



## Breaking Pornography Addiction - Part Two

by David Powlison

*Can God change those who are addicted to pornography? Yes, God can and does bring people out of their isolated, imaginary world of sexual addiction into the real world of authentic, loving relationships with God and people. David Powlison explains that change happens as people are lovingly challenged to face their behavior honestly, understand its roots, and turn to God for help. True change from God will bring freedom from pornography addiction by transforming the sexual addict's imagination and behavior.*



[Read Part One](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

### Practical Strategies for Change

Imagine that your heart, your true inner self, is a room filled with your thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perceptions. Some are good and full of light, and some are bad and full of evil and darkness. There are two ways to clean out the evil and darkness and bring light and goodness to the whole room. You can eject the evil bodily: Fight the sin! Say no! Call your accountability person. Repent. Remember the Bible. Cry out to God for mercy. That's one-half of the battle.

The other way you fight sin is to flood your heart with light. When the room of your heart is filled with light, the shadows, the darkness, and the evil will be pushed out. You don't just put off your sins; you have to put on something new. Part of winning your battle with sexual sin is learning a new way of living.

#### TALK TO GOD

This new way of living starts with pouring your heart out to God. Begin by praying through Psalm 25. This psalm provides you with a pattern to follow as you deal with sin, hard circumstances, and guilt. In the first few verses of the psalm David turns to God and talks to him about the difficulties in his life. He says, "Do not let me be put to shame." And "no one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame" (vv. 2–3). Then he immediately starts asking God to

help him deal with his sins. He doesn't want to end his life in shame and failure, so he prays, "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior" (vv. 4–5). David specifically asks God to remember his own character, "Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old...according to your love remember me" (vv. 6–7). He wants God to look at his life through the lens of his compassion, goodness, and forgiveness.

Right in the center of the psalm, there's this wonderful verse: "For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great" (v.11). This is the heart of what it means to go to God—a radical giving of your life into the hands of another. David is putting himself in God's hands and trusting him for everything he needs. He is pleading with God on the basis of his character to pardon him, change him, teach him, instruct him, grow him, and make him different.

David goes on to pray about his troubles, his afflictions, his loneliness, his stress, his hurts, and his enemies. After he prays about all the problems that bring temptation into his life, he asks God to meet him and "free me from anguish," (v.17) and again to, "take away all my sins...guard my life and rescue me" (vv.18, 20).

Do you see how praying through this psalm will lead you out of your world of sin, guilt, and the difficult circumstances that are the occasion for your stumbling? Pray this psalm to God and insert your troubles, your sins, and your need for forgiveness into it. As you pray, God will begin to reverse the turning inward that sin, guilt, and hardship bring. And he will draw you to himself—to the one who, for his name's sake and by his mercy must and will work in you.

## LISTEN TO GOD

Don't stop with pouring your heart out to God, listen to what he says about sexual sin.

***Listen to what God says in Proverbs 5:15–23.*** This passage is about finding sexual fulfillment in marital faithfulness, and the consequences of not doing so. Pay close attention to this verse, "For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths" (v.21). Your struggle with sexual sin will change when you understand that it is not a private struggle; your whole life is lived in public, before God. Remembering that you are not living in your own little private world, but that you are living in God's world where he sees everything will make it much more difficult to sin. Use this passage to remind yourself that when you look for sexual fulfillment outside of marriage you will be "ensnared," and held fast in "the cords of sin," and that the way forward is living in "full view" of God.

### ***Listen to what God says in Matthew 5:27-30:***

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Jesus sets the bar high for our thought life, and then gives a radical prescription for dealing with your lust. You are to tear it out, cut it off, and throw it away. He is telling you how to break your addiction. Your fight must be vigorous and resolute. You must roll up your sleeves, see that your enemy is you, and fight against your desires.

## GET A NEW VISION

Because pornography is a sin of the imagination, true change has to reach your thought life. You can't "just say no" to an evil imagination. You have to appeal in a more profound way to your imagination by working to replace the evil, dark, and wicked in your mind with the good, light, and pure.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, a French writer, said "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood, and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." This is exactly what God does for you. He wants you to have a vision of something so much better than living within your dark, self-centered imagination. God wants to give you a vision of life as it is meant to be, filled with a real, true, and intimate relationship with him and authentic, loving relationships with others.

Isaiah 61 and 62 will give you that kind of vision. These chapters are full of life and hope. Read them, and notice how Jesus promises to help you. He binds up the brokenhearted. Aren't you brokenhearted by your continuing struggle with sin? He brings freedom to prisoners. Don't you feel imprisoned by your sexual sins? He comforts those who mourn. Don't you mourn when you fall into sin one more time? Fill your mind with the promises in these chapters: Jesus will give you gladness instead of mourning and praise instead of fainting under guilt. He will replace your shame with a new name, a beautiful crown, and a royal diadem: a new imagination.

## BUILD REAL RELATIONSHIPS OF LOVE

The prophet Isaiah said, "Woe to me! I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips'" (Isaiah 6:5). Then an angel brings a coal of fire that cleanses his lips. This is what God is doing in you as you struggle with sexual sin. You are unclean, and you live in the middle of unclean people. But there's an altar on which the Lamb of God has been sacrificed. From that altar comes a coal of fire, and you are cleansed.

Now you say to God as Isaiah did, "Here am I. Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). There are things to do. There are people to love and treat differently. Building real relationships of love with real people is crucial to the transformation of your imagination. You have spent way too much time in your private fantasy world.

It's time to build same-sex friendships with people who will hold you accountable and care about you. It's time to build healthy brother-sister relationships with the opposite sex as well. Leave your fictional world of pretend relationships and, if you are a man, start viewing women as your sisters, as people to protect instead of prey upon. If you are a woman, start treating men as your brothers. If you're married, begin the hard work of building an honest relationship where sexuality becomes one of the fruits of your unity as a couple.

## BUILD ACCOUNTABILITY INTO YOUR LIFE

Becoming accountable to others is crucial to breaking your pornography addiction. But who should you confess to? Start by confessing to God, and then also confess to someone who can help you grow, who will hold you accountable, who can counsel you, pray for you, and encourage you. Who should that person be? Pick a same-sex friend who's trustworthy, who will ask you hard and pointed questions, who loves you and is willing to hang in there with you over the long haul.

If you're married, should you confess to your spouse? The ideal is that your spouse would be

your most faithful and helpful accountability partner. But this sin directly affects your spouse, because in your mind you are betraying him or her. So you have to think carefully, with the help of a wise friend, counselor, or pastor, how you can confess to your spouse without hurting him or her more. As in all sharing, you don't need to go into every gory detail, you can share just enough in a generic way that your spouse knows what you are confessing, so he or she can offer you real forgiveness. This will dissipate the cloud that sexual fantasies have put over your marriage, and then the sexual union that happens afterwards can be fresh and in the context of mercy.

Any sharing (in any relationship) should not become a source of temptation. The Bible is full of stories about sexual sin, and they are told in a way that leaves us with no illusions, but is never arousing.

## MINISTER GOD'S GRACE TO OTHERS

As God blesses you and changes you, minister to others the grace you have been given. Let God send you to those who are struggling as you have struggled. There's protection from sexual sin in knowing that later this afternoon or tomorrow you're going to be talking to someone else who struggles. You will want to talk to them with a clear conscience and a bright heart. If you can't, it will be your opportunity to go to God again and ask for mercy and help.

The transformation of your life from your isolated, private, imaginary world of romantic and erotic desires will happen as you learn to live in the real world where there is a real God to trust, need, know and love, and where there are real people with whom to reconcile, to love, and to serve. Crying out to God for help, thanking him for help received, praising him for who he is, and being willing to be sent by him to love others is how God will continue the life long work of transforming you and making you useful in his world.

\* \* \* \* \*

**If this article was helpful to you, you will benefit from [CCEF's National Conference](#) <sup>[2]</sup> **Sex Matters** November 13-15, 2009. [Get more information by clicking here](#) <sup>[2]</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup>Pseudonyms are used for counselee names and personal details have been changed.

If you benefited from this article,  
would you consider making a donation to support  
the work of CCEF?



*We thank you for your support!*

<sup>[3]</sup>



**David Powlison, M.Div., Ph.D.**, is a faculty member and counselor at CCEF with over thirty years of experience. He has written numerous articles on counseling, many booklets, including *Facing Death with Hope*, *Healing after Abortion*, *Recovering from*



*Child Abuse, and Renewing Marital Intimacy*, and several books, including *Seeing with New Eyes*, *Speaking Truth in Love*, and the forthcoming book *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context*.

This article is adapted from the forthcoming mini book, *Freedom from Sexual Addiction* copyright © 2009 by Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation. Used by permission of New Growth Press and may not be downloaded and/or reproduced without prior written permission of New Growth Press. [www.newgrowthpress.com](http://www.newgrowthpress.com) [4]

### ShareThis

**Source URL:** <http://www.ccef.org/breaking-pornography-addiction-part-two>

:

[1] <http://www.ccef.org/breaking-pornography-addiction-part-1>

[2] <http://www.ccef.org/nc2009overview>

[3] [https://ccefcommunity.org/ssl/make\\_a\\_donation.asp](https://ccefcommunity.org/ssl/make_a_donation.asp)

[4] <http://www.newgrowthpress.com>