



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

7350 Granbury Rd.

Fort Worth, TX 76123

Temptation, How Can I Overcome My Urge to View Pornography?

Lesson #2

Lesson #28 (overall)

Each of us is vulnerable to the temptation of sexual fantasy. When our faith is weak, and we feel that real fulfillment and joy are out of our reach, it's difficult to resist the powerful illusion of fulfillment that sexual fantasy offers. We shouldn't be surprised when we are tempted, nor should we be surprised when we don't quickly "outgrow" this temptation. Writing specifically about sexual temptation, the apostle Paul said, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

It may be that pornographic fantasy and sexual addiction draw their strength from a natural desire to return to the world of intimacy

and security that we may once have enjoyed as infants. In adult relationships, it takes a long time to develop real interpersonal intimacy and trust. We often feel lonely, powerless, and rejected. By contrast, wrongful sexual fantasy offers the illusion of instant intimacy, respect, and acceptance with anyone we want. The powerful illusion of sexual fantasy makes sexual addiction much more enslaving than it would be if it were the mere expression of a biological appetite.

The first step toward freedom is acknowledging that your sexual obsession has taken on a life of its own. A great deal of time and energy can be wasted trying to rationalize and conceal our secret sins.

The next step is facing the fact that there will be no quick cure. No matter how resolutely we pray for deliverance, sexual obsession never disappears in an hour, a month, or even a year. No miraculous spiritual gift will instantly free you from a habit that has had years to develop. **You have much work to do.**

Withdrawal from any addiction is painful. Withdrawal from sexual addiction involves agony that can't be avoided. Heroin addicts sometimes take methadone in hopes of avoiding the pains of withdrawal. They soon discover, however, that their heroin addiction has been replaced with addiction to methadone. There can be no real cure without pain.

To jaded senses and underdeveloped emotions, the first experiences of real intimacy are too subtle and un compelling to offer much comfort. Initially, no relationship or activity will provide the intense, short-term pleasure of sexual fantasy. Like the rush from a line of cocaine or the quick euphoria of an alcoholic when he "falls off the wagon," sin offers pleasure for a season (Hebrews 11:25).

Intimacy in relationships is a living thing that must be nourished and given time to grow. Like a beautiful flower that blooms at the end of summer and wafts fragrance to every corner of the garden, intimacy is the product of discipline and commitment. Soil must be tilled, seed planted, water carried, weeds removed, and plants protected. These activities offer little immediate encouragement to a person whose will, and emotions have for a lifetime been responding only to immediate pleasures. But genuine love is the gateway to joy and fulfillment, and addiction to sexual fantasy directly obstructs real relationships with real people.

In the long term, effort expended in resisting sexual addiction will be rewarded many times over. But movement toward freedom from addiction requires obedience, and obedience requires faith. You have used sexual addiction as a means of avoiding the legitimate growing pains of life. Now it's time to learn to embrace the legitimate pain you've been trying to avoid.

Trusting God in spite of emotional pain, loneliness, and frustration produces sensitivity to the depth and richness of life. To a child, the sun-dappled beauty of a woodland meadow in springtime is less appealing than the garish lights and glitter of a traveling carnival. But it's time to move on to better things (1 Corinthians 13:11). Resist wrongful sexual fantasy over a period of time and you will begin to notice changes in your perceptions as the Holy Spirit gains greater influence in your life. Paul wrote:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Be grateful for the feelings of guilt, hypocrisy, and contamination that you experience when you fail to resist sexual temptation. These feelings don't mean you are worthless or condemned in the eyes of God. His

grace is still available to you (Hebrews 13:20-21). These feelings are signs of spiritual life flowing within, the conviction of the Holy Spirit as He grants growing awareness of the repulsiveness and sterility of sin.

Don't be ashamed to take steps to avoid circumstances and behavior that nourish your obsession. Satan, the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10) delights in making you feel as though you are inauthentic, a hypocrite, or a prude because you are resisting sinful thoughts and desires that are still part of you. Every Christian struggles with the same sense of dividedness (Romans 7:21-23; Galatians 5:17), but don't forget that you are fleeing from an addiction that leaves you empty and unsatisfied and are climbing toward the source of all pleasures (John 4:14). Don't forget too that the Bible promises that you will be given the strength to succeed (1 Corinthians 10:13).

One of the first steps you should take is to remove the source of temptation from your home. Then, instead of planning how you can do the things that have kept you in bondage, consciously avoid situations that expose you to temptation. Don't lose sight of the fact that with time your healthy sensitivities and wholesome desires will grow, and the power of your addiction will fade into insignificance. Also, remember that God doesn't judge you solely on the basis of your failures but on the basis of what you can become through Christ. Although your sin is an offense to God, He always loves you.

A book you may find helpful is False Intimacy by Dr. Harry Schaumberg (Navpress).