

**HELP!**

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MY KIDS ARE  
VIEWING  
PORNOGRAPHY

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*Help! My Kids Are Viewing Pornography*

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## INTRODUCTION

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I hear it so often: “Help! My kids are looking at porn!” Not long ago, one mom wrote to say that she and her husband had allowed their preteen boys access to the Internet to play a video game, thinking they had taught and trained the boys well enough to resist whatever temptation they might encounter there. They were wrong, and had just learned that for the past four months, when Mom and Dad left the house for a date or to run some errands, the boys had been looking at pornography. What should these parents do? How should they respond?

Another mom told me of a friend whose little girl had been waking up in the mornings and using the family’s iPad to look at porn. She was only a child, but was already hooked on pornography. What should this mom do?

Most men my age, or older, remember a day when pornography was rare and taboo. Pornography has

existed as long as the camera has existed (and before that in more rudimentary forms, I'm sure), but has been difficult to find and has always carried some level of stigma. Today, the tables have been turned and porn has gone mainstream. Instead of being a shameful addiction it is now the punch line in jokes, the subject of sitcom episodes, and porn stars are even admired. It's probably significant that we don't speak of "porn actors" but "porn stars," as if there is something inherently glamorous in their line of work. Books and magazines encourage us to enjoy pornography, to allow it to add a little spice to our relationships. Clearly, we live in a day when it is much harder to avoid pornography than it is to find it.

And then there are the scary statistics which reveal that men and boys are consuming porn as never before. Additionally, women and girls are now being introduced to it and even being encouraged to regard it as normal for the female gender. A recent email haunts me. It came from a girl of fourteen who found herself battling addiction to pornography.

Porn is now a mark of our culture, a part of our lives. The sexuality of a whole generation of children is being formed not by talks with their parents, but by professional pornographers who will do anything (anything!) to fuel an increasing

desire for greater perversity in order to increase their own business profits.

Our children will be exposed to pornography—make no mistake about it. If not through school, it may be through church contacts, or it may be through a seemingly innocent Google search. But sooner or later our children will see pornographic movies and images. And we, as parents, need to be prepared.

In the midst of this painful reality, it can be difficult to avoid despair and truly believe that anyone or anything can remove the problem. One does not need to be a prophet to look into the future and see a time marked by people who are utterly broken, whose view of their own sexuality has been undermined and destroyed by the never-ending consumption of pornography. We even see our children and our children's children growing up surrounded by it, giving themselves over to its power.

My aim in this mini-book is, therefore, to equip you as a parent with the right understanding, theology, and tools to protect your children from the harmful effects of pornography. So, with that goal in mind, let's begin.

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## Our Pornified Culture

**P***ornolescence* is a word which I coined to describe something I've seen a hundred times. Pornolescence is that period when a person is old enough and mature enough to know that pornography is wrong and that it exacts a high price, but too immature or too apathetic to do anything about it. It is that period when a person feels the guilt of his or her sin, but still enjoys it too much to give it up or bring it into the light. It's a very dangerous place to be.

Porn is stealing the best years from thousands of young Christian men and women. Porn is dominating their lives during their teens and twenties; during those years when energy is high and responsibility is low, the world lies open before them with endless possibilities, and they are charting a trajectory for their lives. Their dreams and abilities are being troubled and squelched by a reckless commitment to sin. Our *pornified* culture (also a word I coined) has taken them captive.

## Troubling Statistics

The first iPod, the first tablet, the first laptop—possessing these are today's coming-of-age rituals. We give our daughter her first iPod and she responds with joy. While we know there is a lot of bad stuff on the Internet, we never imagine that she, our little girl, would ever want to see it or ever go anywhere she is likely to find it. We give our teen his first laptop, warn him about the responsibility that is now his, and send him on his way. We make a mental note to follow up in a couple weeks, but we're sure he'll do just fine. "He'll talk to me if he has any questions or temptations, right?"

But the statistics don't lie. According to recent research,

- » 52% of pornography is now viewed on mobile devices;
- » 1 in 5 searches from a mobile device is for pornography;
- » The average age of first exposure to porn is twelve;
- » 9 out of 10 boys and 6 out of 10 girls will be exposed to pornography before the age of eighteen;



- » 71% of teens hide online behavior from their parents;
- » 28% of sixteen- to seventeen-year-olds have been unintentionally exposed to online pornography.<sup>1</sup>

## Two Research Studies on Porn

During my research, two related stories caught my eye. The first appeared in *The Independent* and was titled “Our Sexual Obsession Damages Boys As Well As Girls.”<sup>2</sup> It spoke of the results of a study completed by the American Psychological Association which found that “the portrayal of girls and young women as sex objects harms girls’ mental and physical health.” This report summarized the dangers like this:

*The saturation of sexualised images of females is leading to body hatred, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depression, high rates of teen pregnancy and unhealthy sexual development in our girl children. It also leads to impaired cognitive performance. In short, if we tell girls that looking “hot” is the only way to be validated, rather than encouraging*

*them to be active players in the world,  
they underperform at everything else.*

However, the consequences of sexualizing girls are far more devastating than this. Rape is at crisis levels, and one in three women will be a victim of stalking, sexual harassment, or sexual violence at some point in her life. The men committing these crimes are not a small number of psychotic individuals, but a wide range of seemingly normal guys who have grown up to view women as existing merely for their own personal pleasure. Because the report is written and interpreted by the American Psychological Association, some of the conclusions are not biblical and all of the conclusions avoid any acknowledgment of sin and its offense against God. Nonetheless, I do agree with many of their conclusions. One rings especially true.

*The sexualisation of girls is not just shattering the lives of girls and women, it is preventing boys and young men from relating to girls and women as complex human beings with so much to offer them. It is preventing boys from forming healthy friendships and working*

*relationships with girls and women. Instead, it is nurturing potentially violent abusers, rapists and johns. Ultimately, it means boys are not free to be themselves, to know their own humanity [and God-designed masculinity].*

Pornography prevents boys from forming normal and healthy relationships with girls. Implicit in pornography is the understanding that women (and increasingly men) exist to be exploited for the pleasure of others. Women are not to be embraced as friends or wooed or admired. Rather, they are to be conquered, used, and left behind. Boys who immerse themselves in pornography are not able to fulfill their God-given role as leaders and protectors. Instead they become exploiters.

My RSS reader came across a second alarming study. This one was completed by University of Alberta researcher Sonya Thompson. She had provided a questionnaire to 429 rural and urban eighth-grade students aged thirteen to fourteen. The report states, “She asked about their exposure to and use of sexually explicit material on TV, DVDs, movies and the Internet, as well as about their interaction with their parents about such

material.”<sup>3</sup> She found that 35% of boys and 8% of girls had already watched pornography more times than they could count. Even more alarmingly, the parents of these children were completely oblivious to their kids’ addictions. Her conclusions were similar to that of the American Psychological Association. She also said sexually curious teens who are watching porn are getting the wrong messages about healthy sexuality and don’t distinguish between actors getting paid to perform and real-world sexuality. The fact is that children are increasingly learning about sexuality through pornography, and, in particular, through Internet pornography. Hence the need for this mini-book.

Personally, I find it absolutely terrifying that children are learning about abnormal, deviant sex before their minds have even begun to grasp normal and pure sex. They are filling their minds with exploitation, rape, homosexuality, bestiality, degradation, and brutality long before they would even consider that sex is meant to be loving, tender, reciprocal, and passionate. Young boys and girls are now growing up with the mindset that normal sex is passé. And all the while their parents are unaware and oblivious, not knowing their children are absorbing endless amounts of perversion.

## The Monster in Disguise

The issue of pornography is talked about so often in Christian circles that it is in danger of becoming cliché. But the actual human dangers—physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual—are realities we must not overlook. We simply cannot allow pornography to become (or remain!) integrated into our lives and the lives of our children. We must recognize it for the monstrosity it is. One helpful way to think about pornography is to see it as a *mockery*, as *violent*, and as *progressive*.

### *MOCKERY*

Pornography makes a mockery of God's intention for sex. Indeed, all the messages of pornography go directly against God's purposes. Here are two examples of its lies:

- » Where God says the purpose of sex is to build unity between a husband and wife, pornography says it is about fulfilling *any* perceived need with *any* partner, willing or unwilling. Indeed, pornography teaches that sex is everything except intimate body-to-body, soul-to-soul contact between willing spouses.

- » God says sexual desire is good in a controlled context because it urges a man to pursue his wife (and a wife her husband). But pornography says sexual desire cannot and should not be controlled, but should be allowed to draw us to anyone we find attractive.

The lies spread by pornography threaten our children's lives and souls. Galatians 6:7-8 warns against the deceptive power of sin:

*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

According to the Bible, it is the fool who rejects godly knowledge, instruction and biblical warnings, thus making a mockery of the things of God (Proverbs 1:7, 22). Let us be prepared to warn our children not to follow the ways of the fool, and help them to grow in godly wisdom.

*VIOLENT*

Pornography reshapes our very understanding of sex, manhood, and womanhood. It is inherently violent and unloving. It is not about mutual love, care, and commitment, but about conquests and vanquishing, about “having *your way*” (a revealing phrase) with someone else. It rips love away from sex, leaving sex as the immediate gratification of base desires. It lives beyond rules, ethics, and morality. In this way, it is a perversion of sexuality, not a true form of it, and one that teaches depravity and degradation at the expense of mutual pleasure and intimacy.

Is it *possible* for pornography to resemble an act of mutual, committed love? Of course—but don’t for a moment think that is an excuse to dismiss this point. Any honest assessment of pornography must acknowledge that it has no intention of limiting itself to such quasi-legitimate depictions. Why? Because pornography is also progressive.

*PROGRESSIVE*

This is the very nature of sin, isn’t it? Sin is lustful; it is always progressive. Proverbs 27:20 says,

*Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,  
and never satisfied are the eyes of man.*

Sin always wants more. It always seeks to break out beyond its current boundaries. If you give it an inch, it soon takes a mile.

Have you ever been scared by the progressive nature of your own sin? Perhaps there was a time when you saw how a particular sin was taking over your life. You had thought you were in control of your sinful habit, but then, almost in an instant, you found it had jumped to the next level. You were no longer in control—sin was leading the way and you were increasingly just “along for the ride,” obeying the impulses of your flesh. It is a terrifying place to be, isn't it?

A naked body is all the eye needs, and a single glimpse provides plenty of fuel for a while. But before long the flesh craves more. Sin longs to be the master of both the heart and the body, leading them into slavery (Romans 6:16). Anyone who has looked at porn for any length of time can identify with this. What was once satisfying is now boring; certain things that interested you at the beginning, that got you going, now seem pretty bland. Things you once found disgusting are already beginning to intrigue you. This is the way sin is. It will always demand more of you.

Along the way, as a person indulges in pornography, his or her whole perception of



sex changes. No longer does sex involve simple intercourse between a man and a woman. Instead it becomes a series of acts, even acts that are in some ways uncomfortable or degrading. Subtly, unrelentingly, it has reshaped your mind and your heart in very real ways.

This particular temptation is one that our children will encounter. It's going to happen. And, as I stated in the Introduction, we, as parents, must be prepared.