

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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## What's So Bad About Porn?

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## What's So Bad About Porn?

### Abstract

"Porn turns sex into something that is all about me, and so warps my view on healthy sexuality in ways that make it difficult to engage in mutual, consensual, healthy sexuality."

Posting about the destructive effects of pornography from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/whats-so-bad-about-porn/>

### Keywords

In All Things, consumers, sex, pornography, relationships

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

# What's So Bad About Porn?

 [all in allthings.org /whats-so-bad-about-porn/](http://allthings.org/whats-so-bad-about-porn/)

Neal DeRoo

Pornography has a very, very bad reputation. We are constantly hearing about the [porn epidemic](#), both in [secular](#) and in [Christian](#) media. You have probably seen a [t-shirt](#) or some other [merchandise](#) telling you that “[Porn Kills Love](#),” and there are [numerous books](#) out there to help you ‘quit porn.’ Indeed, we are told more and more that porn is not only [dangerous](#) but [addictive](#).

But why? What is so bad about porn? Research suggests <sup>1</sup> that porn leads to dissatisfaction with one's current spouse or partner, can cause one's spouse/partner to feel inadequate, leads to increasingly extreme sexual preferences, can lead to sexual problems (inability to become aroused by partner, decreased desire to have sex with partner, etc.), can become addictive, encourages lying and secrecy, and creates unrealistic expectations.

In general, we can perhaps summarize the problem with porn this way: porn turns sex into something that is all about me, and so warps my view on healthy sexuality in ways that make it difficult to engage in mutual, consensual, healthy sexuality. As such, porn is destructive because it makes me unhappy with something that I *should* be happy with, and that I *would* be happy with, if I didn't have experience with porn.

But porn isn't really *uniquely* bad for any of these reasons, is it? Pornography is simply what happens when consumerism remembers that we have genitals. It's the logical extension of a world and a culture in which everything is thought of as being available for me to consume, if doing so makes me happy. If I expect to eat what I want whenever I want, and to go wherever I want to go whenever I want to go there (how many times do people complain about public transportation as being ‘inconvenient’ because they might have to wait 30-45 minutes to go somewhere, when they could get there ‘right now’ if they had a car?), and to look however I want to look (with new clothes, new hair styles and colors, and new hair, chins, breasts, stomachs, and butts available for purchase at any time), then how can we be surprised when I start to want to have sex with whomever I want whenever I want. Isn't that what we should expect, given everything else in our life?

That we still think sex should be different from everything else and should be more ‘special,’ perhaps more ‘sacred,’ is good. But we shouldn't restrict that sense of specialness and sacredness just to sexuality. Eating, drinking, enjoying each other's company, working, playing—all of these things are gifts from God, [like our sexuality](#), through which we are to honor God and by which we are able, at least in theory, to experience God and God's love.

If porn is bad because it turns sex into something that is all about me, and so warps my view on healthy sexuality in ways that make it difficult to engage in mutual, consensual, healthy sexuality, how is that different from our broader consumer culture? Am I not conditioned to think of everything I own—my clothes, my furniture, my vehicle, my pets—as being all about me, things for me to use to feel happy, or rested, or powerful? Doesn't such a view of things prevent me from being able to engage in mutual, consensual, healthy relationships with objects in the material world—to enjoy them as gifts from God with their own inherent created worth, rather than as mere ‘things’ for my use and enjoyment? Beyond things, don't we also treat people this way: the person at the cash register or in the store is just there to ‘do their job’, and we get annoyed when they want to talk with us for too long.

And if porn is destructive because it makes me unhappy with something that I *should* be happy with, and that I *would* be happy with, if I didn't have experience with porn, then isn't advertising (for all kinds of things) equally destructive, because it makes me unhappy with what I have, and leaves me wanting something that I didn't even know I wanted until I saw the commercial or read the ‘review’? Spiritually, is exchanging my iPhone 5 for an iPhone 6 any less destructive—any less a symptom of failing to be content with what I have because I'm always lusting after something I don't yet have—then wanting to exchange my spouse's sexual proclivities for those of the pornographers?

My point is not that porn isn't bad, but rather that what makes porn bad is, by and large, the very same thing that we seem to take for granted, perhaps even encourage or support, in other parts of our lives. And I think this consumer mentality—"I'll be happy if I get what I want when I want it"—is as addictive, as distorting of our God-given desires, and as destructive of personal, familial, and societal relationships as is pornography.

If you find this hard to believe, I have a challenge for you: right now, commit to not buying any new household or personal items (including electronics, appliances, furniture, clothes, shoes, books, etc.) for a year. Or six months. Or even one month. If you aren't addicted to buying 'new' things, how long can you go without doing so? And see how your relationships with things changes when you fix things that break, rather than just replacing them.

And if consumerism hasn't distorted our social relationships, why are most of us only friends with people we *choose* to be friends with, rather than spending time with the people who are sort of thrust on us through the hiways and biways of life (neighbors, co-workers, etc.)? If we are only able to be friends with people we like because they think, look, and act the same way we do, then the people in our life seem like they are just the next 'thing' we have around because it makes us feel comfortable or happy or powerful.

Are you willing to love the people you're with—or do you insist on always finding the people you love? When it comes to church, are you committed to the church congregation you are part of, no matter what happens—of are you always sort of 'shopping' for a new church, ready to leave your current one if you find another one that "better suits your needs"? Are we now incapable of having healthy congregational relationships, because we always expect everyone—pastor, worship leader, fellow congregant—to give us what we want when we want it?

It is wonderful that we respect sexuality enough to still be surprised and outraged when the world tries to turn it into a commodity. What worries me is that sexuality seems to be one of the only things that we still have that level of respect for.