



# Pornography

## Harmless or Toxic?

The world today is awash with pornography.\* It may be found in advertisements, fashion, movies, music, and magazines, as well as on television, video games, smartphones, mobile devices, Web sites, and now online photo-sharing services. Pornography, it seems, is a prominent feature of popular culture. More people in more places are consuming more pornography than at any other time in history. —See the box “Facts About Pornography.”

The nature of pornography is also changing. Professor Gail Dines writes: “Images today have now become so extreme that what used to be considered hard-core is now mainstream pornography.”

How do you view those trends? Is pornography a harmless pastime, a deadly poison, or something in between? Jesus said: “Every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit.” (Matthew 7:17) What fruitage does pornography produce? To find the answers, let us consider some basic questions about pornography.

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\* The term “pornography” refers to sexually explicit material that is designed to arouse the viewer, reader, or listener. It can include pictures as well as written and audio material.

## How does pornography affect individuals?

**WHAT EXPERTS SAY:** Pornography is highly addictive, with some researchers and therapists even likening it to crack cocaine.

Brian,\* who was hooked on Internet pornography, relates: “Nothing would stop me. I felt like I was in some sort of trance. I would literally shake and develop pains in my head. I struggled to stop, but years later I was still addicted.”

People who indulge in pornography often cover up their habit. They are secretive and deceitful. Not surprisingly, many suffer from feelings of isolation, shame, anxiety, depression, and anger. In some cases, they even develop suicidal tendencies. “My mood became self-absorbed and desperate,” says Serge, who downloaded porn to his mobile phone almost daily. “I felt worthless, guilty, alone, and trapped. I was too embarrassed and scared to seek help.”

Even a fleeting or accidental brush with pornography can have a negative impact. Testifying before a U.S. Senate committee, Dr. Judith Reisman, a leading researcher on pornography, said: “Pornographic visual images imprint and alter the brain, triggering an instant, involuntary, but lasting, biochemical memory trail [that is] difficult or impossible to delete.” Susan, 19, who was exposed to pornographic Web sites, relates: “The images are engraved on my mind. They pop up unexpectedly. It feels like I will never completely be able to erase them.”

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Pornography enslaves and wreaks havoc on its victims.—2 Peter 2:19.

\* Names in this article have been changed.



## How does pornography affect families?

**WHAT EXPERTS SAY:** “Couples and families break up over porn.”—*The Porn Trap*, by Wendy and Larry Maltz.

Pornography damages marriages and families by

- Undermining marital trust, intimacy, and love.—Proverbs 2:12-17.
- Promoting selfishness, emotional aloofness, and dissatisfaction with one’s mate.—Ephesians 5:28, 29.
- Fueling unhealthy sexual fantasies and cravings.—2 Peter 2:14.
- Tempting users to force objectionable sex practices on their mate.—Ephesians 5:3, 4.
- Promoting emotional and physical infidelity.—Matthew 5:28.

The Bible tells marriage mates not to “deal treacherously” with each other. (Malachi 2:16) Infidelity is the kind of treachery that can devastate



a marriage and lead to separation and divorce. Such breakups, in turn, harm the children from the marriage.

Pornography can also hurt children more directly. Brian, mentioned earlier, explains: "When I was about ten, I accidentally found my father's pornographic magazines while playing hide-and-seek. I started looking at them secretly, not really understanding why I was attracted to such images. That started a destructive cycle that lasted way into my adult years." Studies show that pornography can influence adolescents to become sexually active at younger ages and also to become promiscuous, sexually violent, and emotionally and psychologically unstable.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Pornography poisons loving relationships and ultimately brings heartache and pain.—Proverbs 6:27.

## FACTS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY



### EVERY SECOND:

Nearly **30,000** persons view pornographic Web sites.



### EVERY MINUTE:

Internet users send more than **1.7 MILLION** pornographic e-mails.



### EVERY HOUR:

Nearly **TWO** hard-core pornographic videos are released in the United States.



### EVERY DAY:

An average of more than **TWO MILLION** pornographic movies are rented in the United States alone.



### EVERY MONTH:

Nearly **9 out of 10** young men and 3 out of 10 young women in the United States view pornography.



### EVERY YEAR:

The global pornography industry generates an estimated **\$100 BILLION** (U.S.).

## What does the Bible say about pornography?

**GOD’S WORD SAYS:** “Deaden, therefore, your body members . . . as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”  
—Colossians 3:5.

Simply put, Jehovah\* God hates pornography. This is not because he is prudish about sex. He created our sexual powers and purposed that marriage mates use them for the sake of pleasing one another, drawing close emotionally, and sharing the wonder of bringing children into the world.—James 1:17.

Why, then, can we assert that Jehovah feels so strongly about pornography? Consider just a few reasons.

- He knows that pornography can wreck lives.—Ephesians 4:17-19.
- He loves us and wants to protect us from harm.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.
- Jehovah wants to safeguard marriages and families.—Matthew 19:4-6.
- He wants us to be morally clean and to respect the rights of others.—1 Thessalonians 4:3-6.
- He wants us to respect our procreative powers and use them in an honorable way.—Hebrews 13:4.
- Jehovah knows that pornography reflects a warped, selfish, satanic view of sex.—Genesis 6:2; Jude 6, 7.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Pornography damages a person’s friendship with God.—Romans 1:24.

\* Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.



Jehovah, however, has great compassion for those wanting to escape pornography’s grip. The Bible states: “Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:8, 14) He invites humble ones to turn to him to “obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time.”—Hebrews 4:16; see the box “Breaking Free From Pornography.”

Countless individuals have accepted God’s help. Is his help effective? Notice what the Bible says about some who overcame bad habits: “You have been washed clean, . . . you have been sanctified, . . . you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11) Like the apostle Paul, such ones can declare: “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.”—Philippians 4:13.

Susan, who overcame her addiction to pornography, declares: “Jehovah is the only one who can help you get back on track. If you ask for his help and guidance, you can gain a clean standing before him. He will *not* let you down.”





## Breaking Free From Pornography

Do you know someone who is struggling to escape pornography addiction? Consider some steps that have helped many to break free.

### 1. Pray to God.

“The most important step in overcoming the snare of pornography is to ask for Jehovah’s help in prayer.”—Franz.

Jehovah can give the person holy spirit, empowering him “both to will and to act.” (Philippians 2:13) If the person yields to its leading, it will help him to conquer wrong “passions and desires.”—Galatians 5:16, 24.

### 2. Get help from others.

“Pornography addiction is so secretive and shameful that you feel you can’t ask for help. You think you can beat it by yourself. But that is not true. You can beat it only with help. So I swallowed my pride and opened up to my wife. I also sought the help of a trusted friend. It was the

hardest thing that I have ever had to do, but I got the help I needed.”—Yoshi.

Confiding in others will take courage and determination. Yet, it is a vital step toward conquering the addiction and reconnecting with loved ones. Susan, mentioned earlier, relates: “Afterward, I felt a huge gush of relief. Those moments were painful, but they resulted in feelings of peace and approval.”—James 5:16.

### 3. Identify and avoid potential triggers.

What situations, thoughts, or emotions trigger wrong desires? Surfing the Internet? Watching late-night TV? Reading magazines? Visiting the beach? Being hungry, angry, alone, or tired? “Identify your weaknesses, and avoid them like the plague,” says Sven. Jesus said: “If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you.”—Matthew 5:29.

“When I’m tempted to gaze lustfully at a woman, I immediately pray to Jehovah and force my eyes to look away,” says Franz. The faithful Bible patriarch Job said: “I have made a solemn promise never to look with lust at a girl.”—Job 31:1, *Today’s English Version*.

### 4. Strengthen spirituality.

“Fill your mind with wholesome thoughts, and fill your life with spiritual activities,” adds Franz.

The Bible states: “Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things . . . , and the God of peace will be with you.”—Philippians 4:8, 9. ■