



Living a Christ-Centered Life in the World of Cyberspace:

A Whitepaper on Online Sexuality

Cornerstone University upholds the belief that all human beings are called to be healthy stewards of all of life even as they engage in the world with which God has blessed them. But engaging in the technological culture of early twenty-first century life brings with it both opportunities and cautions. One caution is the rapidly growing social problem of pornography, and more specifically, the myriad issues surrounding the notion of what is now called “cybersex,”—mediated or computer based sexual expression and perversion.

Cybersex is a relatively new development offering especially easily accessible and inexpensive immoral temptations at the click of a button. It is, therefore, very important to address this issue wisely, thoroughly, critically, and honorably so that individuals may know how to live as healthy stewards in cyberspace.

In this whitepaper, we attempt to share redemptive insights, as well as develop processes for assisting people who may be struggling with issues related to sexual purity while accessing the Internet.

Internet pornography, or cybersex, is the third largest sector of sales on the Internet, selling over \$200 million dollars annually. Some estimates suggest that there are over 30,000 existing pornographic websites with a reported 40 new websites being added everyday. Needless to say, this is a growing concern for anyone seeking to live the Christian life in a technology enhanced culture.

Since God made each human being a free moral agent, the one variable under each Christian’s direct control is his or her personal discernment: in the selection of content we place before our eyes, in the use of our financial resources, and in the use of our time in moral evaluation and accountability. Yet individuals, including Christians, are increasingly becoming engaged in sexual immorality online.

In the scope of human history, cybersex is a very recent phenomenon – perhaps fifteen to twenty years old. Yet, the story of cybersex is nearly as old as time itself. To fully grasp its development we must return to the Garden of Eden and the creation of human beings. To understand the devastation cybersex can produce, we must first understand God’s creation mandates for sexuality and technology.

After creating the world, God installed his capstone creature – the human being. Made in the image of the Creator, human beings were (and still are) created both with certain capacities, e.g., language, symbolic logic, and emotion, as well as the need for essential relationships with the Creator, others, and the rest of creation. Furthermore, God provided direction to human beings to go and cultivate this world in a manner which is God-honoring. It was truly an auspicious beginning.

Sexuality had its origin in the Garden. We learn from Scripture that within the context of heterosexual marriage human beings are to be fruitful and multiply, which entails sexual activity. In this activity man and woman so properly relate to one another that they become one. It is not a one-way activity. Healthy sexual activity involves both the husband and wife emptying themselves of their respective needs by giving of themselves to the mutual bond between them.

Technology is evident soon after human creation. In the book *Responsible Technology*, technology is defined as “a distinct human cultural activity in which human beings exercise freedom and responsibility in response to God by forming and transforming the natural creation, with the aid of tools and procedures, for practical ends or purposes.”^[1] In other words, technology is a culture-building activity of humans. As we engage in our technological tasks, we creatively form tools and products that should reflect the wonders of God, i.e., our technology reflects us as we image the Creator.

But Scripture teaches us that not only did God create a perfect world—for the right uses of sexuality and technology—but also that sin, and therefore destruction and death, entered the world. Adam sinned by rejecting God’s command and through this disobedience the entire human race was alienated from God, depraved, and totally lost. Due to the universal presence of sin within all of us, Christians must now balance enjoyment of this world with a discerning mind regarding the potential evil of any cultural product. We must guard our thoughts, words, and actions as we live as active agents of cultural creation and change. Thus God commands us to apply biblical principles and values to life in a manner which glorifies Him and serves humanity. God also warns us, for our protection and freedom, to avoid every form of sexual immorality.

When people become involved in sin through engaging in internet pornography, or any other form of sexual immorality, God offers a way to be redeemed, cleansed, and restored. Due to the loving grace of God we are forgiven for our sins through Christ when we repent. As Scripture teaches us, we are all called to acknowledge our sin and reveal it to God. In Luke 12:2-3 it says, “there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever one has said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what one has whispered in the inner rooms shall be

proclaimed from the housetops,” and we learn that God is already keenly aware of our sin. Through the process of humble self discovery we are called to be self aware and accountable for our sins. It is at this point we can then invite God into these broken places in us and ask to be cleansed and forgiven. The Christian hope is rooted in this offering of redemption and consummation. We can be restored, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil. Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow.” (Is 1: 16, 18).

Through God’s design we are created to mature in our spiritual formation by seeking redemption with the support of our fellow brothers and sisters. We can become healthy stewards of our mind, body and spirit if we allow God to be the center of our lives. The experience of changing toxic and destructive patterns such as allowing deviant sexuality into our lives, takes spiritual and mental discipline and support from others. We can rely on our relationship with God and the dialogue through prayer, relationships with supportive friends and family, accountability groups or partners, Bible studies, individual and/or group counseling and other various forms of fellowship within our communities and churches. The process of choosing to reject all forms of engaging in evil, which in this case is sexual exploitation and deviation, is a part of sanctification. Rom. 3: 21-26 says, “But now apart from the Law righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

II

Cornerstone University has developed a program to aid students in the process of accountability and redemption with respect to sexual matters. Both a preventative and responsive plan are in place and available to students: Bible studies, accountability groups, chapels, and a variety of informational programming are all designed to help students commit themselves spiritually and physically to sexual purity. We have established various options to help students be accountable for their actions, which is determined on an individual basis depending on the students’ needs.

Cornerstone University also utilizes a content filter that blocks sexually explicit, adult content, and lingerie websites. We consider the filter and review process to be a redemptive act as it helps us identify those who are struggling and offer them support and opportunities for accountability. Students struggle at a variety of levels, so the university has implemented a three tiered intervention.

Level one represents a student who appears to be just beginning to look at pornographic websites or has only a few recorded hits on such sites in a given week. This student would be confronted. Following discussion, the student would begin participation in an accountability group which uses either the book *Every Man’s Battle* or *Every Woman’s Battle*.

Level two represents a student who continues to view pornography for a second week or otherwise evidences an increased involvement with pornography. This student would be confronted and walked through a packet of information outlining required participation in “The Truth About Pornography,” an educational seminar facilitated by a Cornerstone University Residence Life Professional Staff member.

Level three represents students that continue to struggle with viewing pornographic materials. This student would be confronted and then referred to our University Counseling Center for a professional assessment of the situation. The students would be required to continue in counseling if the Counselor makes that recommendation. At this point the student would also be required to participate in a small group environment and/or participate in an educational seminar.

At Cornerstone University we are committed to embracing each student in a Christ-centered manner as we tend to their academic and spiritual needs. We believe that we are all called to yield to God’s design of sexual purity, and we believe that we cannot do this without seeking guidance, support, and most importantly, God’s loving grace.

-END-

[1] Monsma, Stephen, ed. Responsible Technology, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids), 1986, p. 19.

© Cornerstone University, 2004