

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

July 2, 2019

Last Sunday we used a handout (attached) to evaluate ourselves on “the fruit of the Spirit” and “the seven deadly sins.”¹ Next Sunday, we’ll ponder the principle of “wet paint.” Both messages have to do with the subjects of temptation, choices, and spiritual growth.

One of the “seven deadly sins,” of course, is “lust”; and I’ve been struck by how often that subject has been addressed recently in the theological journals that I read. Sexual abuse and pornography both fit under the idea of “lust,” and in this *Laptop* I’m going to suggest a possible connection between them.

Christianity Today recently noted that “for many years, even as revelations of sexual abuse by clergy had been coming to light for decades in the Catholic church, the evangelical church had not had ‘eyes to see’ or ‘ears to hear’ the extent of its own abuse crisis.”²

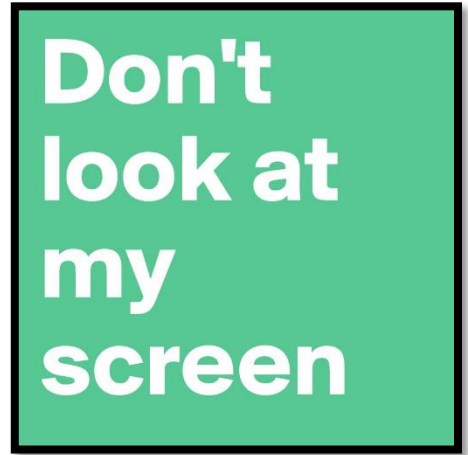
In the words of Beth Moore, currently Southern Baptists’ most famous Bible teacher, “By and large, the naïve couldn’t fathom it, the knowledgeable wouldn’t risk it, the perpetrators were good at it, and the victims were blamed and shamed for it.”

But since last year, a number of Southern Baptist women have brought new attention to the silent suffering of hundreds of Baptist women whose stories have been ignored, stifled, and left untold. And, of course, the #MeToo movement has identified men’s sexual abuse of women as pervasive in many, many areas of our society, whether religious or not.

Here’s what I think might be a hinge connecting such abuse with pornography. You may remember the sad account of David’s son, Amnon’s rape of his sister Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. When Absalom, another brother, learns what Amnon has done, he tells her, “*Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this thing to heart.*” Absalom’s shushing and dismissing are certainly vile, but it is David’s reaction that stuns: “*When King David heard all this, he was furious*” (vv. 20–21).

Jen Wilkin, another Bible teacher, commented, “Furious. That’s it. No public denouncement of Amnon, no vindication of Tamar. No justice, no words of comfort or kindness for his daughter, just impotent, mute anger. David is silent. He takes no action against Amnon, opening the door for Absalom to have his brother murdered in revenge. And Tamar is left desolate.”

Wilkin posits this connection: “Why does David’s anger translate into silence and inaction? Because David sees in his sons an amplification of his own grievous sins. David sacrificed Bathsheba to his own lust and then murdered her husband to cover his tracks. Now his two sons fulfill God’s prophecy of judgment by committing heightened versions of his own sins within their own family.



¹ The “seven deadly sins” do not appear as such in the Bible, but they did arise in the early church https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_deadly_sins.

² <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/june/sbc-abuse-survivors-advocates-profiles.html>

“David’s guilt renders him silent. Tamar’s plea to Amnon as he overpowers her rings in the ears of the reader: *As for me, where could I carry my shame?* And David’s profound silence gives us our answer: *Nowhere*. . . .

“By speaking of Tamar, we are speaking to the women in our churches whose voices have grown silent beneath their shame. We are inviting them to tell and to heal. When we tell Tamar’s story aloud, we dignify her grief. And we begin to become for our sisters the advocates Tamar should have had.”³

It seems to me that Wilkins may have identified an important connection when she wrote that **“David’s guilt rendered him silent.”** I wonder whether a central reason why men’s sexual abuse of women is not taken more seriously and prosecuted more vigorously is that widespread sexual guilt causes other men to look the other way. Consider these numbers from Webroot, an Internet security company⁴:

Every Day:

- 37 pornographic videos are created in the United States.
- 2.5 billion emails containing porn are sent or received.
- 68 million search queries related to pornography- 25% of total searches- are generated.
- 116,000 queries related to child pornography are received.



How Online Pornography Affects Americans

- About 200,000 Americans are classified as “porn addicts.”
- 40 million American people regularly visit porn sites.
- 35% of all internet downloads are related to pornography.
- 34% of internet users have experienced unwanted exposure to pornographic content through ads, pop up ads, misdirected links or emails.
- One-third of porn viewers are women.

Family/Marital Pornography Stats

- According to National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families, 2010, 47% of families in the United States reported that pornography is a problem in their home.
- Pornography use increases the marital infidelity rate by more than 300%.
- 68% of divorce cases involve one party meeting a new paramour over the internet while 56% involve one party having an “obsessive interest” in pornographic websites.⁵

I can’t prove that use of pornography causes men to be less likely to take charges of sexual abuse with appropriate seriousness, but I also can’t help wondering about possible connections. The Barna Group (a Christian company that does statistical surveying) has

³ Some of these stories are told at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/june/tamar-jen-wilkin-absalom-david-1-samuel.html>

⁴ <https://www.webroot.com/us/en/resources/tips-articles/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers>

⁵ See also Samuel L. Perry, *Addicted to Lust: Pornography in the Lives of Conservative Protestants* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

repeatedly affirmed that pornography use among self-identified Christians is as prevalent as among those in the non-believing population. Lust is not a problem “long, long ago and far, far away.” It may be at work in your household, or even in your own life.

In this 4th of July week in which we lift up the value of freedom, finding freedom from sexual abuse and from pornography involves both humility and accountability.⁶ We grow in grace by making choices that are hard to make, by surrounding ourselves with supportive Christian friends, and doing this over and over again until freedom is won.

God is faithful.

The evil one is a liar and the father of lies.

God’s grace covers ALL our sin.

Thanks be to God!



⁶ Helpful resources include Twelve-Step Groups such as SA, and web resources such as www.conquerseries.com and www.covenanteyes.com.

Spiritual Questions

Please rate yourself in the following areas.

The first nine areas are the "*Fruit of the Spirit.*" The last seven areas are the "*Seven Deadly Sins.*"

Love absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Joy absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Peace absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Patience absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Kindness absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Goodness absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Faithfulness absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Gentleness absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Self-Control absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete



Anger absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Envy absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Gluttony absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Greed absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Lust absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Pride absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Sloth absent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete