***Pornography Addiction—Help for Christians***

Pastors, staff members, and lay people can suffer from pornography addictions. These can range from nude pictures of the opposite sex, children or teen exploitation, homosexual ideation, interactions and fantasies on the internet or live phone chats. It is estimated that over half of the men who attend church in America has some kind of addiction to pornography.

With the prevalence of television, cable networks, and internet, pornography is easy to access. One used to believe that most pornography was viewed in the privacy of the home but this is not necessarily the case. We regularly receive calls from churches and denominations that state that their personnel, including pastors, are accessing pornographic content during office hours. Smart phones and other devices can bring easy access to almost every setting.

For most men, the first pornographic exposure occurred in childhood or early adolescence. Boys and young men fantasized about sexual acts and viewing of pornographic magazines or other materials. I believe men, in general, are graphic in nature. When men view such materials, the pictures and images are often etched in their mind. For this reason, it is very difficult to break away from being addicted to pornography.

There are many stages from curiosity, experimentation, to regular usage and being habitually addicted. One person reports that the highest level of endorphins and encephalins (neurotransmitters) are released into the body upon climax, flooding the excitement center of the brain and creating a high that is four times stronger than heroin!

The problem occurs when there is a reward to any type of behavior. When one consistently becomes reinforced or rewarded for viewing or fantasizing such images, it creates neurological pathways in the brain as conditioning the body to become aroused by these stimuli.

Men, whether they are in the ministry, a Sunday School teacher, or lay person, can be dealing or wrestling with pornography. **There is hope**. There are many resources available. There are books and other materials, support groups, counseling, and other ministry outreaches that can be beneficial and are trained in this area. Most of the people have told us they want to be released from the guilt, shame, and emotional drain that pornography seems to have a hold on them.

Before many groups or denominations have admitted pornography exists in the ministry, ***Pastoral Care, Inc.*** has been on the forefront in reporting and sharing there is a real problem within the church and ministry, offering help and guidelines to help the ministers and other lay people. One cannot solve a problem until it is identified.

One thing to remember, you are not alone. No matter what race, socioeconomic or marital status you may be in, there are hundreds of thousands of others just like you who face the same type of difficulties. Such addictions could include pornography, masturbation, cybersex, or other similar sexual practices. Many families have been devastated due to this “secret sin.” Most people report they have not shared their addiction to anyone else, trying to solve their problem by themselves, suppressing the fears and guilt, only to find out this addiction is much bigger than they are. One cannot ignore this issue, it will only get worse and the damage will spread and affect others more that we can ever dream or imagine. We have often preached: *“Sin will take you further than you ever imagined, will keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you are willing to pay or afford.”*

If you find yourself engulfed in a sexual addiction, here are suggested steps in helping yourself, whether you are a pastor, minister, staff member or lay person within the church.

1. **Admit you have a problem.** Face the facts head-on. The first step is to understand and admit what you have done. If you are engaging in pornography or sexual fantasies with another person outside of your spouse, you are committing adultery against your spouse—pure and simple.

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" ([Matthew 5:27-28](http://christiananswers.net/bible/mat5.html#27)).

If you are returning to this behavior over and over again, despite your desire to stop, then you are out control. You are [addicted](http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-f016.html). If this is the case, and you can admit it, then congratulations; you have taken the first step toward recovery.

1. **Repent, find help, and ask for spiritual forgiveness.** The Bible says we all fall short and have sinned. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ([Romans 3:23](http://christiananswers.net/bible/rom3.html#23)) We can fall short in many ways, such as lying, stealing, greed, adultery, taking the Lord's name in vain, gossip, unforgiveness, and so many other selfish acts. All sins are equally serious before God. This does not minimize the sin of adultery.

We live in a time of grace but one cannot break one of God’s commandments and go unpunished. God intended sex to be a wonderful and beautiful thing between you and your spouse. By allowing sin to come into your life and marriage, you have turned something beautiful (sex), into something ugly, selfish and damaging.

1. **Accepting God’s Forgiveness and Sin no more**. The woman caught in the very act of adultery was forgiven by Jesus. She knew she was wrong. She knew her actions were enough to have her stoned. She accepted the forgiveness of Jesus and He told her to “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

The single biggest factor in combatting such an addiction is to come under the authority of Jesus Christ. This is a spiritual battle involving the flesh. When we totally surrender or confess our sins to Christ and come under submission of His authority, only then can we be totally delivered from our addictions. The decision lies in whom you wish to please, God or self?

1. **Realize you are weak, He is strong.** Basically, all humans are selfish and sinful; it is our nature. Most people reading this article have found out first hand you cannot master your addiction to pornography. You, by yourself, are no match for this seductive grip on your life. It is like a powerful drug that is consuming and is in control of your destiny and life. Once it has a hold on you, it is virtually impossible to resist and overcome. You must have God's help!

Christ knows how it is like to be tempted. He was tempted in the wilderness. He desires for us to turn our issues and cares over to him to bear and carry. He says, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). Once we turn everything over to Him, the load of sin and guilt has been lifted. We are only strong through Him. We need to realize this.

1. **Find an Accountability partner.** Once you have admitted you have a problem, confessing your sins before God, accepting His forgiveness and knowing your strength is not big enough to overcome your addiction, you will need to find a Godly person with whom to meet, share openly your weakness, and have them partner up with prayer and support to get you through this problem.

Accountability partners are nothing new, but there is something about meeting with another Christians, sharing the truth, your temptations, your setbacks or successes, and having someone who cares enough to stand beside and help you through this addiction. This should be someone other than your spouse who is trustworthy.

1. **Restore your Marriage.** Too many spouses have been hurt through this ugly addiction. Spouses will usually question “what is wrong with me?” that my spouse has to turn to other means to being satisfied? One has to rebuild the trust and intimacy in your relationship. No other person can do this but you. You alone were the one who breached this trust and broke your spouse’s confidence and heart. You will have to prove yourself to them, sometimes over and over again. You have to instill in them that they are the only ones in your life that you love, or care for, and the only ones for whom you have sexual desires.
2. **Blocking Internet pornography.** One way to ensure that you are not tempted to view pornographic materials is to block the access to the internet. This includes all means of access, desktop computers, smart or iphones, tablets, notebooks, etc. Internet filters are highly recommended. There are many choices including:

	1. **AFA Filter**—single profile, with no password overrides. This means no guessed or cracked passwords, resulting in maximum protection for children and adults. About $40/yr. See: AFAfilter.com
	2. **Hedgebuilders**—free to pastors, missionaries, and Christian schools. Others pay a small fee. See: Hedge.org
3. **Place the home computer in a central place where everyone can see everything that will be viewed or goes on when the computer is on.**This is a trust issue. A part of being accountable is to make sure that the person who has the addiction can still use the computer, but understands that every time he/she is on the computer, everyone in the room can see what is being viewed. This also means for others to check the browsers to ensure that the person claiming to be pornography-free is actually doing so. Anytime someone breaches the trust and intimacy of others, that same person has to prove this will not happen again. It is only a safeguard, not trying to belittle the person.
4. **Destroy all pornographic materials**. To get serious, one has to clean out his/her library of magazines, books, videos, and especially computer files. Make no provision for your flesh ([Romans 13:14](http://christiananswers.net/bible/rom13.html#12)). If you can't control yourself, then you must then get rid of every possible access to pornographic material in your life (Internet, cable TV, etc.). “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

We have to remain faithful and dedicated to meeting our goal….and that is to overcome pornography. We cannot look back to be torn by desiring both worlds. Look at Lot’s wife. Her heart was back in Sodom. Where does your heart lie?

1. **Pray and Read the Word.** In order for us to be over comers, we must live and breathe in the Word. The Bible says to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). We cannot be approved unto God if we do not know His Word and how can we divide the truth if we don’t have the real truth (the Word) living in us?

We also need to identify the reality that we are not battling some being out here. Even though we may wrestle with our self, the real battle we face is with the prince of this world. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Pornography originates from the very pits of Hell and destroys the lives of thousands of people and families. Don’t be a statistic, be an overcomer through the blood of Jesus and get the help you need.

Pray each day. There are only some things that come through prayer and fasting.“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21). We need prayer, we need his Word, we need his guidance, and we need his power to be overcomers.

1. **Get professional help.** There are thousands of Christian counselors who can help you. Look at finding the right people who are qualified to help you. If you have any trouble finding a good Christian counselor, we may be of help in finding one near you.

**If you need a list of Christian books that deal with pornography or other pornography related articles, please visit our website.**

**Copyright © 2015  Pastoral Care Inc**. All Rights Reserved. All material is intended for individual use only. Any other use, such as distribution, promoting one's ministry or adding to websites, is prohibited unless written permission granted by Pastoral Care Inc.

 This information was provided by Pastoral Care, Inc. @www.pastoralcareinc.com