

4 Ways to Respond to Your Husband's Porn Addiction

Your husband's addiction to **pornography** has just been discovered. The aftermath of this betrayal leaves every precious memory grimy and tainted. You muse back on your wedding night. Was he thinking of some **porn** star as he touched you? When you were working to conceive a baby together by night, what had he been conceiving with his computer monitor by day?

Your dreams are shattered. You despise him for how his **sexual addiction** makes you see him, and you're panicked by how it makes you see yourself.

You're tempted to think, *I knew he never had eyes only for me, but I never dreamed it could go this far. I feel so ugly now.* And when he isn't quick to repent, who can blame you when you icily sneer, "Just get lost with that cuddly computer of yours and have fun."

Head spinning, heart breaking, you cry in desperate prayer: "Can I ever trust my husband again? My whole **marriage** is a mirage! Where are You, Lord?"

God is right beside you. Sure, it may appear that He has taken His hand off of your marriage, but your husband's sin has been in God's sights for some time—a **sin** that has been washing out your **spiritual protection** and threatening to flood your children's lives with **generational sin**—in spite of how well your husband's been hiding the evidence. But now God's blown your husband's cover, a sure sign of God's active role in your marriage.

God wants you to take an active role, too, and the first step in rebuilding trust with your husband is to trust God enough to find His heart for your husband in this mess. God wants

restoration.

God's Heart for Men Who Struggle

Recently, my husband, Fred, and I knelt in intercession as he prepared to challenge a large group of pastors to deeper sexual purity. Without warning, Fred suddenly broke into deep sobs. Moments later, he walked out and spoke with a grace and power I had never seen in him before.

Later, he recounted, "I wasn't sure I had the right attitude, so I prayed, 'Lord, I want Your heart as I speak to these men today. As many as half of these guys have been checking out the porn, and You know how that frustrates me to no end. But Lord, I don't want to speak out of my feelings. Can You let me feel Your feelings toward them today?'"

"Instantly, the Lord laid His emotions inside my chest. I burst into tears and felt as though my heart would explode. Then, about three minutes later, it stopped as quickly as it began. Quietly, the Lord whispered, 'There. Now you know how I ache for My cherished pastors, in spite of their sin. Speak to them from that aching place in My heart.'"

God wants you to minister to your husband in that same grace and power, and He can give you His heart for your husband as easily as He gave Fred His heart for the pastors. God wants His heart reigning inside of you, enabling you to see beyond your husband's sin and into the brokenness behind it all.

I speak from personal experience. Even when Fred's temper and sexual sin were ripping up our home, I could see value in him beyond his sin. He had put me first in so many ways in our relationship, and it made me willing to want to go an extra mile for him.

I could also see the dysfunctional pain and confusion still trailing him from his broken childhood home. I saw that he had never had one completely faithful person in his entire life. I

decided to become that first person.

There was another reason I chose restoration over divorce. God loves restoration for the same reason He hates divorce: the children. He knows how hard it is to raise godly children in the wake of divorce, and He knows that the message of salvation passes down to them most easily when the parents are one.

Speaking of husbands and wives through His prophet Malachi, God says: “Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they’re His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ‘I hate divorce,’ says the Lord God” (Mal. 2:15-16, NIV).

In light of all this, I knew I had no right to think of myself first in our marital troubles. I had to think of the kids before I thought of myself and, so, I had to see Fred and the marriage before myself, too. The same is true for you.

Granted, your marriage may now be in shambles, and what lies ahead might even be worse. But God’s call on your life still remains—to build a marriage that pictures Christ’s relationship to the church.

Is Divorce Ever an Option?

Obviously, some men will never soften. When is the damage from his **sexual sin** irreparable? Is divorce ever an option?

Sure it is. **Adultery** always makes divorce an option, and if your husband will not repent and refuses to turn from an ongoing, regular porn habit, he is an **adulterer**.

But if you want a magical line between “reparable damage” and “irreparable damage” to trigger divorce proceedings for you, forget it. There is no line of irreparable damage in the distance somewhere; it lurks right at your door from the

moment he refuses to repent. There is nowhere to hide.

Staying married surely isn't safe. His sexual sin poses huge spiritual danger to the whole family, and compromises his spiritual protection over you. I was chased regularly in nightmares by Satan until Fred turned from his sexual sin. I haven't had such a nightmare since.

There is also the generational sin we spoke of, as well as the ongoing danger that your sons and daughters will stumble upon his magazines, tapes and websites—the most common way young men fall into sexual bondage. Worst of all, your husband will not be the example your son needs to teach him that his Christian walk includes sexual purity. Cascading stages of irreparable damage begin to flow from the moment your husband refuses repentance.

Then why not divorce? Because divorce brings destructive cascades of its own. Statistics show that young men often turn to pornography in the wake of divorce to salve their emotional pain and to begin to explore their masculinity.

Furthermore, sexual addiction counselors find that divorce is no effective answer. Patrick Middleton, one such counselor in the Phoenix area, told me that he has seen very little evidence that divorce leads to consistently healthy results in families shattered by porn.

So whether you stay or go, his sexual sin will wreak its havoc and there are no easy options. But if you do choose to stay, it is time to take an active role in the battle, doing all you can to release the law of reaping and sowing into your husband's life.

Perhaps your husband has paid little price for his sin in the past. Those days must end, so that he might come to his senses in the midst of the mess he has made.

A Helpmate Is an Active Role

As wives, God has given us two roles to play in marriage. One role relates to submission, and the other involves our responsibility to be our husband's helpmate. The trouble is that we too often play the wrong role in the face of sexual sin, submitting quietly in the messy tide of events, alternating between wringing our hands in worry and folding our hands to pray while we wait for our husbands to turn.

This is time to play the other role. You were created to help your husband from the beginning: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18).

The word *helper* comes from a Hebrew word in Genesis, which means "a help as his counterpart." So what does a helper do? Fred likes to explain it this way: As a helper, a wife's role is to help lift her husband—boost him, prod him, encourage him—to Christian greatness, or maturity in Christ.

What is the most effective way to help your husband? First, take steps toward your own healing. Then, confront your husband, telling him what a Christian wife expects of a mature, Christian husband in marriage and holding him accountable to become that very man. Then put these four key actions in motion:

1. Learn about the differences. When a sexually addicted husband is unrepentant, a wife begins to heal by learning the sexual differences between men and women. The real root of his sexual sin lies elsewhere. Once you understand that his problem is not about you, your beauty or sexiness, you can quickly recover your sense of worth and focus on restoration.

2. Develop spiritual disciplines. Prayer and Bible reading will allow the Lord to speak to your heart and keep a steady walk with Him. If you are to heal, you need a stronger prayer life than ever before.

You also need to develop a few close female relationships for

support, insights and sharing your pain. Avoid male relationships like the yourself emotionally separate from any other men and avoid discussing your dreams and desires with other men. Secular TV, movies and books can feed the discontent that you have in your life, so avoid them.

Also, do not overcommit your time. You have already been called to an important ministry in God—restoring your husband and marriage. Give it the time and energy that any great call deserves.

You do not need to add other ministries or time stresses to your life. Keep things pared down enough so that no matter what you are doing (raising kids, working at an outside job, volunteering) you still have the time and focus for the restoration process at home.

3. Reject hypervigilance. Perhaps a fear-motivated question is plaguing you: But what if he does it again? Reject fear. You naturally desire the safety that control can bring, but a hyper-vigilant focus upon his every move cannot deliver the safety you crave.

What you really need if you are to feel safe is a sense of your own self, your value in God, and the development of your own skills to communicate your pain and to set and enforce boundaries. Settle for nothing less than God's picture of marriage.

4. Set boundaries. Refuse to be muzzled verbally. Your husband needs your complete honesty so that he can feel the full extent of the damage he is causing.

Insist that he bring his "church image" in line with the truth—that his sin is damaging his ministry in the spiritual realm. If he is on the church board, then he must step down. If he is on the worship team or missions board, then he must step down.

Clearly define what trustworthy means to you. If you need him to read a book and he won't, that will set back your trust.

If you need him to find an accountability partner and he doesn't, that will set back your trust, too. If you need him to go to a counselor with you and he won't, ramifications follow.

Explain to him that his patience with your healing process is a sign of a deep, genuine repentance in him and clear recognition that he understands what he has done to your relationship. That will grow trust every time.

Although God loves mercy, He never taught that we are to turn our cheek to any and every behavior in marriage. As a wife making your difficult decision on whether to stay or go, you must base all your decisions up His full Word.

Only then will your faith stand through to the end, no matter what your husband does, and only then will you feel free to take any appropriate actions.

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