

Overcoming the Porn Plague

For years we have heard about the widespread use of pornography in the American church, especially among men, but the results of a recent poll are absolutely devastating: Only 3 percent of Christian men say they never view porn and only 25 percent say they view it less than “a few times a year.”

Is it any wonder that the church of America is so compromised, complacent and carnal?

Not only did the poll state that self-identified Christian men viewed porn more frequently than non-Christians (perhaps the Christians were more honest?), but the poll stated that 7 percent viewed porn several times a day, 12 percent at least once daily, 18 percent several times a week, 15 percent several times a month, and 12 percent at least once a month.

But I do not write these words to condemn. Instead, I write to awaken us to reality and to urge every single follower of Jesus, male and female alike, to recognize the intensity of the onslaught and to make a fresh determination to resist and overcome, with the help of God’s grace and wisdom and power.

No generation has ever faced what we face today, from the endless cable TV channels to the instant availability of porn on our computers, cellphones and tablets, and we must therefore be all the more vigilant.

As noted by Joel Hesch, founder of Proven Men Ministries, who sponsored the Barna survey, “What we are seeing can almost be described as epidemic. Viewing pornography can quickly turn into a very real addiction. Just like drug or alcohol use, what starts off as a seemingly innocent or fun act can quickly spiral out of control.”

Porn is absolutely pervasive, from its milder forms appearing in ads all over the internet (and TV) to its most hardcore and

perverse forms, making available even to children things that would have been all but unavailable just one generation ago.

This is not something we can play games with.

We must declare war, which means not justifying or excusing or minimizing the viewing of pornography but rather recognizing it for the destructive, degrading sin that it is.

What are some keys to freedom?

First, we must acknowledge that any of us could fall prey to sexual sin, be it pornography, adultery or fornication. If we somehow feel we are exempt, we could become lax or self-righteous, opening the door to the devil.

I don't doubt that some are more prone to sexual sin than others, but no one can claim exemption from temptation unless age or disease have robbed them of their sexual capacity.

Second, if you are guilty of sexual sin, don't cut it back, cut it off.

This is the principle Jesus gave three times in the Gospels, telling us to cut off the offending hand or foot and to gouge out the offending eye (see Matt. 5:27-30; 18:7-9; Mark 9:42-48). The fact that He used such vivid figures of speech indicates just how deadly unchecked lust can be.

You must recognize that pornography is your enemy. It will only hurt you and never help you, only bring you down and never lift you up. It is degrading and defiling, and you can no more afford to tolerate its presence in your life than you can afford to tolerate the presence of cancer in your body. (For heterosexual men, remember that the woman you are watching is someone's daughter. How would you feel if that were your own daughter?)

Porn is not an option for you as a believer, and you must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God through Messiah

Jesus (Rom. 6:11-12).

Third, find accountability and support. This principle is laid out clearly in 2 Tim. 2:22: "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

The directives are simple: We flee from what is wrong and we pursue what is right and wholesome, but we don't do it alone. We do it together "with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." Some of this can be accomplished today with the help of Christian accountability software such as X3Watch.

Fourth, come clean. As difficult as it may be, if you're really struggling with porn, you need to get help.

If God hasn't delivered you yet, perhaps you haven't been totally willing to be delivered, and one way you will know this if you choose not to confess.

In most cases, your spouse will need to know at some point, and that could be the very thing that helps bring you freedom. But at the least, come clean to a solid spiritual leader who is close to you so that you will not be alone in your struggles. (Confessing to someone else who is struggling really doesn't do much good.)

Perhaps you need serious counseling or even deliverance. Don't minimize the power of porn in your life. (There are many excellent ministries designed to help those bound with sexual sin, such as Pure Life Ministries.)

Fifth, fill yourself with that which is wholesome and good (see Phil. 4:8). When you eat a giant, healthy salad, it reduces your appetite for more food, since you are already full.

In the same way, fill your heart and mind with Scripture, with worship, with godly thoughts and images, and by renewing your

mind, you will not be conformed to the pattern of the world (Rom. 12:2).

Sixth, cast yourself on the mercy and grace of God and remember that the devil is a liar. Jesus really does forgive, and when He forgives, He cleanses.

Remind Him that, in yourself, you are weak and needy, but in Him, you are an overcomer (1 John 5:4). His strength is made perfect in our weakness, and His grace is truly sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9).

He is more than able to finish what He started (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:12 says that He is the “founder and perfecter of our faith”), and you can appeal to Him to manifest His power in you. His grace not only forgives; it empowers as well (see Titus 2:11-14; Rom. 6:14).

There really is victory, freedom and wholeness in Jesus, and through Him we can shine like lights in this dark world.

Let today be the first day of a radical, lasting change in your life.

Michael Brown *is author of Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding With Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show The Line of Fire on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience. Follow him at AskDrBrown on Facebook or at @drmichaellbrown on Twitter.*