

Parenting Tools:

Struggling With Pornography



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Parenting Tools: *Lust & Pornography*

Recent statistics tell us that the average age for a child to look at porn for the first time is by age 11. For some of you, this age is shocking. But should we be that surprised? Wherever there is the capacity for Internet—computers, iPads, smart phones, iPod touches, handheld gaming consoles, and gaming systems like Xbox or the Wii—there is the capacity for pornography. Sadly, it is not really a question of if your child will look at porn, but when. What is a biblical response to when your child is caught using porn or confesses to using it?

Often times, parents are tempted to say that their child cannot help it. We may wonder how with a mixture of hormones, curiosity, and advertisement propaganda we can really expect our children to be able to withstand the temptation to lust. However, we believe that while temptation is certain for your child, the Holy Spirit resides in believers and gives them everything they need to say No to ungodliness (2 Peter 1:3). Perhaps more than any other temptation that your children will face, they need you to help to them understand the biblical strategies of battling the sin of lust. Below are six strategies you can use when you discover your child is struggling with lust or pornography.

1. Be gentle and keep watch over yourself (Galatians 6:1)

The Legacy Principle explains that parents cannot lead their children unless they keep watch over their own hearts. In addition to living out the Legacy Principle, parents can show gentleness by listening and learning about their child's situation. Parents might consider questions such as is this the first time my child has looked at porn?

What did he or she see? How was pornography accessed? Was it my child's fault? In the same way that Christ sympathizes with our weaknesses, we should strive to sympathize with the weaknesses of our children. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

2. Address the heart issue(s)

(Matthew 5:27–28)

The sin of lust is often attached to other sins as well. Feelings of loneliness, inferiority, and misunderstanding about intimacy and God's purpose for things like sex and anger are often times excuses, which catalyze lust. Beyond the behavior of your child, look to his or her heart. God desires for all aspects of our lives to be surrendered to Him, not just one aspect.

3. Point to the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive us of our sins when we confess

(1 John 1:9)

Rather than guiltting your child into repentance, the goal is to convince him or her that God's grace is sufficient for sin. Grace is a better motivator than guilt. Remind your child that God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin.

4. Teach your child the biblical concept of renewing the mind

(Ephesians 4:22–24, Romans 12:2)

As believers, we have been made alive to Christ, and thus our identity and perception of life has been redefined from the way that we used to think about the world. We previously lived in darkened understanding, futility in our minds, and in ignorance of truth (Ephesians 4:17–18). But now, in light of Christ, we are able to hear

and learn about the truth that is in Jesus. As Ephesians 4 states, we are to put off sin, renew our minds, and put on righteousness.

You can use the four steps below to teach your child how to renew the mind:

1. Pause and think in the midst of temptation
2. Identify the deceptive, faulty lies about sex and pornography that we tend to embrace
3. Return to the biblical teaching and promises that God gives in regards to purity
4. Make a personal decision to place faith in what God says about lust and purity

5. Together, work towards removing the cause of sin

(Matthew 5:29–30)

Jesus' words show that it is costly to defeat the sin of lust, as it entails the giving up of something as valuable as an "eye." In this day and age, the "eye" could be represented by Internet use, social media avenues, or private browsing. Explain to your child that whatever they have to give up for the sake of purity, the pursuit of holiness in the area of lust will reap benefits. Use tools such as Covenant Eyes or 3X Watch to help come alongside your son or daughter in the pursuit of purity.

6. Bless and remind your child of where purity leads and where lust leads

(Proverbs 5:18–20, Matthew 5:8)

7. Discipline your child

(Proverbs 5:12, 22–23)

Throughout Proverbs 5, a wise Father warns his son against adultery. The father foresees a time when the son, if he hates his father's discipline or experiences a lack of it, will experience folly

and ruin. Discipline is a redemptive act of love from the parent to assure that the child understands and experiences that there are consequences for sin. Discipline promotes a healthy fear of God aligned with a healthy understanding of His grace.