

A Study Of Moral Issues: Pornography

Introduction. What if I told you there was an activity that 90% of boys under 18 years and 60% of girls in the same age group have done? What would you think it was? Playing the popular video games Fortnite or Pokemon? Playing sports? Logging onto Instagram or Snapchat? You'd be wrong. It's watching porn at least once.

One of the most pervasive, but the least discussed sins among Christians is pornography. Pornography is "predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal." No one is immune to its temptation. Bill Perkins said, "If you think you can't fall into sexual sin, then you're godlier than David, stronger than Samson, and wiser than Solomon."

Ephesians 4:1 says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Walking worthy means avoiding many of the common moral issues that plague Christians.

The gospel calls us out of the world's darkness into God's marvelous light – a great escape from the death, decay, and destruction of sin (1 Peter 2:9-10). Therefore, we live with moral excellence (2 Peter 1:5). So every faithful Christian must clearly and plainly expose pornography for its putrid portrayal of sexuality, its objectifying of women (and men), and its assault on moral decency and the very fabric of society – the family (Ephesians 5:11-12).

I. Pornography Is An Old Problem

- A. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that ancient cities had brothels and that pornographic imagery was commonplace.
 - 1. An example was discovered in Pompeii and Herculaneum, two cities destroyed with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius featured "red-light districts" complete with what amounts to signage carved in buildings indicating that sex was for sale there. The images are graphic, rivaling modern pornography.
 - 2. Even farther back in history, archaeologists have uncovered erotic imagery in excavations of Sumerian cities and other cities in ancient Mesopotamia. The so-called "Turin Erotic Papyrus" which dates from the time of Ramses II contains many drawn scenes of fornication as graphic as anything found in modern pornographic imagery.
- B. Unfortunately, this old problem is alive and well with us today. There are over 420 million porn pages on the internet and over 68 million search engine requests per day for porn (25% of total requests). Every second over 28,000 people are viewing porn online. Every 39 minutes a new porn video is created in the U.S. Over 13,500 porn videos were released in 2005, a 138% increase since 1995. In the U.S. porn websites generate \$2.84 billion in annual revenue. Other pornographic material (e.g. movie rentals, magazines, phone sex, etc.) increase the size of this "industry" to over \$13 billion in the U.S. and over \$97 billion worldwide. Worldwide porn revenue exceeds the combined revenues of Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, and Netflix. The porn revenue in this country alone is larger than the combined revenues of all professional sports (football, baseball, basketball) and nearly double the combined revenues of the major television networks.

II. The Problem Of Pornography

- A. Pornography will certainly be viewed by some as mostly harmless, if not acceptable. But there is no reasonable argument made to defend pornography on any level.
- B. However, there are five serious problems with pornography:
1. It excites lust.
 - a) James teaches us that sin comes from the excitement of desires which are then fed and gratified (“conceived”) contrary to the law of God (James 1:13-15). Peter said Christians must abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11-12). John warned that there are three lusts from which sin springs: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16).
 - b) Christians are supposed to reject sin and not let it reign in their mortal bodies. We are supposed to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:12-14). Pornography stirs up the foundation of sin in the life of people.
 - c) Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount that the lamp of the body is the eye. What one allows into the mind through his eyes will determine whether the body is full of light or darkness (Matthew 6:22-23). Solomon warned young men to not gaze at immoral women dressed with the attire of a harlot (Proverbs 7:10).
 2. It glorifies fornication.
 - a) Christians are supposed to “flee fornication” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Fornication was the downfall of the Gentiles whom God gave up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts, to defile their bodies among themselves (Romans 1:24). They committed vile passions, exchanging the natural use of God’s gender creation for what is against nature, and committed what as shameful (Romans 1:26-27).
 - b) A movie that shows a couple embracing and confessing their love for one another is not pornography. A movie is pornography if it portrays strangers or even a husband and wife having sex with one another.
 - c) Interestingly, the word “fornication” is from the Greek word *porneia* which is the root of our English word “pornography”. That fact alone should be warning enough for the followers of Christ: porn has one purpose — to lead us to commit fornication.
 3. It is a violation of the “marriage bed”.
 - a) While it is true that viewing pornography is not of itself the physical act of fornication, viewing it does reject the instruction of Paul to hold marriage in honor and not defile the marriage bed (Hebrews 13:4).
 - (1) While a “watcher” may not be in bed with the actors committing the act of fornication, he is probably well on his way to committing fornication himself. Jesus taught this principle in the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord taught that a man who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).
 - (2) This does not mean that a person who watches pornography can be put away for the cause of fornication.

- (a) Jesus spoke of the physical act of adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; cp. John 8:4).
 - (b) Just because a man thinks about killing someone in his heart, you cannot try him for murder. The same holds true for other sins.
 - b) Sex in marriage is a blessing from God. Paul said that one of the purposes for marriage is to satisfy the natural sexual longings that males and females possess (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Solomon spoke of this when he warned his son to avoid immoral women (cp. Proverbs 5:15, 18-19). The viewing of pornography in any of its forms makes it difficult, if not impossible, to rejoice in the simple, satisfying physical relationship that God designed for marriage.
 - c) Pornography destroys the marriage bed because it destroys the natural and normal expectations of the sexual relationship of husbands and wives. It creates false expectations for sex in marriage. Young men who feed on pornography expect their wives to have voracious sexual appetites and to be ready at a moment's notice for sex at all times of the day or night, and to live only to service their husband's every twisted desire. Wives who view pornography irrationally expect their husbands to look like male models, and to have unlimited abilities and endurance.
4. It destroys purity and innocence.
- a) The Daily Star reported on a clinic in London where children as young as eight are treated for pornography addiction. Around 60% of eleven-year-olds own their own smartphone, and 92% of teenagers go online on their smartphones every day, and 24% report that they are online "almost constantly."
 - b) The study also reports that today's young people spend an average of 9 hours a day consuming media. Most of this viewing of online content is happening in the relative safety of the home. The vast majority (71%) of young people keep their online activity hidden from their parents.
 - c) Pornography was once a product which an adult could only view in a darkened theater in a seedy part of town or buy in a "dirty book" store. Now, children can find filth with a few taps, a couple of keystrokes, and a web browser. In years gone by, a boy might find a dirty magazine hidden somewhere in his father's or older brother's hiding place, but now innocent children can view the most vile material on a cell phone given to them as a birthday present by their parents. How can anyone expect to have a pure heart if he fills his head with corrupt imagery?
5. It violates the law of love.
- a) "Making love" is a euphemism for sex, and the only time that people can genuinely "make love" is when they are married to one another. Every other time it is fornication and there is no love involved in the proceedings. Whether it is teenagers in secret in a bedroom, in a car, or pornographic "actors" in a filthy movie, there is no love involved in sex outside of marriage. Remember, Satan is the father of this lie (John 8:44).
 - b) People who engage in fornication are only interested in their own selfish desires. Jesus said His disciples must love their neighbor as themselves

(Matthew 19:19). Paul says that we are to put others ahead of ourselves (Philippians 2:4). Pornographic actors are definitely not looking out for the interests of one another. They are looking to make a quick buck and to gratify their unlawful sexual desires with as many people as possible.

III. Steps For Renewing Your Mind

- A. That pornography is addictive seems to be fairly conclusive. Those who study psychology and how the brain functions say that viewing pornography releases the same chemicals in the brain that produce the “rush” and sense of well-being that come from taking drugs. And, like drug use, pornography must become stronger and more graphic to produce the same rush for users. I don’t like using the word “addiction” because some people think that addiction means the user is helpless. To use pornography is certainly a choice. However, it can become a compulsion akin to an addiction.
- B. There are five ways we can overcome pornography:
1. We must walk in accountability.
 - a) When Paul says we are to “walk in the Spirit” in Galatians 5:16 he is writing to a church, not just to random individuals reading his letter in their private corners. Keeping in step with the Spirit of God is an activity we do together (2 Corinthians 6:16).
 - b) To walk in the Spirit, we confess our sins to each other, pray for each other, and stir up one another to live according to the godly standard of purity. To overcome it, sin must be habitually exposed to the light of confession. This is accountability: being honest with another trusted Christian about our temptations, sins, and our heart (James 5:16).
 2. We must internalize scripture.
 - a) We cannot claim to keep in step with God’s Spirit if we ignore or disobey the writings He inspired: the Bible. Through the Bible, the Holy Spirit speaks clear words to the church (Psalm 119:11).
 - b) To walk in the Spirit, we need to renovate our thoughts according to the truths He has revealed, rejecting the lies pornography has fed us. To keep in step with the Spirit we must know and obey the book He inspired. We must explore the Bible and learn what God thinks. We must renew our minds with His thoughts, for they are not like ours (Isaiah 55:8-9).
 3. We must walk in pure pleasure.
 - a) Paul says if we keep in step with the Spirit’s desires, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:17). David, the adulterer and murderer, repented by asking God to “create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10)
 - b) The Spirit “lusts” (craves, longs) — and He shares those longings with us. This is what Thomas Chalmers called “the expulsive power of a new affection.” Laws, rules, and regulations can only tell us what is bad and why it is bad, but they do not change our desires for sin. These sinful longings can only be conquered by implanting new “affections” — new cravings — that counter our sinful cravings.
 - c) Time and time again the Bible describes a holy longing to know and be with Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 13:16-17; Luke 17:22-24; Philippians

1:21-24), an eager desire to understand His sufferings and His glory (1 Peter 1:10-12). The Holy Spirit inspires us to worship Christ above all else, helping us to leave the idol of sex and the altar of porn behind.

4. We must walk in our true identity.
 - a) Paul taught that religious regulations do not work (Colossians 2:20-21). Try-harder ethics are useless (v. 23). Better Internet filters and personal regulations might stop you from looking at porn for a time, but they will not transform a heart of lust.
 - b) Instead, Paul says real change is about knowing who we already are. “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (3:3). “If ye then be risen with Christ ... ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man ...” (3:1, 9-10). Only those who first know this about themselves and are devoted to these principles have the power to slay sinful sexual desires and habits (v. 5).
5. We must stir up the hope the Spirit inspires in us.
 - a) Keeping in step with the Spirit and having hope are intimately connected: the words of the Spirit kindles in us a fresh hope for what God has promised (Galatians 5:5).
 - b) Paul declared a gospel of hope — of anticipation and expectation — which he calls the “hope of righteousness”. Our great hope is that one day Christ will judge the world and destroy sin and death forever (Acts 17:31).
 - c) Practically speaking, this means just as we have fed our minds on pornography, we should now feed our minds on God’s hope-filled promises. Just as we have spent hours engrossed in sexual media, we should spend hours filling our imaginations with God’s vision for our lives and our eternity (Romans 8:5, 17).

Conclusion. Pornography is here to stay. It was once regarded by most people to be the evil it truly is, but now a large segment of society connects little if any negative connotation to it. Where once men would hide in darkened theaters to watch X-rated movies, and good people scorned those who did so, now pornography is considered a normal, viable form of entertainment. Even women openly confess to watching pornography daily.

But the word of God condemns everything that pornography is and everything it represents. It destroys lives and ruins people’s souls. There has always been a need to condemn it in our sermons, but in 2018, we have to renew our urgency, because our kids are growing up in a sex-saturated world. Without the truth being preached plainly and directly, they are in danger of losing their ability to blush at sin (2 Timothy 4:2).

I am deeply indebted to David Weeks for the use of his material.