

Pornography's Pain

February 13, 2019



An anonymous reader wrote:

“Shouldn't a person have the right to watch or read whatever he pleases? As long as he watches or reads in the privacy of his own home, and nobody gets hurt, what difference does it make?”

This expresses a view commonly held among American males—and many females. Let's consider who is hurt by pornography use.

Pornography hurts the user.

The individual who reads and watches pornography does not come away unscathed. Paul wrote,

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7–8).

God promises one will reap “corruption”;¹ who would dare disagree with Him?

What a person sows in his mind determines how he acts. Solomon wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). And, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Someone observed, “Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.”

Just as with alcohol and drugs, pornography is both addictive and progressive. It is undeniably addictive. The percentage of people addicted to pornography is reaching epidemic numbers.² According to a survey, 10 percent of respondents indicated

they are addicted to sex or Internet pornography.³ Other estimates range from 3–8 percent, which would indicate that at least 8.7 million Americans are addicted to pornography—and the number may be as high as 29 million.⁴

Sex addiction is not gender specific, as one might imagine. Half of cybersex addicts are men, and half are women, with men preferring pornography pictures and women preferring sexually explicit chat rooms; however, 23 percent of the women preferred pictures.⁵

Why is pornography addictive? Beyond the obvious—that it partially satisfies the human sex drive—Dr. Alvin Cooper, clinical director of the San Jose Marital Services and Sexuality Center in San Jose, California, found that people engage in online sexual activities to break away from their daily routines, explore fantasies, relieve stress, and spice up their sex lives.

Pornography use is progressive in that one needs more and more to satisfy cravings. It starts small, but it grows to what one has aptly described as “athlete’s foot of the mind.” It never goes away. It always asks to be scratched, promising relief. To scratch, however, is to cause pain and to intensify the itch.

It progresses to greater amounts of time devoted to it, and it progresses to greater perversions—more extreme types of pornography. The user needs rougher and more sexually shocking material to achieve the same level of arousal each time.

For example, simple swimsuit porn turns to more daring pictures, then to pictures of younger and younger girls. Eventually, this can turn to the interest of sex with children, sex with animals, and even to “snuff movies” where the sex act ends in murder.

Pornography hurts women.

The Bible's command for men to honor women (1 Peter 3:7) is sadly lost in a modern world. The National Victim Center now estimates that at least one woman is raped in the U.S. every forty-six seconds.(6) Why so many rapes? Many experts point to the increase in the use of pornography.

Exposure to pornography increases the inclination to believe that women like to be hurt, to be humiliated, to be forced to do things that they do not want to do, or to pretend to be forced to do things that they really do want to do. Researchers reported that in the field of violent/pornographic movies, prolonged exposure to X-rated as well as R-rated films caused male college students to be "desensitized" to rape and violence, and more accepting to the rape myth that women say no when they really mean yes. (7)

Dr. Sal Pellicano, veteran prison chaplain for prison systems in Florida, North Carolina, and New Jersey reports that during his fifteen-year career, 100 percent of the inmates he has known who have been incarcerated for a sex crime were pornography users. (8)

A study released by the University of New Hampshire revealed that states with the highest readership of porn magazines such as *Playboy* and *Hustler* also had the highest rape rates. Researchers Murray Straus and Larry Baron also found "an unusually high correlation" between sex magazine readership and the rape rate in all states. They stated, "The fact that sex magazine readership is strongly and consistently correlated with rape supports the theory that porn endorses attitudes that increase the likelihood of rape." (9)

Pornography hurts children.

- Human Development Specialist Dr. Shirley O'Brien, of the University of Arizona, found that child pornography

victimizes as many as 600,000 children in the United States each year. Victims often include children as young as three and as old as

- Seventy-seven percent of those who molested boys said they were regular users of hard-core pornography; 87 percent of those who molested girls said they were regular users of hard-core
- The typical serial child molester will abuse more than 360 victims over the course of his lifetime. He is usually able to abuse 30–60 children before he is even caught the first
- Seventy-four percent of female adolescents who had sex before age 14 reported that it was
- It is estimated that one in three girls and one in seven boys are sexually molested by age
- Twenty percent of children using Internet chat rooms have been approached by
- Thirty percent of teenage girls said they had been sexually harassed in a chat room, and only 7 percent told a parent about the harassment, since they were worried that their parents would take away their Internet
- Eighty-nine percent of sexual solicitations are made in either Online Chat Rooms or Instant Messages. Thirteen million teens use Instant Messenger,¹⁷ and 25 percent of teens participate in Real Time
- Ninety-five percent of 15- to 17-year-old teens go online; 83 percent have Internet access from home; and 29 percent have Internet access in their Only 33 percent of teens have a filtering service on Internet at home, and 43 percent of teens do not have rules at home about Internet
- Fifty-three percent of teens have been exposed to pornographic materials on the Internet;²¹ 31 percent of kids age 10–17 from households with computers (and 24 percent of all kids 10–17) say they have seen a pornographic Web

- Ninety-one percent of the first exposure by a teen to pornography was during benign activities, such as research for school projects or surfing the Web for other information. Pornographic Web sites often disguise themselves by using common search terms used by children, such as names of popular teen games, TV shows, action figures, and even the White House, to lure teens in hopes that they become future paying users. Once exposed to pornography, teens often seek it out again, and many eventually become addicted.
- Some counselors estimate that the average age for a boy to be exposed to hard-core pornography is now eight and a half years old, and for a girl it is eleven years. Focus on the Family reports that the average age of first contact with pornography for males has dropped from eleven years old to five years.
- Children spent 64.9 percent more time on pornography sites than they did on game sites in September 2000. In addition, 27 percent of children age 17 and under visited an adult Web site, of which 21 percent were 14 or younger and 40 percent were
- Adolescents ages 12–17 are among the age groups most frequently exposed to
- UNICEF reports that one million children each year are forced into prostitution and used to make Children are reported missing at the rate of 750,000 per year, 62,500 per month, 14,423, per week, 2,054 per day, and 85 per hour, or 3 children every 2

Pornography hurts society.

An estimated 3500–5000 people in the U.S. are murdered each year by “recreational killers.”²⁹ Most of them feed on pornography. Serial killer Ted Bundy, in an interview just before his execution, said,

Listen, I’m no social scientist, and I haven’t done a

survey. I don't pretend that I know what John Q. Citizen thinks about this. But I've lived in prison for a long time now. And I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence JUST LIKE ME. And without exception, without question, EVERY ONE of them was deeply involved in pornography. There's no question about it. The FBI's own study on serial homicide shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornography. Well-meaning, decent people will condemn the behavior of a Ted Bundy, while they're walking past a magazine rack full of the very kinds of things that send young kids down the road to be Ted Bundys. But I'll tell you, there are lots of other kids playing in streets around this country today who are going to be dead tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day and month, because other young people are reading the kinds of things and seeing the kinds of things that are available in the media today. (30)

Is it any wonder that the Bible instructs Christians to think on that which is pure? Paul wrote,

Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:8; cf. 2 Corinthians 10:5).

Wayne Jackson notes,

Pornography, sexually explicit movies, etc., have paved the way for many an act of rape, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and other equally vile sins. . . . One simply cannot feed upon the impure and be pure! (Matthew 5:28; 2 Peter 2:14). (31)

Guard your heart

An individual may suffer the loss of other organs, but no one can sustain the failure of a heart. In a biological sense—and a spiritual sense—it is good advice to “keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Our word *brain* is not used in the Old Testament; the word *heart* refers to the center of intellectual activity. A man’s physical and spiritual health depend in large part upon the condition of his heart–mind.

Our hearts can get dirty just like our hands. “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” (Jeremiah 4:14; cf. Ephesians 2:1–3; Titus 3:3). Job wondered, “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” (Job 15:16). God Himself said, “For the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21).

The wise man said, “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). On a bit more cynical day, he expressed it this way:

This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

Jeremiah added: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). The Lord Jesus said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19). It is an ugly brood that comes out of the human heart when it gives in to wicked imaginations.

Where do I draw the line?

There is no sin in appreciating someone's beauty in a general sense—"He's a handsome guy"; "She's pretty"—but it becomes lust when one starts to mentally undress, compare, and visualize an encounter.

Solomon instructed his son not to lust after a woman's beauty in his heart (Proverbs 6:25). Sex does not begin in the bedroom or the backseat of a car. It begins in the mind. That is where we must put our line of defense in the fight with Satan.

Solomon draws the line at lust. Lust³² here literally means to see a woman as a "delectable thing"; it refers to "a burning desire for intimacies with her." The admonition is a warning to stop the very first step toward impure desires.

In the context of Solomon's warning, a naive young man saw himself on the verge of satisfying his curiosity about what happens in sexual relations. He watches a loose woman and thinks about what it would be like to have sex. An older man sees the same woman and wonders what it would be like to have sex with *her*. Each undresses her with his eyes and takes home the mental images. Both muse over them while lying in bed, and daydream of her while going about their routines at work or school.

These activities are nothing less than sexual foreplay. The battleground for remaining pure in body is remaining pure in mind. To harbor unchaste thoughts and feelings in one's heart is to be guilty of adultery in the heart before God. James explained how sin develops: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14).

The pure, holy, and undefiled Lord Jesus (Hebrews 7:26) who "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21) said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her

already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). It was lust in Amnon’s heart that caused him to rape his half sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–14).

What are some guidelines?

- To keep a pure mind, we must put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11; cf. 2 Chronicles 20:15). Christ gives strength to those who give themselves to Him (Philippians 4:13).
- We must monitor our media intake (Psalm 101:3) and think on good things (Philippians 4:8; Matthew 5:6). We must not feed on evil thoughts (Galatians 5:16; 2 Timothy 2:22). In practical terms, this means we must not read dirty romance novels, watch soaps, or be entertained by sexy pictures on the computer, in magazines, and on television. If necessary, it would be better to cancel cable, magazine subscriptions, and Internet access than to lose one’s soul. Just after Jesus condemned lust in the heart He said, “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:29). This hyperbole is not to be taken literally, but a modern version might read: “If thy cable vision offends you, cut it off and cast it from thee.”
- We should ask for God’s help (Matthew 6:13; 2 Peter 2:9).

Some ready references on pornography

General:

- Wrong to look on a woman to lust (Matthew 5:27–28).
- After the heart is right with God, good conduct flows from its hidden springs (cf. Matthew 15:19).
- Abstain from appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

- Lascivious; lewd; lustful (Galatians 5:19–21).
- Vile affections (Romans 1:26–32).
- Corrupt, impure, unholy thoughts (Philippians 4:7–8).
- Flee fornication—don't run to it (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- Do all to God's glory (1 Corinthians 3:17; 10:31).
- Women adorn themselves modestly (1 Timothy 2:9–10).
- Nakedness, or near nakedness, shame in God's sight (Genesis 3:21; 9:21–27).
- Adorn with meek and quiet spirit, not draw attention to outward body (1 Peter 3:3–4).
- Lust brings sin (James 1:14–15).
- Lust destroys soul (1 Peter 2:11).

Dirty Movies/Television:

- Set no wicked thing before eyes (Psalm 101:3).
- Our life is to be living sacrifice, not conformed to world (Romans 12:1–2).
- Adultery, fornication, immodesty, and dancing are projected as acceptable on TV and lessen our distaste for sin (Galatians 5:19–21).
- Language must be pure (Matthew 12:34–37). This forbids sexual innuendoes, which are “verbal porn.”
- Steals time from serving God (2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 5:16).

Endnotes:

1 *phthora*, “decay, i.e. ruin (spontaneous or inflicted).”

2 Much of this research is found at the Web site for Proven Men Ministries, Ltd., 16011 Chieftain Ave., Rockville, MD 20855 (). No endorsement of all content is implied, but one may find much additional useful information at this site.

3 According to the U.S. Census Population clock, which takes birth/death rates and census figures and updates into account, at 1:51 p.m., February 19, 2008 there were 303,469,569 Americans.

4 Results of , the number one Internet news site, 2000 Online Cybersex Survey, printed by *Business Wire*, July 19, 2001. The MSNBC online poll is believed to be the largest Internet study of online sexuality to date. The survey received responses from over 38,000 users. MSNBC Web site surveys are self-selected and unscientific, not the random samples utilized by polling organizations. In 1999, the National Council on Sexual Addiction Compulsivity estimated that 6–8 percent of Americans are sex addicts. (Cooper, Alvin, Dana E. Putnam, Lynn A. Planchon, and Sylvain C. Boies “Online Sexual Compulsivity: Getting Tangled in the Net” *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 6:79–104. Taken from Amparano, J. “Sex addicts get help.” *The Arizona Republic*, p. A1, 1999). Even with a much more narrowly defined definition, the range of those sexually addicted remains between 3–6 percent. Jennifer P. Schneider, M.D., PhD; National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity Website, October 2000.

5 Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: *The Journal of Treatment and Prevention*, Spring, 2000. Based on 1998 survey of 9,265 adults by Dr. Alvin Cooper and others.

6 The Parsonage®, “Battle Plan Against Pornography,” Sermon Outline, printed at .

7 Linz, D., Donnerstein, E., & Adams, S. M. (1989). 509–522.

8 “Vile Passions,” an article on the effect of pornography reprinted in the *AFA Journal*, August 2002, by Rusty Benson.

9 “Legitimate Violence, Violent Attitudes, and Rape: A State-Level Analysis” (with Larry Baron and Murray A. Straus). *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 528, 1988.

10 O’Brien, Shirley. 1992. *Child Pornography* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company).

11–12 The Parsonage®, citing Dr. Gene Abel, Emory University.

13 "Sexuality, Contraception, and the Media" American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Public Education, *Pediatrics*, Vol. 107 No. 1, Policy Statement (January 2001, pp. 191–194) (January 2001).

14 The Parsonage®.

15 Detective Chief Superintendent Keith Akerman, (December 3, 2000).

16 Report, Girl Scout Research Institute, The Net Effect: Girls and New Media (survey of 1,246 teenage girls ages 13–18 between May and July, 2001).

17 Pew Study reported in JAMA, 2001.

18 Online Victimization, NCMEC (June 2000).

19 The Kaiser Family Foundation (2001), reprinted at

20 Time/CNN Poll (2000).

21 Study by Yankelovich Partners Inc. (1999).

22 Published by "Survey Shows Widespread Enthusiasm for High Technology" NPR Online,

23 "Seminar addressing dangers of Internet" *Campus Life* (February 25, 2002), citing George Kuykendall, Director of Citizens for Community Values.

24 *The Pastor's Weekly Briefing*, with H.B. London, Jr., Focus on the Family, May 5, 2000.

25 The study was conducted by NetValue, Internet activity measurement service (December 19, 2000) and published by "The NetValue Report on Minors Online." *Business Wire*.

26 The Attorney General's National Study Commission on Pornography, 1970 and 1986.

27 The Parsonage®.

28 NCMEC Online Victimization: A report on the nation's youth (April 3, 2000).

29 Holmes and De Burger (1988).

30 For the text of the interview with Dr. James Dobson, see

31 Thanks to Luke Griffin and Mike Benson for research assistance.