

# A Parents' Primer on Internet Pornography

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## Introduction

I was 12-years-old when I was first exposed to pornography. A neighborhood friend had found a magazine on the side of the road. He invited several of us to take a look. We spent half of our time looking over his shoulder at the glossy pictures. We spent the other half of our time looking over our own shoulders, hoping that we wouldn't get caught doing something that we all knew was wrong.

Fast –forward to today's world. The internet, mobile devices, and other digital technologies combine to create a world in which children and teens no longer have to look for and find pornography. Now, pornography is in the mainstream and it finds them. And because pornography usually finds them long before they reach puberty, its life-long influence and effect can be even more deep-seated and devastating. This is why the U.S. Department of Justice issued this warning way back in 1996: "Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors and in so many American homes with so few restrictions "

As parents called by God to nurture our children through childhood and into a spiritually healthy adulthood, we have the responsibility to be keenly aware of pornography's presence, its compelling draw, and the impact it has on our kids. When it comes to pornography, what they see and experience now will not only shape them in the present, but will continue to influence them and their relationships for the rest of their lives. Consequently, we must be diligent in preparing our children to understand, process, and respond to this horribly fallen expression of God's good gift of sexuality in ways that bring honor and glory to God.

At the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding (cpyu.org), our Digital Kids Initiative is a resource to help you help your children navigate the Digital Frontier in God-honoring ways. We believe that parental awareness and understanding are a first step towards crafting healthy and proactive parental responses. Your children will see pornography. What follows is an introduction to internet pornography that we trust you will find helpful as you lead them through this dangerous and ever-present minefield.

*The internet, mobile devices, and other digital technologies combine to create a world in which children and teens no longer have to look for and find pornography. Instead, pornography finds them.*



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# What is Pornography?

The *Miriam-Webster Dictionary* define "Pornography" as:

1. the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement.
2. Material (as books or a photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement
3. The depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction.

The word "pornography" is rooted in the Greek word *porneia*, which means to practice prostitution, sexual immorality, or fornication. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul frequently used the word in reference to any kind of sinful and illegitimate sexual activity.



Here are three very helpful definitions of 'Pornography' written from a biblical perspective.

*"Pornography is anything that the heart uses to find sexual expression outside of God's intended design for relational intimacy. It is anything that tempts or corrupts the human heart into desiring sexual pleasure in sinful ways." ("Living in a 'Porn is the Norm' Culture" (HarvestUSA.org)*

*"Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, section 2354,*

## Pornography: The Facts

If there's anything we know, it's that there is lots and lots of pornography on the internet, it comes in many forms, it's accessible through any device with internet access, and the volume is increasing daily. Thus, statistics are outdated quickly. Here are some of the most recent facts:

- ◆ Men tend to access visual pornography, while women typically engage with literary pornography (erotica) and romance websites.
- ◆ 80-90% of online pornography users only access free material.

In 2006...

- 30,000 internet users were accessing pornography every second.
- There were 4.2 million pornographic websites. That equals 12% of all internet sites.
- There were 68 million pornographic search requests per day.
- 42.7% of internet users viewed pornography
- 34% of internet users received unwanted exposure to sexual material.

**One survey indicates that 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women are addicted to pornography.**

## Teenagers and Pornography...

- ◆93% of boys and 62% of girls are exposed to internet pornography before the age of 18.
- ◆The average age of first exposure to internet pornography is 11.
- ◆70% of boys have spent more than 30 consecutive minutes looking at online pornography on at least one occasion. 35% of boys have done this on more than ten occasions.
- ◆23% of girls have spent more than 30 consecutive minutes looking at online pornography on at least one occasion. 14% have done this on more than one occasion.
- ◆83% of boys and 57% of girls have viewed group sex on the internet.
- ◆69% of boys and 55% of girls have seen pornography depicting same-sex images.
- 39% of boys and 23% of girls have seen online sex acts depicting bondage.
- ◆32% of boys and 18% of girls have viewed bestiality on the internet.
- ◆18% of boys and 10% of girls have seen depictions of rape and/or violence on the internet.
- ◆15% of boys and 9% of girls have seen child pornography.
- ◆Only 3% of boys and 17% of girls have never seen internet pornography.
- ◆64% of college men and 18% of college women spend time online for internet sex every week.



## Christian Men, Women, and Pornography...

- ◆One survey indicates that 50% of Christian men and 20% of Christian women are addicted to pornography.
- ◆60% of the women who answered the survey admitted to having significant struggles with lust.
- ◆40% of the women who answered the survey admitted to being involved in sexual sin in the last year.



### What drives pornography addiction?

Experts say that pornography addiction is fueled by three factors that are unique to our current online/digital age:

- Pornography is accessible.** There are thousands of sites that can be easily accessed when one is alone in their own home. In addition, mobile devices with internet access offer 24/7 connection to pornography.
- Pornography is anonymous.** A person can access pornography privately. Nobody has to know them, and they don't have to know the people behind the images.
- Pornography is affordable.** The fact is that a large portion of internet pornography can be accessed free of charge. Pornography that requires payment can be instantly accessed through the use of a credit card.