

The Depth of the Danger

Date: Saturday, May 12 + Sunday, May 13

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“For all that is in the world —the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.” 1 John 2:16

An April 6th, 2007 CNN poll revealed that over 70 percent of Christian men and over 20 percent of Christian women are already addicted to some sort of Internet pornography. This is a staggering statistic, which is also 11 years old, in a day where smart phones were not in hands of virtually every American; these numbers have without a doubt swelled since then.

Today we are going to continue our series “Click Here for Damage” by diving into why this sin is so serious, how pornography can become a serious addiction, and the impact it can have on your life, your relationships, your future marriage, and your mind.

If this is your first time coming to one of our “Click Here for Damage” sessions, let me define pornography – so that we continue to stay on the same page. If you’ve been coming the whole time, you’re going to have to hear it again. Many people have different opinions of what classifies pornography, but for the purposes of our discussions this evening/morning, here is what we mean: **Movies, websites, and photos that are sexually explicate, photos and videos of individuals naked or engaging in sexual activities, and I also would like to include some romance novels, teen fiction, and even internet memes — aimed at women that encourage pornographic fantasies in their mind. And yes, we are not stopping at videos. Pornography can be in our imagination as well.**

I’m guessing at this point in our series, two camps have developed. One camp is saying to themselves, “Yes this is me - I’m struggling with pornography”. If this is you, I’m glad you’re here. Let me encourage you to keep coming, finish this series out with us, talk to your small group leader, talk to your parents, and bring it to Christ.

The 2nd camp is saying, “I don’t struggle with this, I can’t relate to this, and this isn’t an issue for me”. If that’s you, I’m also glad you’re here. Everyone here needs to understand the depth of danger that porn will insert into your life. When we proclaim that something isn’t an issue for us, we often put our guard down. 1 Peter 5:8 tells us to **“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”**. Imagine a bank manager believing that bank robbers are not an issue. He wouldn’t take the right precautions, he wouldn’t install a security system or camera system – heck, he probably wouldn’t even lock the safe! What do you think would eventually happen to this bank manager? He would get robbed, of course! Just as with us, when we put our guard down, the devil *WILL* devour us.

I have several goals for this series; one of them being that when this series is completed, each and every one of you will have a *righteous hatred* of porn. You may be a bit confused. Are we supposed to hate? The Bible speaks both of God's love and hate; His hatred is for sin and wickedness. That is what porn is, sin and wickedness. We should also hate sin, just as God does.

So far you have heard Lily and myself touch on how porn can develop into a serious addiction, but tonight/this morning we are going to get deeper into that.

Addiction

Now, not everyone who sees porn will become addicted to it. Some will come away with toxic ideas about women, men, sex, marriage and children. Now, just hearing about that kind of damage should immediately rattle you. But what's even worse, for many of us, you *will* become addicted. Maybe you already are.

Porn addiction develops much like a drug addiction. After an initially rewarding experience with pornography, we begin to experience uncontrollable urges to obtain sexual satisfaction through that form of entertainment, again and again. For some this may build over years, for others, maybe just a few short months.

So let me explain to you how porn can become an addiction and, at that, an addiction so powerful that it can lead to dangerous, deviant behaviors. Like other addictive substances and behaviors, porn activates the part of the brain called the "reward center".

Let me read you a portion of an article from the website *Fight the New Drug* that speaks about how the reward center works in our brain works:

"It's job is to motivate you to do things that protect and promote your survival—things like eating to stay alive or having sex to produce babies. The way it rewards you for doing those things is by flooding your brain with dopamine and other "pleasure" chemicals each time you do.

But your brain doesn't always reward you for the right things. For example, it produces higher levels of dopamine when you have chocolate cake than it does for whole-wheat bread. Why? Because 3,000 years ago, high-calorie foods were really hard to come by, so when our ancestors found them, they needed to eat a whole bunch while they had the chance. These days, a bag of Oreos is only as far as the nearest supermarket. If we gorged on them every chance we got, we'd have heart disease and a lot of other health problems.

When a person is looking at porn, their brain is fooled into pumping out dopamine just as if they really were seeing a potential mate. Sure, filling your brain with feel-good chemicals might sound like a great idea at first, but just like with junk food, it's more dangerous than it seems.

When porn enters the brain, it triggers the reward center to start pumping out dopamine, which sets off a cascade of chemicals including a protein called DeltaFosB. DeltaFosB's regular job is to build new nerve pathways to mentally connect what someone is doing (i.e. consuming porn) to the pleasure he or she feels. Those strong new memories out-compete other connections in the brain, making it easier and easier to return to porn.

If enough DeltaFosB builds up, it flips a genetic switch, causing lasting changes in the brain that leave the user more vulnerable to addiction. For teens, this risk is especially high because a teen's reward center in the brain responds two to four times more powerfully than an adult's brain, releases higher levels of dopamine and produces more DeltaFosB.

Overloaded with dopamine, the brain will try to defend itself by releasing another chemical called CREB. CREB is like the brakes on a runaway reward center; it slows the pleasure response. [With CREB onboard, porn that once excited a person stops having the same effect. Scientists believe that CREB is partly why consumers have to keep increasing their porn intake to get aroused. That numbed-out state is called "tolerance," and it's part of any kind of addiction.]

Hopefully that gives you all some understanding of how porn can quickly and easily turn into an all-out addiction. I hope that if you are struggling with porn, hearing this does not discourage you, but rather proves that you need help - both spiritually and practically. With the help of the Holy Spirit, your church community, and your parents, you can overcome any addiction.

I also want to highlight something else. The very end of the article talked about how, when we have a dopamine overload, the brain will combat that, creating *tolerance*. This is so important because this is what leads to deviant behaviors. I touched briefly on this Wednesday. When we become numb to porn that once excited us, what we are looking for begins to escalate, often to behaviors that are harmful to the opposite sex and even illegal. We start looking at porn that's maybe more graphic, maybe something that used to disgust us, or maybe even worse. Studies have shown a strong correlation between men's porn consumption and their likelihood to victimize women.

Let me give you guys what may be the most extreme and also the most bone chilling example. Ted Bundy was a serial killer in the 1970's that killed at least 30 women. In an interview conducted hours before his execution, Bundy said this:

Play Video: <https://fightthenewdrug.org/serial-killer-ted-bundy-last-interview/>

Now, let me emphasize: not everyone who looks at porn will end up doing such despicable and evil things as Ted Bundy or becoming a serial killer.

However, pornography certainly will put you on a path of evil behavior. I don't give this example to shame anyone, to discourage anyone, or to scare anyone - but to bring to light the evil that comes from pornography addiction and to start the foundation for each and every one here today to have a righteous hatred of porn.

We talked today about the chemical DeltaFosB's and how it's job is to build new nerve pathways that mentally connect us to the porn we are watching. These connections can become so strong that simply sitting down at a computer elicits a sexual response. This brings to my closing thoughts.

The Impacts of Pornography on Your Life, Relationship, Marriage, & Mind:

Studies are showing that what I just said is true. I'll say it again: Connections [to pornography] are becoming so strong that simply sitting down at a computer elicits a sexual response.

Think about how this could destroy your marriage one day. Instead of all your connections being tied to your significant other, they are instead tied to hundreds, if not thousands, of people spread across the Internet. You're giving a little piece of yourself away to each and every one of those individuals. I can't stress enough that the desire for the unclothed body is o.k., but only if the body belongs to your husband or wife. Think of how remarkable your relationship with your husband or wife would be if all your connections to sex and intimacy and pleasure were tied to them, and not to people that you don't even know scattered across the World Wide Web.

God has designed sex as a way for us to become connected to our spouse. Unfortunately, the devil has perverted God's intention for sex, and the world has accepted the devil's perversions. Porn is shaping the way we see the opposite sex, the way we see marriage, the way we view sex, and at the end of the day, it will shape how you are as a parent. Don't let this happen.

If all of this isn't enough, in two weeks we will hear from Joe about how when you watch porn, you are actually supporting sex slavery and human trafficking.

If you are hearing this message and struggling with an addiction to porn, let me share some encouragement. First of all, the cleansing of God's forgiveness is available to you. 1 John 1:9 says **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"**. If you are a believer of Christ Jesus, go to him now for forgiveness. Don't hesitate. Satan often tricks us into waiting. Making us feel ashamed of what we have done, telling us it's too soon to ask for forgiveness - these are demonic lies. Forgiveness is available anytime, even seconds after you've messed up. If you are not a believer in Christ Jesus, give your life to him and you too can have the gift of forgiveness. You can become cleansed of all sins.

In addition to God's gift of forgiveness, he also shares the power of the Holy Spirit, which is available to you as well. Ephesians 3:16 says **"according to the riches of his**

glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being”. The Holy Spirit is our ultimate weapon in fighting sin and temptations. The Bible is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is active in our world. Unfortunately for many believers, the Holy Spirit is it underutilized tool. I urge all of you to begin listening to the Spirit, which has been given to all believers. Ask for its help whenever you are being tempted. We could have a whole other talk just on the power of the Spirit, but in the meantime, if you want to know more, read your Bible, talk to your parents or small group leader.

I urge anyone struggling with porn to confess your sin to the Lord, seek His forgiveness, and reach out to your spiritual community. May that be your mom, dad, or small group leader. Let's pray.