

Winning the Battle against Pornography

By Mark E. Larson

www.ComeNearToGod.com

Pornography is a very real problem in our society that will not go away any time soon. In fact, statistics show that it will only get worse. There is more pornography available than ever before with the advent of the Internet and pay-per-view movies by remote control. The moral standard of the entertainment industry continues to decline that it is now a great challenge to find a TV show or a movie that does not entertain through the use of pornography in some form. Studies show that pornography addiction is now a big problem with more addicts in the U.S. than alcoholics! The forms of pornography are many (See article: The Deception of Pornography). It can be found almost anywhere.

How is it possible, therefore, to win the battle against this monstrous foe? The word of God provides the answers and gives us the help we need to gain the victory!

No One Is Immune.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12, NASB).

From the start, it is important for each person to accept the possibility that he or she could get entangled with this sin. If we are too proud to admit this, then we set ourselves up for a fall. Whether a person is an elder, a deacon, a preacher, a Bible class teacher, a new convert or a long time member of the Lord’s body, young or old, every person should “take heed lest he fall.” The progressive nature of sin (**James 1:14-15; e.g., Gen. 4:3-8**) demonstrates that we may find ourselves committing a sin that we never dreamed we would ever commit, all because we did not take heed!

“Cut Out” Unholy Activities

“But I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matt 5:28-30).

Through the use of figurative language, Jesus gets His point across in a very powerful way. Cut it out! What sacrifices are you willing to make to ensure that pornography does not ensnare you or a member of your family? Rather than just “talk the talk,” we must also be willing to “walk the walk” and take whatever action that is necessary to reduce temptations and eliminate sin. Would discarding your cable or Satellite service or even your TV be too extreme? Would throwing away movies and suggestive music be too costly? Would canceling all magazines and catalogs that deliver moral filth to your door be too much to ask? Or how about getting rid of your Internet service or at the very least purchasing the best filtering software or service possible? If these suggestions seem too

radical, put things into perspective: “*You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin*” (**Heb. 12:4**).

Replace Bad with Good

When you get rid of the bad, be sure to replace it with that which is good. Don't leave your “house empty” like the man who got rid of the one demon, only to be inhabited by seven more (**Mat. 12:43-45**). The saying is true: “Idle hands are the devil's workshop.” Without something positive and helpful to do, you may find yourself right back where you started or worse, committing even more sin. Good activities are to take the place of the bad such as wholesome recreation, service to those in need, time spent with spiritual people, and prayer. Bad thoughts can be replaced with good thoughts (**Phil. 4:8**) through Bible study and the singing of spiritual songs, for example (**Col. 3:16**).

Flee!

“*Flee immorality...*” (**1 Cor. 6:18a; cf. Mat. 5:28**). Ever heard the old saying: “Curiosity killed the cat”? The same is true when one gets involved in pornography. How many times have you found yourself taking “just a peek” at pornography in the name of “curiosity” only to get burned? “*Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?*” (**Prov. 6:27**). How much fire would you allow to touch the clothes you are wearing? Even a little flame can easily set a house on fire. When pornography in any form confronts you, don't stop and stare, don't linger or stick around, flee! God will provide the way of escape (**1 Cor. 10:13**) so look for it and make your exit. “*So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*” (**Eph. 5:17**).

“Discipline Yourself for the Purpose of Godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7b)

Be honest. How is your prayer life? How would you describe your commitment to *personal* Bible study? Both of these activities are essential to remaining strong in the Lord (**1 Pet. 2:2; Mat. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:15 / Rom. 12:12; Ps. 34:8-10; 42:1-2**). Without a commitment to both, we are like “sitting ducks” that are easy targets of the devil who is just waiting to devour us (**1 Pet. 5:8**).

When we come to recognize the spiritual war that takes place everyday of our lives, we will make the time to pray and read Scripture on a daily basis (**Eph. 6:10-17**). To walk in faith and keep our focus upon God, daily prayer and Bible study is essential. Such discipline is critical for success in the battle against pornography. “*Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation...*” (**Mat. 26:41a**). “*Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee*” (**Ps. 119:11**).

Be Quick to Confess and Seek Forgiveness from God.

If and when you commit any sin, but in particular the sin of partaking of pornography, don't delay to get your life right with God again. The worse thing you can do is make excuses or try to rationalize your behavior away. Instead, make haste to confess your sin

to the Lord: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 **John 1:9**).

Sometimes Christians find it difficult to forgive themselves of the sin they committed, perhaps especially those types of sins that are seemingly more shameful (e.g., partaking of pornography). If we can't forgive ourselves, we may also doubt God's forgiveness of us. This will lead to much discouragement and may cause us to give up altogether and go back into the sin (“What's the use!”). Yet, we must count the Lord's promises as true if we hope to move forward and start anew. Believe in God's grace (**Eph. 1:6**) and the assurance of His *complete* forgiveness. *“For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more”* (**Heb 8:12**).

Face Up to Your Addiction

As important as confessing our sins are, confession alone is not enough. We must also *repent* of our sins (i.e., change our mind and course of direction) to be forgiven (**Acts 8:22; cf. 2:38**). While a person may struggle with a particular sin all of his or her life, God knows the difference between the person who is fighting against sin and the person who is just “paying lip service” when he confesses his sins. To confess our sin to God, only to turn around and commit it again (without any fight or resistance against it) is not true repentance. We must *“bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance”* (**Luke 3:8**). Grace is not to be regarded as a license to sin (**Jude 4; Rom. 6:1-2; cf. Titus 2:11-12**).

Be honest. Does the above paragraph describe you? If your tendency after confession is to swiftly go back into pornography, then chances are you are addicted. The practice of sin is slavery (**John 8:34; cf. 2 Pet. 2:18-19**) and pornography can indeed become a real addiction in a person's life. To win the battle against pornography, honesty and humility are required. Don't look into “the mirror of God's word” and just walk away because you don't like what you see (**James 1:23-24**). Yes, it can be hard to allow the light of His word to expose our faults, yet it is critical that we let it if we want to walk with God again. *“For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God”* (**John 3:20-21**).

Not So Secret

Pornography addiction is usually not a *public* addiction, like alcoholism is in which the problem is out in the open for others to see. Most often, pornography addiction is a secret that no one may be aware of except the person who has the problem. For this reason, pornography addicts may persist in their destructive behavior, reasoning that no one is watching nor holding them accountable.

“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (**Heb 4:13**). No matter how secretive a person may be the eyes of the Lord behold it all. There is a tendency to dismiss God because He

is invisible (**1 Tim. 1:17**). Yet, His witness is very real and always present. His judgment is very real also and may occur at any hour of any day (**Mat. 24:42, 44**).

Transform Your Way of Thinking

Essential to winning the battle against pornography is to retrain our minds in the way we regard it. We are commanded: *“be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (**Rom. 12:2**). We need to learn to view *all* forms of pornography as evil (**1 Thes. 5:22**). To develop the same hatred and disgust for it that God has (**Ezek. 22:11; cf. Mat. 5:28 / Heb. 13:4; Gal. 5:19**) and be nauseated by the thought of returning to it (**2 Pet. 2:22**).

Such a transformation may seem impossible to the one who has struggled against pornography. Yet, such change is most definitely possible through Jesus Christ. Although the change will not take place overnight, by our faith in Jesus and by the power of the gospel, our way of thinking can be transformed! (**Gal. 2:20; Rom. 1:16**).

Major in the Fruit of Self-Control (Gal. 5:23)

It is highly probable that those who struggle with pornography will never completely eliminate their desire for it. It may always have a certain amount of appeal for the pleasure it brings. Yet, this does not mean that the battle against it has been lost. Victory is still possible, in part, through the practice of self-control. *“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the **games exercises self-control in all things**. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but **I buffet my body and make it my slave**, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified”* (**1 Cor 9:24-27**).

The person who has self-control has mastered his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites. He has strength, power, or dominion over himself. This relates to the call that Jesus gave to be one of His disciples: *“... If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow Me”* (**Mark 8:34**). Since Jesus requires it, it is therefore quite possible for *anyone* to have self-control!

Though sometimes it may feel that you are “out of control,” rest assured that you *can* gain control over yourself and your life. Those who are in Christ (**Gal. 3:27**), who are partakers of the divine nature, are people who *can* have self-control with the help of God. *“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness...”* (**2 Pet. 1:3a; cf. 1:6**).

Seek Help from Those Who Are Spiritual.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (**James 5:16**). There is so much that your brethren can do for you if you would only ask for help! As

embarrassing as this particular type of sin may be to confess to another, the spiritual benefit in doing so is well worth it. For when brethren who are righteous or spiritual (**James 5:16b; Gal. 6:1**), not immature (**1 Cor. 3:1-3**), pray for you, much can be accomplished on your behalf. Specifically, spiritual healing will be given in which you will be able to recover from your sin and receive strength by the Lord and His people.

Don't Give Up!

Remember that just as your problem with pornography did not develop overnight, neither will you conquer it overnight. Understandably, it can be very frustrating to go for several weeks without a problem, only to be caught in the trespass again. Yet, don't give up! Don't destroy what you have built so far and not finish what you have started (**Luke 14:27-30**). Learn to rejoice in small victories. Take it one day at a time. Persevere! *"And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, "Do men fall and not get up again? Does one turn away and not repent?" (Jer. 8:4).*

Do You Want to Love Life and See Good Days Again?

"For, 'let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:10-12).

Pornography robs a person of the wonderful life we are meant to have with the Lord. There is no fellowship with God for those who partake of it (**Isa. 59:2**). While pornography may provide pleasure, it will never fully satisfy (**Heb. 11:25b**) and will always leave you hungry for more. Meanwhile, true fulfillment will always escape you (**Mat. 5:6**).

Do you desire to love life and see good days again? Do you desire freedom from the bondage of your sin? A marriage that is strong, happy, and loving again? A right relationship with God that is meaningful and fulfilling? Then draw near to the Lord. Purify yourself. Seek God's forgiveness. Humble yourself in His sight and He will lift you up. *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:8-10, NKJV).*