

9 WAYS TO FIGHT THE TEMPTATION OF PORNOGRAPHY

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In an earlier post I wrote, “7 Negative Effects of Porn,” I focused on the harmful psychological and sociological effects of pornography. This post will focus on a biblical and grace-centered way to resist the temptation to view porn. This post is primarily aimed at men, but I hope that there is some help here for the growing number of women who are addicted to porn and I hope that more Christian women will write on this hidden issue.

1. FIGHT LUSTFUL IMAGES WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S WRITTEN WORD.

Images are unbelievably powerful, but God has made the universe through his Word and the explosive power of his Word trumps the alluring power of an image. God didn’t give us a picture Bible, but revealed himself through words and sentences to be read and heard. The longest chapter in the Bible shows that the way a young man keeps his way pure is through knowing God’s Word (Psalm 119:9, 11). Therefore the firecracker of pornographic images is no match for the napalm of God’s spoken and written Word.

2. REALIZE THAT VIEWING PORN UNLEASHES INSATIABLE CRAVING BUT KILLS GENUINE SATISFACTION.

Leering at naked women online incites yearnings for more and more naked women, yet never gives ultimate satisfaction. On the other hand, the body of one’s wife is a garden of pleasures that leads to holy satisfaction. The book of Proverbs gives the wisdom of a father to son: “Let [your wife’s] breasts satisfy you at all times” (5:18, 19). The body and breasts of your wife contain an intoxicating influence that no other body and breasts can bring. If you don’t think they are satisfying or intoxicating, the problem isn’t her, but the fact that you settle for inferior and ultimately unsatisfying cravings. Why settle for cheap wine when your wife is a fine vintage?

3. TREAT ALL WOMEN WHO ARE NOT YOUR WIFE LIKE SISTERS AND MOTHERS (1 TITUS 5:2).

Look into the eyes of your mom or sister and recognize that the centerfold

you gazed at last night probably has a heartbroken family member who loves her. The thought of your daughter or mother being a centerfold should appall you and jolt you out of the objectification of women and back into the reality of treating all women as created in the image of God as they are.

4. SEVER THE SOURCES OF TEMPTATION TO VIEW PORN.

When discussing the adulterous sin of lust, Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell” (Matthew 5:29). In doing so he prescribes a radical violence toward that which leads you to sin. Jesus knew that amputating your hand doesn’t kill lustful desire—after all he said sin starts in the heart (Matthew 15:19), but his call does mean that you need to get drastic on non-sins that may lead to sin. For some of you this will mean disconnecting the Internet for a period of time or only accessing it in public places, for others this may mean an extended media fast of all kinds. You fill in the blank.

Remember, though legalism is never a means to sanctification, the call to holiness and following Jesus demands radical steps.

5. THINK ABOUT THE ETERNAL RESULT OF LUST.

As Jesus’ words indicated above, at on one level, his answer to how to fight lust is: fight it or risk going to hell. God’s wrath is coming for all kinds of sin and one of them is sexual sin (Colossians 3:5–6). Therefore since purity is of eternal importance, don’t give up in the fight for it. This is only one of the ways to fight this particular sin, but it is not the most significant way. The primary way to repent is through seeing God’s magnificent kindness and undeserved grace in Jesus (Romans 2:4), but this does not mean we that we ignore the other biblical incentives of repentance in light of God’s future terrible wrath. Grace is the best motivator, but it is not the only one.

6. ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF PURITY MORE THAN THE PLEASURES OF PORN.

Eighteenth-century preacher Thomas Chalmers, in his classic sermon “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection,” demonstrated how the greatest power in killing a sinful desire is not just by harping on the sinful desire but

on replacing it with a new and greater holy desire. The promise of experiencing sinful lustful pleasures at almost any moment via your Internet connection is hard to argue with, unless you replace it with a superior pleasure, then it becomes easy. Jesus said it is the pure in heart that will see God (Matthew 5:8), and the Psalmist tells us that in the presence of God are infinite pleasures (Psalm 16:11). In view of this reality, the desire to see God who gives eternal pleasure far outweighs temporal lustful desire.

It's insane to settle for a mud puddle of pleasure when you have an ocean of pleasure awaiting you in the presence of the Triune God.

7. AVOID ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS.

Instead, link up with believers radically focused on encouraging one another in the gospel of grace. Well, maybe this is a bit of an overstatement against accountability groups, but the point is that often accountability groups turn into focusing on sin rather than experiencing the gospel of grace. You don't just want a group that kills, but gospel-driven community that gives life. Men's groups I've been apart of in the past tend to focus more on the experiences of failure the week before not the event of God's grace in the death and resurrection of Christ 2,000 years ago.

Don't get me wrong: Christian relationships should engage in confession of sin (James 5:16), but they are also meant for encouragement in grace (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The author of the Hebrews reveals that the key to not being hardened to the deceitfulness of sin is daily encouragement not an excessive concentration on sin (Hebrews 3:13). The use of accountability software between brothers to keep one away from online pornography is helpful, but grace-oriented encouragement between brothers is best.

8. STARE AT JESUS, NOT AT PORN.

Trying harder and harder to stop looking at porn isn't the way to stop looking at porn—you must look somewhere else, namely, the person of Jesus Christ. Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 writes, "And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." True inward change comes from beholding Jesus not from not looking at porn. As it has been said, what you behold you become, or as biblical theologian Greg Beale puts it,

you become what you worship. Look at porn and become a person controlled by lust and idolatry or look at Jesus and become a glorious and whole human being that reflects the beauty and glory of God.

9. FIGHT AS SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD.

As a Christian, you have been freed to walk in purity. The key to fighting lustful temptation (and any temptation for that matter) is to know who you are not by evaluating what you have done. Becoming a child of God is not dependent upon your not looking at porn, but upon being united to Jesus by faith and the result of the Spirit of God's work in your heart (Romans 8:3–4, 14). No longer are you defined by your entanglements with porn, but by your connection to the person and work of Jesus.

Jesus was crucified for your lust, and he has made you objectively pure in him.

Therefore you can work from a place of purity as covered in the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21), not toward a place of purity to earn righteousness. Kill the urge to view porn because you are a child of God who is dead to sin and free to walk in purity (Romans 6:1–14). Pornography is no longer your master—God is your Father who radically loves you (1 John 3:1) and Jesus is your sin-bearer who is not ashamed to call you, with all your inordinate lusts, “brother” (Hebrews 2:11). So, to paraphrase John Piper, fight the temptation of pornography as a victor not a victim.

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