



THE SECRET IN OUR PEWS

PORN ADDICTION AND HOW YOU CAN BE SET FREE

Clive Human

Author of the book, *The Secret in the Pew – Pornography in the Lives of Christian Men*, *David Blythe*, says: *“There are secrets sitting in the pews of our churches.*

This secret is a hidden lifestyle of sexual preoccupation and perversion within the lives of Christian men. It is fuelled by regular consumption of one of the most destructive forces of our time – pornography.”

No matter how pornography is packaged and no matter how it is made to look, as if its just harmless recreation or pastime, even a form of entertainment, it is a deadly poison that is killing us as a nation - spiritually, morally and socially.

Pornography destroys minds, morals and marriages. Surprisingly in this day and age there are still many people who are not aware that pornography is addictive and just how addictive it is! Research shows that a porn addiction is often

more difficult to break than an addiction to cocaine!

Blythe says, “Pornography has created such a stronghold within the body of Christ that many have become neutralized from being of any kind of force for the Kingdom of God. That is exactly where the enemy wants us – to be of no threat to him and his work.”

When I mentioned the issue of addiction to porn at a church meeting recently, one pastor commented, “Oh, we don’t have that problem in our church.” But just how bad is this problem amongst Christians?

A survey conducted by the Maryland Coalition Against Pornography concluded that 40 to 60 percent of Christian men are involved with pornography in some way. That is four to six out of every ten Christian men! Promise Keepers reports that one third of the men who attended rallies in 1996 admitted to a personal struggle with pornography. Most disturbing were the results from a confidential survey amongst evangelical pastors which found that 64 percent of pastors and lay leaders surveyed, struggled with sexual addiction, which included pornography and other secret sexual activity. Furthermore, 14 percent admitted to having illicit sexual contact short of intercourse and 25 percent

confessed to having committed adultery. All of this occurred after becoming a Christian. (Statistics quoted in Blythe, **The Secret in the Pew**, page 25).

POISON

What is pornography addiction? Firstly, it is a freely chosen sin and is slavery to the obsessions and compulsions of lust. Often it is a false coping mechanism for the individual and is a false love. It is a sick substitute for God's love and is actually idol worship. It is a spiritual, emotional and psychological poison.

Porn addiction can be defined as a dependence upon pornography, characterized by obsessive viewing, reading, and thinking about pornography, and sexual themes to the detriment of other areas of one's life.

Research by psychologists indicates that online porn addiction is stronger, and more addictive than ordinary porn addiction because of its easy availability, explicitness, and the privacy that online viewing offers as opposed to "adult shops" where others may recognise you.

Some people can get almost instantly addicted, whilst for others it may take up to 10 years of erratic exposure to get hooked. But, like a latent cancer, it almost never disappears on its own or reverses its course unless there is some therapeutic or professional intervention.

FROM AN EARLY AGE

I was exposed to pornography at the age of 11 at a time when there was no Internet and porn was still banned in this country. I was at boarding school in the Boland at the time. One of the boys found a book 'hidden' in his father's cupboard and brought it to school. I was sexualised at far too early an age and this affected me as I grew up. In my teens and twenties, I looked on women purely as sex objects, among other things. Getting married didn't take this behaviour away and I soon found out that my wife hated porn, so I continued to indulge on my own or with friends 'for a laugh'. Around the time that porn was decriminalised in South Africa, my wife who was a very recent re-born Christian, got together with a few like-minded people and Standing Together To Oppose Pornography (S.T.O.P.) was formed. Being still in my 'BC' era, I used to accompany her to talks she was giving on porn and its effects and I soon realised that I was in the early stages of addiction. Soon after this I gave my life to the Lord. I realized that the Bible is very clear regarding sexual immorality, so I had to change. With Michele's help and God's grace he has brought us through this and has used us and our experiences to help others.

Generally, an addiction to porn is the 'bad fruit of a root cause'. It can be caused by quite a few things such as perceptions developed as a child in

reaction to loneliness, abuse (emotional, physical, mental or sexual) or even an absent or domineering parent. Even A.D.D. or low self-esteem, as well as something like poor social skills can be a root cause. Some children are just born more vulnerable, with an addictive disposition in their personality. All of these can be factors that may affect the person at a later stage. It's important that the addict's partner knows and understands that it is not necessarily their fault but that they can be instrumental in helping the addict on the road to recovery. Most addictions are an escape from pain and pornography is one of the methods used to deal with these unresolved issues.

We must also be aware that repeated exposure to soft or hard-core porn can lead to full-scale addiction. This addiction generally has four steps:

Step 1 - Addiction: Characterised by repeated return to material. Once the consumer gets hooked, they keep coming back for more, and still more, of this powerful imagery. Once addicted, they cannot get rid of this dependency by themselves.

Step 2 - Escalation: With the passage of time, the addict requires rougher, more explicit, more deviant, and 'kinky' sexual material to achieve the same 'high'. It is at this stage that, if their wives or partners are involved with them, they eventually push their partners into increasingly bizarre and deviant sexual activities. In many cases, this results in a broken relationship when the partner refuses to go further or to participate. This often leads to conflict, separation and eventually divorce.

Step 3 - Desensitisation: This is when what was previously seen as gross now becomes an acceptable 'turn on'. Material that was taboo, repulsive, and even illegal, in time is seen as acceptable. The person really believes that this type of antisocial, or deviant, sexual activity depicted is normal - even if the activity is illegal and contrary to their personal standards and moral beliefs.

Step 4 - Acting out: This 4th phase is the increased tendency to act out sexually the behaviours viewed in pornography. Merely looking no longer satisfies the addict. The fantasies have to be acted out. The addict has been repeatedly exposed to compulsive promiscuity, exhibitionism, group sex, voyeurism, frequenting strip clubs and massage parlours, even having sex with children, rape, and inflicting pain on themselves or a partner during sex.

LIVING IN BONDAGE

Some of the more serious effects of porn addiction, and often the most frequent consequences of being addicted to pornography, is not the probability or possibility of committing a serious sex crime (though this can and often does occur), but rather its disturbance of the really fragile bonds of



intimate family and marital relationships. This is where the most serious pain, damage, and sorrow occurs. There is repeatedly interference and even the destruction of healthy love and sexual relationships with marriage partners.

Porn addiction can even lead to the addict stealing from work to pay for more porn or prostitutes and can cause depression due to the feeling of shame and guilt. It can also lead to divorce and the disintegration of the family. It has even been known to lead some addicts to abuse their own children.

Experts believe that only about 10% of all known porn and sex addicts have confessed, about 70% are men and about 30% are women. The bulk of these unconfessed addicts are living in bondage to this addiction.

"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

For those who are already ensnared in the compulsive web of pornography, it's not too late. Jesus said, "The Lord has anointed Me to preach good news...to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1).

STEPS TO FREEDOM:

1. Join and regularly attend a Christ-centred and Bible-believing church.
2. Confess your sin to God and ask for his forgiveness. "He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but he who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).
3. Destroy your pornographic magazines, DVDs, computer discs, etc. that contain pornography. Discontinue any membership contracts with DVD shops. Install an Internet "shield" on your computer or subscribe to the accountability programme *covenant eyes* (www.covenanteyes.com).
4. Make yourself accountable to a friend of the same sex, a mature Christian whom you respect. "Confess" your sin to him/her, ask for their prayers and have them ask you regularly about your spiritual life. From a human point of view, accountability is essential as it takes four to six weeks to form a new habit of thinking. Without the follow-up that accountability provides, breaking those old and evil habits is practically impossible. "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).
5. Take practical steps to avoid temptation. Avoid going to DVD shops to browse. If your family wants a DVD, call ahead to reserve it and pick it up at the counter. Don't watch



DVDs alone. Limit your DVD watching. Rather watch uplifting Christian films. Don't put your foot in "adult" shops.

6. Don't view TV channels that screen explicit movies, and don't watch after the watershed, as over 18 movies are shown after that time (21H00 on ETV and the SABC, and 20H00 on M-net).
7. In time, your memory can be reprogrammed in such a way that you gain confidence over the fear of memory. This is done in partnership with the Holy Spirit as you mature in grace.
8. The time you once spent in pornographic activities must be redirected and restructured so that wholesome and godly activities take the place of the time once spent in illicit activities.
9. Cultivate God's attitude towards things you view "on screen".

10. Many people caught in porn's net need specialised counselling to help them break free. Some need emotional and spiritual therapy to deal with underlying problems. Don't give up - keep praying for God's help and he will help you find the way out.

Pastors need to deal with this issue in their churches both radically and sensitively. Like Phinehas (Numbers 25), if there's sin in the camp, it must be dealt with! Pastors, however, must also be approachable, so that men will feel they have someone who they can talk to confidentially.

If we are to see revival in our nation, it is us, God's people, who must turn from our wicked ways (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Clive Human is the spokesman for Standing Together To Oppose Pornography (S.T.O.P.) and runs a Cape Town Christian support group for men wanting to overcome their porn addictions.

Support groups for men struggling with porn addiction and more information on the harm caused by porn, or to join STOP's fight against porn contact: Standing Together To Oppose Pornography (S.T.O.P.)

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