

On Breaking the Power of Pornography II

3. It is important to find a confessor. Not several, but one priest. You will make far more progress by going just to one priest than by going to several. This principle applies to any Catholic, but it applies especially to a man who is really trying to overcome a particular fault. St. Francis de Sales said that only one in one hundred priests can be your spiritual director. I suppose the number in our times might be more like 1 in 1,000.
 - a. Go regularly to see him. If you have to, go to confession once a day.
 - b. Pray regularly for forgiveness. Even St. David had to do this. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity." (Ps. 50.3)
 - c. Banish any thought that God would withhold His mercy from a humble or contrite heart. Any hint of a thought that God would not forgive a repentant sinner should be recognized as not coming from God, but from the world, the flesh or the devil.
 - d. Mr. Wood recommends small groups be in every parish, so that men who struggle with this affliction could come together to discuss, and support one another. It would be foolish of me to condemn such an effort, but I am reluctant to start something like that. Group therapy has not stood the test of time. I've had some experience with it, and the experience (more in the field of drug and alcohol addiction) has largely been either negative or unproven. When I say unproven, I mean that there is no way to know if the approach is effective, neutral, or harmful, in the long run. Traditionally, the Church has always approached things one-on-one, and not in groups. Also, there is a question of confidentiality, which is extremely difficult to maintain in these sorts of groups.
4. Find an accountability friend.
 - a. If you have a friend whom you can call on 24 hours a day if needed is a great weapon in combating this affliction. This is one of the key ingredients to the success of Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - b. If you use a computer, you would be wise to download some accountability software. At www.dads.org you'll find an example of this software. You'll find a number of other helpful resources too.
 - c. Douglas Weiss, a nationally-known lecturer on sexual addiction, has stated "I have not experienced, nor have I met anyone who has experienced sexual addiction recovery alone."
 - d. "And if a man prevail against one two shall withstand him: a threefold cord is not easily broken." (Eccl. 4.12)
5. Begin a life of daily Scripture reading.
 - a. There is no quick and easy way to erase pornography from your mind. It took a few clicks of the mouse to obtain it, but it will take real mental discipline to get it out. One reason it is so hard to remove is that when pornography is viewed with pleasure, a chemical called epinephrine is released in the brain. This release of epinephrine causes a deep imprint of the visual image to be stored within the brain. If an act of self-stimulation accompanies the viewing (or the reading of pornographic stories), an even stronger release of the chemical occurs, making the imprint of the image even stronger. Such images can plague a man for decades.
 - b. A very effective means of getting these images out of your head is to spend time reading and memorizing Sacred Scripture every day, both in the morning and in the evening. "Occupy your minds with good thoughts, or the enemy will fill them with bad ones. Unoccupied, they cannot be." (St. Thomas More)
 - c. "For the word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two edged sword and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow: and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 6.12) This is a perfect description of how the word of God penetrates into the body and the soul. It should give us great hope!
 - d. If you couple the reading of Scripture with some good images of sacred art (such as the paintings of Murillo, El Greco, Caravaggio, Gruenewald, etc.), then the combination can blow the evil images out of the water.
 - e. Be aware that things might appear to get worse as you clean out your soul. As the evil images begin to be cut out of the soul, they might subconsciously float to the surface in your mind. When this happens, you will know that you are in the beginning stages of being cleansed from the inside out. It is crucial not to mentally delight in the rooted-out images that float to the consciousness. Pray at that very instant, that they would be painful to you, that you would put them out of your mind, and pray for protection that they would not return.
 - f. Put your focus on Christ our Lord, and not on your problems. The last thing you want to do is to focus your strength and attention on the problem itself. Instead, look to the One who can fill our desires with good things. "It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether... Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good... Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone." (ST,I-II,q.2,a.8)

"Our hearts are restless my God, until they rest in Thee." (St. Augustine)