

The Bible, Sex, and a Changing World: Pornography and Purity

<slide 1> In our modern technological era, we have a crazy amount of access to all sorts of information and news from around the world! We can learn so much about the world we live in. And We also learn the horrors of natural disasters and wars and famine. We also learn about many different kinds of **public health crisis'**

<slide 2> In 2014 we learned about the horrific news of the large scale Ebola crisis in west Africa. Last year we learned all about the Zika virus in central and south America potentially causing an increase in birth defects. In 2009 local news agencies were busy warning us about the Swine Flu or H1N1. At this particular time in my life I was just beginning to see a wonderful young lady named Emily. While we were just beginning to date she came down with this flu. Being indoctrinated by awfulness of this sickness Emily and I did not see each other for a week while she and her mom who also came down with this much worse than usual flu recuperated. During our time apart I handcrafted a lovely card and brought her the most powerful medicine known to women: chocolate. Soon after she got better and we made our dating relationship official by changing our Facebook status from single to in a relationship. And a month later she asked me a very pointed question about a totally different kind of health crisis.

... “do you watch pornography?” If you were entering into a wonderful relationship and this question came up? How would you respond?

<Slide 3> Today we will be **continuing our series on “the Bible, Sex, and a changing world.”** And I believe this morning’s topic (pornography and purity) is vitally important in this conversation! ...? There is a monster running free in cyberspace and causing havoc. And it is having a huge impact in the ways we think about sex and sexuality! **I want to say that there could be some trigger warnings this morning.***

A few years ago some loving well-meaning grandparents wanted to spoil their granddaughter with a brilliant gift! They gave her an ipad for her 11th birthday! a few days later with some curiosity and a push from her friends she googled the word sex. She approached her parents later with tears in her eyes holding out her once treasured ipad and said take it back I don’t want it anymore! She was completely traumatized! Thankfully, she came to her parents about her extreme confusion to talk and pray through the defiling impact the explosion of sexual images that popped up on her screen.

<Next Slide4> **Ephesians 5:3-4** But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

1 Corinthians 6 tells us to flee from sexual immorality

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is **pure**, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Pornography and what some even outside the church are calling our pornified culture is doing everything in its power to undermine this biblical way of thinking and is taking the world by storm. Unfortunately this one case is only a drop of water in an ocean. The statistics coming in are saying that the average first age of exposure to online pornography is between the ages of 7-10...and its dropping fast! **<next slide5>**

Years ago when many of us in this room who are older than I am wanted to see anything explicit had to go down to the corner store in public or to a certain shop or back room of a movie rental store. You had to risk being seen in public. And these photos were nothing of what typing 3 letters and one click of a mouse gets you today.

This is the world that we live in! If you have a device that can **access** the internet – you can access pornography! This was a chilling realization to me in the fall of 2011 when I was at a youth worker conference in a seminar on this very topic. I thought to myself, almost every teenager I know has their own personal device that can access wifi that fits in their pocket!! all of a sudden that x-box can become a porn-box. That playstation, it's a pornstation! The ease of access and anonymous nature of the internet has made it far too easy!!

And what's even worse is that we no longer have to search for pornography on our own. **If we are engaged in the online world it actually searches for us!! <next slide6>** Anyone been on youtube looking at videos of cats and the next movie that pops up in your feed has nothing to do with animals but whole lotta skin?!! There is a network of marketers that is called KAGOY, which stands for kids are getting older younger. What do marketers know? That if they get a young person hooked on their brand they could have a customer for life! And this is very real in the world of sex! There are pornographic websites that are preying on your children hoping to have a customer who is hooked for life!

Our sexually saturated culture is infused with pornography.

Some are now claiming that pornography will be our #1 public health crisis

<next slide7> To get a scope of this here are **some stats**: one major porn site bragged there was enough data watched in 2016 that the USB sticks would circle the moon. Enough videos were watched that added up to approx. 12.5 videos/person on earth. That's 4.5 billion hours of debauchery!!

<next slide8> **So lets have a quick snapshot at how this is affecting our world:**

- 2/3rds of divorces have some conflict with pornography
- It destroys relationships
- Its addictive
- 90% of pornography is violent/abusive (almost exclusively towards women)
- Changes the way we see humanity, sex, and sexuality
- 10% of grade 7 kids said they felt addicted – and most of them were not looking for porn when it found them!
- In a UK survey 60% of teens said that they looked to pornography to learn about sex and fill in the gaps in their sex education!
- It is increasing sexual promiscuity in younger and younger children.
- It fuels sex slavery around the world (including NA)
- 72% of guys and 28% of women view pornography and therefore is far from just a GUYS issue, it's a human issue
- Looking at recent stats for people watching at work is staggering: IN 2010 the Neilson Company in the states did a survey and they figure that 29% of working adults view at work!
- Another study found that 70% of online pornography was viewed between 9am – 5pm! And this is in light of many companies having a zero tolerance policy for watching porn at work = if you get caught you pack your things and leave right now – This is how pornography is affecting our world.

I'd like to give a Definition<next slide9>: Pornography is anything that the heart uses to find sexual expression outside of God's intended design for relational intimacy. It is anything that tempts or corrupts the human heart into desiring sexual pleasure in sinful ways." Harvest USA

Back in 2009 when Emily asked me if this was my struggle, I was able to say no. I never got wrapped up in online pornography; But when I look at this definition, I was far from pure.

The Bible's call to purity is clear and I know miss the mark BUT that is what God is calling us to! And as I see the impact this is having on our world and in the lives of people I love I want to step in and help! I have had the priviledge of walking a couple of young guys to freedom, and healing! God tells, us he will give us a new heart and a new start. **Jesus promises to pick us up and journey with us despite our past and present choices.** This is a difficult walk and now I'd like to take a look why it is so tough. Lets start with the brain! <next slide10>

There is plenty of research showing that pornography re-wires our brains. This is called neurological sequencing!

- puberty = growth explosion of pathways in the brain
- backroads and highways

- corn field illustration <next slide11>
 - would the students take the road or go through the middle of the corn field?
 - through – hard at first but easier and easier <next slide12>

I was in an adolescent psychology class when I first learned about this, and as I thought about young people trapped in the cycle of watching pornography my heart sank! <next slide13> The more you watch the harder it will be to quit! You see when you watch (and I think its pretty safe to say that watching is almost always accompanied by masturbation) the reward center in your brain lights up and releases pleasure inducing chemicals in your brain. Then whether you are in adolescence or not you begin to rewire your brain to need these chemicals to be released! You build up a tolerance and a dependency on these chemicals. You go from wanting them to NEEDING THEM! <next slide14>

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- **“An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula! To get the man’s soul and give him nothing in return”
Screw tape letters.**
- Now this has implication far beyond pornography’s grasp! What are our teenagers spending their time on? How are they making highways in their brains? <next slide15> video games? Netflix binging? social media phone use? Are their unhealthy habits that are getting rutted in? If so it is going to be harder to shake these habits in early adulthood! Are they exercising? working hard? spending time with friends? eating well? are their lives balanced with rest?!
- There is a trend of young people in the church agreeing with the Biblical notion that sex should be reserved for marriage yet they indulge in watching it frequently! And with the average age of marriage getting older, by the time one is married they may have a full on addiction. I have heard of stories of ‘virgin’ men not being able to be aroused on their wedding night! Why? because they have wired their brains for a totally different activity! They know how to run through the corn field but have no idea how to drive around on the road.

Sigh some good news: the world outside the church also sees the problem!

On March 10, 2016 the Utah House of Representatives voted unanimously to **declare pornography a public health crisis in the state**. And just this last week Virginia and south Dakota did the same thing!

Last year the Canadian government said they were going to do a study on the impact of explicit material and how it affects public health as well! Other countries around the world are joining in too!

The Bible has always spoken of the dangers of sexual immorality: when you live outside the boundaries of God's design, there will be negative consequences

Lets have a biblical look at a few reasons why sex is such a powerful idol. Lets look at Gen 2 + 3 <next slide16>

1. **Attraction.** This goes back to the garden of Eden or paradise!

Gen 2:18 – It's not good for man to be alone!

- read 18-20 – Adam had to wait...!

God brings him this women! The woman that God lovingly carefully fashioned brought human relationships into the world! Eve was Adam's suitable helper, she was identical but opposite!

- And Adam is like well she's pretty cool... The English translation doesn't do the Hebrew Justice...YAAAAS
- 25: they were naked and unashamed: there is this playful freedom and wonderful intimacy
- Being attracted to other people is a normal part of human experience. God has designed us this way. So it is no wonder when a someone sees a picture online and is naturally drawn to it, or the posters in malls and billboards or on magazine covers.
- but our minds have been warped under the power of sin to be attracted in ways that do honour God or humanity made in God's image.

2. **Sin brought about brokenness and shame to human sexuality.** <next slide17>

Think of that first question the serpent asks Eve, in Gen 3:1 Did God really say? I think this is a question we ask ourselves all the time. It casts doubt on the goodness of our Creator. Does God really have the best in mind for me? I think I can do better! Did God really say sex is for marriage? Does God really care about my purity, doesn't He just want me to be happy in this particular moment?! holiness

Immediately after Adam and Eve disobeyed God Sin entered the world

Gen 3:7: "their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked, and they made coverings for themselves." God's design for sex is amazing and good but when sin entered the world, the playful freedom was replaced by shame and a horrific realization of our inadequate ability to be fulfilled and to fulfill others! in other words I now worry that my spouce can't fulfill me and even worse that I cannot fulfill/complete her!

The consequences were also gender specific and in 3:16 God shows that there will now be a power struggle and division in relationships between genders.

Intimacy became much more difficult. Vulnerability becomes so much harder because we no longer want our inadequacies to come to light! We told God that we could do it ourselves, that we had a better plan BUT our faults have been exposed. So what do we tend to do? we might **isolate** ourselves and we look for ways to satisfy our sexuality in a way that will not hurt us – in pornography there is no relational risk! no vulnerability, but in turn we begin to block real relationships out, or at least be very guarded and never open up about what is really going on in our hearts!

Along with this brokenness sin also brought shame into our lives, and **shame** is especially associated with and pornography is often described as a shame based sin. Now there is a **different between guilt and shame: <next slide18>** Guilt says, I did something wrong and therefore I feel bad about my actions. But shame goes much deeper than that, its about our identity, **Shame is feeling bad about who we are!**

When people experience guilt, they understand, “I should not have done that.” Shame on the other hand says to them, “I should not BE that.” There is fear from self-condemnation as well as fear of the condemnation from others. When people feel shame they tend to withdraw from and avoid other people.

Here is a story from an anonymous 15 year old girl: <next slide19>

Pornography is not something to be taken lightly. Many people suffer in it longer than they need to because of shame. Just because the world says it is “normal” doesn’t mean we must let it be. People don’t see what it does in the heart and mind of those that it affects. They don’t see what it does inside the homes and relationships of those that it holds captive. They don’t see the lives that it ruins and destroys. But many of those struggling, especially women, feel that people would say either, “oh, that’s normal” or “you’re disgusting” if they knew. So, we stay trapped and we let it consume us. Let it be known, there is absolutely nothing normal about pornography! It’s not just a problem for men or an ‘adult only’ problem. As a 15-year-old girl, I was still just a child when I began a long, painful road of addiction. It’s a cultural and world problem. Men, women and children get exposed to porn every day and it seems to be “normal” in society. But it doesn’t have to be.

I'm hoping that by understanding **the brain, attraction, sin, brokenness and shame** we can understand this addiction cycle a bit more: there are many things in life that can lead us to destructive behaviours and addictions. Past hurts and abuse play a big role on the path to hurtful actions. And there are also times where everyone feels sad, lonely, bored, depressed, sick, stressed, or overwhelmed – discomforts of life come to everyone at various times. We must learn healthy responses to these feelings or we can get trapped in a cycle of unhealthy habits that lead towards addiction or **self-medication** in various forms

- alcohol, marijuana, drugs
- gambling
- social media
- Netflix bingeing
- food bingeing
- consumerism/shopping etc

So what can we do as a church to come around one another and take a stand against pornography and other addictive behaviours? <next slide20>

1. **wake up to the dangers:** I hope this sermon is doing just that! But there are some great websites out there that have lots a great information
2. **Get safeguards in place:** Utilize built-in or install protective software on every electronic device within your family that has online access. Have your home wireless access password protected and set online access via your wireless router with both time and content limits. And if you are not a techie, ask a computer whiz in your world for help in doing this.
3. **talk to your children** and spread the news to family and friends that they need to talk to their children. We need to be having straight up conversations with our children much earlier than we used to about sex and pornogrphahy. Go to www.doingfamilyright.com for great help on “sex talks”. <next slide21>
 - a. get great resources like the book: “Good pictures, bad picture” – check out doingfamilyright.org, Pastor Mardi and her husband Toni are doing a seminar on how to talk to your kids about sex on May 4. <next slide22>
4. **Delay** giving electronic devices that can access the internet
5. Have **online boundaries** on all technology in place – the sooner the better
6. Guard your own hearts and PRAY for purity. Walk the talk. Model purity in your own lives, the way we talk about the opposite gender...

If you are personally dealing with pornography I urge you, to take action today, it is nearly impossible to gain freedom on your own, you need the help of a loving community and accountability. One of the biggest lies is that you are the only one struggling, but that is not even close. Don't suffer in silence. There is no shame in asking for help, remember that is the foundation for the Gospel! Jesus I am not good enough on my own, I need your help, your love, your grace, your salvation! The fact that we believe in Jesus means that we have already acknowledged that we need help, and we do! Without Christ I have no hope! <next slide23>

“Only when you know the deep abiding constant love of Jesus will you have real strength and power against lust in your life. His love is fulfilling--which will keep you from looking to sexuality to give you only what Jesus can give!”

And with Christ we gain a new family that needs to be open and honest with each other! Church we need to be loving and compassionate and willing to help our brothers and sisters in Christ who are struggling! Even if that means answering the phone in the middle of the night! I ask of us, are we willing to do what it takes live out the calling to love one another as we love ourselves? Would you mentor someone? Walk alongside others whatever their struggles may be?!

Here is some steps of action: Tell someone before you go to bed tonight. Don't wait, call text message. Don't wait. **<Next Slide24>**

1. Accountability
 - a. whether one person you trust or a few, have an accountability group you can be OPEN with and TRUST. It is important that they can be compassion and encouraging but they must also be able to be strong. How many times do accountability groups come together and share, ahhh man I messed up again this week, and then the others say awww that's ok, you'll do better this week and then move on, NO at some point you need to be tough and say ok, its your smart phone that's got you struggling, time to get a dumb phone, no more laptop, no more x-box!! This is real and serious
 - b. Get good software blockers
2. Write down the reasons you want to quit!
3. Memorize appropriate Bible verses to help guard your mind
4. Pray out loud, turn on worship music in times of imminent temptation – call someone you trust! Go exercise!

<Next Slide25> **1 Thess 4:3** It is God's will that you should be sanctified (this means that you are set apart from the world, that your character reflects the character of God in the world): that you should avoid sexual immorality; **4** that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, **5** not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God.

Jesus wants us to be free from the sin in our lives that enslave us! In Jesus there is power to break the chains of bondage that keep us from human flourishing! Jesus is our redeemer, which means that he has bought us from the power of evil. He purchased our freedom with his life, death, and resurrection! And he wants to redeem our sex, our marriages, our shame, sexuality, our brokenness. to fix our insecurities and inadequacies. We are no longer are we slaves to sin! WE are redeemed, we can no longer see our identity as sinners but we must see ourselves in light of our redeemer Jesus Christ: we were washed, we were sanctified, we are justified and ultimately this is what we need to focus on to gain our freedom that is available in Christ. Our identity is first and foremost in Christ, we are children of the True King! If we focus on our brokenness that is what we will see, but if we focus and grow in Christ that is where we will begin to find our freedom!

<Next Slide26> *What consumes your mind controls your life - Romans 12:2*
Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your eyes on Jesus. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (MSSG)

Lets pray

Benediction:

Prayer team

Titus 2:11-12

11 For the grace of **God** has appeared that offers salvation to all people. **12** It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,