

enditnow® Emphasis Day
Resource Packet

August 28, 2021

BRINGING PEACE HOME: Addressing Youth Violence at the Roots

Sermon written by Sarah McDugal, MSA-ID
Author | Trainer | Abuse Recovery Coach
Wilderness to WILD, LLC

Includes seminar

PORNOGRAPHY: Addiction, Abuse, & Affliction

Written by Erica Jones
Assistant Director | Women's Ministries
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Includes e-booklet for domestic violence

ABUSE ADVOCACY: A QUICK VISUAL GUIDE

Written by Sarah McDugal, MSA-ID

enditnow®

Adventists Say No to Violence

Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Health Ministries,
Ministerial Association, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries



MINISTERIAL
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Prepared by Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
On behalf of the **enditnow®** team of General Conference departments
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Seventh-day Adventist® Church

GENERAL CONFERENCE
WORLD HEADQUARTERS



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

March 30, 2021

Dear Directors,

Joyful greetings to each of you. This year for **enditnow**® Emphasis Day we have chosen to focus on the issues of youth violence and pornography. These are not issues normally discussed, and we know that some will be uncomfortable with the topic. Yet it is vital that we recognize the problem. More and more we read in the newspapers of violence perpetuated by and against young people. We can no longer pretend that this problem exists only outside the doors of our church. Our young people are not safe! We must find ways to help them deal with the destructive and harmful effects resulting from these types of abuses. With God's help we will make a difference in their lives and help the healing process to begin.

This year's sermon titled "Bringing Peace Home" is written by Sarah McDugal, MSA-ID, Author, Trainer, Abuse Recovery Coach, Wilderness to WILD, LLC. We thank Sarah for the information that she shares in the sermon and the encouragement and guidance she shares from the Bible.

In addition, you will find a seminar in this resource packet titled "The Problem with Pornography: Addiction, Abuse, & Affliction" written by Erica Jones, Assistant Director of Women's Ministries for North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Erica works with young women in the North American Division in the areas of abuse, addictions, and pornography. Many young women have been helped by Erica's commitment and dedication to bringing these issues to the surface.

We thank all the General Conference departments that continue to support **enditnow**®. Their assistance and encouragement through the years have allowed the issue of violence in our homes and communities to rise to the surface and to be openly discussed among our members.

God bless and guide you as you share this important packet of resources for **enditnow**® Emphasis Day.

With love and joy,

Heather-Dawn Small
Women's Ministries Director

"I thank my God every time I remember you...with joy." Philippians 1:3



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About the Authors

Sarah McDugal is an author, speaker, trainer, and Abuse Recovery Coach who works exclusively with women wounded by toxic relationships in the faith community. An Alumnus of Southern Adventist University, she received her master's degree from Andrews University. Since 2018, she has served as a member of the North American Division Committee on Issues of Abuse.

Sarah is the founder of WildernesstoWILD.com, which provides coaching, courses, and resources to guide advocates, clergy, and survivors of abuse toward wholeness, healing, and the development of safer churches.

Sarah has published seven books, including: *Myths We Believe, Predators We Trust*; *Safe Churches: Responding to Abuse in the Faith Community*; *Abuse Advocacy: A Quick Visual Guide*; and *Understanding and Implementing Sexual Misconduct Policy*.

Learn more about Sarah McDugal on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#).

Abuse Advocacy: A Quick Visual Guide, an eBooklet (pdf) is written Sarah McDugal and used by permission from *Wilderness to WILD, LLC*.

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What's in This Packet?

Sermon:	"Bringing Peace Home," by Sarah McDugal, with PPT
Statement:	"Pornography," 1990 public statement by Neal C. Wilson, with PPT
Seminar:	"Pornography: Addiction, Abuse, & Affliction," by Erica Jones, with PPT
Seminar:	"Dangerous Kissing Cousins," by Claudio and Pamela Consuegra, with PPT
eBooklet:	<i>Abuse Advocacy: A Quick Visual Guide</i> , by Sarah McDugal, MSA-ID, PDF
Brochure:	Teen Abuse brochure by North American Division Women's Ministries, PDF
Handout:	Church Self-Assessment Tool, Graph C, by North American Division enditnow ®
Slides:	Backgrounds for the sermon, PPT

Program Notes

Please read through the components of the **enditnow**[®] resource packet. Be alert to ways you can adjust the materials to fit the needs of your divisions and fields. Feel free to translate, rework, and edit the resource packet *according to your division's needs*, including the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet *according to your cultural audience*. We will share the packets for French, Portuguese, and Spanish with the division women's ministries directors, when the assigned divisions have sent us a translated digital file.

The order of service suggests hymns and readings taken from the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, © 1985 that relate to the theme of the sermon as we see it. Please pick and choose elements from the outline or create your own order of service.

Our deep appreciation to you for forwarding the **enditnow**[®] Emphasis Day resource packet to your division counterparts in order to speed the process of reaching the local churches. The packet is also available on our website, women.adventist.org, under Special Days, Enditnow, 2021.

Kindly remember that our logo **enditnow**[®] **Adventists Say No to Violence** is registered and trademarked. Always print **enditnow** with lower case letters, in black bold with dark red "it," no spaces. Use the registered symbol in the title and the first reference in the body of a document and in other places where it is used as the logo rather than text copy.

Seven departments of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists have joined together as a team to address the problem of interpersonal violence. Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Ministerial Association, and Youth Ministries joined Women's Ministries in sponsoring the **enditnow**[®] **Adventists Say No to Violence** initiative. Interpersonal violence impacts everyone, and we are delighted that these ministries for young and old, men and women, children and adults, members and pastors are part of the coalition to bring awareness to this social and spiritual abuse—a tragedy in all its forms.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Women's Ministries Department

Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn of praise

Responsive reading

Pastoral prayer

Prayer response

Call for the offering

Special music

Scripture reading

Galatians 5:22, NLT

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Sermon

Bringing Peace Home: Addressing Youth Violence at the Roots

Hymn of response

Closing prayer

Benediction

Isaiah 58:6,8 NLT

"This is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind."

Sermon

BRINGING PEACE HOME: Addressing Youth Violence at the Roots

Written by Sarah McDugal, Abuse Recovery Coach
Founder of WildernesstoWILD.com

Scripture Passage: Galatians 5:22

INTRODUCTION

The Little Person, An Allegory

Once upon a time, there was a Little Person who felt special. The Little Person always wanted “their” own way. What other people wanted or needed didn’t matter to the Little Person who became selfish.

While other Little People were learning to put others’ needs first, this Little Person didn’t. And the Little Person began expecting and demanding “their” own way.

The Little Person grew up and became a Big Little Person. When the Big Little Person tried the same selfish demands to get “their” own way with other grownups, it didn’t work as well as it had before.

Instead of focusing on being kind and helpful to others, the Big Little Person began a habit of doing dishonest things and hurting people to get “their” own way, even though being dishonest and hurting people is wrong.

Because the Big Little Person was always nice to the people in charge, they thought the Big Little Person was wonderful. Soon the people in charge allowed the Big Little Person to take more and more power.

The Big Little Person *appeared* to live happily ever after, but all the people close to the Big Little Person suffered. In the end, the Big Little Person who learned to like being cruel, ended up suffering too — because the Big Little Person who wanted “their” own way never experienced the joy of unselfishness, helpfulness, and kindness.

One day when the people in charge realized the Big Little Person was cruel to others, they decided to stop giving power to the Big Little Person. That was the day when other people in the community were no longer being hurt by the Big Little Person, and they were able to begin healing from their wounds and to experience true love and safety.

STATISTICS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD

Today's world is a dangerous place for our children and youth to grow up. If we are courageous enough to look, the statistics of violence, bullying, and assault are alarming in every country. Technology has expanded the potential for youthful cruelty, by making it possible to cyber-bully one's peers without risking exposure or harm to oneself.

Before we can explore the tangible ways to address this problem, we must first have a better understanding of what our youth are facing on a daily basis in today's world.

These statistics may be disturbing and very uncomfortable to hear, but for our community of faith they are crucial to know if we want to be aware and able to truly impact the way things are. We must also remember that many of the families in our congregations and communities are living with the impact of this data, which makes it an important theme to discuss in the church — even if it is not comfortable to do so.

According to the World Health Organization, youth violence is a global public health problem. It includes a range of acts from bullying and physical fighting, to more severe sexual and physical assault, to homicide.¹

- About 200,000 homicides occur worldwide every year among the youth aged 10-29 years old. This is close to **half** (43%) of the total number of homicides globally each year.
- Homicide is the **fourth** leading cause of death from ages 10-29, and 83% of these involve male victims.
- For each young person killed, many more **sustain injuries** requiring hospital treatment.
- In one study, up to **24% of women** report that their first sexual experience was forced.
- When it is not fatal, youth violence has a serious, often **lifelong, impact** on physical, psychological, and social functioning.
- Youth violence greatly **increases costs** of health, welfare, and criminal justice services; reduces productivity; and decreases the value of property.

According to RAINN, the rates of sexual violence to children under the age of 18² is chilling:

- 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys under the age of 18 experience sexual abuse or assault at the hands of an adult.³
- 82% of all victims under 18 are female.⁴

· <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/12/youth-violence-is-a-global-public-health-problem-who/>

· <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/children-and-teens>

· David Finkelhor, Anne Shattuck, Heather A. Turner, & Sherry L. Hamby, The Lifetime Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault Assessed in Late Adolescence, 55 Journal of Adolescent Health 329, 329-333 (2014)

· Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement (2000).

- females ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.⁵
- 9 out of 10 victims of rape are female.⁶

The effects of child sexual abuse can be long-lasting and affect the victim's mental health, increasing their risk, and making them:⁷

- about 4 times more likely to develop symptoms of drug abuse.
- about 4 times more likely to experience PTSD as adults.
- about 3 times more likely to experience a major depressive episode as adults.

So, as loving parents, teachers, and church community leaders — how can we keep our children safe? What can we do to protect the next generation and help them develop into healthy, whole, strong, confident, safe adults?

WHERE YOUTH VIOLENCE BEGINS

Statistics show that home, where children are supposed to be surrounded by adults and older youth whom they love and trust, is often the most unsafe place. Data shows that when cases of child sexual abuse are reported to law enforcement:

- 93% of perpetrators are known to the child, and of that number 34% are family members or relatives,
- while only 7% of perpetrators are actually strangers to the child.⁸

The terrifying reality is that far too often the place where our children begin experiencing violence is inside the home. Even inside the Seventh-day Adventist Christian home.

The World Health Organization also states that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are some of the most intensive and frequently occurring sources of stress that children may suffer early in life.

· Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sex Offenses and Offenders (1997).

· i. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Female Victims of Sexual Violence, 1994-2010 (2013); ii. National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey (1998). (This statistic presents information on the total number of male and female victims in the United States, using a study from 1998. Because the U.S. population has increased substantially since then, it is probable that the number of victims has as well. RAINN presents this data for educational purposes only, and strongly recommends using the citations to review any and all sources for more information and detail.)

· H.M Zinzow, H.S. Resnick, J.L. McCauley, A.B. Amstadter, K.J. Ruggiero, & D.G. Kilpatrick, Prevalence and risk of psychiatric disorders as a function of variant rape histories: results from a national survey of women. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 47(6), 893-902 (2012).

· <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/children-and-teens>

These adverse experiences can include verbal, physical, sexual or psychological abuse; various forms of neglect; violence between parents or caregivers; serious dysfunctions such as alcohol, substance, or pornography addiction; as well as outright violence among peers, or in the community.

"It has been shown that considerable and prolonged stress in childhood has life-long consequences for a person's health and well-being. It can disrupt early brain development and compromise functioning of the nervous and immune systems. In addition, because of the behaviours adopted by some people who have faced ACEs, such stress can lead to serious problems such as alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, unsafe sex, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases" later in life.⁹

When describing Christ's childhood, Luke 2:52 tells us that "Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people." This tells us three things about His childhood:

- 1) he grew in psychological and spiritual maturity (wisdom)
- 2) he grew in physical health and strength (stature)
- 3) he grew in favor with God and the people (character and personality).

Ellen White also writes about these three attributes of Jesus:

Wonderful in its significance is the brief record of His early life: "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." Luke 2:52. His mind was active and penetrating, with a thoughtfulness and wisdom beyond His years. Yet His character was beautiful in its symmetry. The powers of mind and body developed gradually, in keeping with the laws of childhood.¹⁰

In order to have the greatest opportunity to grow in wisdom, stature, and favor like Jesus did — our children need protection and safety ~~in order~~ to develop with balance and wholeness. This means they not only need physical safety, but also emotional, spiritual, sexual, and psychological safety.

The solutions for preventing adverse childhood experiences must begin in the Christian home.

We love our precious children. We love them fiercely and fully. We want the best for them. But often we fail to realize that we are preparing them for lives marred by violence by subjecting them to a lack of safety right at home.

- If they are watching parents fight, or seeing their father attack their mother — *home is not safe*.

⁹ https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/adverse_childhood_experiences/en/

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View: CA, Pacific Press, 1898), 68.

- If they are being molested or abused sexually by family or trusted friends — *home is not safe*.
- If they are living in fear of your criticism and harsh words — *home is not safe*.
- If their mistakes and failures are used to shame and control them — *home is not safe*.
- If they are not free to express emotions and fears and concerns — *home is not safe*.
- If they are silent on spiritual topics because they've been told God won't love them if they ask questions — *home is not safe*.
- If they observe fathers and male relatives exercising their power to exploit women instead of leading like Jesus by serving and protecting — *home is not safe*.

We cannot control the world around us. But we do have an undeniable responsibility before God to raise our children in safe, gentle homes that reflect the tenderness and love of Christ's character. "The atmosphere surrounding the souls of fathers and mothers fills the whole house, and is felt in every department of the home."¹¹

In order to address the epidemic of aggression among our youth, in order to reduce dating violence, peer bullying, child sexual assault, and teen homicide — we must assess the cultural norms that exist inside our homes. We must first address ourselves as parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, and family friends. When our homes are structured on the concepts of power and control, we unwittingly perpetuate cycles of aggression, anger, and hopelessness back out into the community.

The first step to ending these painful cycles is to ~~end~~ break the silence and bring the subject into the light.

The Apostle John writes, "God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants." (John 3:19-21)

No matter how awkward it may feel, we must begin discussing reality in a way that allows for honesty and leads to change. When we as a global church avoid uncomfortable topics, preferring to keep things secret and hidden, we allow violence to flourish in private. The only way to dispel the darkness is to shine the light of truth upon it, and to bring it into the sterilizing sunshine of God's character. John tells us that if someone keeps evil hidden in the dark, they are not true followers of God.

THE MINDSET OF POWER AND CONTROL

Church communities can unknowingly promote ways of thinking that increase abusive patterns of behavior, because we idolize those who wield power.

¹¹ Ellen G. White. *Adventist Home* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952) 16.

But wait, isn't power a good thing? It can be. But power unchecked, corrupts quickly. As followers of Christ, we are called to treat each other according to the Fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22).

When we focus on exerting power over others, controlling the choices of others, and forcing our will on others, we easily forget that only Lucifer sought for power. Satan seeks to take. To possess. To control.

Christ seeks to give. Jesus and the Father are one in their identity of LOVE. Together, they employ only the tools of love and truth to invite us to accept salvation. Every other tool: forcefulness, deception, manipulation, trickery, bribery, intimidation, deflection, isolation, enticement... all of these are tools of the devil, not of God. We cannot use these tools in our parenting, our romantic relationships, our marriages, or our ministries without taking on the characteristics of Satan.

When church people, members OR leaders, focus on power instead of servanthood — whether in our marriages, in our classes, in our small groups, or in our congregation and community at large — we perpetuate an atmosphere that makes abuse thrive. We seek to hold the POWER of God, without possessing the CHARACTER of God.

Then we are heartbroken when our children grow up into youth who have seen abuse modeled as the norm, and follow in our emotionally, verbally, physically, or spiritually violent footsteps.

Possessing power without also possessing the character of God is evidence of sin that must be exposed to the light of God's truth.

LIGHT BRINGS HEALING

Until we break the cycle of abuse, we are not following Jesus' command to love one another and to live in the light. "Anyone who loves another brother or sister is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. But anyone who hates [abuses] another brother or sister is still living and walking in darkness" (1 John 2:10, 11).

When we exhibit the fortitude required to talk openly and honestly about creating homes filled with kindness and compassion; when we refuse to protect and enable the familiar habits that endorse a spirit of violence and aggression toward the next generation, the church can begin to experience revival and healing.

Until we do this, we are collectively stealing the treasure of safety and trust from our children's hearts. In doing so, we misrepresent the character of God and transgress the third commandment, which says, "You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name" (Exodus 20:7).

As members of the Body of Christ, we claim to reflect the name of God. When our daily example does not showcase the Fruit of the Spirit, we are taking God's name in vain.

In Galatians chapter five, Paul tells us that when we follow the desires of our "sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

It may be uncomfortable to recognize that far too often we treat our family at home with more hostility, quarreling, jealousy, angry outbursts, envy, and other forms of emotional and physical aggression than we may exhibit anywhere else. Our spouses and children become easy targets for our frustration, exhaustion, or irritability. Then they grow up believing these patterns of behavior are normal, and they treat siblings, peers, romantic partners, and their future families in the same generational pattern.

Ellen White wrote in great detail about home life, and the importance of kindness and mutual respect. "Home," she says, "should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another. The sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides. If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence."¹²

"Never forget that you are to make the home bright and happy for yourselves and your children by cherishing the Saviour's attributes. Troubles may invade, but these are the lot of humanity. Let patience, gratitude, and love keep sunshine in the heart though the day may be ever so cloudy. The home may be plain, but it can always be a place where cheerful words are spoken and kindly deeds are done, where courtesy and love are abiding guests."¹³

This attitude at home does not depend on wealth, gender, or cultural norms. It hinges upon our willingness to imitate Jesus Christ and to model His heart of love to our children and youth. Jesus Christ must be our reference and the center of our attitudes at home.

This is not a calling only for mothers, either. It is an expectation of all who claim to follow Jesus Christ and to be filled with the Spirit — men *and* women, boys *and* girls.

"Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous."¹⁴

CONCLUSION

¹² Ibid, 15.

¹³ Ibid, 17, 18.

¹⁴ Ibid, 118.

Scripture calls us to show love by speaking truth about violence. “What sorrow for those who say that evil is good and good is evil, that dark is light and light is dark, that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter” (Isaiah 5:20).

In Ephesians 5:11-13 Paul instructs us clearly to

- not participate in darkness,
- expose the deeds of darkness,
- use light to make things visible,
- expose sin in the light.

When we minimize at-home examples of violence to our children, accepting aggressive cultural patterns as normal, and make the abuse of power appear to be less harmful than it is in God’s eyes, we act in opposition to God’s heart of love.

As long as violence thrives in silence within the households of the faith community, as long as our churches conduct evangelism and outreach using methods based on power or forcefulness, as long as we embrace the aspects of our local culture that endorse and encourage an attitude of control over others — we are modeling to our youth that violence is normal, that it is not safe for them to report harm, and that the mindset of domination and entitlement is an acceptable substitution for God’s sacrificial love.

If we choose, we can show our young people how to stop violence and **enditnow**[®]. But this means we must look in the mirror and address our own violence, our own aggression, our own sense of entitlement to control and power over others. How do we begin to do that?

We begin by being willing to do whatever it takes to break the silence . . . and **enditnow**.

Silence is not how God defines loving others well.
Scripture says to speak out (Isaiah 58:1, 2, 6,7).

Silence is not the way to inspire abusers to embrace humble change.
Scripture says to hold each other accountable (Ephesians 5:11-13).

Silence is not part of the biblical process of forgiveness.
Scripture says to rebuke those who harm the little ones (Luke 17:3).

Silence does not bring transformation.
Scripture shows that covering sin brings calamity to the entire community (Joshua 7-9).

Silence does not facilitate healing.
Silence does not save the lambs.

Together we can break the silence . . . and **enditnow**.

God's compassion compels the body of Christ to also respond compassionately to the needs that are created as the consequence of abuse. In doing so, victims who are broken by all forms of abuse are given the opportunity to heal and rebuild their lives.

May God bless you and me as we pray, speak, and work together against violence and to end it now.

Together, we can break the silence.

Together, we can end it now.

Amen.

—end—

Statement on Pornography

Diverse courts and cultures may debate the definitions and consequences of pornography (the literature of sexual deviance), but on the basis of eternal principles, Seventh-day Adventists of whatever culture deem pornography to be destructive, demeaning, desensitizing, and exploitative.

It is *destructive* to marital relationships, thus subverting God's design that husband and wife cleave so closely to each other that they become, symbolically, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is *demeaning*, defining a woman (and in some instances a man) not as a spiritual-mental-physical whole, but as a one-dimensional and disposable sex-object, thus depriving her of the worth and the respect that are her due and right as a daughter of God.

It is *desensitizing* to the viewer/reader, callousing the conscience and "perverting the perception," thus producing a "depraved person" (Romans 1:22, 28, NEB).

It is *exploitative*, pandering to prurience, and basally abusive, thus contrary to the Golden rule, which insists that one treat others as one wishes to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Particularly offensive is child pornography. Said Jesus: "If anyone leads astray even one child who believes in me, he would be better off thrown into the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around his neck!" (See Matthew 18:6).

Though Norman Cousins may not have said it in Biblical language, he has perceptively written: "The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization."—*Saturday Review of Literature*, Sept. 20, 1975.

A society plagued by plunging standards of decency, increasing child prostitution, teenage pregnancies, sexual assaults on women and children, drug-damaged mentalities, and organized crime can ill afford pornography's contribution to these evils.

Wise, indeed, is the counsel of Christianity's first great theologian: "If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good" (Philippians 4:8, 9, *Phillips*). This is advice that all Christians would do well to heed.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.

<https://www.adventist.org/articles/pornography/>

—end—

THE PROBLEM WITH PORNOGRAPHY: Addiction, Abuse, & Affliction

Written by Erica Jones

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North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

THE PROBLEM WITH PORN (1)

Harmless fun? Not hardly. Pornography use causes physical, emotional, and psychological damage. Its endorphin-releasing nature turns the viewer into a self-absorbed addict, making a mockery of the beautiful gift of sex God created. It is inherently violent and upholds depravity over mutual intimacy and has strong ties to human trafficking. New evidence proves that pornography use strips romantic relationships of trust and fidelity and is one of the most common causes of failed marriages. Breaking free of the cycle is possible, and freedom is just around the corner.

WE CANNOT IGNORE IT ANYMORE. (2)

Pornography use has become rampant across nearly all demographics. It affects men and women of all ages. It doesn't stop at the church doors, and it doesn't stop at the doors of the family home. Silence and shame only perpetuate the cycle; we cannot be silent about it.

IT'S NOT A SMALL PROBLEM. (3)

- Average age of exposure, age 11.
- Daily searches for porn: 68 million.
- Christians: porn is a major problem in the home, 47 percent.
- Women who use it regularly, 1/3.

ADDICTION: FEEDING THE BEAST (4)

Porn is not a harmless hobby. The consequences are detrimental.

WHAT DOES ADDICTION TO PORN LOOK LIKE? (5)

- Keep increasing the periods of time you spend watching porn
- Feel watching porn makes you feel "high" or serves as a "fix" to your troubles
- Feel guilty about the consequences of viewing pornography
- Spend hours perusing online porn sites, even if it means you're neglecting self-care or responsibilities
- 6) Insist that your romantic or sexual partners watch porn with you
- Feel unable to enjoy sex without first watching porn

- Feel unable to resist the urge to watch porn
- Less satisfying sexual life
- Relationship issues
- Engagement in risky behavior to watch porn

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE CLICKING? (7)

- A 2016 study examined MRI brain scans of porn viewers and showed enhanced activity in the part of the brain that plays a key role in decision making and reward-related behavior. The viewers' brains were releasing dopamine in response to viewing erotic images.
- The reward center is activated when we accomplish a goal; When you experience the reward, your brain responds by releasing dopamine, which essentially reinforces the notion that you need more of whatever that reward is.
- The continued release of dopamine that occurs when someone chronically and compulsively watches porn actually alters the reward system in the brain. These changes in the brain build new "maps" for sexual stimulation, and over time, the previously established maps are no longer able to compare to ones being watched by porn viewing.

The reward center is activated when we accomplish a goal. When you experience the reward, your brain responds by releasing dopamine, which essentially reinforces the notion that you need more of whatever that reward is. In other words, these dopamine discharges are powerful enough to motivate your future decisions. Let's not forget that dopamine is released during an experience that involves sexual excitement and novelty — you know, the kind you witness in porn.

Over time, your brain starts to become desensitized to these dopamine hits. In Normal Doidge's book on neuroplasticity, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, he explains that the continued release of dopamine that occurs when someone chronically and compulsively watches Internet porn actually alters the reward system in the brain. To put it plainly, the more you watch porn, the more dopamine hits you get, and in turn, the more likely you are to watch it again.

Not only that, but Doidge further explains that these changes in the brain build new "maps" for sexual stimulation, and over time, the previously established maps are no longer able to compare to ones being watched by porn viewing. Think of it like this: When you build up a tolerance to a drug, you need to increase your intake of that drug in order to feel the effects. Similarly, Doidge concluded that a porn viewer may need to perpetually progress to increasingly explicit content to experience the same level of excitement.

ADDICTION LITERALLY CHANGES YOUR BRAIN. (8)

1. Studies of the brain show that if someone is addicted to pornography, they tend to have problems at work and with carrying out matters of daily living (DeSousa & Lodha, 2017).
2. The more hours per week someone uses pornography, the less gray matter volume they have in their brain. In addition, connected tissues that are associated with healthy brain functioning begin to deteriorate with increasing hours of use (DeSousa & Lodha, 2017).
3. Among adolescents age 12-16, pornography addiction impairs recent verbal memory (Prawiroharjo et al, 2019).

THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION (9)

Curiosity, Absorption, Dependence, Tolerance, Shame

Addiction can happen in as little as eight weeks. It may begin with simple curiosity, but as you experience the effects of the dopamine, you become absorbed. The more you look, the more you want, and soon you find yourself needing to watch regularly. Just like a drug, the viewer builds up a tolerance and needs more—and what began as curiosity turns into an addiction, usually accompanied by shame.

PEOPLE BECOME A MEANS TO AN END (10)

Over time, pornography creates an obsession with looking at people rather than interacting with them. Porn reflects unreal images of people—they become mere objects rated by size, shape, and harmony of parts—not a whole being. As the fantasy world becomes the norm, the viewer begins to fear true intimacy.

- Others become objects to be judged, sexualized, pursued, hunted
- Voyeurism
- Desensitization
- Objectification

NATE'S STORY (11)

Play video and ask some follow-up questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U93S7Clj-Q&t=49s>

ABUSE: THE INHERENT VIOLENCE OF PORN (12)

You may think pornography isn't hurting anyone. Let's take a closer look.

BY THE NUMBERS (13)

(Read slide #1-4)

1. Both pornography and alcohol consumption are unique predictors of sexual assault victimization for college females; the combined effect of pornography and alcohol

dramatically increases the odds of victimization. One reason for this is that pornography minimizes sexually aggressive acts (de Heer, et al., 2020).

2. Men are more likely than women to become aroused by pornographic images featuring rape. Men who equate sexuality with expression of aggression and power were more likely to prefer rape porn than other men (Carvalho & Rosa, 2020).
3. With increasingly high use of porn, it becomes more likely that men will be likely to rape, likely to commit sexual assault, be sexually entitled, and have hostility toward women (Goodson, et al., 2020).
4. Men who consume more pornography, particularly male-dominant pornography, are more likely to use sexual force in their own relationships (De Heer et al., 2020).
5. Violence against women in pornography is commonly seen. For example, 72% of men and 46% of women have seen pornography where a man ejaculated on a woman's face (Herbenick et al., 2020).
6. Rape porn has been seen by 21% of men and 11% of women (Herbenick et al., 2020).
7. BDSM porn has been seen by 45% of men and 33% of women (Herbenick et al., 2020).
8. People often imitate what they have seen in pornography. For example, 20% of men and 12% of women have choked someone during sex, 11% of men and 21% of women have been choked during sex, and 48% of men have ejaculated on a woman's face (Herbenick et al., 2020).
9. Men's consumption of pornography, particularly violent pornography, is associated with more aggressive behavior toward female partners. This relationship is even stronger when the man is sexist, feels justified in committing violence, and views women as sexual objects (Rodriguez & Fernandez-Gonzales, 2019).
10. Women who use pornography are more likely to commit non-consensual sexual activity, particularly using emotional manipulation and deception of their male partners (Hughes et al., 2020).
11. Pornography, especially violent pornography, shows association with increases in sexual assault related attitudes and past history of assaultive behavior (Bridges, 2019).
12. The more pornography men use, the more they see women as objects, not as people (Seabrook et al., 2019).
13. 45% of scenes in online pornography include at least one act of physical aggression. Spanking, gagging, slapping, hair pulling, and choking are the five most common forms of physical aggression (Fritz et al, 2020).
14. In pornography with aggression, women are the target in 97% of the scenes, and their response to aggression was either neutral or positive and rarely negative. Men were the perpetrators of aggression against women in 76% of scenes (Fritz et al., 2020).
15. 29% of male 10th graders have seen violent pornography (Rostad et al., 2019).
16. 16% of female 10th graders have seen violent pornography (Rostad et al., 2019).
17. Boys who have seen violent pornography are over twice as likely to report committing sexual violence and physical violence against a dating partner (Rostad et al., 2019).
18. Girls who have seen violent pornography are more likely to experience sexual violence from a dating partner (Rostad et al., 2019).

19. Among those who have seen “rough sex” in pornography (behaviors including hair pulling, spanking, scratching, biting, bondage, fisting, and double penetration) 91% wanted to take part in such behaviors and 82% had taken part in at least one of the behaviors. This lends credence to the assertion that watching pornography can lead to behavior, including behavior involving violence (Vogels & O’Sullivan, 2019).
20. Rigorous laboratory studies find significant associations between watching pornography and inducing aggression supportive attitudes and behaviors (Bridges, 2019).
21. Among women imprisoned for making child pornography, 60% had a history of sexual abuse while 46% reported physical abuse (Bickart et al., 2019).

IT’S NOT HURTING ANYONE? (14)

- A positive response to violence in pornographic films promotes a dehumanizing and aggressive idea of sexual behavior. When emotions of arousal are connected to violence and aggression, the brain learns to associate sexual behavior with those things, which can make viewers less compassionate to victims of sexual violence and exploitation. To make matters worse, when pornographic films show people enjoying violence and aggression, the viewer is led to believe that people enjoy being treated this way.
- Victims of sex trafficking reported being forced to watch porn in order to learn what they will be expected to do. Further than being used essentially as a training manual for victims, pornography is also often times utterly indistinguishable from sex trafficking. Nearly half of sex trafficking victims report that pornography was made of them while they were in bondage. This content can be used for financial gain as an online product or as an advertising tool, with the viewer none the wiser on the true story behind the camera.

IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT YOU. (15)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7OllwEdOHY>

#THATSNOTLOVE (16)

Hollywood teaches that this kind of behavior is normal and attractive.

Five Things Fifty Shades Teaches

1. Affections can be bought, and the more money spent the more control earned in a relationship.
2. Stalking and controlling behaviors are gestures of affection, instead of red flags. Possessiveness is also “loving,” especially when manipulation is involved.
3. It’s romantic to ignore or enjoy the pain of others for personal pleasure.
4. It’s acceptable for sex to be used as a weapon, and coercion and force aren’t abusive so much as they’re expressions of desire.
5. Wealth and success coupled with a tortured past means an abusive relationship is acceptable, and it’ll even be called the “love story” of the decade.

AFFLICTION: DEPRESSION, SHAME & DESTRUCTION (17)

Pornography use leads to personal destruction.

THE EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES (18)

Isolation and Shame

Besides the sexual dysfunction that porn brings into the teenager's life, it is an isolating force as well. Feelings of loneliness often trigger a person to medicate with porn. Then, after they have used porn, their loneliness returns even stronger. A recent study in the Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy reported a strong association between loneliness and pornography use. Put simply, if a person is chronically lonely, they're far more likely to use porn on a regular basis.

It's hard to know which comes first because porn and isolation feed one another. Porn leads to isolation and isolation leads to porn. No wonder those who use porn report more loneliness.¹⁰ Sex addiction is an intimacy disorder. When a person has less bonding and intimacy in their life, the fake intimacy of porn becomes more appealing to them.

Fake Intimacy and Loneliness

If someone is isolated from real people, porn allows them to feel close with people through sexual fantasy. Pornography provides a fantasy place someone can go to feel accepted and desired by others. Porn provides fake intimacy that makes it more tempting beyond just the sexual pleasure. If there was a lack of intimacy in someone's family growing up, this can make them more susceptible to the draw of artificial intimacy. Isolation makes people hungrier for intimacy. Sadly, today's younger generations are the loneliest in US history.⁵ A recent survey showed 30% of Millennials (born between 1977-94) say they are lonely and 22% say they have no friends. Gen Z (born between 1995-2015) are even lonelier.

Lethargy and Depression

Porn use artificially raises the baseline level of dopamine. As a result, porn users need more dopamine to feel normal. And without the high, they can find themselves depressed, unmotivated and antisocial. In fact, these feelings affect porn users more frequently than non-users.⁵ Once an addict's brain has adapted to need unnatural stimulation, they can't enjoy the simple pleasures of life like before. They become bored and disengaged with the things they used to enjoy.

Porn creates a chemical dependency in the brain. For some, this has mild effects, but for others, it's significant. Particularly on teenagers.

THE RELATIONAL CONSEQUENCES (19)

Porn is graphic and explicit and shows the human body as a sex object to be used, exploited, and discarded. It's a twisted portrayal of real connections, a counterfeit, a lie to consumers. It shows transactional sex that's drained of any true passion or love or intimacy, infused with

aggression and performance exaggeration. In the end, the consumer is left with a shocking spectator sport of sex.

- Pornography use increases the marital infidelity rate by more than 300%
- 40 percent of people identified as “sex addicts” lose their spouses, 58 percent suffer considerable financial losses, and about 33% lose their jobs
- 68% of divorce cases involve one party meeting a new paramour over the internet while 56% involve one party having an “obsessive interest” in pornographic websites
- Married people who view pornography are more likely to believe that their marriage is in trouble, more likely to discuss ending the marriage, and more likely to repeatedly break up compared to those who do not view pornography (Perry, 2020).

THE SEXUAL CONSEQUENCES (20)

- When one person becomes accustomed to masturbating to porn, they are actually turning away from intimate interaction.
- When watching pornography, the user is in total control of the sexual experience.
- The porn user may expect that their partner will always be immediately ready for intercourse.
- Some porn users rationalize that pornography is ok if it does not involve partnered sexual acts and instead relies only on masturbation.

MATT’S STORY (21)

Play video and ask some follow-up questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbYWKVAeu6Y>

THE SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES (21)

By Nate Danser, Director of Ministry Outreach at Pure Life Ministries.

One common justification seeks to plead innocence for pornography use by claiming that it only affects the person using it. In some ways, this scenario is more plausible than ever before. Today, a man can access as much pornography as he wants in the privacy of his own bedroom. He doesn’t have to risk exposing his family to shame by purchasing an adult magazine at the local grocery store or by sneaking into an adult movie theater, where someone he knows might see him.

And so the question, “Doesn’t it affect only me?” seems reasonable. However, just as the physical realm has laws which cannot be altered, so the spiritual realm has its laws. The truth is this: A person who jumps off a cliff cannot keep his body from hitting the ground, and a person who watches pornography cannot keep from negatively affecting other people.

There are two main areas in which people who view pornography are bound to affect other people by their actions. The first is direct, the second is indirect.

They Reap What You Sow

The apostle Paul told the Ephesian church that they ought to put off their former way of life, because it was "being corrupted through its deceitful desires." (Ephesians 4:18 AMP). He also told the Galatians to diligently fight against sowing to the flesh, because he that "sows to his flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and corruption." (Galatians 6:8).

When a person sows to his lower nature by watching pornography, he sows a great degree of moral corruption into his spiritual life, and he is bound to reap nasty spiritual consequences. Some will reap the corruption of an increasingly explosive temper. Others harvest a general apathy toward life, and show no healthy desire to take care of themselves or fulfill their responsibilities. Still others bear the fruit of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, etc.

It is not difficult to see how this will affect other people. Whenever anything doesn't go his way at home, Ken lashes out at his wife and children. Jeremy squanders the money his parents paid for college by spending 5 hours a day watching porn. He skips classes, barely passes tests, and forgets to pay his bills. Lina is trapped in porn and begins to get depressed. She feels fat compared to the women she sees, and starts forcing herself to throw up after every meal. Her friends constantly worry about her, often wondering how they can help her.

Often when people are addicted to pornography, they are unable to see the changes that are taking place in their personalities, emotions and characters. However, even if other people cannot discern the source of the problem, they certainly feel the sting of the consequences.

Unless You Remain on the Vine

The second way a person's pornography affects other people is more indirect, but equally as damaging. Just as pornography introduces a moral corruption into a man's nature which makes him what he should not be, it also hinders him from becoming what he should be.

The Word of God tells us that we were "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10 NIV) However, Jesus qualifies this statement by saying that "just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me." (John 15:4 HCSB)

A person who is regularly indulging in pornography is cutting himself off from the spiritual influence of Jesus, the Heavenly vine. If the person is not completely spiritually dead already, he or she is extremely sick. This spiritual sickness will always hinder a person's effectiveness in the works that Christ has called him to do.

Pornography kills our passion for God. It destroys our ability to comprehend spiritual truths. It withers our desire to spend ourselves for God's kingdom. It distorts our perspectives and gives us a skewed view of right and wrong.

"Secret sins and corrupt influences eventually steal away the power that should be available to everyone who does God's work in the earth."

Who knows how many men have been called into serving their local church, or even into full-time ministry work, whose calling has been aborted by getting involved with pornography? Filled with the shame of an impure life, they rightly feel that they are disqualified from ministry.

How many fathers are unable to lead their wives and children spiritually because of their own secret sins? They wish they could instruct and guide, but the boldness which comes from a clean conscience is undermined by lack of personal victory. The position of spiritual authority is vacant in their homes, or inappropriately filled by their wives. Therefore, the shaping of their children's spiritual and moral character comes from their peers, the perverse culture around them, or their own corrupt natures.

How many young men and women have been called to take a stand for righteousness in their schools or workplaces, but their morals have been eroded to such a great degree that they have no real testimony of Christ and His truth?

On the other hand, there are some that get involved in pornography while in full-time ministry, and must force themselves to go through the motions of ministry. While God may choose to bless other people through their ministry, there will most certainly come a time when they will either be exposed, or they will simply quit. Secret sins and corrupt influences eventually steal away the power that should be available to everyone who does God's work in the earth.

Pornography Already Affected Someone

The negative effects of a person's pornography use on the people around them is indisputable, and simply incalculable. But the truth is, even if it were possible to avoid affecting the people in your sphere of influence, there is Someone who has already been affected by your sin.

"He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5 ESV)

Jesus, the humble Lamb of God was affected by our sin. The clear teaching of Scripture is that Jesus Christ was beaten, bruised, tortured and put to death upon a Roman cross as a direct result of the sins of humanity. Our sins require an eternal weight of condemnation, and because God was not willing to simply send us all to hell, He ordained that His Son would be brutalized for us. It was the only way that God could justly forgive our sins and bring us into the way of peace.

As long as we willingly allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that we are only affecting ourselves when we watch pornography, many of us will never care enough to really want to change. May we allow our eyes to open, painful as that experience may be, to the reality that pornography is never a victimless crime. And may the Lord grant repentance to all who are in

need, so that their lives might affect everyone around them, not for evil, but for their good and God's glory.

PORN BRINGS TOXIC SHAME (23)

Shame and guilt are common emotions that most porn users report. Shame is the most toxic. Shame is different from guilt. Guilt says "I've done bad" but shame says "I am bad". There is self-loathing and a sense of worthlessness at the core of shame. Shame declares some version of "I am not enough"; "There is something wrong with me", "I am bad"; or "I don't matter."

Shame researcher Brene Brown says "Shame is an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging."

When you violate your own moral standards to watch porn, shame finds you. When your porn use breaks promises you've made to God, your spouse and yourself, the shame multiplies. This shame also takes the form of negative self-talk which feeds other negative emotions – emotions you then feel the need to medicate with porn, further reinforcing the vicious cycle.

TOXIC SHAME (24)

"Real love is sexy, not fake pixels on a screen like porn.

Love is something that brings meaning and purpose to life, it's something that we are all after. And if you value real love and healthy relationships, consider how porn doesn't help either of those things thrive."

FTND

HOPE: SHEDDING LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS (25)

But there is hope, and freedom is right around the corner.

OVERCOMING SHAME (26)

There are six key ways to disempower and overcome shame:

1. Acknowledge the shame of the addiction but don't let it define you.

Take responsibility and own your addiction but don't let it own you. It is a sin to turn from but it must not define you. You are not your addiction. One weakness should never define a person.

2. Be vulnerable and move toward others.

Shame thrives in secrecy; community is key to dealing with shame. When you can share our whole story and still are accepted, you experience safety. The safety of a group translates over time into love, acceptance, and a strong sense of belonging. This is the opposite of what shame tells us.

3. Know the false promise of porn.

In the fantasy world of porn you are always somebody who is loved and wanted. Of course, after you use porn the guilt and shame come rushing back in to continue the cycle. The lie of finding relief from shame through porn always results in more shame. Don't fall for the trap.

4. Beware of the blame game.

Shame quickly can turn to blame. You blame yourself for your actions, but you use this as an excuse to continue the habit. Avoid deflecting responsibility with statements like, "Of course I do bad things because I'm a bad person, I can't help it. It's not my fault. This is who I am and I can never change."

5. Avoid negative self talk.

Negative self talk reinforces the shame messages you're already feeling. It makes you believe these lies as truths. Shame feeds the negative emotions that often trigger the porn user to act out. Until the shame is uncovered and dealt with this cycle will continue. It can be helpful to write down the negative messages you repeat to yourself for a week. People are usually surprised by how much negative self talk they have that reinforces a shame identity.

6. Replace the lies with truth.

Once you have identified the lies, you can replace those lies with truth. For example, instead of the lie of being worthless you are in fact deeply loved by God (Romans 5:8).

RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN (27)

It's possible to retrain your brain.

A+B=C (28)

Look for patterns/common themes in your thinking. These distorted thought patterns create channels in the brain, making it easier to continue to believe them. Take time to think through the feelings you're experiencing and whether they are an accurate reflection of the situation.

A = Activating event or stressor or trigger situation

B = Belief or thoughts and feelings about the stressor

C = Consequence or results caused by our belief

For example: (29)

A — Activating Event or Stressor: your boss asks you to work this weekend.

B — Your belief about working this weekend is that it is unfair to ask you. You believe you should not have to work weekends.

C — The consequence or result is that you decide not to work this weekend, even though all of your co-workers have been asked to work this weekend as well.

It is your false belief that asking you to work on a weekend is unfair and that you do not have to work weekends.

Look for patterns/common themes in your thinking. These distorted thought patterns create channels in the brain, making it easier to continue to believe them. Take time to think through the feelings you're experiencing and whether they are an accurate reflection of the situation.

I THINK, THEREFORE I AM (30)

Everything that goes in is feeding you or depleting you. "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds . . ." (Romans 12:2).

Freedom begins when we pay attention and interrupt negative thoughts with truth. Grab the thought; diagnose it; take it to God; make a choice.

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT (31)

You can be the air traffic controller of your mental airport. You occupy the control tower and can direct the mental traffic of your world.

Thoughts circle above, coming and going. If one of them lands, it's because you gave it permission. If it leaves, it's because you directed it to do so.

You didn't select your birthplace or birth date; you didn't choose your parents or siblings; you don't determine the weather; but you CAN choose what you think about!

The devil is doing his best to unload his stinking cargo into our minds. If we let him, he will lead us to a sunless place and leave us there. He is the master of deceit. This is why Paul tells us to "fix" our thoughts on what is true...in Greek, the word fix comes from the root for logical...anxiety is best faced with clear headed, logical thinking, which can only be accomplished when we shut out the dark and let in the light.

Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind; if encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained. Train your mind!

LIFESPAN OF AN EMOTION: 90 SECONDS (32)

What keeps emotions lingering are the stories we tell ourselves about them, usually that the situation should be other than what it is, or that a person (or we) should have behaved differently. And it's totally understandable that we tell ourselves those stories—we want to justify the sensations we're feeling, and the ego wants to strengthen itself through being right and making someone else, or a situation, wrong. Even when we're feeling shame, we're making ourselves 'right' about being a bad person, unworthy, etc. (The ego can be seriously twisted that way.)

The irony is that this "90-second rule," as it's called, has also been used to shame people who can't seem to "get over" an emotion in that short a time span. If you're really practicing, the

theory goes, then you should be able to release the story and just focus on the sensations. Let them go, let the situation go, move on in serenity. It is moral superiority cloaked in New Age language.

The challenge is that we are wired to create the very stories that keep emotions alive. And the longer we've been telling ourselves a certain story, the harder it is to "just let it go."

On top of that, we're wired with a negativity bias (as some say, our brains are "teflon for positive experiences and velcro for negative"). From an evolutionary perspective, it's one of the things that kept our ancestors alive, and it still serves to alert us to threats. Yet these days, the 'threat' is often just to our ego, to our sense of separation.

And when we're used to feeling bad (sad, angry, anxious, shame), the neural pathways that correspond to those emotions become strengthened, like a brain superhighway. So, it becomes easier for those emotions—and therefore the stories associated with them—to become triggered.

EMMA'S STORY (33)

Play video and ask some follow-up questions.

<https://fightthenewdrug.org/media/emmas-story-overcoming-struggles-video/>

SEEK HELP (34)

Recognize, Reveal, Restore

There is no shame in getting help. Healing is found in recognizing the problem, calling it by name, and finding restoration in the grace of God.

YOU CAN OVERCOME (35)

Share Gateway to Wholeness resources from <http://gatewaytowholeness.com/>

GATEWAY TO WHOLENESS RESOURCES (36)

Share Gateway to Wholeness resources from <http://gatewaytowholeness.com/>

SHARE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (37)

- The Truth About Porn
- Fight the New Drug
- Pure Life Ministries
- Join Fortify
- New Freedom to Love

—end—

Seminar

DANGEROUS KISSING COUSINS: Pornography and intimate partner violence

Written by Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

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From *Ministry*,[®] International Journal for Pastors, November 2019

Porn is a global, estimated \$97 billion industry, with about \$12 billion of that coming from the U.S."¹ The consumption of pornography (porn) in the United States has climbed sharply with the proliferation of the internet and smartphones. More than 77 percent of Americans view pornography at least once a month.² At least 30 percent of all internet traffic is to pornographic websites.³ What about in the church?⁴

"Sixty-four percent of self-identified Christian men and 15 percent of self-identified Christian women view pornography at least once a month (compared to 65 percent of non-Christian men and 30 percent of non-Christian women).

"Thirty-three percent of clergy say they have visited a sexually explicit Web site. Of those who have visited sexually explicit websites, 53 percent say they have visited the sites a few times in the past year, and 18 percent said they visited explicit Web sites between 'a couple times a month' and 'more than once a week.'

"Twenty-one percent of youth pastors and 14 percent of pastors admit they currently struggle with pornography."⁵

This is of grave concern because pornography is the very antithesis of Christian conduct. Pornography promises to deliver pleasure, but it disseminates pain. In porn, women are disrespected, coerced, and physically and verbally abused, and that reality is shaping how society thinks and acts.

While not all porn portrays physical or verbal violence, even nonviolent porn has been shown to have effects. Much research has confirmed that those who consume even nonviolent porn are more likely to support statements that agree with or even promote abuse and sexual aggression toward women and girls.⁶ The most likely explanation is that most porn depicts men as powerful and in charge and women as submissive and obedient. This attitude sets the stage for unequal power dynamics in couple relationships, resulting in slow-but-sure acceptance of verbal and physical aggression against women.

Of greater concern is that porn consumption affects not only men's attitudes toward women but also their actions. In a large study conducted in 2016, the researchers concluded that, "on the average, individuals who consume pornography more frequently are more likely to hold

attitudes conducive [favorable] to sexual aggression and engage in actual acts of sexual aggression.”⁷ Porn consumers are more likely to use verbal pressure, drugs, and alcohol to coerce women into sex, and exposure to porn increases having violent fantasies and actually committing violent assaults.⁸

THE DANGEROUS INTERSECTION

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation highlights three ways domestic violence intersects with pornography:⁹

1. Pornography sets expectations of violence and abuse. In a deranged way, pornography acts as a form of sexual education, teaching children, young men, and adult males the lesson that female sexual partners should enjoy physical acts such as hitting, gagging, slapping, or non-consensual sex. We have been approached by women and are often asked questions during couples’ retreats about certain forms of sex that they were not accustomed to before and that their husbands are now asking for and, at times, requiring. One woman told us of how her husband demands sex every day, and when she rejects his advances, he, basically, rapes her. Not surprisingly, research conducted in 2011 is clear that even mainstream pornography use by frequent viewers is associated with greater intent to commit rape.¹⁰

2. Very often, abusers use pornographic videos or nude pictures they have taken themselves of their victims in order to either coerce or punish victims in abusive relationships by threatening to share—or actually sharing—them online. While the term “revenge pornography” is not often connected to domestic violence or abusive relationships, these phenomena often overlap. Fortunately, at least 40 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws against nonconsensual sharing of videos or nude pictures.¹¹

3. Pornography use by domestic abusers can increase the odds of sexual assault. Janet Hinson Shope conducted a study of 271 battered women, in which 30 percent stated their abusers reportedly used pornography.¹² Shope concluded that “the majority of women (58%) whose abusers used pornography acknowledged that the pornography had affected their abuse.” Research found a link between pornography use and marital rape, which is a form of domestic abuse. According to their findings, men who use pornography and go to strip clubs were found to engage in higher rates of sexual abuse, stalking, and marital rape.¹³

IT IS A PRIVATE MATTER

Most, if not all, porn consumers will tell you that watching porn is simply a private matter and that it does not hurt anyone. But research shows that porn makes many consumers more likely to support violence against women and believe that women secretly enjoy being raped, which leads many to be sexually aggressive in real life.¹⁴ One study found that “those with higher exposure to violent porn were six times more likely to have raped someone than did those who had low past exposure.”¹⁵

Mary Anne Layden, director of the Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program Center at the University of Pennsylvania, stated that “40 percent of abused women indicated that their partner used violent pornography.”¹⁶ She also cited research which found that men who view pornography tend to view their partners as less attractive. It affects negatively the way they see their own spouse because she will never be able to compare or compete with the countless, and apparently nearly perfect, women they see on the screen.

In a world of internet clouds, tablets, computers, and hand-held devices, the war against pornography will probably never be completely won. Among all these forces, the church plays a unique role in how women and the weak should be treated and in the proper role of sex within the context of marriage. Men in church may think, in common with other men, that viewing pornography is a private matter. The reality is that even occasional use of pornography affects how they view women—and most important their relationship with Christ.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet, declared, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV). Only 9 percent of churchgoers and 7 percent of pastors can identify a program at their church to help those struggling with pornography.¹⁷ So, what are we to do?

1. *Start the journey to freedom immediately.* Break the addiction—yes, addiction—to pornography—the sooner, the better. Breaking up is hard to do, but it is the only way. We created a resource to help you get started. You can view it and share it for free. Visit the newfreedomtolove.org website where you will find testimonials, sermons and seminars, and other links and resources that can help you get started on the journey toward freedom from porn addiction. For additional help and resources, you can also visit the gatewaytowholeness.com website. In some cases, you may have to seek professional counseling help.

2. *Guard your mind—it’s a heart matter.* Jesus made it clear that it is a matter of the heart when He said, “Good people do good things because of the good in their hearts. Bad people do bad things because of the evil in their hearts. Your words [and actions] show what is in your heart” (Luke 6:45, CEV). Solomon knew that fact well when he wrote, “Carefully guard your thoughts because they are the source of true life” (Proverbs 4:23, CEV).

Instead of feeding your mind with images that distort God’s gift of sex and demean His daughters, accept God’s invitation, “Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways” (Proverbs 23:26, NASB). Take these encouraging words and claim them for yourself: “The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome.”¹⁸

3. *Recruit others to help you.* The battle for freedom from pornography is not one we can fight alone. Solomon explained it this way: "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, NLT). Now, more than ever, you need the help of others. Begin with your spouse or those closest to you and ask them to help you by being your accountability partners. Loneliness often drives a person to fill that void with porn.

While porn and intimate partner violence are dangerous kissing cousins, you do not have to be the instrument and your spouse and others the hapless victims. It is in your power to make the decision and take the steps necessary, beginning today, to end both of these toxic, poisonous devices of the devil before they destroy others, and you.

ENDNOTES

¹ Mike Genung, "The Road to Grace," <https://www.roadtoGrace.net/current-porn-statistics/>.

² Tim Rymel, "Does Pornography Lead to Sexual Assault?" *HuffPost*, August 26, 2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/does-pornography-lead-to-sexual-assault_us_57c0876ae4b0b01630de8c93.

³ R. Douglas Fields, "The Explosive Mix of Sex and Violence," *Psychology Today*, January 26, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-new-brain/201601/the-explosive-mix-sex-and-violence>.

⁴ A version of this article was first published in the September 2019 issue of *Adventist Review*.

⁵ Mike Genung, "The Road to Grace," <https://www.roadtoGrace.net/current-porn-statistics/>.

⁶ "How Consuming Porn Can Lead to Violence," *Fight the New Drug*, August 23, 2017, <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-consuming-porn-can-lead-to-violence/>.

⁷ Paul J. Wright, Robert Tokunaga, and Ashley Kraus, "A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies," *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 1 (February 2016): 183–205.

⁸ "Porn Can Lead to Violence."

⁹ Haley Halverson with Emily Hale, "Three Ways Domestic Violence Is Connected to Pornography," *End Sexual Exploitation*, October 1, 2018, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/three-ways-domestic-violence-is-connected-to-pornography/>.

¹⁰ John D. Foubert, Matthew W. Brosi, and R. Sean Bannon, "Pornography Viewing Among Fraternity Men: Effects on Bystander Intervention, Rape Myth Acceptance and Behavioral Intent to Commit Sexual Assault," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 18, no. 4 (2011): 212–231.

¹¹ "46 States + DC+ One Territory Now Have Revenge Porn Laws," *Cyber Civil Rights Initiative*, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.cybercivilrights.org/revenge-porn-laws/>.

¹² Janet Hinson Shope, "When Words Are Not Enough: The Search for the Effect of Pornography on Abused Women," *Violence Against Women* 10, no. 1 (2004): 56–72.

¹³ Catherine A. Simmons, Peter Lehmann, and Shannon Collier-Tension, "Linking Male Use of the Sex Industry to Controlling Behaviors in Violent Relationships: An Exploratory Analysis," *Violence Against Women* 14, no. 4 (2008): 406–417.

¹⁴ "Porn Can Lead to Violence."

¹⁵ "Porn Can Lead to Violence."

¹⁶ Jay Everson, "To Confront Domestic Violence, We Must Confront Pornography," *Washington Times*, February 12, 2015, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/feb/12/op-ed-to-confront-domestic-violence-we-must-confro/>.

¹⁷ Mike Genung, "The Road to Grace." <https://www.roadtograce.net/current-porn-statistics/>.

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 324.

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