

Honoring God and Your Marriage: Internet Filtering and Net Accountability

Net accountability. Let's face it, guys, one of the biggest struggles for most Christian men is staying out of trouble on the Internet.

A 1996 Promise Keepers' survey at one of their stadium events revealed that over 50 percent of the men in attendance had been involved with pornography within one week of attending the event. In 2000, a Christianity Today survey showed that 33 percent of clergy admitted to having visited a sexually explicit website.

Of those who had visited a porn site, 53 percent had done so "a few times" in the past year, and 18 percent visit sexually explicit sites between a couple of times a month and more than once a week. Both of these surveys are old, especially by Internet standards, so I'm quite sure that the percentages are much lower than the actual numbers today.

If I gambled (and I don't), I'd be willing to bet that you have, or have had in the past, a problem with what you view on the Internet. I know I have. If you're looking at things on the Internet that you shouldn't be, then you need to stop, right now. If you're married you are sinning against God AND your wife and certainly not honoring her the way you should. If you're single you are sinning against God and you are certainly not honoring Him the way you should. Additionally, you are developing habits that will go with you into your marriage.

I have two suggestions.

1. Net Accountability – Put a pornography filter on your

computer which includes net accountability reporting that will keep track of every web site you visit and send a report to one or more persons you designate. This dual-pronged approach has the advantage of keeping you off of a lot of sites you shouldn't be on in the first place AND keeping you accountable to other people so that you aren't "cheating" by looking at questionable sites which are easily rationalized because technically they aren't pornography (e.g. Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue, etc.).

A porn filter alone is good, and net accountability software alone is good, but the combination of the two offers much stronger protection. The key to using this filter effectively is to have someone change the password on it so you cannot turn it off or bypass it. If you're married, your wife is the obvious choice. For single men, a trusted friend can do it. The other key is having the reports sent to at least one person who will review them and hold you accountable.

2. Get help – If you are looking at pornography, chances are you're addicted to it (the biblical word is bondage). Don't try to deal with this on your own. Get help from your pastor or a Christian counselor and go through the process of dealing with this sin and breaking from the bondage of it, which includes accountability. I can tell you that it is liberating and will make a real difference in your life. There is a study used by many Christian counselors that I highly recommend. It consist of two books by Steve Gallagher:

At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry (+ workbook)

The Walk of Repentance

Steve was a sex addict himself and he now runs a ministry helping men break free from sexual addiction. I have been through this study and I have found it to be well done and very effective. The Altar study takes 18 weeks, and the Walk study takes 26 weeks (I recommend doing them at the same

time). So, in about six months you can go through a life-changing study that can free you from the bondage of sexual addiction and pornography. Isn't that worth the time?

You might have wondered why you don't see anything about repenting or "claiming the blood of Jesus" or something like that here. It goes without saying that you need to repent of your sins and ask God for forgiveness. However, sex/porn addicts tend to have a "sin-repent-sin-repent" cycle which never ends. Repenting is not working because there is no true brokenness over the sin and thus no true repentance (turning away) from the sin, thus no real change in behavior. I'm trying to give helpful, practical advice instead of simply throwing out some spiritual cliches which don't help anybody.

PLEASE do something about this problem. Don't tell yourself you just have "a little problem" or that you can deal with this on your own; you can't. I write this as someone who knows what I'm talking about. Having been through this myself and having worked through it with other men as well, I exhort you in the Lord to resolve today to do something about it.

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