

EDUCATING PASTORS TO PROTECT THEM AGAINST
PORNOGRAPHY USAGE IN THE CURRENT AGE

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ABSTRACT

Despite the widespread access to pornography and the amount of pastors who have become addicted to pornography, little has been done to prepare the pastor to deal with his own pornography problems. Scripture urges pastors to live a life of integrity, free from sexual immorality. The facts show the pastor is susceptible to pornography addiction. He, though a man of God, is still vulnerable to pornography along with the rest of society. Pastors need to be trained to deal with and protect themselves from pornography addiction. The following pages illuminate how great of a hold pornography has on the United States and the pastors within the nation. Pornography causes adverse effects to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the pastor and will certainly affect his ministry as well. However, there is hope. There are some guidelines and pointers for helping the pastor out of pornography addiction. This thesis concludes education is the key to stopping the hold of pornography over pastors. Perhaps seminaries are the best place to begin delegating class time to the education of pastors about both the effects of pornography and the best ways to prevent them.

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INTRODUCTION

Right now, all over the United States thousands of pastors are being trained in seminaries across the country. Many go through extensive training to become prepared and well-equipped spiritual leaders for current and future generations. Time constraints do not allow for everything to be taught to these students. Seminaries must pick and choose what they will teach their students in those precious moments. The question for this paper will explore is: *Should religious groups take time to teach future pastors about pornography and ways to protect themselves against pornography addiction?* The answer is a resounding “yes.” This answer can be seen through research. Unfortunately, research in the area of pornography, especially internet pornography, is sparse compared to other topics. However, this does not mean there is no research in the area of pornography. In the more distant past, literature seemed to simply advocate avoiding pornography. In the past decade, books and articles have examined the dangers of pornography and internet pornography itself. They consider the effects of pornography on the body, mind, and spiritual well-being of a person.

One of the best available resources for understanding what pornography can do to a person is *Your Brain on Porn* by Gary Wilson. He shows exactly how internet pornography affects the brain. He shows why pornography is so hard to quit, the possible effects on a person’s body and life, and how someone can hope to quit pornography. He also supplements his research on the topic with dozens of testimonials from people who have become addicted, from people who are suffering the effects of porn, and from people who have quit pornography addiction. This book does not take a religious approach, but is helpful to understand the biology and neuroscience behind pornography addiction.

For a more religious perspective, *Sex is not the problem (lust is)* by Joshua Harris is a helpful book. Harris shows the spiritual implications of lust and pornography. He focuses on showing the person why pornography is wrong in God’s eyes and gives some basic principles for resisting pornography.

A great testimonial is *Porn Nation* by Michael Leahy. He takes an in depth look at how pornography can ruin a person’s life and offers hope for those who want to escape sexual addiction. Leahy offers his concerns for pornography’s possible effects on future generations and favors a physical and spiritual approach to healing from sexual addiction.

For those who are already convinced that pornography is wrong and want literature to go through with as a group, *Porn Free* by Brain W. Gardner would be a wise choice. He is encouraging and has split his book up into specific sections for group work. He provides discussion questions to allow the reader to think about and reinforce their reasons for stopping pornography use.

Two final resources are helpful for addressing others with pornography problems. Parts of *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers* by Tim Clinton and Chap Clark with Joshua Straub as well as *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling* by Timothy E. Clinton and Mark R. Laaser give brief overviews of how to address someone dealing with pornography addiction. In addition, they show how to help others out of their addiction.

Some resources are available for dealing with pornography. Yet much more should arrive in the coming years which will be more helpful. As research continues in the area of pornography and its effects on people, knowledge on pornography addiction and how to reverse its effects will become greater. This paper will review the effects of pornography known today and how to combat them, but will shift the focus to how pornography affects the pastor. Very little research has reached the public on this matter. It is the author's hope this thesis will propel others to pick up the mantle and provide a more in depth view on how pornography effects the pastor. Then education of future pastors can be more complete on how to avoid pornography and how it affects their ministry.

PART 1: WHY THE SPOTLIGHT IS ON PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography is Everywhere

Pornography has been a struggle for people throughout time.¹ In the current generation pornography can manifest itself in a variety of ways that were not available to the previous generations. The world is more connected than ever before and media travels fast. Entertainment such as television shows and movies have realized that sex sells and now bombard everyday lives with sexual temptations. The ease of accessing pornographic materials has grown as well, allowing people to reach pornography at a rapid pace. In fact, gone are the days when

¹ Gary Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* (U.K.: Commonwealth Publishing, 2014), xi.

people can avoid pornography without great effort. Pornography has seeped into almost every media outlet in the world today and travels just as fast and as far as the internet does. Wilson states, “The internet is now everywhere. It is not just in the office buildings of the most developed countries, but also, through smartphones, in the hands of individuals of all ages everywhere. Information is flowing around the world at a quantity, speed, and with a lack of barriers that represents a sea-change from the past.”² Pornography can now be accessed by people of all ages and all places. Even the pastor can access material with relative ease and anonymity. As the ever-increasing advancement of internet and information exchange continues to grow, so will the exchange of pornography. Wilson continues, “It is well known that pornography has been the single most influential economic engine that has fueled the expansion of the internet, including internet commerce.”³ This means the pastor will almost undoubtedly be faced with pornography at some point in his ministry.

The statistics for porn use and addiction show pornography has gained a hold over many Americans. *The Porn Phenomena* ascertains that one in five Americans, 13 or older, use porn at least weekly (Christians included). Another statistic claims that almost half of Americans never seek out porn. That means that the other half of Americans actively seek out porn.⁴ Porn has taken a hold of the nation. Disturbingly, it is not just those who are seeking porn who come across it. One third of all Americans, 13 and older, come across porn on a weekly basis when they are not even looking for it!⁵ Seeing these statistics makes it undeniable that pornography is a big part of the American lifestyle. This means the common pastor will probably interact with many people who look up pornography. His parishioners might not be the only people he deals with who look up porn. Christianitytoday.com notes that many pastors look up pornography as well. “Most pastors have struggled with porn. That’s according to an online study of nearly 3,000 adults, teenagers, and pastors by the Barna Group. The study included 432 pastors and 338 youth pastors, and was commissioned by Josh McDowell Ministry and Cru for an April

² Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, x.

³ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, xi.

⁴ “Porn Phenomenon Fact Sheet,” Barna, accessed September 28, 2016, http://setfreesummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Porn-Phenomenon-Fact-Sheets.pdf?utm_source=Porn+Phenomenon&utm_campaign=5b991efb22-Porn_Phenomenon_Set_Free_Summit&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a025c052ef-5b991efb22-195989785, 1.

⁵ Barna, “Porn Phenomenon Fact Sheet,” 1.

summit.”⁶ This study indicated that 57% of pastors and 64% of youth pastors have struggled with porn at some point. What is more is 14% of pastors and 21% of youth pastors admitted that they currently struggle with porn.⁷ Pornography seems to almost have as much of a hold over pastors as it does the rest of the nation. And the hold is growing too. More and more people will be exposed to pornography at younger and younger ages. A study done in 2008 reported that 14.4% of boys were exposed to porn before age 13.⁸ Another study gathered in 2011 revealed a trend. Early exposure had increased to 48.7% of boys.⁹ The likelihood of future pastors being reached by pornography seems to be the current pattern.

Pornography has worked its way through the eyes and minds of more and more people. It seems that this will continue to happen to future generations. Many do not see this growth of pornography as a problem. The United States is divided on whether pornography usage is wrong. 50% of people consider pornography as wrong and harmful for society. On the other side, 68% of porn users are comfortable with how much pornography they view, while even 29% of pastors who use say they are not even trying to stop using porn.¹⁰ With such a great hold over people, it needs to be determined whether pornography is actually wrong and harmful. If something good has a hold over the nation, there would be no reason to stop it, but rather to encourage it. It seems that many psychiatrists do not believe a thing such as sexual addiction really exists and do not see anything wrong with pornography use.¹¹ Sometimes viewing pornography has even led to acceptance by peers.¹² While some people in the world may have the view that pornography is not a big deal and can be healthy, God has an opposing view of pornography, especially for pastors.

⁶ Morgan Lee, “Here’s How 770 Pastors Describe Their Struggle with Porn,” *Christianity Today*, January 26, 2016, accessed September 28, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/january/how-pastors-struggle-porn-phenomenon-josh-mcdowell-barna.html>.

⁷ Lee, “Here’s How 770 Pastors Describe Their Struggle with Porn.”

⁸ Jason S. Carroll, et al., “Generation XXX: Pornography acceptance and Use Among Emerging Adults,” *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 23 no. 6 (2008).

⁹ Chyng Sun, et al., “Pornography and the Male Sexual Script An Analysis of Consumption and Sexual Relations,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, (December, 2014), accessed November 23, 2016, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1177%2Fs10508-014-0391-2>.

¹⁰ Barna, “Porn Phenomenon Fact Sheet,” 1-4.

¹¹ Michael Leahy, *Porn Nation: Conquering America’s #1 Addiction* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2008), 138.

¹² Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 39.

Pornography and the Pastor

There are many qualifications for the pastoral ministry. One of these qualifications is integrity. A pastor must remain above reproach and blameless. God holds spiritual leaders to a high standard (1 Timothy 3:1-5). There is no room for pornography in this high standard. One author states, “Pornography is essentially wrong because of its message: it rips sexuality from its relational context and presents human beings not as creatures made in God’s image, but as sexual commodities—something to be bought and sold.”¹³ Pornography oversteps the boundaries of righteousness. Pornography degrades and objectifies women, while at the same time elevates rape, torture, abuse, slavery, and sometimes even child molestation. Furthermore it is a major factor in pushing the demand of international sex trafficking.¹⁴ In other words, pornography use goes against the integrity of a pastor. God also declares that not only pornographic acts, but thoughts can overstep the boundaries of righteousness as well. It is important to note that lust is not being attracted to someone or having a strong desire for sex. That is completely healthy.¹⁵ Jesus himself told his followers, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28).” Pornography is wrong in God’s eyes. The view of the world sometimes leads people to believe that lust is acceptable, healthy, and even manly. However, pastors need to realize the truth. It is difficult to fight a sexual lust for pornography without the realization that it is wrong. Pornography is wrong! The Bible tells people to, “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming (Colossians 3:5-6).” A pastor’s lust for pornography can set him against God, the most powerful entity of all eternity. The fact is that among people “there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3).” Not only is pornography use wrong, but a pastor should treat it with the utmost care. He needs to take action right away! In the book of Matthew, Jesus declares, “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose

¹³ Luke Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn: 5 Proven Ways Pornography Warps your Mind and 5 Biblical Ways to Renew it* (Covenant Eyes, 2014), accessed September 28, 2016, <http://www.covenanteyes.com/e-books/>, 9.

¹⁴ Brian W. Gardner, *Porn Free: Finding Renewal through Truth and Community* (Worthington, OH: Costly Grace Media, 2011), 28.

¹⁵ Joshua Harris, *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2003), 35.

one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Matthew 5:29-30).” Jesus is making the point of just how serious a sin like pornography is. A pastor especially needs to take radical action against it. To sum it up, integrity and pornography just do not go together, especially for the pastor.

The World’s View of Pornography

If pornography is a sin, one might wonder why so many people view pornography as acceptable. Part of the reason is ideology. Dale S. Kuehne, an associate professor of politics as well as a pastor, thinks that right now the world is in a transition. He believes there is current shift in the understanding of marriage, family, and human sexuality. He even goes so far as to say the world now operates on a “completely new relational paradigm” This brings about an entirely new era, unseen by any previous generation.¹⁶ This transition seems to be heading from relational stability and partnership to a foundation of relational choice. He states, “The West is moving away from classical philosophy and revealed religion (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) as the moral foundation of our lives and is transitioning into an era in which individual preference and choice reign supreme.”¹⁷ In this new world, everything is based on the individual. What is right for someone is not considered right for another. What is wrong for someone is not considered wrong for another. As long as no one is hurt by individual choices then there is nothing wrong with it. The three limits to this freedom are:

1. One may not criticize someone else’s life choices or behavior.
2. One may not behave in a manner that coerces or causes harm to others.
3. One may not engage in a sexual relationship with someone without his or her consent.¹⁸

These set rules, along with the transition to individual choice has led to a new intellectual framework pertaining to relationships and sex.

Yet in the past forty years the relational structure and understanding of human life that had served the West for centuries has been turned upside down. Relationships of obligation have been replaced by relationships of choice, and sexual intercourse has been transformed from being valued primarily for its role in procreation and in cementing a marriage relationship to being a pleasurable and typically essential component of intimate

¹⁶ Dale S. Kuehne, *Sex and the IWorld: Rethinking Relationship beyond an Age of Individualism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 44.

¹⁷ Kuehne, *Sex and the IWorld*, 44.

¹⁸ Kuehne, *Sex and the IWorld*, 71.

adult romantic relationships. The definition of intimacy in the iWorld has narrowed to become more sexual, and sexual freedom among consenting adults has been elevated to a place reserved for inalienable rights. The two fundamental elements of relational fulfillment in the iWorld are sexual and relational freedom.¹⁹

Michael Leahy, author of *Porn Nation*, has found the same thing to be true, and he thinks the media has played a big part in it. As he went to various colleges presenting his testimonial concerning pornography he would ask students if they were aware of everything they were soaking in from the media. “Sure we know,” they would reply. “When asked how it’s affecting them, most can only shrug their shoulders. Like a proverbial frog enjoying a swim in the boiling pot sitting on a stove, all we really know is it’s a good bit warmer in here than it used to be.”²⁰ Leahy is very concerned about the nation’s future. He views the nation as a sick patient getting worse. Within a single generation the norm of morality has shifted drastically. Today, many sexual issues are defended as sexual choice even though those same issues were the things that we once considered unthinkable. This new norm for the nation’s collective societal conscience is constantly being refined and clarified as the line of decency moves to the more raw and extreme genres of porn.²¹ The transition is certainly new territory for our nation as the first kids who grew up with porn are now becoming adults who shape the nation.

Pornography’s Arrival into the Present Age

The transition of ideology matched with the advancement of technology has opened the door for major pornography problems. Before the 1960s, the options for porn were few and far between. The two readily available options for a person were to pick up a magazine or go see an adult movie in the theater. For both of those options human interaction was required. It was hard to keep pornography usage a secret. In addition, both of those options were often frowned upon by the majority of society. In the late 1970s, the VCR made it possible for some people to finally bring porn into their own homes. Yet still, to gain access to pornography, public interaction and money were a necessity. In the 1990s, the worldwide web became popular and porn would change the world forever. Porn was now becoming more accessible, private, and free. As internet speed has increased so has the quality and quantity of porn. Porn has become a

¹⁹ Kuehne, *Sex and the IWorld*, 74.

²⁰ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 106.

²¹ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 108.

very attractive product in recent years. Mix in the shifting norm of societal morality to personal choice and pornography has become almost impossible to repel.

Pornography is the perfect storm. The late psychologist, Dr. Al Cooper, believed three main contributors draw people to online sexual activity—anonymity, accessibility, and affordability.²² Computers, private browsers, and even smartphones have made it exceptionally easy to remain anonymous and hide what a person does not want others to see. Pornography is accessible to almost anyone. Smartphones and computers reach to almost every nation on earth. Anytime an electronic device has an internet connection, it has access to porn. Adults, children, and even pastors can easily access pornography. Pornography is also very affordable because now it can be found for free. Websites such as xvideos.com or even mainstream sites like youtube.com can be used to locate and watch free pornography. Each one of these factors contribute to the hold pornography possesses on America. All three of these main contributors are in full force right now and are paving the way for widespread pornography use in the future. The pastor and future pastor will find themselves in this new world of pornography. Pastors are looked to as spiritual leaders and they will have to be trained and educated in order to resist the pull of pornography's perfect storm. They will not only have to protect others from the sin of pornography, but also themselves.

Pornography affects the pastor and his ministry. It is obvious from statistics that many pastors are involved with porn, despite God proclaiming it wrong in his Word. The pastor will undoubtedly deal with pornography at some point in his ministry. 93% of current pastors have already run into internet pornography in their own lives, whether they were trying to find it or not.²³ Now, with the world's transitioning ideology that porn is a personal choice which is morally acceptable, that already large percentage will most likely rise. With so much pornography surrounding the pastor and future-pastors, it *will* have an effect on their ministry. Research shows that it already does.

²² Al Cooper, *Cybersex: The Dark Side of the Force* (London: Brunner-Routledge, 2000).

²³ Barna, "Porn Phenomenon Fact Sheet," 4.

PART 2: PORNOGRAPHY AFFECTS PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Pornography Makes Biological Changes in the Mind

The brain is a powerful sex organ in our body. It produces sexual stimuli in the form of chemicals. Pornography has the power to literally mold this powerful organ. The use of pornography decreases grey matter (the part of the brain used for transportation of information from sensory to motor stimuli) in a person's brain.²⁴ Pornography even changes the way the brain works. Pornography brings about certain chemicals that changes a person's sexual stimuli and not for the better."²⁵ One of these chemicals is a neurotransmitter called dopamine. This is a chemical that makes a person feel very, very good and it instigates energy, motivation, and focused attention. Dopamine is the chemical brains use when a person is sexually aroused, viewing pornography, or just seeing something new. There is nothing wrong with dopamine being used by your body unless it is administered in huge quantities. If dopamine is used by the brain with high dosages for extended periods of time (like viewing pornography each week), then changes within the brain are bound to take place. Norman Dodge, a psychiatrist and author, explains this.

The men at their computers looking at porn...had been seduced into pornographic training sessions that met all the conditions required for plastic change of brain maps. Since neurons that fire together wire together, these men got massive amounts of practice wiring these images into the pleasure centres of the brain, with the rapt attention necessary for plastic change... Each time they felt sexual excitement and had an orgasm when they masturbated, a 'spritz of dopamine', the reward neurotransmitter consolidated the connections made in the brain during the sessions. Not only did the reward facilitate the behaviors; it provoked none of the embarrassment they felt purchasing Playboy at a store. Here was a behavior with no 'punishment', only reward.

The content of what they found exciting changed as the Web sites introduced themes and scripts that altered their brains without their awareness. Because plasticity is competitive, the brain maps for new, exciting images increased at the expense of what had previously attracted them – the reason, I believe, they began to find their girlfriends less of a turn-on...

As for the patients who became involved in porn, most were able to go cold turkey once they understood the problem and how they were plastically reinforcing it. They found eventually that they were attracted once again to their mates.²⁶

²⁴ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 5.

²⁵ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 135.

²⁶ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 3-4.

Dopamine is the centerpiece of changing how the human brain works. The purpose of dopamine is to get a person to do what is beneficial for the body. The greater dosage of dopamine the more a person will be motivated to do something. The brain helps a person determine what is important by telling them what to remember with blasts of the chemical. This is what rewires the brain. Nothing provides as great a blast of dopamine as sexual stimulation and orgasm.²⁷ This means your brain will recognize sexual stimulation, even in the form of pornography as important. Over time the brain will make sexual stimulation more and more of a priority. A huge neural principle is nerve cells that fire together wire together. The brain connects the nerve cells for sexual excitement to the nerve cells with memory storage for events associated with the excitement. For example, any time a person looks up pornography he activates nerve cells which in turn blast his reward circuitry with dopamine. The more this happens, the more the pattern of looking up pornography gets ingrained in a person's neural pathways.²⁸ All this helps explain how and why the brain changes. The brain being malleable to pornography leads to several implications for the pastor dealing with pornography.

Pornography Can Lead to Addiction

The first implication is addiction. Addiction can hijack the reward system of a person's brain in order to convince the person to keep continuing with some sort of habit. Addiction consists of three signs. The first sign of addiction is a craving or preoccupation with the given habit. The second sign is the loss of control in using a substance or engaging in certain habits with an increasing frequency. The third sign is there are negative consequences in multiple aspects of a person's life.²⁹ The use of pornography can fit all three of these signs. The pastor may find himself wanting more and more pornography in his life to the point where he can no longer stop looking at porn by his own power. Former pornography addict Michael Leahy, in his book *Porn Nation*, describes this addiction.

Every time I gave in to this darker sexual urge, there was a newer, greater pain to soothe, a self-inflicted wound that I needed to medicate, but now with stronger, more potent medicine. And I know exactly what would do the trick—for the moment. The resulting shame and guilt and self-hatred I felt after acting out yet again would pull me back down

²⁷ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 59.

²⁸ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 68.

²⁹ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 72-73.

and motivate me to act out once more. It seemed never ending. I was caught in an addictive cycle that was spiraling out of control and ever downward.³⁰

The downward spiral, as described by Leahy, can be followed back to its biological source: dopamine. Dopamine is often labeled as the “pleasure molecule.” However, dopamine is not the actual cause of pleasure itself, but rather is the molecule which *seeks* and *searches* for pleasure.³¹ Opioids appear to be the molecules which cause pleasure. Yet the dopamine system is stronger than the opioid system. The searching for pleasure causes a stronger reaction in humans than the pleasure itself. In other words, the want system of a human being is greater than the satisfaction system. Saying “I am satisfied” or “I am done” to pornography is not very likely because the satisfaction that may come from pornography will eventually be drowned out by the want for more pornography. The constant want for pornography reveals itself as addiction.

Novelty also plays a major role in addiction. Dopamine contributes to people always wanting the new thing because dopamine motivates a person to find novelty.³² It is the same way with pornography. The same old pornography is simply not going to produce as much dopamine over an extended period of time. With the internet, novelty is at a person’s fingertips. There are endless websites with multitudes of genres, matched with a plethora of pornographic videos that can be viewed at a rapid pace. Dopamine fires up each time something new appears. Prominent features such as surprise/shock, anxiety toward something not consistent with sexuality or values, and seeking and searching all help pornography fire up dopamine.³³ Novelty clears the path in leading people to addiction. People will always be searching for more and the next new thing.

Dopamine may tell the brain what to look for. But DeltaFosB is the thing actually rewiring your brain. DeltaFosB is a protein caused by doses of dopamine. Together, they reconstruct the brain and only dissipate after a month or two. However, the changes they make can last much longer than a month or two. DeltaFosB may very well be the discovery that proves porn addiction exists.³⁴ Gary Wilson, a neuroscientist describes DeltaFosB as a construction worker.

³⁰ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 62.

³¹ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 59.

³² Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 60.

³³ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 62.

³⁴ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 84.

Dopamine is yelling, ‘This activity is really, really important, and you should do it again and again.’ DeltaFosB’s job, as the construction worker, is to have you *remember and repeat* the activity. It does this by rewiring your brain to want ‘it’, ‘it’ being whatever you have been binging on. A spiral can ensue in which wanting leads to doing, doing triggers more surges of dopamine, dopamine causes DeltaFosB to accumulate – and the urge to repeat the behavior gets stronger with each loop. When you think, ‘Nerve cells that fire together wire together’, think DeltaFosB.³⁵

Pornography is able to hijack a person’s brain. It convinces the brain it not only wants pornography, but needs it. A person’s body can become dependent on it because DeltaFosB constructs new pathways especially for pornography viewing. These strengthened pathways make pornography addiction a reality.

Biology shows why pornography can be so addictive. Psychology shows how pornography fits into the addiction cycle. The first stage in the addiction cycle is preoccupation. This is where the addict becomes obsessed with sexual thoughts or situations.³⁶ Time may seem to pass by quickly during this phase and the regular duties of life seem like hindrances to fantasizing. The second stage is ritualization. This is where the addict has patterns or routines to search for sexual stimulation. These contribute to the experience and are very important to the addict.³⁷ This is the schedule and routine an addict will fall into and the habits which he forms. The third stage is compulsive sexual behavior. This is how the addict will act out on his addiction. Examples of these are masturbation, pornography, and affairs. It is important to note, this stage is not limited to just the aforementioned behaviors.³⁸ During this stage the addict may be inclined to do something he would not usually do. Perhaps simply looking at pornography might advance into something more drastic. The fourth stage is despair. The actions of the addict eventually lead to hopelessness and similar feelings rather than satisfaction.³⁹ This is the phase where people snap out of their trance and may immediately be filled with disgust and remorse. People may even wonder why they ever looked at pornography in the first place... and then the cycle will start again. Some may even start the cycle again in hopes of escaping the pain. “For some, it’s a living hell that instills intense feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in the face of our society’s onslaught of sexual images and messages.”⁴⁰ Addiction is not

³⁵ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 84.

³⁶ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 148.

³⁷ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 149.

³⁸ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 149.

³⁹ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 149.

⁴⁰ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 150.

something helpful to a pastor or anyone else. The effects of pornography do not stop with addiction. There are still many more to parse through.

Pornography Affects a Person's Health

Pornography causes many adverse effects to the wellbeing and health of a person. Pornography interferes with a person's life. Priorities change due to the rewiring of the brain and life's natural rewards like accomplishments, working out, and friends and family will no longer seem as exciting or rewarding. Pornography becomes the goal and the reward. One person said of their porn use "Everything from my social life to my physical health has been damaged by this addiction. The worst part about it was that I constantly justified it in my head by saying it was 'healthy for me' and 'at least it isn't a drug'. In reality, this was worse than any drug I have consumed and the least wealthy activity I was participating in."⁴¹ Pornography has the power to slowly destroy the things a person holds dear to him.

Pornography messes with a person's sexual functioning. Years of porn can cause an inability to orgasm during sex, erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, and alarming porn fetishes.⁴² Perhaps the worst of these is that pornography can cause the loss of attraction to real-life partners as well as have negative effects on libido and romance. Apparently those who use more pornography enjoy sex less than those who use less porn or no porn.⁴³ Young men seem to be losing their drive for their partners due to pornography. *Your Brain on Porn* zeroed in on the growth of this problem.

Young Japanese men are growing indifferent or even averse to sex, while married couples are starting to have it even less' reported the Japan Times, citing a 2010 poll that revealed a striking trend. More than 36% of men aged 16 to 19 had no interest in sex, more than double the 17.5% from 2008. Men between 20 and 24 showed a similar trend, jumping from 11.8% to 21.5% while men between 45 and 49 leaped from 8.7% to 22.1%. Japan isn't alone. In France, a 2008 survey found that 20 percent of younger French men had no interest in sex.⁴⁴

Relationships are especially affected by pornography. More exposure to images and videos of sexy women will cause a male to devalue his life partner. It is not just looks he ranks her lower

⁴¹ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 26.

⁴² Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 27-42.

⁴³ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 43.

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 43.

on, but also intelligence and warmth as well. All this stimulation hijacks pair-bonding.⁴⁵ In contrast, when a person stops looking at pornography, a person's views seem to slowly revert back to their original form. The testimonies of people fighting pornography are found all over the worldwide web and in books. Here is one example:

Before realizing that porn was the problem, I used to think I needed to get healthier fantasies. Now, almost 8 months after quitting porn, I'm finding that the fantasies I used to have don't appeal to me anymore... at all. What I found is that my wife and I both enjoy sex much, much more when there is no fantasy involved; just the two of us in the moment. I'm now able to make love to her without erectile issues, face-to-face with eye contact.⁴⁶

There is no denying prolonged pornography use has caused sexual problems, while those who relinquished pornography are sexually happier and healthier.

Pornography does not just affect the body, it also affects the mental health of a person. Pornography can cause social anxiety and low self-esteem. Self-testimonies such as this one explain just how a person using pornography and not using pornography can differ in this area:

Social interaction. I was completely afraid of it and incapable of it 50 days ago. In the past week or so, I have interacted incredibly smoothly and effortlessly with people with whom I would have been unable to interact with while using [pornography]. I used to be unable to look people in the eyes. I used to purposefully hide from people I knew in public so as to avoid awkward conversation. I wasn't able to be invested in the conversation. Women, even those I knew personally would intimidate me. I would fantasize throughout the day about being able to interact like a normal human...All of this is now changing before my eyes in a most drastic way. I can interact with confidence; be myself. I can hold an unbreakable gaze into other people's eyes. I am actually part of the conversation, as opposed to being aloof and thinking about leaving it.⁴⁷

People are making the connection of what pornography has done to them and how much better they feel without it.

Apart from social anxiety and low self-esteem, viewing pornography can also lead to the inability to concentrate. Yet another testimonial illuminates this adverse effect. "When I was using internet porn I had brain fog or a constant hung-over-like feeling, which made it hard for me to concentrate, talk to people or just do my everyday tasks. After 7-10 days without porn this feeling went away. My mind became very clear, thoughts easily controllable, and I became

⁴⁵ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 46.

⁴⁶ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 48-49.

⁴⁷ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 50-51.

much more relaxed in general.”⁴⁸ Pornography use has also been associated with low self-esteem, low energy, and depression.⁴⁹ Mood swings are often possible, created by the shame felt from the crushing cycle of addiction.⁵⁰ Part of this might have to do with desensitization. As a person’s brain continues to overstimulate the brain with dopamine that person will become desensitized. The brain will not only produce less dopamine, but it will also reduce the amount of dopamine receptors taking in the dopamine. This means the brain becomes desensitized to what is considered normal. In practical terms, “everyday pleasures begin to lose their luster.”⁵¹

Crippled willpower can ensue as well.

The process of sensitization impacts the prefrontal cortex in the brain. As dopamine receptors degenerate in the brain, changes take place in the prefrontal lobes. The region of the brain is responsible for our willpower, regulating our behavior, and making decisions based on wisdom and morals

Normally, when emotions, impulses, and urges surge from the midbrain, the prefrontal lobes are there to exercise “executive control” over them. But when this region is weakened by continued porn use, willpower is eroded and there is nothing to stop the sense of craving for pornography. As a result, the person experiences the urge, not just as a desire, but as an intense *need*. Neuroscientists call this problem *hypofrontality*. This person no longer has mastery over his passions but is a slave to them.⁵²

A person on pornography biologically starts to lose control over his own body, causing his decision-making to be skewed. In extreme cases, this can even lead to self-harm.⁵³

Pornography Affects Relationships and Perception of Others

Pornography also causes relational damage. Pornography trains men to seek out the fantasy of sex while leaving commitment and emotional attachment behind. It is as if porn gives only a part of sex, taking sex away from intimacy and closeness. This makes actual, real-life relationships difficult because men are being led to expect and want something different, something not possible for one woman.⁵⁴ Real women cannot compete with pornography when women are only valued as commodities to consume, rather than intelligent and emotional

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 52.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 53.

⁵⁰ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 147.

⁵¹ Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 6.

⁵² Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 7.

⁵³ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 20-21.

⁵⁴ Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 12-13.

partners. With a shallow perspective, pornography can offer what a person wants, when he wants it, how he wants it, without any effort on his part, and with as many people as he desires. People exposed to massive amounts of pornography are even more likely to devalue marriage and the importance of faithfulness in a relationship.⁵⁵ Relationships are not as important to a person once pornography has shifted his perspective.

Viewing pornography is correlated to lower morals. Dr. Dolf Zillmann of Indiana and Dr. Jennings Bryant of the University of Alabama conducted studies in the 1980s to see if pornographic videos had an effect on people's views of women. They had three groups of people which they showed different amounts of pornographic material. One group they exposed to no pornography. Another group they exposed to some pornography. A third group they exposed to massive amounts of pornography. After six weeks of showing the differing amounts of pornography, they asked the groups several questions. The results are not to be dismissed. One question was: "Do you support women's rights?" Out of the group that viewed no pornography, 71% of men supported women's rights. Out of the group that had some exposure to pornography, 48% of men said they supported women's rights. Out of the group that had massive exposure to pornography, only 25% supported women's rights. It was not just the men who were affected though. Even women were 30% less likely to support their own rights in the massive exposure group than the group with no exposure.⁵⁶ With the glasses of pornography, women are seen without value. "Women who are not pretty enough are discarded; those who meet with your physical standards are sexualized without their consent. You may even think that these women desire you, as your fantasies overlay reality. Porn trains men who use it to see all women as ready and willing, but it depersonalizes them. They're not real people."⁵⁷ The brain can actually rewire itself to change the beliefs and morals of a person, and nullify the value of a life.

In their experiment, another question Dr. Dillmann and Dr. Bryant asked was: How many months should a rapist be incarcerated? The group that viewed no pornography decided on 144 months. The group with some exposure to pornography decided on one hundred and one months. The group with massive exposure to pornography decided on seventy-seven months,

⁵⁵ Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 12.

⁵⁶ Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 14.

⁵⁷ Gardner, *Porn Free*, 16.

almost half of the time suggested by the group with no exposure. Pornography also led the participants with massive exposure to believe that sexual practices such as anal sex, group sex, sadomasochism, and bestiality were more common practice than other groups believed. As shown by the statistics, pornography use trivializes crimes such as rape. It desensitizes people to sexual violence and cruelty.⁵⁸ This will be a characteristic to worry about for future generations as almost 50% of porn contains some form of violence.⁵⁹

Pornography Changes a Person's Life

A summary of pornography is a sin that affects a person physically, mentally, and spiritually. There is no pornography which is good for a person.⁶⁰ Pornography is the perfect storm. It can be viewed anonymously. A person can access pornography on a personal computer or even their smart phone without anyone knowing. Pornography is accessible. Almost everyone can access pornography since computers and smart phones are so common. Basically, anywhere with internet access is a place where pornography can be viewed. Pornography is affordable. It is now free on many websites and people even make their own homemade videos for others to watch. These three contributors have led to widespread pornography usage in the United States today. Pornography has gained a hold on so many people and the United States worldview has shifted to encourage this unfortunate fact as an acceptable preference of personal choice. Pornography messes with a person's ability to make good choices because extended use literally rewires the brain with biological processes involving dopamine and DeltaFosB. They play a major role in pornography addiction. Prolonged use of pornography causes real-life problems. A person will not view people/things with the same importance as before. Pornography can affect the family life, work life, and love-life of a person in a very negative way. It can also affect a person's sexuality since human sexuality is malleable.⁶¹ Shock value and anxiety can push a person to only be attracted to novel pornography. Physical health problems such as erectile dysfunction, decreased libido, lower self-esteem, and social anxiety. Pornography is associated with relational damage and crippled

⁵⁸ Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 15-16.

⁵⁹ Chiara Sabina, Janis Wolak, and David Finkelhor, "The Nature and Dynamics of Internet Pornography Exposure for Youth" *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 11, no. 6, 2008.

⁶⁰ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 160.

⁶¹ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 143.

willpower. It distorts a person's morals and beliefs and directs people to devalue human beings and trivialize crimes. Pornography is not harmless in any way. In fact it can destroy a person's entire life. Author Michael Leahy described how in his personal life, he lost everything to pornography. "It was only after losing everything that mattered to me—my fifteen year marriage, my family of two boys, my home, my job, most of my friends, and my reputation in my church and in the community—that I hit rock bottom and began asking the only kinds of questions that mattered."⁶² Pornography has the power to completely derail a person's contributions to this world and give them a miserable existence in return. Even when the effects of pornography are known, it is hard to stop. Pain and consequences are not always strong enough to propel a user from his addiction.⁶³ Pornography is a danger to every person in the United States.

Pornography Affects a Pastor's Ministry

Pastors are not impervious to pornography and its allure. It is irresponsible and ignorant to think that they alone are unaffected. Pastors are actually very susceptible to looking up pornography or becoming pornography addicts.

What makes a person vulnerable to pornography? Addiction is prevalent, Laaser says, among people who have high-demand but low-structure jobs and who spend a great deal of time at their computers, initially for work-related reasons, but also for social connection and entertainment. He points to three elements that foster sexual addiction: loneliness, anger and boredom.

Clergy, Laaser notes, often fit this profile: their jobs make high demands, they work in large part independently and they often struggle with loneliness, anger and boredom. Pastors are often isolated and work in contexts where they have few if any peers. Friendships, too, may be rare for pastors. While they are caregivers themselves, pastors may not have care extended to them.⁶⁴

Pastors are often under a lot of stress as people look to them to be role models and perfect examples of what the Bible explains as righteous living. All of these high and unreal expectations can lead the pastor to want a sort of escape in the form of viewing pornography. The same high expectations might also make it hard for the pastor to ask for help. There is often no place for them to turn without tarnishing their position and reputation. Furthermore, while

⁶² Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 12.

⁶³ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 146.

⁶⁴ "Addictive behavior: pastors and pornography" *The Christian Century* 124, no. 18 (September 4, 2007): 21, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 28, 2016).

many times busy, pastors often spend time alone in their office (sometimes even a home office) where they can have easy access of pornography and privacy. Some pastors determine their own schedules and can easily adjust their schedule to make time for pornography. There is very little to hold the pastor accountable. His own self-restraint may very well be overrun by his emotions. Once addicted, he can at first easily juggle his schedule to hide his newfound addiction.

Just because pastors are Christians does not mean they will know how to stop. Schools do not always train pastors extensively on the problems of internet pornography since it is a more recent phenomenon. Many pastors do not even know how to handle pornography themselves. They know pornography is wrong, but are ill-equipped. Authors Jay Dennis and Marilyn Jeffcoat record an example of a man of God who became ensnared in pornography. They tell the story of Jack, a pastor and even president for denominational conferences. One day someone he was counseling came to him and confessed she was using the internet for pornography. This entranced Jack and later he began to explore internet pornography for himself. But he could not stop. Pornography led to cybersex in internet chat rooms, then telephone calls to those partners, and ultimately to an affair with another woman. Jack, just like some non-Christians, lost everything. "I walked away with nothing. Everything in my life was gone. I lost everything of value to me. I was unemployed. I became completely broke with no job, no skills, and no reputation. Calamity after calamity came. I felt all alone."⁶⁵ The effects of pornography can happen to any pastor. A pastor viewing pornography will not necessarily plummet to the depths that Jack did, but it will undoubtedly affect his ministry.

A pastor's ministry deals with people on a daily basis and requires healthy relationships with people in order to carry out that ministry. Pornography destroys the pastor's ability to create and sustain healthy relationships. Pornography can lead to social anxiety as well as low self-esteem, two things vital for a confident preaching of God's Word to other people. Pornography damages relationships, the very thing which is needed for people to stop and listen to the important words a pastor delivers. Putting less stock in the value of others, especially women, is only going to hurt the amount of people a pastor is motivated to preach to. Low energy isn't helpful for anyone seeking to change lives and hearts. It is also hard for a pastor to help others if he is feeling guilty and inadequate for his own sins. 87% of pastors said they

⁶⁵ Jay Dennis and Marilyn Jeffcoat, *Taming Your Private Thoughts: You Can Stop Sin Where It Starts* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002), 19-20.

experience shame about their habits.⁶⁶ That shame is holding back a pastor's potential. And that is just how pornography will affect the pastor reaching out to others! Research on religion and pornography use correlates the more a person uses pornography, the less concerned he becomes about spiritual things."⁶⁷ Pornography breaks down a pastor's care about his very relationship with God. Pornography causes still more havoc to a pastor and his relationships. Parishioners will view a pastor differently if he is found using pornography. Only 1% of pastors recommend telling their parishioners about their own pornography struggles because of this.⁶⁸ Pastors are held to a higher standard of morality by society and are therefore expected not to struggle with pornography addiction. A pastor is at great risk of losing the trust of his parishioners and also his ability to communicate God's Word to them, just by using pornography. Love will lead a pastor to serve others as human beings created in God's image, while lust will lead a pastor to use others and see them as expendable.⁶⁹ Brian Gardner, author of *Porn Free*, cites yet another reason a pastor should not let pornography get a hold on his relationships with others. "But perhaps the best reason to lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us is that we are in a race against time. People all over the world are hungry for the good news that Christ brings. Even with all the struggle and hardship, it is an exciting race, and if the encumbrance of sin is holding you back, you can lay it aside."⁷⁰ It is clear that pornography hinders a pastor's ministry to his people.

Pornography is Dangerous

A pastor needs to be aware of one more attribute of pornography that makes it extremely dangerous. Pornography is hard to talk about. It is awkward for almost anyone to address or teach. As realized earlier, porn is everywhere and chances are that adults and children have been forced to see it at some point⁷¹ If future pastors are not being taught about pornography by their parents or teachers, then pornography will probably teach them what sex should look like. It will

⁶⁶ Lee, "Here's How 770 Pastors Describe Their Struggle with Porn."

⁶⁷ Samuel L. Perry, "Pornography consumption as a threat to religious socialization," *Sociology Of Religion* 76, no. 4: (2015): 441, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2016).

⁶⁸ Lee, "Here's How 770 Pastors Describe Their Struggle with Porn."

⁶⁹ Gilkerson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 17.

⁷⁰ Gardner, *Porn Free*, 233.

⁷¹ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 127.

mold their views of what relationships are supposed to be. No pastor will be exempt from the struggle of distinguishing God-pleasing sexuality from pornography.

There is something that makes pornography unlike anything else in sexual addiction. Internet porn, in particular, is so dangerous because it has the power to rule over those using it, *regardless of their background!* This is especially true for young adults and children because their sexual interests, identities, and views are still forming.⁷² In addition, most people do not realize what pornography is doing to them while they are using it. People rarely make the connection between their symptoms and pornography use until after they stop viewing pornography and notice the difference. Pornography seems like a solution to feel better rather than a problem.⁷³ This all stems from people being unformed. In fact, more teens believe there is nothing wrong with viewing pornography.⁷⁴ This can be changed, of course, through education.

The internet pornography phenomena is only ten to fifteen years old, and so there is not a lot of wide-spread research to show just how dangerous pornography really is. It is simply too young of a phenomena. Young people, including future pastors, are not being informed about the dangers of pornography. Instead, pornography sneakily continues to form and shape people's ideas of sexuality. Gary Wilson, author of *Your Brain on Porn*, compares the pornography phenomena to tobacco and smoking when it was popular in the past. "Big Tobacco's campaign to cast doubt on the link between smoking and disease is now a classic case study in a science called agnotology: the study of the cultural production of ignorance."⁷⁵ He continues by explaining how pornography could be the new smoking:

Is internet porn the new smoking? Almost all young men with internet access view porn and the percentages of women viewers are growing. Whenever something becomes the norm, there's an unexamined assumption that it must be harmless or "normal," that is, that it cannot produce abnormal physiological results. However, that proved not to be the case with smoking.

And just as with smoking, causality studies cannot be done. It would be unethical to create two groups of kids and keep one group as "porn virgins" while setting the other group free on today's internet porn for years to see what percentage lose attraction to real

⁷² Gardner, *Porn Free*, 45.

⁷³ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 20.

⁷⁴ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 158.

⁷⁵ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 154.

partners, can't quit, or develop porn-induced sexual dysfunctions and extreme fetish tastes.⁷⁶

The research that has been done so far shows how dangerous pornography is. As of right now, self-testimonies are some of the most widespread research available on pornography and it seems that education about what pornography really is and really does is helping. One person who stopped using pornography wrote this: "Once you've experienced the truth about porn yourself you can no longer be deceived by propaganda about porn."⁷⁷ Once again, pornography is sneaky. It is commonly not viewed as wrong and can exert its control over everyone. It causes adverse mental, physical, and spiritual problems. For the well-being of people and pastors everywhere, pornography must be guarded and fought against.

When a pastor does not guard himself against pornography, he is likely to fall into pornography use. Steve Gallagher, founder and president of pure life ministries has some ideas about why a pastor can fall into pornography use: "Ultimately, people are vulnerable to temptation when their daily lives are not aligned with God's Word."⁷⁸ In his many years of helping pastors free themselves from sexual sins, Gallaher has identified five red flags. The flags are prayerlessness, pressure, prosperity, pleasure, and power.

Prayerlessness demonstrates a lack of relationship with God. Gallagher says, "Those who stay at the feet of Christ are not nearly as susceptible to sexual temptation as those who do not."⁷⁹ God also iterates this principle through the Apostle Paul. "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)." There is really nothing more important than a relationship with God. The Lord told Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one (Luke 10:41)." The pastor can easily be distracted by the numerous events and objectives to complete and his relationship with God is left in the dust. But his relationship with God is the one thing which is needed. And it is so important when dealing with pornography use. Research even shows that those with a strong relationship with God was a significant factor between those who

⁷⁶ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 154.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 152.

⁷⁸ Steve Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict* (Dry Ridge, KY: Pure Life Ministries, 2004), 120.

⁷⁹ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 121.

never used pornography as compared to those have used pornography.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, not having time to pray to God usually indicates a poor relationship with God. A poor relationship with God weakens the pastor's resolve against pornography.⁸¹

Pressure is another concern for the pastor. Pastors are often thrown into the fray and expected to shoulder all the problems for a group of people. Stress builds up and the pastor feels drained. An escape is needed. How a pastor seeks an escape can often lead him down a path which is not good for his spiritual well-being. Gallagher says, "What may begin as a means to relax, entertain or unwind almost inevitably leads to a quenching of God's Spirit and a downward spiral spiritually."⁸² The world will not make a wholesome escape easy for the pastor.⁸³

Prosperity is a third concern for the pastor. Now, it is important to note that a pastor is worthy of his wages and there is nothing sinful about receiving blessings. However, the pastor having too much wealth makes it easy for a pastor to place his dependence on material riches instead of God. The rich man may aim to please himself with pornography use, rather than lean on God to direct him away from pornography use. Greater wealth also permits the pastor a greater opportunity to afford indulging in immoral activity.⁸⁴

Pleasure is a fourth concern for the pastor. If pleasure is kept in the correct perspective, pleasure will not derail the pastor towards pornography. However, if pleasure becomes expected or the focus of a pastor's life, then he walks a dangerous path. It can even cut off everything that is pure in his life.⁸⁵ The Apostle Paul described such people as being "enslaved to various lusts and pleasures (Titus 3:3)." The pastor can easily fall into this group and become enslaved to pornography.

Power is the fifth concern for the pastor. If a pastor becomes puffed up with his own power or self-worth he is likely to view something like pornography as a reward for doing great works or being righteous. This warped perspective can lead a pastor down a slippery slope of

⁸⁰ Mary B Short, Thomas E Kasper, and Chad T Wetterneck, "The Relationship Between Religiosity and Internet Pornography Use," *Journal Of Religion And Health* 54, no. 2 (April 2015): 580, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2016).

⁸¹ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 121-122.

⁸² Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 122-123.

⁸³ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 122-123.

⁸⁴ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 123.

⁸⁵ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 124.

seeking after only his own desires. Only his needs seem to matter, even though the pastor is called to be a servant to others.⁸⁶

These five concerns may help the pastor understand how he has fallen into pornography or how he may fall into pornography in future times. The pastor faces many trials and struggles during his tenure and must realize that he is human and has weaknesses just like everybody else. The five warning signs are not meant to cover all areas of how a pastor may fall into pornography addiction. Instead, they are mentioned to illuminate the way a pastor lives his daily life will determine how fortified his life is from sin. A man who is walking humbly with God, is less likely to be tempted by pornography. He understands that he can resist this sin by the grace of God. He is empowered “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. (Titus 2:12)”⁸⁷ The pastor must always be on his guard against pornography and take precautions against it to make sure his human frailties do not lead him into pornography addiction.

PART 3: PREPARING THE PASTOR FOR DEALING WITH PORNOGRAPHY

A Pastor Must Know the Characteristics of Pornography

A pastor must prepare to defend himself against pornography. Part of this is knowing what the characteristics of pornography are. It is important to know that pornography is a lie. The devil wants the pastor to think that pornography can fulfill desires, but it cannot. The truth is it will feel good to give into pornography for a moment, whether it is found in magazines, other people, or high speed videos. Yet, it will never fix a greater problem. For example, if a pastor gives in to pornography due to loneliness, he will still be lonely (if not lonelier) later on.

The view of the world is leaning towards tolerance of pornography.⁸⁸ The world will try to tell the pastor how free he will be by giving into his desires. It will whisper in his ear how happy and stress-free he will be, but this is all a lie. Pornography will only make more problems for the pastor. Instead of setting him free, pornography will only bind him. Its ever-growing chains will dictate his life and way of thinking.

⁸⁶ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 124-125.

⁸⁷ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 125.

⁸⁸ Steve Gallagher, *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry* (Dry Ridge, KY: Pure Life Ministries, 2007), 19.

Lust grows. Each time the pastor gives in to pornography he will want more. Suddenly lust, whose small voice seemed particularly harmless, turns into a need which the pastor cannot live without. It is as addictive as any drug, but because society does not view it as harmful, it does not always seem as dangerous to the pastor's integrity. But this is not true.

It is easy to think, "This will be the last time. I will fulfill my desires and then I will never give in again." But the truth is each time someone gives in to pornography he will fall deeper into the pit of lust and need more. Soon it will be difficult to find anything new or exciting and dirty enough for his tastes. Suddenly his so called "free" lifestyle of giving into lust will dominate every aspect of his life. This small little pet sin can become something he feels he needs to survive. Nothing else will seem as interesting as this sinful desire. His mind will keep bargaining and reasoning in every way to continue in this sin, even if he knows it is wrong. Soon, he will be trapped whether he likes it or not. The point is, if the pastor gives in to pornography, he must stop now! It only gets worse from here if he continues. This gives the pastor all the more reason to start fighting pornography today.

With all this research about what pornography is and does, it is important to note three very important things that pornography is not. The first is pornography is not unbeatable. No matter who he is, where he is, or what his experiences are, a pastor can stop lusting at this very second. That is not to say that it is easy, but it is possible. As godly men, pastors should pursue this goal. The Holy Spirit gives believers the strength to beat it. The second thing is that pornography is not unforgivable. No matter what awful things the pastor has done in the past, they were not so horrible that he cannot be forgiven. Jesus' disciple John describes what God does for us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)" God sent his son for all sins and that includes pornography. All sins were crucified with Jesus on the cross. "The blood of Jesus, his [God's] son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7)." Jesus washes the pastor clean. If the pastor truly believes in Christ and is truly sorry for his sins, then he is also truly forgiven. The third thing is that pornography is not strong enough to separate the pastor from the love of God. This goes hand in hand with forgiveness, but it is really important for pastors to understand the strength of God's love. God's love will blast through all of the pastor's previous sins to reach him. For "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any

powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).”

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Before the pastor starts his battle there is some good news. If a pastor has not yet given in to pornography, continuing his battle will only reinforce his brain to never get hooked on pornography. If a pastor has given in to pornography, his brain and any adverse health effects have a good chance of changing back to normal. Four things in specific are likely to happen. An extended time of rest from artificial sexual stimulation will allow a pastor to:

- restore the sensitivity of his brain’s reward circuitry so he can again enjoy everyday pleasures,
- reduce the intensity of the ‘gotta have it!’ brain pathways that drive him to use [pornography],
- re-establish his willpower (strengthen the brain’s frontal lobes), and
- reduce the impact of stress such that it doesn’t set off severe cravings.⁸⁹

There is also some bad news for the pastor. The pastor will have to be consistent in cutting off anything porn related for months or even years before the changes are noticeable. A refusal of activating neural pornography pathways is sure to bring about good changes. It just takes time. One testimony had this to say about the change: “I actually went a full 6 months without even visiting a porn site. When I next saw one I was surprised by how cheesy and corny porn looked. Since then I really haven’t had much interest in watching it.”⁹⁰ Cutting pornography out of a pastor’s viewing diet will not be easy, especially at first. Pornography is like a drug and quitting will not be comfortable. The body and brain will try to get the pastor to continue feeding it the same things it received in the past, but the fight is well worth it in the end. As pornography’s hold loosens, a pastor will feel better, serve better, and live a more God-pleasing life. After all, “what you feed grows, and what you starve dies.”⁹¹

What a Pastor Needs to Protect Himself

There are several things a pastor needs before fighting against pornography. The first thing is a will to change. If at this point a pastor does not believe that pornography is wrong and

⁸⁹ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 98.

⁹⁰ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 99.

⁹¹ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 94.

does not want to stop giving into it, that person has very little chance, if any, of succeeding. Experiences which do not risk something are rarely valuable. If the pastor is not willing to risk losing his immediate pleasure, he will not gain the far greater pleasure that comes from fighting pornography. John White, author of *Eros Defiled*, says it another way: “Seek God and you find, among other things, piercing pleasure. Seek pleasure and in the long run you find boredom, disillusionment and enslavement.”⁹² Another thing needed is a change in perspective. Growth results from a change of perspective. Basically, pastors need to bring their will in line with God’s instead of with the world’s. The last thing needed is to depend on something greater: God’s grace. The pastor is able to rely on something perfect that will never ever fail. Through God’s grace believers can make it through anything, including pornography. God’s word tells us, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).” He will never give the pastor such a burning fire of lust that he will not be able to stand up to it. And God will be there every step of the way giving him faith through his word and sacraments and sending his Holy Spirit to create a new heart within him.

The Stages of Dealing with Pornography Addiction

There are various strategies for dealing with pornography addiction. One of them is suggested by Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Mark Laaser. They give an eight step course for the road to recovery.⁹³ Many of these steps are great even for the pastor who has not looked up pornography. They may better prepare him to stop any temptations at their source.

The first step is to identify the damage. A pastor will need to consider just how pornography is affecting his life and to what degree. This includes the inner thoughts of a pastor. Pornography can affect how a person thinks about his other pursuits, relationships, and even guilt.⁹⁴ Assessing the damage is vital in order to know what to fix.

⁹² John White, *Eros Defiled* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 11.

⁹³ Timothy E. Clinton, and Mark R. Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 161-162.

⁹⁴ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 161.

The second step is to identify patterns of temptations.⁹⁵ Pornography is really good at attacking the pastor when he is at his weakest and it is because the devil knows people so well. He knows how to push on all of a person's weak points and avoid all of a person's strengths. In fact, the Bible says, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings (1 Peter 5:8-9)." Since the devil knows people so well the pastor needs to "be alert" in order to fight him. He needs to know himself.

Joshua Harris, author to *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust is)*, suggests that the pastor identify his own patterns of temptation. These can include time of day, tempting locations, television, newspapers and magazines, music, books, internet, the mailbox, and things that happen in public.⁹⁶ Afterwards, he suggests the pastor answers these questions to better prepare him to act on what he knows:

1. List your own top three lust triggers. How can you avoid them?
2. What time of day or week are you most tempted by lust? What can you do to prepare for those times?
3. Which locations are the most tempting for you? How can you limit your time in those places?
4. What five little battles do you need to be fighting more faithfully? Describe in detail what it looks like for you to fight—and win—these battles.⁹⁷

This is something that will allow the pastor to be prepared. He will not wonder what to do when the struggle occurs, but will know exactly what to avoid and how to avoid it. It is also important to note that the pastor will need to constantly update this information. The way a pastor struggles with pornography may change. A pastor must be ready for that possibility and adapt so he can respond accordingly.⁹⁸ This will help the pastor to know how to maintain his integrity in a practical way. All the while he should keep his eyes on Jesus, "who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:3)."

The third step is to identify emotional triggers. This is tied together with the second step. The pastor must know himself and how he is tempted in order to battle against lust. Some therapists summarize the main triggers with the acronym HALT. These letters stand for hungry,

⁹⁵ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 161.

⁹⁶ Harris, *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, 64-74.

⁹⁷ Harris, *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, 74-75.

⁹⁸ Harris, *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, 75.

angry, lonely, and tired.⁹⁹ The pastor will need to determine what triggers his pornography use, whether it is from HALT or not. This will be the point to focus the attack on pornography viewing.¹⁰⁰

The fourth step is seeing pornography as sin. The pastor must make sure he perceives pornography as a sin and there is no justified reason to continue pornography use. This even includes impure thoughts as well.¹⁰¹ The pastor will want to consider how God is viewing this sin in his relationship with God. God's hatred towards sin, God's forgiveness, and God's love will all play a role in this step.¹⁰²

The fifth step is to refocus on Christ. This is where the pastor will develop a biblical plan to turn away from pornography and towards Jesus Christ.¹⁰³ This may be the most important step of them all. It certainly takes the most work. When it comes to this phase there are a few helpful pointers for the pastor to keep in mind to help him sustain his integrity. The first is to flee from the line. So often, in their minds people mark out a specific point for themselves that when they cross they have gone too far and have sinned. This usually does not work well as people tend to walk up to the line and get as close as they can to that point without sinning. Unfortunately, when tip-toeing the line, it is so very easy to cross over that line. For example, if someone's line is to not look up pictures of naked women on the internet, he may start with something like watching a music video with a sexy female artist dancing in it. He has not crossed his line, but he is now on a slippery slope. He may have already sinned and may start creeping closer to his line. He may then look up pictures of women in swimsuits. In his mind he may not have crossed the line yet as he reasons they are not pictures of naked women. However, it might be too late. Lust may have already seized him and is pushing him to want more. He very well may look up pictures of naked women next and move onto videos soon after. It would simply be better to not even walk up to the line he made, but avoid it entirely. For example, he may have chosen not to watch the music video on his computer or even to leave the computer screen for a while.

⁹⁹ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 161.

¹⁰¹ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

¹⁰² Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

¹⁰³ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

The Bible shows this concept through Joseph, the son of Jacob. At one point in his life Joseph worked for his Egyptian master, Potiphar. One day Potiphar's wife said to Joseph, "Come to bed with me (Genesis 39:7)!" But he refused. "And though she spoke to Joseph day after day he refused to go to bed with her or *even be with her* (Genesis 39:10)." Later on more happened. "One day he went into the house to attend to his duties and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said 'come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house (Genesis 39:11-12)." It is much harder to commit a sin when you take away the opportunity to commit it. Joseph ran from the line. He did not even give himself the chance to make a mistake. No one was around and he could have sinned without anyone knowing, but he fled. He did not continue doing his work and going about his business in the house. He did not stay near her and attempt to resist lust when it was so close to him. He did not even stop for his own possession when she grabbed it. He ran from the line, putting his wants and desires underneath his honor, purity, and righteousness. The Bible puts this in simpler terms when it states, "Flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18)." This is a good way for a pastor to keep his integrity in place. A pastor will not walk up to the line when dealing with pornography. He will flee from it.

The concept to the fifth step is God's Word will show the pastor the type of man he needs to be. It will encourage and inspire him along the way. The pastor will do well to treasure God's Word and do his best to memorize it and bring his mind in line with God's will.¹⁰⁴ Spending time in God's Word will be a constant reminder of God's love for him while he carries out his pornography battle plan. The LORD gives many gifts through his word which will help the pastor become closer to his Father in heaven. He is able to learn about God's power and put on the armor of God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is

¹⁰⁴ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162

the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:10-18).

This passage vividly shows what a pastor can gain from God's Word in his fight against immoral desires. God's word helps straighten out the pastor's perspectives and gives him the tools he needs to fight pornography and any other problems he may be having. Other men may arm themselves with physical attributes or weapons, but men with integrity arm themselves with the spiritual weapons of God.

Other weapons for the pastors include prayer and keeping busy. The pastor can ask God for help and thank him for the grace he has given him. He should use prayer whenever he feels weak. The Bible tells us God wants us to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). God will never tire of this children's voices or problems so the pastor is never bothering him with his requests and troubles.

Another thing the pastor can do to maintain his integrity is keep busy. When people get bored and have nothing to do, they give sin its chance to attack them. Sin can sit in their minds, festering like an open wound. It can grow into full-blown lust that envelops them and directs them back to pornography. The pastor should not give sin that chance. He can stay busy with a variety of hobbies and projects so that he simply does not have time to focus on that sinful desire.

One last pointer is for the pastor to try and view others as precious children of God. "We have all been created and are loved by God."¹⁰⁵ A pastor should try to train his eyes to see people not as sexual objects or commodities, but to see them as brothers and sisters of Christ and love them as God loves them.¹⁰⁶

The sixth step is to find support and accountability. With God's grace as his armor, a pastor technically does not need anything else. But he will definitely want teammates. Teammates can hold the pastor accountable for his lust. Finding and talking to an accountability partner can be awkward, but the benefits far outweigh the awkward moments. Having someone to check up on him consistently is good for his sinful human nature. For some reason, as a general principle, if someone is watching, people are less likely to do something wrong. People do not like getting caught and are afraid of what people will think of them. In the modern age,

¹⁰⁵ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

¹⁰⁶ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

there are multiple places a pastor can go for accountability. He can check within his friend groups. He can find a Christian ministry that supports men who are struggling with pornography addiction. He can even find accountability online with websites such as NoFap.org and Reboot Nation.¹⁰⁷ An online community can give a pastor an extra tool in his toolbox when he needs and extra resource in his battle against pornography.¹⁰⁸ The pastor will want to find an accountability partner who cares about him and will take the time to help. “Nagging, anger, or humiliation won’t work.”¹⁰⁹ An accountability partner who guilt-trips will not be very helpful. In his book *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, Steve Gallagher tells the story of one pastor who was shunned for his sin. “There are simply no words to describe the pain and agony my wife and I went through during the weeks, months and years that followed. Not only were we rejected by those we considered to be our friends, but both the elders and the entire staff of the church refused to have any contact with us whatsoever.”¹¹⁰ An accountability partner will not attempt to shatter the fallen minister, but rather encourage him. He will be strict, but always show the pastor “God is waiting for him with open arms and a gracious, welcoming smile.”¹¹¹

When the pastor has found an accountability partner, there are three things he can do to help out this relationship: 1. Be honest. 2. Be courteous 3. Do not just hear, but listen. How can his accountability partner help him if he is not honest with him/her? No matter how much time that person invests in him, there is no way his accountability partner can watch him 24/7. The pastor must both be open about both his successes and his faults. This way his accountability partner can know how to best help him. Teammates can be the difference between failure and success. The pastor should find a trustworthy friend or friends to help him stay accountable. Pastors with integrity know when to ask for help.

One more way a pastor can stay accountable is with internet pornography blocking programs. “Early in the process of recovery, before the self-control mechanisms in your brain are restored to full working order, blockers can be quite helpful.”¹¹² They will not stop the pastor who wants to get around them from looking up pornography. However, they will stop most unwanted sites and allow the pastor to not be caught off guard by sudden pornographic

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 105.

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 105.

¹⁰⁹ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 163.

¹¹⁰ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 129.

¹¹¹ Gallagher, *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, 129.

¹¹² Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 103.

images or videos. The pastor will have to take the time to think about what he is doing if he is going to disable them before looking up pornography. Hopefully this will be enough time to reevaluate what he is doing and decide that looking up pornography is not worth the risk to his spiritual well-being. Here are a list of free porn blockers available:

Qustodio – <http://www.qustodio.com/index2>

K-9 – <http://www.1.k9webprotection.com>

Esafely.com – <http://www.esafely.com/home.php>

OpenDNS – <http://www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/parental-controls/>¹¹³

Although it is not free, another great porn blocking program can be found at www.covenanteyes.com.

The seventh step is to consider the impact on the marriage. The pastor will need to evaluate his relationship with his spouse if he has one. He should be honest with her and talk to her about the effects viewing pornography has had on their relationship and how the relationship can be healed. The pastor should seek to rebuild or strengthen sexual and emotional intimacies with his wife. He will transition his sexual desires to focus back on her in a godly way.¹¹⁴

The eighth and final step is to see a therapist trained in sexual addiction recovery. Not every pastor will need this, but if he is addicted to pornography he will want to consider this. Pornography is a serious thing. Pornography use can cause long-term debilitating problems such as sexually transmitted diseases or divorce.¹¹⁵ Sometimes a person will not be able to find the help he needs and having someone professionally trained to deal with a pastor's specific problem is necessary to kick the habit.¹¹⁶ There is no shame in the pastor for admitting his weaknesses and seeking someone who can help him in these areas. The pastor is not weak for doing this. He is strong for doing the right thing.

The journey to recover from pornography use may not be as smooth as described in the steps. Often with an addiction, a person will mess up before slowly pulling away from the habits he has gotten used to. "Deeply etched porn pathways can easily spring back to life."¹¹⁷ If the pastor relapses in his battle against pornography, it does not mean the war has been lost. God has

¹¹³ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 103.

¹¹⁴ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

¹¹⁵ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

¹¹⁶ Clinton and Laaser, *The Quick-reference Guide to Sexuality & Relationship Counseling*, 162.

¹¹⁷ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 101.

already set aside the demands of the law through Jesus. He now is only looking for the pastor's heart. If the pastor is repentant, he can be sure God will forgive him. He can stop feeling guilty and forgive himself. God loves him very much and sent his only Son to be crucified as payment for his sins. He makes sure the pastor knows this in his Word. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16)." The pastor is most certainly forgiven. At this point, there is no point in getting down on himself or feeling sorry for himself. Christ has forgiven the pastor of his sins. That means the pastor can be ready to fight pornography immediately after messing up. He should not let pornography grab a foothold, but fight back with the weapons of God.

A man has to have the qualification of integrity to be a pastor. This means he will have to keep his sexual lust for pornography in check. The physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of a person can return back to normal. Pornography is not unbeatable, it is not something that cannot be forgiven, and it is not something that is strong enough to separate us from the love of God. There are several steps a pastor can follow to ascend out of the depths of pornography use while being motivated by the grace and forgiveness of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The steps are to:

1. Identify the damage
2. Identify patterns of temptation
3. Identify emotional triggers
4. See pornography as a sin
5. Refocus on Christ
6. Find support and accountability
7. Consider the impact on the marriage
8. See a therapist trained in sexual addiction recovery.

A pastor must always be wary of the sin which seeks to control him. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall (1 Corinthians 10:12)!" But though wary, the pastor does not have to grow weary. "Don't grow weary, consistency in the areas will slowly strengthen you spiritually... your faithful investments into holiness will grow too."¹¹⁸ The pastor

¹¹⁸ Harris, *Sex is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, 78.

can say with confidence he will sustain his integrity. He can say, “I can do all this through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13).”¹¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this paper has shown pornography is wrong and can cause physical, mental, and spiritual health problems. Pastors are no less prone to pornography than other people. Due to the nature of pornography, it can be especially harmful to pastors and their ministry. Hopefully, this paper has also shown the effects of pornography can be reversed and a pastor can be equipped to rehabilitate himself away from pornography addiction as well as prevent himself from looking at pornography. Equipping pastors to do so will benefit pastors and their ministry. In today’s day and age, it is necessary for a pastor to be equipped to deal with the temptation.

The best way to equip pastors is through education. While pornography affects everyone, it is particularly harmful during sexual formation for children and adolescents.¹²⁰ “Not only are their brains more susceptible to establishing new patterns of thought, but their minds are quite literal.”¹²¹ What young people see in pornography shapes way they see things. “They learn what women are meant to look like, how they should act, and what they are supposed to enjoy. They absorb these lesson keenly, emulating people they perceive as role models. Not surprisingly the younger the age of exposure and the more hard-core the material, the more intense the effect on a person’s sexual formation.”¹²² This indicates that education of what pornography is and what it does as well as how to fight it should occur at a young age. This might be hard for religious schools to implement. What might be easier is to train pastors in seminaries and let them be the spiritual leaders they are supposed to be. Let them teach the parents and parents in turn teach their children. The information about pornography needs to be spread. “You can never hope to overcome addiction or change bad habits if you fail to understand the context in which they flourish.”¹²³ This is why pastors need to be educated to protect themselves and others. “Such education needs to inform all ages of the symptoms that today’s internet porn users are reporting,

¹¹⁹ Philippians 4:13.

¹²⁰ Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015), 112.

¹²¹ Grant, *Divine Sex*, 112.

¹²² Grant, *Divine Sex*, 112-113.

¹²³ Leahy, *Porn Nation*, 103.

as well as teach people how the brain learns, how chronic overconsumption can alter it for the worse, and what is entailed in reversing unwanted brain changes (sexual conditioning, addiction).”¹²⁴

Therefore it is this paper’s urging that each seminary incorporate some sort of training to prevent and fight against pornography addiction. This training ought to examine the perceptions of pornography, show that pornography is wrong, explain the adverse health effects that are connected with pornography, take practical steps to fight temptation, identify triggers, and work on building healthy relationships with others and God. By doing this, schools will make good use of their time. Future ministers will be able to combat world perceptions and defend themselves against the ever increasing reach of pornography. The devil has approached the world with a temptation in the form of internet pornography. God has given the world tools to fight against it. It would be foolish to allow this sin to run unchecked. It would be wise to equip pastors and future pastors with the tools God has given. This will help their ministry of spreading God’s saving Word, all for the glory of God.

¹²⁴ Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn*, 159.

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