

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
PORNOGRAPHY



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PORNOGRAPHY



Warning: Contains Graphic Information

Science is finally catching up and coming to the same conclusion that the church has understood for many years: pornography is harmful. As the research now shows, it is perhaps much more harmful than we previously understood and in ways we never dreamed of.

Mentally Harmful

Proverbs 7 paints the image of a man being lured into adultery saying, "he fol-

lows her as an ox goes to the slaughter or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool”(Proverbs 7:22). It creates a mental picture of a man being extremely foolish, ignoring the danger he knows to be there. In fact, the writer begins with the description of the man, “And among the simple ones, I perceived among the youths a young man void of good sense” (Proverbs 7:7).

Some readers may see a distinct difference between adultery and pornography. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus erased the line between looking at a woman with lust and actually committing a physical sexual act with her. He said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27,28).

Some have argued that the Bible doesn’t directly address the issue of pornography. The idea of a picture, much less a video, would have been difficult to comprehend at the time the Bible was

written. However, in several of his letters, the Apostle Paul gave a list of sins to avoid and often included immorality (2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5). Paul wrote his letters in Greek and used the word *porneia* that is translated as “immorality.” The word literally meant “illicit sexual intercourse” but was used to refer to any sexual activity outside of marriage. It is the root word for our word pornography.

Science now puts a new light on these Bible passages. It shows, to put it bluntly, that porn addiction causes brain damage. Pornography is addictive. Over time an addictive substance doesn't just make a person crave more of something, it changes who they are as a person.

One of the most important discoveries in neuroscience over the past 25 years is the understanding of neuroplasticity. Your brain is constantly changing. The things you do, the activities you participate in, your life experiences, all change the neural pathways in the brain.

You could think of this aspect of the

brain as you would a muscle. The more you work a part of your brain, the stronger it becomes. The areas you don't work atrophy and become weaker. But with the brain, this process is competitive. The parts of your brain that you exercise essentially steal resources from the areas of your brain that are not being worked.

When the reward center of our brain is activated, it causes the release of certain chemicals that make you feel good. The main chemical is dopamine but there is another protein called DeltaFosB. The purpose of this protein is to strengthen the neural pathways that the dopamine moves on.

DeltaFosB is the substance that rewires our brains, helping us learn new skills. But the release of that substance comes when someone views pornography weakens the prefrontal cortex of the brain. This is the part of our brain that we use to think, to calculate risk, to project ourselves into the future to plan. It's the part of the brain responsible for rational thinking, handling abstract concepts, and

for controlling our impulses. So when a person views pornography, they damage the part of the brain that allows them to control their viewing of pornography.

The technical term for an impaired frontal cortex is “hypofrontality.” People with this condition have lower amounts of gray matter, abnormal white matter, and a lower ability to process glucose (fuel the brain runs on) in the prefrontal cortex. There are more than a dozen studies that have demonstrated a link between hypofrontality and sex addicts or porn users.

The younger a person is, the more plastic their brain is. The damage that is done to the brain is worse the younger the person is. Whether intentionally or accidentally, children are being exposed to porn and at younger and younger ages. Children have much greater access to digital devices than they have had in the past, often with less supervision. The internet is just part of life for the younger generations so it is natural for them to allow more access to their children than

previous generations.

Physically Harmful

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Science is just beginning to help us understand the negative physical impacts of extended exposure to pornography. Because of the addictive nature of porn, over time, the user must consume more or look for images that are more intense to get the same effect. Until recently, there were finite limits on what could be experienced. Today, when an image no longer produces the same reaction, a new image or a more intense video is only a few clicks away. Even the decadent Roman emperors never had access to an infinite number of sexual partners.

It is important to note that porn produces a sexual stimulus, but isn't the same as sex. Over time, exposure to more and more porn rewires our brains so that the normal sexual response is no longer connected to human inter-

action. The user comes to require porn to experience a sexual stimulation. It's now becoming somewhat common for young men to need to visualize pornographic movies in their head in order to maintain sexual function. Some must actually watch pornography during sex to be able to have sex.

Erectile dysfunction (ED) has not been common in young men. Since studies were first conducted in the 1940s until recently, ED among young men has remained at less than one percent. Today, studies find the rate of ED among men under 40 ranges from 14-37 percent. There is no variable that has changed with this group during that time period, other than the easy access to pornography. This is likely just the first physically damaging effect of pornography to become common.

Emotionally Harmful

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily an-

gered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

Porn may feel like love to the user, but it is anything but. For decades we have been told that it is a “victimless crime,” that it is just “harmless fun.” But porn destroys relationships. Porn users are far more critical of their partner and far less satisfied with their relationship.

If you are dissatisfied with the “partner” on your screen, just search for a new one. If you want to enhance or diminish a physical trait, that can be added to the search criteria. If you feel like a blond rather than a brunette, want someone a little younger, someone more aggressive or submissive in the relationship – literally anything you want your “partner” to be at that moment is available on demand.

That “demand” mentality seeps across into the real world and creates an expectation of having your desires met. It also creates expectations of what your partner should be willing to do for you. Because anything goes in the virtual world, those expectations can be very extreme.

Socially Harmful

When those expectations are not fulfilled in the real world, it can drive the user further into the digital one. It can also push them to look in other places for that fulfillment. The digital world is full of violence and domination. As the normal stimulation of sexual images diminishes, users start to look for the forbidden and the violent. Sexual domination, rape, and other dehumanizing actions are readily available to take the user's experience to the next level.

This is another area where the digital world can impact the real one. Kerby Anderson discovered that "the FBI's own statistics show that pornography is found at 80% of the scenes of violent sex crimes, or in the homes of the perpetrators."

In the Nov. 2019 issue of Outlook magazine, Noel Bouché wrote that "porn grooms people to accept the idea of transactional, commercial sex by conditioning them to see others as objects, not persons." He goes on to say, "It also shapes our desires and appetites, creating a push

to act out and experience the scenarios, the ‘sensations’ that we’ve seen.” His article also explains that porn is often produced using victims of human trafficking. The “victimless crime” is often produced by forcing young women to act out these fantasies against their wills.

More Common

The problem of pornography is much larger than most of us realize, even within the church. Josh McDowell conducted a study of the issue a few years ago and discussed his findings in an interview in January 2016.

“Most people don’t realize what’s happening with pornography. Basically there’s two types of men in the evangelical church — those that watch pornography and those that lie.”

He describes the situation within the Church as an “epidemic,” He says “at least 78.8% of all men that attend evangelical churches watch pornography. Probably 80% of all evangelical youth pastors also watch pornography, and now, the greatest increase is among women and young

ladies. It's killing us. 64% of all Christian families have an acute problem with pornography."

Hope and Freedom

Pornography is far more dangerous and harmful than most of us have ever dreamed. This booklet has only scratched the surface of the damage porn is doing. There is hope for those who have become addicted and freedom is possible. There are a number of organizations that specialize in helping addicts find that freedom. Many others have great resources that can be helpful as well. You will find a few of those listed in the Additional Resources section of this booklet.

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson, "Pornography" (Probe Ministries, 1992; <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/porno.html>)

Josh McDowell, "10 Ways to Fight Pornography" (Josh McDowell Ministry, August 11, 2016; <https://www.josh.org/10-ways-fight-pornography/>)

"How Porn Kills Love" (fightthenewdrug.org, May 4, 2017; <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-kills-love/>)

Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry, "A Science-Based Case for Ending the Porn Epidemic" (Center for American Greatness, December 15, 2019; <https://amgreatness.com/2019/12/15/a-science-based-case-for-ending-the-porn-epidemic/>)

BJ Foster, "The Best Parenting Internet Controls" (Family First, LLC., 2016-2017; <https://www.allprodad.com/the-best-parenting-internet-controls/>)

Organizations

Josh McDowell Ministry, <https://www.josh.org>

Pure Hope Ministry, <https://purehope.net>

Covenant Eyes, <http://www.covenanteyes.com>



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