

Just as this poem expresses my heart's true prayer, I pray this article reveals the truth that can set you free. Your freedom must begin with Jesus—the Truth Who is a Person and Who makes us God's children by new birth. That freedom continues as Christ's view of the body and of human sexuality affirms the sacred, gender-distinctive embodiment of both yourself and others. Believing, adopting and applying His view of reality will close your account with pornography's fantasy world. God's grace through the Holy Spirit is ever-present to support your decision to embrace His truth, and the pastoral team at MCAG are here to assist in whatever way we can.

\* \* \* \* \*

***My Chains Are Gone*** combats porn addiction at its philosophical and religious roots, helping set porn addicts free through God's truth about the human body.

Visit MCAG at <http://mychainsaregone.org>

\* \* \* \* \*

### Endnotes

1. <http://mychainsaregone.org/articles/pornographic-view/>
2. <http://mychainsaregone.org/articles/pornography-addiction/>
3. For an extensive testimonial that exemplifies how shame prevents seeking or finding help from those who legalistically teach prudery and body shame, read *Beggar's Daughter* by Jessica Harris.
4. From the article "Why More and More Women Are Using Pornography" in *The Guardian* (April 7, 2011), which included a quote from Jason Dean, a counselor to the porn-addicted.
5. <http://mychainsaregone.org/articles/the-imago-dei/>
6. MCAG's Blog (at <http://mychainsaregone.org/faqwhat-about-masturbation-part-1/>) has a series of FAQ articles on *masturbation* that similarly depart from the traditional 'sinful' view of it.

## FREEDOM FOR PORN-ADDICTED WOMEN

*by Rev. David L. Hatton, RN*

Pornography has never been simply a *male* problem. It has always affected women by misrepresenting them as sex objects for men's enjoyment. It often robs them of intimacy with husbands whose porn addiction has stifled marital affection. But female sex drives are just as susceptible to misdirection as those of men. In our sex-obsessed culture, women increasingly fall prey to porn's allurements. Rather than quote the latest statistics about female addiction to porn, let me offer some insights on its causes and hope for its cure.

Although created for male readers, the MCAG website is *woman-friendly*. It has helped both men and women gain a godly perspective on *body acceptance*. Studying or reviewing its core articles might enhance your grasp of this one. My own two contributions might especially be helpful, because "The Pornographic View of the Body"<sup>1</sup> is the common element in "Pornography Addiction."<sup>2</sup> Porn's focus is on *sexual self-gratification*. We purchase it by *objectifying* other human beings. Without that *sexual objectification of persons*, pornography loses its main tool for sustaining the sexual fantasy that supports a viewer's self-gratifying thrill.

### Depersonalized Then Commercialized

In good mental health, all aspects of a person are integrated. God's plan of salvation and sanctification targets our "whole spirit and soul and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). When bare bodies are objectified, it isolates them from the people who live in them. Disassociating gender-distinctive body parts from their owner fails to treat them as true components of personal identity. It reduces men and women to something less than their full humanity. That reduction is the essential groundwork for pornography's success.

While God created us "male and female" for the purpose of reproduction (Genesis 1:27-28a), He also designed our reproductive anatomy to offer mutual pleasure during sexual union. God blessed humans with this orgasmic gift to enhance relational communion between spouses. But its physiological function works before and beyond reproductive purposes. This opens sexual intercourse to immoral misuse outside the marital bond and to immoral mental abuse through pornography.

Just as objectification isolates the body from the person, so pleasurable sexual activity can become disassociated from God's purposes. This rift between sexual thrill-seeking and God's intentions for wedded love commercializes sexuality, turning it into a form of promiscuous pleasure-shopping. Porn is profitable only because *sex sells!* Objectified sexual thrill is its currency.

## The Way In . . . But Why Stay In?

Because secrecy surrounds involvement in pornography, some porn-addicted women think they're alone or in a shameful minority: "Only bad girls, like me, get into such a 'filthy' habit." Others may assume their stories are identical to those of all others who get hooked on porn. But just as men get drawn into it in a variety of ways, so do women. My research leads me to believe that most women will resonate with at least one or more of the following scenarios.

Some girls started out merely trying to satisfy natural childhood curiosity. When families and churches failed to provide safe, wholesome avenues for familiarity with nonsexual human nudity, these girls checked out the Web. There, the porn industry fed them its own twisted agenda. With pornography's help, a legitimate fascination with God's magnificent artistry in the human body gradually morphed into fantasizing forbidden activities on the devil's playground.

Pornography's hook is God's awesomely handcrafted beauty in the naked human body. Nothing in creation surpasses the grace and glory shown in the embodiment of *His image*. Porn distorts that glory-filled reflection, perverting its sacred display and effectively blocking godly thoughts about it. Once captured by porn's false image of our gender-distinctive anatomy, girls raised in prudish and legalistic environments may see no hope of leaving it. The shame of their sinful habits—especially when church leaders call them "*only a male problem*"—walls off any hope for a solution from those whose focus merely fans the flames of their shame.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes youthful self-exploration led adventurous girls from the pleasant sensations of self-stimulation into a prison of habitual compulsions. Whether they occur from coitus or from masturbation, orgasms were designed by God to offer to married couples an elevated brain-chemical 'high' that begs repeating:

Orgasm releases a dopamine-oxytocin high that has been compared to a heroin hit, and many regular users of internet porn report experiencing an almost trance-like effect that not only makes them feel oblivious to the world, but also gives them a sense of power that they don't have in real life. "The PC becomes an erogenous zone. The more you keep trying to put porn out of your mind, the more it keeps popping back in. The brain then learns that porn is the only way to cope with anxiety. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

While both men and women may use pornographic depictions of sexual acts as fantasy-support for masturbation, most men can manually induce a climax without visual stimulus. Some women, however, desire or require imaginative narration beyond the visual in order to supplement their stimulation. One woman privately confided to me:

" . . . it's generally very important to have some kind of story or text – just pictures don't usually do anything for me, at least. And that makes it nigh impossible to masturbate without fantasizing or using porn to provide that mental component. . . . So

and honored pulpits.

In a complete *change of mind* (*metanoia*, the biblical word for *repentance*), a porn-addicted woman must learn to see and treat her body as *a temple of the Holy Spirit* (1 Corinthians 6:19), "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14) in *the image of the Almighty Creator*. Her sexuality and its powerful drives are part of that holy *temple* and *image*. In that divine identity alone lies her freedom from porn addiction.

If you haven't sensed it already in this or my other articles, my concluding poem will surely convey how intensely I feel about the nature of our gender-distinctive bodies as God's sacred territory. This is perhaps my most impassioned rebuke to society and religion for objectifying women, whose bodies were meant to reflect their Maker.

### WOMAN

She is woman . . . and much abused:  
Her lovely womb and breasts and buttocks were infused  
With sordid meaning, twisted thought,  
By vain imagination packaged, sold, and bought.  
A wayward culture holds her chain,  
And even sermons preach the sex-obsessed refrain  
That turns her body parts and skin  
Into ignition points for carnal lust and sin.

Yet in her flesh, along with man,  
She bears the image of the Maker's master plan  
For a Self-portrait, so designed  
That in their bodies they declare His holy mind.  
God's leadership and strength is shown  
In shoulder breadth and muscle, for which men are known.  
But women's wombs, that swell for birth,  
Reflect God's own heart pregnant with creation's worth.  
And in their breasts, where babies feed,  
We see the nurture from God's bosom humans need.  
These signs laid bare in wholesome light  
Should launch our souls to praise God's glory at the sight.

She is woman. . . Lord, set her free  
To be the temple You intended her to be.  
And let Your church repent her rape,  
By calling lewd the beauty of her shape.  
Since in her flesh You wish to dwell,  
Lord, damn these lies that make her form a path to hell.

— David L. Hatton, 12/31/2009  
(from *Poems Between Birth and Resurrection* © 2013)

The porn-addicted woman's hope for freedom is to live out her true identity in God, physically and spiritually. This is a full-circle return to one of MCAG's core articles: "The *Imago Dei*."<sup>5</sup> Our self-understanding comes from being created "*in the image of God*." Male and female porn addiction, and the porno-prudery that fuels it, will persist until we mentally abandon the sexually objectified view of the human body taught to us all our lives. God's evaluation of our naked embodiment—as His "*very good*" divine image and sacred temple—must reign supreme in our minds and hearts.

This divine view of ourselves calls for a realistic perspective not just on the sight of external anatomy and the sacredness of human sexuality, but on the highly controversial subject of masturbation. Because of its close association with pornography, porn-addicted men and women must gain a renewed view of it. Just as human nudity itself has wrongly been an object of religious and social sexualization, so has masturbation. This has caused many believers to worry about its '*sinfulness*.' But biblically, their real concern should be their practice of mentally joining sinful fantasizing to this common process of self-stimulation.

There's no way around this aspect of our Creator's design: the manual release of a pent-up sex drive brings pleasant relief. But so does blowing your nose, instead of waiting for a gratifying sneeze. In our God-given human physiology, masturbation is quite an ordinary 'pop-off valve' for the hormonal tension sexually natural to humans, when that tension's build-up has not been released by conjugal intercourse. Regardless of strong religious opinions and the religious authorities who state them, the Bible never calls masturbation a sin, because Scripture is silent about it.

But that isn't the case with "vain imaginations" and lustful visual fantasies. When sexually immoral intentions from the heart or unholy depictions from pornography are used in conjunction with masturbation, Christ calls it mental "*adultery*" (Matthew 5:28). This is why self-stimulation, if used for *sexual tension-release*, must be separated from lustful mental fantasies. Those imaginary associations were learned, and they can be unlearned by a renewed, God-honoring view of the human body. When that separation is successful, a brief, controlled episode of physical relief can offer a peaceful night's sleep, rather than one disrupted by uncontrolled orgasmic dreams that might include immoral fantasies.<sup>6</sup>

### Conclusion: a New Way of Seeing

Men can quit porn's monopoly game by ceasing to treat the female body as a self-gratifying sexual commodity. Women caught in the same false economy can find freedom by no longer treating their bodies as slot machines for pleasure-coins minted by the porn industry. There's no jackpot of true *self-esteem* won using porn's 'play-money.' Women must stop selling themselves short of their true value as sexually embodied persons. And they must proactively resist the voices that sexually objectify their femininity, even if they resound from otherwise respected

while men may be able to orgasm just from the physical act of masturbation, I think women in general will find that far more difficult, and that greatly limits our ability to relieve our sex drives."

When a repetitive neuro-chemical reward is coupled with a woman's heightened need for fantasy, she may feel helpless in trying to break free from porn.

Another sad scenario is where a young girl's first experience with nudity was the sexual abuse of her own naked body. Childhood's defenseless submission to such a degrading assault caused her to grow up feeling 'dirty,' worthless, not normal. But upon finding her past sexual trauma glamorized in porn photos, her discovery distorted her memory by reinterpreting reality: "*See! Your experience was typical, expected, even desirable*." Then their porn habit becomes a temporary 'feel-good' salve to soothe the hurt of old wounds that keep growing deeper.

Or worse, that same girl might have falsely identified with her abuse: "*Just like these girls in the videos, I gravitate toward this crap! I'm one of them!*" Past sexual trauma, present sexual sin, or even continuing to watch porn itself—while convinced of its wrongness—can perpetuate her sense of defilement. She may hide this falsely adopted self-identity beneath the personal facade of 'a normal girl.' Yet actually, this carefully constructed social *mask* may really be more *her* than her unhealed self is willing or able to believe.

A woman might have been misled to feel *religious shame* for even having 'a strong sex drive'—a trait mistakenly preached as only characterizing men. Sadly, this religious error may keep her involved with porn as a dysfunctional confirmation of her own guilt-ridden self-concept: "*It's my curse . . . I'm so messed up, it can't be fixed!*" Because of such thinking, viewing porn may serve as an indirect form of self-punishment, which a girl imagines she deserves for her 'oversexed' habits.

This *shame factor* might also be connected to a *fear of intimacy*. Imaginary individuals are less threatening than real persons; sex objects make less demands than living subjects. Fantasy-lust and cybersex do not include the hard work and struggle of a real relationship, like the one sealed in a 'for-better-or-worse' marriage vow between two strong wills. Seemingly, the porn addict is *on her own*, in control. No need to fear conflict, failed performance, lack of acceptance, venereal diseases, unintended pregnancies, and all the other messy risks avoided by *self-sex*. But porn's promise is a lie: the sexual autonomy it offers is a ploy that eventually puts porn in the driver's seat.

I've also known women whose first exposure to porn was through boyfriends who had them watch 'sex-ploitation' videos to see how a girl could enjoy performing in the popular perversions. Duped emotionally into thinking, "*This is how to win and keep his affection*," they began emulating the persona of submissive girls portrayed by porn stars. The result of this repetitive role-playing was to adopt the mindset of the script. The role itself finally took over. Her new self-image became the star of a distorted drama played out on a stage of sexual props with porn as the director.

## Your Investment in Female Depreciation

That last point reveals another aspect of women's addiction to porn. It's obvious to them and to everyone else that these pornographic portrayals are grossly demeaning to women. So, what's the kickback? Where's the remuneration? There must be a takeaway. Otherwise, why did so many women devour the erotic 'bondage' novel *50 Shades of Grey*, turning it into a bestseller and making its movie-version a 500-million-dollar blockbuster?

Beyond investing in the porn-drama for its orgasmic excitement, a woman can find in porn's objectified sexual thrill a kind of *mental cash-flow*. Even if she knows her body isn't the 'eye candy' showcased by porn-models, her equipment still works in the pleasure-market. The more she buys into pornography's role-playing game, the more she gains imaginary sexual leverage, a mental form of sexual clout, validated by its orgasmic payoff. Because porn advertises her value in a consumer-relationship with men, tapping into that evaluation becomes an emotional 'fix,' a shot of self-confidence, a reassurance of power in porn's fictitious economy.

Contemplate carefully the full impact in this repeating cycle. The porn addict transfers a young model's deposit of lost personal dignity into her own account as a stimulating sexual dividend. For this transaction to work without realistically falling apart, the porn model must never be seen as a real person with normal desires and emotions. She must remain an object, a tool, a trade-commodity. Banish the thought that she might be a troubled, high school drop-out or a single mom selling her body like a prostitute to make ends meet. The mind must stay self-absorbed, focused on the goal of self-gratification, until the episode plays out to its climax. And the mental block must continue even after the session ends, or guilt from her lack of compassion will only add to the pain of emotional emptiness left by porn's aftermath.

For women caught up in this depressing game, porn has already determined their 'net worth' in terms of feminine body parts. They watch men seemingly control the commerce, but they get to treat their own bodies as the sought-after merchandise. Although watching women become objects for sexual consumption, they can make a *short-term profit* from the arrangement by temporarily joining it, imagining themselves a part of the show. But participating in that fantasy—either to release tension by an orgasmic 'high' or to replenish an emotionally diminished sexual ego—has a *long-term downside*: porn-addicted women spend their true self-worth on imaginary relational assets which are totally worthless in real life.

## Opening the Door to Your True Identity

It's basic physiology that an orgasmic response is functional in the male and female bodies of many animals. But our *animal* bodies have an amazingly elevated status in creation. Humans surpass all other creatures, including angels, because we *embody the image of the Creator*. While a sex drive and the capacity for sexual

enjoyment are parts of our total selves, our personally integrated *self-image* finds fulfillment only in reflecting the One Whose image we bear. In that divine reflection alone can we realize our true value and true identity, as individuals and as a race.

The modern church isn't silent about the porn epidemic. But it has failed both society and its many porn-addicted members by ignoring the human body's crucial role in imaging God. That neglect is behind the religious attempts to fight porn with woman-unfriendly solutions based on body shame. And yet, in Genesis 1:27, the Bible's first and foremost adjectives used in describing God's image are not theological or psychological terms but physical ones: "male and female." Because Christians—when it comes to women's bodies—have generally avoided the practical implications of this divine revelation, I believe God has had to go outside the church to find other voices to bless. Those who unwittingly use His principles to speak out against pornography are most often the feminists.

Feminist lecturers are notorious for being the loudest and most prophetic in denouncing the way our culture demeans and exploits women by reducing them to female body parts. They urge women to rebel against this *sexualization*—to toss the script that has them playing the role of society's *sexual toys*. When feminists exhort women to see themselves wholistically—finding their self-worth in the valuable persons they truly are, not in cultural or religious definitions that treat them as *sexual objects*—they are preaching God's truth. Why do women who hear and heed this part of the feminist message find freedom? Because *the truth sets people free*.

Humanity's 'final frontier' isn't exploring the cosmos but discovering *who we are*. From childhood to old age, the *search for personal identity* is life's biggest quest. Only in "I AM" (Exodus 3:14), Who created us in His image, is our question "*Who am I?*" fully answered. *New birth in Christ*, Who is "the express image of [God's] person" (Hebrews 1:3), begins the resolution of our cosmic *identity crisis*. But *growing in Christ* means learning to have His "mind" toward others, who also bear God's image. If we put others—like porn-models—ahead of ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4), we won't be profiting from their degradation but praying for their deliverance. The attitude of practicing self-denial in Christ spells bankruptcy for pornography, which is totally driven by self-interest.

## Closing the Door on a False Identity

A false self-image translates into a false lifestyle. Eve took forbidden fruit because it seemed *edible, pretty, and prestigious* (Genesis 3:6). It promised a world of *physical, visual and personal* satisfaction. But in warning us about gaining "the whole world" and losing our souls, Jesus said, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it," (Matthew 16:25). By living in surrender to "the mind of Christ," we lose only our *false selves*, which have been either squeezed or stretched to fit worldly patterns. Only in Christ's light and life alone can we find our *true selves*, our full humanity.