

Purging Pornography with the Power of a Greater Pleasure

Matthew 5:8, 27 – 30

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

1 Corinthians 6:9–11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Colossians 2:20–23

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Three Truths About Sex, Sin, and the Solution

1. God designed sex to glorify himself.

He didn't leave himself silent on the matter.

And passages like we just read make it clear what he expects of us.

Whether you eat or drink, you are to glorify God →

Whether you have sex or don't sex . . . you are glorifying God.

2. We are all sexual sinners because we are all natural born idolaters.

The problem of pornography is not a skin problem, it's a heart problem.

Sexual lust is one of a myriad of symptoms of a heart that hungers for eternity.

An old friend of mine wrote a song that begins . . .

*Standing at the brothel door, past his lust there is so much more . . .
For his sin like an SOS tells us of his souls distress . . .*

In his lyrics, he quotes Bruce Marshall (not [G. K. Chesterton](#)):

"Every time a man knocks on a brothel door, he is really searching for God."

What did Chesterton mean? What is my friend getting at?

Ecclesiastes 3:11 – God has set eternity in the hearts of men . . . everything in creation is meant to awaken this hunger . . .

No Fall . . . everything in creation would be source of thanksgiving to God.

With the Fall . . . we have made gods out of God's best gifts.

As natural born idolaters . . . we are actually enslaved to creation – esp. sex.

In pornography . . . men are actually seeking God's glory.

1 Corinthians 11:7 – made in the image of God, when a man looks at a naked woman, he's glimpsing something of God's glory.

For the materialist (no god) = sex is the only thing spiritual in his life. Orgasm is the only mystery in the universe.

For the believer, however, sex is a gift meant to heighten awareness of the greater pleasure of knowing God.

3. **The answer to pornography is not a better system of works, but the beauty and pleasure and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

The solution to sexual immorality IS NOT sexual morality, but something else entirely.

It's easy to nod our head in agreement, but this is what I mean. And this is where some people may disagree with me.

- a. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not a better filter on the Internet
- b. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not a system of accountability
- c. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not more Scripture memory
- d. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not a better sex life in marriage
- e. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not avoiding the magazines at Jay C
- f. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not gouging out your eyes

I actually had a friend call me as he had a knife in his hand.

Jesus says if your eye causes you to sin, cut them out. So he was . . .

I am not denying his words. We will return to them.

I'm saying Jesus didn't think cutting your eyes out would be the solution.

- g. The *SOLUTION* to pornography is not more church / less TV
- h. The *SOLUTION* is not even to reading more Bible or a men's group

None of those are the SOLUTION. They're needed steps, *NOT* the solution.

What is the solution?

New life: new eyes, new heart, new appetite = what Jesus calls new birth

A daily experience of pleasure in God through his Word and his Spirit

This was the turning point in my life . . .

In 2001 . . . working on 1 Thessalonians 4 . . . LUST . . . cried to God

A few days later . . . listening to Larry Crabb . . . I found my answer

When I returned to campus, I read 2 books . . . *Desiring God + Pleasures*

Last 15 years, it's been the beauty and pleasure of the gospel that has given me the strength to battle lust and impurity.

The Power of Pleasure in the Fight for Purity

1. You were made for pleasure.

a. Pleasure language.

- i. Psalm 16:9–11. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- ii. Psalm 46:4. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.
- iii. Psalm 90:14. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- iv. Psalm 37:4. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- v. Deuteronomy 28:47–48. Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you.
- vi. John 10:10. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10 ESV)
- vii. John 15:11 – These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.
- viii. Matthew 25:21 – His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”
- ix. Hebrews 12:2 –Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.

b. The logic goes like this

- i. You were created to enjoy the pleasures of God (Eden = delight/pleasure)
- ii. The power to say “no” to the pleasures of illicit sex must come from a greater pleasure

c. Don't, Don't, Don't vs. Do, Do, Do – Galatians 5:16

- i. It will not do, to simply say “no” to pleasure, as if this is a goal in itself.
 - 1. In the heart of a sinner, the law only stirs up wrong desires.
 - 2. **Romans 7:7–8.** What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.
- ii. Scripture never tells you “no” for the sake of “no.”
 - 1. Pick up your cross and follow ME.
 - 2. Die to sin, so that you may LIVE in Christ.
 - 3. Be Pure, so that you can see Christ.

iii. Galatians 5:16

d. There is a battle, but it is not a battle of pleasure vs. purity

- i. Lie: Pleasure to be found outside of purity
- ii. Truth: Pleasure is found within purity
- iii. Christian Lie: Purity is Had when you deny Pleasure
- iv. Christian Truth: Purity is Glutting Yourself on the Pleasures of God

e. This is not something that you can do . . . You need to be born again!

- i. God's promises to remove the heart of stone . . . give a heart of flesh
- ii. Purity isn't a discipline you do to get God . . . the cross would be unnecessary.
- iii. Purity is first a gift, then it is discipline *to enjoy more of the original gift.*
- iv. See how **1 Thessalonians 3:13** and **4:3** work together.
 - 1. The command be holy is only possible when God's gives grace
 - 2. When grace is given, the Holy Spirit empowers acts of holiness

2. Those who are born again must FEED on God's beauty.

The problem is that all of us by nature, by environment, and by choice have a wrong view of beauty, and this contributes to our pursuit of (wrongful) pleasure in impurity.

Purity means delighting in what is beautiful. Impurity is delighting in what is ugly, but which we falsely believe is beautiful

This is the power of pornography! We have been deceived to think porn stars are HOT.

We need to go back and cultivate a true affection for Beauty. **What is true beauty?**

- a. Picture what you think beautiful is
 - i. Is it static – early morning lake, wife in wedding dress, trophy buck
 - ii. Is it active – 6-4-3 double play, the precision of a marine drill team
 - iii. Is it narrative – transformation of E. Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*
- b. Is there anything evil that you find beautiful?
 - i. What about the well-costumed people who act out immorality on TV?
 - ii. What about the attractive woman who lobbies for abortion?
 - iii. What about movies like *Walk the Line*, where adultery is center stage; or *Gone in 60 Seconds*, where stealing is the whole movie?
- c. Where did you get your sense of beauty?
 - i. Unless we think about . . . our taste for beauty will come from experience.
 - ii. There is a larger, deeper reason why you and I find things beautiful:
 - 1. God has filled creation with marks of his beauty
 - 2. Creation is aglow with color, texture, beauty, taste, etc.
 - iii. But in a Fallen World: our sense of beauty is warped
 - 1. For reasons explicable/inexplicable, we're attracted to ungodly things
 - 2. Through all kinds of mediums (parents, peers, and personal computers), the world, flesh, and devil have twisted our beauty
 - 3. Unless our minds have been shaped (passively/actively) by Gospel our thoughts on beauty will be wrong . . .
 - 4. And if your thoughts about beauty are wrong, you don't stand a chance against fighting pornography!

- d. **IMPORTANT:** Even when you know something is wrong (pornography), it doesn't mean your thoughts/actions will always do right and reject wrong.

WHY?

- i. **The power of attraction** will always overcome moral standards.

1. I know that I shouldn't eat this cholesterol-laden burger . . . but
2. I know with my diabetes, I should stay away from sugar, but those warm, chocolate chip cookies
3. I know the speed limit is 70, but this Corvette . . .

- ii. Add to the power of attraction . . . **the power of emotions.**

1. In our day, people make moral decisions based on feeling, not facts.

We are products of your culture . . . emotions/feelings guide us.

2. This has always been true, but today it is heightened.

In our day, we train our children and ourselves to do right by WHAT FEELS RIGHT.

- iii. Add to this the **power of the image.** – There has never been an era when pictures, images have been more enticed than our digital age.

Into this world . . . commerce uses sex to make money. So we see . . . the pornification of entertainment and sexualization of everything

- iv. Finally, take away the moral standards our culture . . .

1. the disappearance of disciplined role models
2. the fear of saying 'no' for fear of hurting self-esteem

- v. And what do we have . . . a raging cauldron of lust. And no power to stop it.

1. The gospel is the only way to address such impurity.
2. And with a new heart, new eyes, new mind . . . we must glut ourselves on the pleasures of God and relearn what beauty is.

2 (cont.) – We MUST FEED on God’s Beauty

e. What the Bible says about beauty

- i. God made the world beautiful - Genesis 2:8–14; Psalm 104
- ii. Nothing in creation is more beautiful than God – **Psalm 50:2; 90:17**
- iii. Nothing is more desirable than God’s beauty – **Psalm 27:4**
- iv. We were created to long for God’s beauty/glory - **Psalm 63:2**
- v. We were created to reflect his beauty – Ezekiel 28
- vi. In our sin, we chose the creation over Creator – Genesis 3:6; Romans 1:23
- vii. We have been severed from beauty – Put out into the rough and tumble world, man now faces the harsh reality of being separated from God.
 1. Humanity has lost beauty objectively – we are outsiders to beauty
 2. Humanity has lost beauty subjectively – our bodies move towards death
 3. Our whole existence cries for God’s beautiful glory
- viii. Men made to have beauty, but stripped of that beauty, will go in search for that beauty. And where do you think they will go?
 1. Left to themselves . . . Romans 1
 2. When God intervenes . . . 2 Corinthians 4:4–6

f. The Beauty of the Gospel

- i. The cross is the most beautiful thing in the world; it is also the most gruesome. It is not pretty, but it is beautiful.
- ii. Pornography is pretty . . . oh, but how hideous, ugly, and wicked it is.

3. The difference between pornography and purity – 2 paths to beauty.

- a. First Story: Pornography televises a shape without a story
- b. Second Story: Purity tells a story about a cruciform shape

4. Pornography tells Satan's story

a. Father of Lies

- i. False Reality – Satan creates a reality that doesn't exist
 - 1. Everything about pornography is fake
 - 2. Bodies are plastic, people are airbrushed, images are
- ii. False Relationship
 - 1. There's attraction, chemical release, bodily stimulation, but it's fake.
 - 2. Like flying a flight simulator.
 - 3. It hollows you out. The person you become is hollow and weak.
- iii. False commitment
 - 1. It breeds individualism & self-centeredness—the opposite of marriage
 - 2. It requires nothing of you and increases a consumer mentality.
- iv. False sense of pleasure
 - 1. The pleasure of sex is procreative / productive. The pleasure of sex does not stop when the orgasm is over; it is meant to continue in the creation of life.
 - 2. Sex without procreation necessarily distorts sex
 - a. The effect of the Pill on society, has changed sex
 - b. There is a strong correlation between . . .
 - i. Sex without offspring → Sex is about personal pleasure
 - ii. Sex as pleasure → don't need marriage (for kids)
 - iii. Sex about pleasure → Sex without boundaries
 - iv. Sex without boundaries → Homosexuality
 - c. Pornography and homosexuality are not two different things
 - d. This is why heterosexual pornography can easily turn to same-sex pornography
 - e. When flesh is all that matters,
- v. Pornography is a grand façade of falsehood.

b. Murderer

- i. It kills your relationship with God – you walk in the darkness
 - 1. Just as man cannot serve God and mammon, so man cannot serve God and Maxim magazine
 - 2. Either you will behold the beauty of God OR the beauty of sexual sin
- ii. It kills your friendships, esp. at church – you isolate yourself
 - 1. In the act of pornography, you hide yourself away from everyone
 - 2. In order to protect yourself, you devise ways to cover yourself
- iii. It kills your relationship with your (future) wife – you have to lie
 - 1. Because pornography brings another woman into marriage, it divides your heart from your wife
 - 2. For single men, it creates impossible expectations for your future wife; when she finds out, it will rip out her heart.
- iv. It kills you slowly – you have to become a different person
 - 1. It will change you; it will steal, kill, and destroy
 - 2. The way you engage in sex will ultimately shape the kind of person you become.

c. Accuser

- i. You blame your past – instead of confessing your past
- ii. You blame your spouse – instead of serving your spouse
- iii. You blame your circumstances – instead of trusting God
- iv. You blame God's standard – see holiness as ugliness
 - 1. When sexual immorality goes unchecked by God's Word, God's Word will be abandoned or changed
 - 2. Sexual immorality and Christian living cannot coexist for long
- d. The solution to all of these effects is the gospel! – Christ came to die for pornographers, for the immoral, for homosexuals (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

5. Purity tells the story of Christ

a. Personal – Holy sex tells a personal story, a two-person biography.

- i. Holy sex is the culmination of a relationship
 - 1. It is not the goal of life
 - 2. It is not the ground of the relationship
 - 3. It is the acme of joy in marital bliss
- ii. Holy sex is always set in the context of a covenant
 - 1. In the Bible covenants had named partners, a personal history, stipulations, promises of blessing, warnings of danger, assurance of prosperity.
 - 2. The same is true in sex. Only if sex is conducted inside the context of a marriage covenant can its intended benefits be experienced

b. Productive – Unlike pornography which produces nothing and destroys extensively, holy sex creates.

- i. A Home
 - 1. A family is the smallest civilization – “When divorce occurs a whole civilization is destroyed” Sex by its nature is procreative.
 - 2. When it is divorced from family, it releases all kinds of vile evil.
- ii. Children
 - 1. Though this is minimized in our culture, even by Christians
 - 2. The first commandment (“be fruitful and multiply”) reminds us of God’s intentions with sex
- iii. Strong Men
 - 1. Pornography makes weak men, even if their built like NFL LB
 - 2. Purity makes strong men, who can resist the devil, draw to God
 - 3. Proverbs 25:28 – “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”
 - 4. Proverbs 16:32 – “He who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
- iv. Beautiful Women
 - 1. Pornography destroys women—in the photos, in your home
 - 2. Purity liberates women and beautifies your wife

c. Picturesque – Holy Sex displays the beauty of God and his gospel.

- i. Marital Union speaks of Christ and the Church – Ephesians 5:32–33
- ii. Marital Union speaks of the Unity of the Triune God – Genesis 2:24
- iii. Marital Union speaks of Eden – Ever read Song of Songs?
- iv. Marital Union speaks of Zion – Marriage is a parable of Christ and his bride
 - 1. So even if you have a terrible sex life . . . Or you never never have sex again . . . You won't miss the real thing.
 - 2. What's the real thing? Sex with God? Heavens no!
 - 3. Sex is a created act that bespeaks of something far more glorious yet to be experienced. It is a mystery.
 - 4. For the materialist, sex is the closest to heaven they will ever come. It is the only 'spiritual' thing they know. And that's why they worship it!

d. Who do you want to be? What story are you living out?

- i. Your sex life is a test of who you are
- ii. If pornography is a regular issue in your life . . . it's probably not pornography that is the problem
 - 1. There's some underlying lie or idol or lust that is driving you there
 - 2. At the same time, when you give into that temptation . . . it may because it feels good, it releases endorphins, or helps you escape/relax/cope/ . . . but it's likely there are other factors involved
- iii. Ultimately, the solution to all of these things is God, God's gospel, and a life that is daily delighting yourself in the pleasures of God
- iv. How you handle pleasure says much about yourself and the God you worship!

6. How will you cultivate beauty and holiness?

a. ***Delight in the Lord*** – You will fixate on what you feast on. And vice versa.

- i. Memorize the verses which speak of joy and pleasure.
- ii. Read the Bible. Feast on it. Think of it not as a supplement but a steak.
- iii. Read John Piper's *The Dangerous Duty of Delight, Desiring God, When I Don't Desire God*, and *The Pleasures of God*
- iv. Read Tozer's *Knowledge of the Holy*; Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*
- v. Ask God to open your eyes to the joys in his Word.

b. ***Delight in his story*** – The story you inhabit will determine your habits.

- i. Know his story—read the Bible and books that explain the Bible
 1. *God's Big Picture Story Bible, Jesus Story Book Bible*
 2. Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture*
 3. Define your little story and the moments therein by the larger story
- ii. Listen to music that reinforces the story
 1. Andrew Peterson (*Behold the Lamb*), Josh Garrells, Michael Card
 2. Not just Christian music, but Christian music that makes you think.
- iii. Read books that capture your imagination
 1. *Chronicles of Narnia; The Great Divorce; The Lord of the Rings*
 2. N. D. Wilson, *Notes from the Tilt-a-Whirl; Death by Living*
 3. Marilyn Robinson, *Gilead*

c. ***By delighting in the cross*** – Let the cross redefine beauty for you!

- i. Gospel Logic
 1. Let every sin be a reminder that you are a sinner! Christ died for you!
 2. Let every sin be a doorway to thanking God for the cross.
 3. Let every fresh encounter with the cross, awaken joy, amazement, and thanksgiving.
 4. Let such joy drive you into a deeper intimacy with God.
 5. Repeat.
- ii. Mediate on the Cross.
 1. In reading the Bible, look for Christ and his cross—promised, prophesied, actualized, explained
 2. Read C. J. Mahaney's *The Cross-Centered Life* or John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*

d. By delighting in the fellowship of your wife, your family, and the church

e. By calling out and laughing at the devil.

f. And take precautions—put up firewalls, have accountability, keep computer in living room, have emergency friends you can call, etc.