

Dear all, greetings.

Here are the notes to the first half of a sermon I recently preached on men, porn and the Good News. The notes to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half will appear in the following Worldview.

## **Men, Porn and the Good News**

### **Introduction**

- Being born again, and proclamation of the Good News in outreach, involves justification (freedom from the penalty of sin), sanctification (freedom from the power of sin) and glorification (freedom from the presence of sin). Today we focus on freedom from the power of sin – the sin of pornography.

### **Porn – the Scale of the Problem**

- A national survey in the US of Christian men reveals shocking statistics pertaining to high rates of porn use and addiction, plus rampant sexual infidelity among married Christian men.
- The 2014 survey was commissioned by Proven Men Ministries and conducted by Barna Group among a nationally representative sample of 388 self-identified Christian adult men.
- The statistics for Christian men between 18 and 30 years old are particularly striking: 77% look at porn at least monthly; 36% view porn on a daily basis; and 32% admit being addicted to porn (and another 12% think they may be).
- The statistics for middle-aged Christian men (ages 31 to 49) are no less disturbing: 77% looked at porn while at work in the past three months; 64% view porn at least monthly; and 18% admit being addicted to porn (and another 8 percent think they may be).
- Even married Christian men are falling prey to porn and extramarital sexual affairs at alarming rates: 55% look at porn at least monthly; and 35% had an extramarital sexual affair.
- Empirical data suggests that porn use is just as significant among Adventist men as other Christian men, and that significant numbers of pastors use, or are addicted to, porn.

### **Porn – the Impact of the Problem**

- **Porn is addictive.** Because of porn's addictive nature, viewers usually need an ever-increasing dosage over time in order to feel the same level of enjoyment, and they often have to seek out more extreme and hard-core forms of porn.
- Like any potentially addictive substance, porn triggers the release of dopamine into a part of the brain called the reward center (a.k.a. reward pathway or system). Basically, the reward center's job is to make you feel good whenever you do something healthy, like eating a great meal, or getting a good workout. The "high" you get makes you want to repeat the behavior again and again. Your brain is hardwired to motivate you to do things that will improve your health and chance of survival.
- Researchers have also discovered that the reward center is actually two different brain systems, a "Liking" system and a "Wanting" system, that work in different—sometimes opposite—ways.
- The "Liking" system in the reward center provides the enjoyable feelings you get when you win a game, go for a run, or experience any natural, healthy reward. Unfortunately, it also lights up for counterfeit rewards like drugs, or porn, which is why addictive substances feel enjoyable at first.
- When something activates your reward center and you feel that intense high from the "Liking" system, your brain starts producing a chemical called CREB. CREB acts like brakes on the reward system. Normally it makes the pleasure fade and leaves you feeling satiated and ready to get on with your life.
- But if the "Liking" system gets stimulated too much over time (as often happens with drugs or porn), CREB levels build up until your whole pleasure response goes numb. In fact, too much

CREB floating around in your brain can dull the enjoyment of *anything*, which may be why addicts often feel bored, detached, and depressed.

- The “Wanting” system is a much larger area in the reward center, and it causes the brain to rewire itself in response to intense pleasure. With the help of a protein called DeltaFosB, the “Wanting” system builds new brain connections so you can remember the experience and repeat it later.
- It’s called the “Wanting” system because those new nerve connections make you crave the pleasurable experience. The more often the experience is repeated, the stronger those nerve connections become, and the stronger the cravings grow. DeltaFosB is sometimes called “the molecular switch for addiction” because it reinforces cravings and, if it builds up enough in the brain, it can switch on genes that leave the user more vulnerable to addiction.
- DeltaFosB doesn’t just make you remember the pleasurable experience itself; it also forms connections to details associated with the experience. These associations (called “cues”) are found with all kind of addictions. For a smoker, a cue may be the smell of cigarette smoke. An alcoholic may develop pathways triggered by the sight of a bottle or the voice of a drinking buddy. Cues can be anything the brain associates with the experience. For a porn user, it may be the memory of a porn scene or a place or time of day he can be alone with a computer. For an addict, the whole world starts to seem like a collection of cues and triggers leading them back to their addiction. Gradually, the porn pathways become *sensitized*, meaning they are easily triggered by the cues that are all around.
- Wait! Didn’t we say that CREB dulls the nerves, making them *less* sensitive? Now we’re saying that DeltaFosB makes them more sensitive. Well which is it?
- Actually, both. Remember, we’re talking about two different brain systems. With repeated exposure to porn, the “Wanting” system grows more sensitive to the cues that cause *cravings*. At the same time the “Liking” system grows less sensitive to *pleasure*. That’s the awful irony of any porn addiction: the user *wants* it more and more, even while he *likes* it less and less.
- **Porn leaves you lonely.** *Porn promises immediate satisfaction, endless excitement, and easy intimacy, but in the end it robs you of all three. The more porn you consume, the more you tend to withdraw emotionally from real people and rely on porn. Eventually it becomes more difficult to be aroused by a real person or to form a real relationship, and the resulting isolation and loneliness fuels the need for more porn.*
- *Porn is devastating for your wife.* It is very common, when wives find out that their husband has been watching porn, for them to feel a whole range of negative emotions including rejection, humiliation, abandonment, isolation, loneliness, jealousy, anger, and shame. Even if they don’t believe that porn is the same as cheating, they often feel a deep sense of loss, betrayal, and mistrust. The secrecy, shame, isolation, and lies that are often introduced into a relationship by compulsive porn use can snowball into all kinds of problems.
- **Porn kills love.** Studies have shown that most women see no acceptable role for porn within their own committed relationship. The evidence that porn can destroy relationships and partners is overwhelming. *Studies show that viewing porn makes a user more critical of his or her partner and less satisfied with their relationship and sex life. Real love requires real commitment to a real person. Porn just makes it harder for someone to have a real, loving relationship.*
- Two of the most respected porn researchers, Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillman at the University of Alabama, studied the effects of porn and media for more than 30 years. They found that viewing porn makes many users less satisfied with their own partners’ physical appearance, sexual performance, sexual curiosity, and affection. They also found that, over time, many porn users grow more callous toward females in general, less likely to value monogamy and marriage, and more likely to develop distorted perceptions of sexuality. Other researchers have confirmed those results and added that porn users tend to be significantly less intimate with their partners, have less commitment in their relationships, less satisfied with their romantic and sex lives, and more likely to cheat on their partners.

- **Porn destroys families.** *Porn undermines the trust, respect, love, communication, and happiness that are at the core of a healthy family.*
- **Porn devastates society.** As internet porn grew more popular, it has turned darker, more graphic, and more extreme. With so much porn available, pornographers tried to compete for attention by constantly pushing the boundaries. Porn has evolved from erotic and suggestive material through explicit acts to materials dominated by sadomasochistic themes involving scripts fusing sex with hatred and humiliation, promoting the degradation, abuse, and humiliation of females, children and infants ways never seen before.
- **Porn causes chronic ED.** Watching porn is a very powerful experience that leaves a strong and lasting impression in the brain. Every time you watch porn, you are strengthening the part of your brain map that connects arousal to porn. Meanwhile, the pathways connecting arousal to things like seeing, touching, or cuddling with a real human aren't getting used. Pretty soon, natural turn-ons aren't enough, and many porn users find they can't get aroused by anything but porn.
- How bad is the problem? Put it this way: doctors are seeing an epidemic of young men who, because of their porn use, can't get it up with a real, live partner. Thirty years ago, when a man developed ED, it was almost always because he was getting older, usually past 40. As his body aged it became more difficult to perform. Chronic ED in anyone under 35 was nearly unheard of. But those were the days before Internet porn. These days, online message boards are flooded with complaints from porn users in their teens and 20s complaining that they can't stay hard. They want to know what's wrong with their body, but the problem isn't in their organ—it's in the brain.
- **Porn leads to sexual violence.** *Porn is packed full of women being disrespected, coerced, and physically and verbally abused, and that's shaping how society thinks and acts.* But porn doesn't just change attitudes; it can also shape actions. Study after study has shown that users of violent and nonviolent porn are more likely to use verbal coercion, drugs, and alcohol to push women into sex. Multiple studies have found that exposure to both violent and nonviolent porn increases aggressive behavior, including both having violent fantasies and actually committing violent assaults.
- **Porn denies eternal life.** For many, porn is an addictive yet cherished sin. While that sin remains un-confessed, it will keep them out of heaven, just as surely as Moses' one sin in striking the rock kept him out of the promised land, and Adam and Eve's one mistake cost them paradise. **Ps. 66.18. Isa. 59.1-2.**

The solution to this epidemic of sin and addiction? Well....that comes in the next blog....

Kind regards,

Conrad.