

A Stern Warning About The Damage of Pornography

When main stream media sources jump on the bandwagon to warn you about something you usually hear from the pulpit, it might be worth your while to pay attention.

Time magazine devoted its April 11, 2016 cover story to a discussion of the negative effects of pornography. The subtitle is, “The first generation of men who grew up with unlimited online porn sound the alarm.”

The article highlights a wilderness firefighter from Oregon who, “when he was 9, found naked pictures on the internet. He learned how to download explicit videos. When he was 15, streaming videos arrived, and he watched those.”

Now 26, this man is the very picture of virility and beefy masculinity on the outside, but on the inside he is completely unable to have a normal emotional and physical relationship with a woman. For him, women have become so depersonalized and objectified, even violently so, that he has no idea how to love. He literally cannot speak to a woman without casting over her mind and her body the mantle of pornographic images. Porn has poisoned him.

The story builds a scientific case that pornography quickly becomes an addiction every bit as powerful and disrupting as drug abuse. There’s even a book about it, entitled, *Your Brain on Porn*, by Gary Wilson.

Now, of course, the Time article sticks mainly to a discussion of the physical, emotional, and social consequences of pornography, and says nothing about the spiritual damage; but it still confirms what Christians have been saying about this scourge on families and churches (Gal. 5:19, Matt. 5:27-28, 6:22-23, 2 Peter 2:14, Job 31:1, etc).

So, here are a few brief but important pointers:

Parents – take steps to ensure that pornography is blocked from your home. Dig through Netflix history, smart phones, school laptops, etc.

Young men – have nothing to do with pornography. It will change you in ways that you might not yet realize. Soon, it destroys your ability to be a good leader, husband, and father.

Young women – make it clear to your husbands and prospective husbands that you want nothing to do with a guy who is involved in pornography. It is a deal breaker. It may seem minor now, but I have seen more than one active church couple torn asunder by porn.

Also, even though pornography is mainly a guy thing, there are a growing number of women who are choosing to view it as well (recent statistics suggest 46% of guys ages 18-39 intentionally view pornography once a week, and 16% of girls.) These women report that they, too, are beginning to suffer damage in their perception of their own bodies, their sense of worth, and their ability to relate to people.

Couples – viewing pornography together is neither helpful nor godly. Committing sin together doesn't magically make it righteous. (Would it be ok, for example, to snort cocaine together in the privacy of your own living room?) You certainly should date one another and spice up your relationship, but porn is not the way to do it. Pornography actually drives you farther away from one another.

—John Guzzetta

Four Reasons Why the Church Doesn't See Full Participation Like It Used To

At our first men's Bible class, one of the attendees lamented that, once upon a time, whenever the church provided an activity—whether a worship service, a Bible class, a special meeting, a work day, or even just a social meal—practically 100% of the congregation would show up. Sure, there were a few that had to work or were sick. But turnout was reliably huge in a way that the church hasn't experienced in years.

We scratched our heads a bit and wondered aloud as to the reasons. It's not sickness—we are healthier as a society than ever before. It's not convenience—our cars are more reliable than ever before, the internet makes communication a snap, and we have air conditioning, etc.

We walked away from class without any definitive conclusions, but in several days of thinking on it, perhaps I have found a few culprits.

There Are Too Many Other Things We Would Rather Do

The entertainment biz is competing hard for our dollars and hours. I like fun as much as the next guy, I just don't understand the person who says, "I won't be at church Sunday; we are going to Disney instead." Or, "don't expect to see me on Wednesday night, because Fallout 4 just came

out for the Xbox.” Seriously? That sends a really shabby message to the Lord! No one has to choose between fun and God. Give Him your heart and mind, and there will still be plenty of time for fun.

We Don’t Have the Bond We Once Did

Many of us remember when Christians were our favorite group of people to hang out with. Is that still true? If not, let’s recapture it! “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another” (Rom 12:10). We become emotionally invested in the people we spend time with.

We Don’t Want to Be Perceived as Weird Zealots

This may be subconscious. Perhaps we don’t want to be perceived by our neighbors as “going to church all the time.” So we limit our involvement. If there’s any truth to this, read Matt. 10:32-33.

We Are Busier than Ever Before

Modern labor laws have legislated a 40-hour week, but few follow it. Many even have to work two jobs to make ends meet. Single-income families are a rarity. Some of this is unavoidable. It is a Christian duty to support ourselves and our families (Eph. 4:28). But Christians, even those toiling in slavery, have always found ways to carve out time to meet together for worship (1 Cor. 11:33, Acts 20:7-8).

But, much of this is avoidable. Most modern families would admit that the reason they run frantically from sunup to sundown seven days a week is because of optional activities. Don’t worry—our children can be well-rounded and successful even without stretching them thin or skipping church. First and foremost, we need to be careful to protect non-negotiable time to appear before God in worship with our families. We also need to spend a reasonable amount of additional time in pursuit of Bible study, and fulfilling our responsibility to serve God’s people. We need to be careful not to view the church as one among many extracurricular activities. Spiritual activity feeds the eternal side of man. It stores up heavenly treasure, the only treasure that lasts.

So, what to do except bemoan the loss and manage the decline? Make changes! Keep Christ and His church the top priority in your brief life. “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,

and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

—John Guzzetta