



# Dark Addictions Need the Light

By Rev. Ryan J. Ogrodowicz

The internet has flooded us with easy access to pornography. Just a few clicks of a button lead to innumerable free and legal sites of sexual graphics in which the heart and mind can indulge. And it's easy to hide. Outward signs marking the alcoholic or drug abuser are absent in the porn addict, making the sin harder to detect. Pornography, then, is an addictive sin met with little resistance.

Don't make the mistake of thinking pornography isn't an addiction, or that it doesn't cause physical damage. Studies show that extensive exposure to pornography arouses the brain in ways resembling an addict's response to cocaine and heroin combined. This, in turn, creates a greater tolerance that drives the user to look for more graphic images to produce the same sensation. There is a difference, however, between drug and porn addiction in that drug users increase quantity to get the desired effect. Porn addicts, however, need novelty, something new and different that can lead to looking at unspeakable and even illegal images.<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say, all of this does great damage to singles and married people alike. For spouses, no one wants to be married to someone who constantly lusts after another person. They feel betrayed and violated. Single people fare no better. All the mental changes to neurological pathways result in stimulation over images instead of flesh and blood people. This means addicts have a harder time relating to real people and building meaningful relationships. After all, the brain has been trained to become aroused at pictures, not people.

### Still think pornography is harmless?

Christ addresses this when He says "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Highlighting the danger, He adds "if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away... it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:27-30). Sexual temptation is so powerful that God says it can drag someone right out of the kingdom and into hell—an outcome worse than self-mutilation.

### So what's the solution?

Blocking software, accountability partners, a computer in a public space—these things can provide some assistance, but apart from Christ such efforts are futile. We must know our enemy. In the Lord's Prayer we pray "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Note how close the words "temptation" and "evil" are to one another. With every temptation there is real evil at work and we are powerless to stop it. No amount of human will-power and strength can defend against the onslaught of the devil, world and our own sinful nature. Temptation must be met with a power outside of us, the gospel that is the "power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). The power of God's forgiveness is the remedy for every sick sinner caught up in a transgression. Therefore, if confessing sin and receiving forgiveness is the answer, then hiding sin is a surefire way to

exacerbate the problem. The devil loves darkness, but hates the light. The sinful flesh hates the light and flees to the cover of darkness where sin can fester and rot. Keeping sins private may seem like a way of avoiding shame and embarrassment, but it's just what the devil wants—for you to keep your sins hidden from yourself, even from God.

The Psalmist speaks about containing sin. "When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long... I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not cover my iniquity; I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin'" (Psalm 32:4-5). From decaying and groaning to receiving God's mercy and healing, the Psalmist confesses and receives the grace and absolution God promises.

But the news gets better. Not only does God promise you absolution in Christ, He tells you *where* you can hear it, and this is vital. Your pastor, a called minister of Christ, is charged to forgive you, the repentant sinner. Your pastor is God's man working under His authority and divine command to absolve those crushed, burdened, and looking for grace. This means you know exactly where to go when temptation hits. No guesswork and confusion; just go to the pastor and hear what Christ charges him to say: that you are forgiven for the sake of Jesus and that you can depart in peace. There is tremendous comfort in hearing your sins cannot kill you because you are justified and cleansed in Christ, and we mustn't tire of hearing this message. Take advantage of confession and absolution, in which we are free to bring our sins into His light and receive His peace. Hear the gospel that is the true balm for the wounded conscience—the consolation of knowing the very sins we struggle with have been taken care of by Jesus.

Temptations are sure to come; evil never takes a break. Sexual addiction is powerful, but during the strife you know where you can go and what you will receive. Come into the light. Confess boldly again and again. Receive the gospel of Jesus, who has overcome your sin, temptation and even death. Pornography is easy access to sin. Absolution is easy and free access to forgiveness and everlasting life!

<sup>1</sup> See "The New Narcotic" at <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/10/10846/>, accessed 2/13/14.

Rev. Ryan J. Ogradowicz is the pastor of Victory in Christ Lutheran Church located in Newark, Texas. He can be reached at [pastor@viccla.org](mailto:pastor@viccla.org)

