

Pornography

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2019

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0:00] All right, good morning everyone. Hope you had a good Thanksgiving. And we are back to our class on gender and sexuality and dealing with a challenging topic this morning.

So just to set the background, if you haven't been in this class, we have considered God's design for our bodies and for us being male and female and for how we relate to each other and for what God's design is for gender and sexuality in the context of the Christian story, right?

That we're created by God, yet we're fallen and corrupted by sin and Christ has come to redeem us. And we live in between, so we live sort of in between three parts of the, well, in all parts of the story, right, because we are made by God and that's still true that we're made in his image.

And yet we are still, we still experience the effects of sin and the indwelling sin, even as believers. But Christ has forgiven us and set us free and begun to sanctify us, begun to make us more like Christ, and yet we look forward to that hope of glory.

And so this whole class is how do we live, how do we face the challenging realities of this complicated, confusing, sometimes dark world?

[1:25] So we have considered homosexuality, we've considered transgender identity. Today we will address pornography, and next week we will address sexual abuse and assault. These are not easy topics to teach on.

This was not an easy lesson to prepare. But I think it's important for the church to address for several reasons. We, you know, I think the topics we've previously addressed, the church needs to speak to the questions that we spoke to earlier in November about homosexuality and transgender identity, or sort of rejecting one's God-given maleness or femaleness because, partly because, those sins are increasingly celebrated in our society.

And even though they are rejecting God's good and beautiful design for us. But pornography is a far more prevalent phenomenon. The percentages are far larger.

And I think if the church only addresses things like homosexuality and transgender identity and remain silent about pornography or about sexual abuse and assault, I think people could rightly look at the church and say, aren't you being a little hypocritical here?

Because aren't there more of your members who are addicted to pornography or engaging in pornography than engaging in the previous two topics? So, but even more, even more than sort of avoiding the charge of hypocrisy, I think we need to care for one another, right?

[3:04] And we need to talk about hard topics that affect us. Many believers are engaged in, tempted by, exploited by, or otherwise harmed by this sin.

But, I want, as we go through this lesson, I want to keep in mind what Paul says in Ephesians 5. He says, take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

And then, in the next verse, he says, for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. So, Paul says two things. We're to expose that is sort of clearly point out and frankly warn against the pervasiveness of pornography and its harmful effects.

And at the same time, we want to avoid sort of speaking of the things that people do in secret, right? Giving unnecessary details that would stir up ungodly curiosity or ungodly imaginations or shame.

So, before I go on, let me pray for us that the Lord would help us to do these things. Father, we thank you for this morning and we thank you for how you speak to us in your word and how you are frank and truthful and honest with us.

[4:17] We thank you, Lord, for how your word calls a spade a spade and calls sin what it is. And yet, we thank you for the hope that we have in Christ. We thank you for the hope of forgiveness, the promise of forgiveness of our sins, the hope of being released from the power of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us.

We thank you, Lord, for the hope of healing from our brokenness that we look forward to experiencing in full when we see you face to face, but that we can experience in part now.

We pray that you'd help us as we look at this challenging topic. Lord, we pray that you would help us to be edified and equipped by this lesson.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, so I want to look at this under a few headings. First, what is pornography? And where does the Bible speak to it, right?

The Bible obviously doesn't use the word pornography. But first, what is it? Second, a little bit about the history of it and sort of current pervasiveness of it.

[5:28] Third, the effects of pornography. And fourth, sort of more practically, what does mercy and hope and healing look like through Christ for different groups of people who are affected by it in different ways.

So defining pornography, legal scholars have sort of debated this. There was a famous Supreme Court ruling where the Supreme Court justice said, I don't really have a definition for it, but I know it when I see it.

Okay, fair enough. But I think there actually is a helpful definition from a Christian standpoint. Right. Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners in order to display them deliberately to third parties.

And I think that definition is helpful because it reminds us of God's design for sexual intimacy, that it be shared and delighted in by husband and wife within the safety and exclusivity of the marriage covenant.

So if you look at Song of Songs, the imagery of Song of Songs confirms that in some of the imagery that's used of the husband and wife's bodies, right?

[6:47] They're represented as a locked garden, a walled city, or my own vineyard not to be shared with others, right? So those are some images that Song of Songs uses for sort of godly sexual intimacy between husband and wife.

And it's sort of in this safe, secure, contained, covenantal relationship not to be put on display before others.

So I think by removing sexual acts from their proper context and putting them on display before the world, pornography inherently violates God's good design for marriage and sexuality.

So I think it's not only sort of the subjective effects of pornography that are problematic, like pornography, you know, sometimes Christians start with pornography saying pornography stirs up lust, that's why it's wrong.

True, that's very true. But I think inherently in sort of taking sexual intimacy out of that safe and secure context of a covenantal marriage, that's already violating God's good design.

[7 : 56] Even regardless of the effects it has on other people, right? And then those effects sort of carry that violation even further. So it says it offends against chastity because it perverts the intimate giving of spouses to each other.

It injures the dignity of its participants since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world.

We'll look at more of that in some of the part three in the effects of pornography. Now, let me take a moment to speak to the issue of masturbation because that normally goes along with pornography.

Again, the practice of masturbation or self-simulation promotes an inherently self-centered approach to sexual gratification, which again, what's God's design for sexual pleasure and sexual union?

Well, it involves two people and involves a husband and wife who are biologically different from one another, right? And yet are being united together as a picture of the union of Christ and his people being united together forever, right?

[9 : 09] That's God's design. But masturbation doesn't train or prepare anyone to exercise sexual self-control or to prioritize love for one's spouse even above one's own desires.

It doesn't promote a vision of sexual gratification that involves another person and that involves sort of loving and prioritizing and valuing another person who is different than yourself, right?

So again, there's something where there's not one biblical verse that you can quote that says, do not, thou shalt not masturbate. But if you think about what is it, it is, again, sort of stepping outside of God's design sort of by removing sexual intimacy from the relationship of a husband and wife whose bodies, lives, and resources all belong to each other.

And it's sort of isolating it and putting it in this sort of secret and self-centered place. So how does the New Testament speak to these things?

Well, the New Testament warns consistently, clearly, and strongly against stirring up lust and engaging in impurity. So we see that in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

[10 : 27] Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Lustful intent is the ESV translation. The idea there is that one could be tempted.

Temptation is not sin. But lustful intent is sort of carrying, sort of, you know, staying there or taking that a step further, right? It's sort of engaging in that lust instead of sort of resisting it and fixing our eyes on Christ.

Paul's teaching sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you. Paul frequently lists impurity or sensuality along with sexual immorality in several places in his letters.

Sexual immorality primarily refers to sexual acts with another person. But impurity and sensuality refer to a wider range of thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors and would include engaging in pornography or masturbation.

So that's sort of the big picture of what it is and sort of how the Bible speaks to it generally. Now, a little bit about the history and pervasiveness of current pervasiveness of pornography.

[11 : 38] The English word pornography is derived from the Greek word pornea, which is translated sexual immorality. That's the word Paul uses. And graphe, which is to write down or to depict something.

And it's not an exclusively modern phenomenon. Sexually explicit paintings, sculptures, and writings were produced in all kinds of ancient societies thousands of years ago.

So in ancient Rome, around the time the New Testament was written, when Paul was writing his letter to the Romans, these sort of erotic depictions were prominently displayed in pagan temples on the streets.

They were literally like advertisements indicating the way to the prostitution district. Sort of graphic billboards, as you might think.

In the public baths, often sort of as a form of comic entertainment. And in homes, right? Sometimes as a decoration or good luck charms. You'd walk into somebody's house, and you might see this sort of pretty graphic picture, painting, or whatever.

[12:43] So ours is not the first society where sexually explicit material seems to be almost everywhere. The world of the New Testament, Rome, Corinth especially, Paul was writing to people in societies, in some ways like our own, right?

Who were sort of, it's all around you. It's in the water. I think the major difference today is the internet. Before the internet, yes, magazines, but the internet has made pornography more easily, widely, and privately accessible than ever before.

And just some statistics here. If you're not familiar with these statistics, they can be pretty staggering. 30% of data transferred on the internet is pornography. Pornography sites get more visits each month than Amazon, Netflix, and Twitter combined.

Consumers spend \$260 million each day on online pornography, even though there is so much that is available for free that you would think, why would anyone pay for it? But huge amounts of money.

Are spent. And the amount of users is increasing from 2006 to 2016. It went from about 58 million Americans visiting porn sites each month to 107 million.

[14:03] And there's only 285 million Americans. I put age 10 and above. So that's a solid 40%.

Is that right? Yes. Women are increasingly consumers of pornography as well. Approximately 80% of the consumers of Fifty Shades of Grey were women.

According to Covenant Eyes, 64% of Christian men and 15% of Christian women admit to watching pornography at least once a month. Now, there are lots of surveys out there. You'll find different statistics.

Some might be minimizing. Some might be over-inflating. I, I, I, I, I, I, the, the, anyway, this, this statistic is somewhere in the middle. Um, the percentages tend to be higher with, among younger people.

Um, but it's pretty pervasive. Um, so, uh, how do we interpret that? Well, the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1, uh, I think a sobering passage that is relevant to this and, and, and other things.

[15:10] So, he wrote, claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

All right, now Paul's talking about ancient forms of idolatry, but does it not apply to images resembling mortal man? And then, what does it say?

Um, therefore God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

So, Romans 1 would indicate that the increasing pervasiveness of pornography, as well as all the other sexual sins that we've discussed in this class, is a sobering sign of God's wrath against our society.

That is God giving us over to our own corrupt inclinations and their destructive consequences, because we've chosen to worship ourselves and other created things. That's a sobering reality if we take that seriously.

[16:20] I don't think we take that seriously enough. The effects of pornography. I want to talk, sort of, how does pornography sort of affect our relationships in particular?

Um, uh, the effects of pornography are increasingly recognized even by people outside the church. Um, this section I've taken from an article by a Christian counselor, uh, and he, that I thought was quite insightful.

He describes six relational attitudes that pornography commonly fosters, especially in habitual users. And each of these qualities is also confirmed by scientific studies.

Uh, many of these, uh, there's a, there's, um, uh, a website called Fight the New Drug, uh, which basically talks about, um, and the new drug is pornography, um, that's talking about.

Um, and it has a lot of, sort of, scientific and research-based information about, um, the effects of pornography. And so, uh, here are six, um, uh, sort of attitudes that pornography fosters, uh, according, uh, both according to this Christian counselor and according to, uh, some of these scientific studies.

[17:30] Uh, first, um, a, a desire to control, right? Again, uh, pornography does not foster, uh, sort of an actual relationship with another person who will talk back to you, um, uh, uh, or, or sort of have a, have a back-and-forth conversation.

Pornography is a non-mutual relationship alone with imagery. There's no one else to satisfy, no one else to consider. You get to control the entire scene. And this fosters or creates an innate selfishness and an unconscious desire for absolute control over intimate relationship.

Uh, a scientific study found that pornography use correlated with narcissism, right? Uh, narcissism or sort of, uh, uh, extreme self-centeredness.

Um, uh, second, um, objectification. Um, you know, this is something that's been discussed, uh, that many people discuss, uh, uh, pornography objectifies women in particular.

Um, but, uh, right, the, the, the pattern of sort of, uh, well, I'll just read the quote. The addict over the years is looking at thousands upon thousands of images.

[18:47] The unknown bodies have no names or stories and have become means to an end. After they no longer serve a purpose, they are cheaply discarded. This causes people to chronically jump from relationship to relationship, just like clicking from image to image, looking for perfection and completion in a person.

Um, and, uh, in some surveys, uh, many, many people sort of begin with, um, what are seen as sort of, uh, soft core images or less, or maybe less, less, uh, uh, well, it's people go from, um, uh, maybe more normal.

All kinds of images that people might think and then go to increasingly violent or increasingly deviant, um, forms of pornography. Uh, it's sort of, it's a, it's a hunger that's not satisfied.

Um, uh, so that's, that's, that's a common pattern. Uh, third, uh, third thing, um, that pornography use fosters is sort of a, a, uh, speed or, or very rapid, uh, pace.

Um, the rapid pace of relationships comes to resemble the quick climax of intensity around pornography. Uh, the, not, the thrill of not getting exposed, uh, an urgency for consummation, ultimately an abrupt and inevitable ending normally with shame attached.

[20:16] And so, um, again, there's studies that say people who have consumed a significant amount of pornography are more likely to start having sex sooner with more partners to engage in riskier kinds of sex that put them at greater risk of getting infections and to have actually contracted a sexually transmitted infection.

Fourth quality, hunger. Um, this is sort of, uh, uh, sort of a frantic need that must be filled by the other. Um, and, uh, this category shows itself in codependent relationships where both parties become enmeshed.

Uh, the hunger drives them to consume rather than delight in the other. Um, and, and again, often sort of relationships that, that are very emotionally intense and sort of highly, um, uh, uh, physically and emotionally intimate from the beginning don't last very long.

Right? And so it sort of leads to these, these patterns, um, and, uh, pornography sort of, uh, fosters, um, sort of pushes us in that direction.

Um, one of the, uh, studies, so there was a meta-analysis of 22 studies from seven different countries that concluded that pornography use was associated with verbal and physical sexual aggression, uh, in the United States.

[21 : 34] In the United States and internationally among males and females and in cross-sectional and basically across the board. Um, uh, uh, that, uh, uh, pornography sort of fosters, um, verbal or physical, uh, aggression, um, and violence.

Fifth, isolation. Um, we learn our sexuality behind closed doors and in the dim light of the computer screen our sexuality remains hidden even from ourselves.

We come to protect this isolation as some type of sacred space and even the thought of inviting another human in feels threatening and disruptive. The isolation fuels the secret life and separates us from the loving relationships that we most need.

And so interestingly, though, um, some studies indicate that pornography use fosters sort of early, you know, earlier, more intense, um, and more, you know, more kinds of sexual relationships.

In other cases, people find that they lack sexual desire for any other human being at all. Um, and aren't even attracted to their husband, wife, or partner, uh, anymore.

[22 : 52] Um, though they can still respond to porn. Um, uh, again, it sort of twists, twists us in all these kinds of ways.

Uh, last, fantasy. Right? Fantasy is an escape from what is real. Whether it be difficult emotions such as stress, anxiety, or depression, or just the pain that genuine relationship inevitably brings, fantasy relieves those struggles for a moment.

While healthy relationships live in the truth, pornography helps bolster a life of fantasy that is difficult to undo. Fantasy brings relief, but does not bring restoration.

Uh, and there's research on the brain. Uh, pornography stimulates the same areas of the brain as addictive drugs, making the brain release the same chemicals. And just like drugs, porn triggers pathways in the brain that cause craving, leading users back for more and more extreme hits to get highs.

These are only some of the, sort of, I focus on some of the effects of pornography on relationships. Um, there are many other effects.

[23 : 54] Uh, pornography use has contributed to many marital crises. It's a factor in the majority of divorces in the United States today. Uh, the industry also exploits children and women, subjecting them to violence, harassment, degradation, and sexually transmitted infections.

Um, which are much higher among, uh, rates of which are much higher among, uh, pornographic actors. So, um, this is heavy stuff.

But, what does, how does Christ offer us mercy, healing, and hope? Let me, uh, speak to sort of three broad categories of people. Um, and there are many, uh, subcategories here.

But, broadly, if you are tempted by, or engaged in, or addicted to pornography, let me challenge you, uh, with some encouragements and next steps.

First, don't try to fight this battle on your own. Get help from brothers or sisters in Christ. Um, you are certainly not alone. And, uh, don't, don't, don't, you know, in general, whenever we're fighting, you know, significant spiritual battles, uh, you know, Paul uses the image of the armor of God, right?

[25 : 11] Clothe yourself with the armor of God, right? A seal of faith, belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness. And we think of the, you know, okay, I need to put on the armor of God today and sort of go into the spiritual battle.

But what was Paul's image? Paul's image was the Roman army. And you know how they marched into battle? Side by side with their shields right next to each other. And they would be a wall.

And they'd have their shields in front. And then the guys in back would have their shields on top. So they'd have a wall and a ceiling protecting them all. And they'd be marching into battle side by side.

That's what Paul's talking about when he talks about put on the full armor of God. He doesn't just, he doesn't only mean pray every morning and when, before you begin your day. But he means be walking side by side with your fellow believers to fight whatever spiritual battles you're fighting.

So practically put filtering or accountability software on your computer or on smartphone if you haven't done that already. None of those are foolproof.

[26 : 12] But they can be helpful because it's one more thing that will sort of maybe hinder you from running down the road and going down a bad way.

Right? Get accountability from people who will both encourage and challenge you. And this is a challenge.

I would want to challenge you. Beware of getting accountability only from people who struggle and fall just like you do. Sometimes, especially young guys who are struggling with pornography, share their struggle with another young guy who's also struggling with pornography and not struggling so much as failing.

And so you have someone who understands you and maybe who's going to be compassionate. But sometimes, you've actually got somebody who is too compassionate. And they're not going to kick your butt enough.

And sometimes, you need to go to somebody who's maybe older than you or who maybe doesn't struggle with it, but who's a mature and wise Christian and who's going to be like, status quo ain't going to be good for the long run.

[27 : 19] We've got to make a dent in this. Right? We've got to figure out what we need to do by the power of Christ. Right? The best kind of accountability embodies the steadfast love of God the Father, the unwavering call to holiness in Christ, and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead us along that road.

Because this sin is so pervasive, it should not be an off-limits topic in the Christian community generally. Partly why I'm teaching this session. Because we need to put the issue on the table and not have it be a topic that's like, oh, well, hush, hush.

Okay, if you struggle with it, then you can tell me, but I'm not going to ever ask you. If you have a close Christian friendship with another person of the same sex, you know, it's not an unreasonable question to ask.

How are you doing in, you know, sexual purity? Or, you know, whether you're single, whether you're married. We should be asking each other about sexual integrity in general and pornography in particular.

You know, again, not sort of exclusively focusing on this issue. I mean, to, and ignoring other issues. We can also ask each other, how are you, you know, how are you seeking to, you know, use your money and resources to glorify God, right?

[28 : 43] That's another topic we don't like to talk about. We don't like to talk about money either, right? But Paul warns, again, sexual immorality and greed. And he says they're idolatrous, right? So, again, how do we encourage one another and help each other?

For some people, this has become not just a sort of a struggle and a temptation that is occasionally fallen into, but more an addiction. And there are various resources.

There are sex addiction recovery groups. There are Christian support groups in the local area. There are specialized Christian counseling resources. If you are not sure what would, what, if you're not sure what you need, and if you've tried sort of accountability with just brothers and sisters in Christ, and that is not, and you're like, man, I need more than this.

I need help. Like, I think this is just, it's deep and it's bigger than I can handle. Come talk to one of the pastors. And we can, you know, connect you with somebody or sort of help you figure out maybe what a next step might be for you.

Make it your primary goal to pursue Christ rather than making your primary goal to resist porn. The first includes the second. The second doesn't necessarily include the first.

[30 : 02] But Christ is infinitely more satisfying than porn, and his grace is sufficient for each day and for every trial we face. You need to not just ask yourself, what do I need to resist?

But you also need to ask yourself, what do I need to embrace? Right? What do I need to pursue positively? Whether that's, you know, growing in your prayer life and in your time in the Word, whether that's pursuing Christian friendship, whether that's moving out of your studio apartment and looking for a group of other Christians who you can live in an apartment with.

That can be a very practical thing. Whatever, you know, make it your primary goal to pursue Christ and look at his greatness.

I think, right, so we shouldn't be looking at our, we shouldn't spend more time gazing at our sin than we're spending gazing upon the face of Christ.

Right? And when we look at our sin, and yes, we need to look at our sin and see it for all its ugliness, and that's what we've done partly in the first part of this lesson, but we need to look at the glory of Christ because he is matchless and he is majestic and he's awesome and he's far more captivating.

[31 : 23] So how can you actively be fixing your eyes on Christ? Next, just practical things. Be truthful with your spouse or your girlfriend or boyfriend if you're dating about your sin and or struggle in this area.

It may be painful and terrifying to willingly bring this into the light now, but it will be worse if you wait until later or if it comes to light unintentionally. Also, marriage does not automatically fix a single person's pornography habit.

Okay? That is sometimes a reason people say, well, I'm not going to tell my girlfriend because when we get married, this will be fixed. Bad thinking.

Right? There are many seasons of marriage that call for sexual self-control and sexual satisfaction within marriage, again, only happens in the context of intentionally, comprehensively, and self-sacrificially loving another person, which is exactly the opposite of what pornography and masturbation are training you to do.

So, bring it into the light now, and in the context of doing these other things, to seek the help of Christ.

[32 : 44] Don't, along that line, don't make your spouse or your boyfriend or girlfriend the only person who knows about it. That is putting way too much of a burden on them. They are not, they should not be your only accountability partner.

That's foolish. And unloving. You need to seek some other accountability with other Christians of the same sex that will help you and be a blessing to your wife or husband or boyfriend or girlfriend.

A deeper thing. These are lots of things. You may not be able to do these all at once. Start with some of them, but I'm trying to give you a lot of things that maybe you haven't thought of. Because some of you have probably tried some of these things, but I want to challenge you to, that there are other things, and sometimes people are like, I've tried everything I can do, and it isn't working, and I'm stuck.

And I think sometimes, okay, you've tried everything you can see, but there's probably some deeper things and broader things. Hopefully this might give you some ideas.

All right. Examine the underlying motives and broader life patterns that drive you toward pornography rather than focusing only on behavior modification. So this is a longer, deeper thing. But this is often a longer process because we don't always know why we do what we do.

[34:05] Right? I don't even know what I'm feeling at most moments in my life because I'm a guy. Okay? My wife always knows what she's feeling at every moment of the day.

She said, it's just like having a physical body. Of course I know what I'm feeling. It's like I know that, and she might know what I'm feeling. Exactly right. So she's very helpful to me. But I need to be intentional about saying, why am I feeling frustrated or angry or tired?

Do I just need to sleep? Or is something really bothering me that I haven't brought to the surface and I need to deal with that? But examining our underlying motives, what drives me towards this?

So one way to begin this process would be consider those six qualities in the article. Do any of those ring a bell? Right? Sorry for control.

Objectifying others. Sort of impatience. Wanting everything to go very fast and quickly and not liking any uncertainty or slowness. Sort of a frantic need for another person or isolation or fantasizing.

[35:18] Right? Now, some of those might ring more true in one person's life than another. Right? I'm not saying everybody's experiencing all six. But then, say, okay, one or two of those really seem to hit home for me.

What's going on there? Like, I'm fantasizing a lot. How can I be turning to Christ when I'm tempted to fantasize? Or, how can I be engaging in Christian community when I'm tempted to isolate?

You know, Psalm 103.6 says, God satisfies our desires with good things. So, what are the good things that God has provided for our legitimate desires to either be satisfied or just to be put on the altar before the Lord?

And to say, God, I have some unfulfilled desires and there isn't any righteous way for me to have those met right now. But, I want to lay them before you and offer them to you as a sacrifice and look at the sacrifice that you made for me on the cross and be empowered by that and draw near to you in my suffering and in my longing.

His article also lists sort of corresponding virtues instead of control, freedom, instead of objectification, honor, instead of speed, patience, instead of hunger, desire, instead of isolation, communion, instead of fantasizing authenticity.

[36:52] So, I think that's helpful food for thought. Or, another way to begin this process, so, in Tim Chester's book, he talks about the most common reasons why people watch pornography.

And I won't be able to remember them off the top of my head, but their boredom, frustration, depression, anxiety, you know, there's various reasons.

And sort of asking, like, what is it for me that sort of drives me there? For some people, it's being angry, you know, for, there was one example where, for one guy, it was like, he was angry at God because he was 30-something and he wasn't married.

And he really wanted to be married and he felt like God had done him wrong by not giving him a spouse. And so, when he really started dwelling on that, that's what brought him over there. And so, he didn't just need to focus on controlling his lust, he needed to deal with why am I, why do I feel like I'm entitled to something that God hasn't given me?

And how do I need to change my thinking and reject that lie and embrace the truth that, first of all, God doesn't owe me anything and, second of all, you know, in Christ he's given me all that I need.

[38 : 08] Anyway, so, sometimes there's deeper things going on. These are good conversation topics to pursue with someone who knows you well or a wise older Christian. Also, pray for real people.

Here's something practical to do that is not about yourself. Pray for real people who are directly harmed in the production of pornography. Children whose bodies are exploited, women who are pressured into violent and degrading acts or who have come to believe that such acts are just fine, normal and healthy.

Producers and advertisers whose livelihoods are enmeshed in wickedness. Learn about the connection of the pornography industry to global sex trafficking. There is a connection. Consider how you can help people who are seeking to recover from the damage that has been inflicted on them.

If you make a habit of praying for people every day, that might also have a beneficial effect when you're tempted to sort of be part of an exploitative industry. Right?

That's another angle. There's books we can read. All right. Let me speak briefly to those who have been hurt by your spouse's pornography use. And let me begin by saying the last thing in this list is the pastors and elders recognize that these situations are often complex and a general statement of this kind cannot address every specific circumstance.

[39 : 25] However, we are always available for counsel and prayer. Just a few things. You have been deeply hurt and wronged.

You may feel betrayed, deceived, or even traumatized. You may experience emotional, physical, and or psychological effects. All of those things are normal. Anger at your spouse is natural.

It is often warranted, and it may persist for quite some time. A wise mentor or trustworthy counselor can help you process strong emotions and pursue a path of wisdom and resist temptations to either trivialize the problem or to harbor a bitter and vengeful spirit.

Christ can heal your wounds. He knows the feeling of betrayal, but healing often takes time, particularly where it's gone on for a long time and it's involved deception.

Healing often takes years rather than months or days. God wants to heal your marriage, however your spouse may or may not want to seek help. The encouragement and trusting hope of a spouse can be a great source of strength for one who is struggling to be pure.

[40 : 31] If your spouse is in denial or rejects help, the church is here for you and there are also support groups and counselors for spouses of addicted persons. Finally, for parents of children and youth, if you don't teach your kids about porn, the porn producers will teach your kids about porn for you.

According to a study published in 2017 by the American Psychological Association, the average age of boys first exposure to pornography was 13. Other studies have concluded the average age is as low as 11.

And that means that half of children are exposed, or a large number of children are exposed even younger than the average. 60% of the young men in the APA study said that their first exposure was accidental or forced.

Only 33% said that they were intentionally seeking it out. So just because your child is not seeking it out does not mean that they are not vulnerable to it. And I think this applies to every topic we have discussed.

If you don't discuss it with your children, then the world will find plenty of ways to carry on that conversation with your children independently. And that's not, let's not do that.

[41 : 52] Some resources, be careful if you go online and search for resources about pornography. pornography. The pornography companies are shrewd and they notice. And they like to strategically place ads and draw people in.

So just beware of that. There are some resources I've listed here which I want to open it up for questions.

I'm not going to read through these but there's several resources for sort of generally for men, for women, for spouses, some science-based resources, some Christian-based resources.

The book at the end is a good way to introduce these topics to your children. Good pictures, bad pictures. There's some other books. There's some books on the book, Saul, that are children's books that sort of introduce God's design for our bodies in very positive ways but also talk about sort of protecting our bodies and minds.

So you can look through those and those can be helpful ways to introduce the topic to young children without getting unnecessarily graphic or sort of giving inappropriate and unhelpful level of detail.

[43 : 12] All right. Let me open it up for questions or comments. Yes. I was wondering if you were looking at me or behind me.

So this is 64% admit, right? So that means the number's much higher because most people, you would think most people don't want to admit to this problem, right?

Yeah, so the survey numbers are hard. I mean, now that survey is conducted by Covenant Eyes which is one of the companies that offers accountability software so you might also say, well, they probably have more people in their orbit who are actively, you know, dealing with pornography.

But the statistic is admit to watching it once a month, at least once a month. So if it's less than once a month, then you're not counted in that list, right? So the number of men who have watched pornography at one time or another is above 90%.

It's not 100%, but it is very high. So, what are we doing?

[44 : 24] What are we doing? Like, what are we teaching parents of young boys? What are we, like as a church, as a body of Christ, what are we doing for discipleship? This is something that we've been talking about a lot at home.

Like, when a child is baptized, where's their mentor? Who's assigned to that child? What are we doing collectively as a church in America? I mean, I know it's an international problem, but what are we doing to prevent that number?

That's a horrible number. Yeah. And for a young, single woman to know that basically any of my options of dating someone is someone who has a problem with this, you know?

Like, that's a scary thought for myself. So what can we do as women, what can we do as a body of Christ to knock that number out of the park?

Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's a good question. And, yeah, that's a good question. That's why we're having this class. Matt.

[45 : 28] I think this course has been absolutely tremendous. The biggest criticism I would have so far is that under parents you have so little.

And I think this is a huge issue that we need to work through together because there, we may not have a, maybe there weren't a lot of things online, you know, or in books for you to get on this because we haven't wrestled with it too.

Yes. Yeah. So I, a couple weeks ago I addressed sort of parents, the importance of parents teaching children about sexuality and gender more broadly. So I gave some more detail in that lesson.

I think I would also, I mean, I think that, again, this class is meant to open, this class is meant to be the beginning of conversations.

It is not meant to be the last word on everything. So take the opportunity to discuss that. Again, we've tried to put some resources on the book stall. I should check if good pictures, bad pictures is over there.

[46 : 36] I'm not 100% sure but we can get it if we need to. Yeah. I mean, having, having grandchildren now and how they raised our kids, we didn't do it perfectly and we were probably seen as very strict parents.

There were no computers allowed in their room. There were no TVs allowed in their room. I mean, yes, we didn't deal with the smartphone issue but even our kids weren't allowed smartphones until they were in college. So, you know, I mean, we were very strict and what we watched.

We were very vigilant on what movies we allowed. We did not allow our kids to go to our rated movies. We, we didn't. There's a whole tip now of, I mean, you used to see if a video store opened up, an adult video or an adult toy store, there would be protests outside of it from a local church or it was too close to a school.

You don't see that on the news anymore. So, but, it's also correlated with families not going to church anymore. Families not professing to be Christians, not even trying.

And, well, it's okay, we'll handle it, we'll talk about it when it comes up. So, I mean, even as much as we do need to parent as a church and teach parents how to deal with this, but we also need to get people back to Christ.

[47 : 54] Yeah, yeah. Because if they don't have it, they don't see a problem. Yeah. And even your statistic in there on Fifty Shades of Grey is a perfect example of women, especially, who have just decided it's okay, it's not harmful.

And the society has embraced that. And I don't know how many of my secular friends ask me, so what do you think of the book? Because I read like a book a week. I'm an avid reader.

I'm like, I refuse to read it. Mm-hmm, yep. It's real life. It's destructive. It destroys people. And they're like, oh, it's only a story. And that's really the base problem.

So I'll continue to be a strict parent and a grandparent. Yeah. Because if I can save my child or my grandchild from being harmed like that, I'll do what I can.

Yeah. Yeah. I think, yeah, yeah. No, I think, I mean, I think there's a broader issue as parents with how do we sort of govern our children's access technology, right?

[48 : 59] Like, you know, and, I mean, have, you know, do you, have you, you, and there are technologies out there that you can limit on a phone or a tablet, like you, you can limit it to access to certain things.

I mean, we don't, you know, we don't let our, you know, if our kids are watching a movie, it's in the living room or it's in, you know, we don't send our kids up to their room with, you know, with, with a phone to play a game, right?

Like, that's, we don't offer that that much anyway. But I think, and I think along with those, I think along with setting wise boundaries, it's also sort of teaching, I think we have to start by teaching our kids what was God's good design in making us male and female, in giving us bodies, and in putting us in this world, right?

Because just setting boundaries and trying to say, well, I hope I can protect them from encountering this junk out in the world, we have to equip, eventually children are going to grow up and leave the house and figure out how they're going to live their lives.

So I think we have to begin by talking about what is God's good design here? What is beautiful about God's design? Because when we see what's beautiful about God's design, then you see how twisted that the world is.

[50:28] And the other things don't become quite so attractive. And also, you know, it's like, you know, when kids at school start talking about these things, oh, well, okay, I know what they're talking about because my dad already talked to me about that, right?

That's what I want my kids to, you know, that's, we've already, you know, we've talked to our kids about all these things. So, Laura? Yeah, this is something that I think, I think the strict things are great, I mean, our kids are still very young, but just from working before with kids and you've like, a mom, you know, like somebody showed them their kids something, you know, like another kid showed them, and someone else saw someone at someone's home by accident.

Kids are also going to see it no matter, hopefully not, but it's very easy to be seen no matter how strict we can be. So those conversations that if, when, or if this happens, like, what to do with that?

Right, right. If you see, if you, if, you know, if someone shows you something like this, come and talk to, you know, mom or dad, right? Like, that's important to sort of cultivate an open channel of communication with all kinds of things, you know?

Not only, you know, not only inappropriate images, but, you know, we want our kids to, we don't cultivate our kids talking with us about whatever they may encounter in the world and, and for us to help them grow in wisdom and to protect them from, you know, foolish, and to not foolishly expose them unnecessarily to things, right?

[51:59] So, yeah. Ivor. When I was working at AT&T;, we had at least five guys who got fired over surfing, at work.

Yeah. And that's usually when people get caught doing something, either at work or by their spouses or children in some cases.

Yeah. When they seek help, don't wait for that. Right. Right. Seek help. Right. Again, it's that pattern of it's probably didn't start on the office computer, but it's, it just grows, right?

So, yeah. be killing sin or it will be killing you, right? John Owen said that 300 years ago. So, you know, we're, yeah, right?

We're either sort of actively fighting against it or it will gradually tend to balloon, right? Because it's not something that is, that sort of gets satisfied.

[53:03] what's your definition of pornography at the beginning of removing sexual acts from the intimacy of partners for the, being played for other people?

How would you distinguish pornography from like Song of Solomon where we see sexuality being portrayed artistically? Yeah, yeah. I mean, I think when you read Song of Solomon, there's, there's a lot of imagery and, how would I describe that?

So, it celebrates God's good and beautiful design, right? So, we're not saying that your body's dirty and you need to hide it and not talk about it and I guess when you get married then you can figure out what to do with it.

That's not, that's not, that's not good. That's not, that's not God's, that's not God's good and beautiful design, right? So, Song of Solomon sort of talks about love and, and a sexually intimate relationship but it, it's also not voyeuristic, right?

It's not something that is sort of inciting lust, you know, it's, it's not stirring up sort of an ungodly kind of curiosity or shame.

[54:31] I mean, the most difficult thing about Song of Solomon for most of us is like all the imagery is from the ancient world and we can't figure out what to do with it, right? So, part of it we have to figure out like, you know, okay, what does this actually mean?

but, but I think broadly speaking I think Song of Solomon affirms that there's a right place to celebrate, you know, and even in that case sort of depict in poetry, right, the love and intimacy between a male and female, but it's not, it's not in a way that sort of promotes like impurity or sensuality and in fact at the end of the Song of Solomon it's like, I mean, throughout the Song of Solomon it's like, don't awaken love until it so desires, right?

You know, at chapter 8 it's all about be a wall, right? Don't be a door opening and, you know, like to open to everybody. No, be a wall like until you get married, right?

So, even the end of Song of Solomon sort of gives that warning against, you know, and it sort of compares itself to, you know, Solomon has all his wives and concubines but I have my one, right?

My one is better than all of those, right? So, it's promoting sort of godly ideals, right? Monogamy, marriage, sort of tender intimacy between husband and wife.

[56:02] So, I don't think that's the right place to start with teaching children. I think that's not, you know, there was probably some wisdom in the Jewish rabbinical tradition that said, you know, don't read Song of Songs until you're an adult.

I don't know, I wouldn't, I'm not gonna, that's not a law, but there's probably some wisdom in there, but I think it can teach us, sort of, I think it can give us a positive example of that.

So, all right, let me close the prayer when we need to head upstairs. Thank you, Lord, for this morning, and we pray that you would help us as a church, help us to, in teaching our children, help us in strengthening one another to pursue a life of holiness in this area that gives honor and praise to you.

We thank you for the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and we pray that you would continue that work in our lives and in our marriages and in our relationships with one another in the church.

In Jesus' name, amen.