

The Attack of the Porn Monster

If you or someone you know is battling sexual temptation, take these five steps toward GRACE.

This week my wife and I ministered to a group of 115 Russian teenagers at a youth camp in Virginia. Part of our job was to separate the guys and the girls and facilitate honest (and sometimes awkward) discussions about sex, dating and guy/girl relationships. They put their anonymous questions in a black box ("How do I know if she's the one for me?" or "Is it OK to use condoms?"), and we answered while the kids giggled nervously.

I spoke to the guys on the first night about what I call the Porn Monster, using the description of the adulterous woman in Proverbs 7 as my text. In this passage the writer recounts the sad story of a vulnerable young man who wanders into the wrong part of town where a harlot seduces him. The story concludes with these haunting words: "Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways ... for many are the victims she has cast down" (Prov. 7:25-26).

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Proverbs 7 is basically a father's warning to his son about this sin of adultery, but it can easily be applied to any sexual sin—including pornography, which has become an epidemic among Christian guys today. I've prayed with many brothers who struggle with this monster, and in some cases the porn has been a gateway to worse sins. Is there a way of escape from it?

I've come up with this acrostic— to help guys who are wrestling with the demon of lust. If you or someone you know faces this problem, here are five steps to take to find freedom:

G. Grow up. It's understandable why a 14-year-old boy would be curious about sex. His body is changing, his hormones are raging and sheer curiosity may lead him to look at porn, masturbate or fantasize about women's bodies. But God never intended for guys to get stuck in perpetual puberty. There are men in their 30s, 40s, 50s and beyond who never learned to be sexually responsible adults. They never grew up in the sexual area—and their immaturity fuels today's porn epidemic. Message to guys: Act your age.

R. Respect women. Pornography is one of the most blatant examples of the exploitation of women in modern culture. It's right up there with rape, wife abuse and forced prostitution. Not only does porn objectify women (sending the message that their

value is based on their youthfulness, beauty and breast size), it also often involves drugging women and forcing them to have sex on camera. How can any Christian guy look at a pornographic photo or watch even one second of a video knowing that the women in those images may be the virtual slaves of organized crime bosses? That's just sick. Don't support it.

A. Avoid

temptation. Jesus had some really strong words to say about temptation. He said: "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:29). Jesus was not advocating self-mutilation. He was using sarcasm to emphasize that we must be ruthless in our battle with sin. You can't co-exist with it, play with it or compromise with it.

Because of the easy availability of online porn today, that means doing whatever is necessary to cut off your access to it—even if it means going offline or putting your computer in the family room so you won't be tempted to look at offensive sites.

A sexually responsible man knows that God is watching his online history—and the fear of the Lord will guard him from polluting his spirit with perversion. You have the power to resist. Flee from youthful lusts.

C. Call for

emergency help. You don't have to fight this battle alone. I encourage any brother who is recovering from a porn addiction to send out a Red Alert every time he feels pulled into sexual compromise. Find a friend who knows you well, and ask if you can call or text him whenever the battle is raging. The Bible promises that when we confess our sins to one another, we will be healed (see James 5:16). If you humble yourself and ask for help, God will give you extra grace to resist the power of lust.

E. Enjoy holy

sex. Pornography or any other sexual sin is a poor substitute for the blessing of sex in marriage. I have counseled many guys who turned to porn as a way of escape from a loveless marriage. But that is never God's solution. A sexually responsible man will do whatever it takes (including apologizing for his mistakes or seeing a marriage counselor) to heal his relationship with his wife. And when the marriage is healed, the sex not only will be deeply satisfying, it also will be free from the guilt and shame that porn brings.

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