

Introduction

Starting to read a book on pornography can bring a whole host of emotions. What are the pages that follow going to contain?

As you start this book, maybe you are:

- Intrigued – keen to find out more about a topic that your friends are talking about, conscious that you do not know much.
- Worried – suspecting that you will be told that what you have been doing is wrong? Aware that you have been watching things that have not been wise.
- Exasperated – fed up with adults talking about a subject that you feel you either know quite a lot about already – or a subject that you do not really want to know about – and here you are with yet another book to read!

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- Confused – you have never had any contact with pornography, nor have your friends, but you have been given this resource and you are not sure why?
- Excited – aware that there are good things to learn about God, His world, and yourself, as well as there being lots of ways you can be equipped to help your friends.

Each of us will be in a different place as we begin to read but we all have two things in common: we live in a world where pornography is easy to access at the click of a button and we live in a world where Jesus is King. Working out how to live in such a world, in ways that honor our King, is something we all need to wrestle with day by day.

In the pages that follow, there is going to be no graphic detail about the contents of porn. There will be no manipulating you to feel guilty for decisions you may have made in the past. And there will be no pretending that living for Jesus is always easy. There will, however, be an honest look at who we are, what pornography is, why we are here, and how God is calling us to live – and an invitation to follow Him into a future that is beautiful beyond compare.

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING PORN

1. Purpose

Have you ever wondered what your purpose is in life? Ever sat down to think about why you are here? Maybe you are aware that God has “prepared good works” for you to do (Eph. 2:10). Maybe you are keen to be involved in missions. Maybe you just want to follow your dreams, use your gifts, and have good relationships with those around you.

None of those things are unusual. But there is more. God calls all of us to be His precious children – to have a relationship with Him – to know that He is our good Father and that we are safe in His family. He cares about the specific things we might do – but He cares even more about who we are and the connection we have with Him.

We are designed to be in a flourishing relationship with the universe’s King.

WHO WE ARE

To be a child of God is an astonishing privilege. It is worth taking a moment to let that sink in. To paraphrase Ephesians 1:3-14, to be in God's family means that God has been thinking about us since before the beginning of time. It means that He has called us by name to join Him. He wants us in His family – He is not stuck with us but actively sought us out. He has given us His Spirit to live within us, a seal to keep us spiritually safe forever. And He has surrounded us with other believers in His chosen community, the church.

None of that is because we have impressed Him by our words or our ways – we have not earned His welcome – it is simply an outworking of His love. He is a generous God who moves towards messy people, whose hearts go astray, and does what is necessary to bring them back to Him. His love is so deep that Jesus was willing to leave the glories of heaven to die a hideous death, and rise to a victorious life, just so people like us can be in His family. He has done everything necessary to make us clean, to make us His.

How wonderful to think those things apply to us! (Or they could, if we have not already turned to Him.) Those truths are the reason the Apostle John in his first letter could confidently exclaim,

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“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (1 John 3:1 *ESV*).

Our purpose is to be God’s child – to be loved by Him and to love Him in return.

HOW WE LIVE

Our status as children of God changes everything. Being a Christian is meant to be more than going through the motions of attending church, saying some prayers and reading God’s Word. Being a child of the King of all things brings with it a royal call: to love God so much that we desire to be like Him. Not just to keep some set of rules that He writes down, not just to look respectable on the outside so we can fit in at church but, deep within, to choose to live lives that are astonishingly beautiful.

The Bible is packed with examples. Romans 12 is one place to turn. There it encourages us to be joyful, persevering, hospitable, loving, forgiving, eager to overcome evil by being extraordinarily kind and good. To use our gifts, to value differences among God’s family, to live in countercultural ways. None of that is because we have to. It is all about being so overwhelmed by God’s immeasurable grace and love that we choose to respond by living in new ways.

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Philippians 2:15 puts it like this. We are to live in Christlike ways:

So that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

It is about being incredibly beautiful in a world that can be pretty ugly sometimes. And doing so, not in our own strength or in isolation from others – but in God’s strength, alongside other Christians who choose to respond to God’s mercy and care in that way.

Doing this is a lifetime’s pursuit. Day by day, we choose to worship God by living in ways that please Him and are good for us. Year after year, we choose to have our minds renewed by God’s Word, so we increasingly see the good in what He wants. Maybe the best word to describe such a life is holy – a life that is set apart to be wholeheartedly and wonderfully centered on Christ.

One aspect of this kind of life is the important matter of how we use our body and mind. Our call is not to go with the flow of the world but pursue something harder, and something far more worthwhile. We are invited to live lives

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of profound love. Not cheap love – which sees us treating ourselves and others as objects of pleasure – but deep love that knows the true value of both us and those around.

And that brings us to the main topic of this book.

WHAT'S OUT THERE

God's call is the very opposite of pornography's call. Pornography, which at its core is simply media that portrays explicit sexual material, designed to stimulate sexual excitement, is the epitome of cheap love. It tempts people like us to switch on our devices and use our body and mind to get a quick hit of sexual excitement, devoid of any real human interaction or care.

It can feel appealing at times, lots of people can attest to that. It is certainly easy to access and it comes in many forms. In this book we will be focusing on the pornography it is possible to find in video form online – material that can be watched. But there is also plenty of explicit content in books, fan fiction, photography, games, and AI. It's out there but it never offers real love, only fake love. And it always drags us away from God's countercultural call. Using it does not help us shine like stars, it mutes us, dulls and denies our true purpose and call.