

Persuasive, Pervasive, Progressive, Perverted And Persistent

In my message last week I discussed the problem of pornography, so rampant in our culture and society today. It was difficult to elaborate on all the issues this sin entails in just one message, so today, I will continue on the topic.

The use of pornography is a serious issue, and a serious PROBLEM for many in America – and around the world today. I dare say it is the worst it has ever been now, because it is so easily accessible – just a click away on any smart phone. Pornography is persuasive. It is pervasive. It is progressive, it is perverted and it is persistent.

How serious is the problem? According to one study, over 30,000 people are watching porn at any given second. Approximately 40 million people in the US alone are sexually involved with the internet. 25% of all search requests (that's 68 million) and 35% of all downloads on the internet involve pornography.

The study goes on to further show that as much as some may try to avoid porn at all costs, still over 20% of adults and over 80% of children get exposed to porn *unintentionally*. And 20% of men and 13% of women admitted to accessing pornography while at work.

But what are the “benefits” of porn? Perhaps we should ask, what does pornography DO for you? Well, here is just a partial list of the effects porn users admit to:

- Feelings of shame, guilt and self-hatred
- Emptiness, loneliness and depression
- Creating emotional attachment with an artificial world

- Having troubled relationships
- Divorce
- Risks of unhealthy sexual activity
- Intimacy is lost in the marriage relationship
- As well as legal and financial problems.

For many today, pornography is more addicting than drugs, and more damaging to the soul than just about any other activity. Our enemy and his demons must LOVE this stuff. The above statistics are true of all who use pornography; but for the Christian ensnared by porn, it also has the effect of ruining our relationship with God, as it becomes a “besetting sin” – one we find nearly impossible to cast out of our lives, once we become “hooked.”

And lest you think Christians are immune to this sin, think again: studies show that 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women are currently addicted to pornography. The same study showed that 54% of Christian PASTORS admitted to deliberately using porn “at least several times” in the last year.

A few days after I published my last message on pornography, I received an email from a man who is desperate to escape this trap. I won't share the entire email, but here is just a bit of it:

He said, “I feel unworthy to claim to be a Christian or a servant of the Lord. I struggle with a battle against porn and through that, selfishness. Lusting after another woman is selfish and sinful. I know, because I believe and read the Bible. The thing I hate so much about it is that it makes me ashamed of myself so much to the point that I stop praying or talking to my Father in heaven. It makes me feel hopeless and alone like a prisoner locked in a cage far away from everyone. The most horrible part of it, is that it has made me and my wife distant and I can't even tell her that the sin in my heart has made me not want her as much as I should, as a

husband. I fight this battle every day. I have repented lots of times and rebuked Satan in the name of Jesus but still, I struggle. I really hate myself because I am worse than a non-believer, because I know Jesus and a fair amount about His Word, yet I still struggle with sin that He hates. I have been crying and broken over two battles: the battle against the sin of the flesh and me and my wife are falling apart as a married couple."

Like all traps of the devil, it starts out subtly. The enemy whispers in your ear, *"It's not so bad... everybody does it. God will surely understand, you're only human. It isn't hurting anyone. Go ahead, you know you want to."* This is how all besetting sins begin in our lives... we are persuaded by the evil one to just TRY it. Sort of like how he trapped Adam and Eve in the garden by whispering in their ears, *"Did God REALLY say?..."*

Let's look at James, chapter 1. *"Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."* Yes, it all begins with just one look, and soon we are PERSUADED to look again, and again, and again...

Soon, it is all you can think about. The weed of pornography fills our minds and hearts. Philippians tells us, *"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think on these things."* But with our minds filled with pornographic images we cannot seem to forget, there is no room left for anything good or Godly. Our addiction has become PERVASIVE.

As studies show, many people cannot even stop looking at porn while they are at work. And as I already stated, over 30,000 people are watching it right this very second. Instead of the intimacy God designed between a man and a woman, consecrated

in the covenant of marriage, this evil pervades every area of our lives. The marriage relationship is destroyed, and once *that* foundation is gone, the family begins to crumble as well. Yes, pornography is PERVASIVE, destroying everything in its path.

But it's also progressive. Many people using the internet today stumble across an enticing image on their screens, even though they had no intention of looking at pornography... but again... they are PERSUADED, and soon find their minds and hearts PERVADED with this stuff. And once a person gets a taste, just like a drug, it takes more and more of the drug to achieve the same "high." They begin seeking out even more filthy images, which leads to PERVERSION. No longer does "normal" sex "do it" for them. Now they need something riskier, something heavier, something MORE. Thus, they find themselves looking at – and fantasizing about – perverted sexual acts. One study indicated that 30% of porn users admitted to seeking out CHILD porn. I will not go into the "other" types of images people search for. Suffice to say, it is PERVERSION.

And like the writer of the email I shared found out, the demon of pornography is PERSISTENT. This poor man feels trapped, he DOES NOT WANT to do what he does, but he cannot seem to help himself. He knows he is committing adultery of the heart, he knows he is hurting his dear wife and their marriage. He knows he is destroying his family. He knows he is deliberately sinning against the Lord, yet he cannot seem to stop it. He has cried out to the Lord for deliverance and even rebuked the enemy in Jesus' name. Yet the temptation – and the sin persists.

Someone once said that "sin will take you farther than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay and keep you longer than you want to stay." How true. Yet, God is faithful to rescue us. In Matthew 17, Jesus was approached by a distraught father whose son was overcome by a demon that

made him fall into the fire and into the water. Jesus' disciples couldn't cast the demon out, but the Lord rebuked the devil and the child was cured.

Starting in Verse 19 we read, *"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart and said, 'why could not we cast him out?' And Jesus said unto them, 'because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, 'remove hence to yonder place,' and it shall remove; and NOTHING shall be impossible for you. But, this kind goeth NOT out, but by prayer and fasting."*

Prayer and fasting. Jesus knew a little bit about prayer and fasting. Right after His baptism, before He began His earthly ministry, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, where He fasted and prayed. This is how Christ, Himself, dealt with the temptations when the enemy tried to persuade Him, and pervert God's Word. Jesus gained the victory over the devil through prayer and fasting, and He tells us in Matthew 17, that we, too, can cast out even the worst of demons if we only have the faith of a mustard seed and spend time in fervent prayer, and fasting.

We need to be *intentional*, and we need to be deadly serious about removing this besetting sin from our lives. In addition to prayer and fasting, we often times need to completely REMOVE ourselves from the temptation. Matthew 5 seems especially appropriate on this subject. There, Jesus said, *"You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* And THEN He added: *"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."*

I'm not suggesting you disfigure yourself. There is a much simpler answer: since MOST of the pornographic images we seek out are on the internet, get yourself OFF the internet. Protect yourself with easily-accessible software that blocks unwanted content. This will ALSO protect your children. As we discussed last week, the average age of a child encountering pornography for the first time is just 7 years old. Chances are, if your kids have not ALREADY seen this stuff, they WILL, if you do not protect them. And once exposed to this "virus," as we all KNOW, it becomes persuasive, pervasive, progressive, perverted and persistent. Better to cut yourself off from exposure than allow yourself – and your kids – that temptation.

Still, many find themselves "torn" over the decision to put a stop to their porn addiction. On one hand, they hate it. On the other, they ENJOY it. Some think they are incapable of ever stopping their addiction completely. But 1st Corinthians tells us, *"NO temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."* YES, you WILL continue to be tempted, because this thing is PERSISTENT. But if you truly want out, you need look no further than God. He PROMISES to provide the way out, and we KNOW that continuing to indulge this besetting sin is NOT God's will. His will is for you to have life, and life more abundantly. His will is a good, solid, marriage, with your mind – and your marriage bed – undefiled by this perversion. It is HIS WILL that you be free of this demon. So have no doubt: HE WILL HELP YOU!

One final tip: you may be under the impression that in order to do away with this in your life, you need to use willpower. That is not the case. You simply need to look at things logically. What is pornography use actually DOING FOR YOU? Here's a little "secret:" you do not have to use willpower to

stop doing something you do not want to do.

For example, you don't have to use willpower not to sit down and drink a glass of bleach. Why not? Because you DON'T WANT to drink a glass of bleach! Doing so would offer you nothing of any value. The same is true of this – or any harmful addiction. When you realize that it is offering you NOTHING GOOD, nothing of any value, it will not take willpower to stop doing it, because you will not WANT to do it anymore.

Consider the benefits you're currently getting from pornography: Feelings of shame, guilt and self-hatred; Emptiness, loneliness and depression; you're creating an emotional attachment with an artificial world; Having troubled relationships, the possibility of divorce; you're at risk for unhealthy sexual activity; Intimacy is lost in your marriage relationship; not to mention legal and financial problems.

Stop believing the lies the enemy has been whispering in your ear. The grass is not greener on the other side – you already know that, and that TRUTH will never change. God has made a way for you to escape the snares of this enemy, and He will deliver you. But you must do your part. Be intentional about defeating this enemy. Fast, pray, seek the Lord, think on all the GOODNESS of God and His kingdom, instead of the trash you've been filling your mind and heart with. Replace all THAT with God's Holy Spirit and then let the Spirit guide you into all truth.

Audio CDs and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at (715) 486-8066 or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com. Ask for message number 244.

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