Pornography and marriage: healing the hurt

by Andrew and Kathryn



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Ten years into her marriage with Andrew, Kathryn found out about her husband's pornography addiction. It was devastating - for both of them.

Andrew and Kathryn share with VoxPoint their struggle and journey out of porn.

Andrew's story

I never liked reading, but I was now desperate.

Was it really possible to have eyes that are pure? I put aside my scepticism, flipped open the book, *Pure Eyes*, and started to read.

My first glance

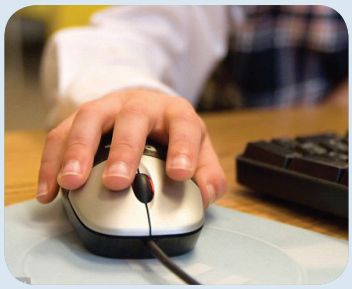
I was 12 when I first saw pornography. I walked into my grandparents' place and a *People* magazine on my pop's table caught my attention.

The bare breasted blonde reached out from the pages and sank deep hooks into my eyes and my heart. It grabbed me and dragged me in and I willingly let it.

It wasn't until I started reading *Pure Eyes*, that I realised I had actually become addicted to pornography.

To this day, I am still baffled about how my pop, mostly incapacitated by a stroke, came to have a magazine like this in his house.

But night after night, we would come to help put Pop to bed and I would seek out those magazines. Somehow a large pile ended up in our shed. It made matters worse.



Andrew: lured by images

I would seek them out because they brought me pleasure and comfort, but then the battle would rage and I would feel guilty.

I knew it was wrong. Out of guilt I would get rid of some – and then I'd come back for more. It became a cycle.

I also worked at a mine for a few years. Porn was everywhere. My life was an illusion – people saw a good Christian man, but God knew what was really going on in my heart.

Battle, victory, defeat. Peaks and troughs. That's how the years passed. I loved my sexual highs, but slavery engulfed me.

I thought it would ease as I entered marriage. I was wrong.

How could I expect to build a marriage when I had been reading the wrong instruction booklet?

I often ignored the real woman in my life and instead went after an unreal woman in a magazine who in reality wouldn't give me the time of day. This made me grumpy because no matter what, porn never satisfied.

> ***I thought it would ease as I entered marriage. I was wrong.***

Pornography lies. Pornography says that a woman is always eager to please a man in any way he wants, whenever he wants, with no need for real relationship. It lies by making you think it will satisfy you, so you go back for more and more, but it never does.

It lies by making you think you've got it under control when in fact you're it's slave.

In my younger years, the problem was manageable, so I thought, because it was always in paper form.

Then came the internet. It is horrifying what you can pipe straight into your house through two little wires.

This became an increasing problem, because online porn was much easier to access and easier to hide.

Our marriage was slowly dying but my wife had no idea why. Something had to be done, but what?

I didn't know what to do about it. I tried to talk to my wife about it but couldn't reveal the enormity of it because it was too embarrassing and shameful.

We don't talk about these problems in Christian circles, much to our detriment.

I tried installing filters and accountability programs, but then it became more of a challenge to figure out how I could get around them. What I really needed was a change of heart.

That change would come in the form of "be sure your sin will find you out". My wife found me out!

Found out

Once I was found out, I got serious about taking porn out the back and shooting it. This had happened before but I never went through with it. This was because in my heart I never really wanted to kill it off. What was different this time?

I had listened to a book by Dr Garry Smalley called *Your Relationship with God*. He had mentioned that the heart and the mind are in constant communication and in decision making the heart will tell the brain what to do. I needed to decide with my heart that this thing had to die.

First, I found a couple of godly men to confess my sins to and asked them to keep me accountable.

Next, I handed over all the passwords of all our computers and mobile devices to my wife so I couldn't access and change things without her knowing. We installed X3watch (www.x3watch.com), an accountability program that sends a monthly email with a list of questionable sites. My brother-in-law installed a filter on our network.

I went to the website xxxchurch.com and found help in the books *Pure Eyes and Eyes of Integrity*.

These helped me in pointing out my addiction, what it had done to my thought processes and how to continually combat the addiction.

Then it was time to rebuild my marriage.

How porn affected my wife

Admitting porn use to your wife is like telling her that her best friend has died a tragic death.

My wife has a strong exterior, but inside she is a delicate flower that if hurt will recoil and close up tight. I had broken my

marriage vows. I had hurt my wife like no other human had ever hurt her before.

I knew that healing was going to be a long haul.

The only hope I had was that she was a woman of great faith. I knew that divorce was not an option, and that God had brought me to this point. I had to trust Him to heal her.

Just as the battle is a physical problem for guys, the problem is a head battle for wives.

She thinks, "Am I good enough? Am I too fat? Is my hair the wrong colour? My body is not the same after the children and I can't get it back! What will people think of me? What will they think of my husband?"

During sex she thinks, "Who is he thinking of?"

Rebuilding my marriage

First, I decided to continually reassure my wife that the problem was not her. I was addicted to porn way before we got together. I reassured her that I was working on remaining sober.

Next, I gave her no sexual pressure at all. That meant no sex at all until she was ready.

I just concentrated on being sexually pure, going cold turkey. This is the only way to beat this, and the only way to regain the trust of your wife.

Strangely, my wife kept up appearances in public but recoiled in private. This became confusing for me, so I took the private situations as a true gauge of where we were at.

I made sure that I honoured her privacy. That meant I didn't go into the bathroom when she was in there. I didn't stay in the room when she was getting dressed.

At night I gave her as much space in the bed as possible, sleeping right on the edge of the mattress. Oh how I longed for her touch on the second night, but I made that a reminder to pray. And pray I did.

I continued to read and listen to books and sermons. I filled myself with truths from God's word and good Christian books.

I needed to retrain my mind, to replace the ruts dug in my brain from porn use, so I agreed to go to ballroom dancing lessons with Kathryn. I killed three birds with one stone: retraining my mind, fulfilling a lifelong dream of hers, and intimacy.

Teaching my sons

One of the saddest verses in the Bible is Judges 2:10 – "Eventually that entire generation (of Israelites that conquered the land) died and was buried. Then another generation grew up that didn't know anything of God or the work he had done for Israel."

Why is it so sad? Because that generation didn't instill in their children the glorious thing God had done.

Don't leave the teaching of the most intimate joining of two human bodies and souls to the schools.

I am having those talks with my boys. I am the one explaining sex and God's purposes for sex to them. I am the one being a living example of a loving husband to my wife.

How do you know when to start? Take your boys for a walk through any department store and watch if they notice an undressed mannequin. If they do, they are more than ready.

I had started with my 11-year-old but missed it with my 9-year-old, thinking he was too young.

What do you say to them? This is where you are going to need the biggest guts of all. I have never been so nervous as the first time I sat down to talk to my eldest son about sex.

There are some good books out there that can help, such as *Preparing Your Son for Every Man's Battle* by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *A Little Black Book on Sex* by Scott Petty and *The Mission: Boy to Man* by Tim and Ami Loper.

The only problem I found was none of these really looked at sex from God's perspective, and why He invented it.

We home school our boys, and I wanted to be the first one to introduce my boys to the joys of sex, so I wrote my own book for them. It is based on God's Word with examples from my life and where I went wrong.

Lessons I've learnt:

- My wife is not turned on by the sight of a naked male body, not even mine!
- Men have sex to feel good, women have to feel good to have sex. Intimacy, romance and intercourse go together.
- My wife is one of God's special daughters, the King's princess, and she deserves to be treated that way.
- Porn blinds me to my wife's natural beauty.

Some strategies I use:

- Be wary of where your hands are and self-stimulation, remove them as soon as you notice it.
- Stop seeking and trawling for perfect stimulation to the eyes. Start looking at your wife as the only woman in your life.
- Zap those images off of the TV! In fact, now I watch very little TV. If I do watch a program, I usually tape it so that I can fast forward the ads.
- When guys are slagging off about their wives, say something positive about your wife.
- Look for and record the wonderful things about your wife and reflect on them often.
- Use photos of your wife as your computer screensaver.

Porn: rife at schools

Andrew was first exposed to porn at home. These days, the problem is bigger, as Darwin teacher Rohan Wightman discovered.[1]

Rohan says pornography, sexual harassment and even sex assaults at schools are prolific - and he is moving his family from Darwin as a result.

He is leaving the Northern Territory after 10 years, partly because he does not want his five-year-old daughter spending her teenage years there.



Rohan Wightman

He talks of pornographic videos on phones and tablets being used to harass female students, and boys intimidating girls outside of school hours into sex acts they have seen in the videos.

"I have seen it become a lot more intense to the point of female teachers I know who have been verbally or sexually abused by students," Mr Wightman said.

"Kids have always done dumb things like drawing d---- on walls and things like that ... but in my time it was a lot different than bringing 15-minute porn videos to school."

Mr Wightman told *NT News* that a counsellor at one school had quit after having to deal with three girls reporting being raped each week and not having extra staff employed to deal with it.

"It may not be rape in the legally defined sense of the word but certainly sexual assault – and stories you hear of kids at parties, it wouldn't surprise me," he said.

"I think there are a few reasons it is not widely talked about and they would have to look at addressing it on a systematic level.

"I think schools are struggling to cope with the issue."

Pornographic X-rated DVDs are legally available in the Northern Territory and the ACT, but not the states.

Kathryn's story

It was about 10 years into our marriage when my husband first told me that he had been using pornography. We didn't have a bad marriage and our sex life wasn't bad either, so it came at me out of left field.

My husband's confession

One night, Andrew, feeling guilty, confessed to me that he had been using porn. I felt as if my heart had been crushed. I cried a lot and blamed myself – I mustn't have been pretty enough or good enough sexually.

Andrew assured me that he loved me and that there was nothing wrong with me. He said he was getting it under control and putting filters on our computers. He also asked me to keep him accountable. He told me that if I checked his internet history and found that the history had been cleared then it was probably because he'd been looking at porn.



It took me a while to get past this. But since he seemed to be getting it under control, and I didn't understand the enormity of pornography and the problems it can cause, I just tried to get over it. I asked God to help me forgive him.

In the following years, I would occasionally ask how he was going and check his internet history. It all seemed to be going well.

I was naïve to underestimate the problem.

I caught him again

On 30 October 2010, my "normal" life came crashing in around me.

It was a Saturday night and I awoke in the early hours of the morning to find my husband not in bed. Strange! I lay there wondering where he was and noticed his office light was on. I immediately thought, "Oh no, he must be looking at porn", but I tried to dismiss it.

We were going away to a Christian conference the next day, so I reasoned that he was getting stuff ready to go. For awhile I lay there, torn.

When I awoke in the morning, I asked him why he was up in the night.

He said he couldn't sleep so he got up and put some shows on our laptop to watch on our trip. *Ok*, I thought, *goodo*.

But something kept niggling at me. So when he got in the shower, I went into his office. I found that the computer internet history had been cleared. Alarm bells rang loudly in my head. I started to feel physically ill. My husband had asked me to check on him, but he had lied.

In the following days, he confessed to me that he'd been looking at porn again. He said he realised he was actually addicted to porn, and it had all started when he was 12.

I'm sure you can imagine my devastation. I'd known Andrew my whole life, and had been married to this man for 13 years, but didn't have a clue about his addiction. Even after he had confessed to looking at porn three years ago, I still didn't know the depth of the problem.

I felt sick to the stomach for weeks after that. I felt angry, betrayed, used, unloved and unlovely. I blamed myself for not being good enough. I thought he was a gross, perverted sick man and I couldn't stand it when he touched me in any way, let alone intimately. I cried an awful lot and wondered where this left our relationship.

I could not see how I could ever get over this or be attracted to this man again. And boy did I feel foolish! Foolish that I thought I knew this man, and yet it turned out I didn't really know him. And foolish because when I had gotten a small glimpse three years before, I had quite happily chosen to be ignorant of the seriousness of this sin and stuck my head in the sand.

Here I was destroyed, and my marriage seemed destroyed as well. I felt very alone.

How do I trust?

While I was at my lowest point, my husband repented and confessed his sin. He began his healing process to conquer this sin. He talked about it with some other men who are now keeping him accountable.

While he was on a high learning to control his heart and wandering eyes, I was at the height of my anger.

Andrew wanted to be with me in a new way and experience intimacy that we'd never known before. He wanted me to trust him, but my stagnant heart wondered if he could ever be trusted and if I could ever fully love him again! It was a most confusing, painful and difficult time.

Even harder was that I was alone in this. It's not something that people talk about or share with each other. Every time I thought about telling a friend, I would feel an enormous amount of shame.

Finding help for wives

I spent a lot of time crying out to God in my pain. He didn't part the clouds or give me any quick answers, but He never left me and He gave me the strength to keep getting through each day. The days were tough. It's hard to live "normally" when your world has fallen apart, but no one knows it has. It's hard to hide your pain or anger from your children and keep functioning as a loving mother when all you want to do is run away.

It wasn't until February 2011 that God led me to some help. The first bit of help came when I had a chance to scour a Christian bookshop for two hours on my own. I was actually shocked by what I discovered there. There were quite a few books dealing with pornography but they were all for men struggling with this problem.

Guess how many I found for wives of husbands who had a porn problem? One! But praise the Lord for that one. It was *Every Heart Restored ... A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin* by Fred and Brenda Stoeker. Oh, how that helped me.

At the same time, the Lord gave me the courage to confide in a friend. She was able to help me greatly, but only because she had had to deal with her husband looking at pornography too. How wonderful it was to have someone to talk to who understood all the things I was feeling.

A new journey

In the early days of discovering my husband's betrayal I often thought about whether I should stay or leave. Everything in me wanted to run, but somehow God had me stay. I'm glad I did. If I'd left then, it would have been a decision based only on my emotions, and I see now how much more damage it would've caused.

God had me stay. God worked in my life, and helped me "manage the mess" to the point where I stopped considering leaving. He changed me to want to work on fixing my marriage so that it could be all that He intended it to be.

My husband seriously wounded me with his sin. However, I learnt that Jesus was wounded plenty, but He didn't dwell on how He was being mistreated. He chose to help the wounded and the ones who had wounded Him. That's what I'm trying to do, help firstly my husband, and then help others who've been wounded in a similar way.

I have been working on forgiving my husband. I could say I've forgiven him, but there are days when the devil likes to remind me of what my husband has done and I have to forgive him all over again. It's a journey, because overcoming sexual sin is a process. Problems don't vanish overnight.

My forgiveness doesn't mean I trust my husband again. My love, forgiveness and commitment to my husband are choices that I make alone, regardless of his actions towards me. But trust is earned. I can't trust him again until he has become trustworthy.

Andrew is slowly earning that trust again. I have seen God growing my husband in amazing ways.

I also try and view the discovery of my husband's sin as God's grace in my life.

My husband's porn addiction had been like a huge life-sucking tumour silently attacking our marriage. But now that I've found the cancer, there's hope. Now I can pray for healing and seek a marital life restored to health.

The day my 11-year-old found violent porn on the web

Noosa parent Lizi Patch has gone public with a story of innocence ripped away from her preteen son after his friend pressured him to view violent pornography on his internet-enabled phone. [2]

"Last week my son told me he had watched something horrible online," Patch wrote. "Something sexual where the young women involved seemed coerced into an act that was brutal and disgusting, not just to an uninitiated 11-year-old, prone to anxiety, but to anyone with a shred of humanity."



Patch said her son, struggling to fit in at his new secondary school, was pressured by a classmate into viewing the video because the classmate thought it was "funny". Afterward, Patch noticed her son becoming quiet and withdrawn, but he didn't respond to her repeated inquiries as to what was wrong.

Finally, one night, he broke down. "We went into my bedroom and he told me everything," Patch wrote.

"He said he had been horrified watching a short video online but was unable to stop thinking about it. He told me he couldn't 'unsee' it, and how he felt his childhood was effectively over. He had not told me anything as he thought I'd be angry with him."

Patch said she was shocked by the violent nature of what her son had seen, and how easy it was to access it.

"I use the internet all the time," she wrote. "I am very active on social media. I've seen porn – most of us have. But I recognise that this time the internet has crept up and slapped me right in the face."

"When the mark of fitting in with your mates becomes watching a 'funny' video, which is essentially violent porn that changes your world in an instant, then I think we, as a society, need to reassess things."

Patch's son is hardly alone in having had his childhood stolen by internet pornography. At 11 years old, he is exactly at the age considered "average" for first time porn exposure.[3] Child-on-child sex abuse is a growing problem.[4,5]

Iceland is considering blocking all internet porn after considering its damaging effects, especially on children.

The Icelandic government is working on legal measures to try and stop the flood of graphic sexual material reaching the island's shores.[6]

Methods under consideration include blocking porn IP addresses and making it illegal to use Icelandic credit cards to access x-rated sites.

Helpful organisations

Porn Harms
pornharms.com

Porn Harms Research
pornharmsresearch.com

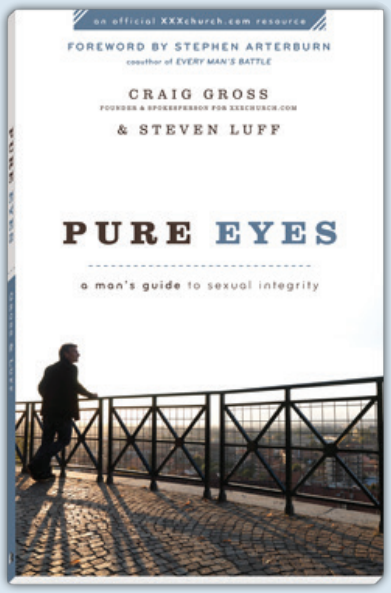
Guilty Pleasure
www.guiltypleasure.tv

Just 1 Click Away
www.just1clickaway.org

Princeton's Witherspoon Institute: The Social Costs of Pornography
www.socialcostsofpornography.com

Fight The New Drug
www.fightthenewdrug.org

Beggar's Daughter
beggarsdaughter.com



Pure Eyes: a man's guide to sexual integrity

Helpful books on sexual integrity

XXXchurch resources *(available at www.eyesofintegrity.com)*:

For men
Pure Eyes: a man's guide to sexual integrity
by Craig Gross and Steven Luff

Eyes of integrity: the porn pandemic and how it affects you
by Craig Gross and Jason Harper

For women
Pure Heart: a woman's guide to sexual integrity
by Shellie Warren

Books for wives:

The Healing Choice - How to Move Beyond Betrayal
by Brenda Stoeker and Susan Allen, Waterbrook Press, Colorado

Every Heart Restored...A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin
by Fred and Brenda Stoeker, Waterbrook Press, Colorado

Books for parents:

Preparing Your Son for Every Man's Battle
by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, Waterbrook Press, Colorado

The Mission: Boy to Man
by Tim and Ami Loper, Biblical Standards Publications, NC

Little Black Book: Sex
by Scott Petty, Matthias Media, Australia

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