

“Porn addicts are, unfortunately, a dime-a-dozen these days. And in the Christian ‘recovery’ community, there is no lack of would-be therapists and theologians. Brian Gardner stands heads-and-shoulders above the rest in this grassroots movement. His ruthless desire to be, first of all, faithful to the revealed truth of the Bible, and second, practically helpful to men entrenched in lust is what enables him to so easily marry doctrine with down-to-earth counsel. Brian has spent years helping the men in his church pursue real sexual integrity, and that wisdom comes out in this well-researched book. More than this, Brian is a real trophy of God’s costly grace. He unabashedly shares with his readers about the squalor of the far country from where the Father called him, and the joy of freedom he enjoys as a child of the living God. I heartily recommend this book.”

Luke Gilkerson, Internet Community Manager,
Covenant Eyes

“With pornography swamping the church today like a tidal wave, the need for strong, pointed instruction is intense. Brian Gardner has mined his extensive experience and study in this field to bring us a highly useful book for men and women suffering defeat in their lives because of pornography. Get this book to the people in your church who need it. Even consider group study using the helpful group discussion questions provided.”

Dennis McCallum, Lead Pastor, Xenos Christian Fellowship and author, *Organic Discipleship*, *Satan and His Kingdom*, and *Members of One Another*.

“I highly recommend Brian Gardner’s *Porn Free* as a book that is authentic, biblical, and gospel-centered. Gardner’s honesty and practicality make the book a must read for anyone wanting to know more about the struggle with pornography and how to experience hope and healing through a relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Joe Bucha, speaker and licensed professional counselor

“It was a joy to review Brian Gardner’s much-needed book, *Porn Free: Finding Renewal through Truth and Community*. The foundation on God’s Grace sets the hopeful tone that will help men persevere with this most challenging arena. He has done a marvelous job of combining a strong scriptural foundation with personal disclosure, well-chosen outside sources, and provocative discussion questions. What a gift for groups of men who embrace their need for sexual integrity! For men who are committed to “walk the walk” in becoming more Christ-like in all areas of their lives, here is a great resource to help them appropriate God’s Grace in the sexual arena. Brian has created a work that should prove to be a blessing to the men who accept the challenge of working through it and to the women and families God has (or will) bless them with.”

Ronald J. Olah, PhD, Psychologist

PORN FREE

FINDING RENEWAL
THROUGH TRUTH AND COMMUNITY

BRIAN W. GARDNER

CGM
costly grace media

*Porn Free:
Finding Renewal through Truth and Community*

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INTRODUCTION

Porn Free: Finding Renewal through Truth and Community is for people who are seeking freedom from sexual sin. The main emphasis of this book is on gaining freedom from the trap of pornography. The essential content of this book can also be applied to other areas of sexual sin, such as masturbation and fantasy, cybersex in chat rooms, serial sexual relationships, fetishes, same-sex desires, and so forth.

For the purposes of this book, it's not the particular expression of sexual brokenness that is the issue. The reality is that most of us are sexually broken in one way or another. For some of us, this has led to addiction, shame, and defeat. If any of those words describe you, or someone you are trying to help, then this book is for you. This book is written from a biblical Christian perspective. While it is possible to stop using pornography without knowing God, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Only by the power of Christ working in our lives can we have real and lasting victory over sin.

My Story

I saw my first pornography when I was 9 or 10 years old. Even before that I always had a fascination with sex. The pages of *National Geographic* were engrossing reading;

a crude drawing in a medical dictionary revealed mysteries to me. Growing up in the 60's didn't afford many opportunities for access to explicit material; those were still well hidden behind counters or locked up in the seamiest of adult bookstores. However, I never missed an opportunity to expand my education, and by the time I was in Jr. High school I was buying and selling naked pictures of housewives from black and white "sun lovers" magazines and single frames from an 8mm video that could only be discerned under a microscope.

I kept a discreet relationship with *Playboy* in high school and *Penthouse* in college. After I became a Christian in 1974 I stopped looking at porn, but continued with fantasy and masturbation. When I got married I assumed that I would give it all up for good. It was only a couple of months into my marriage before I went to the local convenience store to get a pornographic magazine for the first time. At the time I didn't think much of it, even though the withering look from the elderly sales lady made me feel ashamed. I kept that magazine hidden in the bottom of the closet, and soon others joined it. When I was alone in our apartment, I would take them out and use them. Still, it wasn't until many years later that what was a passing fancy became an obsession. The agent of my demise was the Internet.

As a software developer I was an early adopter of the Internet, getting involved long before the World Wide Web became synonymous with it. Though I had other interests, getting access to pictures of naked women was at the heart of my fixation. By the early 90's I was collecting and consuming porn at an alarming rate. I was still

married, had two children, a good job, and was teaching the Bible as well as leading home groups. I was living a double life. I was addicted.

I tried to stop, but the power to do so seemed out of reach. When I tried to approach God about my problem I felt guilt and shame. I would promise to do better and fail within days, or hours, or even minutes. I didn't want to share my problem because I knew that it could cost me my ministry and my place in the church. I was respected, so that would be lost too. My wife would be hurt and angry. I decided I could stop on my own, without telling anyone. I would stop – tomorrow. One more look wouldn't hurt.

I thought that God couldn't help me with my porn problem, but as I look back on it now I realize that I really didn't want him to. I wanted to keep God compartmentalized. I wanted God to help me serve and teach and share with others, but I didn't want him involved with all of my life. All the while I was slipping away from him, he was patiently waiting for me to acknowledge him as my Lord, to be won over by his love. He waited for years. Finally, the pressure of conviction overwhelmed me. I acknowledged my sin, received his forgiveness, and came clean to my wife and friends that I had betrayed with my deceit. I began to try to find out what it meant to live in the light, and began the hard road of recovery.

There is much more to my story, and the pages of this book tell some of the rest of it. What I want to say at this point is that I have talked to hundreds of men who have had a very similar experience. Are you one of them? There is hope for you. My God loves you, and he

is greater than your sin and failure, and he has a way for you to find renewal.

Thesis

Freedom from the power of sexual sin can be yours. No matter what you've done, or how long you've been doing it, you can experience real transformation and true freedom. How can this be? It's what God wants for you. Many approaches to this problem focus on controlling yourself and working to stop sinful behavior. Most Christian books on this topic take that approach. Stop looking at porn, stop having serial sexual affairs, stop going to strip clubs, massage parlors and prostitutes, stop flirting, lusting, and masturbating! Much of my own journey was like this, trying to stop. I joined 12-step groups, I used behavioral modification techniques such as wearing a very thick rubber band around my wrist and snapping it hard when I would have a lustful thought. I focused almost entirely on how to "just stop it".

Even though these approaches can be helpful, they do not bring freedom. As I struggled to control my sexual desires, a verse in Paul's letter to the Galatians kept sticking in my mind: "live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Gal 5:16, NIV) It seemed to be saying that if I could live, or walk, by the Spirit that I would gain victory over lust. You would think it might say, "if you would stop living for your sinful desires, then you could walk by the Spirit," but this was a different equation: if you live by the Spirit, you will not live for sinful desires. That's what I wanted. Could it be that I could stop trying to control myself, and instead be

changed from within?

Real and lasting transformation can take the place of struggle and defeat, but you have to change your orientation. Trying to control and defeat the power of sexual sin on your own is impossible. God has made a way for you to be changed and to have new desires, through what the Bible calls the *gospel*. The gospel is what transforms us from people who love and live for ourselves into those who love Christ and live to please him.

What is this gospel, this proclamation of good news? It is this: the love of Jesus Christ can set you free from the power of sin. Love conquers lust. You can experience freedom, lasting change, and hope for the future because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross on your behalf.

If your story is anything like mine, I hope that as you read this book you will find hope, and begin on a road to renewal, and joy.

How to Use This Book in a Group

The best way to read this book is with others. At the end of each chapter there are questions for discussion. You will have an opportunity to hear others' stories, share your own, and pray together. Even getting with one person to go over this book will be more helpful than being on your own, because you will be able to experience the freedom that comes from confession, and build deeper friendships that heal.

It will be difficult to study this guide with a mixed group of men and women. You need to be with people who can reveal personal, often painful details of their lives with each other. In addition, being in a mixed group can stifle sharing embarrassing details; those details can also be unnecessarily enticing when they come from a person of the opposite sex.

If you do use this book in a group, have each person read a couple of paragraphs out loud. It might seem better to have a leader, or someone more eloquent do all the readings, but the whole group should participate if possible. The role of the group leader is to keep things on track, and encourage participation.

At the end of the reading there are a number of discussion questions. Open these up to the group. Try to keep your answers personal. Saying "I know a guy who once did this and that" is anecdotal, not personal. You will benefit most from this material if you apply it to yourself first.

Every time you get together each member of the group should "get current." Discuss how your has week been (if you're meeting weekly.) The Bible tells us to

“confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” (James 5:16) The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized. One thing that every one agrees on in dealing with sexual sin is the importance of confession. Confession need not be sexually explicit; you can easily run the danger of triggering another person’s desire with graphic descriptions. Rather, it should be a matter-of-fact accounting of success and failure.

It is important to pray when you get together for each member in the group. If you find that you are running out of time for prayer when you meet you should adjust your discussion time, or break the reading up into smaller units. Like confession, prayer is critical for acknowledging God’s power and inviting him into your plan of recovery. In addition, make it a goal to pray for yourself and others in your group. As we saw above in the passage from James, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power.” Don’t underestimate that power.

Acknowledgements

This book could never have been written without the help of many people.

This material comes from a course that I developed for Xenos Christian Fellowship called *Sexual Integrity for Men*, as well as from personal counseling with men who have struggled with a variety of sexual problems. It comes from my own search for answers in God's word, as I confronted my own struggle with pornography. That search led me to many sources, and I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to those who helped me along the way. Many of these were men who courageously confronted and encouraged me. Others are writers, counselors, teachers and theologians whose work I have used to frame my own thinking on this subject. I am "standing on the shoulders of giants."

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Special thanks go to the men and women whose testimonies are recorded in this book. Their stories are told anonymously, but their praise will come from God.

All praise goes to my Lord Jesus Christ, who brought me out of darkness into the excellence of his light.

ONE

THE PROBLEM WITH PORN

It always started innocently enough: I would be on my computer, checking email, surfing information or news sites, downloading music, or even writing up a Bible study. My children downstairs were asleep, and 15 feet away from me in my bedroom my wife and the German shepherd were alternately breathing and snoring. It was time. I would go to a search engine and begin typing in the words that would take me on a dark journey, one that had become second-nature and all too familiar. Soon, a parade of images of naked women would appear on my computer screen.

I would lose all track of time as this procession marched past my eyes. When it was over, I would close the program, and an immediate sense of shame would spread over me. "I can't believe I did that again," I would tell myself. A glance at the clock told me that it was 3 AM. Where had the time gone? I had to be at work at 8 o'clock! My thoughts would darken further as I thought about a Bible study I had to teach the next day – "God will never honor my teaching. I'm sure to fail."

Dread would wash over me as I slid carefully under the covers next to my sleeping wife; real sleep for me would be a long time coming, as I promised to do better next time.

If you've been involved with pornography, it's likely that there are elements of this story you can relate to. Could this be you? Do you consider yourself a committed Christian, and yet have a secret life that brings you shame? Maybe pornography is not really your thing; perhaps you find yourself returning to sexual fantasies and masturbation, going to strip clubs or massage parlors, or even prostitutes. Perhaps you are the kind of person who moves from one sexual relationship to another, living a life of flirtation, pursuit, and conquest. Whatever your problem with sex, the underlying causes are much the same.

What is common to all of us who are involved in sexual sin is the effect that it has on our lives. Sexual sin hurts us relationally: it darkens our relationship with God, our spouses, girlfriends, family, and friends. If you are involved in Christian ministry, the feelings of guilt haunt you every time you teach the Bible, or counsel someone about their problems, or try to share Christ with a friend. It's very hard to help others with issues in their lives when your own conscience is guilty. If you begin to devote more and more of your life to the pursuit of sexual pleasure, you can lose a job, a marriage, your children, your girlfriend, your ministry, and even end up in prison.

Before you say that none of that can happen to you, understand that every person whose life has been ruined by sexual sin probably said the same thing at one time. Sin is always deceiving (Hebrews 3:13).

There is no need to continue the cycle of sin, guilt, and shame. Hope and freedom are available to you right now by the power of God through Jesus Christ. God

promises you: “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Throughout this book we will explore how God’s truth renews our minds, and how living in community with others brings hope and freedom. You can be free of the power of sexual lust and enter fully into the joy of sex as God intended.

Sex is good, because the God who created sex is good. He created sex so that two people could experience a spiritual oneness and intimacy—a bond that is born in commitment, and sealed in delight. God created people in sexual purity, so that they would profoundly enjoy the bond between a man and woman.

In our rebellion against God, our sexuality has been deeply affected; we have fallen far from God’s design. Today we are in a battle for our hearts, and the false gods of this world are being paraded before us in unprecedented array — a Vanity Fair to draw us away from the one true God, and his design for sex.

Before we enter into this battle, we should survey the battleground.

What Are We Up Against?

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1 that our rebellion against God has its deepest expression in sexual immorality. “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” (Romans 1:24-25) Because we decided to worship what God created rather

than God, one of the most important aspects of being human became stained with lust. People began to look to anything but God for satisfaction because they had lost the knowledge of him, and sought only to know and please themselves. Sexual desire ran out of its bounds, and is running riot.

That impulse to put our sexual desires out of proportion stays with us, even as we become Christians and grow in our faith. Temptations abound. In our culture, sex has become an obsession of godlike proportions. We are surrounded by sexual images in every form of media. People speak frankly of sex in a way that would have been unheard of even 50 short years ago. Provocatively dressed people seem to be everywhere we go. As a culture, we have gone from thinking that sex is a normal part of life to believing that sex is the most important part of life.

Pornography is glamorized on television and in mainstream movies: we have television shows about women who pose in Playboy, girl-on-girl kissing no longer shocks us, and housewives exercise to “cardio striptease” videos. What you can see in lingerie ads in magazines or commercials is more like what you use to have to buy from behind the counter. This trend will continue as the line that had once been drawn on what constitutes obscenity will be redrawn over and over by our postmodern culture’s moral confusion and obsessive view of sex. How Christians respond to this pornification of media will become important, especially as the lines between what is porn and what is just typical television programming become more blurred.

You are threatened by more than just our sex-obsessed culture. God's enemy, Satan, wants to demoralize and defeat you, taking you out of commission from any service or passion for God. As long as you are convinced that God could never love you because of what you've done, the devil is satisfied. If you are regularly involved in sexual sin, he doesn't have to do much else to achieve his end. Satan wants you off the battleground, and he doesn't care how he accomplishes this: the Tempter will entice you into sinning, and then the Accuser will condemn you for it afterwards.

So we're wounded, surrounded by temptation, and under the accusation and assault of a spiritual enemy. This is a tough battleground. It's no wonder that so many of us are wandering around somewhere between lust and shame. We can't stop thinking about sex, acting on our desires, and feeling terrible about it. We even foolishly think that if we could get enough sex, we would stop feeling bad.

The cycle of sin and defeat goes on and on, and we find ourselves feeling helpless and hopeless. If that isn't enough, the chemistry of our brains becomes a casualty in the battle—our brain fundamentally changes as we adapt to pornography's message.

Your Brain on Porn

Pornography affects your thinking like a disease that attacks an organ with no pain receptors. Others may be able to see the effects of this malady (if anyone can get close enough) but the one involved often can't see that they are being changed.

Pornography turns a man's mind inward, driving him to live in a self-centered world of sensual fantasy. Men become enraptured with themselves, unable to move away from self-love, as they stay glued to the video screen.

This in turn has an inevitable effect on your relationships. By using pornography you are divorcing sex from any relationship, and will begin to believe that there is no real connection between the two. As you do so over time, your ability to enter into relationships with women becomes inhibited. Pamela Paul is a journalist who interviewed dozens of men and women about the impact of pornography on their lives. In her book *Pornified* she says, "Because pornography involves looking at women but not interacting with them, it elevates the physical while ignoring or trivializing all other aspects of the woman."¹

Pornography turns women into objects to be consumed. Like a bucket of fried chicken a woman is nothing more than breasts, legs, and thighs. "The porn star is a blank slate on which each observer can graft his own recipe for reciprocal lust and pleasure."² In porn a woman isn't a person and she doesn't have thoughts and feelings. Rather, she is a *commodity* to be consumed by men for their own pleasure. This is the antithesis of what God intended. When God created woman, the private beauty of her body was to be cherished, the gift of her sex protected. Pornography degrades and perverts what God has created.

1. Pamela Paul, *Pornified*, (New York, Henry Holt and Cie., 2005), 80

2. Ibid, 78

Proponents of pornography claim that it safely relieves sexual tension. This is not true. In fact, porn *creates* sexual tension, insecurity, and passivity. Men who look at porn know they don't measure up to the idealized images of men who perform with the women they are lusting after.

“Pornography, with its mutual objectification and teenage mentality, can bring back the worst of adolescent fears about manhood (with its requirements for youthful vigor and boundless constitution). This mounting tension then leads the search for temporary relief – and a more intense drive toward more porn.”³

Men who look at porn find less enjoyment in normal sex.

“The 2004 Elle-MSNBC.com poll found that as a result of viewing online pornography, one in ten men said that he or his partner was bored with their sex routine; 17 percent said that viewing pornography made sex less arousing. One in ten admitted he had become more critical of his partner's body.”⁴

Additionally, men can lose the ability to be aroused by their real-life partners, and even have trouble achieving orgasm during normal sex. They find themselves re-imagining scenes from the pornography they have seen in order to achieve climax, or have to masturbate to have an orgasm. Intercourse becomes boring, while oral, manual, and sometimes anal sex take center stage as the

3. Ibid, 82

4. Ibid, 91

preferred items on the sexual menu. Men who look at porn may ask their partners to act out scenes they have seen in pornography. If the partner refuses to engage in these behaviors when they find them objectionable or risky, these same men may go as far as to seek out prostitutes to perform things from their favorite movies. Pornography is having a decisive effect on driving the demand side of prostitution.⁵

Pornography damages more than just a couple's sexual health. It also leads to deception in relationships. Those men who get deeper into pornography have an essentially secret world, especially from their wives.

“But while men consider trust crucial for a healthy relationship, they seem willing to flout that trust when it comes to pornography – deceiving their significant others into thinking they're either not looking at it at all or looking at it less frequently.”⁶

Habitual pornography users deceive themselves as well. This shows itself in the series of promises and lies that they tell themselves. “This will be the last time,” “The girls in these pictures aren't really naked,” “My wife is sick right now, so we're not going to have sex anyway,” “I'll do this as long as I'm single, but I can stop once I get married.” The lies and rationalizations can go on endlessly as your attention is gently diverted away from your failure to be a real man, and turned towards a weak and flawed version of masculinity.

5. For more evidence on this topic, see <http://captivedaughters.org/demand.htm>

6. Paul, p. 99

The Death of Intimacy

We were made to experience intimacy, to enter deeply and fully into the world of another person. Sex is one form of intimacy, but there are others, such as the kind we can share with children, siblings, parents, or friends. Our need for intimacy is vital to us. Consider all the love songs that have been written: most of them aren't about having an orgasm, but rather about the desire for a deep kind of sharing. While there are lots of popular songs replete with sexual innuendo, most are about simple things like spending time together, wanting to be with the person, experiencing the loss of parting, or hoping to restore a broken relationship. Our music and art reflect our need for intimate relationships.

By contrast, pornography creates an experience of *false intimacy*, the illusion of a pain-free, safe substitute for real intimacy. Worse than that, it affects the mind of the person who uses it such that it erodes the ability to be intimate with others over time.

“Pornography corrupts the ability to be intimate. It pulls consumers and producers in with the promise of intimacy, but fails to deliver the connection between two human beings.”⁷

William Struthers has written a recent book on pornography's effect on the brain, called *Wired for Intimacy: How pornography hijacks the male brain*. Struthers' background is in neuroscience, and he explains how this corruption of intimacy works.

7. William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How pornography hijacks the male brain*, (Downers Grove, IVP, 2009), 43

“Many men can spend hours looking at pornography... as they do, they are neurologically training themselves to respond to the type of images they view... As porn and fantasy take control of the mind, it becomes a dream theater that is transposed over the waking world. Every woman they come in contact with is objectified, undressed, and evaluated as a willing (or unwilling) mental sexual partner.”⁸

How can you have intimacy with a woman when all women are reduced to nothing more than pieces of meat to be consumed at your discretion? Women who are not pretty enough are discarded; those who meet with your physical standards are sexualized without their consent. You may even think that these women desire you, as your fantasies overlay reality. Porn trains men who use it to see all women as ready and willing, but it depersonalizes them. They're not real people.

“When pornography is acted upon, sexual technique replaces sexual intimacy. In the absence of a meaningful relational context, nearly all of the elements of truly meaningful sexual intimacy are absent. Pornography teaches its students to focus on the physiology of sexual sensations and not on the relationships for which those sensations are intended.”⁹

“Porn is a whispered promise. It promises more sex, better sex, endless sex, sex on demand, more

8. Ibid, 44-45

9. Ibid, 55

intense orgasms, experiences of transcendence.”¹⁰

“When men realize that they have bought a lie and that it has failed to deliver on its promise of intimacy, they become imprisoned by shame. They intuitively know that they need true intimacy, but they are incapable of having it when they are in isolation from real relationships with real people.”¹¹

The picture is bleak. Pornography silently, insidiously destroys the thinking of men. Is porn costing you your life? Ultimately, it's not just costing you *your* life: there is significant human toll among those who make pornography.

The Price of Porn

“Porn was a horrible experience, having to stay in the same position while they re-did shots and having to re-do positions all the time. I wasn’t allowed to wipe anything off my face or body until they were done. It was really gross and really degrading as a woman... I developed an eating disorder which I had to be hospitalized for several times. I think I am not able to have kids now because of all the physical problems I had. Sometimes I was pounded so hard I bled, my periods were always off key. I caught gonorrhea when I was 18 by another guy I was asked to have sex with on film without a rubber. I never caught anything from prostituting

10. Ibid, 69

11. Ibid, 57

but did from doing porn.” – Kristenye Riddick, former porn actress¹²

Does her testimony make you uncomfortable? It should. However, many men today tend to see pornography as something that is fairly harmless. The arguments go like this:

- The people who make pornography are professionals, not victims.
- The actors are working voluntarily and are paid a lot of money for what they do.
- They seem to enjoy working in the industry. They say as much when we (increasingly) see them interviewed on television, or in magazine articles, or in their best selling autobiographies.
- Spokespeople for the industry, such as Ron Jeremy and Jenna Jameson, talk about the positive effects that porn has, like helping people get in touch with their sexuality, and using pornography as a form of safer sex.

The truth is that pornography degrades and dehumanizes women and glamorizes rape, torture, abuse, and slavery. It encourages child molestation, and is an important factor in driving the demand in international sex trafficking. While pornography is destroying relationships, it also destroys those who make it.

12. Quoted from www.thepinkcross.org

Pornography Objectifies Women

Shelly Lubben is a former porn actress who has been reaching out with the good news about Jesus Christ to sex and pornography workers. On her web site you can read the testimonies of many women who have been set free from the porn industry. In every case, they describe how they hated making porn, hated the men who abused them, and had to use drugs and alcohol just to get through a sex scene. Go to her site (www.thepinkcross.org) and read these testimonials – they will enlighten you as to what is really going on in the industry.

Elizabeth Rollings describes for us what it was like to make what has become a very popular genre, a 25-man sex scene.

“For two days I had to fast. I drank heavily one day prior before I did the movie. When I got on the set I felt really sick to my stomach. I wanted to turn around and run when I walked through the door and saw all the male porn stars and film crew standing there. I zoned out and wanted it to be over. I kept saying to myself, “this is going to be over in an hour. You can do it.” I wanted to break down and cry but I hid behind my fake smile.”

“During the movie I mentally and emotionally checked out and felt like I died. I don’t remember real well the pain and trauma I went through. After it ended, everybody wanted to take pictures with me and get my autograph. Here I am standing there with bodily fluids all over me and people wanted to take pictures with me. It was horrible. My body

was sore the next couple of days and I wasn't right mentally for two weeks after that. I wasn't able to use the bathroom right either. My internal system was totally messed up.”¹³

In order to inflict this kind of suffering, you would have to distance yourself from the humanity of a person. The same is true for those who watch and enjoy this kind of film. These women (and men) become objects of lust; they stop being people. We fool ourselves into believing that these sex workers enjoy what they are doing so that we can enjoy what we are doing while we watch their degradation.

Pornography Is a Significant Factor in Human Trafficking

Melissa Farley, a psychologist who has spent extensive time studying post-traumatic stress disorder among prostitutes, makes the following observations:

“When men use pornography, in that process they are trained as tricks. Pornography is men’s rehearsal for prostitution.”¹⁴

“In interviews with 854 women in prostitution in 9 countries, women and men in prostitution made it clear that pornography is integral to prostitution. In 9 countries, almost half (49 percent) told us that pornography was made of them while they

13. www.thepinkcross.org

14. Melissa Farley, “Renting an Organ for Ten Minutes: What Tricks Tell Us about Prostitution, Pornography, and Trafficking”, *Pornography: Driving the Demand in International Sex Trafficking*, (Captive Daughters Media), 144-145

were in prostitution. Forty-seven percent of our respondents were upset by tricks' attempts to make them do what the tricks had previously seen in pornography." In another study "Eighty percent said that tricks showed them pornography in order to illustrate the specific sex acts that they wanted performed."¹⁵

Several years ago, noted feminist and journalist Gloria Steinem said,

"Pornography is a marketing device for sex trafficking: It normalizes degradation and violence as acceptable and even inevitable parts of sex, and uses the bodies of real women and children as objects. The difference between pornography and erotica is clear in the roots of the words themselves — *porne* means female slaves, *eros* means love — so pornography, like rape, is about violence and domination, not sex. Millions of lives depend on our ability to separate pornography from erotica, and to disentangle violence from sexuality."¹⁶

There are as many as two million sex slaves in the world, and pornography is a significant factor in creating demand for prostitutes. According to Dr. Farley, tricks are trained with pornography. Men who look at pornography gain a taste for things they cannot (and often should never) find at home. Instead, they can rent what they are looking for. As Douglas Weiss, executive

15. Ibid, 145

16. Gloria Steinem, *Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference*. Ms. Magazine. November 1978, p. 53

director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs told an interviewer, “If a guy masturbates to something it would take a prostitute to do, he’s more likely to find one.”¹⁷

If half of the prostitutes interviewed have had pornography made of them, and you have spent any significant amount of time looking at Internet pornography, especially of so-called “amateurs”, odds are that you have watched a prostitute being abused against her will. Odds are that you’ve watched someone underage suffering that same abuse. Though you may not have known it, you have probably been a consumer of child pornography. This degradation of a child has its origin in hell, and you have probably unwittingly found enjoyment in it.

Knowing this, can you look at what you do on your computer the same way again?

The Bible’s Views on the Effects of Pornography

While it might be hard to imagine that its authors had no concept of the hyper-sexualized world of the 21st century, the damaging effects of sexual sin are not unknown to the Bible. The men who wrote the Bible saw the negative effects of sexual sin in their own cultures, which in many ways were as decadent as our own. Their warnings often point to how a man’s life could be destroyed by an obsession with sex:

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the

17. quoted by John W. Kennedy, *Help for the Sexually Desperate*, Christianity Today, March 2008

sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”
(1 Corinthians 6:18)

“Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.” (Proverbs 6:27–29)

“With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life.” (Proverbs 7:21–23)

Pursuing sexual sin leads our hearts away from God, the one true source of all life and joy. Pain and suffering will always be the result. You can’t spend hours each week looking at pornography without being affected by it.

So What Do We Do?

Pornography isn’t harmless entertainment; it devastates both its consumers and producers. Lives are ruined, relationships are undermined, and genuine sexual satisfaction becomes more and more elusive. Our culture’s dream of unbounded sexual pleasure has turned into a nightmare of shattered dreams.

To be free you must turn your back on porn. But you can’t turn away from one thing with nowhere else to go. Instead, you must turn towards something, or someone. In truth, there is only One whom you can turn to that can defeat the power of lust in your life and make you

whole again. It is the One who took the penalty for your wrongdoing upon himself to bring you into a relationship with God. That One is Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life, died on a cross so that he could bear your sin, and conquered death by his resurrection. As a result you can be completely accepted by God based on what Jesus has done.

If you do not consider yourself a Christian, I strongly encourage you to examine the claims of Jesus and ask God to show you whether or not they are true. No matter what you have done or how you've lived your life, his offer of salvation and freedom is there for the asking. You'll learn more about it in the pages that follow, and I invite you to join me in the journey towards real freedom.

If you are a Christian, you already know about salvation through Jesus Christ. Yet, how well have you understood the grace of God? Have you been fully convinced that you are unable to please God on your own merits? Are you trying (and failing) to be a good enough Christian for God to accept you? Do you see the gospel, the good news of salvation through Christ, as something that only applies to someone who is not a Christian?

Throughout this book we will unravel the mystery of how the love of Christ overcomes sin, how the truth of God's word renews our minds, and how living with others in community sets us free to experience joy in relating. The goal of this book is not just to get you to stop doing something, but to start living life to its fullest.

For group discussion

Have each person give the group a brief personal history of their involvement with pornography or sexual sin. How did you get involved? Where are you now? Discuss the effect that your involvement in sexual sin has had on your life and relationships.

In what ways have you felt ashamed, defeated, or hopeless? In what ways have you justified your actions to yourself or others?

Are you optimistic about what God can do in your life right now? What are your goals for the future?

Pray for each member in your group. Pray in hope, knowing that he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world, and in faith that God wants to restore you.