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'for such
a time
as this'

How To Beat Porn Addiction

In a recent USA survey, nearly 68% of professed born-again Christians confessed they had visited porn sites on the internet.

On page 5 to 9 are two Australian newspaper reports.

Christian men who are addicted to internet porn are so troubled by their habit they suffer extreme anxiety, extreme guilt and extreme despair. One Christian minister was addicted to porn. Exasperated, he telephoned a minister colleague to confess his addiction and seek his counsel. There was silence at the end of the line. Then the other minister said: "I have the same problem".

The reality is this: if your religion doesn't make you less critical, more calm, more patient, more kind, more loving and more pure - then you've got the wrong religion. You've caught theology or Christian socialising but you haven't caught salvation. You haven't yet seen the love of God, a discovery that truly breaks sin's hold. So we're going to be direct and to the point in this paper. This is not a subject you'll hear from the pulpits. Page 4 offers you very powerful Scripture, God's direct word to you, that will help you mightily.

Are you a born again Christian or a porn again Christian? We had one fellow come to us admitting he worked in a Christian witness program during the day but on his way home each night he would drop into an adult

bookshop. He was hooked on porn. He felt disgusted with himself. He knew he was a hypocrite and was leading a double life. But he couldn't break the cycle. We gave him the same practical counsel we share with you in this little paper because it is helped many otherwise decent men of all ages break self-destructive habits. It is practical, realistic and gleaned from disclosures shared by troubled Christian men.

Temptation of this nature begins as an inner battle fought in the mind. It is an unseen struggle of the will. Internet porn is a hidden battleground you turn to in the secrecy of your undetected world. Many have stumbled across it by accident, not even looking for porn. Type in a perfectly innocent keyword during a google search, and without warning the obscene, lurid garbage of internet porn is flung onto your screen. Many of these things cannot be deleted easily. Turning off your computer doesn't get rid of the worms and viruses on your hard drive. Like physical sexual promiscuity, cyberspace promiscuity brings viruses too. And they can crash your computer system. You probably already know this.

This paper will be brief. No amount of human advice can conquer overpowering temptation. Such power only comes from God. (see pages 4-5). Want to overcome impatience? Then let the Patient One in. Want to overcome impurity? Then let the Pure One into your life. When the big God comes in the little gods go out. The key to anything the enemy throws at you is to *surrender everything* to the Savior. Put everything on the altar. Tell God your addiction. Admit your obsession. Admit your weakness. Tell God you're frustrated at the many broken promises you've made to Him. Hold nothing back. Ask Him to give you the

power you don't have yourself to beat the addiction. All of us have a carnal nature that's a slave to sin. But when we surrender to Christ, our spiritual nature is awakened. And it needs feeding. The carnal one needs starving. Strengthen your spiritual nature by much prayer during the day. Read the Bible and reflect on what you're reading. Develop a dependency on God. Not the minister. Not the church. Not other believers. Become God-dependent. Get into the habit of chatting with God dozens of times during the day. Feed your spiritual nature! And starve your carnal nature. If a provocatively dressed woman walks by, you may not be able to avoid the first look but you surely can avoid the second. Don't sit in front of your PC for hours at a time all on your own. Set filters¹ on your browser that screen out porn sites. Then throw away the password that disables the filters. This allows you to stall for time and destroys the immediacy of clicking for porn. It gives you valuable time to do something entirely different such as a run around the block. Get away from the computer. Remove yourself from the scene where temptation strikes. It's Satan's enchanted ground! Change whatever it is you're doing. During your run around the block plead with God for supernatural strength to beat the habit. Stay away from that PC until the power of God has flooded your soul.

You may say: "But I enjoy porn. I don't have a strong desire to beat it. I know it interferes with my spiritual walk but I can't help myself". If that's your honest assessment ask God to give you the desire to beat it. Ask Him to remove the enjoyment factor. Give God permission to interfere with your addiction. You can't be a follower of Jesus and surf the net for porn. They're mutually exclusive.

You may say: "What harm does it do?" This is what it does: it destroys your spirituality. It destroys your self esteem. It destroys your respect and regard for the dignity of women. It destroys marriages because the next step a porn surfer usually takes is to have an affair. Ask yourself this question: does the practise draw you closer to God or does it push you away from God? Does it elevate you or degrade you? What would Jesus do? You

know the answer. Resolve now to turn from it and turn to Christ!

The first time you beat the urge it'll seem like the temptation was hugely overwhelming. But the next time will be slightly less overwhelming. The third time will be less again, the fourth will be even less strong and the pulling power of each successive temptation weakens exponentially as you allow God to knock it back. This applies to all temptation, not just sexual temptation.

Do an honest assessment of the triggers that spur you to act in an impure way. Do you have lots of idle time? Get busy. Idleness is the devil's workshop. Do something that's the opposite to sitting in front of a PC such as a physical activity. Do you fantasise a lot? Why do you fantasise? Are you lonely? Do you have an over-active imagination? Do you have a female companion or a wife? To weaken the fantasy factor, get embroiled in an interest that's addictive such as jogging or trekking or an outdoor activity. Activities that elevate your self esteem are especially good as some researchers think porn addicts suffer from low self esteem. If you don't have friends, why not? Aren't you friendly? Be friendly to others and your friends will grow. If your imagination is over-active, feed it with spiritual stuff – imagine what Jesus looks like, what heaven will be like, what happened at the crucifixion, what happened when Jesus ascended into heaven. When your imagination is active on these themes, the lust for lurid stuff will wane.

Investigate what triggers set you off and deal with those triggers one by one, asking God to help you each step of the way. The first week will be tough but it gets easier each time you knock back temptation. Remember that. That gives you courage.

I know of some married men who truly love their wives but who know their marriage is under threat because of their porn addiction. You can't respect women when you're wilfully gawking at naked women in provocative and obscene poses. Recognise the threat your habit poses to your marriage. It's worth saving!

Think of the shame and gnawing sense of self-disgust you feel after you've caved in to

¹ Tools, Internet Options, Content.

temptation of this nature. Let your imagination inflate that sense of self-loathing so you can recall the shame of sin *before* you click that mouse.

Do you surf for porn at work on the boss's computer? You probably don't because you know the audit trail is on the server, a book of record for all to see. The point I make is this: if you can resist porn sites at work because being caught out by others is a deterrent, why not instigate a similar policy at home? Let your spouse or teens see which sites you've visited. And any effort to wipe the history slate clean doesn't really wipe the record (it's still on your PC somewhere), so no cheating. Your teen probably knows more about this part of the technology than you do, so don't cheat by feeble attempts at erasure. People who indulge in cyber porn only do so because they *think* it's all secret. When it's no longer a secret they have the discipline to resist. That's my point. Let's not forget that God sees what you're doing, so it was never a secret in the first place.

The only fix is to get very close to God and allow His Holy Spirit to control your mind, your thoughts, your passions, your eyes and your desires. A pure heart comes from the Pure One. Your strength to overcome must be supernatural and you don't have that. It comes from God.

I know of good, decent men who have overcome this addiction by following the straight advice given you here. We make no apologies for the straight language. We must get tough with the devil because he's sure tough with us. The Bible says: **“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”**. James 4:7 (NKJV).

But whatever you do, don't despair. God forgives and forgives. And He empowers and empowers! You will get the victory in His name. Believe it!

Practical Advice That Works

1. Recognise this is a demon, a demon of impurity. The gospels are full of accounts where Jesus cast out demons. You are engaged in a spiritual war and Satan uses the internet

especially to target and to destroy Christians and ministers. Recognise this is indeed a demon. Pray in Jesus name that He will cast out the demon.

2. Focus your self-disgust away from your sin and set your focus on the Saviour.
3. Pray this prayer often: “Dear Lord, I give you permission to do whatever it takes to direct me away from this temptation because I cannot help myself”. He will answer immediately.
4. Believe that when you allow the big God to enter your life, the little gods will exit.
5. Ask yourself when tempted: “Do I want this thing more than Jesus' love? Whatever you want more in that moment is what you will receive.
6. Satan tempts your *thinking* and that is what leads to impure thoughts. Impure thoughts lead to impure action, but it begins with wrong thinking - so the trick is to *change channels immediately* by writing down ten things that have blessed your life (Phil 4:8). When you are next tempted, thank God for ten different things. This practical action switches channels in your head from negative to positive, from impure to pure, from self to Saviour.
7. Each temptation resisted strengthens you to resist the next.
8. When you do stumble during this process, do not despair but continue the upward journey. It may take some time.
9. If your computer or mobile device is the problem, throw them away. Life can go on without them. If you must have these devices, get an IT expert to install a smart filter that requires a password to turn off – tell him you don't want to know the password.

Go to this superb website with practical resources: www.pureintegrity.org

God's loving advice for you

It doesn't get much better than this:

“Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptised to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with Him? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with Him in His death, we also will be raised as He was. Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share His new life. We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead and He will never die again. Death no longer has any power over Him. He died once to defeat sin, and now He lives for the glory of God. So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live, do not give in to its lustful desires. Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness to be used for sinning. Instead give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace. So, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! Don't you realise that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive His approval. Thank God! Once you were slaves of

sin but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you. Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness. I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy to understand. Before, you let yourselves be slaves of impurity and lawlessness. Now you must choose to be slaves of righteousness so that you will become holy. In those days, when you were slaves of sin, you weren't concerned with doing what was right. And what was the result? It was not good, since now you are ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Romans chapter 6. NLT

In short this chapter says when you accept Jesus you accept His death *as if you also died with Him*. That means you died to sin. You regard yourself as dead to sin. When the devil blows in your ear with alluring temptation you just say “I'm dead”. When he comes to you with the latest trick, you say “I'm dead”. Say it often enough and he'll go away. That's what the first part of Romans 6 is all about. *Regard yourself as dead, reckon yourself dead, consider yourself dead*. Sin loses its charms when you regard yourself dead. The power of sin has been replaced by a greater power: the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you to live the Christian life. Whatever gets your attention, gets you. Whatever you obey, becomes your master. Better to be a slave to righteousness than a captive to the same old sin.

And this whole scenario is captured in symbol by the rite of baptism by immersion. When you are lowered into the water it is as if you are being buried. Dead to sin. When you are raised out of the water it symbolises you sharing in Christ's resurrection power, raised to a new life. That's God's order of business: die to sin so you can hook into resurrection

power to beat it. Dying to sin is the same as repenting, turning away from sin. Repent then resurrection. That's the order.

So that's Romans 6 in a nutshell.

If you want to write to us about your situation anonymously, that's OK. We're here to help you and point you to the source of all purity and power. Jesus. The power that conquers sin in your life is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is the same power that created the universe. It can beat Satan and his stupid tricks any time you call on it. It doesn't get much better than that.

Internet porn nearly cost me my marriage, man tells forum

By Adele Horin

August 8, 2005 Sydney Morning Herald

Sean Thackray's addiction to internet pornography began when he was 11 or 12.

Ten years later, he was still hooked. "The more I did it, the more I wanted to do it. I tried to stop several times but always failed," he said.

The 22-year-old will tell his story at Sexual Integrity, a forum in the main committee room of Parliament House, Canberra, today. The forum is being organised by Warwick Marsh, of the Fatherhood Foundation, to promote a national conversation on sexual exploitation.

Mr Marsh, an evangelical Christian, is an influential lobbyist for conservative family values.

The porn addict will join two former sex workers, including a former brothel madam, in recounting their first-hand experiences. A US authority on porn addiction, Dr Mary Anne Layden, will also address the forum.

"I consider myself an average guy," Mr Thackray says in his prepared speech. "I have a stable career. I am married and my wife and I are trying to pay off our unit. I like sport and cars and food and

music and spending time with my mates ... and I am addicted to pornography."

Mr Thackray, who has sought help and made "positive progress", says he wants to start a debate about internet pornography.

"I don't believe we can achieve that if people don't get honest," he told the *Herald*.

As with drugs, Mr Thackray says, addicts cannot easily overcome their dependency, even if they lose their families and jobs; and they needed bigger "hits" to satisfy them over the years.

From being aroused by the sight of a woman's breast, Mr Thackray needed increasingly graphic and violent pornography for arousal. He became de-sensitised to what once would have shocked him. When his wife discovered his addiction, it nearly ended his marriage.

"A large percentage of the population is growing up with regular exposure to the values that pornography portrays," he says, "such as 'violent sex is OK', 'women want sex as much as men', and 'rape is acceptable'."

Dr Layden, the director of education at the Centre for Cognitive Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania, calls the internet the "new crack cocaine". But she says it is harder to wean addicts off internet porn than drugs.

"There's been a huge influx of cyber sex addicts in recent years," she told the *Herald*. "I've treated ministers who would never go into a porn shop but got ensnared by the internet".

She said it not only ruined marriages and finances but sexual performance as well. "I'm seeing more erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation. What internet porn sets up - fast orgasms, narcissism, women who never say no - is the opposite of what happens in real relationships."

Dr Layden says religion has helped many beat addiction. But she believes prevention is better than cure and urges parents to use internet service providers that filter pornography.

How porn is wrecking relationships

May 26, 2007 Brisbane Times

The internet has brought an explosion of pornography into the home and workplace of virtually every Australian. Just a mouse-click away are images that exceed the bounds of fantasy or imagination. In 1961 the introduction of the pill helped usher in a sexual revolution. It had a profound effect on sexual attitudes, practices and relationships. It brought worry-free sex first to married couples, then to singles. And now there are experts - psychiatrists, sociologists and relationship counsellors among them - who argue that the social and psychological impact of internet pornography is potentially as huge.

For some Australians, the rising tide of internet pornography has offered a form of sex education. It has helped extend sexual repertoires, re-invigorated flagging sex lives, and assuaged anxieties or hang-ups. It has been, some argue, a liberation.

But internet pornography is also emerging as the new marriage-wrecker. More and more clients, counsellors say, have begun to cite internet pornography as a factor in their relationship breakdowns.

The technology has created what some call an addiction. Others are more cautious, describing it as a compulsion. Whatever the label, internet pornography is becoming yet another outlet for those with pre-existing compulsive personalities while for others, it has made it easier to do the things that a former head of the American Academy for Matrimonial Lawyers, J.Lindsey Short, says "traditionally lead to divorce".

An increasing number of men appear to be hooked, and the women in their lives are flailing about in unhappiness, self-doubt and self-blame.

Michael Flood, a research fellow in gender studies at La Trobe University and co-author of the 2003 report *Youth and Pornography in Australia*, says: "This is not about couples going to the porn store to spice up their sex lives. Men in growing numbers are using porn in ways that are secret,

shameful and damaging. It is having a damaging impact on intimacy and sexuality."

It is difficult to determine the scale of the problem. A survey of more than 9000 American internet users by the psychologist Alvin Cooper and colleagues in 2000 found about 9 per cent were addicted - those who spent more than 11 hours a week looking at porn. A 1998 survey of internet users by David Greenfield, founder of the Centre for Internet Studies, found almost 6 per cent met the criteria for compulsive use, with porn sites and chat rooms being most seductive. The godfather of US sex addiction research, Patrick Carnes, the author of *In the Shadows of the Net: Breaking Free of Compulsive Online Sexual Behaviour*, claims 3 to 6 per cent of people are sex addicts. An Australian survey of about 1000 porn consumers by Alan McKee of the Queensland University of Technology and colleagues found 0.4 per cent said they had an addiction.

But all online surveys are flawed: they are not based on representative population samples, depend on self-selected participants and lack control groups. What seems undeniable is that a subset of people spends so much time porn gazing online that they are damaging their relationships.

The *Herald* has waded into uncharted waters to chronicle the impact of the compulsive use of internet pornography on relationships. Psychologists, relationship counsellors and men were among those interviewed. But it was the long and candid interviews with women aged 25 to 50 whose partners were obsessed with pornography that proved most illuminating. The problems may be confined to a minority, but it was surprisingly easy to find women whose lives had been turned upside down by their partner's online activities.

The same themes emerged over and over. The men spent hours online, searching for progressively more hard core images. Family time or couple time was the first casualty. Then sex lives floundered and withered away as men lost interest.

Men became, in the words of Dr Margaret Redelman, the president of the Australian Society of Sex Educators, Researchers and Therapists, "lazy lovers". In the end they could not be bothered with real-life sex. In other cases, sex lives became porn-like, male-focused, extreme and lacking in intimacy.

Women's self-esteem nose-dived. They felt they could not compete with the nymphs on screen. They did not measure up to the bodies or sexual performance of the women their men were watching. Connie, a 50-year-old graphics designer, whose former partner looked at pornography constantly, says: "After a while I started to feel worthless." Karen 44, whose eight-year marriage broke up over her husband's porn obsession, agonised over "why he preferred that to me".

A well-conducted British survey based on a representative sample of partners of regular porn users shows these feelings are widespread. Most partners are largely neutral about their men's regular pornography use, the survey, published in the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* in 2003, shows.

But a significant minority - about one-third of the women - found it highly distressing. About 32 per cent said their partner's porn use had adversely affected their sex life, 39 per cent said it had negatively affected their relationship, 34 per cent had lessened self-esteem, 41 per cent felt less attractive and desirable since having discovered their partner's use, and 42 per cent said it made them feel insecure. More than one-quarter viewed it as a kind of affair.

The Australian women interviewed felt betrayed and inadequate. And always they were under pressure not to appear controlling, uptight or unreasonable. Men's consumption of pornography is natural, many believed, and to judge it as anything but positive is to risk being labelled a prude, or worse, a nag.

Within a few weeks of falling in love, 29-year-old Gracie was virtually living with her boyfriend in his Bondi flat and sharing his computer. These days sharing a computer with a lover can be more toxic than sharing a toothbrush. And so it turned out for Gracie. Like all the women interviewed for this article, Gracie, a human resources manager, insists she is no prude. She is a willing sexual explorer. But even she was surprised at what her 33-year-old boyfriend, a builder, stored under his "favourites" file. "There must have been 20 porn sites there. I was pretty shocked - not that they were there, only that there were so many," she says.

"Whenever I put anything into the search field, there would generally be a site related to porn come up. So if I typed in a word starting with 'l', I would get a listing of 'Lolitas', 'lesbians on lesbians' ... You get the picture."

His internet history file unleashed a tsunami of pornography. But what is a girl to do when she is madly in love, is not averse to a bit of pornography and considers herself to be "cool"?

She tiptoes around the subject for weeks. She raises the issue gingerly: "I'm totally fine, just wondering why there's so much."

She thought she loved him and she did not want to ruin the relationship by being censorious. But her boyfriend's pornography consumption begun to affect their sex life, and then their broader relationship.

The sex became impersonal and aggressive. "There was no real intimacy, no thought about what I might like. That's when I began to realise..."

Slowly the sex tapered off: "I would wake up and find him looking at it, I would go to bed at night and he would look at porn," Gracie says. "We would argue; he would look at porn. I would take the dog for a walk, and he would look at it. I would brush my teeth; he would use it."

She blamed herself. He blamed her. She questioned, she cried, and finally, after a violent argument, she left.

A team of American researchers from Stanford and Duquesne Universities has called cyber-sex compulsion a "hidden public health hazard". Sexual counsellors and psychologists in Australia are less colourful. Brett McCann, a senior lecturer in the sexual health program at the University of Sydney, says it is a growing problem "with big implications for the public health dollar. There's no quick fix, and by the time the problem is uncovered, there's usually a crisis in the relationship."

Greta Goldberg, a clinical psychologist of more than 30 years experience, has counselled adolescents aged 13 and 16 for internet pornography compulsions, as well as adults. "It's more pervasive. It's catching more people, and it's likely to be a huge problem in future," she says.

Relationships Australia, the country's biggest counselling network, reports an increased number of clients raising the issue. Pamela Lewis, the director of client services, says: "More women are saying, 'We used to be close, now he spends his time on porn sites.' It's another one of those things wrecking relationships."

Dr Amelia Haines, a therapist at the Sydney Centre for Sexual and Relationship Therapy, reports seeing a lot of people for whom internet pornography is "out of hand". "Men want to see what else is out there. Some end up spending three hours a night looking for the right image, the right trigger. They search and search. Usually what they look at is not too scary. They worry more about wasting so much of their lives, they're embarrassed about how much they're accessing, and they can't stop."

Compared with alcohol problems, and violence-control issues in relationships, obsessive pornography use is still a second-order marriage-wrecker. It is usually part of a constellation of problems. Ironically, the lack of high-speed broadband in Australia has kept internet porn's full potential on a leash.

Even so, figures provided by Nielsen/NetRatings NetView show 2.7 million Australians visited an "adult" website in March (this figure counts repeat visitors to adult websites only once); 4.3 million visited in the first three months of this year. More than 35 per cent of all internet users in the quarter ending March visited an adult website at least once.

For couples in trouble over internet porn, it is a secret misery. Women say over and over the problem needed to be brought out in the open. "I'm glad you're writing about this," they say.

Rebecca, a 25-year-old medical student, strives for a clinical detachment from her fiance's obsession with pornography. She thinks of his problem as an addiction, like other substance abuses, characterised by compulsive use, secrecy, and shame. "It should be treated like any other addiction," she says. "And abstinence is the best course."

She says his problem is tied to low self-esteem, even though to the world he appears a "charismatic, outgoing person". With porn, he did not have to worry what others thought of his performance.

Originally he confined his daily porn gazing to when she was not in the house. A quick flick through his internet history revealed an escalating habit. It reached a point where "porn became easier than actually having sex", she says. She felt about as sexy as a "can of kidney beans. I felt unwanted. I found myself going to the internet and asking, 'What is it those women have I don't?' I felt worse about myself".

The secret use of pornography is the true home-wrecker, according to most of the psychologists contacted. The most common pattern is for one partner to eventually discover the other's obsessive use. Says Eric Hudson, the national president of the Australian Association of Relationship Counsellors: "Where it is secretive, it is experienced as a betrayal of the relationship."

And secret use, he says, like an affair, can be a symptom of other problems.

Alex, a 38-year-old computer programmer who worked at home, describes himself as an "ex porn junkie". He admits the deception over his porn use was the last straw in a faltering 12-year relationship. It was not uncommon for him to browse for three or four hours at a time most days when he had work and "better things to do".

He did not understand his compulsion when he was in its grip. Now he realises it was his escape from unhappiness and insecurity. "I could retreat to the security of my fantasy world," he says. "I thought it was relatively harmless. I'd started as a teenager with magazines, but with the internet there was so much more content. It was always available."

After he was sprung, he was devastated when his marriage broke up. He felt like a worthless person. "My wife was a very honest, upfront sort of person," he says. "It was the fact I had been deceiving her for so long that made her so angry and upset."

Now that he is not so controlled by pornography, he worries about young people learning about sex from the internet. "It's a big wide world out there, people are doing strange things, a lot of it not particularly kind to women," Alex says. "I was fascinated, I wanted to have a look, but with teens growing up this will be their experience."

Whether people can become "addicted" to pornography, as they can to heroin or tobacco, is debatable. Most experts steer clear of pathologising behaviour just because it is not mainstream.

Hudson says people in the grip of internet pornography, who feel they need progressively bigger hits, experience it as an addiction. But they are not physically addicted. People have some control over their sexual behaviour, he says. McCann says people should seek help early if they believe they are developing a habit that could damage their relationship.

It may not be strictly addictive but for a silent minority, internet pornography has brought anguish, shame and broken hearts.