Maintaining integrity in a pornographic world

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Porn increases the belief
that women want to be raped
- Dr Mary Anne Layden

The harmful consequences of pornography

Christians are often regarded as anti-body and anti-pleasure because we oppose the worldly misuse of sexuality. In fact mature Christians may hold a very positive attitude toward this gift, because it is given by our God and heavenly Father, the creator of humanity. This truth has been forgotten by a world which embraces pornographic and unrighteous sexual activities, in rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord. Society has consequently become saturated by pornography, especially on the internet. Having forgotten the purpose and meaning of human sexuality, a lucrative industry has developed around the use of pornography (fleshly depiction) with highly damaging consequences:

Pornography harms marriage and the family - by developing unrealistic expectations that often promote dissatisfaction, frustration and infidelity.

Pornography assists child molestation - as paedophiles use the images of adults (or child-pornography or pseudo-child images) to entice children.

Pornography is linked to rape - as it inflames lust and portrays women as objects. The US Attorney-General's Commission on Pornography (1986) linked pornography with organised crime and sexual violence (T. Minnery, *Pornography: A Human Tragedy*, Living Books: Wheaton, 1987 p270).

Pornography hurts children - because videos and magazines in the home or the family marketplace are often found and viewed by young people. This gives them a distorted understanding, a wrong expectation, and a twisted appreciation of human sexuality. It increases the likelihood of early sexual experimentation, including abuse of siblings and other children.

Pornography degrades humanity - since publishers invariably treat people (especially women) as consumer commodities and a source of money.

The biblical warning against nudity outside of marriage

God intends our sexuality to be celebrated within the privacy of marriage, but does not wish us to display our bodies in other contexts. Hence Paul stated that *... the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment* (I Corinthians 12:23-24). A warning against the public display and observation of nudity may be taken from the episode of King David's adultery with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11-12) in which he saw Bathsheba bathing, and they became intimate. Arranging for the death of her husband Uriah, David eventually married Bathsheba. Sadly, during that shocking episode he broke five of the Ten Commandments:

- **# 10 do not covet** - (David wanted something that he should not have);
- **# 8 do not steal** - (David took someone who did not belong to him);
- **# 7 do not commit adultery** - (he betrayed his marriage vows);
- **# 9 do not bear false testimony** - (David tried to mislead Uriah);
- **# 6 do not murder** - (David arranged for the killing of Uriah).

His wrongdoing with Bathsheba is the shocking act of weakness that terribly damaged David's legacy. It is arresting to realise how David is remembered principally for his victory over Goliath and his wrongdoing with Bathsheba.

Since the horrible domino effect of sin began when David observed a naked woman bathing, that event provides a startling caution and warning against observing things we should not see. David repented and came to conviction regarding the importance of looking away from things that are none of his business, and then he penned words that all Christians may do well to learn:

> *I will walk in my house with blameless heart.*
> *I will set before my eyes no vile thing* (Psalm 101:2-3).

That is a helpful quotation to memorize as it reminds us how to respond when we are tempted. Another very useful portion of the Bible helps us realise the fact that detestable things (such as pornographic materials) are under God's curse, and all who treasure such perversions are at risk of judgement:

> *Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction* (Deuteronomy 7:26).

Instead we are told: *... remove wickedness far from your tent ...* (Job 22:23) and we are reminded about Job's virtuous resolve about his own sexuality: *I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl* (31:1).

Rejecting sexual impurity

It is helpful that we remind ourselves of the detestable nature of pornography because we often forget God's perspective on this perversion of creation. We quickly become desensitised to the problem, especially since pornographers are very cunning as they pervert human sexuality. God is both saddened and offended by pornography. He is saddened because his creatures are exploited and damaged, and he is offended by sexual sin as it undermines our testimony to the marriage of his Son and the Church. So our God regards pornography, its makers, the naked models (and those who view pornography) as unclean, and in great need to repent and receive forgiveness along with restoration:

> [The LORD declared] *"You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean ..."* (Leviticus 10:10).
>
> [The LORD said] *"You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them"* (15:31).

Jesus similarly gave a strong warning against immoral or ungodly thinking:

> *"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matthew 5:28).

Observing things that we cannot have is encouraged by written and pictorial pornography, with its lies and falsehoods portrayed in words and graphics. Written lies are found in the so-called "romance novels" that have captivated many unfulfilled women, while pictorial lies are found in magazines or videos that portray women as sexual playthings, and are viewed by many unfulfilled men. Sadly, the great falsehood of pornography can profoundly damage our understanding of human sexuality.

Hence psychologist Gary R. Brooks has coined the term *Centrefold Syndrome* to describe the damage to human sexuality that occurs through pornographic magazines, videos and "romance novels". The harm occurs through the lie that: *The grass is greener on the other side of the fence*.

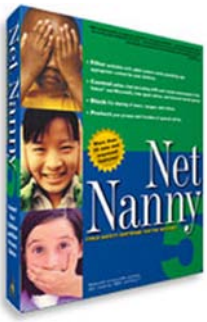
This leads many people to always compare their situation with others and be dissatisfied with what God has given them. In fact the grass is greener on the side that receives the greatest tender loving care! Or as a wise saying puts it: *Fools seek happiness at a distance, but the wise grow it at home*.

A porn-free lifestyle in the home, workplace, and community

Christians can make a personal pledge to God to remain porn-free - neither perusing pornographic material at home, in workplaces, or the community. A group can form an accountability partnership, agreeing to be porn-free. So if sexually explicit materials are pushed upon us, we can boldly declare:

> *"My wife/husband [of now or the future] is not in those magazines. I have made [or I hope one day to make] a promise to love my husband/ wife only. So please do not show me those pictures".*

In our homes we can rid ourselves of pornography, along with materials that are sometimes justified for "therapeutic" use. We will also reject the use of explicit sex manuals as they do not have relevance to the uniqueness of each marriage. In fact the overly explicit written or pictorial descriptions are often a source of harm: pictorial and written sex manuals (even Christian ones) and pornography have caused much damage to marriages, because they create specific expectations that cannot be generally applied. Hence sex manuals and pornographic materials can lead to sexual dysfunction!



Since the internet is saturated with pornography, it may be valuable to use anti-porn filtering software to ensure that computers in the office or at home are not used to view pornography. Computers can also be located in the family area of a home, and not in a secluded location. School and civic libraries should also use filtration software, and the government must require ISP level filtering of the internet so as to protect against the accidental or deliberate perusal of pornographic and other harmful materials.

Our challenge is to reclaim the good place of sexual expression, under the Lordship of God - who through marriage brings unity to a man and a woman *in spirit* (not simply *in flesh*) by covenant: *Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his* (Malachi 2:15). This happens via his blessing of their mutual and public pledge, after which begins a life-long journey of learning to live as one in flesh and spirit, affirming the truth of Hebrews 13:4 - *Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure ....*

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