



Article by Dr. David L. Lane, Resident Retired Minister  
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## **CYBER SPACE PORNOGRAPHY AND ELECTRONIC FORNICATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**David L. Lane, Ph.D**

“Eternity” is for sale, and so is “Truth” – as high fashion fragrances from Calvin Klein. Eternity however, is really not for sale, and neither is Truth. They are gifts from God that can be squandered by bad decisions and unchecked sensuality. However, the infiltration of sex, sexual exploitation and pornography is a threat to both. Shakespeare, in the tragedy of Hamlet, notes the distortion of lust as opposed to God-designed love. He lucidly lined, “So lust, though to a radiant angel linked, will sate itself in a celestial bed and prey on garbage.” Garbage is an appropriate term to describe pornography.

With the ease of access through cable, our satellite provider, the internet in the privacy of our home, or even novels with graphic language that appeal to women that can be read in the middle of the day to escape the mundane, pornography is romanticized through words and emotions. It has invaded every segment of society affecting men, women, and children. It not only affects society at large, it has also become a major problem in the church as well; even destroying many of God’s elect leaders.

In a 2000 Christianity Today survey, 33% of clergy admitted to having visited a sexually explicit Web site. Of those who had visited a porn site, 53% had visited such sites “a few times” in the past year, and 18% visit sexually explicit sites between a couple of times a month and more than once a week.

Fifty-one percent of pastors say online porn is a possible temptation; 37% admit it is a struggle. Yet only 25% of pastors use filters on his or his family's computer. Out of 81 pastors surveyed (74 males 7 female) in Seattle alone, 98% stated that they had been exposed to porn; 43% intentionally accessed a sexually explicit website.

For Christians and non-Christians alike, sexual temptation is nothing new. What *is* new is the proliferation of pornographic web sites, available at the click of a mouse. It is a temptation that previous generations did not grow up with. In those days you had to show your face in a store and actually lay a magazine out or a video and pay money. Now accessibility, affordability and anonymity make pornography easily available for those who would never subscribe to Playboy magazine or set foot in an adult video store.

John Bentley, information technology director at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, surveyed church of Christ members on the pornography problem last year. More than 4,000 members, including ministers, elders and deacons, responded to the voluntary survey.

Forty-five percent of men who participated in the survey strongly agreed or agreed with this statement: "I have struggled with Internet pornography as a temptation." Thirty percent of the males acknowledged viewing Internet pornography on more than 25 occasions.

Other research suggests that as many as one in six pastors/ministers struggle with or are addicted to pornography. We can conclude, therefore, that in each of our churches a sizeable percentage of men in our pews on a Sunday morning are in the heat of battle concerning this malady while countless homes are affected by it.

Like "closet" narcotics, people addicted to pornography try to keep their habits secret, especially if they are professionals or religious leaders. But dark secrets have a way of being exposed, and many

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leaders have had their reputations besmirched when their ugly secrets became public knowledge.

## **THE DESIRE FOR PORNOGRAPHY**

Pornography is not a new form of entertainment, it is quite old. Literally, the word pornography finds its roots in the Greek of the New Testament. Pornography describes that which is sexually immoral.

If you take a look in an English dictionary, pornography will be defined by that which is obscene. What is labeled as pornography today is much more than obscene.

It is the celebration of what is sexually immoral. Pornography is that which exploits and dehumanizes sex, so that human beings are treated as things and women, in particular, as sex objects.

The Longford report defines pornography as following: “the commercial exploitation of sex designed to stimulate sexual excitement, with special reference to abnormalities and perversion.” Today, pornography means all writings, photographs, videos or so called works of “art” that depict sexual activity, particularly illicit sexual acts or perversions.

Pornography lies to us about what sexual fulfillment is and cheapens it to a moment and a picture. It makes sex trivial and a quick visual thrill, instead of the true picture of intimate sex within a deep relationship. As with other addictions, persons addicted to pornography must face the reality that they have a troubled sexuality that needs to be dealt with in depth. They need help from God and in many cases help from professional Christian therapists.

Having some of the toughest restrictions on sexually explicit materials of any Western industrialized nation, the United States is

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still by far the world's leading producer of porn, churning out hard-core videos at the astonishing rate of about 150 new titles a week.

In 1996, Americans spent more than \$150 million ordering adult movies on pay-per-view. According to Paul Fishbein, editor of *Adult Video News*, there are approximately 25,000 video stores that rent and sell hard-core films – almost 20 times the number of adult bookstores.

Since 1991, the number of hard-core titles released each year has increased by 500 percent.

*Playboy's* Web site, which offers free glimpses of its playmates, now averages about five million hits a day.

Telephone sex -- considered simply one more form of "audio text" by executives in the trade – became a huge business in the 1980s despite government efforts at regulation. Every night, between the peak hours of 9 p.m. and 1 a.m., it is estimated that a quarter of a million Americans pick up the phone and dial a number for commercial phone sex.

In 2001, Americans spent between \$750 million and \$1 billion on telephone sex. AT&T is one of the biggest carriers of phone sex.

There are now more outlets for hard-core pornography in the United States than McDonald's restaurants. The introduction of pornography to the information highway has made home computers the fastest growing and primary mode of distribution of illegal pornography.

A study by Nielsen Media Research indicated heavy traffic into the *Penthouse* Web site from corporate networks. Use of this Web site did not taper off at all during office hours. In just one month, employees from IBM, Apple and AT&T visited the site 12,823 times.

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Compaq Computer dismissed approximately 20 employees, each of whom had accessed sex-related Web sites more than 1,000 times.

Faith and Values section of the Herald-Leader carried an article that indicated 50% of all Christian men, and 20% of Christian women, are addicted to pornography. Beyond that, 57% of pastors polled said that pornography was the most damaging sexual issue affecting congregations today.

## **THE DEPENDANCE ON PORNOGRAPHY**

Pornography usually starts with a seemingly harmless second glance, but it seldom ends there. Roving eyes are only the beginning. From there it usually progress to flirting with the opportunity to lust, glancing at pornography, being preoccupied with pornography, to ultimately being addicted to it. The goal of pornography is not to tease you, but to control you.

In every generation and in every age, individuals have stood at the crossroads between right and wrong, propriety and promiscuity, between God's demand and man's desire; and they all had to make a choice. Because of the weakness of the flesh we have all sinned.

Pornography has addictive qualities. Bill Hybels shares a letter from a congregant that confirms that fact. The letter states,

*"I am an emotional invalid. My addiction to pornography paralyzes my spiritual life, perverts my view of the world, distorts my social life, and destroys any possibility of God using me, and I just can't stop. Lust eats me up, yet it doesn't satisfy. Pornography promises me everything; it produces nothing. We know from science that pornography gives a person an adrenaline rush. When the endorphins are released in the brain, they're two hundred times more potent than morphine, and they're more addictive than cocaine. They give an enormous sense of well-being that is absolutely false. I guess it's true, what they say*

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*“Habit, if not resisted, soon becomes necessity.” Pornography is habit forming. You have to keep looking. There is always one more picture to turn to. There is always one more video to watch. There is always one more website to click on. You will never have enough.”*

The addictive nature of pornography leads to depression, feelings of loneliness, shame, fear, and anxiety. It also leads to disillusionment, defilement and deceit. Sin begets sin, and it becomes a stepping stone to even more evil matters that will ultimately bring death. Death to one's self-esteem, death to meaningful relationships, death to moral absolutes, and all too often literal death to the innocent as well as the guilty.

## **THE DESTRUCTION OF PORNOGRAPHY**

Even after reviewing the enormously high statistics on pornography there are still those who will argue that we are making more out of viewing pornography than you should, after all, it is not like having an affair and it is not really hurting anyone.

Both of those thoughts are lies from the pit of hell because, viewing pornography is not only like having an affair, its worst. It is committing adultery. Jesus said in piercing language *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matthew 5:27-28).

When we view pornographic images or even imagine pornographic images with others outside of our spouse, it causes us to lust and we have committed adultery in our hearts. Viewing pornography is the feeding of lust that leads to sin.

**Pornography ruins relationships.** In his book, *The Centerfold Syndrome*, Gary Brooks explains that pornography erodes a man's

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ability to relate to a woman in an intimate and honest way because it 'pays scant attention to [his] needs for sensuality and intimacy while exalting [his] sexual needs.' Pornography completely robs our ability to enter into lasting and satisfying relationships.

**Pornography degrades marriage.** As C. S. Lewis stated in "Mere Christianity," you must not isolate [sexual] pleasure and try to get it by itself any more than you ought to try to get the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again.

Intimacy is not achieved with a person on a piece of paper, or on a piece of film or on a computer screen. It is designed for the marriage relationship and cheap imitations are not to be entertained or tolerated.

Even beyond hurting society, viewing Pornography Hurts Your Spouse. Hebrews 13:4 tells us that marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Viewing pornography brings others into the marriage bed that God has designed to be shared by one man and one woman.

Pornography degrades your view of your wife as she becomes less of a person you share your life with and more of an object to fulfill your sexual desires and fantasies. Your sex life is no longer born out of desiring to give yourself to one another but is born out of selfishly wanting to take from your spouse whatever you think will bring satisfaction and enjoyment to yourself.

Now while you may think viewing pornography will spice up your sex life, in actuality, it hinders you from enjoying it to the utmost because you can only experience it to the fullness when intimacy and love are involved and are deeply growing in your relationship. Once you remove intimacy and love as a requisite part of physical intimacy, and think of it only as an act for physical gratification, we start planting

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the seeds of marital strife where your spouse is no longer thinking about how to give of themselves in your marriage, but only in how to protect themselves from being dehumanized.

**Pornography leads to violence.** Pedophilia is never an accident. Almost all cases of sexual abuse of children find their source in pornography. Rape, torture, and even bestiality have pornographic roots.

There seems to be a common progression associated with pornography. Viewing pornography starts out small and only gets worse. It may start out with pictures and move to videos. Then it progresses to more hard core videos that are violent and more deviant. Before long, books and the internet no longer satisfy. One then finds himself at strip clubs and visiting peep shows dropping quarters in a slot to feed his habit. The drive for a bigger high goes beyond actually committing adultery with his body and it ends with participating in homosexual or violent acts even though one does not think of himself as a homosexual or sadomasochist.

**Pornography strains our relationship with God.** Viewing pornography hurts in so many ways. It hurts society, those involved, your spouse, but primarily it is hurting your ability to be in fellowship with God. It destroys your relationship with God.

Notice the admonishment found in the book of Ephesians. *“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Don’t become like them, separated from God”* (Ephesians. 4:17-19).

Again, Paul warned *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the*

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*heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).*

Perpetuating the sin of lust and sensuality results in our being unable to see clearly, to experience joy, and experience fullness of life the way God designed it.

When we are out of fellowship with God, there is no telling where sin will lead us. Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay. Maybe you are “just viewing pornography” and think it will not go any further. The fact is not only can it lead to worse, it will if something is not done about it. It will lead to an affair, the destruction of your family, or even acts or crimes that you thought you would never commit.

We close this chapter with a tragic testimony of the powerful destruction of pornography from a victim of pornography.

“My name is Diane. I’ve always felt that pornography was bad, that it was harmful. But I felt that it didn’t affect me personally. No members of my family ever read pornography. My husband’s family didn’t read pornography. We live in a small, close knit community. Pornography is not an issue there. I basically felt immune to its effects. A year ago in April, my world was shattered by the effects of pornography.

My eight-year-old daughter was raped and violated in every manner you can imagine by a twelve-year old boy. When they arrested the young man, we were told that they would surely find sexual abuse in his background. And that this is the reason he did it on my daughter. After a thorough psychosexual

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evaluation, they came to one conclusion. There was a single motivating factor in what he did to my baby. He was exposed to pornography at a very vulnerable time in his life. What he saw on those pages not only gave him the ideas of what to do and how to do it, but it gave him the permission to treat females in a degrading and debasing manner. Since he was only twelve years old, he needed to look for a female who was younger than him, who wouldn't fight back. And so he raped and molested my daughter.

I've heard it said that pornography is a victimless crime. I'm standing here before you a victim of pornography. My little girl is a victim of pornography. My husband is a victim of pornography. Even my four other children are victims. How do you explain to a fourteen-year-old boy that his favorite little sister has been raped and violated in such a heinous manner?

But I am also standing here before you, and from my heart I can tell you, that this young man was a victim. He came from a good family. This wasn't a boy who was in a gang. He'd never been in trouble with the law. He came from an intact family in a small community where everybody knows everybody. His parents sent him to a youth camp thinking that they were going to enrich his life with these two weeks in a summer youth camp. At that point, he was exposed to pornography.

He is a victim. His family is a victim. His mother loves him as much as I love my little girl. And his mother is as shattered as I am. Something is seriously wrong in this country when we protect the rights of a handful of men to make billions at the expense of women and children."

Lord, send us a revival of purity in the land, beginning in our pulpits. May we be convicted by the words of the 19th century evangelist Charles Finney as he wrote, "Revival is the renewal of the first love of Christians resulting in the conversion of sinners to God. It assumes

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that the church is backslidden, and revival means conviction of sin and searching of hearts among God's people. Revival is nothing less than a new beginning of obedience to God."

Your purity and mine comes down to one question. Will you begin that new obedience to God's will, or not? David reminds us of the formula for maintaining sexual purity in his gripping challenge found in the Psalm, *"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"* (Psalm 119:9-11).

Will you seek Him wholeheartedly? Will you hide His Word in your heart? Will you heed His Word that you might not sin against Him? Make a choice today, take a stand now. Your family is worth it, the church is worth it, and your walk with the Lord is worth it.

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### **END NOTES**

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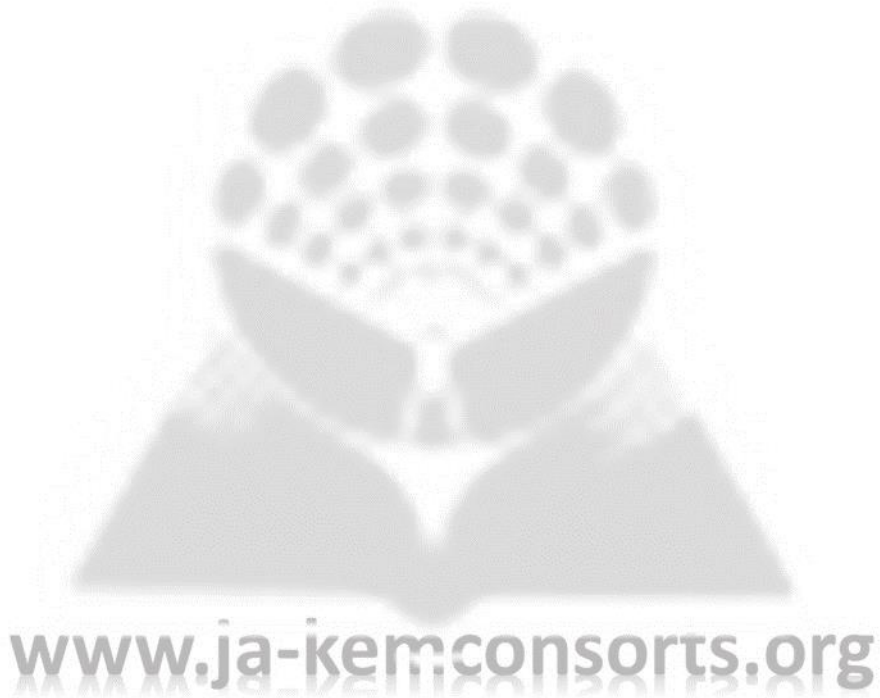
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