



CovenantEyes™

Wired Relationships

.....
A Four-Part Sermon Series

About This Sermon Series

The goal of this four-part sermon series is to talk to your congregation about how technology has impacted our lives and relationships. While we want to celebrate the good that technology has brought us, we also want to be mindful of the ways in which the Internet has opened the doors for temptations and sins, especially pornography.

The sermons outlined here are deliberately outlines. They are specifically meant for you to change and develop on your own. While we hope they provide good starting points for your messages, nobody knows your congregation and its unique needs like you do. And, of course, you should remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as you prepare your messages.

Please note: as written, some of these sermons could be considered PG-13 or higher. If you have a junior church available, you might want to strongly encourage parents to send their kids to it, especially during the second and third sermons, which will go into particular depth on the topic of pornography.



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Know Your Enemy

Key Passage: 1 Cor. 10:23-33

The Internet has brought a lot of blessings, but it also brings its share of temptations. Over the next few weeks, we'll be taking a closer look at how the Internet has shaped how we interact, and what the Bible says about it. This week, we're going to do a high level overview of some of the biggest temptations we face through the lens of the Seven Deadly Sins.

1) Pride: Facebook

Social media is great—it's an easy way to keep in touch, show Grandpa and Grandma pictures of the grandkids, share beauty, etc. But one of the most obvious temptations is to present the perfect life online: best marriage, kids, vacations, etc.

- ▶ Instagram is an easy way to fake that perfect life, like this parody account: <https://www.instagram.com/socalitybarbie/?hl=en>
Note: You may want to find your own examples.
- ▶ Teens use Instagram as a way to bolster their popularity.¹

What does Scripture say about pride?

- ▶ Prov. 16:18
- ▶ James 4:13-17

So we must be careful to not be boastful with our use of Facebook, Instagram, etc. But we must also be careful because our prideful attitudes, especially with online use, can lead to a sister sin...

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¹ Kelly Wallace, "Teen 'like' and 'FOMO' anxiety," *CNN.com*, Nov. 20, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/16/living/teens-on-social-media-like-and-fomo-anxiety-digital-life/> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

2) Envy: Instagram

We touched on Instagram a little bit already, but let's zoom in closer on it. When posting a photo to Instagram, you know how much time you spent on getting it framed perfectly, or selecting just the right filter, or sifting through 50 nearly identical photos to find the perfect shot. But we forget that other people are doing the exact same thing, and we see someone who takes a very similar photo, and we do what? We get envious.

- ▶ Instagram makes us depressed.²
- ▶ 53% of social media-using teens have seen people posting to social media about events to which they were not invited, and 21% of teen social media users report feeling worse about their own life because of what they see from other friends on social media.³

So what does the Bible say about envy?

- ▶ James 3:14-16
- ▶ Prov. 14:30

3) Wrath: Politics and the temptation to misread

Teens might be a bit more prone to pride and envy on social media than most grownups, but grownups have their own social media sins, especially wrath.

- ▶ The 2016 election season as seen on Facebook.
 - ▶ Selective outrage on the political left: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/12/selective-moral-outrage-left/>
 - ▶ Selective outrage on the political right: <http://thefederalist.com/2016/10/12/christians-support-trump-undermines-public-witness/>

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2 Jessica Winter, "Selfie-loathing," *Slate.com*, July 23, 2013. http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/07/instagram_and_self_esteem_why_the_photo_sharing_network_is_even_more_depressing.html (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

3 Amanda Lenhart, "Teens, Technology and Friendships," *PewInternet.org*, Aug. 6, 2015. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/06/teens-technology-and-friendships/> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

Regardless of your political stance, social media has bifurcated this country—we argue and unfollow instead of talking.

So what does the Bible say about wrath?

- ▶ Prov. 15:1b
- ▶ Eph. 4:26-31

4) Greed: The Over-Ease of Online Shopping

There has been a lot of discussion about America becoming a consumer culture for decades, but the Internet has amplified this.

- ▶ Shopping has never been so easy: all you have to do is say what you want and it will be shipped to you. Amazon estimates that its Echo device will exceed \$11 billion in revenue by 2020.⁴
- ▶ Facebook and Pinterest give us an attitude of “Oh, I need that thing to be happy and have the perfect home.” Advertisers have it down to a science to entice you to buy stuff you don’t need, and may not even want, on a flash sale. In 2016, consumers spent \$3.45 billion online on Cyber Monday alone.⁵

So what does the Bible say?

- ▶ Ecclesiastes 5:10-12
- ▶ 1 Tim. 6:9-10

5) Gluttony: Pinterest, Netflix, Amazon Prime

Closely connected to greed, gluttony is more than overeating. It’s overindulging. With greed we talked about how easy it is to buy stuff online; it’s also easy to overindulge, especially with online videos.

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- 4 Eugene Kim, “Amazon’s Echo and Alexa could add \$11 billion in revenue by 2020,” *BusinessInsider.com*, Sept. 23, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-echo-alexa-add-11-billion-in-revenue-by-2020-2016-9> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).
 - 5 Phil Wahba, “Cyber Monday sales hit a new all-time record in 2016,” *Fortune.com*, Nov. 29, 2016. <http://fortune.com/2016/11/29/cyber-monday-2016-sales/> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

- ▶ In 2015, one firm estimated that the average Netflix user watched 1.6 hours of Netflix per day.⁶
- ▶ Another survey found that 70% of all Netflix users have binge-watched an average of 5 episodes of a show in a single sitting, and 35% of millennials binge-watch weekly.⁷

So what does the Bible say about gluttony?

- ▶ Philippians 3:18-19
- ▶ Prov. 23:20-21

Note that here, gluttony and sloth are closely linked...

6) Sloth: General Time-Wasting Online

Screentime has increased: the average person spends 10.5 hours/day staring at a screen.⁸ That's not necessarily a bad thing, since many adults need to use a computer for their jobs. However:

- ▶ 89% of employees admit to wasting at least 30 minutes/day. 50% of employees wasted time texting or talking on the phone; 39% were on the Internet; 38% on social media; and 23% on e-mail.⁹
- ▶ There is some evidence that screen time, especially right before bed, can disrupt the sleep cycle, making you more likely to be distracted the next day.¹⁰

6 Nathan McAlone, "People became even more addicted to Netflix in 2015, according to Goldman Sachs," *BusinessInsider.com*, Jan. 11, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/subscribers-spent-more-time-per-person-watching-netflix-in-2015-2016-1> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

7 Nathan McAlone, "Netflix has revealed an elite category of binge-watcher, and they honestly sound a bit terrifying," *BusinessInsider.com*, Mar. 26, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/netflix-describes-elite-binge-watchers-2016-3> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

8 Jacqueline Howard, "Americans devote more than 10 hours a day to screen time, and growing," *CNN.com*, July 29, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/30/health/americans-screen-time-nielsen/> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

9 Cheryl Connor, "Wasting time at work: The epidemic continues," *Forbes.com*, July 31, 2017. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylnappconner/2015/07/31/wasting-time-at-work-the-epidemic-continues/> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

10 Bloomberg News, "Can't sleep? Blame your screen time," *DailyLife.com.au*, Jan. 9, 2014. <http://www.dailylife.com.au/health-and-fitness/dl-wellbeing/cant-sleep-blame-your-screen-time-20140109-30jcc.html> (accessed Feb. 6, 2017).

What does the Bible say?

- ▶ Prov. 24:30-34
- ▶ 2 Thess. 3:6-12

7) Lust: Porn

Lust is probably the most evident sin on the Internet, especially through sexualized and outright pornographic images and videos. It doesn't take much to get from a Minecraft tutorial to porn. The next few sermons will go into more depth, but here's a high-level overview.

- ▶ In 2006, more than 1 in 5 mobile searches were for pornography... and the first smartphone wasn't released until 2007.¹¹
- ▶ 55% of teens talk with their friends about porn in a generally positive or accepting way.¹²

What does the Bible say?

- ▶ Matt. 5:27-30
- ▶ Prov. 6:20-35

Conclusion

The solution is to do all things, especially online, to the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10:23-33 teaches us to:

- ▶ Seek the good of our neighbors—online.
- ▶ Trust our conscience on what we say or post or watch online, but be sensitive of where our brothers and sisters are.
- ▶ Plan our online use to the glory of God without seeking our own advantage.

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11 Maryam Kamvar and Shumeet Baluja, "A large scale study of wireless search behavior: Google mobile search." *CHI 06: Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (2006): 701-709. http://www.kevinli.net/courses/mobilehci_w2012/papers/googlemobilesearch.pdf (accessed Feb. 23, 2017).

12 Josh McDowell Ministry, *The Porn Phenomenon: The Impact of Pornography in the Digital Age*. (Ventura, CA: The Barna Group, 2016).

Sex in the Age of Technology

Key passage: 2 Sam. 13:1-33

We're in week two of a series on how technology impacts modern relationships. This week we'll be talking about sex and pornography, so if you have young children you may want to take them out of the room. We'll also be looking at a very difficult section from the Old Testament, so let's take a moment to pray before we begin.

1) What is sex supposed to be?

God created sex! It's a gift (Song of Solomon). But like most things in life, it works best when you play by the rules. Ever watch a football game where the other team clearly cheated, but the ref didn't catch them? Or play a board game like Settlers of Catan where someone blatantly disregarded the rules in order to win? Not much fun, is it?

Sex is like that. So what are the ground rules that God created?

- ▶ It's designed to bring intimacy between one man and one woman through marriage (Gen. 2:24; Heb. 13:4).
- ▶ The husband and wife are spiritually unified to the point that their bodies do not belong to themselves anymore (Gen. 2:24, 1 Cor. 7:2-5).
- ▶ Marriage is intended to reflect Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).
- ▶ Adultery is so bad that it warranted the death penalty (Lev. 20:10).
Note: this is an oversimplification of many laws on rape, sex, and adultery.
- ▶ Lust is equivalent to adultery (Matt. 5:27-30).

Let's zero in on that last one a bit and look at what happens when you break God's rules.

2) Sexual exploitation, especially through pornography, destroys marriages and families.

We won't spend much time talking about the sinfulness of pornography: Matt. 5:27-30 should make that clear enough. Instead, we're going to look at what pornography does to us.

2a) Porn dehumanizes: It ruins our vision of others.

Read 2 Sam. 13:1-2. Emphasis: Amnon has lost his view of who Tamar is.

In 1982 and 1984, Dr. Dolf Zillmann and Dr. Jennings Bryant conducted an experiment with 80 male and 80 female college-age participants. They were divided into three subgroups, and each group was shown 4 hours and 48 minutes of media over a six-week period: (1) the "Massive Exposure Group" was shown 36 non-violent pornographic film clips; (2) the "Intermediate Exposure Group" was exposed to 18 pornographic film clips and 18 regular films; and (3) the "No Exposure" control group was shown 36 non-pornographic film clips.

- ▶ A direct correlation was noticed between the amount of pornography one viewed and one's overall sexual satisfaction. Participants from the Massive Exposure Group reported less satisfaction with their intimate partner, such as their partner's physical appearance, affection, and sexual performance. Researchers concluded, "consumers eventually compare appearance and performance of pornographic models with that of their intimate partners, and this comparison rarely favors their intimate partners."
- ▶ More porn exposure decreased the value one placed on the institution of marriage, one's desire for children, and the need for faithfulness in a relationship.
- ▶ Participants were asked to rate their overall support for women's rights. Both men and women who were in the Massive Exposure Group showed significant drops in support compared to the No Exposure Group. There was 71% male support in the No Exposure Group compared to 25% in the Massive Exposure Group and 82% female support in the No Exposure Group compared to 52% in the Massive Exposure Group.
- ▶ The Massive Exposure Group was far more likely to believe women fit

the stereotype of the women they see in pornographic films — that is, “socially non-discriminating, as hysterically euphoric in response to just about any sexual or pseudosexual stimulation, and as eager to accommodate seemingly any and every sexual request.”¹³

In 2007, a study of 2,305 Dutch adolescents aged 13-20 years old found sexually explicit Internet material significantly increased uncertainties about sexuality and increased favorable attitudes toward uncommitted sexual exploration.¹⁴ Specifically, exposure to sexually explicit online movies was significantly correlated to the belief that women are sex objects.¹⁵

Note: More stats are available from 2015 Pornography Statistics.

2b) Porn violates: It leads us to abuse other people.

Read 2 Sam. 13:3-19. Points to emphasize:

- ▶ At his cousin/friend Jonadab’s encouragement, Amnon begins to lie and manipulate to get his way.
- ▶ Amnon no longer listens to reason (v.12-13) and uses force to get his way.
- ▶ Once Amnon gets what he wants, he throws Tamar away.

The Zillman/Bryant study in the 1980s also found that porn seemed to condition participants to trivialize rape. Participants were asked to read about a legal case where a man raped a female hitchhiker and then recommend a length for the rapist’s prison sentence. Males in the No Exposure Group said 94 months; the Massive Exposure Group said 50 months (nearly half that of the No Exposure

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13 Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, “Effects of massive exposure to pornography,” in *Pornography and Sexual Aggression* (New York: Academic Press, 1984); Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, “Shifting preferences in pornography consumption,” *Communication Research* 13 (1986): 560-578, Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, “Pornography’s impact on sexual satisfaction,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 18 (1988): 438-453, Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, “Effects of Prolonged Consumption of Pornography on Family Values,” *Journal of Family Issues* 9 (1988): 518-544.

14 Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg, “Adolescents’ exposure to online sexually explicit material, sexual uncertainty, and attitudes toward uncommitted sexual exploration: Is there a link?” *Communication Research* 35 (2008): 579-601.

15 Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg, “Adolescents’ exposure to a sexualized media environment and their notions of women as sex objects,” *Sex Roles* 56 (2007): 381-395.

Group).¹⁶

In a meta-analysis of 46 studies published from 1962 to 1995, comprising a total sample of 12,323 people, researchers concluded pornographic material puts one at increased risk of:

- ▶ Developing sexually deviant tendencies (31% increase in risk).
- ▶ Committing sexual offenses (22% increase in risk).
- ▶ Accepting rape myths (31% increase in risk).¹⁷

In 2004, data was collected from interviews with 271 women participating in a battered women's program. Pornography use by their partner significantly increased the odds of women being sexually abused by their abusers. When their abuser used both alcohol and pornography, the odds of sexual abuse increase by a factor of 3.2.¹⁸

Note: More stats are available from 2015 Pornography Statistics.

2c) Porn expands: It bleeds into the lives of those around us.

Read 2 Sam. 13:20-33. Points to emphasize:

- ▶ The rape destroyed Tamar and her future.
- ▶ The rape merely "angered" David—but his lack of action cascaded across the lives of many of his children.
- ▶ The rape incited Absalom to vengeance.
- ▶ Jonadab, the friend who encouraged Amnon to put his feelings for Tamar to action, was also the one who had to report to David that "only" Amnon was dead.

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16 Zillman and Bryant, "Effects of massive exposure"; "Shifting preferences"; "Pornography's impact"; Effects of prolonged consumption."

17 Jill Manning, "Hearing on pornography's impact on marriage & the family," U.S. Senate Hearing: Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Property Rights, Committee on Judiciary, Nov. 10, 2005. https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/manning_testimony_11_10_05.pdf (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

18 Janet Hinson Shoppe, "When words are not enough: The search for the effect of pornography on abused women," *Violence Against Women* 10 (2004): 56-72.

Porn is not just a solo activity in a darkened room, hurting nobody but yourself. Your porn use will impact those around you.

Single and want to be married? The next message will go into the neuroscience of porn, but in short it's rewiring your brain, and training you for variety, not monogamy.

In 2011 a study published in *The Journal of Sex Research* showed results from interviews with 782 U.S. college students:

- ▶ For men and women, the frequency of viewing pornography was correlated with more casual sexual relationships.
- ▶ For men, frequency of viewing pornography was correlated with a lower satisfaction with sex and relationships.
- ▶ For men and women, those who reported more types of pornography (videos, images, magazines, purchased videos, pay-per-view videos, books, telephone hotlines) also reported more intercourse partners, more casual sex partners, and younger age of first sexual intercourse.¹⁹

Neurologist Serge Stoleru has found that overexposure to erotic stimuli exhausts the sexual responses of normal, healthy young men.²⁰ (That means porn causes erectile dysfunction.)

What about spouses of porn users?

In a survey of 63 wives of self-identified sex addicts:

- ▶ 70% met most criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- ▶ 75% discovered evidence of the compulsive or addictive sexual behaviors themselves (as opposed to a planned disclosure on the part of a husband).
- ▶ 71% demonstrated a severe level of functional impairment in major areas of their lives.²¹

19 Elizabeth M. Morgan, "Association between young adults' use of sexually explicit materials and their sexual preferences, behaviors, and satisfaction," *Journal of Sex Research* 48 (2011): 520-530.

20 Judith Reisman, "The impotence pandemic," *WorldNetDaily*. Sept. 27, 2007. http://www.drjudithreisman.com/archives/2007/10/the_impotence_p_2.html (accessed Feb. 23, 2017).

21 Barbara A. Steffens and Robyn L. Rennie, "The traumatic nature of disclosure for wives of sexual addicts," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 247-267.

In 2002, the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reported the following as the most salient factors present in divorce cases:

- ▶ 68% of the divorces involved one party meeting a new lover over the Internet.
- ▶ 56% involved one party having “an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.”²²

And in many cases, the pornographers themselves are victims of their own behavior, if not outright victims of sex trafficking.

In 2008, Shelley Lubben, founder of the Pink Cross Foundation, reported:

- ▶ Dr. Sharon Mitchell confirms the STD prevalence in an interview with Court TV, in which she stated: “66% of porn performers have herpes, 12-28% have sexually transmitted diseases, and 7% have HIV.”
- ▶ Porn actress Erin Moore admitted, “the drugs we binged on were Ecstasy, Cocaine, Marijuana, Xanax, Valium, Vicodin and alcohol.”
- ▶ Former porn star Tanya Burleson said, “Guys are punching you in the face. You get ripped. Your insides can come out of you. It’s never ending. You’re viewed as an object — not as a human with a spirit. People do drugs because they can’t deal with the way they’re being treated.”²³

After analyzing top-selling pornographic content, 304 sex scenes were observed for both physical and verbal aggression:

- ▶ 88% of scenes contain physical aggression (spanking, gagging, slapping, etc.).
- ▶ 49% of scenes contain verbal aggression (primarily name-calling).²⁴

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22 Jonathan Dedmon, “Is the Internet bad for your marriage? Online affairs, pornographic sites playing greater role in divorces.” Press Release from The Dilenschneider Group, Inc., Nov. 14, 2002. <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/is-the-internet-bad-for-your-marriage-online-affairs-pornographic-sites-playing-greater-role-in-divorces-76826727.html> (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

23 Shelley Lubben, “Ex-porn star tells the truth about the porn industry,” *Covenant Eyes*, Oct. 28, 2008. <http://www.covenanteyes.com/2008/10/28/ex-porn-star-tells-the-truth-about-the-porn-industry> (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

24 Ana Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Chyng Sun, and Rachael Liberman, “Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update,” *Violence Against Women* 16 (Oct. 2010): 1065-1085.

3) So what's the solution?

3a) Repentance to God

God can and will bring healing, and He can and has used people's sin and repentance in amazing ways (see Rahab; Joshua 2, Matt. 1:5).

3b) Repentance to and healing with others

Accountability, via friendship, professional counseling, or both, is key. Jonadab was a terrible friend/accountability partner to Amnon, but a good one will bring healing.

- ▶ James 5:16
- ▶ Eccl. 4:9-12

Any church-sponsored recovery programs, such as Celebrate Recovery, should be called out here.

- ▶ *Note: Spouses of porn addicts will need healing as well. The ultimate goal is reconciliation in marriage, but given the traumatic impact of pornography, this cannot be as simple as forgive and forget, especially while the porn user is still trying to break free from the bonds of pornography. Provide access to the e-book Porn and Your Husband: A Recovery Guide for Wives as a starting point.*

3c) Technology solutions

For most people, the Internet is their primary access point to porn, both on desktop and on mobile phones. You need a technological solution to a technology-fed problem. Internet Accountability and Filtering are necessary components of any recovery—or to prevent pornography use in the first place.

- ▶ *Use this opportunity to introduce your church to your Covenant Eyes Community.*

Digital Childhood

Key passage: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25

We're in week 3 of a series talking about technology's impact on relationships. This week we'll be talking about its impacts on kids, especially early exposure to pornography, so if you have young children you may want to take them out of the room.

1) The Risks of Unmonitored Technology

Read Matthew 18:6.

Parents, when you let your kids use technology without guidance, you could be the one causing them to stumble.

According to psychologist Al Cooper, the Internet lends itself to temptations for three reasons:

- ▶ Tempting behaviors are affordable.
- ▶ They're accessible.
- ▶ They're anonymous.²⁵

Cooper was talking specifically about Internet pornography, but it's true of other temptations as well. Here are just a few temptations that are particularly relevant to kids and teens.

25 Al Cooper, *Cybersex: The Dark Side of the Force* (London: Brunner-Routledge, 2000).

2) Online Popularity Contests

We talked about this in Week 1 when we talked about pride, but many kids and teens build their self-worth out of how many likes they get on Instagram, Facebook, etc.

- ▶ According to the #Being13 Study conducted exclusively by CNN, some 13-year-olds check their social media accounts 100 times a day and are spending about nine hours a day using media for their enjoyment.
- ▶ The study went on to explore why teens felt the need to regulate their social media and what was found is highly indicative of a generation that is riddled with FOMO (fear of missing out) and FOLO (fear of living offline):
 - ▶ 61% of teens said they wanted to see if their online posts are getting likes and comments.
 - ▶ 36% of teens said they wanted to see if their friends are doing things without them.
 - ▶ 21% of teens said they wanted to make sure no one was saying mean things about them.²⁶

So what does the Bible say?

- ▶ Romans 12:2
- ▶ 1 Sam. 16:7

What can parents do?

- ▶ Be aware of what apps your kids are using. Ask them what they like about those apps. Use these conversations to help guide them into wise media use.
- ▶ Talk to your kids about the types of photos they post. Help them find the balance between spreading beauty and vain self-promotion.

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²⁶ Leah Swartz, Skyler Huff, and Jason Harper, *Getting to Know Gen Z: How the Pivotal Generation is Different from Millennials* (Barkley, Inc and FutureCast, January 2017).
<http://www.millennialmarketing.com/research-paper/getting-to-know-gen-z/> (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

3) Cyberbullying

Kids have always picked on each other, but the Internet allows for anonymous harassment or widespread public ridicule (e.g. one embarrassing snapchat can be spread across a school in minutes).

- ▶ 88% of teens who use social media have witnessed others being cruel on social network sites.²⁷
- ▶ 13% of teens aged 14-24 said someone showed them naked pictures of someone else they both knew, even though that person didn't say they could share the pictures.²⁸

So what does the Bible say?

- ▶ Prov. 6:16-19
- ▶ Eph. 4:29

What can parents do?

- ▶ Make sure your kids know basic online safety—30% of teens share passwords with friends or significant others.²⁹
- ▶ Walk kids through privacy settings on social networks.
- ▶ Stay up-to-date on popular apps and how they can be used to hurt others.

4) Pornography

Last week we talked about how pornography influences our thoughts and our relationships. This week we're going to focus on its chemical impact, and how it actually rewires the brain.

27 Amanda Lenhart, Mary Madden, Aaron Smith, Kristen Purcell, Kathryn Zickuhr, and Lee Rainie. "Teens, kindness and cruelty on social network sites. *Pew Internet and American Life Project*. Nov. 9, 2011. <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media.aspx> (Accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

28 Hughes, Sarah Anne, "Jamey Rodemeyer, bullied teen who made 'It Gets Better' video, commits suicide." *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/jamey-rodemeyer-bullied-teen-who-made-it-gets-better-video-commits-suicide/2011/09/21/gIQAVzxxkK_blog.html?utm_term=.e2bf1269c0a8 (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

29 Lenhart et al., "Teens, kindness, and cruelty"

4a) The neurochemistry of porn

When we watch porn, the following chemicals are triggered. (Note: you can learn more about these in *The Porn Circuit*):

- ▶ **Dopamine** activates reward circuitry and helps us remember the right response to a stimulus. In more plain English, it helps you focus on what feels good and makes you crave more.
- ▶ **Testosterone** increases sexual arousal and desire. People who watch porn and fantasize about sex are more likely to be turned on by everyday objects and modestly dressed people.
- ▶ **Oxytocin** and **vasopressin** help people bond to each other. They help parents bond to their babies, couples bond to each other during sex, and porn users bond to images and videos instead of their partners.³⁰

There are more chemicals at play, but the general idea is that your brain is designed so that you bond with your sexual partner. If your only partner is your spouse, you will form a strong bond with your spouse. But if you're bonding with porn, you're going to bond with images, and train yourself for variety. It's not impossible to rewire your brain, but it is difficult, because God created our brains to make it much harder than simply quitting cold-turkey. And when the viewers are kids, whose brains are still developing in the first place, it can completely destroy their sexuality before they even hit puberty.

4b) Kids, teens, and porn

A lot of parents say, "Not my child!" The harsh reality is, kids will be exposed to pornography—on the playground, at their friend's house, or even at home, watching Minecraft videos.

- ▶ 46% of teens say at least half of their friends view porn regularly.
- ▶ 49% of teens come across porn at least monthly. 37% seek it out at least monthly.
- ▶ When teens talk about porn, 53% discuss it in an accepting or encouraging way.

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³⁰ Sam Black, *The Porn Circuit: Understand Your Brain and Break Porn Habits in 90 Days*, 2013. <http://www.covenanteyes.com/science-of-porn-addiction-ebook/> (accessed Feb. 22, 2017).

- ▶ 67% of youth pastors say porn is a significant problem among teens in their church.³¹

5) So what should parents do?

5a) Integrate the Gospel into your life.

Read Deut. 6:4-9. Emphasize that the conversation was to be continuous, and that there were to be physical reminders, such as phylacteries.

- ▶ Take every possible moment to teach your kids your values...and that your offline values should extend to how you use the Internet as well.
- ▶ Set up real-world reminders for your kids. This may include:
 - ▶ Putting a basket in the hall for your kids to put devices in at night.
 - ▶ Having your kids sign a digital use contract.
 - ▶ Installing Covenant Eyes on all your family's devices.

Note: Use this opportunity to discuss your Covenant Eyes Community.

5b) Tell them a story.

Read Deut. 6:20-25. Emphasize that the laws were a reminder of Israel's history and a promise for the future (tie in Eph. 6:1).

- ▶ Be prepared to answer your kids' questions when they ask why they have so many rules about the Internet. Don't be scared to introduce them to the concept of pornography: you'd rather be the one in control of that conversation, rather than having them hear about it from friends or, worse, Google.
- ▶ Consider telling your kids some of your own story. Chances are, some of you parents are struggling with or have struggled with pornography. Be age-appropriate with what you tell them, but especially once you're free, your story could be the most powerful testimony that they, of all people, need to hear.

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³¹ Josh McDowell Ministry, *The Porn Phenomenon*.

Digital Friendships

Key Passage: 1 Cor. 13

We have spent this series taking a look at how technology can harm us and our relationships. To wrap this series up, we're going to take a look at the antidote to these risky behaviors: Accountability.

1) How the Internet has changed friendship.

One of the blessings of the Internet is that we can now keep in touch with people we haven't seen in years—high school friends, cousins, college roommates, etc. It's a fantastic, cost-effective way to stay in touch! But if we're not careful, our tendency can be to focus solely on surface-level interactions, and miss deep, genuine intimacy, or let inconsequential things ruin friendships.

- ▶ 68% of teen social media users have experienced drama online.³²
- ▶ 13% of Americans unfriended someone during the 2016 election due to politics.³³
- ▶ One study found that the average Facebook user has 155 friends, but would trust just four in a crisis.³⁴
- ▶ One journalist posits that online, we miss not only body language cues for friendship, but we also miss neurochemical interactions: oxytocin triggers when you give a hug in real life, but it doesn't trigger when you

32 Lenhart, "Teens, Technology and Friendships"

33 Daniel Cox and Robert P. Jones, "'Merry Christmas' vs. 'Happy Holidays': Republicans and Democrats are Polar Opposites," *prri.org*, Dec. 19, 2016. <http://www.prii.org/research/poll-post-election-holiday-war-christmas/> (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

34 Sarah Knapton, "Facebook users have 155 friends—but would trust just four in a crisis." *The Telegraph*, Jan. 20, 2016. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/12108412/Facebook-users-have-155-friends-but-would-trust-just-four-in-a-crisis.html> (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

type in “hug” in a text.³⁵

Long and short, we find ourselves better connected than ever... but have no more close friends than we did before.

What does the Bible say about friendship?

- ▶ Proverbs 17:17
- ▶ Eccl. 4:9-10

Doesn't sound much like your average Facebook friend, does it?

2) How accountability differs from other friendships.

We started with friendship on a general level because that's the basis for accountability. But accountability goes even further. Let's look at some more Scripture:

- ▶ John 15:12-13 – Friendship is self-sacrificial.
- ▶ Prov. 27:5-6 – Friendship involves tough love.

An accountability partner is a friend, ramped up. It's someone you trust to let into your life, not just to hang out but to be vulnerable with. It's a person who would rather have an uncomfortable conversation about sin patterns than let you wallow in them.

3) Traits of a good accountability partner.

Let's look more closely at the traits of a good accountability partner, focusing on a very familiar passage.

- ▶ 1 Cor 13:1-3 – An accountability partner truly loves you. Anyone can call out someone else on their sins; an accountability partner does it because they truly love you and want you to grow in Jesus.
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:4a – An accountability partner is patient and kind. This person

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³⁵ Suren Ramasubbu, “Friendship in the Time of Technology,” *The Huffington Post*, Aug. 13, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/suren-ramasubbu/friendship-in-the-time-of_b_7974934.html (accessed Feb. 27, 2017).

knows your weaknesses; he's willing to wait for you, and help you figure things out in your own time.

- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:4b-5a – An accountability partner is not envious or boastful, arrogant or rude. Specifically, he's not bragging that he's got it all together.
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:5b – An accountability partner doesn't force you to do things his way; he helps you figure out what works best for you.
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:5c – An accountability partner is not mad when you continue to have the same crisis, or keep calling at 3 a.m. in a panic. They'd rather you wake them up rather than fall into temptation again. (Now, your accountability partner is also a sinful human being, so don't abuse the privilege.)
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:6 – An accountability partner wouldn't brush off sins like they're no big deal, as many people do with, say, pornography. They will, however, speak truth into your life, and rejoice with you in your victories, no matter how small.
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:7 – You're probably going to lash out at your accountability partner, or simply ignore them at various points. Your accountability partner will still be there for you.
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:8-13 – It's true that Jesus is our ultimate authority, and the Holy Spirit is our built-in accountability partner... but our earthy accountability partners help mirror that. Here in this life, they know us as fully as we allow them to, and our love for each other should mirror Christ's love for the Church.

4) Practical applications of an accountability partner.

So how does this play out online? Here are just a few examples:

4a) Social media

If your accountability partner truly knows you, he'll know when you're being unnecessarily boastful or prideful on social media. Are you making yourself seem like the super-spouse or super parent on Facebook? Or maybe being unnecessarily gossipy, or causing dissention for the sake of argument, not of love? Your accountability partner has the right to call you out in a gentle, private

rebuke.

4b) Pornography

Porn is a huge lure, and if you've been looking at it for any length of time, you need help breaking free. Almost nobody successfully does without some form of external support. That's why we've started a Covenant Eyes Community, to help you connect with people who care and want you to break free from pornography. Internet Accountability sends a report of your Internet activity to your accountability partner, so that person can help you break free from this temptation—forever!