

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF PURITY

ONE NEED TURN on the television for only a few minutes to feel the heat of the oppressive sensuality of our day. Most of the oppression is crude. A boring trip around the TV channels at midday invariably reveals at least one couple wrapped in bed sheets and much sensual monotony. But the heat has become increasingly artful, especially if its purpose is to sell.

Do you remember this commercial?: The camera focuses close up, in black and white, on an intense, lusting male face, over which is superimposed an amber flame, which then becomes a glowing bottle of Calvin Klein's Obsession as the face intones its desire.

Newer spots feature subtle cinematic images with prose from D. H. Lawrence — "... to know him, to gather him in ..." — and Flaubert's Madame Bovary as she wanders around her illicit lover's bedroom. The sticky steam of sensuality penetrates everything in our world!

But even with all this, many sensualists want more. Professor David A. J. Richard of New York University Law School, who advocates freedom for hard-core pornography, argues that "pornography can be seen as the unique medium of sexuality, a 'pornotopia' — a view of sensual delight in the erotic celebration of the body, a concept of easy freedom without consequences, a fantasy of timeless repetitive indulgence." Pornotopia? Now there's a word! It sounds like a new section of Disneyland. Autotopia ... Pornotopia ... Fantasyland. "Absurd!" we think — and it is — but sadly, Richard's arguments are actually being given serious weight today. It is no wonder we live in a culture that sweats sensuality from its pores!

And the Church has not escaped, for many in today's Church have wilted under the heat. Recently *Leadership Magazine* commissioned a poll of a thousand pastors. The pastors indicated that **12 percent** of them had committed adultery while in the ministry — one out of eight pastors! — and **23 percent** had done something they considered sexually inappropriate. *Christianity Today* surveyed a thousand of its subscribers who were *not* pastors and found the figure to be nearly double, with **23 percent** saying they had had extramarital intercourse and **45 percent** indicating they had done something they themselves deemed sexually inappropriate.

Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

One in four Christian men are unfaithful, and nearly one half have behaved unbecomingly! Shocking statistics! Especially when we remember that *Christianity Today* readers tend to be college-educated church leaders, elders, deacons, Sunday school superintendents, and teachers.

If this is so for the Church's leadership, how much more for the average member of the congregation? Only God knows!

This leads us to an inescapable conclusion: The contemporary evangelical Church, broadly considered, is "**Corinthian**" to the core. It is being stewed in the molten juices of its own sensuality so that it is:

- No wonder the Church has lost its grip on holiness.
- No wonder it is so slow to discipline its members.
- No wonder it is dismissed by the world as irrelevant.
- No wonder so many of its children reject it.
- No wonder it has lost its power in many places — and that Islam and other false religions are making so many converts.

Sensuality is easily the biggest obstacle to godliness among men today and is wreaking havoc in the Church. Godliness and sensuality are mutually exclusive, and those in the grasp of sensuality can never rise to godliness while in its sweaty grip. If we are to "**discipline [ourselves] for the purpose of godliness**" ([1 Timothy 4:7](#), NASB), we must begin with the discipline of purity. **There has to be some holy heat, some holy sweat!**