

Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | September 25, 2022

Week 5 | Pornography

Dear Church,

I remember sitting with a friend who was completely devastated. A years-long addiction to pornography had just been exposed as a family member discovered a browser window he had inadvertently left open. He felt ashamed, isolated, and cut off from his family. Even after being met with love and understanding from his family, he was devastated to have this secret sin revealed in such a way. He had hit rock bottom—or at least that’s how it felt.

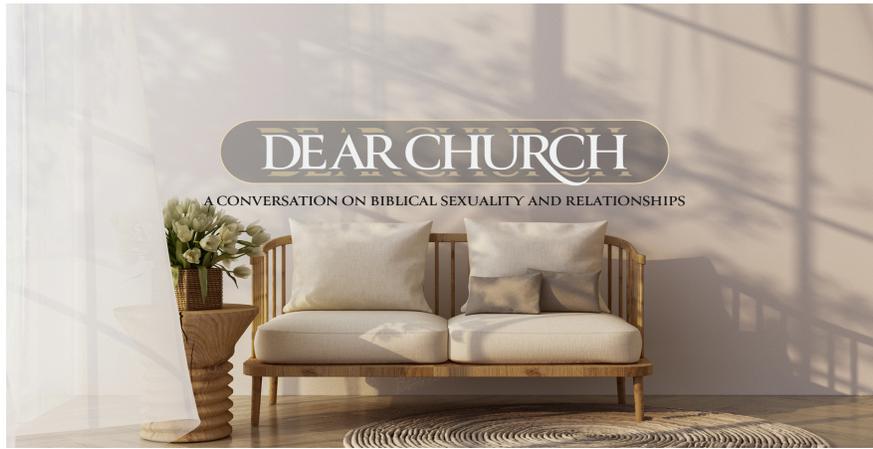
Pornography use is an epidemic—a cancer that is killing relationships and harming the mental health of millions of users. The proliferation and negative effects of pornography are quite staggering:

- 90% of teens and 96% of young adults are either encouraging, accepting, or neutral when they talk about porn with their friends.
- Teens and young adults (ages 13-24) believe not recycling is worse than viewing pornography.
- 64% of Christian men and 15% of Christian women say they watch porn at least once a month.
- 56% of divorce cases involved one party having “an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.”
- 70% of wives of sex addicts could be diagnosed with PTSD.

This issue isn’t just affecting one group of people, it’s widespread among young and old, men and women, married and single—as consumers, addicts, and victims.

So, the question that remains for me is this: “Is there hope?” With such widespread availability and a culture that largely looks at the issue with an encouraging or at least accepting viewpoint, do we as followers of Jesus, have a chance at maintaining sexual purity in this area? The voices of millions of recovered sex addicts—and the voice of Christ—shout, “Yes! There is hope!”

There seems to be a common progression that pornography usage has.



Isolation

What might have begun as a thrilling secret, something that seemed to be victimless—between just you and an image—over time becomes isolating, driving a wedge between you and your family, friends, or spouse.

Escape

As time continues and the addiction grows, the more appealing porn becomes as a means of escaping the pressures of life. It becomes a counterfeit refuge offering false comfort that feels real in the moment.

Objectification

Once the hold that porn has on you strengthens and the escape drives you deeper into a fantasy world, people around you start to become objects that can be used for pleasure rather than complete people. One of the problems of pornography is that it reduces people to a flat caricature, something that completely lacks the intricacies and fullness of how they were created.

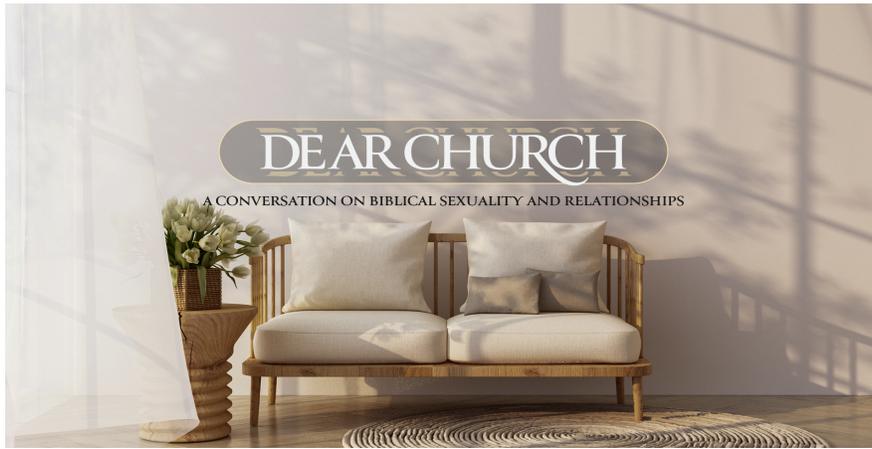
Shame

Isolation and objectification ultimately lead to shame. The relational wedge that keeps you in hiding also creates a darkness that assures you of how disgusted others would be if they only knew.

Hopelessness

The ultimate end is a life of resigned hopelessness, believing that no matter how hard you try, how many internet filters you use, how much you confess, this will continue to be your lot in life. You believe that you've seen too much for any sort of innocence to be restored. "This isn't who I wanted to be" becomes a kind of life motto. And it drives you further into isolation and escape.

What if this cycle wasn't inevitable? What if God wasn't disgusted by your darkest secrets and most embarrassing sins? What if his love has far greater power than the power that pornography



has over you or your loved one? What if He wants to meet you in your mess with gentleness, love, and mercy, to rescue you from those feelings of guilt and shame and to restore you to the fullness of life that he desires for you? What if he doesn't require you to clean up your act before returning to him, but instead longs to be the one you cling to in the midst of the pain?

- How do you see the cycle above play out in your life with things other than pornography?
- Let's read a few scriptures that will help us understand this cycle from a biblical perspective. Slowly and prayerfully read each of these: **Isaiah 61:1-3** (also **Luke 4:16-21**), **Romans 12:1-2**, **Romans 8:38-39**, **Ephesians 3:16-19**, **Philippians 4:8**, **Matthew 11:28-30**. How do each of these scriptures play into the cycle above? What hope do they speak into a hopeless situation?
- Now read **Psalms 51:1-17**. This is a song written by King David in response to his affair with Bathsheba. How does his response inspire you? How would you echo his prayer when it comes to you or your loved one's sexual addiction?
- Read these words to Leonard Cohen's song, *Anthem*:

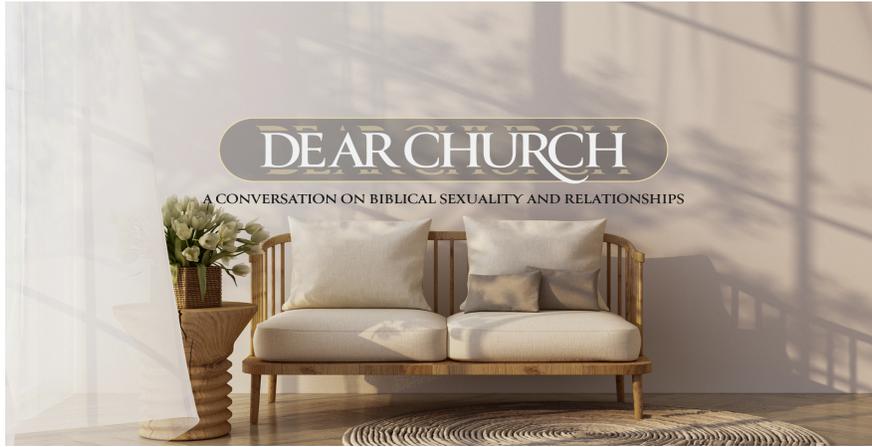
*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in*

How might God use the cracks in your life, the pieces of your life that may be broken, to let the light in? How might you be able to begin celebrating his grace in those broken places? How does this affect the thought of, "This isn't who I wanted to be."?

- If you don't struggle with porn or have been freed from using it in the past, how can you make yourself more available to help people who do?

Additional Resources

- *Unwanted* by Jay Stringer is available on Sunday mornings at our book table or on Amazon. His website, jay-stringer.com, also has a lot of articles and resources.
- Check out Covenant Eyes. Internet filters and accountability software won't do all the work, but it's a gift to have guardrails. I like Covenant Eyes because it does involve others in your journey toward freedom. Their website also has great resources.



- Starting on Sunday, October 23 at 7am, we'll be holding a 4-week class for men who want freedom from sexual addiction. All men are welcome. Keep watching for more details.

I want to leave you with a prayer you might already be familiar with. The Serenity Prayer has been used for years by millions of recovery addicts in Alcoholics Anonymous. It has just as much power in sexual addiction because it acknowledges the fine line between empowerment and helplessness. Our victory will be a cooperative effort between God and us, and this prayer speaks into that.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Blessings to you!
Brock