

Stewardship of Self for Cross-Cultural Workers: Internet Immorality

Although he did not have Internet access, **King David**'s actions in 2 Samuel 11 illustrate processes similar to what Christian workers may experience today. David should have been out on the front lines with his army, but he remained at home alone. One night when he could not sleep, he got up and wandered around his house. He looked out and saw a very beautiful woman bathing. Rather than looking away, David sent someone to find out more about her. Even though he found out she was married, he sent someone else to invite her over. After their night of sex, she went back home. All seemed well until the woman sent word to David saying she was pregnant (and she had not had sex with her husband in weeks).

Rather than confessing his wrong, David tried a cover-up. When David had her husband come back to Jerusalem for a few days, the husband did not go home to spend the night with his pregnant wife. David got the husband drunk, but he still did not go home to his wife. So David had the husband sent into the thick of battle to be killed, adding murder to his sin of adultery. In following chapters he was confronted by a prophet who told him what he did in secret would be avenged in daylight. The child conceived in adultery died, and incest, rape, violence, family disintegration, and murder within the family followed.

Christian workers today fall into sexual temptation, and those temptations are even more prevalent because of the Internet. Even cross-cultural workers in developing

nations often can access pornography from all parts of the world. Unable to sleep, they may surf the net, notice something "interesting," click on other icons to find out more, and download images and text. If they contact others in chat rooms, the conversations may be discovered by spouses who feel betrayed or by children who become disillusioned. Families can disintegrate when either the husband or the wife becomes romantically or sexually involved with others in cyberspace.

How do I know if my spouse or I have a problem with Internet immorality?

Although none of the following alone indicate Internet immorality, several of them together may do so. **Spouses** who have an Internet problem may reveal it by showing some of the following:

- Lack of interest in sex with spouse
- Lack of interest in the family
- Increasing demand for privacy
- Change in sleep patterns, often up in the middle of the night
- Decreasing attention to their other responsibilities
- A pattern of lying about where they are or what they are doing
- A change in personality

Likewise, although none of the following alone indicate Internet immorality, several of them together may do so. **You** may have an Internet problem if you have some of the following.

- You believe the behavior is out of control.
- You want to stop what you are doing.
- You are spending large amounts of time on the Internet.

- It takes increasingly graphic images and/or words to satisfy you.
- You neglect more important matters to spend time on the Internet.
- Great mood changes accompany your behavior.
- Time on the Internet interferes with your relationship with your spouse.
- You feel guilty or depressed afterward.
- You think you would be better off if you did not keep "giving in" to Internet pornography.
- Effectiveness or concentration in your work decreases.
- You use pornographic images or memories during sex with your spouse.

For further resources on the Internet itself, check the following web sites for more such questions.

- www.pureintimacy.org Focus on the Family maintains a web site for those struggling with online pornography themselves or who have loved ones struggling.
- www.sa.org Sexaholics Anonymous maintains a more general web site for those struggling with sexual temptation.

What can I do if I have a problem with Internet immorality?

Since we are dealing with a problem that involves your computer, you can do several things to clean up your computer use.

- Most Internet service providers have some kind of **filtering software** that will block access to pornographic sites, so use that.
- One of the **best filters** available that neither underblocks pornographic material

nor overblocks appropriate health information is the FamilyCLICK Internet filter at www.familyclick.com. It is well worth the few dollars a month it costs.

- If you already have a filter but use a password to bypass the blocked sites, have **someone else put in a new password** so you cannot access some sites unless that friend is there.
- Since everyone surfing the Internet or searching for something specific on it is likely to at some time access an inappropriate site, **decide in advance** that you will click on the "back" icon as soon as you realize what it is, without looking at it in detail.
- Keep your computer in a **"public" place** in the house so that others are around whenever you are using the computer.
- Have someone hold you accountable by coming in at random times to **look at the history** of sites you have visited on the Internet.
 - On **Internet Explorer** a click on "History" will instantly bring up a record of all sites you have visited during the time period specified in your computer. These can be sorted by date, site, or site most visited.
 - On **Netscape Navigator** a click on "Communicator" followed by a click on "Tools" followed by a click on "History" will instantly bring up a record of all sites you have visited during the time period specified in your computer.
 - If you use **another browser**, it will also have a way to look at the history. Of course, if you are not really serious about overcoming your viewing Internet pornography, you can make changes in your Internet options or

- delete sites—that just means you really are not wanting to be held accountable, not really serious about overcoming your problem.
- Have someone hold you accountable by stopping by at random times to **look at the “cookies”** that have been placed in your computer to see that there are none from pornographic sites.
 - If you carry your laptop to conferences, conventions, deputation, etc, leave a list of where you will be staying every night and **have a friend call you** every evening at random times to ask you how you are doing.
 - **Remove the modem** from your computer so that you cannot access the Internet at all.
 - **Get rid of the computer** itself.
 - **Avoid** discussing your Internet problem with an **opposite-gender friend** because doing so often increases the intimacy of that friendship, leading to temptation.
 - Just as **12-step programs** for a variety of problems have been adapted from that of Alcoholics Anonymous, so have 12-step programs been adapted for people with sexual problems. These 12-step programs are described on the web sites listed. Some Christians have reservations about these programs because they may refer to “a Power greater than ourselves” and “God as we understand Him” rather than just referring to God or Christ. However, since Christian workers know God, they are able to interpose God or Christ for “a Higher power” and find these programs valuable. Following are some of the twelve steps adapted from Sexaholics Anonymous. See www.sa.org for a complete presentation of the steps.

- **Admit to yourself and to God** that you are powerless to control this behavior on your own.
- **Admit to at least one other person** of the same gender that you are powerless to control your Internet activity on your own.
- Have an **accountability group** or partner that you meet with regularly (weekly, if possible) to report how you are doing and hold you accountable.
- Have **accountability partners online** who receive a history of the web sites you visit each month. For a few dollars a month “Covenant Eyes” will e-mail or snail-mail two persons of your choice a history of all the Internet sites you visit. You will be able to view your own history, but you will not be able to change it. You may pick your own accountability partners, or they will find one for you. See www.covenanteyes.com for more information.
- Make a ruthlessly honest **moral inventory** of your life; it is likely to include more than just Internet immorality.
- **Ask God to forgive** what you have done and help you stop doing it again.
- Record in a **journal** every time you think of accessing pornography on the Internet, and your response to it. Look for patterns leading to accessing pornography and resisting the temptation to do so.
- Write a **“good-bye” letter** to your addiction, that “problematic companion” who was always there but whom you never want to see again.
- **Conventional wisdom** says, “Don’t tell your spouse. What spouses don’t know will not hurt them.” The truth is that spouses often know or suspect, and sometimes they discover what you have downloaded or your correspondence with people in a chat room.
- **Better wisdom** is to admit to your spouse that you have a problem and ask him or her how much he or she wants to know. Spare your spouse all the gory details; the frequency of Internet access may be enough.
- Be very careful what **“pictures”** you hang on the “walls of your mind” and what **“films”** you play in the “theater of your mind.”
- Whenever illicit sexual pictures or films appear in your mind, **snap your wrist** painfully with a loose fitting rubber band you wear, and instantly begin thinking of an appropriate sexual encounter, one that you have prescribed for yourself for just this situation, such as sex with your spouse.
- Engage in the following every day, and record them in your journal.
 - Begin each day with **prayer** for resistance to Internet temptation.
 - Call and **report** to a recovering buddy.
 - **Read** some recovery literature or devotionals.
 - End each day with **prayers** of thanksgiving for resistance (and of confession, if necessary).
- Check the Internet itself for **resources** on the following web sites.
 - www.sa.org
 - www.christians-in-recovery.com
 - www.sexaddict.com
 - www.pureintimacy.org
- **Read** appropriate books recommended on the web sites above.

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Visit the following web site for more brochures in the series:
www.crossculturalworkers.com

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