

Fighting the Battle against Pornography

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Like television, the Internet is a wonderful invention. It literally puts the world at our fingertips, allowing us to find information on almost anything in mere seconds. With web sites and e-mail, people are connected in ways no one even dreamed about just a few short decades ago.

And like television, the Internet has become a powerful weapon in the hands of the enemy of our souls. Satan is using it to warp and pervert one of God's greatest gifts to man, our sexuality. Pornography is claiming millions of victims daily, and the preponderance of data suggests some of the very pastors, teachers and missionaries CIU is trying to train for service in God's kingdom.

Can that really be? Is the problem really that big? And if so, what can you do about it as one of our alumni? Is there really any way to lock porn out of your computer? What tactics will really work to avoid pornography as a powerful temptation? These are a few of the questions I hope to answer in the next few paragraphs. Taking my cues from the old adage about "fighting fire with fire," I suggest we fight Internet porn with the Internet itself. You will find numerous links listed throughout this article, and I urge you to visit and perhaps bookmark every one of them. You must be ready when a student, a colleague or even a child comes to you and reveals their struggle with this insidious form of temptation.

The Scope of the Problem:

Statistics tell the story, and there are many of them. But perhaps none is more shocking and illustrative of the problem's scope than these:

- 51% of pastors say cyber porn is a possible temptation. 37% say it is a current struggle (Christianity Today, Leadership Survey, December 2001). 4 in 10 pastors have visited a porn site (Christianity Today, Leadership Survey, December 2001).
- 17.8% of all "born again" Christian adults (in America) have visited sexually-oriented Websites (Zogby survey conducted for Focus on the Family, 2000).
- 63% of men attending "Men, Romance & Integrity Seminars" admit to struggling with porn in the past year. Two-thirds are in church leadership and 10% are pastors (Pastor's Family Bulletin, Focus on the Family, March 2000).

- 1 in 7 calls to Focus' Pastoral Care Line is about Internet pornography (Pastor's Family Bulletin, Focus on the Family, March 2000).

One of the best sites for understanding just how rampant Internet pornography has become is that of Author/Speaker Donna Rice Hughes: www.protectkids.com. After a life marred by sexual aberrance, Mrs. Hughes is now working to combat the \$10 billion pornography industry.

Safeguarding Your Computer

Protecting yourself from exposure to pornography is a task that requires a multi-faceted approach and some degree of vigilance. Purveyors of smut know what a temptation it is to most people. Like a wise baker in the middle of the public square, they've learned the value of "keeping the kitchen window open" so innocent passers by can catch a whiff of what's in the oven. For a pornographer, this means marketing your wares on a publicly viewable web site and promoting it across the Internet in such a way that it will be seen. This is where their trickery is most insidious. They know full well that some of these "teaser images" will be seen by people who find them offensive and by children. How does this happen?

Web sites have "meta tags." These are descriptors that the web master posts with search engines to make finding the site easier. For instance, if you type in "Bible College, South Carolina" you will eventually see CIU in the list. Pornographers use this system to get "hits" to their entry pages by listing meta tags that are not necessarily related to pornography. The fact that this works, and that it effectively builds traffic for pornographer's web sites, underscores how susceptible many web users are to temptation from pornography.

Another trick is to take a popular website name (URL, Uniform Resource Code, what comes after "www" and before .com, .net, .edu, etc.) and use it for pornography. (A famous government institution in Washington has a porn site at its name plus .com. The real government site's suffix is ".gov.") So, a person typing in a web address incorrectly often lands on a porn site.

Then there is e-mail. Pornographers are the #1 users of "spam" (unwanted e-mail messages) on the Internet. Anyone with a free e-mail account, like those offered by Hotmail or Yahoo has been embarrassed by the barrage of titillating e-mails cropping up almost on a daily basis.

There are ways to avoid these problems and safeguard your computer. To keep from accidentally downloading a pornographic image on a web site, use a filtered web browser. Another good idea is to investigate the use of a filtered ISP, Internet Service Provider. This would mean replacing AOL, EarthLink or some similar

provider with a company that filters everything its customers receive. A CIU alumnus, Pete Cannon, has a company like this, called “Watchdog ISP.” The service is affordable, efficient and protects you from nearly all porn, no matter what you type into the browser (due to the nature of the Internet, no filtering solution is capable of blocking everything objectionable, so you still need to provide or receive accountability for what is viewed). E-mail offered by Watchdog is also filtered. A filtered ISP is a great solution because it keeps porn from getting into your computer to begin with.



Filtered Dialup and DSL Internet

Watchdog ISP: www.watchdogisp.com

If you don't want to switch to another ISP, you are going to have to police porn in other ways. A good option here is to set up an accountability system with software like “Covenant Eyes,” or the free system from XXXChurch.org. Both of these send a monthly or quarterly e-mail to a designate person, listing every website viewed via the computer on which they are installed. This could be your pastor, accountability partner, small group leader, a friend, or even your wife or husband. It could also include yourself if you are monitoring web use by your children or staff members. The software is almost impossible to delete once installed and remains unobtrusive, so the user probably will never know its there.

Accountability Software

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

XXXChurch: <http://www.xxxchurch.com>

Avoiding Temptation

If you find yourself tempted by pornography, the best thing you can do is admit it to yourself, to God and to an accountability partner. Experts at such sites as www.pureintimacy.org can help you end a pornography addiction. Also try www.xxxchurch.org, the same site mentioned above for free web monitoring software. Though unorthodox, these two former youth pastors are taking on the entire \$100 billion dollar porn industry in some bold, courageous ways. They actually buy booth space at porn industry trade shows and witness to attendees. They've led porn actors and producers to the Lord and into recovery. Some amazing things are happening in their attempt to “stop the bunny,” a code phrase for pornography.

Keep your dealings with computers in the open. Position the screen so it is visible to the door of your office so anyone can walk in and see what's on the screen at any time. Put the computer in a public room in your house, such as the living room,

dining room, kitchen or family room. Do not put it in a back bedroom or other place where the user can click off of whatever he or she is viewing before someone entering the room can see it.

Getting Help

Most pastors and counselors are more than familiar with pornography as a temptation and even as an addiction. The problem is that prevalent. It is important to realize this because the enemy of our souls lies to us to make us think we are the only ones who could possibly face this temptation. The more we bring the problem to light, the more we realize that exposing it brings it down to a manageable size. Going to your pastor or a Christian counselor may be easier for you if you realize that they have probably encountered others with the same problem before.

Along with www.pureintimacy.org and www.xxxchurch.org, try www.no-porn.com and www.porn-free.org. The XXXChurch ministry also has live one-on-one phone counseling and can even make referrals to additional counseling resources in your area.

Prayer...Our Most Powerful Weapon

We must remember that our struggle is not with the purveyors of filth who have flooded our culture with perverted images. Our struggle, as Ephesians 6:12 clearly states, is with the spiritual foe that is the mastermind mind of their efforts. Ultimately, the battle against pornography is a spiritual one and our most powerful weapon is prayer. Even if pornography is not a temptation for you for whatever reason, you can and should be enlisted as a soldier in this battle. Pray strategically for the ministries who are fighting pornography and helping the addicted, and pray for those you know who are struggling. Pray also for laws to be changed to help safeguard children and adults from this menace, and let's not forget to pray for the pornographers themselves. More than anyone else involved in the porn cycle, perhaps they need our prayers most of all.