

Overcoming Porn and Other Kinds of Sexual Temptation

The plague of porn: Porn may be one of the most dangerous and unhealthy challenges that we face in our desire to follow Jesus.

- 20% of men admit to accessing pornography at work
- There are 40 million U.S. adults who admit to regularly visiting internet pornography websites
- 47% of Christians say pornography is a major problem in the home
- There are 4.2 million pornographic websites (12% of total websites on the internet)
- There are 420 million pornographic pages
- There are 68 million search engine requests for pornography daily (25% of total search engine requests)
- Porn and sex are among the top five search queries for children
- There are 2.5 billion pornographic emails daily (8% of total emails)
- 42.7% of internet users view porn

So what's wrong with pornography? If so many people use it, is it really wrong? And if it's wrong, what's wrong with it?

We are made for real relationships with real people. Michael Cusick in his book *Surfing for God; Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle* says, "Porn goes against our design as people and sabotages God's dream for our lives and our true identity...When we fixate on porn, we choose to remain selfishly anchored to our own pleasure above all else. When we preoccupy ourselves with meeting our own needs and ignoring the needs of others...then we stifle our spiritual growth."

Is there hope for people who struggle with porn and other kinds of sexual unhealthiness? And what steps can we take if we are struggling with sexual purity in any way?

1. Come to Jesus with your thirsty, yearning heart.

Images on a computer or TV screen will never satisfy our thirst. We were made for something better. We were made for an intimate encounter with the living God. We were made to drink from him. And as we drink from him, we will enjoy rivers of living water flowing from within. (John 7:37-38)

The Christian message is not a gospel of sin management. It is an invitation to an intimate encounter with the living God where our deepest cravings are satisfied in him.

2. Trade the shame of your past for a new and better identity in Christ.

We are not defined by our failures or our struggles. We are defined by who we are in Christ. In Christ you have a new identity and destiny. This identity and destiny aren't based upon anything you have done or can do. They are based upon what Jesus has done. There is nothing we can do to add to it or take away from it. In Christ we are free from condemnation of any kind, and we are a new creation with a new purpose. (Romans 8:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

3. Don't stop with tearing down idols. Replace them by worshipping God.

The closest thing to worship that many people will ever come to will be standing and cheering for a favorite sports team, screaming like an adoring fan at a rock concert, or staring transfixed at a computer or video image of a naked body. Whatever your idol is, you must do more than tear it down.

"Idols cannot simply be removed. They must be replaced. If you only try to uproot them, they grow back; but they can be supplanted. By what? By God himself, of course. But by God, we do not mean a general belief in his existence. Most people have that, yet their souls are riddled with idols. What we need is a living encounter with God." Thomas Merton

4. Learn to delight in God with all your heart and not just a piece of it.

Jesus said that the greatest command is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This means that the greatest sin isn't necessarily that we hate God, but that we hold out on God. We try to love him with a piece of our heart, soul, and mind. (Matthew 22:34-40)

5. Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

It's in walking in the Spirit that we are set free from sexual immorality, impurity, partying, idolatry, etc. And it's in walking by the Spirit that we begin to see more and more of his fruit in our lives. (Galatians 5:16-26)

6. Begin rewriting the circuitry of your brain with a better vision.

There is lot of data and research that talks about stuff like the neuroplasticity of the brain and the effects of dopamine and how porn – and internet porn in particular – rewrites the circuits in our brains, so that it becomes like an addiction that we “cannot” say no to.

There is no denying the effects of looking at a naked woman and its effects on a man. But I want to remind you that we are more than molecules. We are image-bearers. We are made by and for God.

If looking at pictures of naked people can change us, contemplating God in all his glory can transform us into his image for his glory and pleasure. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

7. Pursue friendship with men and women committed to the same journey.

We need friends who encourage us to live healthy and holy lives. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

8. Seek out advocacy and not just accountability.

We need people who are for us and not just against our behavior. We need people who will encourage us in what is right, healthy, and good. And we need people who will pray for us. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

9. Replace the emptiness of loneliness with the fullness of solitude.

A lot of what drives a compulsive consumption of porn for many men is a lack of healthy friendship. When we are empty and lonely, there is a vacuum in our hearts that makes us particularly vulnerable to porn.

To combat this, we need healthy friendship. But we also need to learn how to be alone with ourselves so that we become our own best friend next to God.

We need to learn how to enjoy the same kind of solitude and prayer that Jesus sought out for himself (Luke 5:16). There is a kind of aloneness without loneliness. It is a kind of solitude and prayer where we meet God and he restores our soul.

10. Put on the full armor of God.

According to Paul we are in the middle of a spiritual battle and so we need to put on the armor God supplies so that we are ready for the fight. (Ephesians 6:10-12)

11. Bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

As we just said, we are in the middle of a spiritual battle. And the weapons we fight with have divine power. We need to destroy every evil in our lives that sets itself against the knowledge of God, and we need to bring unhealthy ways of thinking captive to God. We need to discern when the enemy is whispering lies that we begin to believe is the voice of God or that calls God and his goodness into question. And we need to bring it to God and ask him to help us change our thinking to match the truth of his word. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

12. Flee temptation.

"Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2:22

13. Date your wife/husband.

We need to sacrificially love our wives/husbands and learn to enjoy emotional, spiritual, relational, and physical intimacy with them. (Ephesians 5:25; Proverbs 5:18-19)

14. Learn to look at people as image-bearers of God and not objects to lust after.

15. Stay humble.

Just because it's never been a problem doesn't mean it never will be a problem. And just because you are doing well now, doesn't mean you will finish well. (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Resource List for Sexual Temptation

Resources for Men

Every Man's Battle: Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time
by Stephen Arterburn, Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey

I Surrender All: Rebuilding a Marriage Broken by Pornography
by Clay and Renee Crosse

Clay Crosse burst onto the contemporary Christian music scene with his 1994 hit "I Surrender All." And over the next four years, his star climbed higher and higher with more number-one hits and sold-out concerts. But beneath his success lurked a dark secret: he was addicted to pornography. No one knew he had a problem - not even Clay - until the day God took away his voice. What followed that day was a story of the power of grace and forgiveness. Now Clay and Renee tell their story with the prayer that it will help countless other marriages - perhaps even yours.

Surfing for God: Discovering Divine Desire Beneath Your Sexual Struggle
by Michael Cusick

Think Before You Look: Avoiding The Consequences Of Secret Temptation
by Daniel Henderson

Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain
by William Struthers

Resources for Women

Dirty Girls Come Clean
by Crystal Renaud

Every Heart Restored: A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin
by Fred Stoeker, Brenda Stoeker, Stephen Arterburn and Mike Yorkey

Every Woman's Battle: Discovering God's Plan for Sexual and Emotional Fulfillment
by Shannon Ethridge

Resources for Same Sex Attraction

How Will I Tell My Mother
by Stephen Arterburn and Jerry Arterburn

New Life Perspectives: Homosexuality (Audio CD)
by Stephen Arterburn and Milan Yerkovich

More resources can be found at the following websites

www.celebraterecovery.com
www.dirtygirlministries.com
www.freedombeginshere.org

www.newlife.com
www.purelifeministries.org
www.xxxchurch.com

www.covenanteyes.com - An internet accountability and filtering system