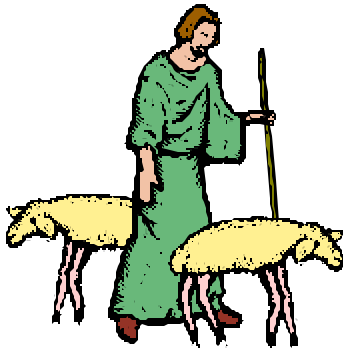


THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

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Are You Addicted?

By Robert Jackson

For the first time in human history, we have a medium that is totally unrestricted and knows no bounds. All previous forms of communication were limited or at least had some element of control. Books, radio and television can be controlled in some fashion, by whatever authority exists. The Internet, on the other hand, is a completely different scenario. Individuals can say or do whatever they want, cloaked in anonymity. Web sites open, and if efforts are made to shut them down, can be moved outside the borders of a governing authority, where there is no control. Very few countries have any control over what their citizens can see or do while on the Internet.

This has allowed the worst of human nature to proliferate. While a person is connected to the Internet, they can be barraged by all sorts of filth. Every single sexual perversion known to man (and new ones are regularly being invented) is not only available, it is pervasive. Read your email and you will probably see spam touting porn web sites. It is nearly impossible to escape and still retain Internet connectivity. In a short period of time, the Internet has become the most exploited instrument of perversion ever known to man.

Pornography is rampant because it caters to the basest human lusts. Pornography is more addicting than cocaine! This is because of the way the human mind is wired. God designed our minds so that at the moment of sexual release, we are imprinted with whatever we see. That process is supposed to bond us to our mates. With pornography, we become bonded to a fantasy. Just looking at pornography causes chemicals to be released that change the way our minds operate!

In the past, pornography was limited. So called "soft porn"—magazines like "Playboy" and "Penthouse" did not have anywhere near the effect that hard core images and full-motion video clips can have on us.

Internet pornography brings in more revenue than the combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises. The size of the porn industry in the United States is over \$12 billion! The term "sex" is the number one search engine request. According to their online searching habits, people want "sex" more than they want "games," "music," "travel," "jokes," "cars," "jobs," "weather" and "health" combined. "Porn", "porno", "erotica", "erotic stories" and "xxx" are all in

the top 20 search terms^{II}.

The National Council on Sexual Addiction Compulsivity estimated that 6%-8% of Americans are sex addicts, which is 16 million-21.5 million people.^{III} That is nearly the entire population of California!

But we are Christians! Does this problem affect us? Absolutely! At a recent Promise Keeper's convention, two-thirds of attendees indicated that they had viewed pornography in the last year. Sexual addiction is growing fastest among professionals—doctors, lawyers and **ministers!** Additionally, over 28% of people viewing pornography are women. Absolutely, this problem affects the body of Christ!

How does Addiction Progress?

There are five stages to the disease process

Early Exposure

Just like the alcoholic cannot become an alcoholic until he has his first drink, sexual addicts are not addicted until they are exposed. Ten years ago, initial exposure to pornography occurred at age 14 or later. Today, initial exposure usually occurs by age eight. We are breeding a crop of sexual addicts.

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