

The Problem of Pastoral Pornography

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The Scope of the Problem

- A 2001 Leadership Survey revealed that 40% of the clergy struggle with pornography.
- 20% of the calls on the pastoral helpline of Focus on the Family relate to pornography.
- 33% of clergy have visited a sexually explicit website.
- 53% of these visited the website several times, up to weekly in the past year.
- 30% of pastors look at pornography in the past 30 days.

The Scope of the Problem

- 28% of spouses know about the problem.
- 37% of pastors say pornography is currently a problem.
- 30% of clergy do not talk with anyone about it.
- 69% have prayed about the problem.
- 4% have gotten professional help.
- 10% of the calls on pastoral help lines are from women, many of these women clergy.

Clergy Risk Factors

- History of sexual abuse including viewing pornography as a child.
- Immature understanding of sexuality.
- A family history where rules are stressed more than relationships, loneliness, depression.
- Acceptance has historically been received through spiritual achievement.
- A cyber sex addict who enters ministry to cope with their addiction.

Special Considerations and Characteristics of Pastors

● Pastoral Role:

- Many who are insecure crave the “special status” of being a pastor.
- Some fall into “pastoral codependency”, i.e., needing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others.
- Accessibility, anonymity, and affordability of on-line pornography.

Special Considerations and Characteristics of Pastors

● Vocational Consequences:

- High expectations of pastors to lead exemplary lives
- There is intense on-the-job emotional stress
- Fears of losing their jobs leads to silence
- Silence leads to a continuation of the problem

● Pastoral Isolation:

- Many pastors have a lot of time alone. They structure their own schedules.
- Many are lonely with few friends

Special Considerations and Characteristics of Pastors

● Pastoral Narcissism:

- Grandiosity
- Self-serving behavior
- Charisma – Adrenaline high from preaching
- Need for praise and affirmation
- Need to be listened to

Special Considerations and Characteristics of Pastors

● **Spiritual Immaturity:**

- Tendency to engage in black or white thinking
- Tendency to blame others when things go wrong
- Illusion that they won't get caught
- Belief that the good they do cancels out their bad behavior

● **Accountability:**

- Lack of submission to authority
- No accountability group

Special Considerations and Characteristics of Pastors

- **Anger:**

- Passive aggressive anger at women expressed as manipulative and seductive behavior
- Anger at God related to overwork and perception that God is not helping them

- **Sense of Entitlement:**

- I deserve to have, to do, to get

Special Considerations and Characteristics of Pastors

● Relationship Struggles:

- Pastoral ministry places tremendous strain on marriages.
- Performance oriented pastors often blame their wives for the problems they have.

● Presence of other Addictions:

- 19% alcohol
- 38% food
- 88% work

Common Pastoral Rationalizations

- Need for reward
- Justification for hard work in ministry
- Wife who doesn't care
- Long hours in ministry
- Pornography doesn't hurt anyone. No one gets an STD. No one gets pregnant.
- It's only curiosity, it won't turn into a problem.
- It will enhance my outreach to others.

Symptoms of a Problem

- Unmanageability and loss of control
 - Engaging in behavior you know violates your moral values
 - Unsuccessful attempts to stop
 - Rationalization
 - Fantasy
 - Neuro-chemical tolerance
 - Using sex to change mood; either to elevate mood or to relax

Symptoms of a Problem

- Stress triggers sexual behavior
- Rituals become established
- The acting out behavior occurs
- It is important to understand that relapse occurs long before acting out occurs. Relapse occurs first in the mind, and then in the behavior.

Treatment for Sex Addiction

- To deal with neuro-chemical intolerance, a period of total sexual abstinence of from 30 – 90 days is recommended (spouse must be in agreement). This counteracts the addict's belief that sex is the most important need.
- Test for Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Develop a strong self-care plan
- Get tested for ADHD.

Treatment for Sex Addiction

- Engage in a 12 Step Program of recovery
- Get a computer filter where you do not have the password
- Get trauma treatment if necessary
- Address the relational problems through support groups and marital counseling
- Obtain spiritual and accountability support through a pastoral group

Returning to Ministry

- The reality is that even today most clergy found to have sexual addiction/pornography problems are dismissed from the ministry.
- If return is to be considered, there should be at least one year of sobriety from addictive behavior.
- There must be a working accountability plan.
- The faith community must be supportive.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue of Sexuality in the Church Community

- Preach about sexuality openly but sensitively
- Hold workshops in the church on sexuality
- Build accountability groups into the church structure
- Focus on this issue as a part of a singles ministry, youth ministry and couples ministry

Helping Resources

- Kettering Clergy Care Center
- Barnabus Christian Counseling Network (www.barnabus.com)
- www.pureintimacy.org
- www.stonegateresources.com
- www.estherministries.org (outreach to wives of sexually addicted ministers)
- The Lodge Retreat Center (Buchanan, MI)

Helping Resources

- *Healing the Wounds of Sex Addiction* by Mark Laaser
- *Breaking the Silence: A Pastor Goes Public about his Battle with Pornography* by Bernie Anderson
- *Every Man's Battle* by Steve Arterburn
- *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggles of Sexual Addiction* by Harry Schaumburg
- *Clinical Management of Sex Addiction* by Patrick Carnes

Add the following Key texts

- “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes” Psalm 101:3
- “Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.” Psalm 119:133
- “O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
- 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up;
● You understand my thought afar off.
- 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down,
● And are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 For there is not a word on my tongue,
● But behold, O LORD, You know it alltogether.” Psalm 139: 1-4
- “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality” I Thessalonians 4:3