

Turning the Tide of Sexual Immorality in our Nation

An adaptation of an address in the Session on Sexual Immorality at the Solemn National Assembly called by the Australian Prayer Network, in Canberra on Friday 9th March 2007.

This article provides a checklist of issues to consider in praying for sexual purity in the church, and for freedom for those caught in the darkness of sexual immorality in the nation. For breakthrough it is essential to confess and repent of any complicity we may have in sexual immorality, as well as praying identificational repentance for sins committed by others in the church. Prayer which brings darkness to light co-operates with Jesus as He prepares His Bride for marriage, washing her with the water of the Word. Jesus died to remove **all** of our sin, to thoroughly sanctify a bride for Himself, who is absolutely pure. His death was not to half heartedly wash us. He did not look down from the Cross at the church He was dying for with a *wink wink, nod nod* approach to our sin. Thus this inventory is quite detailed and may seem even pedantic. Any cleaner worth its salt is abrasive, scratching away at every sceric of impacted dirt, dissolving every last ingrained stain. Consider this report from the Sydney Morning Herald 17/4/07:

God may influence Australians' attitudes towards sex but religion plays little role in what they actually do in bed, a landmark survey has found. The study of almost 20,000 Australians has revealed that most who hold religious beliefs have strong negative attitudes towards watching X-rated films, cheating and sex before marriage. However, unless they were very strong believers, their attitudes didn't appear to stop them doing these things themselves, the researchers found. "What we saw was when it came to these sexual issues, people influenced by religion believed one thing but did another," said lead researcher and psychologist Dr Richard de Visser. Researchers used Australia's largest ever social survey to glean the first snapshot of the links between religion, sexual beliefs and actual behaviour.

As we consider the ways in which we, or brothers and sisters have sinned sexually, let us do so celebrating and thanking God for His forgiveness and eradication of our sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus! Thank Him for the simple ways He has made for us to receive cleansing and restoration, through faith in, and communion with Jesus! In repenting and praying for the church consider these Scriptures:

but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. Romans 16: 19-20

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5: 8

He saved us, not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word. Ephesians 5:26

Eph 4: 17b-24 indicates a progression in the way that impure sexuality spreads and defiles:

Futile thinking (lust), leads to darkened understanding, then to a blindness in the heart, which causes spiritual ignorance. This alienates from vital relationship with God (though we may have a form of religion), a seared conscience and deadened feelings. Relationships are therefore shallow and deceitful because the true self cannot be known, shared or given to another as a gift of love. This article examines this progression of worldly or defiled sexuality, and how it unleashes a curse of death into our churches and on our society. We will consider the following topics and how one leads to another.

When Christians engage secretly in lust it sets the very opposite attitude of Jesus into our hearts

- Lust and fantasy
- Pornography, (and internet abuse)
- Heterosexual promiscuity: Fornication, Adultery and Prostitution
- Homosexuality
- Abuse and Pedophilia

LUST AND FANTASY

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed. Then, when desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:14,15

Lust is utterly self-centred: Love gives, whereas lust seizes. It grasps, seizing from others, invading their privacy and imaging their person. This secret and often obsessive grasping is the very opposite spirit/attitude of Jesus, who did not grasp, but emptied and gave Himself.(Phil 2: 6-7) Scripture instructs us to have this same attitude. **When Christians engage secretly in lust it sets the very opposite attitude of Jesus into our hearts, veiling our capacity to love God with a whole heart.**

Questions for reflection, confession and repentance:

Consider how lust may have a foothold in our hearts and be cutting across true fellowship in our churches,

remembering that *each one is tempted...*

What lusts are hidden in our hearts, defiling our spirits?

How have we become enmeshed in the spirit of the world, rather than allowing Christ in us to make an appeal to the world for righteousness?

How have we dressed to draw attention to our body? (Our clothes ought to frame our faces, not our bodies.)

What flirtations have we engaged in with others?

How have we looked at our brothers and sisters with impurity/lust?

How have we deprived the church of true fellowship by concealing lustful sin and not walking in light?

How have we ignored the blood of Jesus, and His cleansing of the inner chambers of our hearts?

How have we hardened our heart, allowing lust to dull our vision of the Kingdom of God and therefore our fuller participation in it?

PORNOGRAPHY AND THE INTERNET

We don't master sin when we give it room. It masters us....*when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.* For many lust is not enough, It seeks opportunity to connect. For men this is mostly visual, through pornography. Gazing on nakedness and lewd acts is to idolize the human body and to defile the person by separating their body from a true knowledge of their whole person. This defiles God's image in them. For women it is more relational, filling emotional need through false intimacy. It can gain expression through chat rooms, peering into other's love lives through gossip magazines and living vicarious romances and adulteries in soaps and romance novels. Neither is exclusive to one gender.

In 2006 there were 4.2 million porn sites on the web, with 500+ new ones added every week. 68 million requests daily for porn, which flowed from 25% of all searches that were made. (source: *Internet Filter Review.com*) It is safe to assume that Christians are as involved in this satanic web of darkness as non-Christians. The driving emotional force behind pornography and chat rooms is the need to comfort, escape from, or deny inner pain from rejection, abuse or trauma in life.

Christians are all the more vulnerable because a sense of guilt from their impure actions adds to their emotional pain, which drives them back to seek false comfort. They may become ensnared in an addictive cycle.

Spiritual Ramifications

A judgement against the opposite sex is made in pornography. Heterosexual pornography devalues women. Pornography also sacrifices to pagan gods. The Canaanite gods, Baal and Ashteroth, were male and female fertility gods, whose phallic-like or multi-breasted totem poles were erected on the high places to cast shadows over the land from sunrise to sunset. These shrines of worship were designed to arouse those who gazed at them. When Christians turn to pornography or seductive or romantic chats on the net, they too seek arousal and stoke unclean passions. They too, worship, by sacrificing their time, money, integrity, openness, trust, marriages to the sexual gods of this world.

Questions for reflection, confession and repentance:

How have we or other Christians used pornography or engaged in unclean internet relationships, thus practising idolatry, the worship of false gods?

How have we made judgements against a gender by devaluing them to objects for voyeurism ?

How have we robbed the church of the true fellowship of transparency, by concealing sin?

How have we contributed to the poverty of love within the church, failing to meet the needs of the lonely?

...to the superficial fellowship which hasn't sought to minister to emotionally needy hearts?...to the poor provision of safe places in the church where the compassion of Jesus is extended to those who struggle sexually, helping them confess their sin and accompanying them on the journey of healing and repentance?

How have we or the church been weak in modelling, ministering and nurturing true love and teaching Godly morality?

In our prayer, let us pray for the brokenness of soul which underlies the sin as we repent for the nation.

HETEROSEXUAL PROMISCUITY *including fornication, adultery and prostitution*

God gives the uniquely precious gift of marriage as the foundation for every society. He gives it as the sole relationship for the expression of sexual love, for the conception and nurture of children, and as the fundamental unit for the stability and expansion of every community.

It wonderfully reflects His image through a man and woman cleaving together as one flesh exclusively. God intends that the complementarity of husband and wife being united together as one, be a reflection of the way in which Father, Son and Holy Spirit are complete, perfect and one in love and unity.

Marriage is also a prophetic witness to the Kingdom of God to come, when Jesus, the Son and Lamb of God will be given in marriage to His bride, the church, whom He is even now preparing, cleansing and washing. For those with eyes to see - it is a sign pointing to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and our co-dwelling and mutual partaking with Jesus through eternity.

Thus marriage is under such attack by the evil one because it is precious to God, given to wonderfully reveal His image and the certain hope of the future kingdom.

But many have seen marriage as an end to fulfil neediness.

Fornication in singleness has robbed the pure offering of ourselves that we are meant to bring to our betrothed at the consummation of our marriage. It has also stolen the purity of those we have fornicated with, but have not married. We have thus stolen from our brothers, or sisters, who in turn married those with whom we became one flesh. (1 Thess 4: 6 ... *that no man transgress and defraud his brother in this matter*).

Repentance in this area also beckons that we examine how the broken have been taken advantage of.

Whether of the prostitute who is usually supporting a drug habit, often enslaved to a 'pimp,' always selling themselves and selling out their human dignity, or of 'one night stands' who are 'easy targets.'

Questions for reflection, confession and repentance

Have we devalued marriage by entering it

to fulfil our neediness

with hardness of heart,

with hidden escape clauses of divorce

with lust in our hearts rather than love

to provide a home for previously conceived children

primarily to fulfil our ambitions of celebrating the Big Day!

after social, parental or partner pressure,

to fulfil our own wants rather than to give ourselves as a holy gift to our spouse

being already bound to others through unrepented, unconfessed sexual union

with no real understanding of what love is, and how to love?

Have we robbed others by 'knowing' their spouse before or during marriage?

Have we taken advantage of the broken to service our selfish sexual lusts?

How has the church ignored, tolerated, even condoned members 'sleeping together' outside marriage?

**Marriage wonderfully reflects
His image through a man
and woman cleaving together
as one flesh exclusively.**

HOMOSEXUALITY

To the degree that heterosexual sin has been tolerated within the church and society, opportunity for the onslaught of homosexual sin has been opened. Homosexuality is one step further in the trajectory of lust and fleshly sexuality away from God's purpose for sexual love - exclusively as the expression of the fullness and covenant of love between husband and wife.

Homosexuality judges the complimentary gender of being unworthy of marriage. It rejects the complementary distinctiveness of their sexuality in favour of one's own, and so rejects intimately embracing, coming to know and being challenged by the fullness of God which the other gender reveals. To the degree that the church condones homosexuality she fails to uphold the truth of the fullness of God's heart and image being reflected in the world through male and female together. This necessarily erodes our attempts at mission. Homosexuality also affects same sex relationships, by abusing God's gift of same-gender brotherly love, *philia*, which provides encouragement, admiration, praise and bonding for the development of gender maturity. Only men can teach boys to be men. Only women can nurture girls to be women. Homosexuality twists the enjoyment and purpose of same-sex friendship with the bondage of sex, lust and passion. In many places the church has been remiss in the opposite direction by not providing the healthy mentoring which gender security requires. In post war decades the church was notoriously depleted of men, and many of those who were present had little idea of how to extend the type of *philia* which secures growing teens in the Godly strengths of their gender. This vacuum in the church was often accompanied by another attitude which further erodes gender security and cross gender respect. Subtly the "sword between the sexes" was driven into the hearts of youth through the unhealthy attitudes which were modelled to them. Where mistrust of the other gender, pride in the superiority of one's own resulted in jokes at the other gender's expense, the emasculating of men by women, or, where men have 'lorded it' over women, the church has participated in the very spirit which empowers homosexuality.

This same spirit has seduced church and society, to present homosexuality as an acceptable, desirable, contributor, even to those who would not imbibe. This is best exemplified in *metrosexuality*, the tendency to remove gender distinctives in dress, hair style, perfumery, social roles, etc. It is reinforced by a besotted media and by the social reconstructive agenda of the homosexual lobby, which draws heterosexual people into its circle of influence. Broader society and parts of the church visit their dance clubs, applaud their licentious lifestyle, celebrate their partying as the epitome of social pizzazz, and consider it cool to have them as friends, even to experiment with their abominations.

Subtly these attitudes allow homosexual strongholds to unleash powerful waves of lust on church and society. They may not seduce us into homosexuality per se, but they can undermine moral standards, enabling any form of lust to tempt and titillate.

The Church has the answers to this gender conundrum – as we ensure that God's image is more fully re-

flected into the world through the embodiment of His true masculinity and femininity in us. Let us seek to become a winsome invitation to those struggling with gender confusion – and yearn for the greater gifts of healing to minister to those who seek release from the strongholds.

Questions for reflection, confession and repentance:

Have we agreed with the spirit of homosexuality in these ways, and even fostered it through our churches? Have we allowed it, not necessarily by outright condoning and accepting, but by failing to provide wholesome *philia* love, reflecting the discipling heart of Jesus – offering true fellowship, mentoring and personal investment in the good of their gender?

Have we held and modelled subtle or blatant judgements against the opposite sex?

Have we failed to father well, helping make these recent generations the least fathered in history, and therefore highly vulnerable to homosexuality?

Have mothers been overly dominant, or conversely weak, in nurture which can as readily cause homosexuality or heterosexual promiscuity?

Alternatively, have we lacked grace and focussed only on truth in addressing homosexuality and homosexuals? To do so brings the judgement which Jesus didn't come to bring! As Christians we need to seek His heart for those caught up in homosexuality, discerning wisdom to speak the truth in love, which requires relationship and not impersonal attacks from afar.

CHILD ABUSE AND PEDOPHILIA

The spiral effect of lust releasing sin, producing death, proceeding in the steps outlined above, ends in heinous sin which powerfully damages others. Whether it's sexual harassment, voyeurism, exhibitionism, molestation and rape its effects are profound. We need to offer comfort, support and healing to all victims, not the least of which are the victims of childhood sexual abuse. On the net last year there were 116,000 daily requests for child porn and 100,000 illegal child porn sites. Pedophilia prematurely opens and damages a child's sexuality in much the same way as a rose is destroyed when forced open as a bud. It smears the child with false guilt and a sense of being putrid beyond ever being able to be clean or pure again. The child's soul is ravaged with the trauma of the attack or seduction, and is often left with deep confusion: *I liked it/but I shouldn't have*. Some of the effects are self hatred, aversion to intimacy, or a repetition of the behaviour in promiscuity, and often, in acts of pedophilia themselves, as adults.

Praying for the Victims.

The consequences are drastic because victims have become like sacrifices on the altars of Baal. The perpetrators pour out the filth of their hearts on the victims who are left in bondage, as though tied to the altars of the powers of darkness, as offerings to their lewd demands. In prayer for victims these bondages need to be broken, and prayer offered that the blood of Jesus bring a release from such unseen and usually unrealised spiritual bonds, which bind them into self hatred and destructive behaviour. The power of Jesus' love and blood is sufficient to smash these bonds and restore the soul!

Praying for the Perpetrators

Perpetrators are men and women, but more frequently men, on 1 out of 5 girls, and 1 out of 7 boys.

Whereas more men sexually abuse girls than boys (20% of girls are victims); the less than 3% of men who are homosexually active/oriented, inflict attacks on 14% of boys. This far greater proportion indicates yet again how homosexual perversion of God's intent brings a licentiousness that continually breaks boundaries. Often they are abuse victims themselves, emotionally frozen at their age of abuse, subsequently outworking their fantasies which are trapped in their soul and focussed on others of that same emotional age. It can be an act to take from children what was taken from them, or to give what was given to them.

Others, entrenched in sexual addiction, don't set out to abuse children, but in their pursuit of sexual pleasure, break boundaries for wilder experiences. Because it makes an older adult feel young to think a younger person is attracted to them, they find excitement in having fantasies about younger people. Pornography "creep" eventually has them viewing images below the legal age. Their seared conscience dulls restraint and their deadened heart pursues dangerous excitement. Ultimately more boundaries are broken when they surpass pornography to draw a child or youth into their web.

For others the trauma of life has been so severe to develop psychosis which obsesses about children and leads to evil.

Sadly, toleration of sexual sin in the church has made it no safer place for children than anywhere else in society. All of us are given to sin, and it is sobering to consider as we pray for them that *there, but for the grace of God...*

Jesus is bringing all His enemies under his feet, including the demonic power behind pedophilia! Pray that His Restoring power be released into the sickness of the heart, the bondages of the mind and the hardened conscience.