pleasure. You describe, in your book, how God made pleasure. In fact, I want you to read how you described it because there is a list of pleasures, Bob—that as I read these, it was like, “Oh, yes, nice, nice.” And you don't have to tell your children to go away. This is all rated “GP”—God's Plan—but this is a picture of the senses that God gave us to enjoy, as human beings.

**Paul:** “The multilayer beauty of a sunset, the sweet song of a bird, the biting herbaceous-ness of cilantro, the tender delicacy of human kiss, the whistle of the breeze through the leaves of a giant oak, the shimmer of a glassy still pond, the variegated beauty of the human form, the gorgeous aroma of a rose, the seemingly endless catalogue of herbs and spices, the emotional power of music, the communicative power of visual art.

“The gift of eyes, ears, mouth, nose, and hands to take it all in. The existence of the desire for pleasure, the ability to recognize and enjoy beauty, the capacity to create beauty, the endless sights, sounds, shapes, colors, lights, and textures of the created world, the sedentary pleasure of sleep. The pleasures of life are everywhere you turn.”

**Dennis:** My wife didn't read that, but I'll show it to her when I show her your book. She's very visual. I've said of my wife, “Wherever she goes, she makes things beautiful, either through her presence, or through her words, or through the art or the design that she creates and brings to an office, a room, a yard”—much to my chagrin—I'm a laborer for the deal! [Laughter]

**Paul:** That's right.

**Dennis:** But what you are saying is God made these pleasures for us to enjoy. They, in and of themselves, are not shameful. We shouldn't feel guilty for enjoying them. God made pleasure to be enjoyed. Yet, we, as human beings—because we are broken—have a way of twisting and turning the pleasure—and putting it where you would put an idol—on a pedestal.

**Paul:** In fact, I would say even more fully—it actually brings God glory to celebrate the beauty that He's put into His creation—to recognize how amazing it is—that my eyes can pick up this stuff—these colors, and textures, and shapes—that my ears hear with such distinction. I can hear discord, and I can hear harmony. I mean, those are wonders in and of themselves. To celebrate that, actually, gives God glory.

**Bob:** God could have created a black and white world. He could have created us with eyes that only see a blur; but He made us so that we can experience the beauty and the wonder. We are sensate—sensual creatures—in how we live.

**Dennis:** And one of the things you do, Paul, in your book, is you point out how we—as God’s creation / as creatures—expect too much out of these sensations. We expect too much out of pleasure. You illustrate this with a series of stories of how men and women you’ve counseled have gotten lost in their pursuit.

**Paul:** Sure. You take a 13-year-old boy, who has the doors opened to him of sexual pleasure. Something connects in his brain, “I feel alive when I’m doing this.” So, that becomes a theme in his life. Here’s my concern. When I wrote this book, I’m concerned about the 13-year-olds out there. What they don’t realize they are doing is they are asking a particular kind of pleasure to provide something for them that it *can never* provide.

In so many cases, where I’ve dealt with the aftermath—with a 45-year-old guy / 45-year-old woman—it’s gone back to those early days where this pattern of addiction takes place because pleasure—beautiful pleasure—is put in a place it’s never supposed to be.

**Bob:** Paul, I will often see people compartmentalize—their spiritual life, and their money, and sex life—over here. They don’t see that there is a connection between the two. So, they go to church on Sunday. They worship, and they read their Bible, and they love Jesus. Then, Monday, they don’t see that there is a connection between what went on in church on Sunday and how they handle their money or how they handle sex throughout the rest of the week.

**Paul:** Well, I think that’s been one of the reasons why the church is losing this battle because we’ve divided our world into things spiritual and things secular. That division doesn’t exist! All of life is spiritual. In every moment of my life, I am in some stage of response to God—ignoring Him, recognizing Him, rebelling against Him, submitting to Him. I’m always living a God-ward life. It’s impossible not to.

I mean, you can argue—and I do in this book—that the four most important words in the Bible are the first four, “In the beginning, God,” because if God is on scene—and He is—and everything belongs to Him, everything is created by Him, everything is invested with meaning and purpose by Him, everything has a plan that He has put into it.

**Bob:** Right.

**Paul:** So, what does that do for pleasure? Well, it means—just think of one thing—those pleasures never belonged to me—they belong to God. Pleasure can’t be boundless. It needs boundaries. God set boundaries for pleasure. So, once you begin

with God as Creator, all of a sudden, the whole thing becomes spiritual. Everything has to do with God.

Now, here's what is important. Let's go back to children. My child doesn't know that. He doesn't know he is a worshiper. He doesn't know he'll put pleasure in the wrong place. He doesn't know that all of life belongs to God. He doesn't know that that sets all kinds of boundaries for his living. He knows none of those. Those are the mysteries of the universe that parents have to download to their children.

It's not enough to say, "No, don't touch this girl in that way." You should say that, but it's got to be rooted in these deeper things—that really define where the battle takes place.

**Dennis:** One of the things you go on to say about pleasure is that your life of pleasure is protected by pleasure. Explain what you mean by that.

**Paul:** Well, it's—pleasure is made safe when every horizontal pleasure submits itself to a greater pleasure—and it's the pleasure of God. If the quest—if my first question in sex is not: "What pleases me?" but, "What would please God in the way that I'm involved in this?" all of a sudden, the thing is protected in just a beautiful way.

If I say with my money—[not]: "How can I use this money to bring whatever pleasure it is able to purchase for me?" but say: "How would God be pleased by my use of this money?" If I say to my relationship with that girl or that woman at work—not: "What would please me in this relationship?" but: "What would please God in the way I conduct myself in the certain relationship?"—I mean, you just get it—that pleasure is always made safe when it's under the umbrella of a grander pleasure. And that's the pleasure of God.

**Dennis:** I'll give you a good illustration of this. This past weekend, I was with a couple who, by the world's standards, would be considered wealthy; but the wife was smiling and taking great delight / great pleasure in trying to find ways that she could give more away—to such a degree—she's decided—and I'm not saying this needs to be everybody's marching orders—

**Paul:** Sure.

**Dennis:** This is the conclusion she came to—that if anyone asks her for money, she's going to give it to them. She had some incredible stories of people coming up to her in a store—out of the clear blue—asking her for money. Now, again, she's not lavishing vast amounts of money on people, but she's meeting some needs of people as she's going along the way. What kind of clicks with me, as you just made your statement, Paul, was that she started with God. "This has been given to us by God. I take great delight in Him. I want to please Him, and I'm going to do that by doing what God says He loves—a cheerful giver." So, she's delighting in God's pleasure of her giving.

**Paul:** And the other side is true too. If you are a Christian man—and you’ve begun a flirting relationship with a woman at work, and are beginning to sort of touch her arm, and those kinds of things—moving in that direction—you’re not doing that because you’re ignorant that that is wrong. You’re doing that, at that point, because you don’t give a rip of what’s wrong because you want your pleasure. God is out of the picture.

That’s why it’s only that greater pleasure that will protect me because—guess who I need to be rescued from?—not my culture. I need to be rescued from me. A heart submitted to that greater pleasure is a heart rescued.

**Bob:** I remember having a dinner one time with our mutual friend, Dan Allender, and his wife. It had been a great meal. We kind of pushed back from the table. I said, “That was a great meal.” Dan said, “You know, every time you have a great meal, it should be a trigger of how great heaven is going to be.” He said, “It’s just a picture of something that is infinitely greater that awaits us.”

In Psalm 16, it says, “At His right hand, there are pleasures evermore.” God is not a God who is stingy with pleasure; is He?

**Paul:** No, He is not. And see, I think that what you’re pointing to is another part of the conversation we need to have. It’s that all of these physical glories actually have a very important spiritual function. It’s not just that God made His world pleasurable. There is a purpose for all those pleasures. Every physical pleasure that God ever created—wherever you encounter it—is meant to be a finger that points you to the glory of God.

You can stop at the pleasure. They’re all functional. They are all meant—I mean, if this rose is not just pink but, across its petal, is 700 shades of pink—“What must He be like who made that rose?” If these wings of this hummingbird are inexhaustible—“What must this God be like who thought of that?” If this sunset just *blows* my mind as it hits the horizon—“What must this God be like who made this?” That’s what all those things are meant to do. They are meant to be fingers that point you to the one place where your heart will be satisfied.

**Dennis:** So, the question for every listener right now is “What or who do you worship?”—just a real quick throne check—“What’s got center stage? What grabs your attention?” Does God show up in the sunset, in the flower, in the smile of your child, in the delight of—as we’ve talked about—a nice meal or a kiss? Question is: “Your heart was made to worship. What are you filling it with?”

**Bob:** And that’s not a question you just ask once and go, “Okay, I’ve got that resolved”; right?

**Dennis:** Exactly.



**Bob:** You ask that question over and over again. I think in reading the book, *Sex and Money*, we get a chance to examine two very good things that can lead us to idolatry. I'd encourage our listeners, "Get a copy of the book that Paul David Tripp has written, called *Sex and Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies.*"

You can order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com. Our website is FamilyLifeToday.com. Click in the upper left-hand corner of the page where it says,— "GO DEEPER." You can order the book online. Or you can order by phone. Call 1-800-FL-TODAY—1-800-358-6329. That's 1-800- "F" as in family, "L" as in life, and then, the word, "TODAY."

I know that one of the things that has helped Mary Ann and me wrestle with this issue of how we handle the issue of money, in particular, is the discipline of giving in our lives—cultivating a heart of generosity—wanting to be givers and wanting to support the work of the Kingdom. We still have a ways to go in that because, like you were saying, Paul, we are still wed to or tempted by the stuff of this world, thinking it will bring satisfaction.

But I just want to acknowledge the listeners who help support this radio program. We are listener-supported. We could not do what we do if it weren't for listeners, like you, who pitch in and help cover the cost of producing and syndicating this daily program. We're grateful that, for more than 21 years now, we have had faithful, generous listeners who have said, "This program really does matter to us, and we want to help support it."

This month, when you help support the ministry of *FamilyLife Today*, we'd like to say, "Thank you," by sending you a copy of a Bible study that we put together for couples. It's the *FamilyLife Bible Study for Couples*. It's designed for a husband and wife to go through together as you look at God's Word and see what it has to say about relationships. This is a Bible study that you can do either on your own or do with other couples.

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And let me encourage you to join us back again tomorrow. Paul David Tripp is going to be here again. We're going to continue to talk about how we wrestle with the idols of sex and money in our lives. Hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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