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*Saint Mark's Church
Sunday School*

Holiness and Contemporary Issues : Homosexuality (11/ SO / 3)

1.General Aim of this unit: To show the teens the practicality of living a Christian life in the society which is tarnished by lot of sins.

2.Special Aims of the Lesson :

1. To define homosexuality and argue with those who suggest that it is a natural orientation.
2. To stress that it is a sin and condemned in the OT and NT and discuss the verses in both testaments dealing with homosexuality.
3. To highlight the destruction occurred in Sodom as an example of the consequences to this sin.
4. To emphasise that the stand of our Church (as all the Orthodox churches) , we love the homosexuals and pray for them to repent and return back to the right track , but we strongly condemn and reject “homosexuality” as a norm of life.

3.Outcomes: At the end of this session , the teens are able to:

1. Debate [supported by verses and logic] “ Homosexuality is not the norm of life but it is deviation and a lust of the flesh”
2. Differentiate between the sin of homosexuality and those who under their weakness or unhelpful circumstances fall in it and need all the support to repent and return back to the embrace of God.
3. Get the tools that support him / her to stand fast against all temptation of this sin (personal relation with Jesus Christ , true sacramental life in the church , knowledge and state of mind)
4. Remember by heart some of the verses that support deviation from this sin.

Verses : Lev.18:22 ; 20:13; 1 Cor.6:9-11 , 3:16-17 ; Rom.1:26-2 ; Matt. 19:4-5 ; 1Tim. 1:9-10

References : 1. Attached notes “Homosexuality” including HH Pope Shenouda III lecture and Fr. Hopkon
2. Orthodox Christian sites in the net

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PORNOGRAPHY

1. Introduction

Pop culture and Porn

The sexualisation of all things, especially our children, has reached epidemic proportions.

Several aspects of this can be highlighted. One is the emphasis on youth, beauty, and "getting the look". Our young people are now absolutely obsessed with the way they look. They may not care what kind of persons they are on the inside, but they are terribly concerned about how they appear on the outside.

As just one indication of this, consider a recent survey of 29,000 young Australians. Mission Australia's 2007 National Survey of Young Australians found that body image is the biggest worry for 11-24 year olds, whether male or female. Body image was ranked the area of most concern by over 32 per cent of respondents. Family conflict was next at 29 per cent, and coping with stress was third at 27 per cent.

Another worrying aspect of the sexualisation of culture is the mainstreaming of porn. Quite simply, porn has moved from the fringes of society and is now in the very centre. Not too long ago when pro-family groups raised concerns about this, we were dismissed as wowsers and narrow-minded. But it seems that concern about the sexualisation of our youth is becoming more widespread. Three articles in three days just recently appeared, all lamenting the loss of innocence, the destruction of our children, and the pornification of culture.

He then looks at some of the evidence for the harm this is causing. "The most disturbing research comes from the American Psychological Association, which released a report this year on the sexualisation of girls. An APA task force of six psychologists and a member of the public took two years to produce the report, which covers 45 pages with 439 references covering another 20 pages. It is a significant piece of social research and I believe the most comprehensive on the subject."

On December 6 there appeared a *Herald Sun* article by NSW MP Greg Donnelly with the title, "Just sick of exploitation". He begins by noting all the sleazy billboards that seem to be everywhere in large cities.

He continues, "The report comes from the American Psychological Association, which was recently released on the sexualisation of girls looked at the issue across a number of media platforms: television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, cartoons and animation, magazines, sports media, video computer games, internet, advertising, products, clothing and cosmetics. The report examines in detail literature and research relating not just to girls, but also to women

The conclusion about the consequences of the sexualisation of girls and women: 'Ample evidence indicates that sexualisation has negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, sexuality and beliefs'."

Melinda Tankard Reist had this piece in the *Australian*: "Girls now the sum of their body parts". In her article she begins with the Mission Australia survey: "The results are disturbing but not really surprising. Many girls feel disgusted by their bodies, engaged in constant self-surveillance and self-criticism. Their bodies have become an all-consuming project.

One in 100 Australian girls suffers anorexia nervosa. Some estimates put the rate of

bulimia at as high as one in five. Children as young as eight are being hospitalised with eating disorders. Some hospitals report there are not enough beds to cope with the numbers. A recent report found one in five 12-year-old girls regularly used fasting and vomiting to lose weight. One in four Australian girls want to get plastic surgery."

She is rightly worried about how this is all impacting on young girls especially. "Too many girls are trying to imitate half-starved celebrities and airbrushed models in a quest to be hot and sexy. We have allowed the objectification and sexualisation of girls in a culture that is becoming increasingly pornographic. The embedding of sexualised images of women in society has become so mainstream, it is hardly noticed. Everywhere a girl looks, she sees sexualised images of her gender. She's expected to be a walking billboard for the brands of the global sex industry. Playboy make-up, porn star T-shirts, padded bras and pole dancing for little girls: they're being groomed to turn tricks in their stripper chic."

She finishes with these words: "Research links sexualisation with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression

There is no question that the sexualisation of culture is having lasting and wide-ranging negative effects. The future of our society, and the wellbeing of our children, should come ahead of the dirty profiteering of the porn industry and its allies. It is time this destructive influence is reined in, before it is too late.

2. What is pornography

Care.org UK defines pornography as: "the 'explicit representation of sexual activity in literature, films, etc, to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings. It is "titillation and fantasy".

"Pornography stimulates the pleasure centre in the brain. But after a while more pornography is needed to produce the same effect. The addictive cycle is started. There is an increase in intensity in the addiction so that the individual needs more or harder material to get the same affect, moving on to the accepting of degrading behaviour (desensitisation) and the ultimate acting out of images seen in pornography

Soft porn could be mistaken as harmless but it is still harmful and sinful: "Soft core' and 'hard core' pornography have no legal or dictionary definitions. They are two ends of a continuing line, which starts at bare breasts and genitals and ranges towards violence, bestiality and child pornography. In recent times what used to be thought of as 'hard core' is appearing in 'soft core' top shelf magazines and is readily available on the Internet. The boundaries are blurred." (Care UK)

3. Stages of pornography progress :

Being addicted to pornography is nothing new. It is a potent weapon in the hand of the devil. He simply dangles his bait and the flesh does the rest. Pornography appeals to the carnal nature. Experts in the field of sexual addictions contend on-line sexual activity is "a hidden public health hazard exploding, in part because very few are recognizing it as such or taking it seriously."

1. Addiction -The addiction effect causes a porn-consumer to get hooked and once involved in pornographic material, they want more and more. The material provides a very powerful sexual stimulant or aphrodisiac effect, followed by sexual release, most often through masturbation.

2. Escalation - With the passage of time, the addicted porn-consumer needs rougher, more explicit, more deviant and "kinky" kinds of sexual material to get their "highs" and "sexual turn-ons."

3. Desensitization - Pornographic material which was originally perceived as shocking, taboo-breaking, illegal, repulsive or immoral, though still sexually arousing, in time comes to be seen as acceptable and commonplace. The sexual activity depicted in the pornographic material (no matter how antisocial or deviant) becomes legitimized.

4. Acting Out Sexually - This fourth phase is an increasing tendency to act out sexually the behaviours viewed in the pornography that the porn-consumer had been repeatedly exposed to. This behaviour frequently grows into a sexual addiction which they found themselves locked into and unable to change or reverse -- no matter what the negative consequences were in their life.

The above is from Dr. B. Victor Cline, "Pornography's Effects on Adults & Children." Christian Self Help Addicted to pornography- a Christian view point

4.Harmful effects of Pornography

"The devil often sits back and lets the flesh do his dirty deeds. Unrestrained human sexuality can turn the beauty of intimacy into something ugly through pornography" Bob Larson: *Larson's Book of Spiritual Warfare* Published: Thomas Nelson 1999.

Pornography is leading to masturbation and masturbation is ignited by pornography.

For most Christians pornography is associated with shame, guilt, pain and the destruction of relationships, but why is it so addictive?

Jill Manning believes the foundation of our society is under threat because of pornography, "The marital relationship is a logical point of impact to examine

because it is the foundational family unit and a sexual union easily destabilized by sexual influences outside the marital contract. Moreover, research indicates the majority of Internet users are married and the majority seeking help for problematic sexual behaviour online are married, heterosexual males.”

Her findings found that the research indicates pornography consumption and pornography addiction is associated with the six trends; ·

1. Increased marital distress and risk of separation and divorce
2. Decreased marital intimacy and sexual satisfaction and increase lowliness
3. Infidelity
4. Increased appetite for more graphic types of pornography and sexual activity associated with abusive, illegal or unsafe practices,
5. Devaluation of monogamy marriage and child rearing
6. An increasing number of people struggling with compulsive and addictive sexual behaviour.

We can look for signs of pornography addiction in those we love. Indicators include emotional or sexual withdrawal, and a preoccupation with the computer, especially late at night. One woman says she knows her husband is watching pornography when he grows emotionally cold and gets angry over little things

Since pornography is sinful, the person’s relationship with Jesus is also dramatically affected.

5.Pornography effect on women

The Bible tells us Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...Hebrews 13:4. These six trends defile the purity of the sexual union between a husband and a wife and undermine the foundations upon which a successful marriage and family is established. Jill Manning rightly states “Internet pornography is altering the social and sexual landscape”

Unless we stop him the devil will continue to press through his diabolical vision for humanity trapping Christians in the process. Being addicted to pornography is not God’s best.

The scriptures commands “Drink from your own well, my son—be faithful and true to your wife. Let your manhood be a blessing; rejoice in the wife of your youth. Let her charms and tender embrace satisfy you. Let her love alone fill you with delight.” (Proverbs 5:15, 18 – 19). This word does not allow room for external sexual gratification outside marriage.

The undeniable truth is that in pornographic addiction women are reduced to and portrayed as mere physical objects for selfish lustful gain and this and this attacks the image of God in every woman. Pornography also warps a God given gift showing the sexual act independent of a long-term loving mutual relationship.

The data on women using pornography is concerning with 28% admitting to being addicted to pornography according to the internet-filter-review.com website.

Is there a link between being addicted to pornography and female sexual dysfunction?

According to recent research findings there may be a relationship. DivorceWizards.com reported 43% of American women who were addicted to pornography suffer from sexual dysfunction.

“Research links sexualisation with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression. The messages delivered by a culture obsessed with body image and sex limit the freedom of girls to explore other facets of their lives. They need to be encouraged to think for themselves, to be creative and imaginative, find meaning in life and make a mark in the world.

6.Pornography effect on Marriage

The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers in 2003 believed Internet pornography was a significant factor in 2 out of 3 divorces. J. Lindsey Short, Jr., president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, stated, “While I don’t think you can say the Internet is causing more divorces, it does make it easier to engage in the sorts of behaviours that traditionally lead to divorce.”

Another survey found 49% believe pornography promotes negative attitudes towards women and encourages viewers to think unprotected sex is O.K. (Kaiser Family Foundation 2001 poll)

Focus on the Family’s Pastoral Ministries reported that approximately 20 percent of the calls into their Pastoral Care Line are for help with issues such as being addicted to pornography and compulsive sexual behaviour. Evidently, people who are addicted to pornography is causing harm in the lives of many Christians.

Care UK places an emphases on an easily forgotten truth that “Pornography... promises the unreal promoting false expectations of relationships and ignoring the realities of daily living...”

7.Pornography and violence.

The link between being addicted to pornography and violence is self-evident but recent research confirms what we, as Christians instinctively know.

Dr. Mary Anne Layden, director of education, University of Pennsylvania Health System commented, “I have been treating sexual violence victims and perpetrators for 13 years. I have not treated a single case of sexual violence that did not involve pornography.”

Jill Manning’s research into pornography and its affect on individuals concluded there is “a modest correlation between exposure to pornography and subsequent

behavioral aggression. She found 7 studies proving that a strong correlation exists between depictions of violent sexual activity and aggression. Clearly, internet porn is a dangerous evil intrusion.

The testimony of Jill C. Manning, concluded, "the impact of sexually explicit material on behavior is more complex than is often assumed in pornography research, but that a negative impact exists" "Research reveals many systemic effects of Internet pornography that are undermining an already vulnerable culture of marriage and family." Even more disturbing is the fact that the first Internet generations have not reached full-maturity, so the upper-limits of this impact have yet to be realized. Furthermore, the numerous negative effects research point to are extremely difficult, if not impossible, for individual citizens or families to combat on their own"

8.How to defeat addiction

1. pray and be earnest when you pray. don't just say the words, mean them.
2. take Paul's advice and do not even THINK about how to satisfy the desires of sinful nature. no sin ever happens without some kind of pre planning, for example no guy just suddenly commits adultery without even thinking about it. he has to have considered it and thought about how to do it for a long time as long as you keep yourself from thinking about it , it'll be a lot easier to avoid. but how do I control what I think? you may ask. you can't control whether or not the thought pops into your brain, there is nothing you can do about the thought, but you can control whether or not you dwell on it. if you immediately start thinking about something else, I guarantee you'll forget about your desires and get out of the situation.
3. everyone has their spiritual highs and lows. and needless to say you're more susceptible to sin at a low. Satan always attacks us at our weakest. so when you know your having a spiritual low, be especially careful to avoid any situation that could lead to porn. for me it means not turning on my computer, watching certain movies, etc. just do whatever you need to do to avoid getting into the situation.

most importantly TRUST GOD. if you honestly trust that he'll keep you out of trouble, he will.

To illustrate the second point you made (stubby), I heard this in a sermon one time: You can't prevent a bird from flying over your head, but you can prevent it from building a nest in your hair!

9.Here is Advice on Purity

I suggest the following steps to help you prevent falling into sexual/ pornographic temptation:

When you feel the urge coming on you do 3 things prior to caving into the temptation (you do have a choice whether to indulge yourself or not)...

1. *Pray for God to help and strengthen you not to fall into this temptation.* Write out some verses to read while you are praying such as: 1 Cor 10:13-14 "But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it. 14 So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols." NLT and "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." Phil. 4:13

2. *Ask yourself: What is the way out of this?* Remove yourself from the computer and distract yourself. God doesn't suggest that you hang around and see if you can withstand the temptation - He commands you to: "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple 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. Therefore honor God with your body." 1 Cor 6:18-20 NIV
"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Tim 2:22 NIV

3. *Flee by calling a friend, playing a game/sports, taking a walk, reading an inspirational book or exercising.*

Commit your life to the Lord. All of us are tempted throughout the day and need to recommit ourselves to the Lord. Prov 3:4-6 says:

† If you want favour with both God and man, and a reputation for good judgment and common sense, then trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.

Put internet filtering software on the computer – you may have to ask your parents to do this since it will cost something. Look up: CleanSurf.com. There are many of these programs and you will need to research which is the best. Don't be afraid to ask your parents to help you so you can avoid temptation. They will understand that you are struggling – since this is normal!

Verses Supports You

scriptures are full of calls to righteousness

John 8:32 "Then you will know the truth , and the truth will set you free." (1Thess 5:21) "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Proverbs 14:31, 34;

Ecclesiastes 4:1; Ezekiel 22:29, 31; Zechariah 7:9-10; Matthew 5: 13-16, 27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-25; Ephesians 5:11-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Jude 22-23

Philippians 2:5 Philippians 4:8 ; Psalm 119:9-11

10.Help! I'm addicted to pornography

Sexaholics anonymous website (<http://www.sa.org/>) adapts the Alcoholic Anonymous 12 step plan to overcome sex addiction and provides what I believe is a pragmatic and workable plan, giving a real sense of hope rooted in God's grace.

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over lust — that our lives had become unmanageable.
 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs
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12. Suggestions for healing and recovery

Sexual sin thrives in isolation – it grows in the heart of an unhappy spouse and in the darkness of a lukewarm heart. For those who struggle with sexual addiction, seclusion is death.

The only way to dissolve the shame of sexual sin and begin the process of breaking free is to expose our failures. Proverbs 28:13 says, "Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and renounce them find mercy." Change does not occur without asking God and others for help.

The following are some suggestions for healing and recovery:

- Confess and repent. **"Confession is a powerful deterrent to temptation"**
- Destroy all pornographic material, including adult movies.
- Meet regularly with a support group to share and pray for each other.
- Meet with one person on a weekly basis.
- Make daily phone calls to an accountability partner.
- Be willing to face the pain and emptiness within.
- Resolve trauma from childhood, such as sexual or physical abuse.
- Ask your spouse to install a porn blocker on your computer. (See Resources, below.)
- Encourage your pastor to preach on pornography at least once a year.

In the end, finding freedom from sexual addiction doesn't come from reading books, attending support groups, receiving counselling, or gaining biblical knowledge. These are important tools God uses as part of the healing process but, in themselves, don't set the struggler free.

Until the addict fills the hole in his soul with something bigger and more attractive than sexual sin, the gnawing emptiness inside will continue to drive him to pornography. The inner spiritual vacuum must be satisfied before life-changing freedom can occur. And God must do the filling.

13. A good point to be noticed Why stop sexual impurity (contemporary experience)

I have a message for all of my fellow young men. God has revealed something to me that is so powerful it has literally changed my whole outlook on Christianity. It was after I had masturbated again, though I didn't lust like previous times before, and I was looking for answers to how I could stop and whether I should. Then I stumbled upon this verse in 1 Corinthians 10:23 it says "You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'--but not everything is helpful. You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'--but not everything is beneficial." Now in context with the whole passage, this verse was ready to begin explaining the eating of idol sacrificed meat and such, but I got something much deeper much more meaningful from it. I discovered that I am free. But what I found most of all is that I must not strive for purity because the Bible says I should or shouldn't, it is not a matter of dos and don'ts. It's a matter of wants and want nots. If you have truly become saved through the

blood of Christ , then you want purity because it is something God wills and as Paul discusses in Galatians we take upon God's will as our will. God does not have a chalkboard up in heaven tallying up how many times you were impure. God loves you. And to show our love back that's why we act the way we do. I am not going to be pure only because the Bible says its wrong and that it's a sin , but because I love Him and want to please Him. What proves I am saved is that I want what God wants. You might all be saying to yourselves "well of course I want to be pure", but think about this; do you want to be pure just because the Bible says it's wrong. Or do you want to be pure because it is your will to be pure. It is your desire to pure. God doesn't want robots, He wants children. He wants you to want Him. So I may sin, but you know what, I don't want to sin. In times past I approached this whole thing wrong, I approached it like depriving myself of something, doing it because I am supposed to. But I don't do it now because I am supposed to, I don't do it because I want to. I don't do it because I want to get closer to God. I don't do it because it isn't "beneficial." I don't do it because it isn't just God's will, it's my will. I can tell you all this, but I do not know your hearts, this is something you have to question with God yourselves. Have we been praying the prayer of St. Augustine "Lord make me chaste...But not yet." You have to want Purity.

Note: This material is collected from different Christian web-sites

Dear all,

**Please find attached the lesson on ‘Homosexuality’ prepared by Bassem.
Also below are two links to sermons on the topic by HG Bishop Suriel of Melbourne.**

<http://www.orthodoxsermons.org/sermons/human-rights-and-homosexuality>

http://www.4shared.com/audio/gGYVpa3c/homosexuality_by_h_g_bishop_so.html

Also some very useful background material.

<http://www.coptic.net/articles/OnHomosexuality>