



Pornography—The Visual Drug

Pornography subtly destroys loving relationships through the “me, myself, and I” temptations that are listed in 1 John 2:16:

- Pride (“I do what I want”)
- Coveting (“I want what I don’t have”)
- Lust (“I must gratify my feelings”)

(See *Pornography Destroys the Ability to Love* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Pornography%20Destroys%20the%20Ability%20to%20Love.pdf>)

In addition to undermining relationships, pornography has other detrimental effects that impact the brain. John Piper refers to a recent publication titled *The New Narcotic* by Morgan Bennett that states, “Neurological research has revealed that the effect of internet pornography on the human brain is just as potent—if not more so—than addictive chemical substances such as cocaine or heroin.”

Piper continues, “There are 1.9 million cocaine users and 2 million heroin users in the United States, compared to 40 million regular users of online pornography. Here’s why the addictive power of pornography can be worse:

- *Cocaine* is considered a stimulant that increases dopamine levels in the brain. Dopamine is the primary neurotransmitter that most addictive substances release, as it causes a “high” and a subsequent craving for a repetition of the high, rather than a subsequent feeling of satisfaction by way of endorphins.
- *Heroin*, on the other hand, is an opiate, which has a relaxing effect. Both drugs trigger chemical tolerance, which requires higher quantities of the drug to be used each time to achieve the same intensity of effect.
- *Pornography*, by both arousing (the “high” effect via dopamine) and causing an orgasm (the “release” effect via opiates), is a type of polydrug that triggers both types of addictive brain chemicals in one punch, enhancing its addictive propensity.

“But, Bennett says, ‘internet pornography does *more* than just spike the level of dopamine in the brain for a pleasure sensation. It literally *changes the physical matter* within the brain so that new neurological pathways *require* pornographic material in order to trigger the desired reward sensation.’

“And it gets worse: Another aspect of pornography addiction that surpasses the addictive and harmful characteristics of chemical substance abuse is its *permanence*. While substances can be metabolized out of the body, pornographic images cannot be metabolized out of the brain because pornographic images are stored in the brain’s memory. Brain research confirms the critical fact that pornography is a drug delivery system that has a distinct and powerful effect upon the human brain and nervous system.

“None of this takes God by surprise. He designed the interplay between the brain and the soul. Discoveries of physical dimensions to spiritual reality do not nullify spiritual reality.” (See *Pornography: The New Narcotic* at <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/pornography-the-new-narcotic>.)

In light of medical discoveries with regard to pornography and its addictive properties, where can the answer (antidote) be found? In **Sexual Sin in the Ministry** (<http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/sexual-sin-in-the-ministry#>), the following is stated: “The concept of sexual addiction *as a disease* does not fully identify the seriousness of the problem. If we are going to get serious about the problem in the church we can ill afford to be misled in our thinking.

“When one is held in the grip of sexual sin, there is no hope of self-reform or self-efforts for those living according to the ‘passions of their flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and mind’ (Ephesians 2:3). To put it bluntly, those living in habitual sexual sin are ‘*dead* in their trespasses and sin’ (verse 1). Dead, in a loss of spiritual life. Dead to finding satisfaction with God. Dead to living for his purpose. Holiness is dead. Wisdom is dead. Purity is dead. Love is dead.

“I believe *addictionology* plays down the seriousness of sin and the necessity of the work of God when it encourages the sexual addict to accept the theory that recovery will only be successful when they begin to believe that they are a good person at the core and just have a disease. Diagnoses always determine the method of treatment. So ‘good’ people only need to get serious, follow the steps of recovery, and remain in recovery. The opposite is true. When dealing with sexual sin we must hold fast to the teaching of Jesus Christ, ‘For from within, out of the heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, adultery’ (Mark 7:21).

“By nature and by choice we satisfy ourselves, rebel against God, and have no accurate understanding of the depth of our problem. The heart is deceptive, and without supernatural change it will grow worse. The only hope is ‘the grace of God . . . training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age’ (Titus 2:11–12).”

Viewing pornography is more than an addiction, a disease, or a habit . . . it is sin and it can be overcome.

(See *Don’t Lose Heart* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Dont%20Lose%20Heart.pdf>) and *Trusting in God in Trials Out of Our Control* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Trials.pdf>)