

Why Porn Kills Sex

This week's *TIME* magazine features a cover story on a new initiative against Internet pornography. These anti-porn activists, though, aren't the caricatured pursed-lip moralists. They are instead young men who say that pornography has compromised their ability to function sexually in real life.

The cover struck a chord with me because I've seen a similar situation show up many times with couples seated in front of me for pastoral counseling. In a typical version of this scenario, a young married couple seeks help because they've stopped (or in some cases never started) having sex. In this typical scenario, the husband is the one who cannot maintain interest in sex. When one asks the right questions one finds that he's been deeply immersed in pornography since adolescence. It's not, in these situations, that he can't get the mechanics of sex to work. It's that he finds intimacy with a real-life woman to be, in the word that emerges repeatedly, "awkward." Many of these men can only have sex with their wives by replaying scenes from pornography in their heads as they do so.

So what's happening here? Why does it seem that pornography ultimately kills sexual intimacy? There are, to be sure, many psychological explanations. Pornography desensitizes one to sexual stimuli, feeds the quest for endless novelty and creates a script of expectations that does not, and cannot, meet up to the real dynamics of personal relationship. But I think there's more afoot here.

In order to understand the power of pornography, we must ask why Jesus warned us that lust is wrong. This is not because God is embarrassed about sex (see "Solomon, Song of"). God designed human sexuality not to isolate but to connect. Sexuality is intended to bond a wife and a husband and, where

conditions are met, to result in newness of life, thus connecting generations. Pornography disrupts this connection, turning what is meant for intimacy and incarnational love into masturbatory aloneness. Pornography offers the psychic thrill and biological release meant for communion in the context of freedom from connection with another. It cannot keep that promise.

[Click here for the full story.](#) {eoa}

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