

How to Be Free from Pornography

Introduction

I assume you're reading this because you are involved with pornography. You feel guilty and trapped. You want to stop, but you can't figure out how. You told God you would never do it again, but you did. Your promises and vows, your anger and sadness, none of it produced lasting change. Take heart - God wants to liberate you!

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1Co 10:13)

This passage tells you that there are many others who, like you, silently fight the same battle. That doesn't make giving in OK, but it does mean that you're not some kind of freak. After trying and failing so often, some men come to the conclusion that there is something fundamentally wrong with them. Accepting the idea that you are exceptional is dangerous, though, because it gives you an excuse to stop resisting temptation.

This passage also tells you that God wants you to help you overcome the temptation. He has promised a way of escape. You can be free. Maybe you don't believe that. You want to, but it hasn't "worked" for you. Let's get this straight right at the start - God's not going to wave a magic wand over you and take away your desires. God promises a way to escape, not the absence of temptation. He's not going to snap His fingers and remove every source of temptation. What we're talking about here is a plan, a series of steps you take repeatedly to get free and stay free.

You've wasted enough of your life in the emptiness, guilt and shame of pornography. It's time to be free:

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: (1Pe 4:1-3)

The Price of Pornography

Pornography has a price and it may be higher than you think. Even if you don't spend any money buying porn, it's still costing you dearly.

Viewing pornography is sin. That should be a high enough price all by itself. Your willful, repeated sin nailed Jesus to the cross. It grieves the Holy Spirit. It defiles you. It's not God's will for your life:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: (1Th 4:3-5)

Pornography leads to more sin. When you give in to pornography, you're opening the door for other sins. How many lies have you told because of your experiences with pornography? How many times have you deceived those closest to you? How much money do you owe your company because of the time you've stolen from them?

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Pornography closes God's ears to your prayers. If you want God to answer your prayers, you'll abandon pornography, because God won't listen to your prayers while you hold on to it.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: (Psa 66:18)

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isa 59:1-2)

Pornography leads to bondage. The more you give in, the tighter the cords of sin wrap around you. Every time you give in, you make it harder to escape:

His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. (Pro 5:22)

Pornography wastes life. A day will come when you'll wish you had all that wasted time back. Not only that, but you'll answer to God one day for the life He has given you. He expects you to use it wisely:

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (Eph 5:15-17)

Recognize Deceitful Lusts

If the porn habit is so costly, and you want to be free, why do you keep doing it? The Bible makes it clear that our desires mislead us. They entice us to do things that will not satisfy our greatest needs.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (Eph 4:22)

What are you after when you indulge in pornography? What lies do you believe before you give in? Here some of the answers I've heard:

- ✓ I only do it when I get lonely.
- ✓ It relieves pressure when I'm stressed out.
- ✓ It gives me a sense of control.
- ✓ Well, at least I'm not actually fornicating.
- ✓ I enjoy it - it's fun.

Pornography increases loneliness. You may be single and sad, but porn won't fix that. In fact, it does just the opposite. Pornography isolates you. It draws you in to a make-believe world where all you need to worry about is satisfying your own desires. The real world isn't like that. Porn makes you self-centered and less likely to sustain a real relationship.

Also, you might be trying to punish God for your loneliness. A part of you may be saying, "God, I wouldn't do this if You would bring someone into my life." People have been shifting the blame ever since Adam. How can you think the God who gave His Son for you (Rom. 8:32) would deny you a mate if a mate would be best for you right now?

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Pornography increases stress. You may be overwhelmed at work or drowning in debt, but pornography won't fix it. In fact, the time and money you waste in this sin only adds to your stress. Guilt and shame don't lighten your load, either.

Pornography takes control. If you think you're in control with pornography, you're kidding yourself. Porn controls you. The more you do it, the more it enslaves you.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Rom 6:16)

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. (Jer 13:23)

Pornography isn't an acceptable substitute for sex. As we'll see in a minute, Jesus said that looking on a woman with lust in your heart is spiritual adultery. God wants you to be pure in body and spirit.

Pornography can't give lasting pleasure or joy. Only the last of these statements is remotely true. Sin does offer pleasure, but only for a season:

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; (Heb 11:25)

But the price tag, as we have seen, is high on this passing pleasure.

Right Thinking About Pornography

Many people have the idea that it's alright to look, as long as you don't touch. To get victory over pornography, you need to reject the world's view of it, and start thinking about pornography the way God does.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom 12:1-2)

God doesn't view pornography and sexual sin as trivial matters. Here's what Jesus said about sexual desire and the heart:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Mat 5:27-30)

Jesus said that lusting after a woman is heart adultery. God knows what you would do if you had the chance and if you thought you could get away with it. You're just an adulterer without opportunity.

Jesus said the solution to this problem is radical surgery. (I don't believe He was recommending literal, physical mutilation.) He was saying that you need to radically remove the source of stumbling. Sexual temptation isn't something to flirt with. God commands us to flee from it:

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Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (1Co 6:18)

Flee also youthful lusts... (2Ti 2:22)

The right response to sexual temptation is to radically remove the source, to flee before you fall. Let's take a look at the changes you may need to make.

Capture Your Thoughts

An important part of God's victory plan is to discipline your thinking. You can't let your mind run wild and expect to succeed in your fight against pornography.

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (2Co 10:4-5)

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Phi 4:8)

It takes practice to discipline your thoughts. Whenever you find your mind drifting into wrong thought, consciously capture those thoughts and direct your mind to think about something pure, something right. It's work, but it's worth it.

It also helps if you avoid things that lead you mind down sinful paths. Be careful about the TV shows you watch and the music you listen to. Even if they aren't sinful, they can turn your thoughts in a direction that will lead to trouble.

Learn From a Failure

Sexual desire is one of the strongest temptations we face. Samson, with all his strength, was defeated by it. Solomon, the wisest man of his day, wrote about the dangers of the strange woman, but still fell because of the many strange women he loved. David, a man after God's own heart, defeated Goliath, but fell to lust. Here's the record of his downfall:

And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. (2Sa 11:1-4)

David was irresponsible. At the time kings went to war, David stayed home and sent others do his job. Do you surf porn sites at work? If you do, you're stealing from your employer. If you want to be free, you've got to stop goofing off and start fulfilling your responsibilities.

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David indulged smaller feeder sins. His decision to stay home was a gray area. He could justify it, but it was a choice that put him in the place of temptation. His self-indulgence in one small area fed his self-indulgence in a more serious area. You might look at a magazine or catalog that isn't pornographic, but it ignites your lust. You might listen to music that draws you back toward the very thing you're trying to escape. If you want to be free, avoid feeder sins.

David lacked accountability. David was the king of his country, so he could do as he pleased. There wasn't anyone to hold him accountable for his choices. Maybe you live alone and you indulge in pornography in the privacy of your home. Maybe you hide out in your office. There are times and places in your life where you answer to no one for your actions. If you're going to be free of porn, you'll have to increase your accountability. Here are some steps you can take:

- ✓ Put your computer in a part of your home where others can walk by and see what you're doing.
- ✓ Tell a trusted friend, or your pastor, about your struggle and ask them to check on you from time to time.
- ✓ Sign up with an Internet service provider that blocks porn sites and / or logs your activity.

David crashed through God's roadblocks. David had a conscience, which undoubtedly fired up as he gazed on Bathsheba. He ignored this first alert. When he asked about her, someone told her that she was the wife of one of his soldiers. David crashed through this roadblock, too. If you've fallen to pornographic temptation, you probably have a good idea of when, where and how you're most tempted. It's easier to say no to temptation from a distance than it is up close. Here are some ways you can respect the roadblocks:

- ✓ If you drive by a store that sells pornography on your way home, take an alternate route. The difference will be worth the distance.
- ✓ If you purchase porn when you have cash in your pocket, leave your money home. Take your checkbook instead. That way, you'll have the accountability of signing your name for your purchase.
- ✓ If an activity stirs your lust, avoid it, even if it is not sin.
- ✓ Keep your life as public as possible. Nothing improves personal conduct like witnesses.

Pray

Do everything you can to avoid sexual temptation. Know, though, that your best is not enough without God's help. You need to seek His help in prayer every day.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mat 26:41)

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil... (Mat 6:13)

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Defeat Temptation with Scripture

Another key element in God's victory plan for you is His Word. Hiding it in your heart and speaking it in the face of temptation will lead to victory.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psa 119:9,11)

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Mat 4:10)

Here are some Bible verses you should memorize to help you in your fight for freedom:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1Co 10:13)

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: (1Th 4:3)

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (Joh 8:36)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom 12:1-2)

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1Co 10:13)

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Phi 4:13)

Take Heed

As you begin to apply these biblical principles with God's help, you're going to start experiencing freedom and victory. Watch out! Don't think you've arrived at a place where you're immune to temptation in this area. Don't get big-headed or lazy. If you fail to stay on guard, you could fall hard.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. (1Co 10:12)

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1Pe 5:8-9)

If You Fall

Don't believe Satan's lie when he whispers, "Go ahead and give in. You know you're going to anyway. Do it quickly so you can get it over with." Help may be on the way, but you won't benefit from it if you just give up. Fall fighting.

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In your battle against this powerful foe, you may slip. What happens if you do well for a week or two, and then give in? Repeat what you did on your good days. Change what you did on your bad day. Repent and get back in the fight!

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1Jo 1:9)

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (1Jo 2:1)

For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again... (Pro 24:16)

Recap

Here's a summary of the action plan we've discussed:

- ✓ Confess your porn problem as sin and receive God's forgiveness by faith.
- ✓ Count the cost of giving in to pornography.
- ✓ Identify the desires you're trying to fill through pornography and look for a godly alternatives that really meet the need. If you can't find it, trust that your Father has a reason and seek His grace to endure.
- ✓ Discipline your thought life.
- ✓ Pray daily for God's deliverance and receive His help by faith.
- ✓ Fill your heart with God's Word and speak it in the face of temptation.
- ✓ Find ways to increase your accountability.
- ✓ Avoid feeder sins.
- ✓ Heed the early warning signs of sexual temptation - the roadblocks.
- ✓ Defeat temptation with Scripture.
- ✓ Be on guard, even when you're doing well.
- ✓ If you slip, get right, and get back in the fight.