



A Measure of Grace

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Pornography: A Testimony *by Roger Jones*

When an older boy from my neighborhood coerced my friend and me into his van, I remember feeling excited. He had a dirty magazine, and we were interested to see what was inside it. It was exciting! It was scary too. I knew what I was seeing was wrong, but it brought a rush of feelings and reactions in my body that I hadn't felt as intensely before. I had never felt so exhilarated and so dirty at the same time. I was about ten years old.

This older boy had darker intentions than just a desire to show us the pictures of the women in his magazine. He began joking with us about he would like to see us pose like the pictures in the magazine. It was subtle at first, but he became more direct in his efforts before too long.

It was time for my friend to be driven home, and my dad was out looking for us. The older boy gave us the chance to leave. My friend left, but I chose to stay. I wasn't ready for the intense feelings I was experiencing to end. Together with the pornographic imagery, the sexual tension and the

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Pornography	1
Public Image	3
Recap	4
Feb at a Glance	8
March and Beyond	8

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(Pornography continued from page 1)

male attention I was receiving felt really good. He continued to make efforts to get me to take off my clothes.

I began to get scared. He would not let me go at that point. I pled with him to let me out of the van, which he began to use as a bargaining tool. "I'll let you go, if you take off your clothes and pose like this picture," he said. Eventually, I said the thing that brought him out of his trance and back to reality. "If you let me go, I won't tell anyone!"

At this, he got scared and allowed me to leave. Fortunately, he never tried to touch me. I did not keep my word to him and promptly told my mom about the situation the second I got home. She, in turn, marched down the street and gave this boy an earful! (Go Mom!)

I escaped physically unharmed that day, but this experience set the stage for years of addiction to sexual fantasy and pornography. Over time, I turned to these things more and more to ease my anxiety, frustrations, and pain. I felt so much shame and guilt about my choices, but I didn't have an understanding of how to deal with my feelings in an appropriate and healthy way.

I was living two lives. I was the good Christian boy, active in church and part of the worship team. Everyone who knew me knew about my faith and

thought I was the "goody goody" kid who did no wrong. In my mind and in my private moments, I was leading a very different life. Lust, fantasy, and masturbation were my constant companions. I was constantly seeking out sexual images in movies or in furtive glances through magazines in the local bookstore. When I was in college, I finally became old enough to purchase pornography. This only furthered my addiction and began a weekly cycle of using porn to feed my fantasies.

I felt so much shame and guilt about my choices, but I didn't have an understanding of how to deal with my feelings in an appropriate and healthy way.

I didn't understand at the time how I was shaping my understanding of men, women, sex, and my own beliefs about who I was as a man and a child of God.

My ongoing use of pornography instilled within me an extremely warped view of the world around me. I viewed everyone through the filter of my sexually addicted mind. "I wonder what he/she looks like without clothes on?" or "I'd like

to see those two having sex." These thoughts were with me constantly.

My own self esteem and self image worsened throughout this time as well. I could never measure up to the men in the porn I watched. They had perfect bodies. I didn't have six-pack abs, large biceps, or any of the "other" extraordinary features they possessed. The women I saw in porn were just as

(Continued on page 6)

Public Image ~ Does it Matter? (Part 3)

by Mary Heathman

Last month I quoted from David Kinnamon's book, *UnChristian*, where he wrote of the six perspectives that "Outsiders" have about "Insiders." (See page 4.) I also said that in this month's article we would "look at the antidote to some of this bad news." But before I do that, it seems critical to put the specifics off another month or two while I write a bit about what lies beneath the perceptions "they" have about "us."

I believe that the way Christians are perceived is stemming from incorrect understanding of what it means to be a Christian. It seems to me that many of the perceptions about Christianity are coming from a wrong definition of the label itself. Thus, we are being judged by how we "ought" to behave rather than simply by who we are—sinners as are everyone else, but forgiven and living by the undeserved grace of God we have received through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

But to the younger population of "Outsiders," Christianity is about a standard of behavior, rules and regulations, a code of ethics. When they see us behaving in ways that don't match up with that standard, they call us hypocrites.

I was talking with a friend of mine last week about the way we Christians are perceived by "Outsiders." Melinda reminded me of a familiar quote from C. S. Lewis. He was prefacing his book by defending what he meant by the label "Christian." I am presenting his thoughts as a much more lucid argument than I could ever make for defining our terms before we begin talking about how we can affect change in our public image.

C.S. Lewis in the Preface to *Mere Christianity*:

"Far deeper objections may be felt - and have been expressed - against my use of the word Christian to mean one who accepts the common doctrines of Christianity. People ask: 'Who are you, to lay down who is, and who is not a Christian?': or 'May not many a man who cannot believe these doctrines be far more truly a Christian, far closer to the spirit of Christ, than some who do?' Now this objection is in one sense very right, very charitable, very spiritual, very sensitive. It has every available quality except that of being useful. We simply cannot, without disaster, use language as these objectors want us to use it. I will try to

(Continued on page 5)

The Way “They” See “Us” – A Recap

According to David Kinnaman’s research, there are six broad themes—the most common points of skepticism and objections raised by outsiders—that are important to understand about how “They” see “Us”. Those six themes are outlined in the following excerpts from his book, UnChristian:

“Hypocritical. Outsiders consider us hypocritical—saying one thing and doing another—and they are skeptical of our morally superior attitudes.”

“Too focused on getting converts. Outsiders wonder if we genuinely care about them. They feel like targets rather than people.”

“Antihomosexual. Outsiders say that Christians are bigoted and show disdain for gays and lesbians. They say Christians are fixated on curing homosexuals and on leveraging political solutions against them.”

“Sheltered. Christians are thought of as old-fashioned, boring, and out of touch with reality.” “We are not willing to deal with the grit and grime of people’s lives.”

“Too political. Another common perception of Christians is that we are overly motivated by a political agenda. . . .”

“Judgmental. Outsiders think of Christians as quick to judge others. They doubt that we really love people as we say we do.”

“Let me reiterate that you may not agree with the views of outsiders, but you should not ignore them. We have to deal with [them] as they are—candid, irreverent, and brazen. If we do not, it makes their criticism even more forceful because it goes unanswered.”

Excerpts taken from UnChristian by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, Published by Baker Books, copyright by David Kinnaman and Fermi Project, 2007

(Public Image Continued from page 3)

make this clear by the history of another, and very much less important, word.

The word 'gentleman' originally meant something recognisable; one who had a coat of arms and some landed property. When you called someone 'a gentleman' you were not paying him a compliment, but merely stating a fact. If you said he was not 'a gentleman' you were not insulting him, but giving information. There was no contradiction in saying that John was a liar and a gentleman; any more than there now is in saying that James is a fool and an M.A. But then there came people who said - so rightly, charitably, spiritually, sensitively, so anything but usefully - 'Ah but surely the important thing about a gentleman is not the coat of arms and the land, but the behaviour? Surely he is the true gentleman who behaves as a gentleman should? Surely in that sense Edward is far more truly a gentleman than John?' They meant well. To be honourable and courteous and brave is of course a far better thing than to have a coat of arms. But it is not the same thing. Worse still, it is not a thing everyone will agree about. To call a man 'a gentleman' in this new, refined sense, becomes, in fact, not a way of giving information about him, but a way of praising him: to deny that he is 'a gentleman' becomes simply a way of insulting him. When a word ceases to be a term of description and becomes merely a term of praise, it no longer

tells you facts about the object: it only tells you about the speaker's attitude to that object. (A 'nice' meal only means a meal the speaker likes.) A gentleman, once it has been spiritualised and refined out of its old coarse, objective sense, means hardly more than a man whom the speaker likes. As a result, gentleman is now a useless word. We had lots of terms of approval already, so it was not needed for that use; on the other hand if anyone (say, in a historical work) wants to use it in its old sense, he cannot do so without explanations. It has been spoiled for that purpose.

Now if once we allow people to start spiritualising and refining, or as they might say 'deepening', the sense of the word Christian, it too will speedily become a useless word. In the first place, Christians themselves will never be able to apply it to anyone. It is not for us to say who, in the deepest sense, is or is not close to the spirit of Christ. We do not see into men's hearts. We cannot judge, and are indeed forbidden to judge. It would be wicked arrogance for us to say that any man is, or is not, a Christian in this refined sense. And obviously a word which we can never apply is not going to be a very useful word. As for the unbelievers, they will no doubt cheerfully use the word in the refined sense. It will become in their mouths simply a term of praise. In calling anyone a Christian they will mean that they think him a good man. But that way of using the word

(Continued on page 7)

(Pornography continued from page 2)

“over the top” as the men. I could never please a woman sexually the way the men in these movies did. At the same time, the women were treated like objects to be used by men. I was unable to envision myself dominating a woman in this way. Because of the negative way I viewed myself, it was much easier for me to imagine being used by the men in a sexually degrading way. Through porn, I gained a false understanding of sex and relationships.

My relationship with God became mostly about confession of sin. Most of the time, I felt so ashamed that I didn’t think I could approach Him. I felt my sin was too dark and too bad for God to love me. When I couldn’t take the pain any longer, I would cry out in desperation to Him. Every prayer began the same way, “God, please forgive me for looking at pornography and masturbating...” I didn’t have the energy or focus to worship God, because I was worshipping His creations, not Him.

I came to Where Grace Abounds for help in 1995. It was so refreshing to be in an environment where I could talk openly about my struggle with pornography. It has not been an easy journey. I wish I could say here that pornography is no longer a temptation and that I left it behind, never looking back. The reality is that after 10+ years of harboring a

secret life and addiction, the steps out of that life have been difficult at times. I have had successes and failures along the way.

One of the most important things I’ve learned through my struggle with pornography is that God rarely “zaps” us and instantly delivers us from temptation. There are some who claim this has happened to them, and perhaps they are telling the truth. I prayed for years for an instant healing, and I placed all of my hope in that possibility. Now I

know why God hasn’t swooped in and rescued me in that way. At a root level, my struggles and temptations indicate a legitimate need for connection. Through the things which I was exposed to at an early age and the choices I made in the years following, I was seeking an illegitimate avenue of meeting these true, God-given needs for relationship. If God simply removed my desire for pornography, He

would also be removing something essential that He created in each of us: our need for other people.

One of the most important things I’ve learned through my struggle with pornography is that God rarely “zaps” us and instantly delivers us from temptation.

I was so relieved to learn that I did not have to be perfect to be loved by God. Struggling with sexual sin does not disqualify me from being in relationship with Christ. He died for all of my sins, including pornography, fantasy, and lust. He died for your sins too! ☆

(Public Image continued from page 5)

will be no enrichment of the language, for we already have the word good. Meanwhile, the word Christian will have been spoiled for any really useful purpose it might have served.

We must therefore stick to the original, obvious meaning. The name Christians was first given at Antioch (Acts 26) to 'the disciples', to those who accepted the teaching of the apostles. There is no question of its being restricted to those who profited by that teaching as much as they should have. There is no question of its being extended to those who in some refined, spiritual, inward fashion were 'far closer to the spirit of Christ' than the less satisfactory of the disciples. The point is not a theological or moral one. It is only a question of using words so that we can all understand what is being said. When a man who accepts the Christian doctrine lives unworthily of it, it is much clearer to say he is a bad Christian than to say he is not a Christian."

Main Entry: **Chris-tian**

Pronunciation: \ 'kris-chən, 'krish-\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: *Latin christianus, adjective & noun, from Greek christianos, from Christos*

Date: 1526

1 a: one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ...

www.merriam-webster.com

Since C. S. Lewis wrote this, the word "Christian" has, indeed become an almost useless word in its current use. Perhaps even worse than that, it is not a compliment but a criticism. So much so, that "Insiders" are now scrambling for different ways to describe themselves. Some of my friends no longer call themselves "Christians" but "Christ-followers." This seems reasonable to me; it helps them in their relationships to circumvent the negative connotation that interferes with their witness. But the fact remains that in our public image, we are seen as "Christian," and what that means to almost half our population is that we are *hypocritical*, etc.

Given this dilemma—we are not what they think we are—how can we address this public image problem? Starting from this place of understanding of who we are and who they believe us to be, I think we can come up with some strategies that can help dispel the misperceptions of Christianity. That will be my next article, an attempt to outline what we can do to dispel negative perceptions of Christianity.

If you have some ideas about how that might be done, feel free to call or write! In the meantime, please pray for us. And thank you for caring about the WGA mission. ☆



February At a Glance

February 12-20th: Mary ministered in the Philippines

Thursday Night Group

February 7th: 38
February 14th: 40
February 21st: 40
February 28th: 39

Orientation meeting: 6 New People

March And Beyond

March 1st: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00-9:00 am at the WGA offices

March 18th: Scott and Roger will be presenting to staff and mentors at Save Our Youth

March 18th: Mary will be speaking at Tuesday Morning Joy, Abundant Life Church

April 25-26th: WGA's Family and Friends Retreat.

September 19-21st: Mary will be speaking at the New Hope Family and Friends Retreat in San Rafael

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A Measure of Grace
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Where Grace Abounds
exists to guide and support
men and women who seek to
understand sexuality and
relationship, and to inspire
all people to know and
personally appropriate
God's plan for their
sexuality and relationships.

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