

The Curse of the Pornographic Mind

While none of us enjoy looking at the horror of sin, of its sad results, of its destructiveness, it is often very necessary to bring out how evil sin is. The reason humans continue in sin is that they are deceived. They believe that sin will reward, and disbelieve the consequences. No one harms themselves intentionally, indeed, even suicide is an attempt to help yourself escape.

We always work towards furthering our own pleasure and well-being. That is why when a human is indulging in self-destructive behaviour, you can be sure that they do not believe that such behaviour is destroying them. They believe it is harmless, or it isn't affecting them, or isn't hurting others.

Or else, they believe consequences only come, in their words, as a result of excessive use, years down the road, to those who do it too much. They think their moderation means they are exempt from consequences. That is why the way to help people out of sin is not by minimising the sinfulness of sin, but by emphasising it.

Psalm 36:2 says, *"For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful."* See, the one committing sin continues in it because he has flattered himself in his own eyes. He refuses to see the ugliness of what he has become. And it is his very self-deceived view of his sin that allows him to continue in it.

The Bible uses the word *'until'* – the turning point is only when his iniquity be found to be hateful. It is only when we see sin for the destructive, terrible force it is, that we turn from it in revulsion. It is when we see the better alternative in God's glory in His holiness, that we turn from the mud pies of our sin to the heavenly beauty that is Him.

One such sin which needs such a treatment is pornography. No one enjoys even talking about the defilement that is pornography, but it certainly is not going to go away if we ignore it. Ever growing since the explosion of the Internet and the end of censorship, more and more people are descending into the cesspool of pornography.

Sadly, it is gripping Christians, even pastors, teachers of the Word, and full-time Christian workers. More and more, we are seeing men, and indeed, some women, addicted to the viewing of pornography. And sadly, we are growing increasingly desensitized to it all.

I have dealt with a professing Christian who believed that pornography would help his married love life. Christians sit through racy scenes on TV and the movies, and it no longer causes sadness and grief over a perversion of God's plan for sexuality. Indeed, it seems to cause the opposite – we secretly relish any reference to things sexual. But God is clear in **Galatians 6:**

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Galatians 6:7-8

Pornography is a sowing process, and it produces fruits. It wrecks sexual relations in marriage, it tears apart the home, it dulls the soul spiritually, it ruins Biblical masculinity and Biblical femininity. It stirs up violence in some men, and creates a warped view of sexuality. In short, it tears apart the mind, it tears apart the family, it tears apart the church.

Why does it do this? Perhaps we are already seared by overexposure to the world's pornographic thinking, and need the cold water of the Word to splash over us and remind us of reality. Let us get the Bible's perspective on pornography. Our 'proof text' – in Christ's own words – is found in **Matthew 5:27**:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery:' But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Matthew 5:27

Jesus explains the root of what pornography is, and why it is evil. Pornography is to sexually desire another person who is not married to you. It takes place in the mind, but the sexual sin is as real as if the act has taken place. An imagination of the act that, in heaven's eyes, is the same as the act itself. He then says that one doing that has committed adultery.

Now adultery is marital unfaithfulness. So can a single person not be guilty of this sin? Of course they can, because the root idea of adultery is to commit sin with someone who does not belong to you. When you fantasise about someone who is unmarried, or married to another – they do not belong to you in God's eyes, and you are guilty of adultery. Let's break this down into some portions, to see why this sin is heinous in God's eyes.

1. Firstly, it is an issue of unfaithfulness.

When you fantasise about someone other than your spouse, you are clearly being unfaithful – you are using them to meet your sexual desire, when God commands you to focus only on one person – your spouse. If you are single, you are being unfaithful to the one God has for you – because there is only one person for you. By imagining any other, you are unfaithful to that one.

Indeed, even if God has it for us to be single all our lives – we are being unfaithful to Him. We are loving something more than Him, because any time we disobey His commandments, that is what we are saying: I love something more than God.

2. Secondly, pornography is the sin of coveting.

To covet is to desire for yourself what is not yours, what is not for you. When you covet, you display the ugly heart of discontent that craves and desires with burning violence to quench its own desires. In **Colossians 3:5**, Paul says that covetousness is idolatry. See, the one coveting essentially says, 'God and His gifts are not enough for me.' They covet what God has not given them.

They look over the fence at their neighbour's spouse, at their neighbour's goods, and reasons, "If I had them, I'd be happy." They are essentially unthankful. They are discontent. A coveter is not satisfied with what God has given them – and feels it is their right to burn in lust after what God has not given them. The one involved in pornography states: 'I want more than God has given me.'

If they are married, they state they are not happy with God's choice of a partner for them. If they are unmarried, they state their discontent with God choosing singleness for this time in their life. And so it is an act of rebellion: 'God has not given me what I want, so I will seek it in fantasy. I will seek it by imagining it, and by simulating the experience myself.'

The greatest tragedy of this is that we are saying: God, you are not enough. We are saying, my relationship with God is not enough to thrill me, fill me with love and joy and acceptance. Instead, we are making an evil exchange – one of God's gifts, sex – in a perverted form, as the thing we love most. We are desiring the created more than the Creator.

This is the heart of why covetousness is so evil: it makes a god out of a thing. It seeks happiness, meaning, fulfilment, freedom in something that God created to be used to enjoy Him more. Romans 1 speaks about this dark exchange – and links it directly to perverted sexuality.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

Romans 1:21-26

Humans made a dark exchange – they refused to make God their first love, and chose to worship what He had made for our enjoyment. The result? God gave people over to the destructiveness of their own hearts – to become increasingly perverted. The one pursuing pornography does not realise he is choosing the created thing over the Creator, and is on a one-way path to having God give him over to his sin.

Put simply, when one commits adultery through pornography, you are saying, 'This is better than God.' Those vile images are more enjoyable than God to you.

3. Thirdly, not only is pornography coveting and idolatry, it is also pride.

The one fantasising does so essentially for one reason – he can remain in control of the fantasy. When you fantasise, everything is as you want it – there are no circumstances beyond

your control, nothing you have to submit to, or include – all is as you want it. You remain in control. This is the proud heart that always says, 'I will.' The one in pornography deceives themselves by thinking they are simply imagining how it could be with their spouse, or with their future spouse.

For them, this is not lust, it is 'thinking about possibilities.' But the fact is, Jesus said it is nothing like that. Because true sexuality involves the willing involvement of your spouse. There is no controlling the other person – it is the giving union of two souls committed to each other. Therefore, when you fantasise about someone without their consent – what does that amount to? Put simply – mental rape.

If Jesus said lusting after someone in your heart was as if you had actually committed the act, then what is it to lust after someone without their consent? Mental rape. How foolish the world is to continue in debates over whether sexually explicit films and media cause rape. They do not cause rape. Pride causes rape. Pride that is fuelled by pornography. Pride fuelled by the thinking that I can control a sexual experience as I want to.

Pretty soon, such thinking is horrifically fleshed out – as the man believes that his fantasy world must find an outlet in reality – where he controls it all, even without the consent of the woman. Ted Bundy, a convicted serial killer, just hours before his execution said the following: "I have lived in prison a long time now and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to violence just like me. And without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography, without a question, deeply influenced and consumed by an addiction to pornography."

Here, of course, is the irony of sin. The one fantasising enjoys it because he thinks he can control his sexual pleasure privately, without complications. Instead, he is increasingly being controlled. He is growing in enslavement. The slightest provocation from a film, song or video leaves him like an addict with withdrawal symptoms. But he deceives himself. He says, 'My desires are just strong.' He's right – they are – they are burning out of control, because he has fed them.

Indeed, the problem of pornography is not the images only. They are simply the fuel. The problem is the pornographic mind. Many a person needs no images; they do fine imagining and fantasising without the aid of visual pornography – they have pornographic minds. Sin enslaves. It becomes a habit, a need – an addiction.

4. The fourth problem with pornography is that it is hatred.

Hatred? Yes, it is hatred. Love, **1 Corinthians 13:5** tells us, seeks not her own. Pornography is an exclusively selfish endeavour. It is not a giving act of unselfish esteem of the other. It is a gratifying of oneself, by the use of another. It is the exploitation of the thought and image of another human, to please myself. There is nothing in pornography that is the giving, unselfish, mutual love of the marriage bed. It is using another person for myself.

It is not simulation of true sexuality because it gives nothing to another person. It is all selfish, and the marriage bed is not selfish. The form of sexuality that comes out of this is a warped form. It manifests itself in self-sex, in even married partners simply taking from one another in the marriage bed, not giving. That is because pornography trains us to take, never give.

Connected to that, pornography destroys Biblical masculinity and femininity. Men become predators, instead of protectors and providers. Women lose their high honour and become purely a means for men to satisfy themselves. As a man increasingly sees a woman as the means to quench his own burning lusts. Her personality, her needs, her dreams and desires become distractions that get in the way.

Then, he starts to resent her lack of cooperation in his single-minded pursuit of his own pleasure. He grows in hatred for the female. This is the trap of sin. It poses as love for the opposite sex – but pornography is a deep love of self, that exploits a natural desire into an ugly, predatory thing.

Furthermore, God's portrait of love between man and women grows and thrives on high respect and praise for one another. When a man or a woman increasingly views the other from only a sexual point of view, they have stripped themselves of the ability to rejoice in the high spiritual nature of people made in the image of God.

Such a man, for example, has robbed himself of the chance enjoying the pleasure of holding his spouse in high esteem, for in his own eyes, all women are being dragged down into the muddy waters of his mind. His guilt defiles his own sense of honour, and from that low place, he has no honour to give to others. His hatred and disrespect towards the opposite sex grows.

Not only is pornography idolatry, pride and hatred, but it is also spiritually numbing. When one is involved in sexual sin – the law of diminishing returns takes place. You start off enjoying the pleasure of sin. But soon, that high is no longer felt, and you need a bit more to get that same thrill. But that thrill eludes you the next time, and so you need it racier, weirder, more hardcore to find that original thrill.

Soon, something tragic has happened – in the quest for an ever-increasing sexual thrill – your heart has become dull. The scar tissue has grown over your heart, and it is incapable of feeling the thrill of the simple, beautiful marriage bed. As the sinful heart needed an ever-increasing pace, soon nothing at all excites it. It requires sin simply to get along; the addiction is in place.

And now, the heart has lost the joy of innocence, the joy of a child unwrapping its presents – of rejoicing in the gift as God gave it to us. And so our hearts retreat to a dull and grey disposition – for since we sought sexuality on the edge, sexuality in the norm no longer has an interest for us. Such a person is sadly numb to the joys of life.

He has been burnt by the deceitfulness of sin, and been hardened. He has lost feeling in his heart where there should be deep sensitivity to the sanctity of sexuality in marriage – he can no longer even feel pangs of conviction over seeing premarital sex portrayed online or in the

media. And here is another reason why – God meets with us in our bodies. He demands pure bodies.

What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

God has saved us, and now dwells in us by His Spirit in our bodies. Sexual sin defiles the place of fellowship. He meets with us in our bodies, and when our bodies are used for sexual sin, you may as well smear the Most Holy Place with human waste and expect the Shekinah glory to descend there. **Romans 12:1** says: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

Do we want God's abiding presence in our lives? He will be a faraway concept, a distant theme, to the one involved in pornography. You may as well write *Ichabod* over your life – the glory has departed. Yes, God will forgive and fellowship with the repentant. But the one addicted to pornography needs to hear – you will have no spiritual life of note as long as you keep defiling the temple of God. This warning in 1 Corinthians needs to be on our hearts:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Now, how many people involved in pornography view what they are doing as an act of idolatry, unthankful discontent, mental rape, hatred, and the thing which numbs them to the joy of life, and to the very presence of God? Not many. This is why we say, the place for a person involved in pornography to start is to see is as the Bible does.

How to recover from the curse of pornography

Call to mind once more **Psalms 36:2**: *"For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful."* Is it a hateful thing to be regarding naked bodies as more wonderful than God Himself? It certainly is. Is it a hateful thing to be unthankful and discontent with what you have? It definitely is. Is it a hateful thing to be a mental rapist? It absolutely is.

Is it a hateful thing to be hating others? Yes, it is. Is it a hateful thing to deny yourself the presence of God and rob yourself of the joy of the marital bed? Yes. We know it is – we deceive ourselves by not meditating on these things, and believing them. This is the road to recovery.

1. So firstly, we need to renew our minds with the truth of Scripture,

See, change happens when our minds are renewed. We have to see pornography sin the way God sees it. That is what confession means. Confession literally means to 'speak the same word on.' If we truly confess the sin of pornography, it means we agree with God that we have been idolatrous, coveting, mentally raping others, trying to control, being selfish and hateful. It is that very thought that will repel us from returning.

2. Secondly, we need to see the pleasure of God is a far surpassing pleasure.

The greatest antidote to a sinful pleasure is a superior pleasure. It is hard for a calloused heart to see through the haze it has brought upon itself, but with tears and repentance, there needs to be a belief, a faith, that God Himself is sweeter and better than the perversion of one of His gifts. We need to know that knowing and experiencing God is the deepest pleasure we can have.

Sexuality provides a sense of intimacy, fulfilment and satisfaction. It was meant to do that. However, the one in pornography must see that sexual sin wounds the heart, it does not warm it. They must see their behaviour as destructive, and trust the Creator of their heart, by pursuing Him. The biggest antidote to the coveting heart is contentment. That is why Paul said in **1 Corinthians 6:20**: *"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

3. Thirdly, there needs to be a profound reordering of our thought lives.

Philippians 4:8 gives us the guideline for the kind of thoughts we are to be thinking: *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."*

This is the kind of thinking we are to have. Practice making these criteria the grid through which all thoughts must pass. If they do not conform to these standards, they have no place becoming a meditation. **2 Corinthians 10:5** instructs us to take our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ.

4. Finally, we need to act in wisdom.

That means fleeing the appearance of sin, and giving no occasion to the flesh. Let him that thinketh he stands take heed lest he fall, says **1 Corinthians 10:12**. Don't close your door when you're online, or flirt with temptation when you're alone – don't allow your flesh room to breathe. Flee fornication – follow Christ with all your heart.