

The Role of Pornography in the Global Slide into Immorality

Prof. Johan Malan, Mossel Bay, South Africa (December 2012)

The viewing of pornographic photos and video clips on the Internet and cell phones is a rapidly increasing phenomenon across the globe, and has become an addictive habit in the lives of millions of people. Members of all social and economic classes are involved in this practice, from adolescents to the elderly.

Great concern is expressed in articles on a number of websites over the rapid increase of pornography viewing. Some of these websites are Christian and others of a non-religious nature, but they are all committed to the upholding of moral values in society. Exposure to pornography does not only have religious consequences, but also impact victim's lives socially and psychologically.

Sex online, referred to as cybersex, has become an epidemic. Various analysts say that the damage caused to a relationship or marriage by cybersex is devastating. Easy access to porn sites on the Internet is mainly responsible for the rapid expansion of this evil. The following statistics speak for themselves:

- As many as one out of every three to four online searches are for porn.
- Every second 30,000 people are viewing pornography. The average age of first exposure is only 11.
- In 56% of all divorce cases in the USA, one party had an obsessive interest in porn sites.

In some cases, personal e-mail messages of a very intimate nature are exchanged between "anonymous friends", which often lead to secret meetings and the sexual abuse of girls, after which they are often humiliated and "dumped".

Cybersex addiction

The following is an excerpt from an article published by the *New York Times* in May 16, 2000 (<http://partners.nytimes.com/library/national/science/health/051600hth-behavior-cybersex.html>):

Cybersex Gives Birth to a Psychological Disorder, by Jane E. Brody:

Sex is the hottest topic among adult users of the Internet, with studies showing that fully a third of all visits are directed to sexually oriented Web sites, chat rooms and news groups.

For most people these forays into cybersex are relatively harmless recreational pursuits, but experts in the field say that the affordability, accessibility and anonymity of the Internet are fuelling a brand new psychological disorder – cybersex addiction – that appears to be spreading with astonishing rapidity and bringing turmoil to the lives of those affected.

Researchers writing in the current issue of the journal *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* report that many of the men and women who now spend dozens of hours each week seeking sexual stimulation from their computers deny that they have a problem and refuse to seek help until their marriages and/or their jobs are in serious jeopardy.

For some people, the route to compulsive use of the Internet for sexual satisfaction is fast and short, said Dr. Mark Schwartz of Masters and Johnson in St. Louis. "Sex on the Net is like heroin," he said. "It grabs them and takes over their lives. And it's very difficult to treat because the people affected don't want to give it up."

According to Dr. Al Cooper, who works at the San Jose Marital and Sexuality Center in Santa Clara, Calif., cybersex compulsives are just like drug addicts; they "use the Internet as an important part of their sexual acting out, much like a drug addict who has a drug of choice," and often with serious harm to their home lives and livelihood. Especially vulnerable to becoming hooked on Internet sex, he wrote, are "those users whose sexuality may have been suppressed and limited all their lives [who] suddenly find an infinite supply of sexual opportunities" on the Internet.

Dr. Dana Putnam, a psychologist in San Luis Obispo, Calif., said other factors that could increase a person's vulnerability to cybersex compulsion were depression and other forms of emotional distress, relationship problems and a failure to get one's sexual needs met.

However, a second survey conducted by Dr. Schneider among 94 family members affected by cybersex addiction revealed that the problem could arise even among those in loving marriages with ample sexual opportunities. "Sex on the Net is just so seductive and it's so easy to stumble upon it," she said. "People who are vulnerable can get hooked before they know it."

Cybersex compulsives can become so involved with their online activities that they ignore their partners and children and risk their jobs. In Dr. Cooper's survey, 20 percent of the men and 12 percent of the women reported they had used computers at work for some sexual pursuits. Many companies now monitor employees' online activities, and repeated visits to sexually oriented sites have cost people their jobs.

To those who say "What's the harm? We are not risking disease or death," Dr. Schneider, who has written extensively on sexual addiction, responds that the damage to a cybersex addict's life and family can be as devastating as that caused by compulsive gambling or addiction to alcohol or drugs. In her survey, 91 women and three men in committed relationships said they had experienced serious adverse consequences, including broken relationships, from their partners' cybersex addictions. Partners commonly reported feeling betrayed, devalued, deceived, ignored and abandoned and unable to compete with a fantasy.

Among these was a 34-year-old woman married 14 years to a minister who she discovered was compulsively seeking sexual satisfaction by visiting pornographic sites on the Internet. "How can I compete with hundreds of anonymous others who are now in our bed, in his head?" the woman wrote. "Our bed is crowded with countless faceless strangers, where once we were intimate."

Children may also suffer as a result of increasing conflict between the parents or break-up of the marriage. And even if the marriage survives, children may lack adequate parental attention when one parent is preoccupied with sex on the computer and the other is preoccupied with the cybersex addict.

Once unleashed, the power of a cyber-affair and/or cybersex can cause a formerly loving man to become evasive and to demand his privacy online, according to Dr. Young and her co-authors. "This 'new frontier' in relationship dynamics can lead a once warm and passionate wife and mother to also turn to the computer and its cyber world lovers and/or sex partners and away from caring for her children."

As Dr. Putnam put it, "Once people get hooked on cybersex, they tend to put themselves at risk and do things they wouldn't ordinarily do." (End of quote from *The New York Times*).

Family Research Council

Pat Fagan of the *Family Research Council* in Washington DC, corroborates the above-mentioned findings. In a paper, *The effects of pornography on individuals, marriage, family and community* (July 2010) he says, among others:

"Pornography is a major threat to marriages, the family, and the society at large. It is not a private choice without public consequence. Pornography alters both sexual attitudes and behaviour, undermining marriage, which in turn, undermines the stability of the entire community.

- Married men who are involved in pornography feel less satisfied with their conjugal relations and less emotionally attached to their wives.
- Pornography use is a pathway to infidelity and divorce, and is frequently a major factor in these family disasters.
- Couples affected by one spouse's addictions usually experience a loss of interest in sexual intercourse and good family relations.
- Both spouses perceive pornography viewing as tantamount to infidelity.

A counter action

Shane Morris of Life Site News (www.lifesitenews.com/) published the following excerpts from an interview which John Stonestreet of Breakpoint (www.breakpoint.org) conducted with the well-known Christian apologist, Josh McDowell in November 2012:

Pornography is out there, and it's not going away any time soon. So to help your kids guard against it, you have to prepare them. According to Josh McDowell, author of books including "Evidence which Demands a Verdict" and "More Than a Carpenter," who has turned his attention of late to the devastation of pornography on our culture and the Church, this may rank among the greatest threats to Christianity we've ever seen.

Explaining why he decided to tackle the issue of pornography, Josh said in the mentioned interview with John Stonestreet of Breakpoint how he sensed a barrier to his apologetic work (the defence of the Christian faith) which had nothing to do with the faith itself.

"I am an apologist," says Josh. "I set forth positive reasons, why to believe, in order to see young people come to Christ. But about five or six years ago, I kept sensing that there's a problem out there. When I would interact with young people, something had become a barrier. I realized it was intrusive and pervasive sexual immorality and pornography on the internet. As an apologist, the one thing that can undermine everything

that I teach is not in the area of apologetics, it's in the area of morals. If you don't deal with this issue, you won't fulfil your role as a biblical apologist."

Josh's son, Sean McDowell, who is the head of the Bible Department at Capistrano Valley Christian College, as well as an author, speaker and apologist in his own right, works with youth full time. In that process, Sean has gathered a litany of sad stories of apparently model Christian young men and women who have fallen into the trap set for them by a culture saturated with sex and lust.

And that's just the problem. The first points Josh and Sean McDowell hope to communicate to parents, pastors and teachers is that in today's world, most children and students aren't looking for pornography. "Pornography is looking for them," says Josh. "Of those teenagers who have seen pornography, between seventy-eight and ninety-one percent were never looking for it. Researchers show that thirty-eight percent of those will become addicted."

"How big of a deal is this for the body of Christ right now?" asks John Stonestreet.

"Well, the stats which I have documented," explains Josh, "show that upwards of fifty percent of pastor's struggle with pornography. Sixty-two percent of men who attend evangelical churches regularly struggle with pornography, and upwards of sixty-five to sixty-eight percent of teenagers. This is probably the greatest threat to the cause of Christ in two thousand years of church history, because it so undermines your life, your walk with Christ and your beliefs. My fear is that many pastors are not addressing it because they're involved in it. Somehow, we've got to get the leadership in the body of Christ addressing this."

"Give us some specifics," says John. "How does it undermine Christians? How does it undermine Christian growth, how does it undermine marriages?"

"Apart from shame and loneliness," explains Josh, "[pornography] produces a question about the authority of the Scriptures, of Christ, of the Resurrection, of the Church and of parents. It starts to darken the door of the brain to consider truths of the Christian faith. Once you become involved in pornography, it takes over all your thinking, your morals, and your life. You have to understand: pornography just takes over your life. It takes over your relationships – your view of people, of women, of children. And as a result, it doesn't leave room for your walk with Christ. You can't become involved with pornography and have a healthy walk with Christ."

That, says Josh, is why he's launched "[Just 1 Click Away](#)," a website devoted to networking the old and young with resources and help. Sean McDowell gives a lecture at Summit Ministries which echoes the message of "Just 1 Click Away." In it, he draws from the work of Drs. Joe McIlhaney Jr. and Freeda McKissic Bush in their ground-breaking book, "Hooked," in which they describe how pornography and sexual promiscuity actually change the physical structure and chemistry of our brains, making it more difficult to love, bond and have sexual relationships with our spouses.

Another critical issue which the McDowells seek to address with this new campaign against pornography is the dreaded task parents have of educating and preparing their children. Both Josh and Sean discourage any hope that our children will be among the lucky few who never encounter pornography. Statistically speaking, say the McDowells, that's a non-existent group.

"Your kids will encounter pornography," says Josh. "It's so sad, but it's true." Even if we isolate our kids and teens from contact with the outside world through modern technology, they will still become adults and have to confront all at once the sexual culture we tried to stifle. Our job as parents and mentors, believes Josh, must now be to focus on preparing our children to respond in a godly way when faced with pornography.

That's why at "Just 1 Click Away" the McDowells have sought not only to expose the problem, but also to provide resources and training for parents and adults on how to open the channels of conversation with their children early, how to equip them to face the battle ahead, and how to ultimately and consistently say "no" to the dehumanizing, degrading influence of our culture's worst addiction.

On Josh and his son's website, www.just1clickaway.org/ they say:

- **Sex** and temptations are waiting online just 1 click away, invading our homes and our schools, fighting for the hearts and minds of young people, perhaps even yourself.
- **God**, faith, and strong moral values can protect hearts and minds against a slippery downward slope. But we must wake up and act now and instil moral strength in our youth!
- **Truth** and facts can set us free. These are also just 1 click away. Begin your journey with the resources on this website; share them with those you love.

It is important to note that Josh does not resort to a form of religious crisis management by merely emphasising the dangers of harmful and shameful sexual practices in an effort to scare people away from getting involved with bad habits. Unregenerate people (“the natural man” – **1 Cor. 2:14**) has a strong propensity to evil and thoroughly enjoys sinning. He first has to be led to Christ to be born again spiritually and be imbued with a new nature before his lifestyle and moral values will change significantly (**2 Cor. 5:17**).

There are also other ministries that are committed to countering this evil practice. The resources offered by *Every man's Battle* (<http://everymansbattlevideo.com/>) are excellent and provide practical help, tools and advice.

A life under the domination of sin

Sexual perversion is only one of several forms of sin and promiscuous behaviour which is typical of fallen mankind. The majority of people will not be deterred from evil practices by any means – not even by the plagues of God which will be poured out upon them during the great tribulation: “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (**Rev. 9:20-21**).

Sexual immorality is typical of a life of wickedness in which God and His Word are utterly rejected. According to *The New Testament Greek Lexicon*, the Greek word for sexual immorality (*porneia*) is defined as “adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.” *Porneia*, therefore, refers to various forms of sexual immorality and perversion. People who indulge in these sins will also be exposed to the related sins of idolatry, violent behaviour and involvement with the occult.

If God and His righteousness is not the main purpose and goal of our lives we are wilfully surrendering ourselves to the devil's alternative culture of sin. We should not allow this to happen but resist it with all our might: “... and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them” (**Eph. 5:10-11**). People who prefer the works of darkness instead of a life of holiness will soon be under the rule of “the man of sin” (**2 Thess. 2:3; 2 Cor. 4:4**), and eventually be compelled to worship the false christ instead of the true Christ (**cf. John 5:43; Rev. 13:3-4**).

There is a solution to the pervasive problem of sin and promiscuity: the Lord Jesus has come to save us from sin (**Matt. 1:21**). “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts” (**Rom. 6:12**). You must make a definite choice to be delivered from the bonds of sin and wickedness, and subsequently commit yourself to the challenge to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made you free (**Gal. 5:1**).