



February, 2018

Now What?

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In January, I had the opportunity to pull back the curtain on my life and share how God has transformed misery into great ministry opportunities for me (He's really great at that, if we let Him in). But, some of you might be left wondering, "now what?"

In other words, what in the world can the local church do to address the scourge of 4G impurity that is constantly begging for our attention and affection?



The follow five suggestions are taken from a piece I wrote two years ago as a summary of Barna's The Porn Phenomenon. This piece was co-commissioned by Josh McDowell Ministries and Covenant Eyes.

Reject the "Morality" of Self-Fulfillment

There are numerous articles in faith-based magazines and blogs about the "feed me" attitude prevalent in so many church-goers. This idea is that self-fulfillment is the highest moral good. Sadly, the church has been borderline complicit with supporters of the self-fulfillment movement with an emphasis on prosperity and safety.

Chasing after self-fulfillment is not new. In Ecclesiastes, King Solomon made it clear that chasing riches, big homes, and pleasure was like "chasing the wind." He ends in Ecclesiastes 12:13 saying, "That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty."

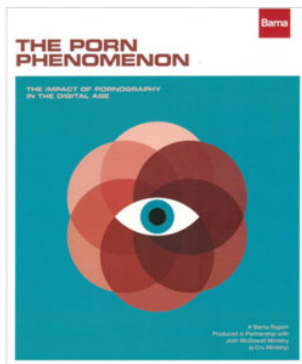
In other words, we must counter the narrative that human beings need sex to survive. Instead, they need Jesus.

In John 6:35, we read, “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

Are we constantly reminding people that the only true satisfaction comes from Jesus Christ? Do we create environments where they can soak in the awe-inspiring, satisfying presence of the Holy Spirit? Are we teaching our people that we were created as spiritual beings before sexual beings? During the 167 hours in a week that they aren’t attending church, the world is telling them to adopt an attitude of “Me, me, me!” You have an hour to remind them to adopt an attitude of “Him, Him, Him!”

Rethink our Approach to Sexual Ethics

Sin is sin. It creates an element of separation between us and a Holy God. But, it seems that churches risk becoming the “sex police” by being overly dogmatic about sexual right and wrong, while being silent about spiritual attitudes that may be even more corrosive. When was the last time someone was called out at church for being greedy? Or prideful?



*As mentioned in *The Porn Phenomenon*, C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* offers this pointed perspective on matters of flesh and spirit:*

“The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and backbiting; the pleasure of power, or hatred.... That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither.”

Does your church (or even your own attitude) have a tendency toward “disproportionate bias” with sexual sin? According to Woodrow Wilson, “When correcting a child, the goal is to apply light, not heat” and I think the same is true in our churches. Yes, shine a light in the dark places where porn addiction and sexual distortion thrive, but make sure your flashlight on this issue isn’t any brighter than the one you use towards other issues. Let’s leave judgment out.

Create Communities of Grace

*In John 1:14, we read, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth**” (emphasis mine).*

Life is a constant struggle to find balance between grace and truth. I’ve found this to be abundantly true as a parent. Some situations are clearly “truth” issues. For example, “Don’t touch the stove, it’s hot!” is pretty black and white. But, when my kids come to me with issues of the heart, these are different because they are often accompanied by guilt and shame. With these issues, heavy doses of truth often act as an accelerant for more guilt and shame. On the other hand, a reaction full of grace, absent judgment, causes shame and guilt to shrivel and die.

James 5:16 says, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” The beautiful combination of confession and prayer crush the power of shame and guilt. Ephesians 5:8 asks us to “live as children of light” because in the light, grace and mercy and peace can have their way, lifting heavy burdens from tired shoulders.

How would you describe the overall atmosphere of your church? Is it one of grace or truth? Is the senior pastor the most trustworthy and authentic person in the church? How can you, as a leader, model

vulnerability in your own life? When it comes to leadership, John Maxwell states, “you replicate what you are.” Does your church have programs or environments that invite authentic, open, accountable, judgment-free sharing? According to Barna, “Successfully waging a battle against porn use can be done in the loving company of a community of grace.”

Present a Culturally Resonant Challenge to Pornography

The idea that one must choose to embrace learning, science and reason or be a student of religion, dogma and faith is prevalent. But, didn't God invent science? If God is who He says He is, shouldn't we find scientific evidence that points towards a Divine Creator instead of away from Him? In the case against pornography, it's not just a list of Scriptures that tell us there's a better way, but we now have a growing list of sound, scientific sources stating that pornography and sexual addiction adversely affect neurological activity in both genders and even disrupt sexual response in men.

In a cultural sense, current causes often use issues of human dignity, equality and fairness to push their agendas. These same issues exist in the case against pornography, giving churches a perfect opportunity to engage in critical, social justice conversations.



The Porn Phenomenon provides an amazing list of talking points:

- Porn denies human dignity.
- Porn objectifies human bodies.
- Porn tells a false and inhumane story about people of color.
- Porn presents a picture of sex that is carnal, aggressive and often unrealistic.
- Porn is cruel, degrading and misogynistic, and distorts expectations of both masculinity and femininity.
- Porn destroys relationships, pathologizes sexuality and ruins the lives of children.
- The industry exploits and coerces actors, and by design or accident incites sex slavery and human trafficking.
- Porn treats human beings as commodities.

What if you were more familiar with these studies and statements? How could your church embrace science and culture as a means of furthering conversation about pornography? If we can do this well, then we might be more successful in promoting what Barna points out as the last “next step.”

Promote a Robust Biblical Counter-Narrative to Porn

The Porn Phenomenon provides this excellent explanation (124): “In stark contrast to porn’s lies, God’s word says that human beings are created in God’s image and thus are precious beyond compare. And sex is a God-created aspect of human life – it’s not a dirty word.”

Let’s go back to the very beginning. In Genesis 1:27, we read these amazing verses, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Next, verse 28 is basically telling Adam and Eve to procreate! “Be fruitful and multiply.” Sex is God’s idea! And not just for procreation, but also for pleasure (Gen. 2:23) and oneness (Gen. 2:24). These aspects of God’s design for sex stand in stark contrast to the false stories told by pornography. Church leaders have a massive opportunity to talk openly about sex and pornography, showing the massive distance between God’s plans and porn’s lies. Without conversation, both from the pulpit and within families, silence on God’s design for sex and sexuality actually whispers “this is taboo” or “this is shameful” and points curious minds towards the endless pages of answers provided by a simple Google search. Passive parenting is not an option in the digital age, where information is quick and cheap.



Is your church willing to tackle "the tough stuff"? Has your church equipped parents to have conversations about sex, sexuality, and God's design for both?

Since the average age of first exposure to explicit content online is around 10-11, how have you equipped your children and youth leaders on keeping kids from porn and on coaching kids on what to do when they encounter something inappropriate?



At Protect Young Eyes, it's our passion to educate caring adults and their kids about how to honor God with every digital click. We do this through amazing presentations and digital content. On February 7, we released the first-ever curriculum for kids and teens teaching digital citizenship through a Scriptural lens called Virtue in Media (www.virtueinmedia.com). For anyone reading this letter, who would like their church to use this plug-and-play, video-based curriculum for kids in

grades K-8, including training for leaders, bilingual at-home content, and more, please email me directly at chrism@protectyoungeyes.com for a special discount.



**VIRTUE IN MEDIA IS
THE ONLY
SCRIPTURE-BASED
TECHNOLOGY
CURRICULUM
AVAILABLE**

Our hope is to reach as many families as possible with our message that it is possible to use technology in holy and virtuous ways.

Catholic Educators



Protestant Educators



Home Educators



Catholic Youth Groups



Protestant Youth Groups



Curious Parents



May each of you, as leaders in the local church, accept your anointing as men and women who like a good shepherd, must fight for the eyes, minds, and hearts of your sheep. May you speak openly and truthfully about all of the awkward things that Dr. Google has answers for. After all, we have much better answers.

*Warmly,
Chris*



I am so proud to call Chris McKenna my friend!

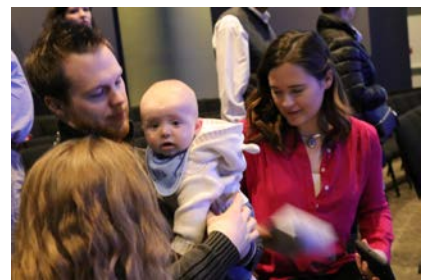
I thank God for his sacrificial labor of love to launch VIRTUE IN MEDIA as a resource to advance the Kingdom of God in the hearts and lives of students, and their families.

Please join me in spreading the word to your family and friends.

We are also honored to share this poem, written by our dear friend, Laura DeWeerd, before she went home to be with Jesus in heaven.

THE DEPTH OF WINTER

*How predictable is this time of year
when I am brought to my annual low.
My energy is depleted, my soul is depressed
not even revived by the brilliance of snow
My eyes squint from the brightness;
the beauty is a grand and glorious sight.
My breath is caught up with nature's display of birds
on the dramatic backdrop of white
Yet I crave so much more of the warmth that I miss
I need sun on my face, that of spring's gentle kiss.
Even the red of the cardinal or the sweetness of blue on the jay
cannot match the colors of flowers or the feelings I have summer's day.
The world is caught up in temporary pleasures
like the radiance of new fallen snow.
They miss the wonder of the source of it all,
like I miss the sun's summer glow.
I must seek further than temporary pleasures
like the beautiful banquet of snow
To overcome the depth of my winters
I need God's power for revival from this annual low.
~~~Laura DeWeerd*



Liam Wesley LaPorte Smith, Child Dedication, Ada Bible Church Knapp Campus, February 18, 2018



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