

# Pornography and Media

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Pornography is a sickness that has spread throughout our society and infiltrated numerous aspects of our lives—intentionally and non-intentionally. Whether it's soft-porn in a women's catalog, or hard core porn over the internet and on adult TV channels, pornography is everywhere and seeping into the view of unsuspecting and unsuspecting Christians, destroying families, ruining lives, and creating addictions that rival that of illegal drugs.

Perhaps not as volatile or damaging as pornography, is the continued onslaught of music, movies, and other media that is contrary to core Christian values, even degrading and damaging to the human body and soul. The effect of negative media is much like that of pornography, allowing sinful thoughts to enter into the minds of the participating individuals that lead to serious sin and enormous consequences.

## **Pornography and its Addictive Nature**

Pornography is any material (movies, television, magazines, books, and increasingly the Internet) that displays or describes sexual behavior, or the human body, in such a way as to arouse sexual feelings. Pornography is every bit as addictive and harmful to the spirit and the lives it destroys, as substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are to the body. Those who engage in the use of pornographic materials are in direct violation of the Lord's commandment from D&C 59:6 which states: "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery . . . nor do anything like

unto it." Christians are admonished to avoid all forms of pornography and to oppose the production, distribution, and/or use of pornography.

The addiction of pornography is powerful and carries with it tragic consequences. Studies have shown the pornography can lead to a desire for more potent stimulations with the results being a degradation of heart, mind, spirit, and self-respect. Marriages have been destroyed, families have been torn apart, and individuals brought into the bondage of addiction through even the most casual experimentation of pornography.

## **Christian Churches Must Take a Proactive Role**

Christian churches are quickly recognizing the breathtaking proliferation of pornography and must train and educate ecclesiastical leaders on how to counsel those caught in its trap. In all cases the focus needs to be on the Atonement of Jesus Christ as a means of gaining strength and help against this powerful tool of Satan.

Consider the following excerpt from an article published by a Christian Church sponsored magazine in 1974—over three decades ago—on the dangers of pornography: "Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions, bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won't vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life. (Challenges for the Year Ahead (pamphlet, 1974), 4-5; reprinted in "Things They're Saying," New Era, Feb. 1974, 18.)

Twenty years after this remarkable article the prophet Gordon B. Hinckley urged all people to avoid pornography like the plague: "That is the way pornography is. This sleazy filth is like corrosive salt. It will eat through your armor if you expose yourselves to it. I cannot emphasize this too strongly. The makers and marketers of this slimy stuff grow wealthy while the character of their customers

decays. Stay away from it. Stand above it. It becomes addictive. It will destroy those who become its slaves... The Lord has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45). (Gordon B. Hinckley, "True to the Faith"; Ensign, June 1996)

### **Much of today's Media is a Threat to Spirituality**

While pornography is a major issue in today's society, the general media is not terribly far behind. Because there is both "good" and "bad" in the general media, there is an opportunity to stumble on something that is inappropriate, or get into "gray areas" where something appears OK but is one step closer to something worse. It is up to each of us to choose wisely the media we expose ourselves to, while being extremely careful in guiding our children in what they expose themselves to including music, published content, movies, and television. In some cases the media may be "soft porn," and/or lead to pornography in a search to quench a thirst for more aggressive levels of explicit sexual content.

M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "If we do not make good choices, the media can devastate our families and pull our children away from the narrow gospel path. In the virtual reality and the perceived reality of large and small screens, family-destructive viewpoints and behavior are regularly portrayed as pleasurable, as stylish, as exciting, and as normal. Often media's most devastating attacks on family are not direct or frontal or openly immoral. Intelligent evil is too cunning for that, knowing that most people still profess belief in family and in traditional values. Rather the attacks are subtle and amoral—issues of right and wrong don't even come up. Immorality and sexual innuendo are everywhere, causing some to believe that because everyone is doing it, it must be all right. This pernicious evil is not out in the street somewhere; it is coming right into our homes, right into the heart of our families" ("Let Our Voices Be Heard," Ensign, Nov. 2003, 16–17).

### **Christian Churches Need to Wake Up to the Dangers**

While pornography and other forms of degrading and destructive media are actively evangelized against by God fearing Christians everywhere, it is still amazing to find

some individuals and churches that don't see this onslaught as a major problem facing God's children.

For instance, in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there doesn't seem to be a conference or fireside that goes by that misses addressing the issue of pornography and media vigorously, with very specific and explicit language. General Authorities of the Church have been actively discussing the issue of pornography consistently for decades. Consider the following from an article published in a Church magazine in 1971 regarding pornography: "The Effects Panel's conclusions on the effects of pornography sound much like the tobacco industry's now shopworn defense of smoking. Applied to pornography, it goes like this: Research has not demonstrated undeniably that there is a link between the increased availability of erotic materials and increases in sex crimes. Therefore, pornography cannot be labeled harmful, and it should be up to each individual whether he chooses to steep himself in erotica" (Don L. Searle, Jr. "The Obscenity Flood: Can It Be Stopped," Ensign, October 1971).

Another noteworthy article comes from the apostle Thomas S. Monson who offered specific steps on how to avoid the snare of pornography. Elder Monson used the famous scripture from Joshua to urge members to take a stand saying: "Let us join in the fervent declaration of Joshua: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Josh. 24:15). Let our hearts be pure. Let our lives be clean. Let our voices be heard. Let our actions be felt" (Thomas S. Monson, "Pornography – the Deadly Carrier" Ensign, November 1979)

### **Conclusion**

To find Church leaders many decades ago writing such energetic admonitions to Christians about the evils of pornography is extremely inspiring. Today pornography is spiraling out of control including hard core porn (Hustler, etc.) as well as soft porn (Maxim, Cosmopolitan, selected clothing catalogs, etc.), with Adult Bookstores popping up in communities across America. While the law appears powerless to protect our society from the evils of pornography, we need Christian Churches who will warn members against the insidious effects of such garbage,

offer counseling and help to those who have been stricken with pornography addiction.

Pornography assistance support groups have been established in local communities to help those inflicted. Lastly, for those who have fallen deep into the snare and require a more robust repentance process there should be (and are in some churches) disciplinary policies that balance consequences with healing to help the afflicted find forgiveness and reconciliation.

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