

## Why are Christians obsessed with sex?

You know when we do a series on relationships or when we talk about lust and pornography – I think people can start to get the impression that Christians are obsessed with sex. Or we might hear something like, “If all sins are equal, why do we care so much about premarital sex but not about obesity?” And we can almost use these statements as a way to protect ourselves from feeling guilt or shame. Or from confronting the sin in our lives. There’s a lot to break down in everything that I just said so let me say this first.

I admit and confess that the Church has been unfairly preoccupied by certain things within the realm of sexual sin but I don’t think it’s wrong for us to focus on sexual sin. For example, I do think that most sexual sin is a bigger problem than most obesity.

Here’s why.

1. No **where** in the Bible does it say that all sins are equal
2. The **Bible** uses comparative language when it comes to sin
  - a. Exodus 32:21
  - b. Matthew 5:19
  - c. Matthew 23:23
  - d. **John 19:11**
3. The **Bible** speaks of degrees of punishment and reward
  - a. Luke 12:42-48
  - b. Matthew 11:21-24
4. We **know** that some sins have worse consequences than others
5. The **Bible** talks about sexual sin a lot
  - a. Porneia and its various forms (Sexual Immortality) - (53 times)
    - i. This doesn’t include mentions of lust or homosexuality
6. The **Bible** Characterizes sexual sin as worse than other sins
  - a. (1 Corinthians 6:16-17) <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” <sup>17</sup> But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. <sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.
  - b. Paul’s and the Holy Spirit speaking through him is saying that sexual sin is unique because sex is a whole body experience – body, mind, heart and soul. Which is why Paul references Genesis “The two will become one flesh.”
  - c. This flies in the face of what modern culture teaches us about sex. Society wants to believe and teaches us and teaches our children that sex is purely physical. I remember talking to a woman when I was in college and she said “I’ve had sex with a lot of people but I’ve never made love to anyone.” That it’s possible to have a one-night stand or a casual hookup without any attachments. That it’s possible for sex to be a purely physical event.
  - d. Here’s the thing... the law and our personal experience teaches us otherwise. Even society wants to recognize that sexual abuse is something different than physical abuse. Sexually abusing someone is not treated the same as physically abusing someone. That’s why we have two separate categories for it. Victims of Physical assault tend to feel

vastly different than victims of sexual assault. Why is that? Because undeniably sex is much more than a purely physical interaction.

- e. But science backs this up too – the amount of chemicals that are released during sex creates what some refer to as a highly potent cocktail that alters our brain and creates neural pathways and bonds that ultimately alters how we behave. Sex is more than a purely physical event – it’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.
- f. Finally, scripture, our ultimate source of authority and truth teaches that sex mystically causes two to become one – we don’t know everything that that means but one thing it does mean is that having premarital sex or committing adultery is worse than overeating.

## All Porn is Sexual Sin

So what does this have to do with porn?

First of all – I think we need to get on the same page about something. According to a Gallup poll from 2015 (just three years ago) 75% of Americans claim to be Christian. According to Barna though 50% of Christian adults think viewing porn is wrong and 33% of Christian teens think viewing porn is wrong. In other words, there are many Christians who claim that pornography is not a sin.

### 1. All Porn is sin and here’s why

- a. **Porn denies the image of God in humanity.** Men and women are sacred, valuable, full of dignity. Christianity teaches that men and women are made in the image of God in a way that’s totally unique. I knew a man once who confessed to me that when he was a child or a teenager he would spit on pictures of Jesus when no one was looking. I told him that of course he was loved and forgiven. You know, I don’t know how you feel about that but I do know that men and women are more sacred than a picture of Jesus. I know that when a man makes an image of God... it’s nothing compared to when God says He makes us in his image. However much offended you are by the idea of violent sacrilegious acts... know that every sexual sin that involves other people is incredibly sacrilegious – if we truly believe that men and women are the image of God.
- b. **Porn takes advantage of the desperate.** When you read stories of adult film workers you realize that most have been victims of abuse or were looking for a way out of poverty or were looking for validation and love. When you use pornography you are taking advantage of the disadvantaged.
- c. **Another reason that porn is sin is because Porn isn’t fake** Anger can be acted. Violence can be acted. Murder can be faked. But nudity isn’t. This is 100% true when it comes to pornography. Nudity isn’t faked. That’s someone’s son or daughter. That’s definitely not your husband or your wife. And it might even be someone else’s husband or wife.
- d. **All porn is sin because Porn is a perversion** You know there are a lot of different types of pornography out there. There’s a book called Everybody Lies that researches google search trends and in that book one thing that’s mentioned is that Indian women search for “how to breastfeed by baby” equal to the amount they search for “how to breastfeed my husband.” Here’s why I say that: there’s a lot of different types of porn out there and I think it’s really easy for some people to go: my choices aren’t immoral. Some porn involves actual people and some that doesn’t. But no matter the case – pornography is not God’s plan for sex or intimacy. Pornography is a perversion of God’s will. And there’s no way around that. Whether you’re talking about photographs or

drawings or feet or breastfeeding or whatever else you're into it. Sometimes our morality is as shallow as asking the question: Did everyone agree? Is everyone consenting? Or we might take it a step further and ask: Is anyone being hurt? But the Christian needs to ask: Is this God's will, is it His design?

- e. **Porn rewires our brains** We'll touch on this later but one thing I want to say is that porn hurts our ability to be soberminded. Porn distorts our view of sex and reality.
- f. **Porn hurts our relationships**
  - i. *It hurts our connection with our spouse*
    - 1. In one poll, 70% of women whose husbands were addicted to pornography reported symptoms similar to PTSD.
    - 2. Porn makes it hard to build trust and intimacy
      - a. Spouses of porn users often feel like they're inadequate – that somehow they're not enough for their spouse.
      - b. Spouses of porn users often feel like it's their job to police, babysit, or help their partner be accountable because often times they're the only person that knows.
      - c. In 2004 a study revealed that Porn use was a major contributing factor to 56% of divorces.
  - ii. *It hurts our attraction to our spouse. Your wife or your husband is meant to be your standard of beauty.*
    - 1. It's hard enough for your spouse to be your standard of beauty with all of the media that's unavoidable. Don't make her compete with porn stars.
  - iii. *It hurts our sex life with our spouse*
    - 1. It trains us to desire the variety and "designer sex" of porn more than the familiar sexuality of marriage.
    - 2. It causes impotency and can make us train our brains to desire porn over real intimacy and over real sex with our spouse.
    - 3. It trains us to have self-serving expectations from sex
    - 4. SIDE NOTE: If your spouse is struggling with pornography you need to know – this is not your fault. You have done nothing to give your partner permission or reason to turn to pornography. This is not on you. It has nothing to do with whether or not you're available sexually. It has nothing to do with whether or not you're sexually attractive.
  - iv. Even if we're single porn hurts how we end up viewing one another. It especially hurts how men view women.
- g. **Two more reasons for why porn is sin and then we're done driving that point home. Porn hurts our children**
  - i. The largest consumers of internet pornography are children ages 12-17.
  - ii. When we're exposed to porn at a younger age it's much more likely to become a life long struggle.
  - iii. The average age that someone is first exposed to porn: 11-13
  - iv. The most common cause for stumbling upon pornography: researching for a homework project
  - v. On average, teens consider "Not recycling" to be worse than using pornography
- h. **Porn workers have a hard time going to church (Even after they're out).**
  - i. XXXchurch – an organization that ministers to adult film workers hears numerous stories from those leaving the porn industry that feel too much

shame and discomfort to belong to a church and allow that church to fully know them. Every click that we contribute means that we're contributing to a very high likelihood that people will never find a saving faith community.

So Porn is sin – right? And not only that but it does serious damage to our lives. It's incredibly self-destructive but it's also incredibly damaging to our community. So here's the question – How can I get free from it?

For that I'd like us to turn our attention to 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

*3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; (Notice the Biblical Emphasis on refraining from sexual sin. Paul says that God's will is that we be holy and it's followed by mentioning one sin only – sexual immorality) 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body[a] in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;*

Paul gives two action steps: 1) Know how to control your own body (verse 4). 2) Know God (verse 5)

### Know how to control your own body

Another way you could understand this verse is “Learn” how to control your own body. And that's some of what we've been doing already this morning. We've been learning about sexual sin. We've been increasing our knowledge about porn and its affects on our lives. But now I want to change our attention to the very practical responses. I want us to learn how to control our own bodies. To do this we need to know something about our brains, we need to know some timelines, and we need to know an effective strategy.

### Our brains are moldable – like playdoh.

The book – The Porn Circuit, which teaches us how to rewire our brains to be free from pornography explains that most sexual desires are acquired tastes— the odors of cheeses, Italian bitters, dry wines, coffees, patés, the hint of urine in a fried kidney. Many delicacies that people pay dearly for, that they must “develop a taste for,” are the very foods that disgusted them as children. – (The Porn Circuit)

Our sexual desires and preferences are often the result of acquired taste. It's learned.

Take something like kissing – that's not a universal human display of affection nor is it universally pleasurable.

One anthropologist visiting the Trobriand Island people quoted a native as saying “white people will sit, will press mouth against mouth—they are pleased with it.”

The Tsonga people of southern Africa said “Look at these people! They suck each other! They eat each other's saliva and dirt!”

Even something like attractive smells are taught:

There's something called a “love apple” that comes from Elizabethan times. A woman would keep a peeled apple in her armpit until it absorbed her sweat and her smell and then she would give the love apple to her lover to sniff in her absence.

Of course today we use perfumes and deodorants to make ourselves smell more appealing.

And what we consider to be visually appealing is also taught to us.

We know that standards of beauty change from culture to culture and over time. Whether that be weight, height, other proportions, body hair, etc.

What's the point?

Well... You and I can shape our brains and each choice we make is going to affect the "shape" of our brains so to speak. Paul says to "know" how to control our bodies and knowing it's possible to rewire our brains is part of that process and more necessary today than it ever has been in the history of humanity.

The Book, the Porn Circuit, says that "...through orgasm (porn) delivers a potent dose of euphoria... Mix in the anxiety and excitement of using the forbidden, the fear of being caught, and even secrecy, and the brain learns even faster during these intense emotional bursts. With each repetition the brain receives powerful cocktails of signals and hormones that ensure future cravings...

Porn bonds us to the screen, to the experience, and causes our body and especially our brains to seek the screen rather than our spouses. If you're single and hoping to marry – pornography is damaging your future sex life. Porn teaches us to bond with fantasy rather than reality.

**There are four Milestones for you to know when it comes to changing our brain.**

First of all if you want to be free from pornography you'll need to cut off porn, masturbation, and sex. It's time to detox.

If you're addicted to pornography **14** days will be "the wall". In other words, after the two week mark things start to get easier.

After **30** days you'll feel more confident, more energetic, and less preoccupied with sex.

After about **90** days married couples can start engaging in sex again and will experience a newfound intimacy.

When asked how long it takes the brain to recover from pornography use

3 Of the world's leading experts on brain science and pornography said that

"An **educated** guess would be one or two years — similar to someone who ended drug use. It depends on where you are at in your development, your age, and other factors..."

Donald L. Hilton, Dr. William Struthers, and Dr. Ted Roberts

So there are your **timelines** for overcoming pornography use.

- 1) The first 14 days are the hardest
- 2) After 30 days you'll be more confident in your ability to experience victory and the benefits of being porn free will be more obvious
- 3) After 90 days you can start having sex with your spouse

4) After 2 years your brain will fully healed

2 Timothy 2:22 provides us with a great guideline for overcoming pornography that sums up our strategy perfectly.

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Run From, Run Toward, and Run with.

Run from **sin**, run toward **goodness**, run **with** others who are doing the same.

Run from sin for 14 days, for 30 days, for 90 days, and then for 2 years,

then run toward goodness,

Those struggling with pornography and overcoming addiction are often told to **replace** bad habits with good habits – habits that are rewarding, entertaining, and beneficial.

If you're going to do this 90 day fast – find a hobby. Start hiking. Or biking. Start painting. Start serving. Start reading your Bible. Don't just run from sin – run toward goodness.

Run from, Run Toward, and Run with.

This brings us to our next point. There are 3 characteristics of online pornography that makes it such an attractive option. It's often represented as a three **legged** stool. It's also called the Triple A engine.

- **Affordability**
- **Availability**
- **Anonymity**

If you take away one of those legs the whole thing falls. And anonymity is by far the easiest leg to take down. Porn will always be affordable. 90% of porn users have never paid for porn. And it's widely available: You used to have to pay money to get porn... today people are spending money to prevent accidentally receiving porn.

BUT it doesn't have to be anonymous.

**Find an accountability partner** and use internet accountability software to track your browsing and have reports automatically sent to your accountability partners,

If you want more resources for learning how to control your body check out the free books and where to find them in your sermon notes.

## **Know God**

Finally Paul says that we are not to behave according to the passionate lust of the Gentiles who do not know God.

For Paul, knowledge of God ought to change our behavior.

When I was preparing for this sermon – one of the things I found myself asking often was: what would Jesus' tone be if he spoke to Waite Park Church about pornography. If Jesus was in this room right now, what would he say?

You know – I think a lot of it depends on the person. I read a story of A 10 year old boy who was brought to a catholic priest because his father had caught him looking at pornography. The priest asked the boy what he thought Jesus would say if He was in the room when it happened and the boy said, "I know what I did was wrong. I know it was sin. I know that every time I look at that stuff it's like I'm taking the nails and hammering them into Jesus' hands."

The Priest said the boy was obviously just repeating back things that had been taught to him.

Then the Priest told the boy something like: I think Jesus would turn the computer off. I think He would look you in the eyes and tell you that He loved you. I think Jesus would say He was sorry that so much of this world was designed to lead you into sin. I think Jesus would be angry at the adults who made this possible. I think Jesus would be heartbroken that this happened to you. I think Jesus would tell you that He loved you.

I think it's easy for us to hear a sermon like this this morning and forget that Jesus has different expectations for each of us. Some of us were exposed to pornography at an incredibly young age. Some of us are victims of sexual abuse. Some of us have totally vanilla sexual desires that are 100% accepted by society and others of us feel like we couldn't possibly confide in anyone about our temptations.

And at the same time when we read the New Testament we do see clear expectations for holiness and sexual purity. We see strong words for Christians who unrepentantly continue in their sin.

And so the conclusion I came to was the cross.

The cross is the perfect representation for how seriously God takes sin. The cross is the perfect picture for the cost of sin. The cross is the perfect picture for God's demand for justice. And the cross is the perfect picture of God's love for us – the perfect picture for showing us that no matter how much sin we commit – God still pursues us. The cross shows us that there's nothing that God wouldn't do for us.