

# The Lust of the Eyes

By John R. Meuther

The first letter of John contains an exhortation for the church to resist worldliness. The apostle paints the world as the kingdom of darkness, under the power of evil, and he gives clear guidance to his readers: choose the light rather than the darkness. "*Do not love the world or anything in the world*" (2:15). In the next verse ([click here to view the whole passage](#)), John describes three examples of worldliness: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Of the three, the first and the third are easy to understand: illicit sensual pleasure and boastful materialism. But what about the middle warning? What does John mean when he warns against the lust of the eyes?

Many commentators see this simply as an amplification of the first warning. According to this interpretation, the warning against lust warrants elaboration, because the eyes, more than the other senses, tempt the believer toward sexual immorality.

Yet the flow of the argument seems to suffer if the second is merely a reiteration of the first. Something else, or at least something more, seems to be in John's mind. More likely it refers, in addition to sexual lust, to anything that entices the eye. Lust of the eyes is the tendency for us to be captivated by the outward, the visible, and the tangible. In C.H. Dodd's words, it is the "tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things, without inquiring into their real value." The "lust" that John has in view here then is an instability, a rootlessness and a restlessness.

Josef Pieper makes an eloquent application of John's teaching to modern times: "[The lust of the eyes] surrounds itself with the restlessness of a perpetual moving picture of meaningless shows, and with the literally deafening noise of impressions and sensations breathlessly rushing past the windows of the senses."

Modern restlessness is the product of our technologically driven culture, and Pieper suggests it is an inclination that is not limited to the eyes. Writing prophetically in a pre-video era, J. Gresham Machen lamented the sterility and "unrelieved drabness" that technology brought to modern life. The modern American "has to have somebody else amuse him all the time. Leave him alone for five minutes, and he has to turn on his radio. It seems to make very little difference to him what the radio gives forth. All he wants is that some kind of physical impact shall be made on his ear-drums. ... Turn off his radio even for a moment and the appalling emptiness of his life is at once revealed." This "lust of the ear" can be as dangerous as the lust of the eye.

In our day, however, nothing so powerfully introduces these temptations as the television. When Christians condemn television, often they focus their attack on

sex, violence, or the advertising-induced consumerism. Generally, such criticisms are valid and important, but they miss the greater problem with television: the lust of the eyes that it generates by its instantaneous, transient, and never-ending flood of moving images. As Marshall McLuhan noted, when we watch it, it is massaging us all the time, not only during its perfidious commercials. The overpowering and hypnotic effect of its images erode critical thinking and discernment at all times, whatever the content.

Bruce Edwards has written that television demands only one commandment. "Watch and do not speak. Watch and do not act. Watch and remain still, placid, passive. Watch: unself-consciously, docilely, imperturbably. Watch: losing yourself in the mediated world, ignoring your own."

What is wrong with such modern restlessness? The assault of these images deadens our sensibilities. Perhaps no one understood this better than Andy Warhol. Capitalizing on our culture's lust of the eyes, Warhol's pop art cynically strung together a repetition of images, from Elvis to soup cans to car wrecks. The effect, according to Gene Veith, was that "the tragic and trivial were reduced to banality."

As Ken Myers has written, the lust of the eyes induces careless habits and atrophies the cultivation of Christian virtues. Restlessness is "likely to be an obstacle to prayer, to concerted reflection, and to attentiveness to the needs of others."

We are distracted from our Christian vocations, turning from the world of our neighbors toward virtual worlds, artificial worlds, and passive worlds. Further, it erodes an appreciation for permanence and stability in our lives, privileging instead the novel and the ephemeral. Our TVs and PCs and VCRs especially bind us to the transitoriness of this world.

In 1 John, the apostle sees these temptations as folly. It is foolish to desire the world, because the world and its desires are passing away. When we become addicted to the transitory things of this world, we are closed to the permanent things, to God and to the imperishable eschatological world that is dawning.

Lust of the eyes, therefore, robs us of our heavenly-mindedness. By recklessly pursuing the tangible and the visible, we can all too easily forget that faith is being certain of what we do not see. Moreover, in our addiction for more and more images, and more and more information, we have conflated wisdom and information. The Bible, however, carefully distinguishes the two, and we must allow wisdom to place limits on our appetite for information. In short, Christians must place limits on the lusts of their senses, and restrain themselves by developing technological asceticism.

In John Updike's "Rabbit" tetralogy, we see graphically illustrated the spontaneous, undisciplined, and lustful character of modern life. The frenetic

pacing of the narrative accelerates with every volume, a point that can be substantiated by Updike's references to television. There were three references to television programs in *Rabbit, Run*, 19 references in *Rabbit Redux*, 26 in *Rabbit Is Rich*, and finally, 38 in *Rabbit at Rest*. In the end, Rabbit finds relief from his restlessness only in death: ". . . but enough. Maybe. Enough."

Ironically, John (the apostle, not the novelist) suggests that Rabbit's visual restlessness is caused by blindness. It is the children of the darkness, blinded by sin to spiritual realities, that have the lust of the eyes. By contrast, only the children of the light, who know another source of relief from worldly restlessness, can obey the Johannine commandment to keep themselves from idols. They have had their eyes opened to God's spiritual glory. Only they can rest in the truth that "Fading is the worldling's pleasures, all his boasted pomp and show; solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion's children know."

John Muether, librarian and associate professor of theological bibliography and research at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL, is also a contributor to the recently released *Vanity and Meaning* (Baker Books).

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### **The Lust of the Eyes**

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Human beings—especially men—have always struggled with lust, in the sexual sense of the word. Job was the holiest of the ancients, yet even he had to make “a covenant with [his] eyes not to look lustfully at a girl” (Job 31:1). The apostle John warned against “the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes” (1 John 2:16). In the third century, the theologian Origen was so distressed by his sexual sin that he crushed his testicles between two bricks. Or consider America’s greatest theologian—Jonathan Edwards—who lamented the prevalence of gross sexual immorality in (of all places) Puritan New England. Like any other sin, the lust of the eyes has always been with us.

What is new, however, is the unprecedented access we have to sexual images. There are pornographic magazines and videos. There are adult bookstores and strip clubs. There are pornographic programs on cable television and perhaps most alarmingly of all, there are thousands of ways to access pornography over the Internet. A recent study by psychologists at Stanford and Duquesne Universities reports that some 20 million Americans visit sexual websites each month, of whom perhaps 200,000 are compulsively addicted to cybersex [Associated Press, 3/1/00]. How many of them, do you suppose, are members of a Bible-teaching church?

Using pornography is a sin, of course, which is why people view it in secret, and why they feel ashamed when they do. And just because it is a hidden sin, its destructive

power is immense. Lust is never satisfied; it always craves more and more. Thus pornography is always uncontrollable. What at first is only idle curiosity soon becomes a compulsive addiction, and may ultimately lead to more vulgar sins such as prostitution. Along the way, pornography kills joy and inhibits intimacy. Often it hinders a single person from finding a life partner. Frequently it rips a marriage from seam to seam. Always it disturbs a man's communion with God, robbing his confidence in the power of the gospel to bring spiritual change. It may even destroy his very soul.

Incidentally, the masturbation that often accompanies the viewing of pornographic images is also a sin. I mention this because people sometimes claim that masturbation is not forbidden in the Bible. It is true that masturbation is never explicitly mentioned. Neither is pornography, for that matter, or many other specific kinds of sexual sin. Instead, the Bible is content to address sexual sin in general terms, outlawing any sexual activity outside the union of husband and wife. Remember Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians: "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . . because these are improper for God's holy people" (Eph. 5:3). Sex is for sharing. But by turning sexual gratification back upon the self, masturbation is perhaps the most intense form of self-worship imaginable.

Christians who are in bondage to sexual sin often hope to find a "quick fix" for their addiction. There are no quick fixes. If there were, you probably would have discovered one by now. The reason you haven't is because sexual sin goes down to the very deepest levels of the sinful nature.

Even if there are no quick fixes, however, there are some things you can do. The first is to admit that you are in desperate need of spiritual help. Confess your sexual addiction, not only to God, who alone can forgive your sins, but also to a mature Christian. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). In your fight against lust, you will need some allies. Do not be deceived: You will not be able to conquer this problem on your own, in isolation from other Christians. More than almost any other kind of sin, sexual immorality thrives on secrecy. But as soon as the secret is out, sexual sin starts to loosen its hold on both the body and the soul. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Make a commitment to talk with a Christian brother as soon as possible.

The second thing to do is forcibly to limit your access to pornographic images. If you are hoarding any lewd magazines or pictures, go home and throw them away. If you have been watching pornographic movies, get rid of your cable package or stop driving by the adult bookstore. Cancel your credit cards; terminate your Internet account; stay out of the gay bar; ask the hotel to remove your television—do whatever it takes to radically reduce your temptation to sin.

By itself, however, getting rid of pornographic images is not enough. The real problem is not on your computer screen, it is in your heart, which is why trying to "just say no" never works. If it were simply a matter of physical pleasure, sexual sin could be

conquered through self-discipline, the exertion of moral effort. But sex is always a spiritual matter, and gaining victory over sexual sin requires a deep and gracious work of God's Spirit.

Understand that giving in to pornography and lust reflects an inability to give and to receive love. It is an attempt to escape from a world that seems unresponsive to our desire for acceptance and significance. The escape is only an illusion; the relief is only temporary, and it always leads to even deeper disappointment and despair. Dr. Harry Schaumburg writes: "Sexual addiction is the by-product of intense unmet needs, coupled with the demand for fulfillment and control of relational pain independently of God. . . . Sexual addiction isn't just an issue of sex or even external behavior: it's a by-product of loneliness, pain, the self-centered demand to be loved and accepted regardless of the consequences, and a loss of vital relationship with God" (False Intimacy, 23).

The fact that sexual sin is about something more than just sex has a number of significant implications. It means that conquering sexual addiction will require the fresh application of repentance and forgiveness to the deepest wounds in your heart. It also means that there are many other sins that need to be dealt with—sins like arrogance, bitterness, and self-deception—before you can make significant progress towards holiness. In some cases, it also means coming to terms with the ways that you have been sinned against, especially if you have suffered sexual abuse.

Help is available, not only from your pastors and elders, but also through Harvest USA, a ministry of truth and love to those who wish to be free from pornography and other sexual struggles (215-342-7114). The ultimate antidote to lust is love—real love—the kind of selfless love that Christ demonstrated on the cross. And love is one thing that God has in unlimited supply. He has the love to forgive your darkest sins, the love to satisfy your deepest desires, and the love to replace your lust with joy. "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. . . . But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us" (Titus 3:3-4).

## Lust

Lust is a primary ingredient of sex addiction. In our correspondence with sex addicts, we find that people are often confused about what lust is. Lust is harmful to the body, mind and spirit, and it can easily be mistaken for love. Lust has the opposite effect of love.

**Definitions** (*Webster's 9<sup>th</sup> New Collegiate Dictionary*):

Lust: (n) Intense or unbridled sexual desire, lasciviousness...an intense longing; craving; (v) to have an intense desire or need, crave

Desire: (n) Conscious impulse toward something that promises enjoyment or satisfaction in its attainment... longing, craving...Sexual urge or appetite

**How lust got started:** One of the Greek words for lust is *Epithumia* (Strong's #1939), meaning the "desire for what is forbidden." It is based on the lie that the forbidden pleasures are worth the cost (see [sex addiction lies](#)). Satan used this lie in the Garden and Eden. He suggested that eating the forbidden fruit would bring great god-like wisdom and the punishment wouldn't be that bad. This strongly appealed to Eve (Pride of Life), who also liked the fruit's appearance (lust of the eyes), and wanted to eat it (lust of the flesh). She discovered that the fruit did not deliver what she thought it would. The consequences included curses and separation from God.

**What God says about lust:** Lust is sin (Matthew 5:28) and sin is death (Romans 6:23). Jesus said, "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28 NKJV). When we entertain fantasies through pornography, masturbation, voyeurism, adultery, fornication, phone sex, etc., we sin with our minds. According to Jesus, that's the same as committing the act.

**Lust and pornography:** Pornography uses the same lies that Satan used in the Garden of Eden. Porn images tempt our eyes and flesh to lust (see [how porn works](#) page). James described the temptation process in James 1:14-15 NKJV: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." Sin by lust causes the death of innocence, sexual health, the ability to love and sensitivity to God.

**What lust does to us:** Lust has many destructive effects. The most serious effect is that lust corrupts our ability to love God. John explained that lust is a way of loving the world. He wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17 NKJV). Lust cripples our ability to give and receive love, and blocks God's love from working in us. See our page [Lust vs. Love](#) for more information.

Other effects of lust include slavery to sin, dissatisfaction, blocked blessings, separation from God, ruin, self-hatred and hardening of our heart. For an in-depth look at these, see our [What Lust Does](#) page.

**Prayers:** Removing lust from your life begins with confessing and repenting from our lust. We can pray this simple prayer to *confess* our sin to God:

"Lord, I confess that I have lusted in these specific ways: .....(name them all). I see my attitudes as sinful. I am sorry for grieving your heart in my pursuit of carnal pleasure with my eyes and mind. I ask Your forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, for this forgiveness I have in Jesus Christ."

Repenting from our sin is just as important as confessing it ([Luke 13:3](#)). Repentance means to turn from our sin and commit to living for God. We must sincerely turn from our sin and avoid it from this point forward:

"Lord Jesus, I turn from my lustful ways now, and I surrender every source I have used for lust: .... (name them all). I cast them off from my mind and body, committing my eyes, mind and body to serving you in holiness with your help. Lord, please teach me, strengthen me, guide me, and draw me close to You for the difficult road ahead. Thank You, Jesus, Amen."

Renouncing our sin is the final act that closes the door to Satan:

"I renounce my sin of lust and any evil spirits associated with it...(name them if you know them...lust, masturbation, covetousness, fantasy lust, etc). I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from me and trouble me no more. I close the door to lust, bar it with the cross of Christ and seal it with the blood of Christ, Amen."

**Where to go from here:** The journey out of sex addiction is also a journey of getting closer to God. We've created a page summarizing the steps you can take to destroy lust in your life called [Ten Points on Destroying Lust](#). For a more in-depth study, please take our [Freedom Journey](#).

## **Lies about sex sin, addiction and freedom**

Lies are the foundation of the temptations we face in sex addiction. The devil is a master liar. Jesus explained, "He [Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44 [NIV](#)).

People were first exposed to Satan's lies in the Garden of Eden. Satan suggested to Eve that God was keeping back good things from her. As Eve started to doubt God, she lusted for the fruit and sinned. In the same way, Satan tempts us using

combinations of things we desire and lies. If he can get us to doubt God's goodness through lies, then we're more likely to sin.

**An example of the common sexual temptation:** Satan often tries to convince people that restricting sex to marriage is outdated and impractical. He tells people (singles & teens, especially) that God is unfairly withholding sex from them. He tells them that there will be little or no consequences for having sex outside of marriage and/or looking at pornography. The result is that many people doubt God's good plan for sex and give in to fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pornography or many other bad alternatives. Afterwards, these people discover that the consequences are real and often much worse than they thought.

**Destroy the lies with truth:** The power of lies is broken by truth. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32 [NKJV](#)). As Jesus said, we need to be familiar with his word, which is recorded in the Bible. Spending time in Bible study during our [daily quiet time](#) is therefore critical for success on the battlefield of temptations. It takes study and memory work to know the applicable Bible verses for the different temptations we may face in sex addiction. (see our [Sword of the Spirit](#) page for more info)

As you read the following lies, ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize lies you may have believed. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13 [NKJV](#)). We've attempted to answer each lie with truth from the Bible.

| Lie                                    | Truth   |
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| "I'll never get free of sex addiction" | <p>Jesus died on the cross so we CAN get free of whatever sin struggle we are involved in. The Holy Spirit, who raised Christ from the dead, gives life to our mortal body so we can live in freedom (<a href="#">Romans 8:11,13</a>). Life through Jesus Christ brings spiritual renewal and a new nature that enables us to walk in purity, just as Jesus did (<a href="#">2 Corinthians 5:17</a>).</p> <p>No matter how bad we may have sinned, we can still come to Jesus and receive forgiveness and cleansing. Jesus' blood covers all our sins. <a href="#">Hebrews 6:17-20</a> affirms that we have hope in</p> |

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|   | <p>Jesus, who is the anchor of our soul. See our <a href="#">verses on hope</a> also.</p>   |
| <p>"Pornography helps my marriage sex life"</p>                   | <p>Pornography destroys a marriage's sex life through lust. Though it may bring a short-term pleasure, it harms your marriage by supplanting love-inspired affection with lustful gratification. It's only a matter of time before things deteriorate. Lust naturally craves more and more, so you'll find yourself looking for more exciting outlets when your spouse is unable to keep up.</p>  |
| <p>" I can't live without my porn" (and/or sex sin)</p>           | <p>The enemy wants us to believe that we cannot survive and enjoy life without a diet of sin. The truth is that sinful living produces spiritual and ultimately physical death. True life begins with living according to God's Spirit, and making no provision for sin's fulfillment (<a href="#">Romans 13:14</a> , <a href="#">John 6:63</a>). We CAN live without sin!</p> <p>When we obey God with our sex life, we will experience peace and are best able to reap the fruits of a healthy marriage (current or future). Sex is not a right given to every person, but rather, it is a gift from God to every person who marries. For those who have not married, the challenge is to trust God and wait on Him for His provision for life, marriage and sex. (See <a href="#">singles</a> and <a href="#">sex</a> pages)</p> |
| <p>"God won't accept me because I keep falling to temptation"</p> | <p>Satan specializes in condemnation and despair. Once he entices us to sin, he condemns us for sinning, telling us we'll never be free. He tells us we'll never be able to please God. Jesus died so that we have peace with God. God is not angry with us for sinning, and he longs for us to accept Jesus' sacrifice and live in the reality of the new life he prepared for us. Jesus bore all of God's wrath due to us for our sin (<a href="#">Isaiah 53:4-12; Isaiah 54:10</a>). God <b>will not</b> reject us when we approach him for help.</p>  |

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| <p>"God made me this way"</p>               | <p>God doesn't make mistakes. He created us good, but we are corrupted from birth by the sinful nature we inherit from Adam (Romans 5:12). We can become enslaved to sin when we obey sin's desires (Romans 6:16). When enslaved, it's easy to blame our bondage on God. When we do this, it seems to free us from the responsibility for our sin. But, God is not to blame - we are! Steps to gaining freedom begin with taking responsibility for our sin by confessing it to God (see <a href="#">Freedom Journey</a>).</p>   |
| <p>"Forbidden sex is more enjoyable"</p>    | <p>Forbidden sex enslaves us to lust. For a time, our forays into the forbidden may deliver pleasure, but soon we'll want more risk, more exposure, more thrill, etc., and we'll go deeper into depravity. Our own actions can bring a type of curse upon ourselves, such that we are unable to enjoy the good things God has given us. <a href="#">Romans 1:20-32</a> describes what can happen when we follow the path of depravity. Those who wait on God for their sexual needs will enjoy lasting pleasure and contentment (<a href="#">Psalm 36:7-9</a>; <a href="#">John 4:14</a>). God's provision meets our needs (<a href="#">Philippians 4:19</a>).</p> |
| <p>"All sex is good"</p>                    | <p>God gave us some very specific guidance on what kind of sex is acceptable. God restricts sex to marriage between one man and one woman (<a href="#">Mark 10:6-9</a>, Genesis 2:24). Any sexual activity outside of this context is sin, which has consequences that in some cases have lifelong effects (see <a href="#">consequences</a>). God also gave us specific guidance on nakedness, telling us not to reveal our sexual organs to any person other than our spouse (<a href="#">Habakkuk 2:14-16</a>, <a href="#">Isaiah 57:8</a>, <a href="#">Ezekiel 23:18</a>). Pornography exploits nakedness, and it makes God furious! (Ezekiel 23:18).</p>      |
| <p>"Religion teaches that sex is dirty"</p> | <p>God has given us the wonderful gift of sex to be enjoyed between a man and a woman in marriage. Sex in this context is beautiful and</p>  |

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|  | <p>pure. When sex is removed from this context and/or exploited through pornography and other media tools, it becomes an addictive and destructive practice. See our <a href="#">sex page</a> for more info.</p>  |
| <p>"Pornography doesn't hurt anyone"</p> | <p>Porn damages the viewer. Proverbs 6:27 says: <b>"Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?"</b> The implied answer is "No." Lusting after people with our eyes and thoughts is equivalent to committing the sin with them (Matthew 5:28). Porn trains us to practice lust and live in a fantasy world of evil thoughts. As a result, we burn with insatiable lust that drives us to seek gratification. The memories resulting from our porn activities can last a lifetime and damage our ability to enjoy sex in our marriage. Pornography also can lead us down the destructive path of perversion. Pedophilia, homosexuality, rape and abuse are just a few of the many possible activities that porn promotes.</p> <p>Porn damages the viewer's family. For example, your children could be tormented by any evil spirits that are tormenting you, or they may simply get hooked on porn when they stumble across your porn stash of computer files or magazines. Your spouse could be devastated if he/she discovers you've been committing "mental adultery" through porn. He/she may have difficulty ever trusting you again when they discover your secret life. It could take years for you to re-learn how to love your spouse and eliminate the stranglehold lust has on you. You may have to relearn how to have sex in a loving way, since you have become tuned for lust through porn.</p> <p>See <a href="#">How porn works</a> and <a href="#">Why Porn is bad</a> for more info.</p> |

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| <p>"Getting married will stop my pornography addiction"</p>      | <p>Marriage can make porn addiction worse, and porn addiction ruins a marriage's sex life! There are several reasons for this, but one of the key reasons is that porn addicts have sexually tuned themselves to respond to lust by porn pictures and masturbation. Married sex, by design, is to be built on love. Lust and love are total opposites! See our pages on <a href="#">lust</a> and <a href="#">lust vs. love</a>. The porn addict should break his addiction before getting married.</p>  |
| <p>"Lust is the same as love"</p>                                | <p>Lust is the exact opposite of love. See our pages <a href="#">lust vs. love</a> and <a href="#">lust</a> for explanations.</p>   |
| <p>"There is nothing wrong with lust."</p>                       | <p>Lust is sin (<a href="#">Matthew 5:28</a>). Lust is very harmful and is often the starting point for many other kinds of evil. <a href="#">1 John 2:15-17</a> tells us that lust will actually prevent God's love from being in us! If we lack God's love, we are vulnerable to being filled with every other form of evil. <a href="#">Romans 1:20-32</a> gives us an example of what happened when Roman Christians followed lust. They were filled with every form of evil (<a href="#">29-30</a>). See our page on <a href="#">lust</a> for more info.</p> |
| <p>"Masturbation is harmless and healthy"</p>                    | <p>Masturbation is addictive and gives lust a foothold to control our minds. It also destroys our marriage sex life by sexually tuning us to ourselves. Masturbation teaches us nothing about loving our spouse and giving to him/her during sex. It's all about satisfying our own selfish desires. (see <a href="#">masturbation</a> page)</p>  |
| <p>"God is unfair and unloving to restrict sex to marriage."</p> | <p>God is holy, which means perfect in goodness and righteousness. God also loves us very much. He proved his love for us by sacrificing Jesus for our sins (see <a href="#">God's Love</a>). God restricted sex to marriage to protect us from the many sorrows that come with sexual sin. Sex sin brings spiritual confusion, perversion, bondage, addiction, destruction of families and a host of other possible side effects (see <a href="#">sex sin consequences</a>). Sex is so powerful that it can</p>  |

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|  | <p>only be safely contained in a loving marriage where there is lifelong commitment, trust and intimacy. Once we extract sex from that context, it becomes unstable and easily converts to a lustful endeavor.</p>  |
| <p>"Lots of sex brings satisfaction and fulfillment"</p>   | <p>Lasting fulfillment comes from knowing God. When we follow God, He satisfies us with good things that bring lasting fulfillment (see <a href="#">Psalm 103:2-5</a>, <a href="#">Psalm 107:9</a>, <a href="#">Psalm 145:16</a>, <a href="#">Psalm 36:7-9</a>, <a href="#">John 4:14</a>). Indulging in sex sin yields lust which is a continual desire for more. Lust is a total lack of fulfillment (see <a href="#">lust</a>).</p>  |
| <p>"Pre-marital sex is OK as long as you're planning to marry the person"</p> <p>or</p> <p>"Sex is Ok as long as you are committed to one another in a monogamous relationship."</p> | <p>Whether you are engaged to be married or are thinking that you will eventually get married, the fact is that you are not yet married. The Bible is clear about sex outside of marriage being sin (<a href="#">1 Corinthians 6:9</a>, <a href="#">2 Corinthians 12:21</a>, <a href="#">Galatians 5:19</a>; <a href="#">Hebrews 13:4</a>; <a href="#">Colossians 3:5</a>, Deuteronomy 22:13-28). The consequences of pre-marital sex will include damaged intimacy in your future marriage.</p>  |
| <p>"God doesn't care about what I do with my body"</p>   | <p>God is deeply concerned with what we do with our bodies, because our bodies are literally temples for his Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 describes this special function of our bodies and how we are called to honor God by not defiling our bodies with sexual sin in particular. Sexual sin unites us spiritually with whatever we're having sex with (physically or mentally). Since God's Spirit lives in us as Christians, we dishonor our bodies and defile God's temple through our sexual sin. Keeping our bodies from sexual sin is a spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1-2).</p> |
| <p>"My addiction disqualifies me from Christian ministry"</p>  | <p>All people have sinned and have fallen short of God's holy standard (Romans 3:23). Every minister of the Gospel has sinned at one point or another. Sex addiction does not disqualify you from being in ministry. Granted, if your ministry</p>  |

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|  | is causing you to fall to temptation, you should step back for a time until you have broken the bondage with God's help. Your victory over it will likely open up doors for you to help other people looking for the path to freedom.   |
| "I've committed the unforgivable sin"                  | See our <a href="#">Unforgivable Sin</a> page   |
| "Your body is not good enough to be successful in sex" | This lie is championed by penis enlargement, breast implant, Viagra and weight loss program vendors, the entertainment industry and many others. The enemy's goal is to get us to doubt that God has created us with the capacity and the ability to naturally enjoy sexual union with our spouse. The enemy wants us to sabotage our enjoyment of sex by inspiring fear of failure and/or rejection from the opposite sex. This kind of performance orientation is of course promoted by pornography's typical themes like "size matters," and other nonsense. When considering sex, we can trust God that he has given us all we need to enjoy sex with our spouse. We also can ask him to help us overcome any fears we may have about sex, such that we can enjoy the full experience of sex (spiritually, emotionally and physically). |

## How Porn Works

Pornography in its various forms has become accessible to just about anyone. With the help of the internet, videos, cable television, satellite and magazines, thousands...or possibly millions of people are becoming addicted to pornography every day. Though the sex industry downplays the impact of porn on society, the truth is that pornography profoundly damages people.

Pornography images are designed to appeal to our human tendencies toward lust and "sexual idolatry." Let's examine these tendencies more closely:

**Lust:** *Webster's Dictionary* defines lust as "intense or unbridled sexual desire," "an intense longing: craving" and a "conscious impulse toward something that promises enjoyment or satisfaction in its attainment." The problem with lust is

that it is based in selfishness and works contrary to love. In fact, it is the opposite of love (see [lust vs. love](#)). When fed, it can grow into an uncontrollable force in a person's life. Like a wildfire, lust can consume a person's resources, time and attention.

The Bible identifies 2 basic types of lust that people are tempted by: "lust of the eyes" and "lust of the flesh" ([1 John 2:15-17](#)). Pornography caters to both types by providing visual stimulation that appeals to our "fleshly" desire for sex ([more about lust](#)). It also gives us lifelong fuel for lust through the memories of the sexual images. With the help of special hormones released in the brain during sexual arousal, porn images are retained in our memories much longer than non-sexual memories.

**Sexual Idolatry:** Idolatry is the "worship of a physical object as a god" or an "immoderate attachment or devotion to something." Worship means to show "extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem" (both from *Webster's Dictionary*). Many people may not realize that pornography has helped them develop an immoderate or extravagant devotion to sex. Gazing at pornography for hours, masturbating to sexual images and repeatedly fantasizing about sex are basically forms of worshipping sex. People who practice such activities find that sexual images seem to rise to the top and forefront of their thoughts. Their minds become a type of "mental altar" for sex (more about [sexual idolatry](#)).

Unfortunately, pornography's powerful appeal leads many into sexual addiction. A life dedicated to pornography, or even just seasoned with occasional viewing of it can become considerably darkened by the many harmful side effects. Here are just a few of the many possible side effects of pornography addiction that we've witnessed:

- Perversions (homosexuality, bestiality, bisexuality, transexuality, fetishes, etc.)
- Irritability
- Sexual imbalance
- Sexual dissatisfaction
- Masturbation
- Lies & deception
- Uncontrolled thoughts
- Spiritual oppression
- Marital strife / destruction / divorce
- Corrupted perception of reality
- Warped interpersonal skills
- Reclusiveness

- Fear
- Increased tendency toward sexual crime
- Guilt & condemnation
- Loss of Hope
- Depression
- Inability to give or receive love
- Spiritual death
- Torment
- Depraved mind
- Darkened understanding
- Loss of discernment between good & evil
- Promiscuity
- Lustful eye

(see [destruction testimonials](#) for real life examples)

Many of the above effects reflect the fact that there is a spiritual aspect of pornography and sex addiction. Jesus gave us a clue about this in Matthew 6:22-23 NIV: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Porn is a form of darkness that follows the rule Jesus described. When people view pornography, they open a "doorway" in their lives through their eyes to darkness. The resultant effects of that darkness can be seen in our list above.

### **Power for Freedom is Available**

We have found that a person desiring freedom from sexual addiction will need spiritual help in order to gain complete freedom. The only source we know of for reliable and decisive help is [Jesus Christ](#). We have experienced [personally](#) this addiction-breaking power and are happy to share more info about it with anyone who is interested.

### **Lust and Love**

*This page is part of our [study on lust](#)*

Lust and love are complete opposites, and lust often replaces love. One of love's definitions is "unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another" (*Webster's*). The Bible says, "love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail;

whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NKJV).

Lust is not kind, lust envies, lust behaves rudely, lust seeks all for its own, lust thinks evil, lust rejoices in sin, lust perverts the truth, lust bears nothing outside of its own pursuit of fulfillment. Lust does not believe God or His word, and hopes only in its own gratification. Lust cares only for itself. It will hurt, deceive, destroy, lie and anything else it has to do to sustain itself.

The major difference between lust and love is that love is a selfless concern for another person, where lust is totally self-focused. Lust believes the lie Satan has crafted. The lie suggests, "If you do this thing, you will be satisfied deeply." The truth is that doing so will only lead to dissatisfaction and desire for more. Lust keeps growing and choking the person who feeds it.

The battle between lust and love is a spiritual battle. The forces of evil promote sexual lust through the internet, cable TV, magazines, erotic literature, strip clubs, adult bookstores, phone sex, advertisements, and computer games. Since lust constantly seeks fulfillment, it is almost a guaranteed moneymaker to the company or individual without scruples. By serving greed, they become instruments of evil. It may seem like a losing battle for love. But, since God is love ([John 4:8](#)), we know that evil and all its programs will be ultimately destroyed.

God gave mankind the perfect example of love when He allowed to His son, Jesus, to be crucified for mankind ([John 15:13](#), [John 3:16](#)). God's awesome love fills your heart when you truly receive Jesus Christ as Lord. Amazing changes happen when His love hits your crusty heart, previously dead in sin. You receive the ability to show true love and to crucify the lusts that wage war against your soul ([1 Peter 2:11](#)).

## What Lust Does

*This page is part of our [study on lust](#)*

Lust harms our body, mind and spirit. Specifically, lust:

**Leads us to dishonor our bodies** (which are made in God's image): (*Romans 1:24*) Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

**Burns like an increasing fire:** (*Isaiah 57:5 NIV*) You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags.

**Consumes God's blessings in our lives:** (*Job 31:12*) It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.

**Enslaves us to sin:** (*Romans 6:12*) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts

**Angers and grieves God:** (*Ephesians 2:3*) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (see also [Ezekiel 6:9](#) , [1 Thessalonians 4:4-6](#))

**Separates us from God:** (*Ephesians 4:18 NIV*) They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

**Corrupts us by deceit:** (*Ephesians 4:22*) that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit (see also Titus 3:3 & 2 Peter 1:4)

**Causes ruin and destruction:** (*1 Timothy 6:9*) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

**Drains our vitality/energy for life:** (*Proverbs 6:26 NKJV*) For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

**Wars against our souls:** (*1 Peter 2:11 NKJV*) Living before the world beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul

**Causes self-hatred:** (*Ezekiel 6:9 NIV*) They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices.

**Fills the body with darkness:** (*Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV*) The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

**Blocks God's love from working through us:** (*1 John 2:15-17 NKJV*) "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the *lust* of the flesh, the *lust* of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the

world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever"

**Destroys our sensitivity to God:** (*Ephesians 4:19 NIV*) Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

**Hardens our spiritual heart:** (*Ephesians 4:18 NIV*) They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

## **Bible passages concerning lust**

### **Proverbs 6:23-26 NKJV**

For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

- Flattery can lead to lust in the heart
- Beware of enticement through the eyes
- Lust opens door for consumption of one's life by evil

### **Job 31:1-12 NIV**

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does he not see my ways and count my every step? "If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit-- let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless--if my steps have turned from the path, *if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled*, then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted." *If my heart has been enticed by a woman*, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door, then may my wife grind another man's grain, and may other men sleep with her. For that would have been shameful, a sin to be judged. It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.

- It is shameful and sinful to allow the heart to be led with the eyes into lust
- It is shameful and sinful to entice another person to sin
- Lust will destroy the harvest of good things that a righteous man has

### **Ephesians 4:18-20 NIV**

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God

because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.

- Lust hardens out spiritual heart, producing ignorance and separation from the life God has for us
- Lust destroys our sensitivity to God, plunging us into sensuality of every kind of impurity
- Lust is never satisfied. It continually lusts for more

### **Proverbs 5:3-5 NKJV**

For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil; But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell.

- Feeding lust is like eating rat poison wrapped in chocolate. It tastes good, but kills you.
- You find out after feeding lust that you believed a lie and forfeited the good things of God for your own destruction. It gives bitterness a foothold in your life.

### **Bible stories dealing with lust:**

1. Samson ([Judges 13-16](#))
2. David and Bathsheba ([2 Samuel 11-12](#))
3. Solomon ([1 Kings 11](#))
4. Amnon and Tamar ([2 Samuel 13](#))
5. The wayward woman ([Proverbs 6:24-26 NIV](#))
6. Potiphar's wife and Joseph ([Genesis 39:6-13](#))
7. The Mob that started a war ([Judges 19](#)) (Levite and harlot concubine)
8. Sodom's perverted mob at Lot's house ([Genesis 19:4-11](#))
9. The perverted Romans ([Romans 1:20-32 NIV](#))
10. The "Lust Sisters" - Oholah and Oholibah ([Ezekiel 23](#))

## **Ten Points on Destroying Lust**

*This page is part of our [study on lust](#)*

There are many principles revealed in the Bible for destroying lust. It's usually not as simple as, "just don't do it." The main principle is that through Jesus Christ, we gain supernatural power to put lust to death. With that in mind, I've listed 10 points on destroying lust below. I encourage you to study each one and

consider how you can apply it in your life. For further study, I recommend taking our online course [Freedom Journey](#).

**1. [Confess, repent from and renounce your sin of lust to God](#)**

**2. Make no provision to fulfill lust:** "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." (Romans 13:14 [NKJV](#))

**3. Walk by the Spirit:** "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16 [NKJV](#))

**4. Put lust to death by the power of the Holy Spirit:** "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13 [NKJV](#)) (see also [Colossians 3:5](#))

**5. Reckon yourself with Jesus - alive to God and dead to sin:** "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:24 [NIV](#)) (also [Colossians 3.5](#) and [Romans 6](#))

**6. Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace:** "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22 [NIV](#))

**7. Deny lust and live righteously:** "<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup>teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13 [NKJV](#))

**8. Invest your time, energy and efforts in God's will, not in lust:** "<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup>that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (1 Peter 4:1-2 [NKJV](#))

**9. Apply the truth to the lies:** (John 8:31-32, [Psalm 51:6](#)); see [truth and lies about sex sin](#)

**10. Submit to God, resist the devil, draw near to God:** "<sup>7</sup> Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to

mourning and your joy to gloom.<sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:7-10 [NKJV](#))

**Related page:** [Temptation](#)