



Keeping the Internet Innocent: Today's Porn Problem

By Al Ells, M.C.

The internet is filled with marvelous things to see and do. Map out an excursion to a new city, e-mail missionaries in Turkey, keep up with old friends on Facebook, or even get medical advice. The advent of cyberspace has ushered in a vast array of benefits—and problems.

Chief among the internet's downsides is cybersex: the use of the internet for sexual activity. The internet is the newest, easiest and one of the most prevalent ways to access pornography or become sexually involved with another person. The technological impact of the web has not only assisted us in accessing information, but it has also become a major venue for sin.

A recent study on the impact of the internet warns that internet users who would normally be unlikely to develop sexually compulsive behavior *may do so as a result of their Internet usage*. The anonymity of the web and instant accessibility to its sites has enticed many curious users into succumbing to the temptation of pornography. This is easily accomplished, since pornography is the third largest sector on the internet.

Consider the following statistics:

- **There are 19,542,710 unique visitors per month on the top five paid porn sites.**
- **There are 98,527,275 unique visitors per month on the top five free porn sites.**
- **Seventy percent of all online porn traffic occurs during the 9-to-5 workday.**
- **In 1999 the Internet porn industry generated over \$1 billion.**
- **Estimates for 2010 show pornographic DVD sales alone at \$12 billion.**
- **There are 4.2 million internet porn sites (12% of all sites).**
- **200 new porn sites per day are being added to the internet.**
- **All sites offer free "teasers": free pornographic pop-ups that lure the user to sign up to view more.**
- **Though all porn sites require the viewer to attest to being at least 18 years of age, any child can click "yes" and then view the free porn teasers.**

Studies indicate that the internet has had a major impact upon both men and women. While most porn viewers are male, *women have greatly increased their involvement in unhealthy and ungodly online relationships*. Typically, a woman starts a relationship through chat-room conversations that quickly become flavored with intimate disclosure. The relationship often progresses to the daily anticipation of a message or e-mail from this person. These online interactions lead to the exchange of phone numbers, phone sex or even personal meetings. For bored, unfulfilled or romantically inclined people, the instant and confidential nature of the web makes participation too easy to resist.

Each day, 37 million Americans sign onto the internet from home, and 32 million Americans use the internet at work. The repercussions of misuse are staggering to contemplate. The increasing numbers of Christian men and ministers struggling with internet pornography who come to my office for counseling are living proof the web's

use for sexual activity. I have also witnessed marriages jeopardized by internet romances. Family problems today include teenage porn viewers who have been caught by their parents.

What can be done to help stem the tide of cybersex? Consider these suggestions:

Make sure everyone in your family and ministry understands the dangers of pornography.

The Scriptures say that people perish for lack of knowledgeable foresight (Proverbs 29:18). Christians who desire to keep their lives pure need to be aware of the potential dangers of internet misuse, especially related to cybersex.

Viewing internet pornography together damages a couple's relationship.

Any exposure to porn viewing can bring arousal that encourages further viewing and, ultimately, may become a problem for one or both partners. Additionally, any introduction of pornography into the bedroom will eventually damage the emotional and spiritual intimacy of the act of marriage.

Monitor Internet usage by checking the computer history log.

There are many ways of checking the internet history on your computer. On many search engines, predictive text will indicate terms that have been searched for in the past. The same goes for the web browser. If you have a Windows-based program, you can check the History file and find out if anyone has been visiting Internet porn sites or chat rooms. Simply go to <Start> and click with the right hand mouse button. Go to <Explore> and then to <All Folders>. Click on the <History> to see all visited internet sites.

If you are tempted with online porn or chat-room relationships, confess it to another person.

Change starts with open recognition and admission of your sin and weakness. Accountability to someone who will pray for you and check on you regularly will help considerably.

If cybersex has become a pattern in your life, seek help.

Once these practices become patterns and habits, they fall into the category of compulsive or addictive sin bondages. They reinforce an arousal template so powerfully that the addicted individual needs expert help in order to gain freedom.

Restructure your computer and Internet usage.

Once you establish an unhealthy pattern, you may find yourself being aroused simply by going online. Get a spouse or friend to help you walk through a different way to sign on, or ask him or her to be present when you do. Anything you do to break the cycle will help.

Get a safe internet provider.

Several internet providers offer screened or assisted usage to eliminate porn from their users' addresses. Safe Access, Safe Net and Integrity Online are screened internet providers, which filter objectionable material.

If you would like more information about breaking free from online pornography, please contact Leaders That Last at info@leadersthatlast.org or 480.325.9350.