

# identity & sexuality a biblical perspective

## Accountability Help For Those Struggling with Lust or Other Sexual Sin

### **A Conversation Guide for Accountability Partners**

One of the tasks of a good friend or accountability partner to someone who is entrenched in pornography is to help them understand their own heart. Why do they run to porn again and again?

Solomon reminds us that “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water” (we often can’t see our own motivations) “but a man of understanding will draw it out” (Proverbs 20:5, parenthesis added). A wise friend helps to draw out of others the deeper motivations they are unable or unwilling to see in themselves.

As an accountability partner, it is important to understand the allure of pornography: What deeper motivations keep men coming back to it again and again? What are good accountability questions we can ask to get to the root of the problem?

## **1. Porn is easy, but relationships are hard.**

Relationships, especially our closest relationships, involve work. Every day we are required to care what's going on in others' lives. We must put up with sour moods, offensive behavior, and selfishness—both in ourselves and in others.

In contrast, porn offers men a feeling of risk-free intimacy. Pornography offers men a fantasy world where they are required to know nobody, require no romance, and no self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. And for many men the payoff is great: not only can they avoid the messiness of real relationships, they can also feel the delight of a million virtual women catering to their every whim.

**GOOD ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTION:** Has there been a relationship in your life recently that has been unusually difficult?

## **2. Porn is comfortable, but life is stressful.**

In life things go wrong. Expectations are frustrated. People let us down. Tragedies happen. We get sick. We get tired. We get into sharp disagreements. Life is stressful.

Porn, by contrast, offers a very comfortable world where nothing goes wrong. Porn offers a ready-made setting where we know we will get exactly what we want.

Of course, we know it's fake. It's like professional wrestling or "reality" TV. As Chris Hedges says in his book *Empire of Illusion*, the success of these forms of entertainment lies not in fooling us that these stories are real. "Rather, it succeeds because we ask to be fooled. We happily pay for the chance to suspend reality."

**GOOD ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTION:** Have there been any stresses in your life recently which have brought on a feeling of pressure or strain?

## **3. Porn is exciting, but life is boring.**

The word "boredom" first started being used by French authors when they wrote about that feeling of discontentment when life gets tedious. While the feeling of boredom has probably always been around, it is only in the last 300 years we have seen it become a social epidemic. Blaise Pascal said boredom is the plight of a modern man when "he lacks distraction and has no absorbing passion or pastime."

Boredom is one of the fruits of a leisure culture. As wealth and free time increase, so does our hunger for distraction. As we come to expect constant stimulation and excitement, the day-to-day can seem dull by comparison. With Google at our fingertips, information is everywhere, but we easily become detached, anonymous spectators, rarely taking risks of vulnerable

involvement or passionate commitment—rarely acting on what we know. Culturally we are guilty of what Dorothy Sayers calls the sin of tolerance, “the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die.”

Porn offers a world of sexual excitement to our bored minds. Porn is a highly sexualized form of the image-based culture in which we live, a world where billions of pictures are painting a thousand words at break-neck speeds. Porn offers a fantasy of pure sexual stimulation.

**GOOD ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTION:** Have you found yourself bored or itching for excitement? Do you feel like your life is mundane?

#### **4. Porn makes men feel powerful, but real life makes them feel powerless.**

It is easy to feel small in the world. We intuitively know the world does not revolve around us, but this doesn't stop us from wishing it did. We want others to pay attention to us, to treat us as important, to put us first. This desire can be so strong at times we can actually begin to feel entitled to it: we want a little corner of the world where we are kings.

Porn offers men a deluge of power. In a man's porn-fed fantasy, the girls never say no. In pornography there are no social barriers between a man and the woman of his dreams. Pornography sells the idea that beautiful women are trophies—collectibles that show the watching world what a real man really is. Pornography also sexualizes male dominance, allowing men to fantasize about a world where women enjoy being treated as objects.

**GOOD ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTION:** Have you been in any situations recently that made you feel belittled, unimportant, or disrespected?

### **The Biblical Goal of Accountability Questions**

The reason accountability partners should ask these pointed questions is not to “psychologize” sins away. Rather, the goal of good accountability questions is to use them as a springboard to focus our thoughts on benefits of the gospel of Christ more than the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Each question opens a door to living out Hebrews 10:24, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

§ When we ask the question, “Has there been a relationship in your life recently that has been unusually difficult?” the goal is to help others see how they are looking to a particular relationship to make them feel

pleasure or fulfillment (thus, a relationship that is always letting them down). We can then point them to the fullness of joy and satisfaction that comes from Christ (John 15:1-11; 16:16-24; Romans 15:13).

- § When we ask the question, “Have there been any stresses in your life recently which have brought on a feeling of pressure or strain?” the goal is to help them see that they are using porn as an escape from life. We can then point them to the psalmists who saw God as their refuge (Psalms 46; 59:16-17; 61:1-3; 62:5-8; 91; 142). Instead of escaping from reality, we can escape into divine reality.
- § When we ask the questions, “Have you found yourself bored or itching for excitement? Do you feel like your life is mundane?” the goal is to help others see if they have been settling for a life of amusement over a life of amazement. We can then point them to the excitement of knowing God and obeying him (Matthew 13:44; 2 Corinthians 8:1-2; Philippians 1:3-4; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 3 John 1:3-4).
- § When we ask the question, “Have you been in any situations recently that made you feel belittled, unimportant, or disrespected?” the goal is to help them see they crave power, importance, and esteem from men more than they crave the favor of God. Jesus asked, “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44). We can point them to the eternal glory the Father gives to Christ, and that as Christians we share Christ’s glory because He lives in us (John 17:20-24; Romans 2:6-10; Colossians 1:24-29).

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