

HELP YOUR CHURCH

Five Ways To Start Talking About Pornography In Your Church

The church plays a vital role in the defense of human dignity.

Yet there is one issue that is breaking apart families and marriages¹ and increasing rates of sexual violence against women² that many churches struggle to address: pornography.

Research also shows that more than half of youth pastors have had at least one teen come to them for help in dealing with porn in the past 12 months.³ In fact, most pastors (57%) and youth pastors (64%) admit they have struggled with pornography themselves, either currently or in the past.⁴

However, most churches do not have programs specifically designed to assist those struggling with pornography.⁵

In today's culture, church leaders hold a special responsibility to speak truth and shine a light on the harms of pornography. That's why the National Center on Sexual Exploitation has developed these suggestions to help pastors get started.

- 1 Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, and Soyoung Bae, "More Than a Dalliance? Pornography Consumption and Extramarital Sex Attitudes among Married U.S. Adults," *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 3, no. 2 (2014): 97-109.
- 2 Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, and Ashley Kraus, "A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies," *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 1 (February 2016): 183-205.
- 3 Barna Group, "News Conference on Barna's New Study: 'The Porn Phenomenon,'" (January 15, 2016), <https://www.barna.org/blog/culture-media/barna-group/porn-press-conference#.VrS9OrSjndI> (accessed June 27, 2016).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.

1 Pray With Your Congregation And Church Leadership About Pornography

Opening the topic of pornography during a prayer is a great way to not only facilitate an individual opening his/her heart to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but also to seek the Lord's guidance in addressing the problem of pornography.

Listing pornography in a prayer of confession can be a start, but also consider corporate prayers that specifically pray:

- For recovery for those struggling with pornography;
- For spouses of those watching pornography;
- For children who are exposed to pornography to have the courage to speak with their parents about it;
- For the leadership of the church to have wisdom and discernment when helping members with this problem.

2 Educate Your Congregation About Healthy Sexuality

Our culture consistently bombards children, teens, and adults alike with messages about sexuality—through both pornography and the hyper-sexualized pop culture. Even the most mindful individuals are not immune from receiving these messages, whether on social media, in a pop-up ad, or on TV.

The church therefore has a responsibility to actively preach on what healthy sexuality looks like in order to start the dialogue and provide a positive model for which people can strive. These sermons or group discussions must be a regular part of church life, not a once-a-year topic, because worldly messages about sexuality are non-stop.

Useful discussions could include instructing parents on ways to have regular conversations about sexuality with their children and teenagers, active dialogs in youth groups about pornography or hyper-sexualized pop culture, and Biblical reflections on passages about sexuality, and discussions about what healthy relationships look like.

3 Re-Think Mentoring Relationships In Your Congregation

Any disciple or mentoring relationship within the church should include frank discussions about pornography. If your church provides any training or instructions for members actively mentoring one another, include a suggestion to discuss this topic.

Consider training members of your church in best practices for being accountability partners. Whether they use software like Covenant Eyes, one-on-one meetings, regular phone calls and texts, encourage them to balance love and truth in exhorting one another toward sexual purity.

4 Train Your Church Leadership

Many church leaders began working in ministry before pornography grew to be the widespread, normalized, influence it is today. Therefore, some might not be aware of the seriousness of the grip that pornography has on the lives of young men (and increasingly young women).

Research shows that Internet pornography hijacks the brain's reward systems the same way that cocaine does.⁶ For those whose pornography use has become compulsive, or addictive, breaking free can be extremely difficult.

Pastors and their staff and volunteers must spend organized time learning about the harms of pornography and the best practices for speaking about it and guiding someone through recovery.

Discuss ways to extend grace to those who confess struggling with pornography, and how to create a safe space for them to seek help. Also, it's important to recognize that spouses of those struggling with pornography often experience "betrayal trauma" and will need resources and programs for healing.

5 Promote Resources for Recovering from Pornography and for Accountability Partners.

Talk to your pastor and other ministries in the church about outside resources to help their efforts. If your church has a bookstore or library, consider providing some books regarding pornography recovery. Share some useful websites and faith-based programs. Discuss possibly setting up an accountability program where members of the same sex can help one another when they feel tempted or just to check in on each other.

Remember that your local church does not need to bear the burden alone. **A list of resources for getting started is available at EndSexualExploitation.org/resources.**

You can regularly share these with your congregation from the pulpit during announcements, in church emails, and on church bulletin boards.

6 Donald L. Hilton, Jr., and Clark Watts, "Pornography Addiction: A Neuroscience Perspective," *Surgical Neurology International* 2, no. 19 (2011)



NATIONAL
CENTER ON
SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION

Resources from the National Center on Sexual Exploitation:

Have a representative from the National Center on Sexual Exploitation speak at your church to educate church leadership, the congregation, parents, or youth groups on the harms of pornography, and the basics of porn-recovery. Email public@ncose.com to inquire about and schedule a speaker.

Join the National Center on Sexual Exploitation's Prayer Team to receive monthly prayer requests regarding all forms of sexual exploitation: endsexualexploitation.org/prayer

Learn the public health harms of pornography at endsexualexploitation.org/publichealth

Attend the 2018 Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation Summit, held in Herndon, Virginia April 4-7, 2018. Learn more and register at endsexualexploitation.org/cesesummit2018

Participate in White Ribbon Against Pornography Week, a nation-wide week of awareness and educational events at endsexualexploitation.org/wrap

Other Potential Resources:

Covenant Eyes: accountability software covenanteyes.com

Josh McDowell Ministries: awareness ministry for families and individuals josh.org

Brave Hearts: mentoring program bravehearts.org

Route 1520: Christ-centered recovery www.route1520.com

Start Talking (Parents): 10 talking points for parents endexploitationmovement.com/starttalking

Betrayal Trauma Recovery: recovery programs for spouses btr.org

LifeStar Network: network of therapists for sexual addictions lifestarnetwork.com

Undone Redone: resource for men, women, spouses undoneredone.com

Protect Young Minds: resource for parents protectyoungminds.org

Dirty Girls Ministries: female addiction recovery dirtygirlsministries.com

The church should be the first place a person of faith goes when they are struggling with pornography, or to seek help for others struggling.

Thank you for doing your part to make the church a safe, helpful environment for recovery and defending human dignity.