

# Making Disciples in a Porn Pandemic

by Ted Shimer, Founder, The Freedom Fight

Why would Steve Shadrach, founder of Student Mobilization and Campus Ministry Today say, “This book is the most needed discipleship resource in the Church today” about *The Freedom Fight*, a book about how to break free from pornography? Consider the data regarding the porn use of Christian college students and the results.

## It's more pervasive than we've heard.

Those of us working with college students know that porn use sometimes seems almost as common as drinking water. Unfortunately, this perception is rooted in reality. In 2019, the Freedom Fight conducted a survey of over 1300 Practicing Christian college students from over thirty different campuses across the country. The men and women we surveyed were involved in a campus ministry, and they considered their faith in Christ to be very important to them. Many of them were leaders in their ministries. What we found was alarming. 89% of the growing Christian men we surveyed watch porn, at least occasionally. 61% view it at least weekly and 24% watch porn daily or multiple times a day. 51% of these men said they are addicted to porn.<sup>1</sup>

It's not just a guy's problem, but porn use is also plaguing practicing Christian college women. Though growing in Christ is very important to them and many of them are in leadership in their campus ministry, pornography remains a part of their lives. 51% of this group watch porn at least occasionally. 70% of them either watched porn or had a sexual hook up in the last 12 months. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the already unparalleled amount of pornography people watch increased by 12% in just the first three weeks of the lockdown.<sup>2</sup> The Christian porn pandemic is getting worse, not better. Our future Christian leaders, spouses and parents are having their hearts and minds captured by porn, and the impact is devastating.

If we are making disciples of today's college students and not effectively addressing this issue with gospel centered, biblically based, scientifically informed and effective solutions then we are setting people up for failure.

## It's more destructive than we thought.

The Bible is clear when it says, “fleshly lusts wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). The spiritual attack of fleshly lusts, like pornography, is measureable. Sociology professor Samuel Perry researched the impact of pornography use on a group of 3000 people over a six-year period of time. His peer-reviewed research shows that porn use wages war in at least four areas.<sup>3</sup>

## *Porn use wages war against...*

... **Spiritual Growth.** Dr. Perry's research showed that "Any porn use...is associated with declines in religious commitment and behavior (i.e. attending services, prayer, etc.) and an increase in religious doubts. So, think about it. If you wanted Christians to be less committed to praying, going to church, and reading their Bible, and wanted them to doubt more, just get them to watch porn. And this is what the enemy is doing on a massive scale.

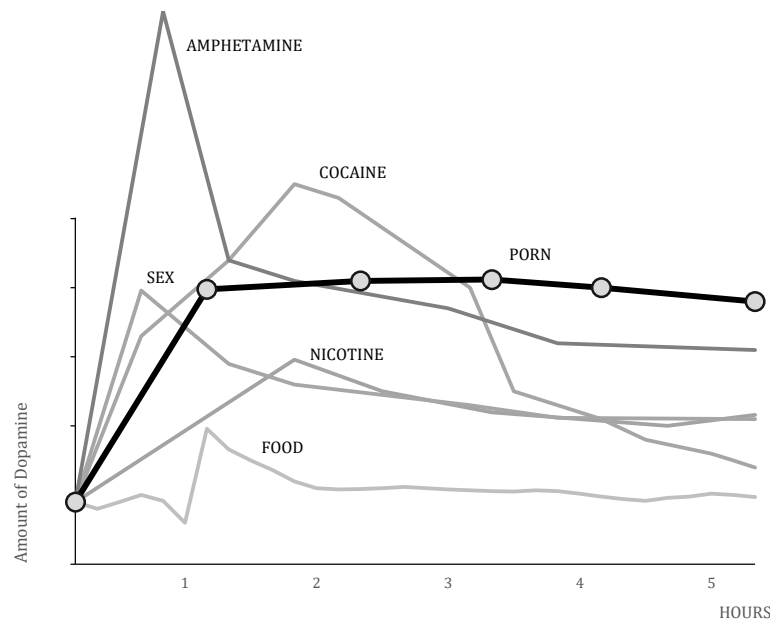
... **Marriages.** Married couples in which one of the spouses started watching porn, were 2-3 times more likely to divorce in the next two years than the porn free couples. One of the best predictors of divorce for a person is the depth of their porn habit. And the younger generation has a deeper porn habit than any before it.

... **Kingdom Service.** The study found that the more frequently someone uses pornography the less likely they are to serve in their congregation.  
More porn = less service

... **Godly parenting.** The more porn a parent watches the less likely they are to talk to their kids about spiritual things. Perry concluded, "Findings suggest that increased pornography consumption might threaten the transmission of religious heritage from parents to children."

## **It's more addictive than we previously understood.**

The following graph shows the amount of dopamine estimated to be produced in the brain by different stimulants:



Dopamine is the pleasure chemical that our brain's release when it experiences pleasure that it wants us to remember and repeat. Sex provides the highest natural dopamine hit. As you see on the graph above, there are three man-made stimulants estimated to produce more dopamine than sex: meth, cocaine and porn. Drugs like cocaine release unnatural amounts of dopamine into the body. So does pornography.

Dopamine ensures that the brain remembers and later craves the activities that led to the high. The use of drugs like cocaine, meth, and porn is rooted in chasing that high again and again. Many times, chasing dopamine can be so consuming that people risk it all—their job, marriage, ministry, and integrity—for another hit. The adolescent brain is particularly susceptible to addictive substances, which is why many of them get hooked after only one exposure.

As you look at the graph, notice that nothing compares to porn in sustaining a high near its peak. As a result, users might binge on porn for hours at a time. The users get a fresh hit of dopamine as they move to new and often more deviant sex scenes. Today's youth are not just watching an unprecedented amount of porn, but they are addicted to it. The deadly combination of an adolescent's brains' plasticity with the unprecedented access and nature of today's pornography has resulted in addictions that both start earlier and are more enslaving than previous generations.

### **It's a greater opportunity than we've imagined.**

Addressing the Christian porn problem is an opportunity to show the power of the gospel and of the Word of God. Pornography addiction is an opportunity for deep discipleship. Breaking free from this addiction is not easy. It requires addressing the roots that drive the porn use. Jesus promised, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Knowing the roots of porn addiction helps us know where to apply His truth.

Let me tell you about a man who found freedom because he addressed the roots of his addiction with God's truth. Drew had been addicted to porn for many years when he joined a Freedom Fight group. He found freedom during his first six-month group but he decided to do another FF group, because he wanted to make sure his new lifestyle of freedom lasted. Scripture meditation, authentic accountability and living out of an identity in Christ were some of the daily practices God used to change him. After Drew found freedom, he was confident as a spiritual leader. He led three friends to Christ and discipled them over the next two years. He led a Freedom Fight group in his church and is now helping other men break free. Drew is a godly husband, an intentional father and spiritual leader in his church who's having a huge impact as he leads other men to the freedom he found.

God can use one person, like Drew, to cause a chain reaction impacting marriages, families and churches all for God's glory. The truth set Drew free. But before it set him free it changed him, and because it changed him, his freedom lasted. Confronting the roots of a porn addiction requires growth and development in key areas of one's life. Here were some of the areas that Drew grew in as a result of

addressing his addiction.

<b>Root of Addiction</b>	→	<b>Growth Area</b>
Sexualized Society	→	Pursue holiness
Addicted Brain	→	Renew the mind
Isolation	→	Develop authentic relationships
Negative Emotions	→	Become emotionally healthy
Shame	→	Live out of an identity in Christ
Trauma	→	Replace lies deposited by trauma with truth

The vast majority of people addicted to porn don't get the miracle of instant deliverance; rather, it's a process of growth. To break free from porn, a person must *outgrow* porn. Addressing the porn problem in the Church is an opportunity for deep discipleship and for helping God's people run free. Hebrews 12:1 says, "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

What if addressing one of the greatest threats to the Church is also one of the greatest opportunities for revival and growth?

Parents, pastors and spiritual leaders must be equipped to address the porn pandemic in the Church with biblically based, gospel centered, and scientifically informed solutions that result in life change and freedom. This is why I wrote the book ***The Freedom Fight – The New Drug and the Truths that Set Us Free***. This book is both for the struggler and for those who want to be equipped to help them.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *The Freedom Fight*, Ted Shimer, pg. 43-44

<sup>2</sup> Pandemic lockdown sees spike in porn use, located at <http://www.insider.com/porn-views-have-increased-worldwide-since-onset-of-covid-19-2020-3>

<sup>3</sup> *Addicted to Lust*, Samuel Perry

## About the Author

Ted Shimer has disciplined men since 1991 with the collegiate ministry Student Mobilization. He received his MABS from Dallas Seminary and was trained as a Pastoral Sex Addiction Professional-Supervisor. Ted is the Founder of [The Freedom Fight](http://thefreedomfight.org) (thefreedomfight.org), an online porn addiction recovery/discipleship program that is biblically based, gospel centered, scientifically sound, and effective. [His book](#) *The Freedom Fight – The New Drug and the Truths that Set Us Free* releases November 9, 2020 via [Amazon in print and Kindle](#) format. [Bulk discounts are available.](#)