

Concerns About Pornography

New research about the impact of pornography challenges churches and other community institutions to provide more up-to-date information about its potential harm.

“Pornography is a social toxin that destroys relationships, steals innocence, erodes compassion, breeds violence, and kills love. The issue of pornography is ground zero for all those concerned for the sexual health and wellbeing of our loved ones, communities, and society as a whole.” So begins the Pornography & Public Health Research Summary published by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation on August 17, 2017.¹ At the same time, other research indicates increased public acceptance of pornography, especially among younger generations. For example, a 2014 study by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found that 45 percent of Millennials, the first generation to grow up with unlimited exposure to pornography through the internet, said viewing pornography is “morally acceptable,” compared to 9 percent of Americans ages 68 and older.²

Pornography “poses a serious threat to couple intimacy and relationship harmony,” according to Drs. John and Julie Gottman. “Pornography can lead to a decrease in relationship trust and a higher likelihood of affairs,” they wrote on their website, noting that porn sites often subtly or directly encourage sexual activity outside of marriage.³ Pornography use has been closely linked with infidelity, which is one of the most common reasons given for divorce. Another study concludes that persons exposed to large amounts of pornography are likely to feel less satisfied with their real-life partners, feel less committed to existing relationships, and increasingly accept promiscuity as natural and marriage less desirable.⁴

Pornography is highly addictive, literally hijacking the pleasure centers of the brain, especially when viewed by the young, and is easily accessible on the internet and in magazines. Brain scans of addicted users show alarming changes. Many popular publications, such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Penthouse*, and *Playboy* magazines, provide content that can readily be classified as “soft porn,” presenting sexual activity as casual dating behavior quite divorced from love and commitment.

If we want a society in which marriages and families thrive, we need to do more teaching about commitment, self-discipline, and effective relationship skills, while talking openly about the damaging effects of pornography on relationships. Resources for teaching about the dangers of pornography and for working to limit access to it can be found in the following articles on the UM Discipleship Ministries website:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/facing-up-to-pornography-and-sexual-addictions>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/protecting-our-children>

References:

¹file:///Users/janeives/Documents/1%20Current%20Projects/Pornography/NCOSE_Pornography-PublicHealth_ResearchSummary_8-2_17_FINAL-with-logo.pdf

² <https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/hemez-attitudes-marital-infidelity-fp-16-12.html>

³ <https://www.gottman.com/blog/an-open-letter-on-porn/>

⁴ Kyler Rasmussen, “A Historical and Empirical Review of Pornography and Romantic Relationships: Implications for Family Researchers,” *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, Volume 8, Issue 2, p. 173-191

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