

Pornography and Interactive Sexual Devices

Pornography is any medium that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to entice sexual imagination. Pornography has no beneficial use but damages human relationships. Mass communication technologies such as the Internet have expanded its reach to an unprecedented degree. Video and virtual reality have intensified its content. The introduction of sex robots that imitate human speech and sexual behaviors and are designed to perform sexual acts with humans are an extreme elaboration of pornography. All of these have dangerous psychological, social, and spiritual consequences.

As of 2016, in the United States, 93% of male and 62% of female university students had viewed internet pornography during adolescence, with 49% of males viewing pornography before age 13.¹ 64% of young people, ages 13-24 actively pursue viewing pornography weekly or more frequently.¹ A study in 2012 showed 93% of boys and 52% of girls aged 16 to 19 had watched a pornographic movie in the 6 months prior to survey.^{2,3} The world's most popular pornography website averages 92 million daily visits and ranks #8 among all websites in the world, outranking Wikipedia, Amazon, or Netflix.^{4,5} One in four internet users view pornography in any given month.¹ Pornography is the most common online topic for men, more than any other subject.¹ Sexually explicit dialog, dress and actions are increasingly common in regular television programming, even during the purportedly family friendly hours, and the so called "soft" porn or "mommy" porn publishing industry is increasing.

Pornography is also a substantial problem for practicing Christians and clergy in the United States. Among practicing Christians, 2% seek out pornography daily, 5% weekly and 6% once or twice a month. 21% of youth pastors and 14% of senior pastors admitted to using pornography regularly. Among the users of pornography, 56% of the youth pastors and 33% of the senior pastors stated they were addicted.⁶

In evaluating pornography and counseling those affected by it, the following areas should be considered:

1. Biblical

- A. Scripture is unequivocal about the necessity for human beings to remain sexually pure, and that sexual activity is to be restricted to monogamous marriage between one man and one woman (Ex 20:14; Ex 22:16-17; Deut 22:13-30; 1 Cor 6:9, 13b-20; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3-5; 1 Thes 4:3-5; Heb 13:4).
- B. God has reserved the most intimate expressions of sexuality, including sexual intercourse, specifically for the marriage relationship. The Bible describes the covenantal relationship of love which God has for His people; the husband-wife relationship reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church and as such is holy. (Song of Songs; Prov 5:15-19; Eph 5:25-31).
- C. Scripture also makes it clear that defiling the mind and heart with lust is sinful and the moral and spiritual equivalent of adultery, and may lead to committing adultery (Ex 20:17; 2 Sam 11:2-5; Ps 66:18; Ezek 23:5-10; Matt 5:28; Rom 1:24-28; Col 3:5; 1 Pet 2:11).
- D. God sees sin that is done in secret (Ezek 8:7-13; Matt 10:26; 1 Tim 5:24).

- E. Christians have a duty to warn when society is faced with moral danger (Ezek 33:1-6).
- F. God through Jesus Christ offers forgiveness, no matter how shameful the sin (Hos 3:1, 1 John 1:9).

2. The Human Cost

Pornography is extremely harmful, and this harm is done at multiple intertwined levels: biological, psychological, medical, social, and spiritual.

- A. Pornography is harmful to individual users; it:
 - 1. Trains them to think that sexual gratification is obtained with images or objects that exist for the user's pleasure, rather than with an ensouled, thinking and feeling person who bears the image of God.^{7,8}
 - 2. Promotes the myth that the purpose of sex is primarily to take rather than give pleasure.⁷
 - 3. Is not a morally neutral substitute for fornication or adultery. There is no honor or virtue in having sex with a thing.⁹
 - 4. Defiles their bodies and souls with lust for something illusory and unreal and, in the case of sex robots, further defiles their bodies and souls by physical coupling with an interactive artificial humanoid device.¹⁰
 - 5. Supports the sexual revolution's lie that sexuality is all about orgasm and personal gratification.⁸
 - 6. Is addictive. Like a potent drug, pornography releases dopamine in the brain, providing a transitory escape from stress, disappointment, boredom, and facing one's responsibilities, while over the long term placing the user who desires more and more pornography at risk of becoming socially crippled and emotionally stunted.^{7,11-14}
 - 7. May lead to employment termination in the case of workplace viewing.¹⁵
 - 8. Contributes to loneliness.⁸
 - 9. May encourage a variety of sexually deviant behaviors.¹⁶⁻¹⁸
 - 10. Leads to estrangement from God.¹²
- B. Pornography is harmful to marriages¹⁹; it:
 - 1. Leads to decline in sexual satisfaction within marital relationships.^{12,20}
 - 2. Leads to destruction of loving relationships.^{20,21}
 - 3. Further separates the goods of love and the potential for generation of life from love and mutual giving.^{20,22}
 - 4. Encourages a "throw-away" culture of disposable relationships, leading to more single-parent, divorced, and fractured families.^{19,20,23}
 - 5. Diverts finances from legitimate family needs to narcissistic sexual gratification.²⁴
 - 6. Denies the legitimacy of sexuality and family as defined by God.¹⁹
- C. Pornography is harmful to children:
 - 1. It diverts parental affection to images or objects.^{8,19}
 - 2. It subverts the modeling of genuine love.^{8,19}
 - 3. It fuels the sexual perversion of pedophilia (in the case of child pornography), increasing the risk that children may become victims of

molestation.^{18,25,26} This risks distorting the child's understanding of God the Father.

4. When sex robots are designed to resemble children, it normalizes sexual gratification with the immature and places children at further risk.²⁷

D. Pornography is harmful to those used in the creation of pornography; it:

1. Reduces them to nameless instruments of unseen strangers who, to gratify their own urges, leer at their nakedness, exploit their vulnerability, and abuse their dignity as people bearing God's image.
2. Forces sex trafficking victims to engage in unsafe sexual practices of every imaginable form.²⁸
3. Fuels the appetite for and profitability of sex trafficking. Children and many women depicted in pornography frequently have been trafficked into forced prostitution²⁵ (see CMDA statement on Human Trafficking).
4. Spreads sexually transmitted diseases, some of which are potentially deadly, and not all of which are preventable by barrier methods.^{29,30}
5. Suppresses their sense of personal identity and self-worth as they endure the message that their value is nothing more than their bodily appearance.^{7,8,31}
6. Severely shortens the lifespan of those trafficked due to malnutrition, infections, violence, limited access to medical care, and forced drug use (see CMDA statement on Human Trafficking).^{32,33}

E. Pornography is harmful to society; it:

1. Furthers the pernicious tendency in our society of commodifying and denigrating others, particularly women and children.^{7,26}
2. Incentivizes withdrawal from authentic human relationship and community, which contributes to emotional and relational disability.^{20,23}
3. Is toxic to marriages, contributing to the destruction of stable families.^{9,20,23}
4. Decreases tolerance and acceptance of others.^{19,20}
5. Corrupts and debases the ideal of beauty, which is reduced to only that which is sexual.^{8,10,20,33}
6. Generates inhuman expectations for others, who may feel that they must imitate pornography to be attractive and, through immodest dress or augmentative surgery, become hypersexualized to be loved.^{31,34}
7. Perpetuates or worsens misogyny.²²
8. May increase the incidence of rape as it teaches individuals that they are entitled to have their sexual gratification anytime they want it.²²
9. Disseminates exposure to all sorts of sexual deviancies, such as sexting, hookup apps, virtual impersonation, sexual violence, bestiality, and "deepfake" pornographic video manipulations intended to humiliate, manipulate and ruin the reputations of other people.^{22,25}
10. Confuses lust with genuine love, leading to a society that no longer seeks truth and the good, sacrifices for others, or retains its will to survive.
11. Signifies the seeking after a vacuous substitute for being in relationship with God.⁷
12. Contributes to cyber-crime, malware and malicious Internet activity.^{24,26}

3. Medical Considerations

Use of pornography has been claimed to have potential beneficial effects, such as diffusing sexual aggression. These claims are, or potentially are, without merit as follows:

- A. Pornography, including interactive sexual images and devices, has no therapeutic value. Patients who have difficulty interacting with other people would not be trained to deal with real people in a healthy way by interacting with artificial and controllable sex robots.³⁵
- B. Interactive sexual technologies do not have potential to treat pedophilia or rehabilitate sex offenders. Retrospective studies have strongly correlated pornography with increased incidence of rape, prostitution, normalization of sexual deviancy, and addiction to sexual activity.^{35,36}
- C. If the use of interactive sexual devices leads to increased desire for “real” sexual activity, the individual may become inclined to engage in risky behavior.^{35,36}
- D. Sex robots will likely not promote safer sex. If used in a brothel the potential for sexually transmitted infection between serial users may persist.³⁵

4. Responding to Pornography

- A. Christians should promote the beauty and benefits of sexual purity.
- B. Christians should acknowledge the pervasive and addictive nature of pornography and recognize that its root is ultimately spiritual.
- C. Christians who are involved with pornography should confess their sins and demonstrate repentance, and this necessitates a plan of action and accountability to prevent recurrence.
- D. Christians should have early and ongoing discussions with their children about the dangers of pornography and consider using filtering technologies to decrease the risk of accidental exposure to Internet pornography.
- E. Christian healthcare professionals, because of their duty to respect and protect the dignity of every patient as a bearer of God’s image, have an even higher obligation to abstain from sexual impurity, including pornography.
- F. Internet search engines, advertisers, and other custodians of information technology should be required to filter pornographic content so that it is not presented to users who do not request it. At a minimum, the default policy should be filtering of pornographic content.
- G. Christians should become aware of the content used in sex education curricula and oppose the use and promotion of sexually explicit material in schools at all levels.
- H. Christians should testify that God is just, merciful, loving, and faithful, and that He will, if we ask Him and repent, forgive sexual sins and bring us into a relationship with Him that is far more fulfilling and intimate than the fleeting and false pleasures of pornography. God rejoices when sinners repent (Luke 15:7; John 3:16-17; Jer 2:13).
- I. Christians are obligated to welcome with compassion those who are caught up in pornography, which is not to condone the use of pornography (Gal 6:1).

- J. Christians should pray for those trapped in this perverse industry: the performers, the users, the victims, and the perpetrators, that they would be released from bondage, and that the industry would fail.

5. Conclusion

- A. CMDA affirms, with gratitude to God, the beauty of our nature as sexual beings.
- B. CMDA acknowledges that while God creates us as sexual beings, our created human nature and flourishing are far more than sexual.
- C. CMDA rejects the notion of pornography as a harmless or victimless activity.
- D. CMDA condemns the creation, distribution and use of pornography, including extreme forms of pornography such as sex robots. Pornography is an imminent threat to public health, a clear and present danger to all people and to their relationships with others and with God.
- E. CMDA affirms that Jesus Christ, with open arms, offers the possibility of repentance, spiritual renewal, healing, and hope for all who are afflicted by pornography (1 John 1:9).

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Helpful Websites

- Conquer Series
<https://conquerseries.com>
- Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability Service
<https://www.covenanteyes.com>
- Living Without Lust
<http://www.livingwithoutlust.com>
- Operation Integrity
<https://operationintegrity.org>
- Responsible Robotics
<https://www.responsiblerobotics.org>
- Rich Guidotti
<https://positiveexposure.org>
- Shaunti Feldhahn
<https://shaunti.com>
- Your Brain on Porn
<https://www.yourbrainonporn.com>

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