



# HOW PORNOGRAPHY HARMS

WHAT THE CHURCH NEEDS TO KNOW



**EFC**

The Evangelical  
Fellowship of Canada

**Uniting Evangelicals to bless Canada  
in the name of Jesus**

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# Introduction

**C**hildren, youth and adults are being exposed to violent and degrading pornography like never before. It is freely available, easily accessible and anonymous.

Pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry driven by huge profits, with incredible reach. Major porn website Porn Hub reports 92 million visits daily. It is estimated that 1 in 4 of all internet searches are for pornography.

Almost one in three teens and half of young adults encounter porn daily or weekly, by accident, without seeking it out. Almost one-fifth of practising Christians report that they are attempting to stop using pornography. What impact is this epidemic of pornography having on our lives and our society?

A growing body of research is pointing to the impact of pornography as a public health concern, affecting not just individuals, but Canadian society as a whole.

Those who use porn regularly become desensitized to what they are watching and begin to view more and more explicit and degrading material. Their perspective and relationships are affected. They become more likely to accept violence or coercion in sex as normal, believe women enjoy rape and are more likely to buy sex from prostituted women. Reports of rape and musings about rape by university students and on campuses across the country, and the sharing on social media of sexual images are some of the indicators that our culture is increasingly pornified.

Pornography is interconnected with other sexual exploitation issues, like prostitution and human trafficking. Pornography feeds the demand for paid sex, which funnels women into prostitution and fuels human trafficking. Pornography is made of trafficked women and children, and women and children are trafficked for use in porn.

Evangelicals engage on these issues out of a belief in the inherent dignity of each person and in the calling to care for those who are vulnerable.

This booklet provides an overview of this urgent topic. You will learn what exactly is going on with pornography today, why it matters, and how we can respond as Christians and as parents. Discussion questions are included to foster reflection and interaction, either as an individual or a small group.

The prevalence of pornography and its impact on individual lives and society as a whole is an issue that matters. It affects all of us in some way, but especially those who are vulnerable to the abuses of the industry, the individuals who use it and the people they encounter.



1





# Violent internet pornography is damaging our society

BY JULIA BEAZLEY

Over the last several years, as the EFC has researched, consulted and networked broadly on prostitution and human trafficking, we realized that these issues are part of a tangled web – a web that includes pornography. You just can't dig very deeply into any one of these areas without bumping into the others. They're all interconnected.

Pornography feeds the demand for paid sex and normalizes sexual exploitation. But beyond that, there's a wealth of research that shows some serious public health impacts associated with pornography – especially internet porn. Among these are the links between the use of internet porn and sexual violence, especially when it's viewed at younger ages. Viewing violent, degrading pornography shapes and influences what youth – boys and girls – see as acceptable sexual behaviours and attitudes.

Pornography today is far more violent and degrading than it was in the past. What is now mainstream in pornography is aggressive, violent and dehumanizing. The themes of dominating and humiliating women are common, and much of what is out there is steeped in hatred for women.

And it has never before been so readily accessible to children or adults. The internet feeds it into our homes and to our mobile devices 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in ever more violent and degrading forms. Today pornography is actually more difficult to avoid than it is to access.

But what pornography teaches about relationships and sexuality is dishonest, inaccurate and harmful. It teaches that sex is detached from intimacy, love, mutuality or respect. That it is impersonal and adversarial. So much of what is available at the click of a mouse or swipe of a finger teaches that violence in sex is normal and desirable.

In a 2016 submission to the parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women, we argued that a study of violence faced by young women and girls today must look at how the messages of online pornography are contributing.

We asked the federal government to study the public health impact of pornography and to take measures to restrict its harms, especially to children.

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**What pornography teaches about relationships and sexuality is dishonest, inaccurate and harmful**

## The brain on pornography

Our brain is moulded by learning and repeated behaviours. This mechanism, called neuroplasticity, describes how the brain forms new and strong connections: neurons that fire together, wire together. Watching pornography unleashes a chemical reaction that changes the wiring or connections in the brain.

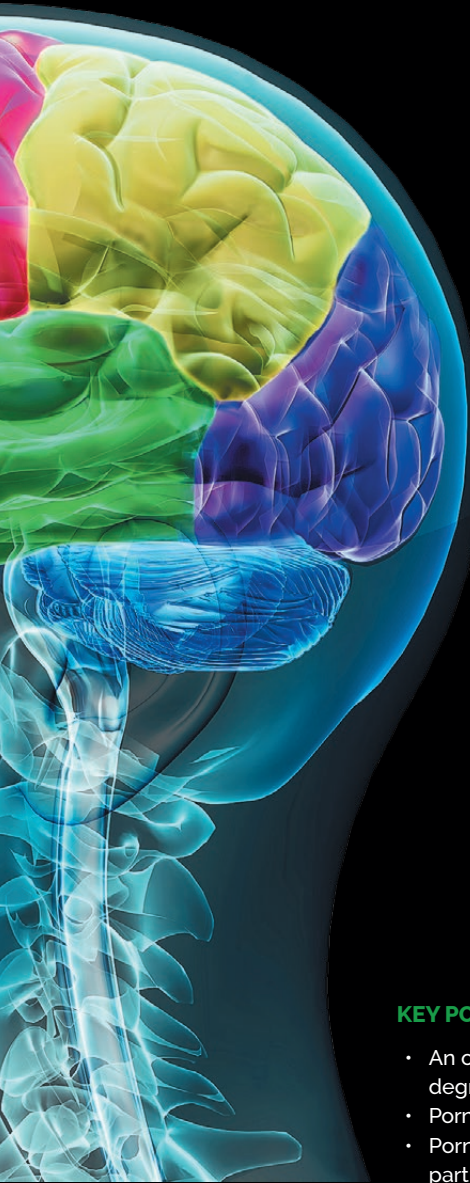
The prefrontal cortex acts as the executive control centre of the brain and moderates the reward circuit. It is the part of the brain that thinks ahead, predicts and weighs consequences, helps control impulses, and regulates pleasure seeking behaviour, but it doesn't fully mature until about age 25.

Pornography activates the reward circuitry of the brain, the engine in the brain that drives us to do things that are pleasurable. The neurotransmitter dopamine, known as the "wanting chemical," is the gas that fuels the engine. The brain releases dopamine in response to pleasurable things like food or sex, the same chemical released in response to alcohol or drugs. Sexual stimulation and orgasm offer the biggest natural surge of dopamine.

The reward circuit is in an area of the brain known as the primitive or feeling brain, and is fully developed by the teen years.



Repeated use of porn has a powerful influence on sexual conditioning, that is, how we become aroused. It leads to changes in sexual behaviours and preferences. It often leads to compulsive behaviour and can lead to addiction.



Teenage brains are uniquely vulnerable to the impact of pornography and addiction:

- Sensitization – addiction pathways are formed, creating a new normal in what feels good: what used to feel good doesn't anymore.
- Desensitization - the pleasure response is numbed, decreasing the production of and responsiveness to dopamine in the reward circuitry
- Hypofrontality – decreased connectivity in the prefrontal cortex leading to inhibition of control and executive decision making



With ongoing porn use, the pleasure response becomes numbed and desensitized. New and different images are sought out to trigger the pleasure response, leading to use of more hardcore porn.

**KEY POINTS**

- An online search for porn brings up violent and degrading images that no child can imagine
- Porn is becoming the primary sex educator of children
- Porn shapes attitudes toward women and is particularly formative at younger ages

# 1

## Discussion questions

1. Julia Beazley discusses the connections between pornography, prostitution and human trafficking. Were you surprised? Why or why not?
2. Beazley explores how pornography shapes and influences what youth see as acceptable behaviours and attitudes. How do you see media shaping the attitudes or behaviour of people around you? Do you notice an influence on your own attitudes or behaviour?
3. Read Luke 6:45 (ESV): "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Think about and discuss this passage. How does the media (print, tv, video, etc.) you are consuming shape you and the people you love? How can we better guard our hearts and minds?
4. "What pornography teaches about relationships and sexuality is dishonest, inaccurate and harmful," says Beazley. "It teaches that sex is detached from intimacy, love, mutuality or respect. That it is impersonal and adversarial... that violence in sex is normal and desirable." In what ways have you noticed these messages in society?
5. Consider the lies about sex, relationships and pornography that we hear and see. How can we respond to these false ideas in a constructive and compassionate way, and still protect our youth and children? Consider 1 Corinthians 13 and how it describes love. Is there help to be found in that passage, both for our response and for a true definition of what love is?
6. As Christians, one of our fundamental beliefs is that every person is created by God, made in His image and loved by Him (Genesis 1:26-27; John 3:16). This gives each person's life inherent dignity and worth. How does it change our interaction with others if we treat them as though they are loved by God and bear His image? How is this different than treating someone as an object for our gratification?

2



# Parenting in the age of porn

BY JULIA BEAZLEY

**A**s parents, it is critical that we be talking with our kids about sex and sexuality and about pornography. And these need to be ongoing open conversations, not one-time events. While few parents look forward to discussing these topics with their kids, these may be some of the most important and formative conversations we have, and the reality is that these conversations need to start earlier than most parents would think.

Pornography has changed. The material kids are being exposed to online is entirely different than what they might have seen even a decade ago.

It is almost impossible for kids to avoid being exposed to porn in some way. As Dr. Gail Dines, founder and president of Culture Reframed, says, internet porn and mass media have become the primary sex educator of our kids.

A young boy or girl who is curious about sex today is likely to go to the internet for answers. They're probably expecting to find nudity or images of people having sex, but they are not prepared for the sexual violence and cruelty they discover.

Kids who are raised on pornography are being robbed of the ability to connect, relate and be intimate in real life. They are learning what to expect in sexual intimacy with partners and growing up with distorted and unrealistic expectations of themselves and their sexual partners.

Discussions with our kids about sexuality should flow out of our faith. Our bodies and our sexuality are made by design. God calls us to treat each other with respect, not as objects or playthings for another's gratification or profit. Pornography is a distortion of our sexuality that is harmful and dishonest.

We need to give our children accurate, honest information grounded in our faith. It is our role to be prepared to answer questions and satisfy their very natural curiosity. Christian parents yearn to be the safe places for our kids to come with their questions. Parents are the best sex educators for our kids, not pornography or mass media. If we don't talk with them, they will learn from the internet or their peers.

The most important action parents can take to counter the influence of pornography is to talk to their kids. There are good



**We need to give our children accurate, honest information grounded in our faith.**

resources to help facilitate those conversations. See a few suggestions for good books, below. As well, parents can put in place accountability with electronics, e.g. a household rule that electronic devices with internet access must stay in common areas or internet filtering/monitoring.

## Resources for parents

- *Good Pictures, Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids* by Kristen Jensen and Gail Poyner, Debbie Fox (Illustrator)
- *Good Pictures, Bad Pictures Jr* by Kristen Jensen, Debbie Fox (Illustrator)
- *How to Talk to Your Kids about Pornography* by Educate and Empower Kids
- *30 Days of Sex Talks* by Educate and Empower Kids
- [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)
- [www.parents.culturereframed.org](http://www.parents.culturereframed.org)
- [www.protectchildren.ca](http://www.protectchildren.ca)
- [www.protectyoungminds.org](http://www.protectyoungminds.org)
- [www.fightthenewdrug.org](http://www.fightthenewdrug.org)
- [www.educateempowerkids.org](http://www.educateempowerkids.org)

NOTE: THE EFC DOES NOT NECESSARILY ENDORSE ALL CONTENT ON EXTERNAL SITES.

# It's time Canada takes the lead in protecting children from online pornography

BY JULIA BEAZLEY

**O**ver the last several years, the EFC has made fighting prostitution and trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation a high priority, and much of my time has been dedicated to researching and speaking about these issues.

Being anti-porn is not about being prudish, or anti-sex. In fact, if anyone is guilty of being anti-sex, it is the pornography industry that is shaping the sexuality of a generation with its violent depictions of human sexuality that are devoid of any sense of intimacy.



We have moved well past the point where we can consider pornography simply a matter of personal choice or preference, because our children are being exposed to violent and degrading material when they lack the capacity to make such a choice or process what they are seeing.

The material that our children are being exposed to is an entirely different creature than what they might have stumbled across a generation ago.

As sociologist Dr. Gail Dines (author of *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*, 2011) says, “mainstream pornography found on free internet sites is not yesterday’s *Playboy* – rather it is a multi-billion dollar industry of cruel, body-punishing acts of making hate to women. This is the world your average boy is catapulted into when he types ‘porn’ into Google.”


To be clear, the pornography industry has never respected women or treated them justly – but at least the product men were consuming even a decade ago, in the mainstream anyway, didn’t seem to be dripping with contempt, even hatred for women.

The average age of exposure to pornography today is between 11 and 13 years of age, a time when the sexual template of most children is a blank slate. For many, their formative sexual experience will now be with the material they encounter online – material which teaches them that the primary, if not sole, value of a girl or woman is as an object for sexual pleasure.

Now more than ever, pornography dehumanizes women. In interviews men and boys who regularly use pornography will make distinctions between their use of porn and sex with “real women” or “real girls,” who want things from them and who are too much work. There is an “othering” of women in pornography; that teaches boys and men that those women are somehow qualitatively different in their value from the women in their lives. And, if they are other, less than, less real, then their use and abuse seems justifiable.

Pornography teaches entitlement – the idea that sex is a need, and that men (boys) have a right to it on their terms at any time; which legitimizes the buying of sex and leads society to accept that there should be a class of women made available for purchase.

Porn feeds the demand for paid sex – which is what funnels women into prostitution; because the women and girls in guys’ lives won’t allow or participate in the brutal sex acts portrayed in porn, and prostituted women are the one group of women who can’t say no. Men consume pornography and seek out the sex they believe other men are having and feel they too are entitled to have. As violence and degradation in pornography have become



**The average age of exposure to pornography today is between 11 and 13 years of age, a time when the sexual template of most children is a blank slate.**

commonplace, this is mirrored in the lived experiences of women in prostitution.

And all of this fuels sex trafficking. Increased demand for paid sex always leads to an increase in trafficking. Trafficking victims are exploited in pornography, and filmed sex acts are sometimes used as a means of coercion and control. Porn is also used to groom and train trafficking victims. It's time we start, as former MP Joy Smith says, connecting the dots.

As a mother of a nine year old boy, I sometimes feel panicked. I think the fact that I am immersed in issues of exploitation only intensifies that panic. I wonder, even with my eyes wide open, will I be able to protect him? I want him to grow up with a healthy understanding of his own sexuality, rooted in deep respect for himself, and in deep respect for women. And so even at this age, I try to talk with him as openly as I can. But I am painfully aware that I can't be everywhere, at all times.

As a society, we are only beginning to see the impact of porn on our boys and men, with more and younger men addicted to pornography, acting out sexually, and experiencing sexual dysfunction in early adulthood.

We have to get past the awkwardness and discomfort and fear of treading on our kids' privacy and autonomy and make sure we are aware, engaged and talking to them about it.

It is time for Canada to give serious consideration to measures that will help prevent children from accessing pornographic content online. The UK, for example, has passed legislation and is developing a regulatory system that will require internet service providers to put meaningful age verification on their sites. Canada should also consider requiring internet service providers to block pornographic content by default, while still allowing adults wishing to access pornographic material to opt in. This is not about censorship. Adults would still be able to watch porn. But the default position would be one that would protect children who lack the developmental maturity to handle the material from accessing it, whether by accident or by intent.

Some argue that filters will never catch everything, or that they'll catch too much, and there is no doubt any such filter would have to be quite sophisticated. But we have got to err on the side of protecting our children.

Filters won't be the only answer – they can't and must not spare us as parents, professionals and educators from having to engage

**We have to get past the awkwardness and discomfort and fear of treading on our kids' privacy and autonomy and make sure we are aware, engaged and talking to them about it.**

– but they will be a critical tool in the toolbox. We need both a legislative and public health approach in order to effectively address the deleterious effects of pornography on our young people.

If we as parents, professionals and lawmakers fail to address this, we risk a society where boys learn from pornography at ever younger ages that women are to be objectified, humiliated, dominated, degraded and worse. We risk crippling generations of boys relationally and sexually, and placing generations of girls in increased danger of sexual violence and exploitation.

**We risk crippling generations of boys relationally and sexually, and placing generations of girls in increased danger of sexual violence and exploitation.**

# 2

## Discussion questions

1. Isaiah 61:1 (ESV) tells us that the Spirit of the Lord "has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives." Who do you think the captives might be with respect to pornography and issues of sexual exploitation? What can be done to help free them? What role might we play?
2. Dr. Gail Dines refers to current mainstream porn as cruel acts of "making hate to women." We know that the Bible teaches that each person is made in the image of God and loved by God. This belief fosters and encourages mutual respect between men and women. How can we actively counter the way pornography degrades and humiliates women and fosters hatred toward them?
3. Pornography communicates the idea of entitlement in sexual activity, rather than the self-giving, sacrificial love described in Scripture. Where do you encounter those different messages around you, day to day? Beazley points out these negative and untrue messages are particularly damaging to young people as they shape their views about sexuality. Is there a greater role for the Church to play in communicating a healthy view of sex?
4. Pornography consumption leads to desensitization, meaning pornography users generally consume porn that is more and more hardcore over time. The Bible talks about the progression of sin and becoming hardened by

the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). Think about a time when you may have witnessed or experienced in your own life this spreading of sin. In your experience or observation, what stops this progression? How can community and other Christians help?

**How can we have these discussions in a healthy and open way?**

5. Julia Beazley emphasizes the need to talk about healthy sexuality in our churches and with our children. In what ways do these discussions happen in your small group, church or family? What keeps us from having these discussions? How can we have these discussions in a healthy and open way?
6. It can be hard for some of us to step into a public discussion that is often framed as limiting the rights of other people, in this case, viewing pornography. What is our role as a society in setting limits? Why should we be involved in trying to limit porn consumption by other people's children? What does our faith say about our responsibility to those around us? Are you comfortable in this role? Why or why not?

3



# Our big, big pornography problem

As Canadians access online pornography more and more – and at younger and younger ages – we need to understand the enormity of the problem to begin to find a solution.

**T**he statistics are staggering. Average age of first exposure to internet pornography: 11 years old. Number of websites devoted to pornography: 4.2 million.

Pornography's accessibility – available with just a click or swipe – and its affordability – free to those who know how to find it – adds to the enormity of the problem. So does its highly addictive nature.

Christians access online pornography to disturbing degrees. In fact, statistics show the use of pornography by regular church attenders mirrors that of the general population. Covenanteyes.com, an internet accountability and filtering system, reports 50 per cent of all Christian men and 20 per cent of all Christian women say they are addicted to pornography.

Addiction to pornography is a particularly disturbing dimension of this issue for teens, as more and more young people are exposed to online pornography at younger and younger ages. Experts point to the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine in the brains of teenagers when they engage in stimulating or potentially addictive activities like viewing pornography. The brains of teenagers are particularly vulnerable to addiction and rewiring because their brains have not yet fully developed, creating a vicious cycle of addiction that could negatively impact a teen's sexuality for life.

Exposure to pornography is associated with:

- poor concentration
- low motivation
- depression
- social anxiety
- negative self-perception
- erectile dysfunction
- decreased interest in sex with a partner
- more forgiving attitudes toward violence against women and increased comfort with the idea of rape
- increased likelihood to have an affair.

**"It's time for us to address internet pornography for the lie that it is – a tsunami of sexualized, violent images meant to entrap our children and teens into believing that this is normal sexual behaviour. Pornography is one of the greatest negative influences in today's culture. We need to take action by addressing this as a public health issue."**

—GLEN DYNE GERRARD, DIRECTOR OF DEFEND DIGNITY

# Pornography — by the numbers



# 49%

OF CANADIANS THINK PORN IS MORALLY ACCEPTABLE (COMPARED TO 34% OF AMERICANS)

# 3x

PRACTICING CHRISTIANS ARE 3 TIMES LESS LIKELY TO USE PORN

# 66%

OF CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS THINK VIEWING PORN IS MORALLY ACCEPTABLE

# 19%

OF PRACTICING CHRISTIANS ARE CURRENTLY TRYING TO STOP USING PORN



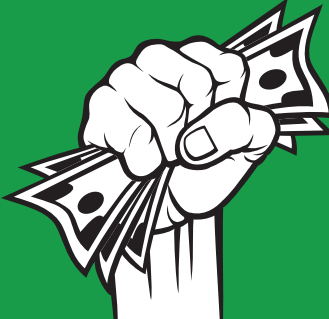
# 1 in 4

INTERNET SEARCHES ARE FOR PORN



# 36%

OF THE INTERNET IS PORN



# \$97 BILLION

ESTIMATED REVENUE OF THE PORN INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE (WITH THE U.S. AT \$13 BILLION)

# 21%

OF TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS WHO WANT TO STOP USING PORN HAVE SOMEONE HELP THEM AVOID IT



PORN HUB REPORTED THESE FIGURES FOR 2018:

**92**  
MILLION

WEBSITE VISITS DAILY (WORLDWIDE)

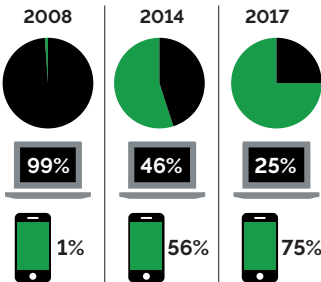
**207,000**

PORN VIDEOS VIEWED PER MINUTE

**57,750**

INTERNET SEARCHES FOR PORN EVERY MINUTE

MOBILE GROWTH ON PORNHUB



**29%**

OF TEENS (13-17) COME ACROSS PORN DAILY OR WEEKLY, WITHOUT SEEKING IT OUT

**48%**

OF YOUNG ADULTS (18-34) COME ACROSS PORN DAILY OR WEEKLY, WITHOUT SEEKING IT OUT

**32%**

OF TEENS (13-17) SAY ALL OR MOST OF THEIR FRIENDS REGULARLY VIEW PORN

**49%**

OF YOUNG ADULTS (18-34) SAY ALL OR MOST OF THEIR FRIENDS REGULARLY VIEW PORN

IN THE BEST-SELLING PORN VIDEOS (2010 STUDY):



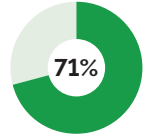
**88%**

OF THE PORN SCENES SHOWED PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

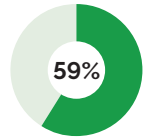
**48.7%**

OF THE PORN SCENES SHOWED VERBAL AGGRESSION

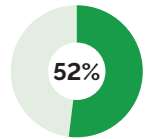
MOST EFFECTIVE RESOURCES FOR DEALING WITH PORN USE:



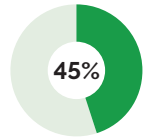
PERSONAL COUNSELLING



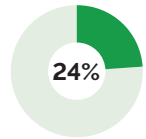
INTERNET MONITORING/FILTERING



ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS



MENTORS



TOPIC-SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDY

SOURCES: BARNIA, PORN PHENOMENON 2016; BARNIA, TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS USE PORN MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE; ARACIUS DATA, CANADIANS' MORAL COMPASS SET DIFFERENTLY FROM THAT OF OUR NEIGHBOURS TO THE SOUTH, 2016; ALJ BRIDGES, R. WOSNIETTER, E. SCHARREER, C. SUN, R. LIBERMAN, AGGRESSION AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN BEST-SELLING PORNOGRAPHY VIDEOS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS UPDATE (2010)

# Accountability relationships

**“I am convinced that pervasive internet pornography has become the greatest barrier to faith in Christ, and we simply must do something about it.”**

—JOSH MCDOWELL, CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST AND AUTHOR

**P**eople go to pornography for many reasons – it can be driven by loneliness, boredom or as a way of coping with stress. One of the ways to fight pornography is through accountable relationships. As Covenant Eyes states, “Porn affects everyone. But it can be beaten through the power of accountable relationships.”

John Wesley found that meeting regularly in small groups helped followers of Christ to look out for each other. Wesley’s club at Oxford had a list of questions they asked themselves in private devotions, for self-examination, as well as questions to ask one another in a small group.

## SAMPLE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

1. How have you experienced God in your life this week?
2. What temptations have you faced since our last meeting? How did you respond? Which spiritual disciplines has God used to lead you toward holiness of heart and life?
3. Are there worries or other issues you are facing?
4. Is there any sin you would like to pray about? Have any of your financial decisions lacked integrity this week? Have you consumed sexually explicit material?
5. Is there anything you’ve held back from God that you need to surrender?
6. What are you doing to improve your walk with Christ?
7. How can I help you this week?

**“Internet filters don’t work for most people over the age of 13. . . . When I started Covenant Eyes 16 years ago, I had two teenage sons. Instead of legalistically blocking them, I wanted something that would start a conversation, an accountability record. . . . Filters can’t replace relationships for keeping people accountable.”**

—RON DEHAAS, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF COVENANT EYES

SOURCES: QUESTIONS ADAPTED AND EXCERPTED FROM JOHN WESLEY’S HOLY CLUB QUESTIONS; NEIL COLE, CULTIVATING A LIFE FOR GOD (CMA RESOURCES:1999); ED STETZER, ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS POST AT CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM, 2008

## 3

**Discussion questions**

1. Which of these statistics on pornography surprised you the most? Is the problem greater or smaller than you thought?
2. Christians also are accessing and addicted to porn in significant numbers. When have you heard pornography talked about well in churches and ministry organizations? Why is it so important for this issue to be openly addressed in Christian circles?
3. What kind of environment or relationship would need to exist, do you think, for someone to feel comfortable talking about pornography with other Christians?
4. Read James 5:16. The Bible talks about confessing our sin to one another and repentance. In what ways is confession a part of your life or your church life? Do you think there's a greater reluctance to confess to porn use than other sins? Why or why not?
5. How can we bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2)? What does redemption and grace look like in this area?



4



# Responding to bondage

Things are black and white with *50 Shades of Grey*\*

BY SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE

**W**hen our family vacationed in Cozumel in 2015, my 17-year-old was appalled at how many women were reading *50 Shades of Grey* by the pool. “That’s like a guy watching porn in the open!”

This book series has become mainstream. After \$100 million in book sales, and the highest advance ticket sales of any R-rated movie ever, the story of a naïve 21-year-old being introduced to a world of sexual submission by a 25-year-old billionaire (yes, billionaire – the series is not exactly known for its realistic plotting) has made bondage fantasies seem normal.

It’s easy to dismiss this series as evidence of how sinful our society has become. But sexual deviance has always been with us. Something has made this series take off. Before we can speak into it, we need to understand the root of its appeal.

In her book *The Fantasy Fallacy: Exposing the Deeper Meaning Behind Sexual Thoughts* (W Publishing Group, 2012), Shannon Ethridge shows how the root of our fantasies often speaks directly about an unmet heart need – and illuminates our particular brokenness. If we get rid of the whips and chains from this story, what is the root appeal to women? A strong man rescuing a young woman adrift in the world.

I remember being 20 and feeling alone and scared. I had a multitude of decisions in front of me. I was on my own. The idea of a strong, confident man who would swoop in and take charge would have been awfully alluring. We don’t have to do anything, decide anything, even think anything. We just have to feel. To frantic multitaskers, that’s pure intoxication.

Then there’s the allure of vulnerability. Sex is not supposed to be solely physical. We’re supposed to truly “know” each other when we make love. When we take sex outside of the marriage context, we lose the commitment and therefore the emotional and spiritual intimacy. The physical is all we have left. Then, anything goes.

The fear of being alone, the yearning for intimacy, and the replacing of that intimacy with someone else being in control – those

“That’s like a guy watching porn in the open!”

# 51

NUMBER OF LANGUAGES *50 SHADES OF GREY* HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO  
THEGUARDIAN.COM

\* This article was first published in *Faith Today* (March/April 2015)

are all things God warned us about in Genesis 3:16: “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” It’s not surprising we’re seeing it acted out on such a large scale.

Here’s where things get really ugly. God created our physical sexual response to be paired with a committed marriage relationship. When women (or men) start reading erotica, we’re pairing sexual arousal with something other than a spouse. We’ve already seen that large-scale social experiment go awry with pornography. Italian researchers have found that porn use is the leading cause of sexual dysfunction among men.

Now, erotica is doing the same thing for women. Arousal is paired with fantasy, not relationship, making it more difficult to achieve arousal in marriage. You’re not making love to your husband – you’re using him while your mind is elsewhere.

If we have to fantasize to perform, then it’s only a small step to acting out those fantasies, leading to relationships that are degrading and abusive. A study out of Michigan State University found that women who read the series were more likely to have abusive partners, binge drink and suffer from eating disorders.

How should the Church respond? First, address the root needs. Churches need to major in authentic community with real discipleship and accountability, rather than just being an intellectual or social club. Raise up men to step up to the plate and act responsibly. Start with the young men in your church who seem to be adrift. Help women recognize that books like *50 Shades of Grey* are just as much porn as what their husbands might be viewing online.

Then let’s be vocal about healthy sexuality. There are no shortcuts on the road to true intimacy. Let’s preserve the promise of a great sex life that doesn’t need erotica by the bedside, handcuffs on the bedposts or something requiring batteries in a drawer. Intimacy is the best aphrodisiac. When I did my surveys for *The Good Girl’s*

*Guide to Great Sex* (Zondervan, 2012), I found that the women who enjoyed sex most were those who felt the most spiritually intimate with their husbands. And that’s not grey. That’s black and white.

**There are no shortcuts on the road to true intimacy.**

**“50 Shades of Grey is a story of abuse, it’s a story of violence against women. It kind of rebrands violence as romance. And what concerns us is in a society where 1 in 4 women are sexually abused we have a film that is eroticizing, glorifying and basically legitimizing violence against women.”**

—GAIL DINES, SOCIOLOGIST AND ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY ACTIVIST





## The dangers of pornography

Steve Arterburn, founder of New Life Ministries, gives three reasons why pornography is the greatest threat facing Christians today:

### 1. Porn always gets worse

The longer a person is involved in pornography, the more likely they are to move into a genre they used to think was detestable or perverse.

### 2. Porn prevents sanctification

When a person is addicted to pornography, they have lost the desire to be sanctified.

### 3. Porn kills intimacy

Pornography destroys intimacy with God, a spouse and others.

SOURCE: SETFREESUMMIT.ORG/MONDAY/  
PORNOGRAPHY-IN-THE-CHURCH-STEVE-ARTERBURN/

# 4

## Discussion questions

1. Sheila Wray Gregoire talks about how sexual deviance has always been with us, but that something has made the *50 Shades of Grey* series take off. What changes do you see in our culture or values that might be making people more comfortable with this kind of sexual activity or relationship?
2. What do you think are the unmet heart needs and brokenness that pornography meets? Do you think people's needs or brokenness are changing over time? How can we pursue healing in these areas as individuals, small groups and churches?
3. Gregoire says, "Churches need to major in authentic community with real discipleship and accountability." How can we nurture authentic community, discipleship and accountability in our relationships, small groups and churches? Is there something specific that you could do to help bring this about?
4. Galatians 5:16-17 talks about warring within ourselves. We all struggle with temptation of some kind. How can we support and encourage one another?
5. What benefits can you see from regularly meeting with two or three people who are godly, wise, honest and trustworthy? How could you establish those kinds of relationships, in order to give and receive support in times of struggle with temptation?

Next  
steps

## What you can do

- **Pray**
- **Talk to your kids**
- **Offer grace and build in accountability** in your family, small group, church and among your friends.
- **Start a conversation.** Challenge the public discourse about pornography.
- **Raise awareness in your community,** e.g. by hosting a Reveal forum on pornography with Defend Dignity and the EFC or asking your local school board to provide information for parents and educators on the effects of online pornography.
- **Ask local businesses and libraries** that offer free Wi-Fi to include an internet filter.
- **Contact your Member of Parliament to ask:**
  - Parliament to implement ways to minimize the public health impact of pornography
  - For pornography sites to be restricted to adults, available on an opt-in basis for adults
  - For pornography sites to be required to put in place meaningful age verification
  - For mandatory warning messages on pornography sites, e.g. mentioning connection between heavy porn use and erectile dysfunction.
- **Ask the Justice Minister** to encourage the enforcement of Canadian child pornography laws and obscenity laws in order to limit images of youth who appear to be under 16 years of age and the most violent images.



## Learn more

### WEBSITES

[www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)  
[www.culturereframed.org](http://www.culturereframed.org)  
[www.defenddignity.ca](http://www.defenddignity.ca)  
[www.educateempowerkids.org](http://www.educateempowerkids.org)  
[www.fightthenewdrug.org](http://www.fightthenewdrug.org)  
[www.integrityrestored.com](http://www.integrityrestored.com)  
[www.pornharmresearch.com](http://www.pornharmresearch.com)  
[www.protectchildren.ca](http://www.protectchildren.ca)  
[www.protectyoungminds.org](http://www.protectyoungminds.org)  
[www.theporneffect.com](http://www.theporneffect.com)

### BOOKS

- *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age* by Jonathan Grant
- *He Restoreth My Soul: Understanding and Breaking the Chemical and Spiritual Chains of Pornography Addiction Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ* by Donald L. Hilton Jr.
- *Restored: True Stories of Love and Trust After Porn* by Matt and Cameron Fradd
- *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* by Norman Doidge
- *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* by Gary Wilson
- *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal* by Barbara Steffens

### EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AT [WWW.TED.COM/TALKS](http://WWW.TED.COM/TALKS)

Dr. Gail Dines – Growing Up in a Pornified Culture  
Ran Gavrieli – Why I Stopped Watching Porn  
Gary Wilson – The Great Porn Experiment  
Philip Zimbardo – The Demise of Guys

### HELP FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH PORN TEMPTATION OR ADDICTION

[www.fortifyprogram.org](http://www.fortifyprogram.org)  
[www.journeycanada.org](http://www.journeycanada.org)  
[www.rebootnation.org](http://www.rebootnation.org)

NOTE: THE EFC DOES NOT NECESSARILY ENDORSE ALL CONTENT ON EXTERNAL SITES.



## Conclusion

**P**ornography's impact is widely felt in our culture, in our churches, in our homes. Pornography is shaping our views of one another, our purpose, our worth and it impacts our interactions with each other.

Sexuality is a gift from God. It is not meant to be distorted by violence, humiliation or self-centred entitlement.

We are called to uphold human dignity and worth, not to use people for our own gratification or reduce them to objects.

Pornography is sexual exploitation. Its production involves human trafficking and it fuels the demand for prostitution. We are also called to seek justice and care for the vulnerable.

Let us be a people who repent and seek redemption, who live in community together to support and encourage one another, who care for the vulnerable and seek justice. The Christian community has stood up together before and helped stop problems like pornography that hurt individuals and society. We can do it again.



**Our mission**

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada exists to unite Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus.

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*Uniting Evangelicals to bless Canada  
in the name of Jesus*



RELIGIOUS  
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CARE FOR THE  
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