

Satan's Shameful Tool to Keep You in Bondage to Sexual Sin

Shame is one of the most powerful bonds that keeps men from breaking free of their pornography usage.

Shame is not to be confused with guilt—it can be much more destructive to a man's self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.

Guilt says, "I did something bad," but shame says, "I am bad." Guilt focuses on an action, but shame focuses on the person.

Shame causes you to feel like your mistakes and flaws make you unworthy of love, you're not a good person and you are a loser. Its roots may go back to your childhood when you were abused, belittled or neglected.

But you are not the only one who has experienced shame—most people have at some point in their lives. In fact, the first two humans knew the feeling of shame.

After Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit and realized they were naked, they tried to hide from God. Their shame made them think that they would no longer be accepted and loved by God. Your porn usage may make you feel unworthy of God's love and grace, but that will never be true.

In Romans 8:1a, Paul assures us that, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

The Shame Cycle

Like most addictions, pornography addiction tends to repeat a cycle.

Porn addicts use sexual images to manage their feelings of being unworthy of love and acceptance, low self-esteem and medicating their past abusive experiences.

Then, after they have used pornography, they feel shame for their actions.

Their shame creates anxiety and more self-condemnation, so they watch more porn to try to relieve this stress. So they create a cycle of acting out, then feeling shame and needing more porn to try to ease the anxiety and feelings of being a “bad person.”

Unfortunately, the person progresses to needing more explicit materials to overcome his pain.

As Robert Weiss, LCSW, CSAT-S and author of *Sex Addiction 101*, explained, “Eventually, numbing and denial will dissipate for most sex addicts. And when it does, they start to feel ashamed, guilty and remorseful. Exacerbating these unwanted emotions is the fact that they also feel powerless to stop the cycle of their addiction.”

“Plus, whatever reality it was that they were trying to escape in the first place returns, bringing with it the self-loathing, anxiety and depression they were probably already experiencing.

How It Keeps People Trapped

The key to shame’s grip on a porn addict is its ability to make him take any measure he can to hide his porn usage. Since he feels nobody would love him and he’ll be rejected if they knew , he dreads the thought that others will discover his activities.

As he focuses on guarding his secret, he becomes more isolated from his friends and family. Then once again, he turns to more pornography to deal with this tremendous stress of not being able to have close personal connections.

Brittany Meadows of Addiction Campuses wrote, “Each time you repeat this cycle, you become more let down by your inability

to handle these pressures. You don't want help from other people because each time you fail—the shame strengthens.”

How to Break Free

Breaking free from the bonds of shame will not be easy. You will have to become vulnerable and trust that you can openly tell someone else about the feelings and actions you have tried so hard to conceal. You will have to connect with people to escape your self-made isolation.

The first step is to realize that God created you and loves you. He already knows every sexual image you have looked at and every shameful thought and feeling you have had.

Before you talk to people, ask for His forgiveness and experience the grace and mercy He has for you. Knowing that He sees you as His child worthy of dignity, acceptance and great value will strengthen you to confide in other godly people.

Also, accept that you are not perfect and never will be. No one is. You have and will make mistakes and wrong choices. But whatever happened in your past does not need to determine your future. You can have a wonderful life free from pornography. Christ's death on the cross took all of our imperfections—and we were raised to life in Him. So if you are in Christ, God sees His perfect Son when He looks at us.

Meadows said, “Do you see yourself as a “loser”? An “addict”? Stop shaming yourself with labels and promote yourself as an individual. Of course there are things you may wish to change from your past, but your self-worth isn't based on what you've done or haven't done: It's based on your ownership of those choices and the commitment to positive life changes.”

To that, I would add, it is based not on how you see yourself, but how God sees you!

Become Accountable

To overcome shame, you must break free of your isolation. The best way is to become accountable to other godly men. A small group will allow you to speak openly with other men who have also struggled with shame and pornography.

Dr. Doug Weiss is a psychologist who is featured in a powerful, cinematic course that helps men find freedom from porn called the Conquer Series. He explains, "Anybody can be free if they're willing to do the work. But the first work is getting honest, and a lot of Christians—we're not confessing our faults one to another; we're not talking about what's going on."

He added, "If you don't have an accountability partner, get one. The enemy of your soul looks for easy prey. The easiest prey for our enemy is a man who is not honest or accountable; in other words, he is alone ... It's going to hurt. But one bad day of being honest is better than decades of struggling."

James 5:16a says, "Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." {eoa}

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