

# DOXA

Verne Nesbitt Ministries

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**doxa (doks'a)**, from the Greek *δοξα* :

1. opinion, 2. glory given as the result of a good opinion, especially to God.

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## *PLAYING WITH FIRE!*

Fire burns. That's the fundamental problem with fire. That being the case then why would anybody want to play with it? I remember as a kid doing frivolous things like seeing how long I could hold my hand over a burning candle or snuffing out the flame of a match with my fingers. Why? Because fire fascinates. Who hasn't hypnotically stared at a roaring fireplace or camp fire, half-mesmerized by the beauty of the ever-changing colors and shapes wafting into the air? Then, of course, there's the challenge: How long is too long? How hot is too hot? How much pain can I endure?

The answer for most of us comes when we actually get burned. But it's too late; all of a sudden our little game is over: The pain, discomfort and annoyance of our wound rudely reminds us of an all-consuming reality: Fire burns.

### **PLAYING WITH PORNOGRAPHY**

*"Tell a man whose house is on fire to give out a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; but urge me not to use moderation in a case like the present"* -William Garrison on slavery

What is the case for sounding the alarm in our present generation? It is this: The formerly unthinkable has now become reality: Pornography is unmistakably ensnaring more and more Christians in a web of deceit, debilitation and destruction! I shudder when I consider how many good Christians I have known personally, who have been, or who are now, trapped in the pits of pornography. They range all the way from mere acquaintances to family members to fellow pastors. It seems that none of us are immune to its seduction. The chances are that those of you who are reading this are either battling with this temptation yourself or you are intimately acquainted with someone who is.

### **PORN GOES MAINSTREAM**

So proclaimed Time Magazine. The feature article made it clear that hardcore pornography, often masquerading as a "kinder, gentler porn," and "video that goes all the way," are now the accepted norm in our society. And a week later, as if to punctuate the above essay, lawyers, academics and pornography "celebrities" alike mingled in Los Angeles at the World Pornography Conference, a three-day summit billed as a study of "eroticism and the First Amendment."

And so, we are witnessing a new social phenomenon taking root right before our eyes. But, most regretfully, we are also witnessing the "frog-in-the-boiling water" syndrome that seems to be characteristic of so many Christians of this generation. Nonetheless, it is my heartfelt prayer that once Christians see the trickery of the enemy, they may yet become disenthralled with this powerful temptation.

### **DISTURBING INFORMATION**

First, let's be clear about one thing: Scripturally, there is no valid distinction between so-called "soft porn" and hard-core porn. Keeping this in mind, let us look at the definition of the word pornography itself: The eminent Oxford Universal Dictionary defines pornography as *the "description of the life, the manners of prostitutes and their patrons."* This is confirmed by the fact, as every student of the Greek NT will no doubt be eager to inform you, that the word pornography is actually derived from the two Greek words πορνι (prostitute) and γραφειν (to write).

It's apparent, isn't it, that when seen in the light of the cold, hard facts, there's not much room to differentiate between soft porn and any other breed of pornography. Pornography has to do with prostitution! Certainly the prostitution of one's heart and mind, if not one's body. And although pornography throughout the centuries has generally been held in disdain and judged as unacceptable by the standards of Western culture, things changed dramatically, at least for American citizens, in the "enlightened" Sixties. In 1967 Congress created a Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. It concluded that pornography did not contribute to crime or sexual deviation and recommended repeal of all federal, state, and local laws that "interfere with the right of adults who wish to do so to read, obtain, or view explicit sexual materials." Then, in 1969, the Supreme Court declared a Georgia anti-pornography law unconstitutional, saying, "If the First Amendment means anything it means that a state has no business telling a man, sitting alone in his own house, what books he may read or what films he may watch." Needless to say, this ruling opened the floodgates. Within months Penthouse magazine began publication in America, challenging Hugh Hefner's already popular Playboy with graphic photographs which had never before been available at a public newsstand.

### **WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!**

*" . . . save others by snatching them out of the fire." - Jude 1:23*

No doubt you know that the severity of a burn is indicated by its degree. But did you know that third-degree burns often feel much less painful than first or even second-degree burns, due to the fact that in third-degree burns the nerve endings or pain receptors themselves are destroyed?

Two of my favorite authors, C.S. Lewis and Philip Yancey, have pointed out that in many respects physical pain is a blessing in disguise, insofar that it serves as a megaphone to the body that something has gone terribly wrong. But in third-degree burns, pain, as such, is blocked. But what about our spiritual pain receptors? Sadly, for many, warnings about indulging in pornography may be too late. Many have already sustained the equivalent of third-degree burns of heart, mind and spirit, and no longer have any pangs of conscience left, much less a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. And sadder still, someone in such a pitiful condition is most often oblivious to the condition of his or her own soul.

One more thing using this analogy of comparing the physical with the spiritual: Victims of intense physical burns generally suffer a high risk of infection. This is due to the collateral damage done to the body's immune system. It doesn't take much to see the spiritual parallel here, does it? When we play with the fire of pornography, we leave ourselves open to all kinds of onslaughts at the hands of the world, the flesh and the Devil. We become vulnerable to the diseases of the enemy's encampment that might not otherwise affect us. We become weak and spiritually infirm.

## **PORNOGRAPHY IS BIG BUSINESS**

*"Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."* - Ephesians 5:5

A conservative estimate contends that over 1000 new porn sights appear on the internet every week. Moreover, CT&T reported that the pornography industry "makes up the largest portion of video rentals" and that pornography magazines "sell by the tens of millions each *month*." Nevertheless, here's an insider's tip on the market place: While pornography may be big business in "Babylon," those in the know warn that it's foolish for someone to invest their inheritance) in an enterprise destined to go down the tubes (see Ephesians 5:5, above). And, speaking of business, women (and men) who are all too eager to sell their bodies to the highest bidder are hopeless, apart from Christ, when they try to buy back their souls. Pray for such ones now, before it's too late.

## **A WORD TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE WISE**

For those of you who are battling with this kind of temptation and long to overcome your obsession, or if you are in a position to stand in the gap for someone you know that is "hooked," (see James 1:12-15) let me offer some further thoughts on the subject:

### **Don't make excuses:**

Some of the common excuses offered by someone caught up in this kind of behavior are 1) they're "just curious;" 2) they are not guilty of the carnal sins of fornication or adultery; 3) they are not harming anybody else; 4) they are simply seeking stimulation in their sex life. Or, 5) that it is a means of getting release from their sexual frustration.

As somebody once said, *"Tell it to the Judge!" But, of course, none of us will, inasmuch as on that final Day "every mouth (will) be silenced, and the whole world (will) be held accountable to God."* - Romans 3:19. Be sure that on the Day of Judgment your excuses will be revealed for what they are -- excuses.

### **Don't mince words:**

Call a spade a spade! Strike out rhetoric like "It's just a bad habit" or "I'm addicted" or "In the overall scheme of things, it's not that big of a deal." The fact is, to indulge in pornography is to sin grievously against God. Until you acknowledge that your sin is sin, the Lord is hindered from setting you free from its grasp. In other words, if seeking out professional counseling seems to be a valid step toward your healing, don't bypass the Cross on the way to the couch!

### **Wake up to reality:**

It is not accurate to say you are only hurting yourself. The wage of sin is death. That is, when you sin, something has to die: sin will kill your personality, your character, your integrity. Consequently it will affect your relationships; especially those with whom you are the most intimate. When you indulge in pornography, the ones you hurt the most are, without question, the ones you love the most.

Pornographic fantasizing has never resolved problems, healed wounds, softened the heart, quickened one's conscience or made the world go away. It has only frustrated the sexually impoverished, infuriated the emotionally wounded or produced insatiableness in the lascivious.

### **Honor God's creation:**

*"I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I look upon a young woman (with lust)? What would be my portion from God above, and my heritage from the Almighty on high?" Does He not see my ways, and number all my steps?" - Job 31:1-4*

Your eyes are the creation of God; as is the one who may be the object of your lust. While it may not be possible to make a covenant or pact with the latter, your heart can make an agreement with your eyes, so as to avoid similar temptations in the future. Subsequently, when your eyes see someone, who at one time you would have viewed as a mere sex object, your heart can remind you that this someone who is God's creation and the object of His great love in Christ Jesus ... indeed, a soul for whom Christ died!

### **A brief word to men about women:**

It is only when you begin to look upon women in the same way the Lord, Jesus looks upon them that you will experience victory in this war over your soul. Only then will you be able to respect them as they were meant to be respected. Only then will you be able to minister to the woman caught in the horrors of exhibitionism or prostitution or adulterous affairs; or, for that matter, only then will you be able to treasure your own spouse the way God intended for her to be cherished. Women so esteemed will only become more beautiful and lovely, not less. By your godly attitudes and demeanor you can rescue them from the world's ways; you can reclaim them from images they have of themselves that only deride and demean. You can redeem them with love -- but only to the same degree you make room in your heart for God's love for them and yourself.

### **THE FIRST STEP TOWARD HEALING**

Every first-aid manual or piece of literature on the subject of burns that I have examined maintains essentially the same procedure: To treat a burn, no matter what its degree of severity, first bathe it in cool water. How symbolic! If you are caught in the trap of pornography -- or you desire to minister to someone who is -- never underestimate the power of the pure water of God's Word to heal.

### **Listen:**

*"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress, He sent out His word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.*

*- Psalm 107:19, 20*

### **And this:**

*"... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind -- yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish." - Ephesians 5:25-27*

Come; wash yourself again in the pure water of the Word. Let God's precious Word reveal to you the sordidness of your sin so you can come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Then, let that same Word point you to the One whose blood alone can cleanse you of your iniquities. And then, and then, let it minister to you words of hope, health and healing through the power of Christ's Spirit within!