

Further Help for Healing from Porn Addiction

“. . . in whatever measure we live as if lies are true,
to that measure we will continue to experience bondage to sin.”
(from annotations to “The Chain” allegory on the MCAG website)

The following material is for those whose troubles with porn stubbornly persist, even after they’ve read *My Chains Are Gone*’s main articles.¹ Although I wrote this article with the male porn addict in mind, women who have already been helped by the MCAG website may find this supplemental material beneficial as well.²

The MCAG approach depends on *the truth setting people free*. When readers fail to find freedom, I first suggest they prayerfully restudy the material. One reading may not be sufficient. Nonsexual nudity in the hospital stared me in the face for 25 years, before it dawned on me that the naked truth had porn-proofed me.

Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” (John 14:6, ESV). He also said, “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. . . . So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed,*” (John 8:31b-32, 36 ESV). In the new birth, Christ frees us from *sin’s penalty*, but when Jesus applies “*the truth*” to our lives, it can set us free from *sin’s bondage*. The truth of body acceptance exposes the lie of body shame behind pornography. Yet each person’s journey is unique. Your individual need for healing may reach beyond what is shared on the MCAG website.

Extra help doesn’t devalue the liberating power of truth itself. But some might face mental barriers to believing the truth or spiritual obstacles to embracing it. A blocking impediment might be from past emotionally traumatic memories or even from demonic influence. Whatever obstructs truth’s entrance must be cleared away.

Again, the truth bears repeating, but repetition can fail without the Holy Spirit’s intervention. As unfamiliar as these suggestions seem, many people have found God’s healing power in them. Some ideas simply clarify what MCAG teaches. Others touch deeper areas of spiritual need. All of them may take faith and courage to apply.

If still plagued by porn addiction, try what has helped others. Even the most controversial ideas offered here were drawn from the laboratory of life. I share them not to stir up doctrinal controversy or theological debate, but to help dislodge persistent mental or spiritual hindrances to receiving the truth that will set you free from porn.

Part 1: Resources to Clarify the Ideas from MCAG

These first three suggestions basically supplement or affirm the message of MCAG *intellectually, theologically, and emotionally*.

The Centerfold Syndrome

Soon after we launched MCAG, a lady wrote to congratulate us on our website, pointing out the similarity of our message to that of psychologist Gary R. Brooks. She sent an excerpt from his book, *The Centerfold Syndrome*,³ photocopied from an anthology. I was delighted to find we were on the same page with this counselor.

1. See main articles at www.mychainsaregone.org, or review them in “[An Abridgment Summarizing the MCAG Website](#).”

2. Women readers with porn problems may first want to read the article “[Freedom for Porn-Addicted Women](#).”

Here are the five principal components of “the Centerfold Syndrome,” with quotes from Dr. Brooks:

- **Voyeurism:** “The culture at large seems to be generally indifferent to this trend [of female body glorification], seeing it as harmless titillation, pretty much a natural product of men’s biological makeup. I strongly disagree with this position. It is my contention that this mania, this explosion of glorification and objectification of women’s bodies, promotes unreal images of women, distorts physical reality, creates obsessions with visual stimulation, and trivializes all other features of a healthy psychosexual relationship.”
- **Objectification:** “. . .when a man in a relationship is continually distracted by a fantasy life dominated by visual images of idealized bodies of strangers, that man will frequently be emotionally absent from his partner; he will be unable to have intense, here-and-now experiences with her. Tragically, if he spends most of his emotional energy on sexual fantasies about inaccessible people, he frequently will not be available for even the most intimate emotional and sexual moments with the most important person in his life.”
- **Need for Validation:** “[Men] are programmed to crave validation of their masculinity, and they frequently view women’s bodies as a medium for that validation. This need for validation disempowers them and creates an odd yet vitally important inversion of the traditional power relationship between women and men. . . . When women are envisioned as sexual objects and made the centerpiece of men’s visual world, they become imbued with enormous psychosocial power.”
- **Trophyism:** “While collecting new and different sexual trophies may be celebrated among adolescents, it is a sign of emotional immaturity in the world of adults. . . . Women’s bodies age, losing their trophy-like characteristics, especially in comparison to newer varieties. Hence, the trophy-hunting man, initially satisfied with his trophy-wife, must eventually face the maddening reality that his prize will eventually lose her luster, while other potential prizes will emit near-irresistible allure.”
- **Fear of True Intimacy:** “. . .men are taught to suppress their needs for intimacy and sensuality, and come to invest too much emotional and psychological power in some women’s bodies. Fearing their potential overdependence on women, men develop a preoccupation with sexuality, which powerfully handicaps their capacity for emotionally intimate relationships with men and for nonsexual relationships with women.”

Dr. Brooks calls the Centerfold Syndrome epidemic in America. His personal experience in counseling men suffering from it made him an expert in describing the problem of a pornographic view of women’s bodies. In fact, even if you have no trouble grasping what we share on MCAG, studying his perspective will reinforce your understanding. Find a copy and read the whole book.

The Theology of the Body

One Catholic reader surprised us by saying that our site taught principles from John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* (TOB).⁴ We confirmed this by our own research. Before becoming a pope, Karol Wojtyla published *Love and Responsibility*,⁵ a superb philosophical treatise on sexual morality. He later wrote his TOB—probably the most comprehensive theological work on human sexuality to date.

Several Catholic teachers have tried to communicate Wojtyla’s elevated theological concepts to average Christians. One of these is Christopher West, whose introduction to the TOB was given at a

3. *The Centerfold Syndrome* by Gary R. Brooks, Ph.D. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995). Used copies of this book are easily found online.

4. *Man and Woman He Created Them – A Theology of the Body* by John Paul II (Pauline Books & Media: Boston, 2006). This book and many video and audio talks on the TOB are available from <http://ofwcmedia.com/> (OFWC Media).

5. *Love and Responsibility* by Karol Wojtyla, translated by H. T. Willetts (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981). [This book is available at <http://ofwcmedia.com/> (OFWC Media).]

large church in my own denomination.⁶ A series of talks addressed specifically to a Catholic audience, are downloadable as MP3-files: “*Naked Without Shame*.”⁷

Whoever denies a physical dimension in our being created “*in the image of God*” should study this pope carefully. He explains how nothing in creation represents the Trinity more clearly than our gender-distinctive physical bodies in heterosexual marital union. He also shows how complementary sexuality symbolizes our potential union with God through Christ. By exposing past and present philosophical falsehoods, he confronts a modern intellectual failure to see the divine significance in our fleshly, sexual embodiment.

John Paul II’s TOB isn’t easy reading, but it serves as a strong corrective for false ideas popularly believed about the body today. Despite its Roman Catholic elements, the TOB’s message is crucial for Protestants unwittingly held captive by mental porno-prudery.

Visit the Porn Factory with New Eyes

If you’re sick of how pornography has controlled your mind and ruined your life, hopefully the MCAG website has radically increased your mental nausea. If so, it may be time to finally *vomit!*

For many people, the Internet was a major doorway into porn. It’s now an avenue for exposing the porn industry’s vile practices. Many ex-porn stars broadcast their horrific stories about what models undergo to create this dehumanizing form of entertainment. If you’ve spent untold hours visually consuming their performances, it’s time you learned the violent abuse these models go through in the process. An inside view of how the porn business devastated their human dignity and breached their personal safety might be exactly what you need to help you emotionally *throw up*.

When I first searched for an exposé of the porn industry, I found a short documentary on YouTube called “Pornography,”⁸ made in 1991 by the late Andrea Dworkin. Although it’s dated and lacking in video quality, it still packs a strong punch. While our pulpits merely preached, “*Don’t look at it!*” fiery feminists like Dworkin were loudly decrying the horrors of the porn industry, stressing the urgency of eradicating its twisted mentality from our culture.

Presently, anyone needing to *visit the porn factory with new eyes* can learn about the heartless brutality and tragedy inside the porn business by a quick search for books and videos “exposing the porn industry.” Realistic testimonies of porn stars themselves can be nauseatingly revealing, especially if sealed by their death. Those posing and role-playing in sex-scene photos and videos have an average life expectancy of about 37 years. Porn addicts should let this fact sink in deeply by watching some of the composite videos that memorialize the deaths of these porn models.⁹

By treating these girls as objects for sexual violence and virtual rape, modern pornography drains them of personhood and defiles them as reflections of God’s *image*. This should cause holy anger. But, in its downward trend, this progressive degradation has hit hellishly deep levels of depravity. Whether reportedly *consenting* or slavishly *compelled*, these models are psychologically damaged and physically assaulted to profit porn-makers and entice lustful minds.

To quench any remaining infatuation with porn, discover exactly how this sophisticated form of human trafficking harms these models. Accurate knowledge of what’s happening to them should cause permanent moral outrage and stir up your own declaration of war against pornography to your dying day!

6. He gave an “[Introduction to the Theology of the Body](#)” at Skyline Wesleyan Church (San Diego area) in 2010.

7. Presently, West’s “[Naked Without Shame](#)” talks are still freely downloadable.

8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9j7-zZks08>.

9. Two especially moving YouTube videos: “[Dead Pornstars Memorial Part 1](#)”& “[Dead Pornstars Memorial Part 2](#).”

Part 2: God's Use of Various Means of Grace

“When once passion takes part in the game, the human reason, unassisted by Grace, has about as much chance of retaining its hold on truths already gained as a snowflake has of retaining its consistency in the mouth of a blast furnace.” — C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Time heals no wounds, but God can heal all wounds in time. He does this in various ways, as illustrated in Christ's ministry. Jesus frequently ordered sicknesses to depart. Sometimes he just prayed. Often He used touch. Once He smeared mud made with His saliva on a blind man's eyes and had him go wash it out. He straightened one woman's back by casting out a demon. Another woman grabbed His outfit to get the healing she needed.

In theology, these diverse patterns of divine blessing are called *means of grace*. To use them as Jesus did, we must have His attitude: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise,”* (John 5:19, ESV). We are never above Christ. Which *means of grace* to use, and how to use it, must come on a case-by-case basis through divine guidance, as it did with our Lord.

This concept will be a faith-stretch for some. Many believers are so mesmerized by modern materialism that they entrust all aspects of health to science, technology, and the pharmaceutical industry. But behind the material world is a spiritual one, and each affects the other. This is especially true for humans, who are *body-spirit* beings.

All creation—especially the human body—reflects God's glory. God uses *the physical* spiritually, and *the spiritual* physically. He's not bound by Greek philosophy's dualism between the material and the spiritual, which guides much modern thinking. Through a sacred, wholistic approach, the following ideas, instead of dividing *body* and *spirit*, assist with healing, based on their interrelationship.

Prayer

Under guidance by the Holy Spirit, prayer is a means of grace, especially when it is spoken aloud, even when alone. Misguided prayers actually reinforce false thinking. For example, praying for normal attraction to the opposite sex to diminish is guided by a false view of creation and of God's procreative purposes for humanity. Having a creational, incarnational view of the body changes the prayer from “Lord, help me stop looking at porn,” to “Lord, help me start seeing the naked body as You do.” When God answers the latter prayer, the allurements of pornography will come to an end.

Prayers against porn addiction must join with praise to God for fashioning our beautiful male and female bodies in His image. This praise, coming from the heart, should be verbalized out loud. When His divine command to love others guides our praises and prayers, we assault the real problem of porn, which is the sin of misusing the sight of our neighbor's body to stimulate self-gratifying lust.

Prayer shaped by lies is *powerless*. It is *powerful* only when anchored in truth. As you let the Holy Spirit guide your prayers, remember that He indwells your own naked body. Everyone else's naked body is also either a present temple for Him or targeted to become one. You can acknowledge this reality by praising God in prayer for your own body while taking a shower or bath. As a labor nurse, I've prayed with this same holy awareness as I work with the nude female body. The only territory where prayer helps refashion a godly, wholesome view of the naked body is in the realm of truth.

Scripture

By carefully restudying Genesis, David Martin of MCAG saw how our being created “*in the image of God*” had a physical aspect to it that most Bible teachers trivialized. This revelation of a fleshly dimension to the “*likeness*” we bear to our Creator personally helped set him free from a pornographic

view of the body.

My own vacillation between nudity in healthcare and its scandal in my religious training ended through taking a fresh look at God’s Word after removing my culture-colored glasses. When I stopped reading today’s swimsuits and private bathrooms back into Bible times, I got a new perspective on ancient society. Clothed cultures of the past didn’t associate the body’s occasional public nudity with shame. Today’s porno-prudish attitude is definitely no improvement on former times. But by presuming modern cultural values to be the basis of a God-given moral code, many Bible teachers have led believers into legalistic misinterpretations of God’s Word.

For instance, Genesis 3 does not say why God wrapped our first parents in animal hides. Nor does it say His action was a command to obey or a moral example to follow. Some Bible scholars believe He was graciously providing leather outfits for protection and warmth. This view meets the real *need* of the naked: *warmth* (**James 2:15-16**). Other theologians suggest that the skins of slain animals were meant to teach us the need *to atone* [*kaphar*]¹⁰ for sin. Today, however, most preachers insist that God’s intention was to hide their nudity—yes, even though it was that of a married couple!

This *majority* opinion is loyal not to Scripture but to the cultural standards of Victorian prudery. Even though hiding the body as a moral necessity is absent in the language of Genesis 3, this dogmatic belief—that God implied it—has effectively skewed all subsequent Biblical studies on nakedness. This is how our modern prudish ideas and treatment of nudity has been superimposed on Bible times.

God’s Word can be instrumental in healing: “*He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,*” (**Psa 107:20**, KJV). Those who seek freedom from porn addiction can find in Bible study a means of grace by reading Scripture afresh. In rereading the Bible, you will never find God withdrawing His evaluation of the naked body’s “*very good*” status (**Gen 1:31a**) nor calling only the clothed body His “*temple*” (**1 Cor 6:19-20**).

Visualize, as you read. See Jesus—in the manner of the nude slaves of His day—washing the feet of His disciples (**John 13:4**). Imagine seeing God’s faithful prophet Isaiah preaching in the nude for three full years (**Isa 20:2-4**). Watch Peter wearing nothing as he worked on his fishing boat (**John 21:7b**). Contemplate the sight of 3000 new converts on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:41**) being baptized in Jerusalem’s many public *mikveh* pools, where naked immersion was strictly required.

Meditate on Christ’s admonition to surrender your entire outfit to whoever sues you for just one piece, so that you walk out of a courtroom *naked*—**Mat 5:40** (ESV), “*And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.*” The logical implication—missed through cultural blindness by modern Bible teachers—was clearly understood by early church fathers, like Chrysostom, who clearly saw what this verse literally meant:

Do you grasp the excellence of a Christian disposition? After you give your coat and your cloak, even if your enemy should wish to subject your naked body to hardships and labors, not even then, Jesus says, must you forbid him.¹¹

As you read Scripture, let the body acceptance practiced in Bible times cleanse your mind. Your indoctrinated heritage of *body shame* may begin to dissolve, as well as a pornographic view of the body.

Baptism and a Sacred Use of Water

Early church fathers considered removing clothes for the nude baptism ritual to be a symbolic

10. A Hebrew word meaning *to cover*, used for the idea of *making atonement*.

11. Chrysostom, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Homily 18.3 in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, NT Vol. 1a, Matthew 1-13* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001). p. 118.]

divestment of worldly ways for entrance into the new life of God’s Kingdom. It was a complete water bath, a sacramental sign of sins being fully washed away (**Acts 22:16; Heb 10:22**). Just as we enter and leave this world naked, so new converts were stripped for baptismal burial with their nakedly crucified Savior. Coming out of the water naked, just as newborns exit the womb, signified not only new birth but resurrection with the risen Christ (**Rom 6:3-4**), who left His grave wrappings behind when He exited the tomb. This was some of the rich theological symbolism invested in the ancient practice of nude baptism.¹²

But prudery infiltrated the church. The well-documented attitude of early monks toward the tempting sight of the opposite sex points to a major cause for the disappearance of this practice. As monastic values toward the body became more popular with church leaders, they eventually supplanted the early church’s officially prescribed nude baptism. This robbed baptism of much of its symbolism and meaning as a means of grace. Perhaps pornography wouldn’t be the problem it is today, if churches had maintained the heritage of body acceptance underlying nudity in the ancient baptismal ritual.

Despite the modern absence of its original nudity component, baptism still represents a sacred cleansing from sin and identifies the believer with a death to self and a new life in Christ. Any unbaptized believer who is still struggling with porn ought to follow Christ in baptism. By its very nature, baptism blesses the body. It’s a public statement of agreement that God’s plan of salvation is for “*your whole spirit and soul and body*,” (**1 Thes 5:23**).

If you were led to faith in Christ by someone who failed to encourage you to obey this command of Christ (**Mat 28:19**), don’t let that stop you from being obedient now. Baptism is still a burial and still a bath; use it as such. Approach baptism as a sacred death to your old way of believing and living. Use it as a symbol of cleansing from the stains of false, worldly thinking. Let your addiction to porn be buried with Christ. Then, rise up from the water clean and fresh and alive to the goodness and sacredness of not only your own body but that of everyone else. Wash away your porno-prudish mindset. Be clothed with the mind of Christ, and forever after begin to look at the bodies of others only through His eyes.

The Old Testament prescribed the use of sanctified water for ritually cleansing places, items and people (**Num 19:17-18**). Some faith communions still practice a sacred use of water in their prayers for spiritual cleansing. Houses, rooms, closets, computers, and other things and places—even though they are physical in nature—can become spiritually “*unclean*” through the presence or depiction of evil things, such as pornographic pictures and videos. These defiled locations may need cleansing prayer with the symbolic application of *water* ritually dedicated by prayer for this special use. Sacredly applying water on a person’s body can become a strategic symbol of spiritual cleansing similar to that pictured in baptism. I heard one evangelist instruct people receiving this kind of ministry to “let this holy water put you in mind of your baptism.”

Another ritual use of water is *foot washing*. Oddly, many Bible teachers and church communions ignore it as a spiritual means of grace, even though Jesus implied its need (**John 13:10**), exemplified its practice and clearly enjoined its perpetuation: “*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you*,” (**John 13:14-15**, ESV). With some preparatory instruction, a foot washing ritual might be joined with cleansing prayer as a powerful, sanctified use of water.

The sacred application of water—in praying for houses, rooms, and people—has often proved an especially effective means of grace in confronting spiritual strongholds. If there is any indication of demonic activity in your porn addiction—as there might be, because of the way pornography perverts nature and truth—try using *holy water* in conjunction with your prayers.

12. Read “[Hippolytus of Rome on Nude Baptism](#).”

Holy Communion

Early church fathers saw the Eucharist as a continuation of baptism. Baptism declared the death of our old life in the world and the birth of our new life in Christ. Holy Communion repeats this theme by inviting us to participate in the ongoing ministry of death and life through the Bread and the Cup, which represent the work of the Cross. It repeats baptism's symbolism by reminding us that we died with Christ and are alive in Him (**Gal 2:20**). But, mystically, it also provides "*a participation*" (**1 Cor 10:16**) in His sacrificial death and bodily resurrection for our ongoing spiritual nurture. All Christians should meditate upon this, as they observe Communion. But they should also realize how effectively the Table can serve as a powerful means of grace for many spiritual needs.

First, we should *bring to* the Table and *leave with* our crucified Lord those things in our lives that need to die. Then, we are enabled by His grace to *take from* the Table the fruits of His Cross and Resurrection and to "feed upon Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving," as the *Book of Common Prayer* exhorts. There's still much of the world in us that needs death, and much in us that needs death to the world (**Gal 6:14**), to make room for more of Christ's life. The Table invites us to a sacred rendezvous where God spiritually enables this ongoing death-and-life process to take place in us.

Holy Communion should never become a routine observance. It must always be a vital transaction of faith, where we bring more of ourselves to the Lord's Table and take more of Christ's life as we leave it. *Eucharist* is the transliterated Greek word for *thanksgiving* and comes from the root word *charis*, or "*grace*." As a means of grace, how much closer to the Cross can we get than to the Body that hung there or to the Blood that was shed on it? Whether we theologically conceive of Christ's presence *as, by, with, in, or through* the physical elements displayed, Jesus directly instructed us *to feed upon Him* (**John 6:53-57**), which we are to do *by faith* at each celebration of His Table.

The Communion Table represents Christ's Cross quenching sin's penalty and His Resurrection breaking through sin's power. Together they divided historical time, ended the Old Covenant and began the New, answered the Law's demands with grace, and drew an eternal line between death and life. Nothing gets past the Cross without death, and nothing rises up to life from that death without the power of Christ's Resurrection.

This is why His Table—which sets before us Christ's work on the Cross as a physical means of grace—is a place of divine deliverance and edification. Whatever has wounded your soul sexually can find healing here, even the self-inflicted damage of yielding your heart to pornographic lust.

Bring and leave *on* the Table all your years of porn addiction, then *from* the Table take Christ's Body and Blood as spiritual nurture for your new life in Him. Leave *on* the Table any lie that resists the exorcism provided by rational truth, then *from* the Table feed upon Him who is "*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*." Discard *on* the Table any defiled mental images from the past that haunt your memory, then *from* the Table feast upon "*the express image of God*" in the Body of His Son. As you approach this sacred Table, bring to it anything in you that needs to die. Then, with all your heart, feed upon "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*." Drink the Blood that Christ passionately poured out for the Church, His Bride, who—in the one-flesh relationship manifested by this Meal—is also called His Body (**1 Cor 10:17**). Don't let theological fears or this Table's mystery keep you mentally aloof from receiving its grace and power.

Confession and Anointing with Oil

Avoiding the clarity of Scripture can rob God's people of two crucial practices that are taught in the Epistle of James: *confession of sin* and *anointing with oil*. Calling for "*elders*" (recognized so by age or office) to "*pray over*" and "*anoint. . .with oil*" is a clear exhortation to employ oil as a means of grace (**James 5:14-16**).

Pastors critical of this consecrated use of *oil* are often heard praying that God *anoint* their preaching

through the Holy Spirit. Ironically, it's *oil* that gives *anointing* its symbolic meaning in relationship to the Holy Spirit. This passage also addresses the role that *confession of sins*—and absolution from them—can play in the healing process. Absolution—the pronouncement that confessed sins are released—is also popularly criticized and avoided, despite its authorization by Jesus Himself (**John 20:22-23**).

If your faith communion shuns these practices, don't fear to look elsewhere to find those who understand the value of these means of grace. Searching outside your denomination doesn't mean you must quit your church. Some Christian communions take this passage in James at face value and practice it literally. Unless you are Catholic or Orthodox, you may have to seek out a Lutheran or high-church Episcopal priest who honors this Scripture literally in order to have your confession heard and absolution pronounced. To get anointed with oil, you may have to find a mature charismatic believer who knows that oil, prayerfully applied "*in the name of the Lord*" can mediate healing in mighty ways (**Mark 6:13**). But don't avoid any of these means of grace that God offers merely because your church leaders or your church tradition overlooks them.

Part 3: An Iconic Use of the Physical *Imago Dei*

"If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred."
— Walt Whitman (American poet, 1819-1892)

The non-Christian poet Walt Whitman had insights on creation that many church leaders failed to see. I use his quote to introduce these next suggestions, because it succinctly expresses the truth on which they are based: *nothing in the created universe is more sacred than the human body*. Why? Because it's the "*image of God*," the *imago Dei*. God chose it to embody His "*likeness*" and to become the "*temple of the Holy Spirit*."

The preceding section shows the value and significance of God's use of various means of grace. This next section is perhaps the most logical means of grace for helping to defeat porn addiction. It teaches body acceptance by directly confronting *body shame*. Some ex-porn addicts call it the "turning point" in their struggle. Personally, it is what porn-proofed me as an RN.

Because a pornographic view of the body dominates society and the church, the following methods I'm suggesting might be harshly criticized and unjustly slandered. But they're so logical and effective that, at the risk of alienating some readers, I feel morally obligated to share them. If your heart is open for God to use this last means of grace, it can bring a freedom found nowhere else, and it can do so thoroughly and almost immediately.

Pornography and *prudery* both perceive the naked body as a stimulus for lust and sexual gratification. Those who experience ordinary nudity in healthcare, art classes or naked cultures, see a more wholesome picture. Which perception is right? A simple trial easily wins most observers to the perception of nakedness found in those latter contexts. A frank exposure to normal, nonsexual nudity sabotages all the trusted, untrustworthy arguments of porno-prudery. But, more important, it can be fatal for porn addiction.

A common protest is, "*You can't teach old dogs new tricks*." But we are people, not dogs. If it was impossible for our old mental habits to change, God wouldn't tell us to *repent*, which means to *change the mind*. When He does tell us to change our minds (**2 Tim 2:25b**), He gives us grace to do it, especially when it comes to how we view the body. In fact, *God instilled the human body with more grace than He's placed in any other part of physical creation*. The supreme example of this fact was in the human body of God's Son, when "*the Word became flesh*," (**John 1:14**, ESV).

Having a profound awareness of our "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" bodies (**Psa 139:14**) helps us

to treat them with sacred dignity. Both prudery's exclusion of the naked body as a lustful obscenity and pornography's exploitation of it as lustful entertainment distort the value of God's image in the human form. To unlearn body shame and relearn body acceptance, we must recapture a holy view of nakedness, whether we find it on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel,¹³ on the walls of an art museum, in the convalescent care of a loved one, or on the sands of a clothing optional beach.

The nude body can serve a grace-filled role as holy *iconography*. A holy *icon* is religious art that portrays Scriptural themes or saintly attitudes. For centuries, Orthodox churches have used sacred icons as guides to focus the mind during prayer. The Bible's literal description of the *imago Dei* in sexual terms (**Gen 1:27-28a**) makes the gender-distinctive bodies of men and women the epitome of instructive icons. Rather than affirming the sordid suspicions of prudery or extending the lewd corruptions of pornography, a God-honoring meditation on the naked "*image of God*" in its "*male and female*" forms can restore our minds and hearts to the sanity and sanctity of body acceptance.

No humanly crafted piece of artwork can mediate this purifying contemplation as efficiently as the naked Self-portrait sculpted by our Creator in the Garden of Eden. For centuries, sacred portrayals of the nude by Medieval and Renaissance artisans served this contemplative purpose in old European churches. Unfortunately, many zealous Protestant reformers, fearing a religious use of images, purged them from their churches, as well as mentally abandoning a sanctified view of the naked body. In fact, a long Reformation history of banning images from sanctuaries has crippled modern efforts to bring any kind of artwork back into the service of worship.

It's a sad commentary on the evangelical church that a holy rebuke for our prudery didn't come from rational Christian thinkers. Instead, it flowed from secular pens, like that of Kenneth Clark, an art historian who wrote a classic book on the history of the nude in art:

Before the Crucifixion of Michelangelo we remember that the nude is, after all, the most serious of all subjects in art; and that it was not an advocate of paganism who wrote, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth."¹⁴

In contradiction to society's porno-prudish views, a nonsexual sight of the naked human body has proven to be a powerful means of God's grace in confronting porn addiction. David Martin's words, in his summarization of the *My Chains Are Gone* site, bear repeating:

. . . you will need to retrain your mind about nudity. Culturally, we have defined it as a sexual condition. You may need to find ways to experience it outside of a sexual context, even if only with your spouse or alone. The lies are really a house of cards. You'll be amazed how quickly they fall.

"*How can I go about giving this a try?*" is a legitimate question. Churches no longer practice the naked baptism ritual nor paint nudes on their ceilings and walls. It seems all the most readily available avenues for seeing the naked body are sexually defiling, like strip joints, smut shops, web porn. Where then can the average person find a nonsexual, non-exploitative observation of nudity?

I have a few suggestions, but none will work, unless your mind is open to the possibility that the naked *imago Dei* can actually serve as a holy, *iconic* revelation of the glory of God. On the other hand, with no religious or spiritual effort at all, many non-Christians have had their perspectives on nudity automatically transformed by their experience of *the naked truth* itself. This well-verified fact raises another obvious question for the Christian: *Shouldn't believers be even more successful in having their vision healed by learning to see the nude body through the eyes of its Maker?*

13. See it at http://www.vatican.va/various/cappelle/sistina_vr/ for a view of it.

14. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude – A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 29.

Using a Large Mirror

Some were led into misusing the nudity of others by misusing their own bodies as a stimulus for unholy sexual fantasy. If this is how you began to see nudity as synonymous with sexual expression, then even disrobing for a shower can bring on lustful thoughts. In such cases, practicing holy meditation in front of a full-length mirror can help break this unwholesome pattern.

With the mind and eyes of Christ, take a sober look at your nude body. Your naked skin is the garment you were born in and will die in. The Original Artist, who handcrafted the first copy of what you are carefully and prayerfully staring at, pronounced it “*very good*” (**Gen 1:31a**) after its creation. If our first parents hadn’t been sidetracked by Satan in the Garden, the birthday suit you see in the mirror would be the normal outfit for work and play for you and everyone else in the world.

Our society associates genitals with sexual activity and shame, but physiologically they’re magnificent! If you have trouble seeing their beauty in form, then learn to appreciate their beauty in function. God designed their anatomy specifically for procreation through sexual union. Society’s obsessive exaltation of genital pleasure—during that special union and beyond it in grossly defiling ways—trivializes God’s design and purpose of our genitals. But we can restore them to holy ground by focusing on the awesome gift and responsibility they represent as instruments of continuity in duplicating the *imago Dei* through sexual reproduction (**Gen 5:3**).

Meditate on the fact that the genitalia of Jesus visibly defined His gender. Ponder how His circumcised penis was often seen at public bathing areas throughout His life, even at His baptism. Finally it was mockingly displayed to the crowd as He hung on the Cross. God intentionally chose circumcision of the penile foreskin as a visible sign, reminding Israelites of the Abrahamic Covenant every time they saw it. Naked genitals are a major taboo of modern *body shame*. But, if we take God’s words in **Gen 1:27-28** about physical gender and sexual union literally, then to insinuate that our genitals are indecent or obscene is to slander the *imago Dei*.

Beyond prayerful lingering at the mirror, there are other ways to change the way we see our own personal nudity. Short periods of private nude sunbathing tend to erode a false view of our naked selves, as well as to replenish our all-too-frequent deficiencies of Vitamin D. You might also try getting into the practice of sleeping naked. A return to this common habit in human history—that is, giving the body a nightly break from clothing—is both healthy and restful. These activities can help to disassociate the state of mere nudity from an exclusive sexual focus. Learning to see our own normally naked bodies in a godly way is essential if we are to treat the nudity of others properly.

Using the World of Art

“*The nude alone is well dressed.*”
— Auguste Rodin, French sculptor (1840-1917)

[CAUTION: The marriage partnership requires openness and honesty. A married addict should tell his mate about his need and desire for healing, especially before attempting to use this last means of grace. Show her MCAG’s website. Most women appreciate how it confronts the sexual objectification of women. Let her read this article, too. If she was raised to see her body as a sex target, she may discover her own need for healing from body shame. But if unconvinced about body acceptance, she might suspect these next suggestions as merely an extension of your porn habits. If she is resistant or distrustful, then stick to the previous suggestions. Focus on rebuilding her trust in your love and marital commitment, even while staying determined to find freedom from porn. When you show improvement, she may surprise you by wanting to explore these other suggestions herself.]

Not everyone excels in doing art, but all can learn to appreciate it. We’re made in the image of the

Almighty Artist. That's why there's a degree of creativity in each of us, even though it may never find an avenue of *fine-art* expression.

If you think you don't like art, push yourself. Go to a museum or gallery where nudes are depicted. The use of nudity in art is very rarely associated with direct sexual activity, as it is in porn. Closely examine each painting or sculpture to discover the various elements that make the composition attractive or interesting. In admiring the skill of these figurative artists, remember that their nudes are only copies of the original artistry of the Master Sculptor.

If direct observation is unavailable, find books of artwork in a library or search for galleries on the internet. Don't just look. Read information about the works. Within an artist's personal thoughts, you may find a healthy view of nudity that can help correct a lingering unhealthiness in your own. In one book, which contained many nude works, the modern painter Steve Hanks wrote:

I believe that the pinnacle of art is in the nude. I always return to painting nudes in order to keep up my abilities in figure painting, but there is more to it than that. I also took a lot of art history classes which gave me a great respect for the nude, especially the way the nude has been treated throughout Western history. If you go back to Florence, which I've done, and look at the churches and government buildings that were built five hundred years ago, they are all adorned with beautiful sculptures and paintings of nudes. These nudes were seen as an expression of pride in humanity and as heavenly incarnations. Nowadays we couldn't do anything like that.

This makes me wonder, "What has changed?" The simple fact is that we are now bombarded with pornography. Now, more often than not, nudity is seen as a sexual, pornographic image. This is sad to me because when I studied the nude in school it was a celebration of life, a form of respect for people and the most difficult artistic challenge there is for an artist. There is nothing negative about it. I could give in and say "I won't do nudes because people will view them as pornographic." If I do that, I would be giving no voice to a respectable way of viewing the human body.¹⁵

Porno-film makers have prolifically abused the video arts, but if movies were your doorway into porn addiction, they might be a doorway out. Unfortunately, Hollywood usually exploits nudity sexually. However, films like *Schindler's List* show how video drama can use nudity in nonsexual ways that send a different message.

In the heyday of traditional nudism, a small number of films wove nudism's counter-cultural lifestyle into their plots. One low-budget example from 1961, *Diary of a Nudist*—a 2-star in my opinion, and mentioned here only because of its online availability from a public domain archive—has no sexual message in its story or its nudity. A more realistic, superbly directed French film from 1991, *La belle noiseuse* (I give it 4-star), shows a woman's personal transformation as she models for an old, frustrated artist; lots of nudity and tedious melodrama, but no sexuality.

Focusing on the nonsexually naked *imago Dei*, displayed in films and other artwork, is extremely therapeutic. It disentangles nudity from popular sexual illusions and reconnects commonly exploited body parts to the personal identities of their owners.

Think of it. Living people posed unashamedly as references for the paintings and sculptures we enjoy. The people in movies like *Schindler's List* knew that millions of viewers would see them in their God-given birthday suits. These naked models and actors have names and souls, even if they've already left this life. The Bible says we and they will all spend eternity in physically resurrected bodies. Believers, above all others, should see the nudity of these people as a normal dimension of their individual personalities. Clothed or unclothed, their flesh embodies the dynamic and sacred *imago Dei*. When you learn to apply that truth automatically each time you see the naked human form, your addiction to porn will meet its death.

15. *Moving On - The Art of Steve Hanks* (Seymour, CT: Greenwich Workshop Press, 2007), p. 114.

There's an even more direct way to extinguish a false view of nudity through art. Sign up for a life-drawing class or attend some open figure-drawing sessions. Don't laugh at this idea! Anyone can at least draw stick figures. That's where I started at age 55. Granted, I was serious about learning art, but hopefully you're serious about getting free from porn.

You've squandered many hours indulging in the sexual nudity of pornographic fantasies. Why not spend a mere fraction of that time on the rewarding task of drawing a real live person who is nonsexually naked? You fed your eyes on falsehoods. In this endeavor, you must feed them on God's reality. You will be forced to stare at nudity; forced to study every curve and line of the naked body; forced to capture on paper a semblance of the Maker's design in the unclad *imago Dei*. Whatever unrealistic ideas you've imagined about figure drawing, they will quickly disintegrate in the stark presence of a nude model, male or female.

There's always a fee involved to participate in these sessions, but it's an investment in guaranteed therapy. All you need is a pencil, a pad of drawing paper, and a mind ready to learn a new way of praising the Creator for His awesome handiwork. Even if you can't carry a tune, you sing hymns and praise songs at church. So, don't let poor drawing skills stop you from extolling God for His creative masterpiece by trying to copy from it! You'll quickly find this challenging exercise to be an effective means of grace! You may even decide to take up art as a hobby, as I have.

In transition to a final suggestion, I'll mention another practical way to participate in the art of the nude: *become the naked model yourself*. I'm not necessarily suggesting that you become a paid model for art classes, although that might offer valuable lessons. Rather, I'm thinking about opportunities where you can join a naked crowd of other nonprofessional volunteers posing for massive art projects. Spencer Tunick is widely known for orchestrating this kind of photographic composition on a grand scale in major cities around the world. Jack Gescheidt has done the same on a smaller scale with his Tree Spirit Project. There may be others doing group-projects of photographic art using voluntary nude models.

Tunick's work is well-known with many examples of his fine-art projects online. Thousands of volunteers travel great distances to be in his photo shoots. You may not care about his concept of art, but being surrounded by so many other naked people will instantly quench a distorted, fantasized view of nudity. Joining a project like this takes energy, money, and time. Even if only a once-in-a-lifetime event, it would be a strong dose of reality therapy to undermine a stubborn, pornographic view of the human body. However, there's an easier, less expensive way to obtain the same lesson.

Visiting a Safe, Clothing Optional Location

Some people have had the good fortune to stumble accidentally into nonsexual, mixed-gender, clothing optional situations. Maybe along a secluded beach, or at a hot springs resort, or even on a vacation trip abroad, they came across a picture of nudity that didn't fit their preconceived mental frame for it. Such an episode happened to Paul M. Bowman while hiking in Idaho:

. . . . When I entered the clearing, there were probably forty or fifty people scattered about, soaking in the pools. As I neared the first pool, an attractive college age girl looked up at me, smiled and simply said, "Hi, how are you doing?"

She was stark naked—and completely comfortable and at ease with it. All the hillside pools were occupied by groups of naked people, and all totally at peace, as if they were a permanent part of the natural environment. . . .

The scene didn't seem to make sense. I had been taught that when naked men and women got together they became so full of lust that all kinds of licentiousness took place. Yet, here was a scene totally contrary to that notion. There were groups of college friends, some families with their children, and even obvious strangers, about evenly divided between males and females, all mixing together

enjoying the sunshine and the warm pools with no sign of anything sinful taking place. . . .

. . . a hillside full of innocuous naked men, women, boys and girls seemed so contrary to what I'd learned in church about nakedness that I knew that I would have to study to see exactly what the Bible really did say about nakedness. . . . I was completely mystified at how what I had been taught could be so at odds with what I saw in actual practice.¹⁶

A similar, less dramatic discovery was made by a Christian friend of mine. While traveling alone, she stopped for a few hours at a mineral-bath retreat center and learned that one section of the complex was clothing optional. On a whim, she bravely chose to join others who were sunbathing and spending pool-time without swimsuits. Her experience, which she described as *exhilarating*, immediately changed her previous ideas about the naked body. She told me she hoped she'd be able to have that experience again.

When I began massage therapy courses, it was at a school that rented facilities from a hot springs resort where accommodations were co-ed. A hostess led me into a dressing room near the Watsu training pools and assigned me a cubicle for my belongings. Men and women were showering and changing in and out of swimsuits openly, as if it was completely normal. There was no disrespect, no gawking, no sensuous activity. Everything was aboveboard.

This same unashamed attitude about nudity reigned in the massage classes. As an RN, I knew social nudity only in a one-way direction. Here, the tables were turned. To trade places during practice sessions, the students just disrobed and climbed under the sheets. No one had qualms about getting undressed in front of each other, and I got used to having none either.

At the resort's pools and saunas—which students were allowed to use during free time—swimsuits were optional. A sign was posted alerting guests to report inappropriate sexual behavior, but I never saw any. Families with children were there skinny-dipping, and I decided to join them. One elderly Slavic lady I met told me how much she appreciated this resort because it reminded her of similar places in her homeland. During my years of massage training, I met several Christians swimming naked without shame at those pools.

These wholesome experiences with nonsexual social nudity stamped body acceptance indelibly into my thinking. Before this time, I was completely comfortable seeing others naked in the hospital environment. After wards, I felt totally at ease being seen in my own naked skin.

If such a setting would serve as a means of grace to help break your addiction, it would be foolish to wait until you stumble onto skinny-dippers at a secluded riverbank. Yet, it's dangerous to assume that all places waving "clothing optional" banners are therapeutic and safe. Because our prudishly pornified culture has wedded nudity with lust, sexual promiscuity is often a planned objective for some who frequent such places. Caution is warranted, if this particular path is chosen to help you fight porn addiction.

Many resorts, like the one where I attended massage school, uphold and enforce morally high standards. But all cost money. Clothing optional locations free to the public may be distant. Also, some venues have been overrun with the sexually indulgent rather than body-friendly people. Careful research and planning are needed to find a morally sound atmosphere for calmly meditating on the *imago Dei* in your own naked body and those of others around you. Such a safe context can be a strong mental eraser of porno-prudery's indoctrination and of pornography's allure. For many, it was at just such a place that they finally won their battle with porn.

If this is what you need to bring your own problem with porn addiction to extinction, then pray for God's guidance, and don't go without it. The naked truth can set you free, whether you follow this last suggestion or not. But if God wants to use a wholesome experience of nudity as a means of grace in

16. From Preface to *Nakedness and the Bible* by Paul M. Bowman (Ferndale, WA: Amity Marketing Service, 2001), v-vi.

your life, then seek His wisdom in how, when and where it should happen. You may be surprised at how rapidly His guidance comes. I believe this is because God knows that, if you haven't discovered the truth yet in intellectual ways, you won't be able to avoid recognizing it in this very practical way.

God may use other things to help the truth of body acceptance sink in and liberate you from porn addiction. These "further helps" are not ultimate remedies but various means by which God's grace can help remove mental or spiritual hindrances that block the truth from transforming your thinking. Again, Jesus declared that the truth alone sets us free. So, if a careful and thorough reading of the MCAG articles have not brought that freedom, then pray about using one or more of these suggestions I've presented.