

THE PROBLEM WITH PORN

by HAROLD SENKBEIL

Q: I've looked at pornography ever since high school. Now that I'm newly married, I'm trying to quit but I'm really struggling with it. If my wife doesn't know about it, is it really that bad?

A: Too many men silently wrestle with this issue but are not man enough to talk about it. So, thanks for your honesty.

First, pornography feeds fantasy. It encourages men (and many women too) to think of sex abstractly, thus denigrating God's good and perfect gift of sexuality. God made our first parents male and female, and from their sexual union came all humanity. Ever since He brought Eve from Adam's side and joined the two together in Eden, sexual distinction and attraction has been an essential feature in the creation God made and labeled "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Yet, as you know, God the Father's idyllic creation was irreparably harmed by Satan's ploy, first pitting Eve against her Creator and then driving a wedge in the perfect union of Adam and his wife. Their naked bodies, once a source of delight and desire, now became objects of shame and conquest.

Simply put, God made sexual attraction for mutual giving and receiving. Sin makes it a matter of taking and getting instead. The body God created for your spouse's pleasure and delight is instead repurposed for your own indulgence and gratification. Pornography robs sexual pleasure of its proper place and makes it a spectator sport at best.

Porn use quickly becomes compulsive and habitual. There are multiple reasons for this, many of them biological. Human brains release a quick rush of neurotransmitter chemicals at orgasm that cause intense pleasure. It's not

uncommon to become dependent on these chemicals, so that one needs a regular "fix" of porn in order to lessen stress, calm nerves and maintain external equilibrium. It's a chemical addiction like many others.

To break this habit, you'll need more than will power. For starters, address the biological factors. Go on a fast. Stop using in order to lessen the compulsion. Ask a trusted friend to monitor your computer use via blocking software. Be alert to the situations and circumstances that leave you especially vulnerable. Make wise choices.

Then, instead of fantasy, try reality. Focus on the wife God gave you (or will give you, if you're unmarried). Love her as Christ loved His bride, laying down His life for us all. Strive to please her in every way. Remember that God made your body for her delight; He designed you to reach your highest pleasure in giving yourself to her.

Ultimately, this is a spiritual struggle. The sad routine of acting out, remorse and self-loathing further feeds the vicious cycle of addiction. Break that cycle by Word and by prayer. Fight the good fight, "holding faith and a good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:18). Seek out your pastor for confidential spiritual care. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Your pastor will hear your confession, pronounce God's own forgiveness and teach you to cling to Christ and live a new life each day by faith in Him. ❁

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