



Into the Light

All things are possible with God

March – April 2021

It Was Nothing Personal

By Bob Van Domelen

Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?” (Isaiah 29:15)

Recently someone asked me “Why don’t you ever write anything for those of us in prison charged with having child pornography on our computers?” It was a good question and one that had me searching past issues of this newsletter. Other than occasional references to the internet and several references to dealing with fantasy, I came up short and I wondered why.

The first computer in our home was a Commodore 64 using 5 ½ inch floppy disks for data storage. Back in the early 80s we had no access to what was called the ‘world wide web’ on that machine, so looking at, much less trafficking in, child pornography or *any* pornography was not possible – at least not in our home.

Back in the 70s and 80s, to view porn of any kind meant a trip to a ‘dirty bookstore’ and knowing that there was a possibility someone might see me entering such a place kept me away. But not completely. I never bought anything for fear of having it found. Instead, I stored images that didn’t need a trip anywhere.

These images fueled imagination and imagination gave birth to a desire to make them real. Like any addiction, there was never enough. I hated the idea that I considered or sought out some of these images but by the time of my arrest, a cycle was in place.

Those who go to great depths to hide their plans who do their work in darkness think “Who sees us? Who will know?”

The internet has eliminated the need to risk being seen entering an adult bookstore and asks no cover charge to view site contents. With each return visit, however, chains of secrecy and isolation are strengthened.

The late author Leanne Payne (*The Broken Image*) often described those bound by these chains as having created a ‘hidden’ self, one which the public wasn’t allowed to see. She maintained that such people often protected their dark side with active church participation, effective and recognized work achievements, and having a network of family, friends, and relatives. She also maintained that the darkness walked alongside this image, always ready to be indulged.

[Note: *The description above is not a one-size-fits-all.*]

Years ago, I facilitated a support group and the issue of pornography often came up. Instead of asking ‘why’ someone spent so much time on the internet viewing porn, I asked the following questions: “Once you were on an adult web site, why did you continue to search through images? Weren’t

those displayed on the first page good enough? And if they weren’t good enough, what were you looking for?” The final question was perhaps the most important. “And did you find what you were looking for?” I can’t remember anyone ever saying ‘Yes’ to that last question. But something even more serious surfaced in our conversations.

With every click on a new link, images stopped being real people and instead became something strictly sexual. I believe two things result when this happens.

First, the trip into this world of illicit fantasy indeed becomes ‘nothing personal’. What is seen are just images or actors on a screen bringing fantasy to life, actors who appear to be enjoying themselves.

Second, the deeper one goes into the world of porn, the more difficult it becomes to view real people *outside* of that world. The addict cannot accept the fact that real people would not give their permission to reenact behaviors born in fantasy. This is the reality that makes molestation possible.

“I didn’t touch anyone!”

At face value, this is a claim that can be made by those with child pornography charges brought on by their internet activity. It certainly makes understandable their frustration hearing a judge sentence them to lengthy terms in prison because, unlike those who did molest a child through touch, they did not.

The law states that a minor cannot give an adult permission to be sexually intimate – even if the child claims to have done so. That means that every video or photograph showing a child in a sexual situation is against the law. That also means that every time someone downloads child porn that choice basically encourages the producer of the material to create more videos, more images, and more victims.

I can’t and won’t argue the ‘fairness’ of sentencing structures connected with child pornography because I don’t write with legal intent. I write because part of my life was spent on a downward spiral where my choices hurt many people. I deserved a prison sentence. Yet because I know that God never meant me to remain in that state of brokenness, I am encouraged to share with you.

He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

I once believed that there were few things more frightening than having everyone know my deep and sometimes dark secrets. As embarrassing as I thought that might be, exposure came with a tremendous feeling of freedom. The chain labeled ‘secrecy’ had either been broken or had some links removed. And as the saying goes, with truth one never has to remember which lies were told.

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24) This is one of my favorite Psalms yet in these two verses we are asked to give God total access to the person we are. Each of the underlined phrases is a challenge in trusting God.

It's a little like inviting someone to visit and then watching the person go searching through every drawer and every closet in the house. I meant to clean those areas out but just didn't get to it. Task done, however, it's also like hearing God say, "You have a nice place, Bob, but I think if you trust me, it can be even better." I would hope that I would say, "Sounds great, God! Let's do it!" rather than "That's okay, God. I can handle it on my own."

If Jesus asked, "What would you like me to do?" I would ask Him to remove every pornographic image stored anywhere in my subconscious so that I'd never have to deal with them again. Yet I think I'd hear the same words God spoke to Paul when He said, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*" (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Paul responded, "*That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*" (vs 10) I am sure, however, that God takes delight when we place our hand in his and plead for help and that's what we need to do in times of temptation.

Salvation is personal

The world in which we live would like us to believe that pornography is an acceptable form of entertainment provided it is not child pornography. Some might even suggest that substituting adult porn for child porn might be an effective tool to eliminate a sexual desire for children. If pornography's focus is on sexual gratification without concern for those involved, wouldn't such a suggestion merely change the age level of a victim? And more importantly, shouldn't the goal be freedom from those dehumanizing images?

¹⁸ *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.* ¹⁹ *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ²⁰ *you were bought at a price.* (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

Some might suggest that Paul implied that God is against sexual activity but verse 18 clearly says *immorality*. I am reminded that when Dr Dobson (*Focus on the Family*) was asked to define pornography, his response was "People know it when they see it."

I take to heart the notion that the Holy Spirit dwells in me because my body is His temple. Yet all that is in me, all that I have thought and done is already known because I have given Him full access. I was bought at a price and that makes me of value to God. My relationship with God cannot be any more personal than that. When I think about it, my goal is not to diminish that value in any way.

²¹ *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
²² *"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then, if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.* (Matthew 6:21-22)

Be made clean

The absence of pornography will, over time, restore our ability to see what is good and holy. We will no longer walk in secrecy or isolation because nothing good or of value was ever found in the darkness of corrupt images, so why would it make sense to continue in that darkness? I prefer the light.

Still, I know that the battle ahead continues to be one step at a time, one day at a time. I know that for some there might be more bad days than good, more struggle than victory, yet because God knows our hearts, we are cleansed by faith (Hebrews 15:9).

Don't minimize or say viewing porn doesn't hurt anyone because it does. Someone is always diminished. Instead, continue to call on the Lord, continue to reach out for support, and continue to believe that you are loved.

¹² *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.* ¹³ *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.* ¹⁴ *I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity.* (Jeremiah 29:12-14) □

Our Prayer Corner



Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

Let us pray . . .

- First and foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those addicted to pornography, that illusion is replaced by a reality where the goodness of others is seen without distortion.
- For those looking for hope, that they find it through the example of others.
- For those fearing the shame of exposure, that they are able to see themselves as God sees them.
- For families and friends of registrants, that they will continue to be supportive even in difficult times.
- For chaplains in all institutions, that during this time of Covid they are blessed with strength and imagination as they seek ways to effectively serve.
- For churches/pastors, that they pray for ways to be Christ for those in prison, jail, or in reentry.
- For Bob's health, that the ministry God has for him will continue to be an encouragement and hope for others.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- (As Always) For those who are still abusing, that they will come to understand the devastation they bring on their victims and that they seek help for themselves.

Broken Yoke Ministries is a not for profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and operates solely on the contributions of people such as you. All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us. Unused stamps are also very welcomed and a good way for those in confinement to be in partnership with this ministry. The bottom line is that we need YOU to help make these newsletters possible. So pray about becoming a partner with this ministry.

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received since the last issue of this newsletter. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement while others call out for us to be in prayer.

This I know in my heart. He will always be here to get me through the tough times. I always say, 'I am blessed every day in every way'. Even in the tough times I still claim I am blessed because He never leaves me!

I have purpose in my life again and want to serve God. People around me are supportive. Every day is another miracle. My life is changed!

Because of Covid, we get out of the room for 20 minutes to phone, shower, go outside, etc. Not much time to do it all but we make choices.

I am 81 and have 12 more years to serve. I have taken responsibility for my crimes, attended all treatment classes, but am still unable to be released. I have served 28 years of a 40-year sentence. I believe in our Lord and know that some day we will meet in heaven.

I have always been a 'let's kick down the door' kind of guy. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, He is showing me that there are these things called doorknobs. Who knew! I am so grateful the Father has found me worthy to be placed on His anvil. Praise God! I'm taking shape!

I deeply regret that my primary way of concealing my ugly deeds was turning Christian in jail because that's where I felt the safest. I invested my first 7-8 years into what might have been hundreds of bible studies. Today I realize that what might have started as a way to hide so I would not be hurt. God was working a major miracle in my life without me even realizing it – a miracle that's still being worked out in my life every day. I'm humbled by God's love, mercy, and grace in my life and the fact that He hasn't given up on me.

I admit that at times I tend to forget people but God will always put them on my mind when they really need prayer. It's so amazing when all of a sudden I feel the need to pray for someone either for a long period or a short one. Later I learn that the person was experiencing some kind of trouble. I feel very blessed when God shows me this, but I am also learning that God has taught me not to ignore the urgings to pray.

In the first few years [of his sentence] I found that anytime I read the Bible all the passages on wrath, punishment, separation, damnation, and destruction would stand out. I found that I had made an idol of my sin and believed it to be beyond God's grace and mercy. I made much of my sin and little of my Savior – which was indeed sad.

It may sound odd but less than a handful of offenders in my prison actually believe that change is possible, let alone caring help is available.

On Prayer

I am deeply convinced
that the necessity of prayer,
and to pray unceasingly,
is not as much based on our desire for God
as on God's desire for us.
It is God's passionate pursuit
of us that calls us to prayer.

To pray, I think, does not mean
to think about God in contrast to thinking about
other things, or to spend time with God instead of
spending time with other people.
Rather, it means to think and live
in the presence of God.

Henri Nouwen
(1932-1996)

President Jimmy Carter Ridiculed

"I've committed adultery in my heart many times. This is something God recognizes I will do -- and I have done it -- and God forgives me for it." (*Playboy Magazine* 1976)

Then President Carter made international news because of an interview he did with *Playboy*. He had been talking about God's word as it applied to lust, citing Matthew 5:28.

"I tell you that anyone who looks on a woman with lust in his heart has already committed adultery."

The response to his comments was quick and for the most part condemning. Some claimed he lost his chance at reelection for being too honest. When asked later if he regretted what he shared or if he had been too personal, he stood by what he had said.

I share this with you because it will take courage to call pornography what it is – a false intimacy that brings no real connection and inspires instead an illusion that will bear no fruit.

 *jesus loves you* 

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A Little Humor

A man buys a parrot and brings him home. But the parrot starts insulting him and gets really nasty, so the man picks up the parrot and tosses him into the freezer to teach him a lesson. He hears the bird squawking for a few minutes, but all of a sudden the parrot is quiet. The man opens the freezer door, the parrot walks out, looks up at him and says, "I apologize for offending you, and I humbly ask your forgiveness."

The man says, "Well, thank you. That's much better. I forgive you."

After a brief pause, the parrot says, "If you don't mind my asking, what did the chicken do?"

