

Clergy Ethics Training / Presentation on Pornography – April 2016

(Stats / Addiction / Damage / Help)

STATS

No one is exempt from the temptations of sexual sin, and the one presenting the greatest threat to our culture today is pornography. Pornography is destructive. The magnitude of it in the world is beyond comprehension.

Josh McDowell who teaches extensively on the damaging affects of pornography says, “The devastating impact of Internet pornography is a global phenomenon, and not one country or culture or church in the world is isolated from its reach.”

Here are just a few of the stats (from Josh McDowell’s website):

- 190 billion photos are viewed every month

- Over 17 billion (17,291,480,548) porn videos are watched in a single day

- 100 million pages viewed daily

- 4000 videos views per second

- One month of photos would be almost 1.4 million miles long (1,392,000) if placed side by side and would wrap about the equator 58 times

Bishop Paul Laverde of the Diocese of Arlington declares that, “What was once the shameful and occasional vice of a few ... has become mainstream entertainment for the many.”

Pastors and Christian congregations are not exempt. Statistics indicate that only 3% of Christian men and 13% of Christian women have **never** viewed pornography.

And Christian’s are just as likely to become addicted as non-Christians. Pornography grabs people quickly into its grips because of the high level of excitement it generates in the brain.

Pornography paper-clips these images to the brain. As a result, one cannot avoid bringing the images seen through exposure to pornography into the marriage bed. We can’t unsee what we’ve seen and those sexually stimulating images stay with us. We’re sexual beings and God created us to enjoy sexual intimacy with our spouse—the two become one. Our sexuality isn’t just spiritual, it’s sacred. It’s a uniting together like no other. It represents the closeness of the Triune God. Porn removes the emotional and spiritual component of sex and God’s design for lasting intimacy.

A pastor from a large denomination stated that when asked at a national men’s conference how many of them were struggling with pornography ... almost 90% raised their hands. Another reported, “Pornography has secularized our denomination.” Society accepts it as normal, and Christians are buying into the message.

This means that we must do something to protect our families, our churches and ourselves from the lie that pornography is okay because it's not. It destroys lives!

It's the biggest threat to young people and children today.
Roughly 80% of college men and 34% of co-eds use porn on campus regularly.

Even more alarming is that by the age of ten, 32% of children have viewed pornography and by the ages of 12 to 15 - 53% of boys and 28% of girls have viewed hard-core porn on the Internet.

Josh McDowell asks, "Where are the Revolutionaries?"
Where are the Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, the Mother Theresa's, the Bonhoeffer's, the Elisabeth Elliot's and the Wilberforce's in the church today who have the courage to battle the devastation of porn as they did racism, poverty, ignorance, Nazism and slavery.

ADDICTION

Viewing pornography often leads to addiction, which is a serious growing problem.

Dr. Chris J. Tuell defines addiction as "Any related, compulsive behavior that interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones and one's work environment."

Porn addiction is a process addiction (versus chemical) that comes through habit formation:
Step 1: The initial use (or exposure) has no expectation of the reward and the "high" is far better than expected.
Step 2: The person begins to anticipate the reward. "This is going to be great." And there is a conditioning of the brain.
Step 3: The reward begins to not match the expectation. It's never quite as good so more or different forms are used; like hard-core porn.
Step 4: The person is in a state of chasing the high, even when the pain outweighs the pleasure.

In layman's terms, it goes like this:

- I feel bad. I use. I feel better!
- I feel bad again. I use. I feel **some** better. There may be consequences.
- I feel bad because of the consequence, so I **need** to use again.
- I no longer use to feel good, but just to feel NOT BAD.

It's the pursuit of the pleasure that's the addictive process.

Dopamine, the "feel good" neurotransmitter, tells the brain "I want it. Give it to me." And the prefrontal cortex, the reasoning part of the brain, is overruled and eventually shuts down. It becomes a brain issue more than a battle of the will.

If you can't be content without it, it owns you. That is an indicator of addiction. You become the slave. It becomes your master.

DAMAGE

Pornography devastates family, home, work and lives hurting relationships, marriages and kids. It alters brain and sexual functioning. Even teens and young men are being diagnosed with erectile dysfunction as a result of pornography addiction. It distorts one's view of sexuality. It can damage the ability to bond with a spouse. It affects attitudes, perceptions and values about sex and reduces it to simply a physical act.

Porn keeps us from the real intimacy our hearts crave. There is no actual interaction, yet the brain is rewired shutting down the capacity for intimacy (and causing erectile dysfunction).

Porn masks our brokenness. Overall, it hurts people ... body, mind, spirit and soul.

GETTING HELP

Overcoming addiction is a process that requires help:

1. Total Honesty

This means total honesty with spouse, family and/or anyone who is being hurt by the addiction. Being completely honest about the addictive behaviors is essential. Addiction thrives in secret and dies in the light of honest truth telling.

2. Rigorous hard work

Recovery will require much more than reading some books and going to a few meetings. Recovery is a lot of really hard work that takes time. It requires coming up with a recovery plan and sticking with it.

3. Outside Help

No one can do this alone. Outside help is necessary ... online programs, support groups, counseling, coaching. It's a process of reprogramming oneself from years of destructive messages and addictive ways of thinking and behaving.

4. Resilience

It means never quitting. There may be setbacks, even relapses, but we only fail if we stop trying. That's probably the hardest part. Stand strong when the addiction shouts: "You've already slipped, so just look a little longer." or "You've had a hard day, you deserve it." Do not give in! Instead confess and start again.

Thomas Aquinas said, "Every sinful behavior is rooted in a legitimate God given appetite." Michael Cusick, who also educates on porn, asks the question: "Can it be that beneath our compulsions, there is a God-given appetite for attention, affection, affirmation, acceptance, security, significance and satisfaction?" Porn and sexual sin captures some of these desires.

Jeremiah 2:13, "For my people have done two evil things:

They have abandoned me—

the fountain of living water.

And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns

that can hold no water at all!

Desire is a spiritual longing to connect at the most profound level. We are actually searching for God in these deep desires. False intimacy is thinking we can fulfill our desires with images.

Our desires aren't the problem. We need living water that comes only from God.

Thankfully, God can do a deep work of restoration in our lives. He heals the brokenness.

Jesus said, "I have come to bind up the brokenhearted and set the captives free" (Isaiah 61:1).

Freedom comes with surrender to God not trying harder. Through surrender, we know God and freedom better.

If you're struggling, you can find freedom:

First **Recognize** – This is a real issue. It's an addiction. It's not just a bad habit. If you can't live without it, it owns you. And it's more than just your will. It's more than you just not trying hard enough. Your brain has been hijacked.

Then **Reach Out** – The Bible says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. When we bring ourselves to God, when we trust Him with who we really are, not the person we think He wants us to be, He gives us a gift to help us break free. Reaching out is also a way to practice true intimacy rather than false intimacy. With sexual sin, we can't continue to struggle alone.

Repentance – Repentance is not a heroic spiritual act to convince God we feel bad about ourselves. Repentance is a change of mind – to do life differently. "God I want your living water and I realize the desires of my heart; my thirst and longings are for the living water. I've been digging this well and I want to do my life differently."

Reorder Our Lives – The pursuit to purity is about reordering our lives. To do that, we fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith; the one who is writing our story.

Credit to: Josh McDowell and Michael John Cusick

Visit [Josh McDowell's](#) website for many resources.