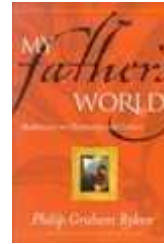


Window on the World

Window on the World is our weekly opportunity to examine our culture from the vantage point of biblical Christianity. Here you will find the text from Dr. Ryken's "Window on the World" talks from Tenth Presbyterian Church's evening service. If you missed one or wanted to send a copy to a friend, you will be able to find them here. Please note: there is no "Window on the World" on third Sundays, selected other Sundays, or in July and August. Windows on the World before September 2005 are available in an older format. [Click here](#). Many of these are now published in [My Father's World: Meditations on Christianity and Culture](#) (P&R Publishing, 2002) and in [He Speaks to Me Everywhere: Meditations on Christianity and Culture](#) (P&R Publishing, 2004) by Philip Graham Ryken.



Cybersin

Dr. Philip Ryken



Series: Window on the World
Date: 02/05/2006

Listen: (None Available)

Full Text:

Every year in February I like to open a window on the world of love and romance. This year I want to speak with you about the single greatest threat to romantic love in America today, and possibly in human history. I refer, of course, to the ready availability of internet pornography.

Nearly ten years ago, before Tenth Church had a website or I had my own email address (remember the good old days?), I warned this congregation in one of my Windows on the World that the internet would make pornography pervasive. Now we are living in a depraved new world, in which sexually explicit material is the most common and most financially profitable content available on the internet. Sexual chat rooms abound, enabling people to commit virtual adultery with an almost limitless number of partners in the privacy of their own homes and offices. Sin has never been so simple. Pornography is one of the largest industries in America, and the more people are exposed to it, the more pornographic our mainstream media becomes. Once regarded as a shameful sin, porn has become the norm.

Pornography diminishes our capacity for the human relationships God wants us to share for his glory. Sexual intimacy is designed to serve as the covenant cement that binds one woman to one man in a love relationship for life. But when our sexual experience is privatized through pornography, we treat sex as a means of selfish gratification rather than a joy to be shared with the man or the woman God has called us to love. When a single person uses pornography it stifles the growth of selfless love and makes it increasingly difficult to have other-centered relationships that build up the church and may lead to marriage. When a married person uses pornography it defiles the marriage bed, darkens the flame of romance, and destroys the partnership of prayer.

But these are not the only problems with pornography. It is a secret sin, and therefore it isolates us from the spiritual community we need to grow in grace. It is a visual sin, and therefore violates Christ's command not to look at someone with lust in our hearts (see Matt. 5:28). And since it is often accompanied

with masturbation, it is an intensely physical sin, and therefore more easily gains addictive control. Unless this sin is mortified—that is to say, unless it is put to death (see Gal. 5:24; Col. 3:5)—it will only intensify. Pornography makes greater and greater demands until finally it becomes a life-dominating sin. As one of the Puritans said, sexual pictures secretly convey poison to the soul. Now they are only a mouse click away—a click that may eventually lead a man or a woman straight to hell.

What is God's plan for putting pornography to death? Pastor George Scipione says at least six things are needed in any effective spiritual strategy for dealing with this sexual sin [see George Scipione, "Is Porn Norm?" *Evangelium*, pp. 2–5].

The first is *regeneration*, or the new birth. This is essential to everything else. Unless we are born again, we do not have the Holy Spirit living in us, and we will be powerless in our struggle against sin. But when the Spirit is alive in us, we can begin to grow in godliness: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

The second is *renewed repentance and faith*. When Christians feel guilty, sometimes it is all we can do to drag ourselves back to God. But God wants us to run straight back to the cross, believing that because Jesus died for our sins, we are fully forgiven—forgiven for as many sins as we have sinned.

The third part of a spiritual strategy for dealing with sexual sin is a *renewed mind*. This is always God's plan for spiritual change: a transformed mind that leads to a transformed life (see Rom. 12:1–2). This mind may be fed by reading good Christian literature, but fundamentally it is formed by feeding on the Word of God.

The fourth part is *renewed obedience*. It is not just our thinking that needs to change, but the way that we live. This means replacing the old habits of lustful sin with new habits of purity before God. Among other things, this means being wise about when and where we use various forms of electronic communication. If you can't be trusted not to look at sexual images, don't watch television when you are alone, keep your office door open, or do whatever else it takes to limit the temptation to sin (see Matt. 5:29–30).

The fifth part is *regular use of the regular means of grace*. Some people always seem to be looking for some special method that will guarantee spiritual change. But the only means that God has given for our spiritual growth are the ordinary means of the word, sacraments, and prayer. If you want to make progress in your struggle with sexual sin (or any other sin, for that matter), spend more time reading your Bible, sit under the faithful preaching of the gospel, receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by faith, and pray daily for Christ to take control of your thoughts and actions.

Sixth is *regular reporting to responsible shepherds*. We are not designed to grow in godliness by ourselves, but only in community with other Christians. When we are struggling with sin—especially any kind of addictive sin—we need to share our struggle in the church. Do not be afraid: a good brother or sister will not condemn you, but encourage you in the mercy of Christ. When the struggle is intense, you may need daily or at least weekly accountability from a close Christian friend. In addition, it is always wise to make sure that a pastor or elder is aware of your situation for the purpose of prayer. Many Christians also find it helpful to meet with a counselor who is trained to help people who are in bondage to sexual sin. Good places to get help in Philadelphia include Harvest USA (www.harvestusa.com) and the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (www.ccef.org).

Anyone who does these things by faith will experience the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Anyone who is involved with pornography and decides not to do these things is pursuing his or her own destruction.