

# **Pornography**

## **The Most Secret of Sins**

### **The scope of the problem**

As indicated by the following statistics pornography has become a serious problem in the post-modern society of today:

- In 2007, global porn revenues were estimated at \$20 billion.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2002, 11 300 mainstream hardcore films were released compared to 470 Hollywood films.<sup>2</sup>
- The number of porn sites on the Internet increased from 88 000 in 2000 to nearly 1.6 million in 2004.<sup>3</sup>
- According to Christiannet.com 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women admitted in 2007 that they are addicted to pornography.<sup>4</sup>
- According to a survey of 564 pastors in 2000, 37% indicated viewing pornography is a 'current struggle'.<sup>5</sup>
- According to a poll by Focus on the Family during 2003 47% of families said pornography is a problem in their home.<sup>6</sup>
- A recent survey at North American universities shows 51% of men and 16% of women spend up to 5 hours per week online for sexual purposes, while another 11% of men spend anywhere from 5 to 20 hours per week.<sup>7</sup>

### **Contributing factors**

Pornographic material has become more readily available, at less cost and with tighter secrecy than any other time in history. Where one had to visit a back alley in an area of disrepute in the past to watch erotic shows or X-rated movies the Internet has brought pornography right into the private home today. A revolution in digital technology has opened the floodgates and we are literally being swamped by pornography. It was not all

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<sup>1</sup> Covenant Eyes, p3 (This document contains information obtained from a diversity of sources. In order to identify the original source visit <http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornography-facts-and-statistics/>).

<sup>2</sup> Covenant Eyes, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Covenant Eyes, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> McNamara, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> McNamara, p.19.

<sup>6</sup> McNamara, p.17.

<sup>7</sup> Gilkerson, p.10.

that easy to hide pornographic material in the past. There was always the possibility of a spouse discovering a pornographic magazine in a briefcase or in the closet. Currently handheld devices such as smartphones and iPads make it possible to view pornography in total secrecy almost anywhere inside or outside your home. It seems as if pornography has indeed become the 'most secret of sins.'

## The seriousness of the problem

Watching pornography is often downplayed as not such a serious sin. It should rather be seen as a form of recreation of great value in alleviating stress and depression. Everybody is doing it anyway and it has become part of the post-modern lifestyle. The Bible sees sexual sin, including pornography in a different light. `

*You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who so much as looks at a woman with evil desire for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28 AMP)*

According to Jesus then, if you look at pornography and have any lustful thoughts you have actually committed the very act of adultery. It implies that anybody who has been watching pornography regularly over several years has already committed adultery with hundreds if not thousands of women.

*Shun immorality and all sexual looseness [flee from impurity in thought, word, or deed]. Any other sin which a man commits is one outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God? You are not your own, You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own]. So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body (1 Corinthians 6:18-20 AMP).*

*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: **adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV, own emphasis)***

Apart from the fact that pornography is condemned by the Word of God various other negative consequences should also be taken into consideration:

- Research has shown that one may become addicted to pornography. Various hormones and neurotransmitters play a role in this regard.<sup>8</sup> Just like any other

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<sup>8</sup> Gilkerson, p.9.

addiction, due to the tolerance factor, more and more is needed to obtain the same effect. This not only means an ever-increasing volume and more time spend looking at pornography, but more explicit and bizarre material as well. Like any other addiction the habit may be very difficult to break and it will lead to self-destruction unless the addict is set free by the grace of God.

- Being addicted to pornography or anything else means that we are putting the object of our addiction before our relationship with God and we are therefore guilty of idolatry. Pornography may have a devastating effect on your spiritual life because it brings separation between you and God.
- Pornography enables men or women to escape from reality and retreat into the realm of fantasy. This world of the imagination may become very real and very similar to the practice of visualisation which has its roots in the occult and New Age movement.
- Using pornography may lead to major depression.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, many people start viewing pornography in order to overcome depression, stress or any other emotional pain. In this way the viewer is caught in a vicious cycle of depression with no escape.
- Pornography destroys marriages. One of the most harmful consequences of a husband viewing pornography is the devastating betrayal of his wife and the covenant of marriage he has made to her before God. Learning about a husband's pornography viewing can be a very traumatic experience to most wives since they tend to equate it with the physical act of adultery.<sup>10</sup> Statistics show that pornography may have a very detrimental impact on marriages. According to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers 56% of divorce cases involves one party having 'an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.'<sup>11</sup>
- Pornography may ruin your family life.
- Pornography influences productivity negatively. 44% of U.S. workers with an Internet connection admitted to accessing an X-rated website at work during the month of March 2004.<sup>12</sup> In 2003 two-thirds of 474 human resource professionals said in a survey they have discovered pornography on employee computers.<sup>13</sup>
- Pornography is accessible to the youth on the Internet at a very impressionable age. According to a 2010-survey among 14-16-year-olds from a north London secondary school nearly a third looked at sexual images online when they were 10 years old or younger.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gilkerson, p.23.

<sup>10</sup> Croft, p.23.

<sup>11</sup> Covenant Eyes, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Leahy, p.113

<sup>13</sup> Covenant Eyes, p.17.

<sup>14</sup> Covenant Eyes, p.13.

- Watching pornography lowers our view of women by seeing them as sexual commodities. All women should be valued and respected as people created in the image of God.
- Watching pornography desensitise us to cruelty by numbing us to the seriousness of verbal and physical aggression.

I think most of us don't realise what the magnitude of the pornography problem really is. The first Internet generations have not yet reached full-maturity, so only time will tell what the real impact of Internet pornography will be while the future impact on the first smartphone generations may even be beyond our imagination. We must also bear in mind that digital technology will continue improving with devastating effect. The two-dimensional images of today will become three-dimensional tomorrow. If the appeal is to the eyes today, it will involve all five senses in the future. Taking all these facts into consideration it seems as if we are truly living in the last days.

## The solution

Nothing can be blamed for viewing pornography, not the accessibility of pornographic material on the Internet, not depression, an unhappy childhood or any other emotional problem, not even the shortcomings of your wife. All these issues can contribute to the problem, but none of them can be seen as the true root of the problem.

To find the root of the problem one has to go back to the beginning of time. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and every living thing including man. He created everything perfectly – there were no disease, pain or death. But then man rebelled against God by disobeying His command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result of man's disobedience, sin and death, both spiritual and physical, entered the world. From now on everyone would be born with a natural disposition to rebel against God and pursue the pleasures of sin.<sup>15</sup> Our sinful behaviour, including viewing pornography, can therefore be blamed on one thing and one thing only – our fallen nature.

As a result of sin man are under the wrath and condemnation of God which includes eternal separation from God. Fortunately for us God provided a solution to this dilemma. He sent His only son, Jesus Christ, to earth in a human body, to lead a sinless life and to die in our place on a cross, thereby paying for our sins. In order to come to salvation one has to adhere to the following steps:

- **Acknowledge** that you are a sinner and that you are guilty before God.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 'Therefore, as sin came into the world through one man, and death as the result of sin, so death spread to all men, [no one being able to stop it or to escape its power] because all men sinned.' (Romans 5:12 AMP)

<sup>16</sup> '... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...' (Romans 3:23 NASB)

- **Repent** of your sins. Have a deep sorrow about your sins.<sup>17</sup>
- **Confess** your sins to God and to everybody you have wronged.<sup>18</sup>
- **Reject** your sins. Tell God that you are prepared to turn your back on your sinful ways.<sup>19</sup>
- **Believe** that Christ died for your sins.<sup>20</sup>
- **Receive** this free gift of salvation from God and make it your own.<sup>21</sup>

Everyone who accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Saviour is born again spiritually and receives the Holy Spirit as an indwelling guest. The Holy Spirit empowers every believer to grow spiritually by overcoming sin, including pornography.

*For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, you will surely die. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever (Romans 8:13 AMP).*

Although Christians have received the Holy Spirit as Comforter and Helper we still live in a fallen world where the attacks of sin, the flesh and the devil are constant and intense.<sup>22</sup> The fight against pornography is a daily reality, searching our hearts for sin, confessing it and repenting of it while also trusting the Holy Spirit to equip us for the fight.

As a result of our sinful nature we as believers will never be without sin as long as we remain on this earth, but this propensity for sinning should never be used as an excuse to

<sup>17</sup> 'I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.' (Luke 13:3 NASB). 'Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;' (Acts 3:19).

<sup>18</sup> 'If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action].' (1 John 1:9 AMP)

<sup>19</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the LORD,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7 NASB)

<sup>20</sup> 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.' (John 3:16 NASB) 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16:16 NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> 'He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:' (John 1:11-12 NKJV)

<sup>22</sup> 'For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.' (Ephesians 6:12 AMP)

keep on indulging oneself in pornography. The fight against pornography should be taken seriously. It asks for total commitment. Playing with sin may have deadly consequences. If you keep on viewing pornography wilfully with no real remorse over your deeds, but rather trying to justify it, while also hiding it from all those around you, you should reconsider whether you are truly saved. Beware; by continuing in your sin your heart may become hardened to such an extent that you may not feel any remorse or guilt at all. You cannot serve both God and the idol of pornography. Were you sincere when you accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour? Test your salvation against the six steps mentioned above.

The following practical steps may be of help in your fight against pornography:

- Do not fight the battle against pornography on your own. Seek help at the church you belong to, contact an Internet ministry aimed at overcoming pornography addiction or approach a fellow-believer for support.
- Make yourself accountable. Set up weekly meetings with a fellow-believer for prayer, confession,<sup>23</sup> encouragement<sup>24</sup> and self-examination. Make use of the accountability service provided by Covenant Eyes. For a monthly fee this Internet ministry will track all the websites you visit on your computer, smartphone, or tablet, and send this information to a trusted friend, spouse or mentor.
- Install a password for accessing your Internet service which is known to your spouse only.
- Install an Internet filtering programme that blocks access to pornography.
- If everything else fails you should take the drastic measure of disconnecting your Internet service.<sup>25</sup>
- How innocent it may seem, do not look at any 'non-pornographic' images which may stimulate your appetite and lead you back to pornography again – not even women in swimsuits or images of female athletes. Fooling around with 'borderline-images' may be compared to an alcoholic on his way to recovery who takes just one small sip of beer or whiskey.

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<sup>23</sup> 'Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].' (James 5:16 AMP)

<sup>24</sup> '... and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.' (Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB)

<sup>25</sup> In the words of Christ: 'If your right eye serves as a trap to ensnare you or is an occasion for you to stumble and sin, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be cast into hell (Gehenna).' (Matthew 5:29 AMP)

It is time for churches to realise the seriousness of the battle against pornography. They should be equipped to assist those who are struggling with this problem. Keep the following in mind:

- The pornography addict should preferably be placed under the mentorship of somebody who has already overcome this problem, who will be able to show compassion and approach the matter with humility.
- All possible mentors should undergo the necessary training for counselling pornography addicts.
- The person who needs help should be made to understand the seriousness of his problem.
- Keep the matter confidential and do not subject the person who needs assistance to the possibility of malicious gossip, spiritual haughtiness or condemnation.
- Church members should intercede for pornography addiction in the congregation, the larger community and the country as a whole. Pray for the youth and for your local minister or pastor not to fall into the trap of viewing pornography. Ministers and pastors are targeted specifically by the devil and need our special prayers constantly.

## **An invitation**

Have you really tried your very best to get rid of the habit of viewing pornography, just to stumble again? Your life may have become a sinful pattern which has repeated itself over and over for many years. You would download pornographic material only to destroy it in disgust after watching it a few times. You would fall, get up and pray for forgiveness, only to fall, get up and pray for forgiveness again. You may actually be feeling degraded, loathing yourself, since you are constantly wrestling with guilt and shame because of what you are doing. Take heart, Christ is extending an invitation to you:

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]*  
(Matthew 11:28 AMP)

Do not delay. Now is the time. Set about the matter in real earnest.

*Seek the LORD while He may be found;  
Call upon Him while He is near.  
Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the LORD,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.*  
(Isaiah 55:6-7 NASB)

Remind yourself that you have already been set free in Jesus Christ. He has bought you with His blood and you do not need to keep on living in bondage. As long as you do not keep the problem to yourself there is still hope. Transparency is the key to solving the problem. If you hide your sin it is easy to hold onto it. Confess your sin to somebody else.<sup>26</sup> Make yourself accountable, read your Bible, attend a Bible-believing church, pray often and confess all sins you have committed daily.

Take control of your mind by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even if you stop viewing pornography completely you may still have sufficient pornographic images stored in your brain to be used for fantasising. If your mind starts drifting where does it drift to – to pornographic images or to God and godly things? By having been exposed to pornographic images, a pathway was created in your brain.<sup>27</sup> Each successive time you viewed pornography this neural path was travelled again, becoming deeper and wider over time until a natural tendency was established to retreat into a fantasy world of sex and pornography by means of this pathway. When you decide to turn your back on pornography you should ask the Holy Spirit to erase the pornographic images in your mind while you also have to allow Him to create a new pathway leading to God and godly things. By using the godly pathway more often it will become better defined over time while the sinful pathway will become overgrown by being used less and less.

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ... (Romans 12:2 NASB)*

*For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]. (Philippians 4:8 AMP)*

*And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth. For [as far as this world is concerned] you have died, and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:2-3)*

You can be sure that the devil will keep up his attacks trying to force your mind back to pornographic images and fantasies. He may also entice you to just have a quick look at one or two naughty images. Memorise some verses from the Bible to ward off the attacks of the devil, such as Psalm 18:2; Psalm 27:1,2,5; Psalm 121:1-2; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:3

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<sup>26</sup> *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (James 5:16 NASB)*

<sup>27</sup> Gilkerson, p.9.



and 1 John 3:8. Remind him that the Lord is your Saviour and Protector. Also remind yourself and the Lord about His promises (Isaiah 62:6).

Apart from accepting God's forgiveness you should also be prepared to forgive yourself for what you have done in the past. The devil will accuse you by trying to convince you that you have reached a point where forgiveness is not possible anymore. Remind him about verses such as John 3:16 and 1 John 1:9. Apart from having accepted Christ as your personal Saviour you should also surrender every aspect of your life to Him, including your predilection for pornography and any other idol in your life. Total surrender is essential for experiencing victory over temptation, sin and addiction. Ask the Father daily to be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

## Resources

**Covenant Eyes:** Provides an Internet accountability service which tracks websites you visit on your computer, smartphone, or tablet, and sends this information in an easy-to-read report to someone you trust. Various e-books can be downloaded from this website. Free webinars are also available. <http://www.covenanteyes.com/>

**Harvest USA:** A ministry committed to offering hope in Jesus to men and women struggling with sexual brokenness and sin. <http://www.harvestusa.org/>

**X3Pure:** A Christian site providing online workshops to enable men and women to conquer pornography addiction and regain control of their lives. <http://www.x3pure.com/>

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<sup>28</sup> *If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts [gifts that are to their advantage] to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and continue to ask Him!* (Luke 11:13). *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but ever be filled and stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit.* (Ephesians 5:18)

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