

Pornography

By Pastor Alan Utting



'Anything that drags the heart away from Christ must be fought, not fed.'

Elisabeth Elliot

Many people who are addicted to pornography dislike their habit and find it difficult to break free. They know it is wrong and it is often accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt. While it is more commonly a struggle for men, it can affect both sexes. It's difficult to unsee a visual image. Furthermore, studies show that 60% of individuals with porn addiction report difficulties in maintaining a healthy sexual relationship with their spouse. For computer users, you don't have to go looking for porn as unfortunately it is likely to appear on your computer unannounced at some stage. As seeds may grow into a tree so unwanted porn seeds may grow into strangle holds which lead to bondage which is destructive if we are not careful. 'For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world' (1 John 2:16).

'Neuroplasticity' is a term used to show that the brain is not hard-wired, meaning we can alter wrong thinking and create wholesome habits. Both Caroline Leaf and Norman Doldge give excellent insight on this subject (see reference below). The good news is that victory is attainable if we are determined to find it.

Biblical Perspective

Scripture records many accounts where people fell into sin through the lust of their eyes. For example, David with Bathsheba (2 Samue 11: 1ff), Solomon (1 Kings 11:4), Samson (Judges 14:1 ff) etc.

'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death' (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Observations

Deliverance comes through Christ. 'But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:57) and the mind's renewal 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will' (Romans 12:2). A favourite quote of mine is, 'there's a purity in Christ which cannot be defiled'. Very true. Remember that forgiveness and grace come through Christ. You are greatly loved.

Here are some helpful thoughts in overcoming an attraction to porn:

1. Overconfidence in ourselves or our ministry can make us susceptible to failure. Experiencing loneliness or disappointment is also a contributing factor. Temptation can grow on us unawares and we might not always recognize it. 'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it' (1 Corinthians 10: 12,13).

Flee lustful thoughts at the 'initial stage' of temptation as Joseph did, when confronted by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:11,12). Work out now your strategy for coping with wrongful thoughts so that when temptations come, you can implement them immediately. For example, decide beforehand to go for a walk, run, swim or bike ride. Read a good book or ring up someone for a chat or go visiting. Do something you enjoy doing and make every effort to have downtime from your computer. If that is difficult, shift your computer into a room where others can see what's on the screen.

2. Cultivating a genuine aspiration for freedom is essential. 'As a deer pants for streams of water so my soul pants for you, my God' (Psalm 42:1). If you lack this desire be honest with the Lord and talk to him about that and ask Him to increase your desire for freedom. He understands. As I recently observed in a text on a wall, 'What comes easy won't last. What lasts won't come easy.'
3. Make yourself accountable to someone or to a small group of people of the same sex. Talk about the difficult stuff in a confidential atmosphere and don't gloss over the challenge. Have a report back system as that can be a real deterrent from viewing porn.
4. Discipline yourself to live in the Word. 'How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word' (Psalm 119:9). Reading, memorising and meditating on Scripture every day means you will be fruitful in your ministry (Psalm 1).
5. Never fantasise sexual encounters, even a little bit as these thoughts will take root.
6. The need to view porn is not always about sexual pleasure but an indication of a need for intimacy. Joining a small group for fellowship, transparency, accountability and Bible study can help meet that need. When this happens it is a little like what AA does for alcoholics.
7. There are computer software programmes around which block sites that may come up on your computer. Programmes like this are an excellent deterrent to prevent you from visiting unhealthy sites.

If you are married, disclosing an addiction to your spouse is a complex decision that warrants careful consideration. Disclosure to the other person may lead to feelings of betrayal or disappointment, and in some cases, can place significant strain on the marriage. However, being open about the issue may also foster transparency, potentially strengthen the relationship over time, and help alleviate personal guilt. It is advisable to seek guidance from the Lord and support from qualified professionals when navigating this situation so that you understand what God wants you to do.

'Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God' (Matthew 5:8).

Resources

Dr Allan Meyers, *Valiant man*

Caroline Leaf, *Switch On Your Brain*

Norman Doldge, *The Brain that changes itself*