

“How to Respond to...”

PORNOGRAPHY

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Introduction: What is Pornography?

Pornography has many definitions depending on the person who wants to define it. Generally, pornography is defined as “*printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.*”¹ From this definition one can see how prevalent pornography may be accessed from TV’s to tablets, from movie’s to magazines, or from cell phones to any computer.

A Reality Check

How prevalent is pornography? Statistics show that nearly three-quarters of young adults (71%) and half of teens (50%) come across what they consider to be porn at least once a month, whether they are seeking it or not. It is also reported that 62% of teens and young adults have received a sexually explicit image and 41% have sent one (usually from/to their boy/girlfriend or friend). When they talk about porn with friends, 89% of teens, and 95% of young adults say they do so in a neutral, accepting, or encouraging way. That is, only one in 20 young adults and one in 10 teens say their friends think viewing pornography is a bad thing. Despite the awareness of the problem, most churches do not have programs specifically designed to assist those struggling with porn use.²

Is Pornography Sinful?

The Greek word “*eros*” is the origin and basic root word for our English word eroticism or erotic. The meaning of this word is to express love in a sensual or physical way, often igniting some level of sexual arousal. Eros was the name of the imaginary Greek god of love who was thought to be quite mischievous. We might think of our modern day Cupid who more playfully *inflicts* lust on an individual. But when one searches God’s Word, the word “*eros*” isn’t found. In fact, when this physical/sexual love is expressed on its own, *outside of God’s definition of a marriage*, God uses a different word to describe the activity as “*pornaia*” (English “porn”).

¹ Oxford Dictionaries · © Oxford University Press

² Barna Report Stats: <http://www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon/#.V87fnSgrKUn>

Examine how God places this in the obvious “works of the flesh.”

*“Now the works of the flesh are evident: **sexual immorality**, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” [Galatians 5:19-21]*

Notice what other sins are listed with sexual immorality. In looking at this particular list of sins, someone might ask why are some of these sins listed acceptable in our society, while others are not? It's NOT about what is socially acceptable, but what is acceptable and unacceptable to our Almighty God. Pornography would fall into this same category of “**pornaia**” (sexual immorality), whether actually committing the sexual acts or *watching* the sexual acts committed. Jesus clearly demonstrated this when He spoke about the 6th Commandment in His Sermon on the Mount, [Matthew 5:28]

“But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

In further teaching about adultery and sexual immorality Jesus quotes, as always, with His divine authority from Genesis 2:24,

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female... ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” [Matthew 19:4-6]

Jesus' teaching about the unity of “one flesh” is very critical to understanding true sexual morality. “One flesh” means that within God's institution of marriage, a man or woman is permitted and blessed by God to only have sexual intimacy with his wife or her husband (this is His wedding gift to the couple). Sexual activity outside of the bond of a married couple is the sinful act of adultery. Sexual activity of the unmarried is called fornication. God is clear, both adultery and fornication are sinful and against His holy law.

But is Pornography sinful, if you're thinking of your Spouse?

It is helpful if men and women are reminded that marriage between a husband and wife is to be patterned after Christ's relationship with the church. Since Christ would never “cheat” on the church, and since sinful man's idolatry is often described as spiritual adultery, this question might be appropriate:

“When the Israelites were worshiping false gods like Baal and Molech, [Ezekiel 23:36-38] would God have been okay with it if they simply said to Him, ‘We were only thinking of you Lord?’”

This very thing happened when Aaron made the golden calf.

"So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.'" [Exodus 32:5]

The LORD was furious that they gave all the credit of His deliverance from their Egyptian slave owners to a golden calf they had just made, and then said they were worshipping the LORD!?! Likewise, if a husband or wife says he or she is thinking about their spouse while watching porn (or even watching it together), what's the point of the porn? Either the spouse is good enough and the sole source of the desire, or they're not. When pornography is being used he or she isn't becoming excited by their spouse, but by the images/videos of another man or woman.

In a similar illustration, would a man be okay if his wife was bathing and some other man was 'thinking about his own wife' while watching the man's wife bathe? If a man were thinking about your wife while touching himself or someone else, would that make it alright? In the same way, if a husband or wife was thinking about his or her spouse while gazing at the private parts of another man or woman, does that make it OK in God's eyes? Since the fall into sin (Genesis 3), there's a reason why we call them "private parts". When our eyes see something that they shouldn't, we pray the Lord would remind us in that moment, "That's not yours to see."

"...the lust of the eyes . . . is not from the Father, but is from the world."
[1 John 2:16]

"Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied." [Proverbs 27:20]

No matter how the man or woman tries to justify his or her lustful thoughts, the Word of God is clear that it is sinful (**pornia** = sexually not moral). This includes pornography. After giving a list of immoral choices to the Romans, Paul writes:

"Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them." [Romans 1:32]

Sin is serious! We need to be reminded, by watching pornography, an individual is also giving approval to those who are practicing sexual immorality. This even includes those involved in producing the pornography. From Paul's words, God holds the ones approving of it just as accountable as the ones actually engaging in the act.

Do we Dress for Sexual Success?

Just like we pray for the Lord "to lead us NOT into temptation," it would be hypocritical for us to lead others into temptation with what we wear. If we are to dress with modesty, [1 Timothy 2:9] how in the world could we excuse something as immodest as pornography?

Is Pornography MORE than a Spiritual Issue?

Studies continue to show how porn destroys not only relationships and marriages, but "physically" men of all ages with porn-induced sexual problems, including ED (erectile dysfunction). Similar studies show the same kind of adverse effects in women also. Pornography confuses the dopamine chemicals in the brain which has a wide range of important functions throughout the body. Pornographic media creates multiple neurological "partners" that further desensitize the brain both emotionally and physically against a "normal" relationship. Porn is filmed showcasing next-to-impossible relationships and creating unreasonable expectations.³

God unites a man and woman as "one flesh" and the undivided sexual activity between a husband and wife is the blessed result of a God-gifted closeness. Pornography simply put, promotes and glorifies the physical act *without the closeness*.

How does God teach us to respond to Pornography?

In reading this, you may be responding to a friend or relative that has asked you questions or made statements about pornography, or you may be trying to navigate your own struggles with it. In either case, it is important that we aren't swayed with what the world and Satan are teaching us, but rather follow what our God teaches us!

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." [2 Timothy 2:22]

In Christ, there is forgiveness and strength. In 1 Corinthians 6:20, the Apostle Paul reminds each of us that "*You were bought at a price*" (with the blood of Christ = you, your body, is God's), and in chapter 7:4 that "*your body is not your own*" but your spouse's). Therefore, we are reminded to "fight the good fight of faith," to "pray without ceasing," and remember wars aren't fought alone or won overnight. So Paul encourages,

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." [Phil. 4:13]

In fighting lust, talk to your spouse, or a trusted Christian friend or Pastor for help. Pray, pray, and give thanks for Christ's strength in weakness!

Other available resources:

- "Every Man's Battle" by Fred Stoeker
- Accountability software: <https://covenanteyes.com/>
- <https://store.opendns.com/familyshield/setup/router>
- http://marripedia.org/pornography_objectifies_women
- <http://microsite.frc.org/get.cfm?i=RS09K01>



³ <http://yourbrainonporn.com/>