

Is watching porn a sin?

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Pornography has been in practice for centuries. The digital age has made it more accessible than ever before. For many people, watching porn is totally normal. But ‘normal’ and ‘right’ are two different things. This article tries to answer whether watching porn is okay in God’s eyes, or whether it is a sin we should avoid at all costs. Moreover, it describes some serious problems caused by pornography and gives some advice on how to get free from this addiction.

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Is watching porn a sin?

In order to answer this question, let’s explore what porn is, what sin is, and how the two are connected.

What is sin?

The Bible gives a lot of examples and definitions of sin . One helpful definition is sin being any choice or behavior that leads us away from the life that God intended us to live. It means acting against His will and thereby moving away from Him and from His good plans for humanity.

What is pornography?

The dictionary of Merriam-Webster defines pornography as:

Movies, pictures, magazines, etc., that show or describe naked people or sex in a very open and direct way in order to cause sexual excitement.

This is a neutral, factual description. It does not tell us whether pornography is good or bad.

The Bible does not mention the word 'pornography'. However, it does mention the Greek word from which it is derived: 'porneia'. This word points to fornication, prostitution, adultery, sexual immorality, and other forms of filth and perversion. The other part of this word,

‘graphe’, is the Greek root for various forms of expression, like writing and drawing. So, if we want to discover the Biblical view on pornography, we need to see what it says on ‘porneia’.

What does the Bible say about ‘porneia’?

The Bible is very clear here:

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality [porneia], or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (Ephesians 5:3, NIV).

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral [pornoi], nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

“Flee from sexual immorality [porneia]. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person [porneumon] sins against his own body. Or

do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?" (1 Corinthians 6:18-19).

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral [pornous] and adulterous." (Hebrews 13:4)

'Porneia' is a sin, it excludes people from God's Kingdom, and therefore Jesus' followers should stay away from it.

Why does the Bible condemn 'porneia' so strongly?

Sexual immorality goes right against God's plan for sexuality. God designed sexuality as something for a man and a woman within marriage. Moreover, it is directly related to having children. Sexuality, therefore, is not only a matter of lust, but also a matter of love and having children together. This loving relationship between husband and wife is very precious in God's eyes.

The apostle Paul even says it reflects the relationship between Jesus and the church: "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church"

(Ephesians 5:32, see also verses 22-33). Marriage is designed by God to portray Christ. Sexual immorality damages this holy portrait.

What if I'm just watching porn, not actually committing sexually immorality?

Watching porn is about lust, not about actually having sex. Isn't that a big difference? Indeed it is, but the problem is fundamentally the same.

In the Old Testament, God told the people of Israel: “ You shall not commit adultery ” (Exodus 20:14). Jesus explained that this prohibition went further than using our bodies in a sinful way. He says that lust should be taken just as seriously as the act of adultery itself: “Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). An affair of the body always begins with an affair of the mind. When we commit ‘mental adultery’ or watch porn, we are already moving beyond the borders that God gave us. He calls us to flee every form of (sexual)

temptation (Matthew 26:41; 1 Corinthians 7:1-3), and that includes pornography.

Is watching porn a sin?

Watching porn does not fit in the Biblical concept of having sex (which means: marriage). Watching porn is about lust, about using someone's body to get excited. It removes sex from the context of marriage to feed the 'desires of the flesh' and to encourage us to desire and objectify others outside of marriage. This has nothing to do with God's purpose of sexuality as an act of married love. Therefore, the Bible says we should stay away from 'porneia', which includes watching pornography. It clearly is a sin.

Which problems are caused by watching porn?

If you watch pornography, this will have serious consequences. Let me list six:

1. Pornography is guaranteed to damage your marriage

Pornography is guaranteed to damage your marriage (or, if you are not currently married, your potential to have a

healthy marriage relationship). It arouses wrong and exaggerated expectations, leading to decreased satisfaction with your partner's sexual performance, affection, and physical appearance. Moreover, since marriage is meant as an exclusive relationship between husband and wife, there is no room for other sexual desires — not even when you are 'just watching'. It will hurt your spouse, make them feel second best and drive a wedge in your marriage.

2. Watching porn leads to distorted perceptions about sexuality.

For one thing, it makes you view non-monogamous relationships as normal and natural behavior. But it goes further than that.

For many young children nowadays, porn is their number one teacher on sexual education.

Since aggression and abuse are 'normal' in almost all pornography movies (increasingly so in recent years), what does this teach children about having sexual relationships? Several studies show that pornography

reinforces the objectification and sexualization of women and children. It promotes the idea that sex without any boundaries, coercion and rape are justifiable acts. This has huge consequences for people's actual behavior 'in real life'.

3. Watching porn affects how you see other people.

It lets you see men and women as objects to lust after instead of people to be respected and loved . Pornography infiltrates all of your thought patterns and relationships.

4. Watching porn encourages instant self-gratification.

Giving in to this urge leads to a lack of ability to delay gratification, which is a very useful skill in life. Researchers see a strong relationship between frequently watching porn and underachieving in other areas of life.

5. Watching porn is highly addictive.

It leads to excess dopamine consumption which makes you crave for more and more and more. Slowly you will have to push your limits to get the same level of

excitement. So, you will need to watch more porn or more extreme porn. This cycle affects your brain, as is seen in all types of addiction.

For more information on this topic, watch this talk:

Moreover, all addiction prevents you from engaging fully in relationships and from becoming the man or woman God created you to be — which should be your first goal in life. A porn addiction takes over your life, as thousands of people currently experience.

6. Pornography might be produced and distributed at the expense of individuals (human trafficking)

According to the statistics provided by Covenant Eyes , 28,258 users are watching pornography every second and \$3,075.64 is spent on porn every second on the Internet. Such high rates of consumption mean high demand.

Often, pornography is produced and distributed at the expense of individuals, against their will. This is human trafficking. Both adults and children are victims here. When minors are involved in commercial sexual activity,

this is always classified as human trafficking. With adults, it's more difficult to differentiate consent versus coercion, but there is a lot of deception, pressure and threats going on there as well. It is not acceptable to misuse other people that way for your own pleasure. For more information on this topic, you can visit the Exodus Road website

How can I stop watching porn?

Many people who regularly watch porn, would like to quit. But that is not easy. Here are six tips to stop watching porn.

1. Quit completely

Porn is a sin, and you need to stop it completely. It makes no sense to just cut down on your porn consumption. That won't work in the first place, and it doesn't solve the problem. You need to be radical.

2. Seek help

If you struggle with lust, temptation, porn or addiction: confide in someone you know and trust, someone in

church maybe. Ask for help and do not struggle on your own. Ask for guidance and prayer, and be honest about your ups and downs. Please contact us (through the contact form , or the chat button in the lower-right corner of the screen) if you have no one to turn to.

3. Avoid temptation

Porn is easily accessible and you easily stumble upon it, even when you're not searching for it at all.

But you can take some steps to protect yourself.

For example, many people are especially vulnerable when they are tired and alone. They can protect themselves by keeping electronics out of their bedroom. You can install software to protect your devices. (For example, when you are using an Android phone or the Google search engine, you can use "SafeSearch" which will block all sexually explicit content. Web browsers like Firefox also offer add-ons to block porn, or contact your internet service provider for filtering and parental controls they can put in place to reduce the chances of seeing that type of material.) Maybe you need to delete social media apps, if

they are a source of temptation for you. This may be inconvenient, but it's like putting up guardrails to protect yourself. Get to know your weak spots and avoid them.

4. Ask God for strength

Even when temptation is strong, God is stronger . In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the apostle Paul assures us, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

5. Do not let porn alienate you from the Lord

If you want to stop watching porn but find yourself falling back, do not wait to confess this sin to God. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Satan's main goal is to alienate believers from God. Do not give in to the temptation to hide from the Lord in guilt and shame, but pour out your heart before Him.

6. Remind yourself that God has something better for you

God designed us for real intimacy. Pornography is just a poor substitute for a lifelong covenant relationship with a spouse. Do not settle for less than God's ideal!

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that pornography is a sin, since it goes against God's purpose for sexuality. Moreover, watching porn has devastating effects on your marriage, on your view of sexuality and even on your brain, especially since it is highly addictive. Therefore, you should stay away from it completely. Do not let porn destroy your life and the lives of others!

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