

What Women Don't Understand About Men Who Struggle With Pornography

After years of research and ministry to men, women and marriages, social researcher Shaunti Feldhahn and Craig Gross, the founder of , have become convinced that there is a missing-link factor to solving the epidemic of porn use that has impacted so many in churches today: enlisting the support of women.

In their new book, *Through a Man's Eyes: Helping Women Understand the Visual Nature of Men*, Shaunti and Craig investigate men's visual brain wiring and reveal to the female reader how men and boys look at the world, including all the challenges males face on a daily basis—but often don't talk about—and what it means for every wife and mom.

Whether a man or boy is simply living with a male brain in a sexualized culture or actually wrestling with porn, the two co-authors believe that men should no longer be the only ones who understand it, but that women need to be aware as well. *Charisma News* caught up with the two authors as they are launching their new book.

Charisma News: You say the Christian community has put in a lot of effort to tackling the porn problem and the problem of visual temptation in general, but hasn't yet seen enough effect. What do you mean by that?

Feldhahn: Twenty years ago, no one talked about this stuff in the church. Today, thankfully, we've gotten to the point we can address it directly. We have men's groups, Celebrate Recovery, specialized therapists and so on.

There is a lot of ministry in this area. Yet those visual

temptations are still very much out there, even in the church. And porn use in the overall market continues to grow, to the point where one out of every five searches on mobile devices is for porn. In the church, although these ministries certainly impact individual lives, this issue continues to be a problem. It hurts a massive number of lives and marriages. We haven't yet seen the systemic change we all want to see.

Gross: I remember when I first started in 2002. The church was not ready for this at all. It took three years until our first church booked us for a Sunday morning to talk about this issue.

Since 2005, we have seen over 1,000 churches work with us on Sunday morning events. It has been incredible to see the church having these conversations, and all denominations pretty much understanding this is a topic that can't be avoided. But there is a next step that has to happen. We must bring women into the conversation, help them to understand this, and enlist them to be a true partner to a husband or son.

Charisma News: What do women not understand?

Feldhahn: In general, women are largely unaware of what men are confronted with every day in this culture. Because we are wired differently, we don't realize that when a man sees a woman who is dressing to overtly draw attention to a good figure, it creates an instant sexual stimulation and temptation in his brain. Even if he doesn't want that to happen!

And many men make rigorous choices every day to look away, and take those thoughts captive. They fight down the temptation to look, and to let their thoughts go in sexual directions. But other men have gotten pretty weary of the struggle and have made poor choices. And they feel shame that they are trapped, are hiding it and don't know how to get free.

Charisma News: Why will a woman's ability to understand help solve the problem of porn?

Feldhahn: In my research over the years I've seen that if a husband is struggling with just being visual in this culture, or is actually struggling with porn in some way it is almost impossible for him to get free of it if his wife doesn't understand or if she doesn't see why he would even have this temptation, and isn't supportive of him as her husband. If she's condemning and furious instead, it certainly may be an understandable reaction—but it definitely won't incentivize him to open up. And a man needs to open up, to get help.

Gross: We tell women that everything from everyday visual temptation all the way to hard-core porn use will only become more of a problem when it is hidden. Men have to be willing to be vulnerable and open. We have to be willing to bring stuff into the light in order to work on it.

Some men do talk about it with other guys. But in this book, we share with women that the only way a man is going to be willing to talk about it with his wife, is if it's safe. And it is only going to feel safe if she can talk about it with him, without freaking out. But right now many men assume their wives will freak out, so they stay silent. So they stay trapped. I'm not blaming women for this, mind you. The guy should be willing to open up to other guys. But all too often, his wife is the only person he shares his heart with. So in practice, this becomes the one area that he doesn't talk about with anyone.

Feldhahn: I've heard many a man say he wouldn't dare to talk about this with his wife ... but only because "she wouldn't understand." I haven't found a single man who has said he doesn't want his wife to understand. Most men said if she could somehow understand, he would actually love to know that she was on his team. That he could talk to her. That this stuff didn't have to be hidden anymore. Honestly, that is

huge.

Gross: Think about the vast difference it would make if men didn't need to fight this battle on their own, in the dark. If they could talk about it with their wives. Getting women up to speed on this and enlisting them as partners is critical.