

Pastors Get Honest About Porn: The Struggle Is Real

Many pastors struggle or have struggled with pornography and even more youth pastors struggle with it.

The Barna Group released the findings this week, based on an online study including 432 pastors and 338 youth pastors.

In the study, 57 percent of the pastors admitted to a current or past struggle compared to 64 percent of youth pastors. Fourteen percent of pastors said they are dealing with it currently compared to 21 percent of youth pastors.

Josh McDowell Ministry and Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) commissioned the study. Barna plans to release a full report, called "The Porn Phenomenon" in April.

McDowell, well-known author, speaker and evangelist, says pornography in the church among all ages is a much bigger problem than Christians realize, and only 7 percent of churches even have programs to help people battle the addiction.

He also said that virtual reality technology is about to make the problem explode and become even more dangerous for men, women and children.

More than 1 in 10 youth pastors, polled in the research, described their struggle as an addiction. One in 20 pastors who weren't youth pastors also called it an addiction.

The majority of faith leaders who struggle with pornography say it has negatively affected their ministry. Eighty-seven percent of pastors say they feel a great sense of shame around their porn use, and 55 percent of those who use it say they live in constant fear of being discovered.

The Barna study shows a notable difference between the way pastors and those in the pews think about the consequences for pastors who use pornography. More than 4 in 10 adult Christians think churches should fire pastors who are found to be using porn.

In contrast, only 8 percent of pastors think a pastor using porn should resign. They prefer using counseling and accountability.

More than 9 in 10 pastors agree that pornography is a bigger or much bigger problem than it has been in the past. More than half of the surveyed youth pastors say they've had at least one teen ask them for help in the last year.