



Session 7

Lust: A Colossal Distortion

(Steve Bollman)

St. Gregory the Great

“When pride, the queen of sins, has fully possessed a conquered heart, she surrenders it immediately to seven principal sins ... vain glory, envy, anger, melancholy, avarice, gluttony, lust.

- Moralia 31.xlv



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The Issue of Desire

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be *desired* to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.”

- Genesis 3:6

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own *desire*. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full grown brings forth death.”

- James 1:13-15

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An Internalized Struggle

“The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with visible creation is broken.

- Catechism #400

”

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When we say, “Desire” ... many men spontaneously think of lust!

Lust distorts love.

It has gotten significantly more difficult in our day.



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A Typical Modern “Relationship”

▶ Carlos is a 24-year-old man in Austin, TX.

▶ Current relationship with Melina (9 months)

▶ Numerous previous relationships.

▶ Looks at pornography/masturbates daily.

▶ Has cheated on every girlfriend-not Melina yet.

▶ Keeps nude photos of ex girlfriends.

▶ Keeps “sex tapes” of him with ex girlfriends.

▶ Melina not too happy with porn and masturbation.

▶ Melina “hates” photos/footage of ex girlfriends.

Melina hates using Carlos’ laptop because he has all the material with his ex-girlfriends bookmarked.

Pornography/masturbation causes tension because “sometimes I can’t function cuz I’m too desensitized ... [and] I can’t get it up.”

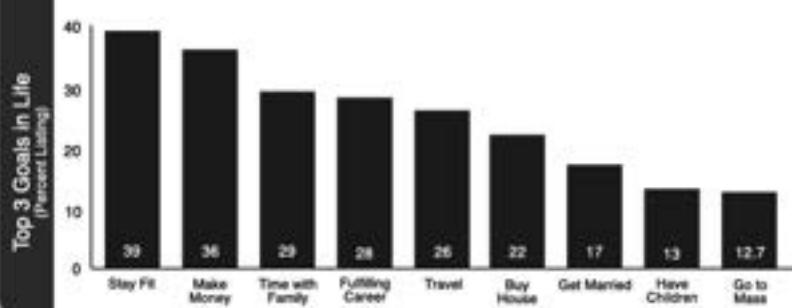
When his laptop was broken, he borrowed the laptop of one of his exes to watch porn. When she found out, she was really p***ed off, but I didn’t give a s***.”

Would like to get married one day – to an ex – “who is exactly what I want in a girl, like sexually, physically, you know.”

Source: Regnerus, M., “Cheap Sex – The Transformation of men, Marriage and Monogamy,” Oxford University Press, NY, 2017, pp. 110-111

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A Distressing Future



Source: Nielsen, "Global Generational Lifestyles Survey," November 2015.

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The reality of the 7 Deadly Sins is that they destroy
our life from within.



The issue is the struggle of the heart.
Let's look at love.



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Love ... and the Brain's Reward System

Attraction

- Falling in love activates the reward center in the brain.
- Caudate nucleus - distinguishes between potential rewards.
- Ventral tegmental area (VTA) contains dopamine producing cells.
- Dopamine is released in the nucleus accumbens.
- "Romantic love is a primary motivation system in the brain ... romantic love is a need, a craving" (Dr. Helen Fisher).

The Brain's Reward System



Communion

- The brain is restructured by the neurochemicals released during intercourse.
- Oxytocin, vasopressin and dopamine restructure the nucleus accumbens and the lateral septum to form a "pair bond."
- "Sex is unlikely to be the driving force for [mate guarding]" (Dr. Helen Fisher).
- The brain responds to hearing the name of the beloved in a manner similar to hearing its own name.

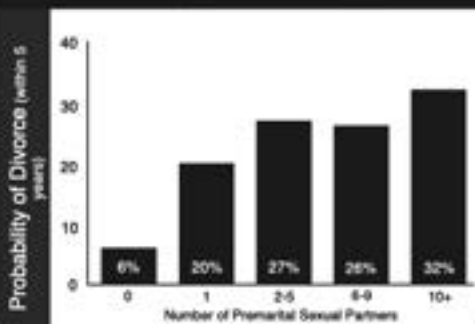
Source: Fisher, H., "Why We Love - The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love," Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2004, pp. 67-76.

Source: Fisher, H., et al., "Romantic Love: An fMRI Study of a Neural Mechanism for Mate Choice," The Journal of Comparative Neurology, 2005.
Wang, Z., et al., "Neurochemical regulation of pair bonding in male prairie voles," Physiology and Behavior, 2004.
Gallup, K., et al., "Anterior Hypothalamic Neural Activation and Neurochemical Associations with Aggression in Pair-Bonded Male Prairie Voles," The Journal of Comparative Neurology, 2007.

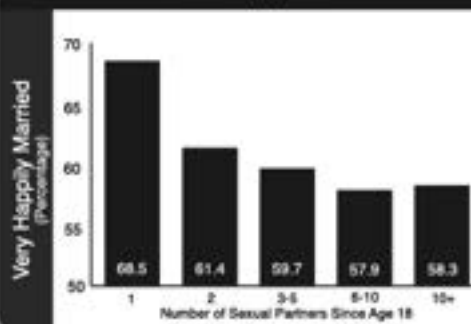
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The Wisdom of God

Premarital Sexual Partners and Divorce



Marital Happiness



Source: Wolfinger, N., "Counterintuitive Trends in the Link Between Premarital Sex and Marital Stability," (Data taken from NSFG 2002-2013), June 6, 2016; General Social Survey, 1972-2018.

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There are two major challenges with this reward system.



Timing: Attraction takes 1/5 of a second. Attachment occurs over time.



Primacy: Once an attachment is formed, the attraction system does not turn off.

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Pornography: Virtual Infidelity

Attraction – Addiction

Sexually stimulating images are processed as real - at the emotional, not intellectual level bypassing the neocortex and passing directly from the thalamus to amygdala.

Brain focuses on visual stimuli in milliseconds.

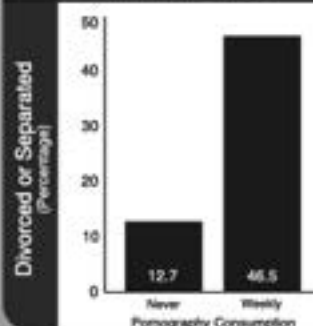
Same chemicals are released when viewing pornography as released during a real sexual encounter.

Oxytocin and Vasopressin bind person to object of desire. Dopamine is addictive.

The Brain's Reward System



Attachment – Divorce



Source: Struthers, W., "Wired for Intimacy, IVP Books, 2009, pp. 83-107. General Social Survey, 1972-2018.

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Destroyed from Within

Erectile Dysfunction

- ▶ Brain's reward system builds a tolerance to dopamine.
- ▶ Dopamine activates sexual centers in the brain's hypothalamus.
- ▶ Hypothalamus sends a signal to erectile centers in the spinal cord.
- ▶ Tolerance to dopamine means sexual centers are not activated.
- ▶ Pornography consumption is leading to erectile dysfunction in otherwise healthy men who are still in their 20's and 30's.

Alternative Practices

- ▶ Over stimulation/release of dopamine dampened by release of opiate dynorphin.
- ▶ Pornography activates mPFC, posterior cingulate and temporal lobes.
- ▶ Women are viewed as objects.
- ▶ Willingness to view ever greater "fringe" material in the attempt to get "dopamine rush."
- ▶ Develop preference for "super-normal" over natural: fake vs. real.

Human Trafficking

- ▶ Millions of humans are trapped in human trafficking each year.
- ▶ 79% are for sexual exploitation. 70% are women and girls.
- ▶ One-quarter are under age 25. 8% are under age 11.
- ▶ U.S. is a major destination. They come from all over the world.
- ▶ 50% are force to produce pornography.
- ▶ Websites perform on demand.

Source: Voon, V. "Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with and without Compulsive Sexual Behaviors." *PLoS ONE*, July 2014, v. 9, Issue 7, e103118.
Robinson, M., et al. "Cupid's Poisoned Arrow: Porn-Induced Sexual Dysfunction: A Growing Problem." *Psychology Today*, July 11, 2011.

Source: Leeks, J., "The Science of Sin." *Bloombury Signs*, London, 2016, pp. 106-107.

Source: Migration Data Portal: Human Trafficking.
Farley, M., "Renting an Organ for Ten Minutes: What Tricks Tell us about Prostitution, Pornography, and Trafficking." in *Pornography: Driving the Demand for International Sex Trafficking*.

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The Strongest Warning of Christ

“

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- Matthew 18:6

”

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There's another important challenge in the reward system.



Anticipation: More than half of the dopamine is released before the action ... and the brain doesn't like to be tricked!



Is there hope? The story of St. Augustine.

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St. Augustine



St. Augustine: Biographical Background

- ▶ 354: Born on Nov 13th in North Africa to devout mother and pagan father.
- ▶ 370: Goes to Carthage to further education.
- ▶ 372-373: Has illegitimate child. Embraces Manichaeism heresy.
- ▶ 383: Goes to Rome and then Milan.
- ▶ 386: Is converted in a garden.
- ▶ 387: Baptized by St. Ambrose.
- ▶ 391ff: Ordained a priest – then a bishop.
- ▶ 430: Dies on August 28th.

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Augustine's Inner Conflict

“A huge storm rose up within me ... Suddenly, a voice reaches my ears from a nearby house ... ‘Take it and read it’ ... I snatched up the book, opened it, and read in silence the passage upon which my eyes first fell: ‘Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in concupiscence.’ I had no wish to read further; there was no need to.”

Source: St. Augustine, “Confessions,”
Book 8, Chapter 12, Trans. Chadwick, H.,
Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University
Press, 2008.

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St. Augustine's Transformation

“So under the three forms of lust I have considered the sicknesses of my sins, and I have invoked your right hand to save me ... You are the truth presiding over all things. But ... [I] wanted to have you at the same time as holding on to a lie ... Who could be found to reconcile me to you? Was I to beg the help of the angels ... Many have tried to return to you, and have not had the strength in themselves to achieve it.”

Abandons position in rhetoric.

Lives a monastic life of prayer, fasting, good works and meditation on Scripture for 3 years.

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Practical Advice

- Go to Confession immediately after falling.
- Turn off media ... Only watch good media.
- Get electronic software to help (Covenant Eyes).
- Go to bed together with your spouse.
- End each day talking with your spouse for 15 minutes.
- Enriched environment – friendships with other men.
- Participate in ascetical program (Exodus 90).
- Seek professional help.

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Session 7

- What desires do you have in your heart that are NOT from God?
- In what ways do you personally experience something like Augustine's inner conflict?
- Which of the practical steps regarding lust and pornography do you need to begin today?