
—
“Today no one in the world shall suffer because I live. I will be kind, considerate, careful in thought and speech and act. I will seek to discover the element that weakens me as a power in the world, and that keeps me from living up to the fullness of my possibility. That weakness I will master today. I will conquer it, at any cost.”

William George Jordan

Chapter Fifteen

The Deadly Hazards of Pornography

Insight # 15 Pornography is like a training manual for the mystique; it dulls the conscience, corrupts the mind, cankers the heart, deadens the soul, and stimulates natural passions until they become unnatural.

Therapy goes with the territory of mothering. Young children have only one real mother, but teenagers seem to need a few more--just to work things through--to clear out the cobwebs of confused thinking. I've enjoyed these conversations with my children's friends. Curt was one of these, but not in the beginning.

Curt was a friend of one of our sons. He seemed extremely shy; my natural friendliness seemed to irritate his right to privacy. He kept his face covered with a baseball cap that was tipped downwards, and he shadowed our son in silence whenever they passed through our home. Often I attempted to bring him out of his shell, but conversation seemed painful. Their friendship gradually faded away, but years later he came to visit--alone.

I was watering flowers when he drove up. I didn't recognize him; he no longer wore the baseball cap. This time, he started the conversation, "Hi, Mrs. Sorensen; it's been a long time."

"Well, Curt," I responded, "it has been a long time. How are you doing?"

"Better, thank you," he said.

"Better?" I asked.

“Definitely better,” he responded.

We sat down on the lawn and began catching up. I learned why he was doing better when he learned about this writing project. He said, “That’s great. I’m so glad that you’re writing on the dangers of pornography. I wish that someone had warned me years ago when I got hooked on the stuff. It’s bad--really bad.”

“Tell me about it,” I said.

“Well, it all started when I went over to a friend’s house to play. His older brother had a collection of porno magazines. The three of us climbed into a closet and started looking at them. Wow, I had never seen anything like that before, but once I got started I couldn’t stop. There seemed to be a magic to it all--I loved and hated the way they made me feel.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Well, they’re exciting to a guy. They make you feel powerful, excited on the outside, but terrible on the inside. The guys think there’s nothing wrong with the stuff, but all I know is how I felt at the time, and I felt bad. I couldn’t be around Mom or my sisters without feeling bad. I couldn’t be around you, or Micah’s sisters without feeling bad. I wanted to hide from everyone--except my friends. You’re always scared that someone is going to find your stash.

“I started out having sexual fantasies; I could sensationalize anyone. They would be just sitting there, but I would sensationalize them.”

“What do you mean by sensationalize?” I asked.

“I could, just by thinking, make any woman look sexy, inviting,” he said. “She could be just sitting there, or jogging down the street, or working alongside me at the restaurant, it didn’t matter; I was convinced that she wanted me sexually like I wanted her. I know it’s bizarre, but I was controlled by sexual fantasies.”

“How did you get out?” I asked.

“I don’t know, well, yes, I do. I met someone--a girl--that I really cared about. I never thought she would ever even look at a guy like me, but one day I got up the courage to ask her out. She just looked at me; she stood there looking at me. I turned around, walked away and went home and hid out with my stash of magazines. I kept thinking to myself, who does she think she is? Who does she think she is? My love turned to hate in just a few minutes, then I realized I didn’t hate her--I hated myself, or what I was doing to myself. I realized that I would never be able to date a girl like that unless I cleaned up my act. I threw all the magazines in a paper bag, and

went out in the backyard, dug a hole and buried them.”

“That’s fantastic,” I said, “Did you ever dig them up again?”

He smiled, looked down, then said, “Hey, to be honest, I wanted to. Whenever I got depressed, I really wanted to, but I never did. Oh, there’s times when I walk pass the magazine rack at the grocery store and glance over at them, but I don’t open’em. I know what they do to you, and I don’t want it anymore. By the way, I’m with the greatest girlfriend now. She has helped me to get back on track--I mean with school and goals. I met her in a class at the college. We’re probably going to get married in a couple of years.”

“How did you get up the courage to ask her out?” I asked playfully.

“I didn’t actually, she asked me out,” he said. “Hey, really that’s one of the things that happened after I got away from the stuff. Women started noticing me. I think what happened there is that before I scared them; they didn’t know, but I think they sensed it--that I didn’t respect women, or myself for that matter. That’s a laugh; you think that it’s all in secret--that nobody knows what you’re doing, but you just can’t hide the bad feelings.”

“Can I use your story in my book?” I asked.

“Are you kidding? If it helps some kid, I’m happy for you to use it.”

Curt walked away, then as he got into his car, he smiled and waved. “Hey, say hi to Micah,” he said, “and thanks for listening.”

“Thanks for telling,” I said. As he drove away, I sat thinking about the difference in him. The Curt that used to hide his face, and cower in my presence was gone; the new Curt was open, alive and free.

The Pollution of Pornography

Remember the sign that was posted on the beach in the story about Kerry? It read: NO SWIMMING OR BOATING ALLOWED: TREACHEROUS UNDERCURRENTS. Pornography should have a warning sign that says: Beware, Dangerous Substance that Dulls the Conscience, Corrupts the Mind, Cankers the Heart, Deadens the Soul, and Stimulates Natural Passions until They become Unnatural.

Let’s set the record straight: we’re not talking about censorship of classic novels and beautiful art portraying undressed men and women. I walked through the Louvre in Paris, France and saw more naked men and women than I have ever seen in my life, but their nakedness increased--not decreased--my reverence for human life!

The paintings portrayed human dignity, poise and grace. As I walked away I realized for the first time, how society has fallen from such a view. We live in an age of technological advancement but spiritual darkness.

Nakedness is not the issue; neither is the discussion of sexuality, even the scriptures are open and candid about sex. It's the "tang" or "brutal force" in pornography that makes it so destructive. The art at the Louve, France inspires an awakened sense of wonderment for human life and form; pornography breeds contempt for human life and form. We know it by it's rank smell--the smell of lust, the smell of vulgarity, the smell of mocking, the smell of ridicule.

Our inner guide tells us that it is not good for the human soul by the dark, depressing bitter aftertaste. Women are quick to call it for what it is, but men can get addicted to the "tang" of it--the passions roused, the pride, the fascination with power. The addiction is not only to the pornography, but also to the dark power that inspires it. Pornography has two parts-- what we see and what we *feel*, and it's that feeling that's the brutal force.

The Brutal Force Behind Pornography

We can better understand the brutal force behind pornography by contrast. My husband and I love to listen to classical music; there's an energizing, uplifting, ennobling force to it. (Perhaps such compositions are immortal because they have been inspired by the Immortal, Eternal God.) Good books such as scriptures and other inspired writings can have the same edifying effect. They enlighten our minds, and generate tender feelings of our hearts. The after effect is that we feel more alive, more peace, more direction.

Pornography is pornography because of the power it generates towards the dark side of human life and the dark side of sex.

Pornography rips the mask off of the mystique; it openly exposes all the five parts of the mystique: it **lowers** the vision of human life, instills the **lie** that sex is better when it involves only body parts; inflames the **lust** that reduces the act to a graduated

form of masturbation, uses charged **language**, and has the seductive **look**.

Now let's take a closer look at the dangers mentioned: It dulls the conscience, corrupts the mind, cankers the heart, and deadens the soul, and stimulates natural passions until they become unnatural.

1. Dulls the conscience

"Pornography," said Susan Brownmiller, "(is) designed to dehumanize women, to reduce the female to an object of sexual access. Bodies are stripped, exposed and contorted for the purpose of ridicule, to bolster that 'masculine esteem' which gets its kicks and sense of power from viewing females as anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys, dehumanized objects to be used, abused, broken and discarded." (Against Our Will, p. 975)

Pornography opens the door to exploitation--using and abusing others for sexual gratification--by dulling the conscience and dehumanizing women--and in some cases, men and children. The Nazi's of Germany first launched a campaign to dehumanize the Jews, and then they exterminated them. The dehumanization process dulled the consciences of the people into believing that the Jews were less than human. Throughout history, this simple plan has been used: dehumanize through ridicule and humiliation--justify the conscience that this abuse is an exception--then carry out acts of abuse, or even murder. Christians were mocked and killed by the Romans--because they were considered less than human. In our American history, Indians were killed for sport--because they were considered less than human. The ridicule comes first, then the act of violence.

In this same way, pornography seduces the conscience into thinking that it's okay to take advantage of women because they are less than human. They're not human beings, they're just "chicks" or "babes". Pornography ridicules all human life, but especially the women who are portrayed as "anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys, dehumanized objects to be used, abused, broken and discarded."

Our collective conscience is wide-eyed and alert when it comes to any mistreatment of blacks or Jews, but dull and into denial when it comes to women being held up for ridicule in pornography--reduced down to toys to satisfy men's desire for power and play. If the photos in the magazines were only of Jewish women, we would see them for what they are, but the photos are simply of *women* so

we excuse them by saying, “It’s freedom of speech. This is what these women want to do with their lives. These women choose to become sex toys; we can’t help that. Besides--everyone knows--censorship is bad.”

Such expressions confirm exactly the message: that it’s perfectly acceptable to hold women up for ridicule. However, to portray any woman (or man for that matter) as a toy for sexual exploitation is to dehumanize all women--and men--even ourselves.

2. Corrupts the mind

Pornography is like a training manual for the mystique--sex divorced from love. It programs the mind with ideas and attitudes that lead to sexual exploitation, just like seeds planted eventually produce a harvest of food.

Men who have a steady diet of these ideas form a distorted perspective of women, seeing them as “sex toys”.

3. Cankers the heart

Pornography increases the power for lust, while decreasing the power to love. Normal intimacy is empowered by feelings of love and the desire to make life together. Lust is empowered with intense sexual desire to have sex for masturbation, sex for pride, sex for power. When a man makes sexual-lust the master control center of his identity, he becomes the “upside-down” man ruled by passion rather than compassion, rashness rather than rationality.

4. Deadens the soul

There are natural laws that govern the universe; there are natural laws that govern the soul. We can choose to love, honor and cherish the family of God, or we can choose to hate, dishonor and despise, but in doing so we cannot escape the natural consequence--the deadening of the soul. (This extremely important idea is explored next.) That which is no longer used, needed, or wanted becomes extinct. It’s called natural selection. It works in nature and in humans. Souls that are dying seek sensual stimulation and shock to feel alive again. Sexual illnesses are the result of spiritual starvation and the craving to feel alive again.

5. Stimulates natural sexual feelings to make them unnatural, twisting love into lust.

Pornography creates the upside down man--ruled and controlled by sexual passions--void of heart and mind. Remember, the nourish and neglect principle: we are endowed with powers of mind, heart, spirit, and sexuality, but we choose which to nourish

and which to neglect, which will be the masters and which will be the servants. Those who concentrate time and energy consuming pornography deliberately make lust their master. We see the same effect when time and energy is concentrated into one area at the exclusion of others. The jock who puts all efforts towards the game of football, but neglects studies and mind development, or the computer nerd who sits in front of the monitor hour after hour and forgets how to communicate with humans. Pornography stimulates the sexual, exaggerates the sexual, gives more power to the sexual, and ultimately enthrones the sexual to become the master of all control centers.

Psychologist Patrick Carnes, currently the leading United States researcher on sexual addictions, found that among 932 sex addicts studied, 90 % of the men reported that pornography was significant to their addictions. (Don't Call It Love, p. 67) A sexual addiction occurs when deviant sexual behaviors get out of control, regardless of how severe the consequences. It occurs when "inordinate amounts of time are spent in obtaining sex, being sexual, or recovering from sexual experience(s). . .[to the] neglect of important social, occupational, or recreational activities" (Ibid. p.12). The thrust of his message is that with regular use of pornography, there is a loss of personal power to resist self-destructive and other-destructive behaviors.

The Five Effects of Pornography

Victor Cline, PhD., a clinical psychologist, has treated over three hundred persons suffering from deviant sexual behaviors; 96%percent of his clients are male. Among them are child molesters and rapists. In an article titled, "Pornography Effects: Empirical and Clinical Evidence," he noted, "with only a few exceptions" pornography was a major "contributor or facilitator" in the acquisition of sexual illness. He found that pornography affected men in five ways. (Notice how Dr. Cline's findings agree with the five that have already been mentioned.)

First, there is an addictive effect.

"They got hooked. . .they could not throw off their dependence on the material by themselves despite many negative consequences such as divorce, loss of family, or problems with the law as with sexual assault."

While normal sexual desires can be contained and controlled,

pornography stimulates or inflames passions until they become like a massive case of poison oak--the more you scratch, the more you itch. The sexual desire is a stimulus/response control center--the more stimulation--either in thought or touch--the more control it takes. The social scientists call this a stimulus/response attribute of our natures. Seeing food causes our mouths to salivate in preparation for the meal. Seeing seductive looking women hardly dressed creates a stimulus for men to respond sexually.

Second, there was an escalation effect.

“With the passage of time they (those addicted to pornography) required more explicit, rougher, more deviant and kinky kinds of sexual material to get the highs and sexual turn ons. . . .”

Gary Bishop, a molester and murderer, said before he was executed, “Pornography was a determining factor in my downfall. . . .I spent hundreds of dollars on magazines and films. . . .Some of the material was shocking and disgusting at first, but it shortly became commonplace and acceptable.

“As I continued to digress further into my perverted behavior, more stimulation was necessary to maintain the same level of excitement. Finding and procuring sexually arousing materials became an obsession. For me seeing pornography was like lighting a fuse on a stick of dynamite. I became stimulated and had to gratify my urges or explode--[those portrayed in the pictures] became mere sexual objects. My conscience was desensitized and my sexual appetite entirely controlled my actions.”(Ibid. p. 17, 18)

Third, there is a desensitization effect.

Dr. Cline points out that pornography that depicts violence and aggression against women, causes men to “take lightly” such acts of abuse. What had been shocking and repulsive became acceptable and commonplace. Another word for desensitization would be unfeeling, unsympathetic. In other words, *those who become addicted to pornography increase sexual lust while they decrease emotional love*. They do not stop to remember that the women are not sex toys, but daughters, sisters, maybe even mothers--many of whom have been trained to please sexually when they were little girls--by grown-ups who should have protected them.

Fourth, there is disruption of intimate relationships.

Along with the desensitization effect, there is a disruption in marital bonding. Dr. Cline said, “The major consequence of being addicted to pornography is . . .it diminished their capacity to love

and express affection to their partner in their intimate relations. The fantasy was all-powerful, much to the chagrin and disappointment of their partner. Their sex drive had been diverted to a degree away from their spouse. This disturbance of the fragile bonds of intimate family and marital relationships. . . is where the most grievous pain, damage, and sorrow occurs.” In other words, the more they gave into the pornography, the less they were able to express marital intimacy. The mystique can become so compelling that reality is discarded for a mirage--not unlike the fantasy masquerade that longs for the love that’s “hidden in the mist”.

Fantasy masquerades can prevent women from experiencing real love, and fantasy sex can prevent men from experiencing real marital sex. Remember the story of Bob, whose wife was addicted to romantic novels, or the fantasy masquerade? Here’s a story that shows how a man can become addicted to the fantasy side of pornography.

I attended a seminar on sexual addictions with speaker Patrick Carnes, author of Don’t Call It Love. During the break, a young wife and mother confided, “I never understood it before--why my husband would rather make love to a magazine than me. We haven’t made love in over a year. After listening to the discussion on pornography I realize that a man can actually prefer the fantasy to the real thing. It really doesn’t make sense.”

We cannot look through two windows at once--if we look at human sexuality through the mystique, we miss out on the magnificence of soul-bonding intimacy. In wholesome bonding, the man and woman are magnetized to each other, the sexual attraction reinforcing their love and commitment.

The apostle Paul taught, “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:4-5) Some have suggested that Paul meant sexual “power” or the right to ignite sexual powers. In other words, the wife gives to the husband the power and right to ignite her sexual passions, and the husband, in turn, reserves that right for his wife. Pornography is voluntarily giving that right to a stranger’s image on paper or film.

Fifth, there is the acting-out effect.

There is an increasing tendency to sexually act out the behaviors viewed in pornography. One time I interviewed several inmates at the Vacaville Medical Facility, a local prison. One of the questions I asked was, “Do you believe that pornography leads to

sex crimes?”

Everyone of them answered, “Absolutely!”

A young man who was serving time for rape said, “I know that’s what led to my crime. I had been sitting in my room for several hours just looking at the stuff. The pornography created a sexual frenzy that I just couldn’t control. When I left my apartment, I started stalking the first good looking woman I saw. I waited until it was dark and went into her apartment through a back window. I know when I get out; I won’t ever look at that stuff again. Men just don’t realize what it does to them. They think it’s just innocent entertainment; it’s not. It makes you think that women want to be raped--that they prefer it, that it’s more exciting.”

A three-year-old girl in Oakland, California, was kidnapped, her head shaved so that no one would recognize her, then locked in a filthy van, and abused for four years before someone tipped off the police. When the police found her, they also discovered the van was full of pornographic material. Another molester who abused little boys said, “I became so stimulated (by pornography) that I had to gratify my urges or explode. All boys became mere sexual objects. My conscience was desensitized and my sexual appetite entirely controlled my actions.”

Summary

Pornography dissects everything away from the sex act except the sex act itself. It disregards romance, feelings, kindness, tenderness, courtship, friendship, honesty, honor, respect, and a protective spirit. It presents a picture of human sexuality that’s a fake and a lie, just as the masquerade presents a picture of love that’s a lie. It distorts the view of human life to a sexual slant. It bypasses the intellect, the feelings, the uniqueness, and the personality. It twists and spoils natural feelings of love, sympathy and compassion into indifference, disgust, and callousness. It strips sex away from love, honor and cherish, and turns it towards hate, dishonor and despise. It promotes out-of-control sexuality while at the same time it drains moral strength and spirituality.

Each one of us is needed to battle the pornography in our society; one voice can make a difference. As I say over and over to our children, “We need to let people know what we stand for, and what we won’t stand for.” As Edmund Burke said, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Notes to chapter fifteen:

1. The American Medical Association recently released a report stating that sexual assaults are the most rapidly growing violent crime in America. Over 700,000 women are sexually assaulted each year. More than one in four college-age women surveyed had been the victim of rape or attempted rape. 57% of the assaults occurred on dates. 73% of the assailants and 55% of the victims had used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault. 76% of the boys surveyed believed that forced sex was acceptable under some circumstances. *This was absolutely shocking*, 51% of boys and girls surveyed (between the ages of 11 to 14 years-of-age) said that forced sex was acceptable if the boy “spent a lot of money” on the girl. 75% of the boys, and 47% of the girls said it was acceptable for a boy to rape a girl if they had been dating for more than six months. In a survey of male college students, 35% admitted that they would rape a girl if they thought they could get away with it, 43% admitted that they had used coercive behavior to have sex, including ignoring a woman’s protest and using physical aggression to force intercourse. (quoted by Ann Landers, Feb. 28, 1997)

2. “In academic studies, males exposed to even ‘soft’ pornography take a more lenient view of rape and empathize less with rape victims. Writing in the Duke Law journal, Professor Cass Sunstein concludes that ‘the liberalization of pornography laws in the United States. . .has been accompanied by a rise in reported rape rates’ almost fourfold between 1960-88 in the United States--while ‘in countries where restrictions have been adopted, reported rapes have decreased.’

“The correlation is even more stark regarding child molestation. John Rabun Jr., ex-deputy director of the Justice Department’s National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, says that in 40 prosecutions, ‘All adult predators were found with adult pornography and in most cases child nudes and/or pornography.’

“But forget rapists and pedophiles. The invisible victims in this sex-saturated society--where every new telecom technology opens orchards of forbidden fruit--are countless families where loving male-female relationships die the slow death of porn-poisoning. ‘Normal’ men who use pornography which portrays women as one-dimensional sexual objects, often come to view their wives similarly, importing porn-fueled fantasies into the marital bed. . .with love and tenderness drained from marital sex, wives become mere means of

enhanced masturbation. They sense it. They resent it. And discord follows. Perhaps, not accidentally, the Divorce Age and the Porn Age almost perfectly overlap.”

(Paul Akers, Scripps Howards News Service, S.F. Examiner, January 19, 1997)

4. “More than a decade ago, Attorney General Edwin Meese III’s commission on pornography issued its controversial report asserting that sexually explicit materials were harmful and called for strict enforcement of the federal obscenity laws. The report prompted President Ronald Reagan to launch one of the most far-reaching assaults on porn in the nation’s history, a campaign that continued under President George Bush. Hundreds of producers, distributors, and retailers in the sex industry were indicted and convicted. Many were driven from the business and imprisoned. The Reagan-Bush war on pornography coincided, however, with a dramatic increase in America’s consumption of sexually explicit materials. . . According to Adult Video News. . . the number of hardcore-video rentals rose from 75 million in 1985 to 490 million in 1992. The total climbed to 665 million, an all-time high, in 1996. Last year Americans spent more than \$8 billion on (pornography) . . . (Twenty-five years ago it was estimated that Americans spent between 5 to 10 million on pornographic materials.) Despite having some of the toughest restrictions on sexually explicit materials of any Western industrialized nation, the United States is now by far the world’s leading producer of porn. . .” (U.S. News & World Report, “The Business of Porn”, Eric Schlosser, February 10, 1997)