

The Illusion That Viewing Pornography Is Okay

Our Spiritual Warfare

We are at war! No, it's not against the militant extremists who are killing Christians just because of what they believe. It's not against another nation that is attacking our country. It's not against a physical internal threat within our country. It is a war with Satan and his armies of darkness. Paul states in Ephesians 6:12 that "*we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*" Satan is attacking every minute of the day to try and drive man away from God. We know that Satan is "*walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8), but he is also cunningly setting snares to entrap men (and women) so that we might be taken captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26).

One of the illusions that Satan has prolifically entrenched in the mind of man is that viewing pornography, or porn, is okay. Pornography is defined by Merriam-Webster as "the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement." Another definition is "any sexual stimulating material or language that is used by a person to foster sexual stimulation" (1). The illusion that Satan is portraying is that viewing porn has no negative effect on our minds, our relationships, and our spiritual well being. This illusion has been aided in time by the ease of obtaining pornographic material. In times past, a person would have to go to a disreputable part of town to a specific business establishment and purchase magazines or books to look at porn. Then television and computers brought the access of porn into our homes. Now we can, should we choose, access pornographic websites from the phones in our pockets. Satan must certainly be ecstatic about what technology has brought about in helping draw the minds of man away from God! What this illusion has resulted in is a huge problem within our society today:

Statistics related to Pornography (2006):

United States Pornography Revenue	\$13 Billion per year
	Every second, \$3,075 is spent on pornography
	Every second, 28,258 internet users are viewing pornography
	Every second - 372 Internet users are typing adult search terms into search engines
	Every 39 minutes, a new pornographic video is created in the United States
Pornographic Websites & Search Engine Stats	4.2 million websites (12% of total web sites)
	420 million web pages
	68 million daily pornographic search engine requests (25% of search engine requests)
Internet Pornography & Young People	Average age of first Internet exposure to pornography: 11 years old
	15-17 year olds having multiple hard-core exposures: 80%
	8-16 year olds having viewed porn online: 90% (most while doing homework)

The development of pornographic material, its ease of distribution and its abundant growth in viewing participation has resulted in an increase in divorce, lost careers, lost families, and lost souls. The illusion that Satan has been successful in delivering is that God's perfect gifts can be utilized to participate in all manner of sinful activities.

God's Perfect Gifts / Satan's Counterfeit Illusions

James tells us that *"every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures"* (James 1:17-18). God made us in His image (Gen. 1:27) and saw everything that He had made was very good (Gen. 1:31). One of God's most precious gifts is the relationship between the created man and the created woman. How God made us helps in this relationship:

- Eyes: God made our eyes to see the beauty of His creation.
- Mind: God made our minds to understand the visual beauty of His creation.

- Desires: God made us with physical desires and the ability to fulfill those desires within the boundaries of His law. He gave us the appetite to enjoy the fruits of all His creation.

Solomon, in some of his words of wisdom, gives an example of how a man and a woman can enjoy God's perfect gift in the marriage relationship. Solomon looks upon his wife and sees the beauty of her eyes, mouth, cheeks, neck, and breasts and is overcome by one glance from her (Songs of Solomon 4, 7). These are God-given gifts to be enjoyed in the boundary of marriage as God has defined (Gen. 2:24-25), and every creature of God is good, and it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

Satan, on the other hand, uses these God-created characteristics to seduce us and to get us to believe that the counterfeit he is selling is the real thing. Just as Satan deceived Eve and Adam tempting them to partake of what God had forbidden by energizing through sin the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, Satan is using the same tools to help man believe the illusion that viewing porn is okay. Pornography utilizes our eyes, mind, and desires but in a way that is not within the boundaries of God's law. God's designer gifts become Satan's deceiving gifts. We are tempted when we are drawn away by our own desires and enticed into using God's gifts in a way in which He does not approve. *"Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived my beloved brethren"* (James 1:14-16). Pornography presents itself as the real thing; look how beautiful this partially or fully naked person looks (eyes), thus triggering the release of dopamine (a chemical neurotransmitter in our brain, the "gotta have it molecule") in our brain (mind), and causing a heightened sense of excitement (desire) to want more and more (2). We come to believe that we are using God's gifts in an acceptable manner. But porn is all counterfeit/deception, not the real thing. Only in the marriage relationship as God has designed are His gifts truly giving man and woman the true intent of His desires for His creation. "Like all idols, porn promises us something we desire. In reality, it over promises and under delivers" (2). "Embracing the counterfeit means forfeiting the real" (2).

"The Broken Promises of Porn" - Satan's Counterfeit Illusions (2)

- Promises validation of our manhood without requiring strength.
- Promises sexual fulfillment without relationship.
- Promises intimacy without requiring risk and suffering.
- Promises power over women without responsibility and humility.
- Promises comfort and care without depending on others.

These are the promises that Satan wants you to believe to ensure you keep having that desire to keep going back for more. Don't believe the lies as they come from the father of all lies, the devil (John 8:44). Satan uses our thirst for God-given human needs such as affection, affirmation, acceptance, satisfaction, and security to deceive our wants and desires. Porn is like the proverbial crafty harlot causing one to yield but resulting in the pathway to her house, which is the way to hell and death (Prov. 7:6-27) Porn will never truly fulfill these God given desires. Desire and thirst are quintessential to a God-fearing man's walk with his God. We thirst and look to be satisfied, but looking at porn is like trying to drink from a broken cistern that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13). Now is the time to understand and see where our thirst can be satisfied: Jesus. *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37-38).

Overcoming the Wiles of the Devil (The illusion that viewing pornography is okay)

1. Recognize that viewing pornography is a sin.

As Jesus speaks on the mount in Matthew 5, He quotes the old law (Ex. 20:14) in reminding the people that they should not commit adultery. But Jesus goes on further showing them that it all begins in the heart. Jesus states, *"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (5:28). Jesus makes us look inward and shines a light on our hearts where sin is conceived and developed. Jesus would know that man doesn't act out what he has not first imagined or fantasized.

Pornography is a means of fulfilling the lust of the flesh and gratifying our own selfish desires. It is of the world and if we love the things of the world, we will not have the love of the Father within us. Porn falls into the definition of all that is in the world as described in 1 John 2: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (vs. 16).

"Lust is the craving for salt of a man who is dying of thirst" (Frederick Buechner)

Paul tells Timothy to "flee youthful lust" (2 Tim. 2:22) in his walk with God. As explained above, porn is plainly a lust of the flesh and eyes but not only for the youthful. It is a lust that many of the world have succumbed to regardless of age and many even within the church. Recognize it for what it is - sin! *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace"* (Rom. 6:12-14). We are to abstain from fleshly lust that war against our soul (1 Peter 2:11). We are to recognize that sin lies at the door, or the computer, and its desire is for us. But we must rule over it (Gen. 4:7).

2. Repent of the sin of viewing pornography.

Recognizing that viewing pornography is a sin and having a new desire to do the will of the Father, one must turn away from viewing porn and turn to God.

*"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness. **Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way"***

Psalm 119:33-37

If you are guilty of participating in this activity, know that you have the ability to turn your eyes away, because God, who is faithful, will not allow anyone to be tempted beyond what one is able but will make a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). But Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians to "flee idolatry" (10:14). If we have an attachment or devotion to porn, it has become an idol, and we must turn and flee from it. Paul reminds Timothy that if anyone cleanses himself of dishonorable characteristics, that he will be a "*vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work*" (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

3. Reorient your life toward the Son.

When one is lost in the woods, a compass can be of great benefit in finding his way out. It shows the direction of true north and allows one to determine his location and plot a way out. Once an individual has recognized his sin, and repented of his sin, he must reorient his life and plot his new course with the goal of spending eternity with God in heaven. God's word is the compass that can direct our minds to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and our Redeemer.

A. Set your mind on things above, not on things of this world (Col. 3:1-5)

- Come to the understanding that only God and His ways can fully satisfy our wants and desires because He created them in us. Anything else is only fulfilling our own selfish desires.
- Remember that Paul suggests that forgetting those things which are behind can help us get to "*the goal for the prize of the upward call of god in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13-14).

B. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:1-2)

- You have put off the old man, concerning your former conduct, which grows corrupt by deceitful lusts. Now put on the new man who was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24).
- Use the example of David in renewing his mind when he realized his transgression against God (Psalm 51): wash me, acknowledge that I do sin,

allow God to purge my sins, blot out my iniquities, create a new heart, renew, restore, uphold, and deliver. Make God my strength.

B. Become a warrior in the fight against the devil (Eph. 6:10-18)

"The quality of a true warrior is that he is in service to a purpose greater than himself that is, to a transcendent cause." (Bly)

- A warrior must be cunning. He knows his enemy; he knows when to fight and when to run; he is prepared. He understands that his enemy is the world, the flesh, and the devil.
- *"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier"* (2 Tim. 2:3-4)
- Resist and stand firm; be strong and very courageous. (1 Peter 5:8-9; Joshua 1:5-9)
- Fight the good fight of faith.
 - *"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses"* (1 Tim. 6:12 NIV).
 - Recognize what triggers your lustful desires and take action.
 - Potential triggers: an overwhelming feeling, rejection, frustration, anger, boredom
 - Actions: pray for strength to withstand these temptations; contact a trustworthy friend for support; get away from the computer and go running.
- Prove yourself a man (1 Kings 2:1-3)
 - Keep the charge of the Lord your God: Walk in His ways, keep His statutes, keep His judgments, keep His commandments, keep His testimonies...that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.

Conclusion - Allow the Light to shine through any darkness

The world hates the light because they practice evil and don't want their deeds to be exposed. They love the darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19-20). Jesus is the light of the world and brings life where there is only death in the world. To overcome the sin of pornography, or any other sin, we must acknowledge the presence of Jesus and that we will not be defined by darkness. We are defined by the light of Christ in us.

As we are defined by the light of Christ, we must believe that God our Father can transform our hearts and mold them for righteousness sake. Just as God was able to give His children a new spirit and new heart when they were serving "detestable things and all its abominations" (Ezekiel 11: 18-21), He can help us in the spiritual battles we face today. We can be God's people, and He can be our God.

Today you face a choice. You can blame your circumstances, you can blame other people, or you can try to justify the reason in your own mind why you are viewing pornography. You can try to hide your sexual activities and only dream of godliness and liberty while darkness continues to permeate through your mind. Or, you can choose life (Deut. 30:19-20).

Choose life.

Reference

1. Becker, P. (2012). Recovery from sexual addiction: A man's guide. Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse.
2. Cusick, M. (2012). Surfing for God: Discovering the divine desire beneath sexual struggle, Tenn., Nashville: T. Nelson.