

So You Want to Open the Can of Worms



Addressing Pornography
Temptation in Your Church

Porn in the church. You've read the stats. You know the problem is big and that it is in your midst. Your gut tells you that men and women in your own church are struggling with this issue. But you are at a loss for words for how to "open the can of worms" and get people talking about the temptation and sin of looking at Internet pornography.

I. Cracking the Lid: "I want to relate to those who are struggling."

There are many legitimate concerns and fears you could have about bringing this issue to light. Perhaps you don't know where to start because you haven't personally struggled with this temptation before. Perhaps you're thinking, "This would be easier to talk about if I had a personal story of victory to share, but I don't."

Do not let this obstacle stop you from bringing the issue into the light. There are likely many sins you would feel comfortable addressing specifically, even if you have no war stories about them personally. Pornography is no different. All the same, when you are opening this can of worms, the testimony of someone who has been there can be very powerful. Below are some video tools to help you:

- **Covenant Eyes videos** – The ministry of Covenant Eyes has free videos on their YouTube¹ and Tangle² channels. You can also view or download the newest high-quality video for free on the Covenant Eyes website.³
- **Somebody's Daughter documentary** – This hard-hitting documentary⁴ interviews several church-goers who used to struggle with pornography addiction. Buy this documentary and use clips in your church settings.
- **Freedom Begins Here** – This DVD resource also has a YouTube page⁵ where you can find some good, free video testimonies from those who have struggled with pornography.⁶ Freedom Begins Here sells DVD toolkits for churches and small groups: you might be able to draw some excerpts from the videos they provide.
- **Porn Nation videos** – The ministry of Bravehearts has a YouTube channel⁷ that includes a number of good video interviews of college students and their attitudes about pornography. **NOTE:** These videos were intended to be seen by unchurched college crowds and may not be appropriate for all audiences. Viewer discretion is advised.
- **Illusions** – This website has several free videos and testimonies of those who have been affected by pornography.⁸
- **Fireproof** – This big box-office film includes a scene where the main character, played by Kirk Cameron, deals squarely with a temptation to view Internet pornography.⁹ Call Outreach ministries to get permission to play the movie in your church.¹⁰
- **BluefishTV** – This video ministry offers several good sermon "teasers" that help to introduce this topic. You can download the ones you want for \$1.99 per video.¹¹

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/CovenantEyes> (When using YouTube and seeing clips about pornography temptation, beware of "related videos." Many times sexually tempting videos can be listed as "related" in the right-hand sidebar, even if the video you are viewing is presenting an anti-lust message.)

² <http://www.tangle.com/CovenantEyes>

³ http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/article/new_covenant_eyes_promotional_video/?c=43

⁴ <http://www.somebodysdaughter.org/>

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/freedombeginshere>

⁶ <http://www.freedombeginshere.com/>

⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/PornNation>

⁸ <http://www.illusionsprogram.net/>

⁹ <http://www.fireproofthemovie.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.outreach.com/>

II. Cracking the Lid: “I’m a church leader. What if I struggle with porn myself?”

One survey suggests that over 50% of pastors believe pornography temptation is the #1 sexual issue damaging their congregations.¹² Other surveys suggest that over 50% of *pastors themselves* experience this same temptation.¹³ So while many church leaders may want to open this can of worms for their churches, they fear what will happen if they choose to confess their own sin.

The question for the church leaders who struggle isn’t whether they *should* come clean at some point, but *how* they should come clean. Inevitably there will be consequences to confessing this weakness, consequences that will affect some vital relationships such as marriages and relationships with those in the church. Every church leader’s situation is different, so there is no universal format for confessing this problem.

It could be that one of the safest ways to bring your own problem into the light is by creating an atmosphere in your church that encourages others to confess their own struggles. Several churches have started to encourage their whole leadership team, and even all their members, to get Covenant Eyes accountability software¹⁴ on their computers. When someone starts using Covenant Eyes, all the websites they visit are monitored and that information is compiled into a report and emailed to trusted accountability partners that each person chooses. Because this eliminates the secrecy of Internet use, the temptation to view pornography is greatly reduced. Plus, this isn’t merely a technological solution to our temptations, but a relational solution (an accountability relationship). When someone is really tempted, struggling, or giving in to sin, they have others around them to help lift them up.

Church Leader, when you help to create an atmosphere where many people are open and honest about their struggles, this also can create a safer environment for you to be honest. Then you can begin bringing trusted friends, mentors, and fellow church leaders around you to hold you accountable to where you go online.

However, if you feel that your pornography use has gone beyond curiosity or experimentation and into the realm of habit, compulsion, and addiction, then you may need to get to the root of this and seek professional counseling.

- **The Parsonage** – This is a ministry of Focus on the Family to ministers and their families.¹⁵ They have a pastoral care phone line (1-877-233-4455; 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, mountain time). They offer a listening ear, helpful resources, and an extensive referral list of licensed Christian counselors from across the country.
- **Nehemiah Ministries** – This is a ministry in mid-Michigan for Christian leaders and their families. They offer on-site peer counseling and a guest house for church leaders to get away and be refreshed.¹⁶
- ***The Pornography Trap*** – This book by Ralph H. Earle Jr. and Mark R. Laaser is for pastors struggling with sexual addiction.
- See below “**Dealing with the Worms: The Cycle of Addiction**” for more resources.

¹¹ <http://www.bluefishtv.com/>

¹² In March 2005 *Christianity Today* published the results of a study called “Christians and Sex” in their *Leadership Journal*, saying 57% of pastors surveyed said addiction to pornography is the most sexually damaging issue to their congregation.

¹³ In 2002, of 1,351 pastors surveyed, 54% said they had viewed Internet pornography within the last year, and 30% of these had visited within the last 30 days (from *Pastors.com*, in March 2002; cited by [ProvenMen.org](http://www.provenmen.org)). This was significantly higher than two years earlier when *Christianity Today* conducted an exclusive survey of its readership—both laity and clergy—on the issue of Internet pornography: 33 % of clergy said they had visited a sexually explicit Web site (Christine J. Gardner “Tangled in the worst of the web” *Christianity Today*, March 5, 2001).

¹⁴ <http://www.covenanteyes.com/>

¹⁵ <http://www.parsonage.org/>

¹⁶ <http://www.nehemiahm.org/>

III. Lifting the Lid: Presenting the Problem Before Your Whole Church

Some church leaders will want to address this issue specifically from the pulpit or in another large gathering. There are a number of resources to help leaders speak confidently and knowledgeably about pornography:

- **PowerPoint Presentations** – Go to the Covenant Eyes website to download PowerPoint presentations, specifically designed for church settings.¹⁷
- **Sermon Outline** – “Pornography Unmasked”¹⁸ is a free sermon outline and transcript based on Proverbs 7. The sermon can be adapted for your specific needs or split into multiple sermons.
- **Internet Pornography Statistics** – Download a PDF¹⁹ of some of the most accurate statistics about the adult industry and Internet pornography.
- See above “**Cracking the Lid: ‘I want to relate to those who are struggling’**” for innovative videos you may be able to use for your presentations.

IV. Dealing with the Worms: Triggers and Temptations

After you open this can of worms in your church people will need practical resources to fight temptation and seduction. This will involve a number of approaches: (1) offering preventative tools, (2) reeducating about sexuality, and (3) forming accountability groups.

- **Offering Preventative Tools**
 - **Covenant Eyes Accountability Software** – Encourage those who are tempted by Internet pornography to be accountable to trusted friends, mentors, or spouses concerning where they go online. Using accountability software transforms the way people use the Internet. This program is free for accountability partners and only costs \$7.99/month for the software user (lower prices for group accounts).²⁰
 - **CleanHotels.com** – For those who feel especially tempted all alone on the road, go to CleanHotels.com to find hotels that do not have adult TV programming in their hotel rooms.²¹
 - **ClearPlay DVD Player** – This innovative DVD player actually filters normal DVDs for objectionable content in real time. You choose what you want filtered from the movie, such as sensual content, crude sexual content, nudity, explicit sexual situations, as well as filters for ranges of violence, language, and drug use. Order the player and your membership on their website.²²
- **Reeducating About Sexuality** – In addition to helpful teaching and preaching, offer your congregation a host of books and resources.
 - **FREE e-books** – *13 Ways to Ruin Your Life*,²³ by Jarrod Jones, and *Porn Again Christian*,²⁴ by Mark Driscoll. Both are addressed specifically to men.

¹⁷ http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/article/covenant_eyes_powerpoint_presentations/?c=43

¹⁸ http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/pdfs/Pornography%20Unmasked.pdf

¹⁹ http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/pdfs/Covenant%20Eyes%20Pornography%20Statistics.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.covenanteyes.com/>

²¹ <http://www.cleanhotels.com/>

²² <http://clearplay.com/>

²³ <http://www.13waystoruinyourlife.com/>

- **Other good books** – *Sex Isn't the Problem (Lust Is)*, by Joshua Harris, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor, *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*, by Steve Gallagher, *The Game Plan*, by Joe Dallas, *Truth About Sex*, by Kay Arthur, and *Strength in Weakness*, by Andrew Comiskey.
- **Personal Bible study** – Encourage the congregation to engage in personal and group Bible study so that they start to have a biblical worldview. Teach them to study the Bible for themselves. For instance: Precept Ministries Inductive Bible Study classes are very good for the layman to begin this process.
- **Forming Accountability Groups** – Helping your church to form biblical small groups and tight accountability clusters is vital to fighting temptation and breaking the hold of sin. As you direct the formation of small groups in your church, a good FREE resource is C.J. Mahaney's e-book, *Why Small Groups?*²⁵

V. Dealing with the Worms: The Cycle of Addiction

One of the growing problems today is that various sexual addictions are being escalated by Internet pornography. There is no clear line of demarcation between those who are “struggling” with pornography and those who are “addicted” because porn addiction isn't a clinical term. Nonetheless, counselors and psychologists around the world are recognizing the need to deal with this growing problem.

When you open this can of worms, be ready for the potential counseling needs from members of your church:

- **Crossroads** – This curriculum by Edward Welch, M.Div., Ph.D. is one of the best resources for those struggling with any form of addiction. Welch draws on his twenty-six years of biblical counseling as well as his expertise in the area of counseling psychology and neuro-psychology.²⁶
- **Freedom Begins Here** – This ministry provides books and DVD Tool Kits²⁷ for small groups, accountability partnerships, and whole churches. The Freedom Begins Here curriculum is based on the research of Dr. Mark Laaser, a leading expert in the area of sexual addiction, and relationship expert, Dr. Gary Smalley.
- **CCEF Counseling Training** – As addiction issues arise there may be a need for more lay-counselors in a church. One of the best biblical counseling training centers in the world, the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, offers a certificate program (offered on-site or via distance education). Their “Biblical Counseling Certificate” consists of three courses that provide a foundation for biblical counseling, presenting a basic biblical model, and offers essential “how to” principles. Find out more on their website.²⁸
- **Harvest USA Seminars** – This ministry has been around for a quarter of a century and has dealt with a variety of sexual brokenness issues in the church. In addition to many educational resources, their team is also available for special seminars at your church. Read more on their website.²⁹
- **Pure Desire Ministries** – The ministry of Pure Desire equips churches to create the kind of communities needed to help those caught in destructive porn addiction. Their resources include books and DVD training seminars.³⁰

²⁴ http://relit.org/porn_again_christian/

²⁵ <http://www.sovereigngracestore.com/ProductInfo.aspx?productid=B3150-00-60>

²⁶ <http://newgrowthpress.com>

²⁷ <http://www.freedombeginshere.com/>

²⁸ <http://www.ccef.org/>

²⁹ <http://www.harvestusa.org/>

³⁰ <http://www.puredesire.org/>

- **Faithful and True Ministries** – Mark Laaser is one of the leading experts in the area of sex addiction. His ministry offers a host of therapy groups, individual and couples counseling, workshops, and training opportunities.
- **NANC Directory** – The National Association of Nouthetic Counselors has certified and trained biblical counselors all over the US. For over 30 years this association of pastors and lay church leaders have helped thousands of people through their biblically faithful approach to counseling. Their website has a directory of counselors.³¹
- **Stone Gate Resources** – This is an eight-day, intensive, live-in program that helps those trapped in sexual addiction. Stone Gate is located in a rural area just twenty miles north of Colorado Springs. Dr. Harry Schaumburg’s program includes private biblical counseling, interactive seminars, lectures, and guided study.³²
- **Good books** – Check out *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*, by Steve Gallagher, and *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, by Ed Welch. These are great books that explain the biblical process of restoration for the sexual addict.
- **Covenant Eyes Accountability Software** – Those who are compulsively looking at pornography online can find accountability using Covenant Eyes software. There is a clear cycle to porn addiction,³³ and when an accountability partner understands this cycle they can assist someone through the process of recovery. This program is free for accountability partners and is only \$7.99/month for the software user (discounts are available for group accounts).³⁴

VI. Dealing with the Worms: Broken Relationships and Marriages

Pornography destroys relationships, and inevitably as men start to come clean about their habitual sins, their wives will need the support of those in the church. Whether they’ve known about their husband’s addiction for a while, or they have just found out about it, there are many questions and that hurts wives need to work through.³⁵

Below is a list of recommendations for wives from the ministry of Faithful and True:³⁶

- You will need individual support (a therapist, pastor, and/or a women’s group) for your healing, just as your husband needs it for his healing. Couple’s counseling is not sufficient for you to find safety and progress for your own issues.
- You need to be heard about the pain and loss in your life created from your husband’s sexual sin. While your husband may feel great relief from having disclosed secrets kept for years, you are only beginning to take in the reality of how his secrets and behaviors have affected your life.
- Information about addiction will help you understand the depths of this problem. It does not take away feelings you have, but it can help you create a new perception of the problem and understand the kind of help that is necessary for change.

³¹ <http://www.nanc.org/Directory.aspx>

³² <http://www.stonegateresources.org/>

³³ <http://www.covenanteyes.com/blog/2008/12/09/breaking-the-cycle-of-porn-addiction/>

³⁴ <http://www.coventanteyes.com/>

³⁵ <http://www.covenanteyes.com/blog/2008/09/22/husbands-who-watch-porn-part-4-wives-are-asking-whats-wrong-with-me/>

³⁶ <http://www.faithfulandtrueministries.com/counseling-services/wives-support/>

- You need full disclosure of the secrets/behaviors that he has been engaged in. To begin to restore trust, you need your husband to be totally honest about his past. We suggest that professional help may be necessary to facilitate this process.
- You need to hear as quickly as possible from a professional that you did not cause your husband's addiction, that you can't control it, nor can you cure it. He will need a program of recovery to work on the deeper issues that drive his decisions. Your efforts to be more sexual, more attentive, more watchful, more 'anything' is not the solution.
- You will find healing and growth if you participate in examining your own life. Creating greater emotional and spiritual intimacy with your husband takes both people to change patterns in your lives.
- You may need someone to 'hold your hope' while you begin this journey. It can look hopeless and despairing in the beginning. To have someone who has 'been there' and 'made it through' to greater intimacy is to have a 'hope bearer' while times are difficult.

As your church is preparing to meet the needs of these hurting wives, there are a few resources that we recommend to get you started:

- **NANC Directory** – The National Association of Nouthetic Counselors has certified and trained biblical counselors all over the US. Their website has a directory of counselors.³⁷
- **Weekend to Remember** – Each year the ministry of Family Life puts on about 150 *Weekend to Remember* conferences all over the country. These conferences teach God's design for marriage and family. The environment is generally fun and non-threatening. It offers couples a chance to get away, to refresh good marriages or heal troubled ones. Find a conference near you.³⁸
- **Pure Intimacy** – This is an online resource offered by Focus on the Family which helps individuals and couples fight through sexual sin issues.³⁹
- **Good books** – *Sacred Sex: A Spiritual Celebration of Oneness in Marriage*, by Tim Alan Gardner, *Shattered Vows: Hope and Healing for Women Who Have Been Sexually Betrayed*, by Debra Laaser, and *I Surrender All: Rebuilding a Marriage Broken by Pornography*, by Clay and Renee Cross

VII. Out of the Box: Unique Ways to Fight Porn in Your Church

More and more ministries are cropping up with a mission to give churches a whole new perspective on the pornography issue. Check out some of these resources and see if these could be right for your church:

- **White Collar Sideshow** – This traveling road show is a mixed bag of sights and sounds all geared to spread a message about how to fight pornography addiction through honesty and accountability. They look sort of like Blue Man Group meets Rob Zombie meets a 1930s illusionist act. Creative live percussion is combined with powerfully artistic video images to show the cycle of porn addiction. It's really one of those things you should see for yourself. Go to their website⁴⁰ for more information about how to book them.

³⁷ <http://www.nanc.org/Directory.aspx>

³⁸ http://store.familylife.com/conferences/find_conference.asp

³⁹ <http://www.pureintimacy.org/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.whitecollarsideshow.com/>

- **Pink Cross Foundation** – This is a ministry started by ex-porn star, Shelley Lubben. She reaches out to the women still trapped in the sex industry. Because of her personal experiences in the industry, she offers a unique message about the behind-the-scenes world of porn. Her message will strip pornography of its illusion in a way you’ve never heard. Go to her website for information about the sex industry or to book her for your church gathering.⁴¹ **NOTE:** Stories, photos, and videos on ThePinkCross.org may not be suitable for all audiences. Viewer discretion is advised.
- **Porn Nation** – Michael Leahy is a former porn addict with a powerful story, a story he’s told at over 200 college campuses and countless churches. His presentation, “*Porn Nation: The Naked Truth*,” offers a stark picture of our hyper-sexualized media and culture and how it is hurting us. Visit the PornNationTheBook.com⁴² for more information about bringing Leahy to your church. **NOTE:** Leahy’s presentation and media content are typically geared for non-Christian audiences and may not be suitable for all church venues.
- **Traffic Control: The People’s War on Internet Porn** – This feature-length documentary deals with the sticky issues of First Amendment rights of pornographers vs. pornography’s affects on children and society: where do we draw the lines? Great footage, interviews, and information will raise the bar of awareness in your church. Order the film on the CP80 Foundation website.⁴³
- **Offer Covenant Eyes to your whole church** – A number of churches have been calling their members to a lifestyle of radical accountability. By offering Covenant Eyes software to anyone in the church who needs it, you help to start an “accountability culture” in your church. As the men, women, and families of your church begin to live lives of accountability online, this will be both a preventative measure (helping to stop sin before it starts) and a corrective measure (helping those who are trapped in sin already). Covenant Eyes has special church/organization pricing and customer service.⁴⁴

⁴¹ <http://www.thepinkcross.org/>

⁴² <http://www.pornnationthebook.com/>

⁴³ <http://www.cp80.org/trafficcontrol/buy>

⁴⁴ http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/article/what_is_the_organizational_business_church_ministry_synagogue_etc_price_for_covenant_eyes_software/?c=23