

Sexuality, Pornography and Christians

This little booklet is provided to provoke Christian thought, understanding and action in the area of sexuality.

In addition, it contains a discussion of pornography. One-third of Australian internet users visited an adult website at least once in the first three months of 2007.¹ If you were one of those people, or have visited such sites before, or been tempted to, or know someone who does, you need to keep reading this little booklet.

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¹ "One in three porn viewers are women" by Adele Horin; SMH 26/5/07.

Sexuality, Pornography and Christians

One-third of Australian internet users visited an adult website at least once in the first three months of 2007.² If you were one of those people, or have visited such sites before, or been tempted to, or know someone who does, you need to keep reading this little booklet.

The internet has brought an explosion of pornography into the home and workplace of virtually every Australian. Just a mouse-click away are images that exceed the bounds of fantasy or imagination. Social researchers have observed that in 1961, the introduction of “the pill” helped usher in a sexual revolution. It had a profound effect on sexual attitudes, practices and relationships. And now, psychiatrists and sociologists argue that the social and psychological impact of internet pornography is potentially as huge.

Of course, the internet is not the only place you find pornography. Books, movies, magazines, television shows, advertising boards and posters are littered with images of scantily clad men and women – it is true what they say, “sex sells”.

All this presents a clear and present danger for the Christian who desires to live a pure, holy and honourable life, who wants to follow God and express and use their sexuality in a way that pleases Him.

What God says about our sexuality.

God created humans male and female (Gen 1:27) and placed us together in his world to be fruitful and increase in number. I take it then, that God made us sexual beings, invented sex and it is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, when man and woman were placed in the garden together, “the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame” (Gen 1:25).

Herein lies the wonder of our sexuality. It is a shameless and magnificent gift of God when found and expressed in the right context. That context is the marriage relationship. When the man has left his father and mother and been united to his wife, then the two become one flesh (Gen 1:24). The purpose of our sexuality then, is to unify this unity and to create children.

The Bible celebrates the wonder of sexuality in Song of Songs, where two lovers are reminded not to arouse or awaken love until the appropriate time (Song of Songs 2:5, 3:7). The point is that we are not to interfere with our sexuality but we should let love and its physical expression take its natural course. The consummation of love is to take place at the proper time and in Song of Songs, that is seen when the two find themselves in perfect committed unity (Songs of Songs 8:5-7).

In God’s good world, both these passages express that there is to be a self-giving attitude in our sexuality. In the marriage relationship our body is no longer our own. Paul expresses this in 1 Corinthians 7 in this way, “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.”

So our sexuality and sexual activity between a husband and wife are good things. There is no room in a robustly biblical Christianity for the denigration of sexual activity.

Sadly however, the rejection of God’s good order for the world has had a negative impact on our sexuality. When sin was introduced into the world and into our relationships, it distorted the way we

² “One in three porn viewers are women” by Adele Horin; SMH 26/5/07.

express our sexuality. We have been changed within. At the point that Adam and Eve rejected God's goodness, they realise that they were naked (Genesis 3:7). They are exposed and this makes them feel vulnerable and they are afraid (Genesis 3:10). It is at this point that the openness and freedom that was meant to exist between a husband and wife in marriage was distorted. In order to provide a solution to the shame that has been introduced into the relationship, God makes them garments of skin and Adam and Eve are clothed (Genesis 3:21)

Michael Hill helpfully writes, "The defensive role played by the garments suggests that sexual desire is now warped. It may be used towards objects and goals that were not part of God's plan. Subsequent biblical history will show the perversion of sexual desire as a reality. Frequently the pattern of self-giving will be inverted. Often, sexual activity from this point on, will involve taking for oneself rather than giving oneself to the other."³

Perhaps the best way to describe the impact of sin is that it introduces into the world "non-relational sexuality". We have been designed to express our sexuality within the marriage relationship. Any other expression of it is inappropriate. When removed from its context, sexuality moves from being a joyful physical union between a husband and wife, to a tool for use and abuse by those seeking to find pleasure or sell their wares. As a result, much of the expression of sexuality that we see in the world is a tragic perversion of God's intentions.

At this point, it is worth noting that being single is not a perversion of God's intentions. Being married and therefore sexually active does not increase or complete your humanness; in fact it seems in 1 Corinthians 7 that marriage is the concession. Paul's argument in the chapter is that a having a relationship with God completes your humanness and takes priority over all other relationships. While marriage is the most intimate of human relationships, the error of our age is that sexual experience is the peak human experience and confirms your value as a human. Instead we must see that time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29) and the world is passing away and people need to hear the Gospel. The relationship a person has with God is most important and to be pursued as such. Unmarried people are able to give their full attention and time to God's work (1 Corinthians 7:32) while those married must give at least some attention to their marriage. In Paul's mind, not being married is a preferable state given the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Sexual expression in a broken world

We live in a world broken by sin; we are pulled away from God's ideal from within and without. But thanks be to God that he gives us the victory over such temptation through the death and resurrection of his Son and the power of His Spirit.

As Christians, we must bring ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus. This will mean that we must pursue God's ideal for us in every respect, including the realm of our sexuality. This will mean retaining sexual expression for the purposes of unifying the marriage relationship and the creation of children. This will mean fleeing from sexual immorality (all sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship) and pursuing a holy and honourable expression of our sexuality.

There are many ways we can fail at this point – sexual intercourse with someone we are not married to, homosexuality and lust are just three. Our focus in this paper however, is on pornography.

Why pornography is bad for you.

³ Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love*. (Kingsford: Matthias Media 2002), 143.

During the last weekend in May 2007, a number of articles appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) that argued for against the use of pornography. Those arguing for pornography say that it is pleasurable, educational and re-assuring. While these may be true responses from users, the research done to discover such results, and therefore justify the use of pornography, is fatally flawed. All positive studies use self-selecting users who are willing to talk about their use of pornography. They do not use control groups and methodologically exclude those who are shamed or living in fear by not using representative populations groups. The results are therefore skewed.

By contrast, when longitudinal studies have been done with control groups and randomly selected people, the situation that pornography users find themselves in is rather bleak.

Research has shown beyond doubt that what people see influences their behaviour. Researchers in Canada (Prof James Check), America (Zillman and Bryant) and Australia (Dr John Court) have all demonstrated independently that even infrequent exposure to non-violent pornography can increase inclinations towards sexually aggressive behaviour or rape and can decrease the viability of marriage and desire for female offspring. Dr Arch Hart's research has shown how pornography is addictive and that its continued use will lead to personal and relational turmoil.

SMH writer and researcher Adele Horin spent two months in 2007 charting the use of pornography and its impact on Australians. She concluded that it is a social phenomenon that is poisoning couples and destroying families.⁴ She found that "an increasing number of men appear to be hooked and the women in their lives are flailing about in unhappiness, self-doubt and self-blame. For the men, most use pornography in secret and shameful ways that is damaging them psychologically and impacting their intimacy and sexuality with their partner.

Family time is the first casualty to pornography, closely followed by either a lack of interest in sex or an interest in increasingly aggressive and 'creative' sexual encounters. Horin found that the women end up feeling betrayed and inadequate and the men end up feeling shamed and lost in a pit of hopelessness and despair.

Of course, the above is simply the sociological impact of pornography. At a theological level, pornography is something that Christians ought to flee from even without the sociological reasons as reinforcement. Why?

To put it simply, pornography is a distortion of human sexuality. It promotes non-relational sexuality and arousal and lust in the heart of those engaged with it. To view pornography or read pornographic material is to reject God's good order for the world and the Lordship of Christ you claim to sit under as a Christian.

Jesus says in Matthew 5, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Jesus here makes it clear that the solution required in cases of inappropriate sexual expression had to be radical to be successful. Paul follows Jesus at this point when he instructs Christian men and

⁴ Adele Horin, *How porn is wrecking relationships*. SMH, 25/5/07.

women to be radical by fleeing from sexual impurity and immorality (Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:8, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5).

By doing this we are living in order to please God rather than to please ourselves. This is how Paul expresses the goal of a Christian life in 1 Thessalonians 4:1 – and that we pursue such a pleasing life more and more. This passage (printed below) is a great one to think through and pray over as we consider how it is that God wants us to live in this whole area of sexuality. I wonder if you could be commended by Paul as the Thessalonians were in verse 1?

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable,⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.”

When faced with a call to holiness like this it is easy to find ourselves suddenly spiralling downwards in despair; doubtful that we could ever live up to such a standard. Those trapped in pornography (or engaging in other sexually inappropriate activity) will know the shame attached to this (most often) hidden secret they have. This shame drives people into depression and away from God. This shame will also be a barrier to action. Pray that you can put aside the shame you feel for the good of your relationship with God and with your friends and family.

If you are viewing or engaging with pornography in any way, shape or form, then it is time to stop.

What to do to escape pornography

If you are one who has struggled or continues to struggle in this area, the sad news is that you are very much not alone. The internet has not created a new problem, it has made an old problem all the more accessible to people who in the past may have successfully avoided it. What do you do if this struggle is yours?

First, be honest with yourself and if you have used or do use pornography, admit that you have a problem. Decide that it is time to fix the problem.

Second, tell someone. Tell someone you can trust about your problem/ addiction and ask them to help you solve the problem. This may be a friend, a minister or your husband or wife. It is worth checking with them that they do not have the same problem. If they do, then work at keeping each other accountable in solving your problem together!!

Thirdly, dispose of the pornographic material that you own and make it hard for yourself to get more. Don't keep any of it. If at this point you have decided to solve your problem (and I hope you have), then start disposing of it now. This article can wait. It really can. Go. Do it now. We will wait.

Don't keep anything you have. Delete internet histories, saved pictures and videos, favourites and other storage devices. Throw out videos, DVDs, books and magazines.

Then, you need to work out how to avoid getting it all back again! Start by not going back to the shops you have purchased things from before. Take action with your computer at home and at work. Get a program that filters what you are able to access on your computer. Norton Internet

Security and other Anti-Virus programmes will do this well. Get someone else to set up your computer and make them the administrator so you cannot change the settings.

Go back then and talk with your accountability partner. Set up on your computer a program that will send your internet history to someone else every day or week. There are several versions of these available – the two we recommend and have used are found at www.covenanteyes.com and xxxchurch.com/07/. When you view questionable websites on your computer, someone else will find out and come asking questions.

Fourth, Seek God's forgiveness. Sexual sin can powerfully shake our knowledge and acceptance of God's forgiveness. Once actions have been repented of and plans to avoid temptation in the future are established, be sure to spend time meditating on God's absolute promise to forgive and forget our sin through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifth, having dealt with the matter spiritually, deal with the effects of this sin on your human relationships. There may be serious reparative work required between spouses when one has been involved with pornography. This may take the form of talking about the activity and committing to honesty and openness about current struggles and any future ones; it may mean re-examining the sexual relationship within the marriage; it may mean some counselling; and it may take some time to regain each other's confidence. Please talk to one of the ministry staff if you need advice in this area or the name of a good Christian counsellor.

Sixth, be patient and resist feeling defeated if you fail again. Your addiction to and involvement with pornography took time to develop; it will take time to overcome.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, pray continually – for yourself and with others for your problem to be permanently solved. Rely on God for deliverance and strength. Ask him to refine and sanctify you by His Spirit. God promises to make a difference in our lives. Depend on him to give you the strength you need to overcome this battle.

By way of conclusion, we want you to recognise that there is hope and a way out. Here is an illustration in the form of an autobiography about overcoming the temptation to sin. This readily applies to any sin, but especially to that of the use of pornography.

Chapter 1: I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the road. I fall in, I am lost... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2: I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the road. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in the same place, but it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3: I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the road. I see it is there. I still fall in...it's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

Chapter 4: I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the road. I walk around it.

Chapter 5: I walk down another street.

What chapter are you up to?

How are you going to get to chapter 5?

How to porn-proof your family.

The statistics claim that 20% of internet pornography use is by people under the age of 18. It is the parents' responsibility to help their children learn what it means to live a holy life and to control their body in a way that is honourable. It is the parents job to help their children remain pure. One way parents can do this is by thinking carefully about your children's access to internet and television. Here are some tips to help you.

1. The first and most important (and most neglected) thing to do is to teach your children what it means to live as one of God's children. Instruct them in what holy living looks like. Share with them your own failings. Pray together that you may all grow in godliness and holiness of life. The best way to do all this is to read the Bible and pray with your children every day. For resources or help with this, please speak to one of the ministry staff at church.
2. Pray for your children that they would make wise choices with their eyes, ears and bodies that honour God.
3. Hold discussions with your children about what are appropriate and inappropriate websites to visit, television shows and movies to watch, and books to read. Make rules with real consequences so they know the boundaries and the ramifications of crossing them. Explain the importance of godly living. (Remember that MySpace is inaccessible to children under the age of 14. If your children are on MySpace and under the age of 14 they have lied about their age.)
4. Ensure that your computer has an adequate Internet Security program with a website filter. In addition, load on a website register from a site such as www.covenanteyes.com or xxxchurch.com/07/. It may be embarrassing when your friend rings you to ask you about a website you have visited, only to discover it was your child (!) – but it is better to be safe than sorry. Check the internet history regularly.
5. Ensure that all your computers are kept and used in an open, visible and high traffic area in the house. It is an unwise practise to allow children unrestricted access to the internet in the confines of their room.
6. Ensure that your television is kept and used in an open, visible and high traffic area in the house. It is an unwise practise to allow children unrestricted access to television in the confines of their room. (Remember too that pornography is available on some mobile phones too.)
7. Ensure that you know what movies your children are seeing (especially at friend's houses), and what books and magazines they are reading. Teenage magazines often run stories that will teach your children how to live a sexually distorted life.

A final word

Easy access to pornography on the internet is exposing our children and ourselves to increasingly vile forms of sexual distortion and depravity. With men and young adults, particularly, we need to lift the veil of silence on sexuality and talk about problems people do have and may be covering up.

My experience is that the problems in this area are always worse than I thought and always involve people you would never have thought. Some people I know have thrown out their computer or television or shut down their internet link to deal with the temptation. Some radical surgery that impacts all is better than letting some suffer in silence.

Please talk to one of the ministry staff if you need more advice, help or support. Please challenge us on these issues too. Being a minister of a church does not exempt you from sexual temptation.

THE CHRISTIAN MALE'S BATTLE WITH SEXUALITY

Dr. Archibald D. Hart

*It is God's will that you should be sanctified:
that you should avoid sexual immorality;"*

1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NIV)

I am firmly convinced that the greatest challenge facing the Christian church in this twenty first century lies in the realm of sexuality. And it is men, especially 'good', Christian men, who face the greatest challenge. Almost every letter I have received from men since publishing my book "The Sexual Man" eight years ago confirms this conviction.

The war within

In the hearts of all good men there is a battle raging, a battle as real as the war we are fighting against terrorism. It is a battle for integrity, decency and purity. It is a struggle to overcome forces that seem uncontrollable – in human terms. And many good men are losing this battle, including pastors. While recent revelations of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests has rocked the confidence and trust of Catholic parishioners in North America, we have known for many years that our own house as protestants isn't exactly in order. I first started researching the incidence of pastoral sexual failures eighteen years ago, as did several others. We went public with these findings and soon began to see a gradual decline of reported violations. Just raising the consciousness of pastors by reminding them of how vulnerable they were in the sexual arena, coupled with clearer ethical statements from denominational leaders, did much to stem the tide. However, I am now seeing a gradual but steady increase again in pastoral sexual failures.

But my focus here is not on the sexual indiscretions of pastors. Rather, I want to examine the broader issue of male sexuality that, to some extent, underlies pastoral failures. Pastoral indiscretions are, in my opinion, the outworking of a distorted male sexuality – a reality all men must face up to.

A gift gone wrong

Sex is a joyous gift from God. But of all of the gifts of creation it is probably the most perplexing. There is more potential for sin in the realm of sexuality than in almost any other area of our lives. Paul's admonition in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 3 is as needed today as it was in New Testament times, giving clear evidence of the power sex has always had to entrap us. In more than 30 years of clinical practice, working with many Christian men and pastors, I have not encountered a topic more bewildering to them. Despite the sexual revolution, or perhaps because of it, men seem to be more confused about their sexuality than ever before. They struggle to understand its power, how to control it, and above all how to "sanctify" it according to the admonition of the apostle Paul.

Why is it that so many struggle to balance their strong hormonally-driven urges with their desire to be good, devout and faithful partners? One reason is that the tensions we feel in our sexual drive seem to fit "the lusts of the flesh" Paul talks about. Another is that we live in an era of sexually supercharged stimuli. That men engage in such a struggle is indisputable, as every

counselor of men knows. Good men have difficulty differentiating between ordinary, healthy sexuality and what is abnormal. Many men fear that just because they have a strong sex drive they are in some way deviant. “I must be something of a freak” a pretty normal pastor told me once. Some even fear that they may be “perverted” or addicted to some sexual aberration.

The bottom line is that ALL men struggle to keep their heads above the turbulent waves of their testosterone. The sex drive is a powerful force in healthy men and clearly some have a harder battle with the fight than others. Men with strong sex drives can easily develop a pervasive sense of shame and self-rejection, even though a strong drive, in and of itself, is NOT abnormal. That we must learn to control our sexual urges and channel them into appropriate outlets is the challenge all men face. And it has been this way since the dawn of time!

Major sources of distortion

But who or what is the real problem? It can't be sexuality in and of itself, since this is part of God's creation. I believe it is that the beautiful gift God has given us has become distorted. Men, in particular, have lost their way! What was intended by God to be a joyous, transcendent experience that unites a man and a woman in the act of procreation, has become a bewildering, bothersome and, for most, a baffling challenge.

Several obvious sources for the distortions we see in contemporary male sexuality can be identified. I discuss these in detail in my book “The Sexual Man” (Word Books).⁵, but only have space to discuss three major sources here.

1. The ‘veil of silence’.

“Men are known by the silence they keep” someone has said. This sums up a major distorting influence in male sexuality. The shrouding of male sexuality is not difficult to discern: while average men think about sex a lot, it's too personal and intimate to discuss openly. They won't even admit how often they think about it! Some men may joke about sex, but they hardly ever talk about it seriously. The result? Most boys grow up struggling to distinguish between what is ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ from what is ‘sick, sinful and dysfunctional’. They have no sense of where “normal” lies because they don't know what others are thinking or feeling deep down.

This ‘veil of silence’ can have devastating consequences. For one thing boys don't get healthy or even accurate information about sex from their fathers as they grow up. What they learn from friends is full of distortions and embellished with the shame we so easily associate with sex if you grow up in a Christian home. But there is a much more serious penalty for our silence - it fails to help fathers **model** a healthy sexuality. Most sons do not see their fathers as sexual beings and this can, for example, keep them from learning how to behave in a healthy way toward girls. Without adequate models, boys develop a sexuality that is misguided, and in many cases immoral or even dangerous.

2. Pornography and Cybersex

There is no greater threat to a healthy, let alone sanctified, male sexuality than pornography. It is devastating our Christian boys and creating an epidemic of addiction to sexually stimulating images. The only way I can describe what it has become is to call it “an obsessive/compulsive sexuality” – men are obsessed with it and act it out compulsively. The average male growing up in today's world is so bombarded by sexual stimulation (mainly through the sex-crazed media who

⁵ The Sexual Man. Archibald D. Hart, Word Books, Dallas Tx., 1994.

have discovered that everything sexual sells better than anything else), that few men escape its influence. Pornography also feeds unrealistic expectations for fulfillment, changes how men view women in that they are only seen as sexual objects, and fosters a non-relational sexuality. This means that many men who have used pornography for a long time do not know how to relate to real women, and have great difficulty breaking the habit.

But the current distorting influence of pornography is only the tip of the iceberg. Cybersex, is rapidly becoming the primary source of pornography. There are now literally thousands of web sites that offer extremely explicit pornography that can be indulged in total privacy without anyone else knowing about it. Already it has become a significant temptation for Christian men – including pastors. And just round the corner there is an even more frightening prospect that will make the current level of pornographic of “virtual sex”, where computers connected to high speed internet sites will be able to offer sex-hungry men a variety of sexual experiences in real time with “virtual” partners. It will be so addicting that it is bound to put substance abuse low down on the list of social concerns.

3. The long ‘waiting period’.

The detrimental influence of pornography is particularly severe when it captures young boys. In this context we need to be aware of one significant biological effect that is not going to go away. It is this: *The age of puberty is now lower than it has ever been in history, and it continues to drop.* This reality always comes as a surprise whenever I lecture on the topic of male sexuality. For both boys and girls, the more developed a culture, the lower is the age of puberty. Many factors, including healthier living conditions, better nutrition etc., are considered to be the cause. 200 years ago puberty only struck at 17 or 18. And you were almost certainly married by age 20 – a very short ‘waiting for sex’ period. When I was a teenager, the average age of puberty was around 13. My grandchildren now are all going through puberty at about 11 years of age. And it continues to drop. Who knows when it will level out!

Think for a moment about the difference in maturity between 11 and 18. It is frightening to realize that 11 year old boys, and for some it is younger than this, are physically mature enough to make babies, but not mature enough to feed or raise them. But that is the reality of our world today. The ramifications are mind boggling.

At the other end, the age of adolescence has gone up. No longer can we think about it ending, say, when a boy leaves high school. Many social commentators are saying that today adolescence doesn’t really end until age 28 or 30 because men are not financially able to support a family until they are done with graduate school, working and living independently.

Now this is the point I am leading up to: the period of “waiting” between puberty (say 11) and when you can legitimately experience sex in marriage (say 28), is already too long and getting longer. And it is this long “waiting” period provides the opportunity for sexual distortion. The worldly alternatives facing our young people today are either free sex without any commitment (teenage pregnancies and promiscuous behavior) or masturbation to pornography. Often it is a combination of both. Certainly, a heavy dependence on pornography by men in these early years must inevitably create serious addictive tendencies that are difficult to break.

Creating a healthier sexuality

Given what I have written so far it is not surprising that I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is that we address these issues in our Churches. There is no other social structure that holds out hope! Whatever else we do we must give the highest priority to shaping a healthier

sexuality in our young people, especially boys. We also need to provide opportunities to bring healing to our men. Judging them because they seem out of control won't help. It only breeds more shame and remorse. The battle can only be won by helping them to develop a healthier sexuality

But how does one create a healthy sexuality, given the problems mentioned? And what can men do to heal an already distorted sexuality? The challenges are enormous and I don't want to give the impression that there are quick and easy solutions. However, here are some practical ways we can begin to rebuild the beautiful gift that God has given us through our sexuality:

- To begin with, we need to acknowledge our need for **divine intervention**. While there is a lot of therapeutic help we can offer, only the power of God can get a man out of the mess of a distorted sexuality with any degree of permanency.
- We must help the church at large to **break the veil of silence** that shrouds sexuality. Men's support groups have already begun to spring up around the country. The time has come for frank, open discussions in our churches about the dangers of such practices as sexual fantasies, the damage of early exposure of boys to pornography, and the importance of building healthy, balanced lives. Believe it or not, when one's life is rich with meaning, sexual temptations lose their power even in men with serious distortions.
- **Couples need help in addressing sexual problems** as early as possible in their marriages. Churches who maintain a distance from these matters or who do not offer programs that can help couples in their struggles at reconciling the sexual differences between the spouses are only perpetuating the problem.
- **Parents need help in educating their children**, especially boys, into developing a healthy sexuality. This has to be done without shaming them or creating severe guilt, which is quite inadvertently the most common form of control that Christian parents resort to. Parents themselves need training in how to educate their children!
- Since it takes healthy parents to raise healthy children, parents, **especially fathers**, should be encouraged to confront their own sexual distortions and get help in undoing them.

Conclusion

The problems facing men as they seek to develop a sanctified sexuality aren't going to go away. If anything the challenges are getting greater. And at least for our Christian sub-culture, the church is the only system that can help us restore a sanctified sexuality. The apostle Paul's advice to men has never been more needed than now: "... *that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;*" *1 Thes, 4:4-5 (NIV)*. In one sense we need to learn how to control our bodies because the temptation to sin is greater in the realm of sex than in anything else. But we also need to learn control because we have lost our way on the sexual road. God help us as a society if we don't find the way back to His road before it is too late!

Archibald D. Hart, Ph.D., FPPR.
Senior Professor of Psychology and Dean Emeritus
Graduate School of Psychology
Fuller Theological Seminary