

# ***Pornography: The False Escape***

*This article was written by a member of the Reconciliation Ministries Living Waters leadership team. They are a group of "wounded healers" who have fought their own battle with sexual and relational brokenness, and who have experienced the healing power of Jesus Christ. If you or someone you love is struggling with sexual sin, call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114 and let us walk with you to Jesus.*



**I never thought of porn use as a problem. It was something that "didn't hurt anyone" and was "safe".** In High School it was normal for guys to talk about their favorites, which made it seem like everyone did it, like it was normal and natural. What I didn't know: I was using porn like a drug to keep me away from my emotions and distancing me from God. As time went on it increasingly pushed me to isolation and made me feel more and more depressed, fueling a cycle I didn't know about or understand. Because I was so wrapped up in denial and isolation I didn't think about how it would impact those around me either, and I never thought about my distant relationship with God. Realizing porn use as a problem and even addiction was like lifting a heavy fog in front of me, dispelling all the lies I accepted as my truth.

**For most of my life I grew up in an environment of neglect and a lack of responsibility.** My parents were both responsible adults, but they did not feel responsible for raising their kids well. My parents were divorced when I was young and both neglected me, and while they were married there was a clear pattern of physical and verbal

abuse. After the divorce, I lived with my mother for most of the time and she had a very co-dependent relationship with me. I was the man of the house, even though I wasn't even a teen yet, and she would share whatever was on her mind, unloading her negative emotions on me. She was very controlling and focused on perfection, which drove me to be uninterested in doing anything. **During High School I remember crying out for help and my mother took me to be tested for Bi-Polar disorder. I was not diagnosed with any disorders, but through the discussion the therapist found some issues and suggested some books on parenting and some parenting tweaks. My mother lied and said she already read them and was a great parent.** Any problem I had came across as an attack on her parenting and she would go into denial and shut me out, often crying in an attempt to manipulate me. My father didn't really want to be a father. He only agreed to pick me up every other weekend because it would reduce the child-support he had to pay. He continued to complain about the payments, my mother, and the annoyance of having to pick me up until I was a legal adult. He was uninterested in being a dad for the most part, and years later told me he didn't have the time to be a dad so he would try to just be a decent friend to get me on his side. If I had a question, I would be told to ask the other parent. Since I never got any answers, I stopped asking the questions and tried to figure things out on my own. **Once I realized I couldn't reach perfection I stopped trying in school. I felt unwanted, and even worse, like a burden wherever I was. I never felt like I had a home, I felt like I was just visiting someone.**

Spiritually my mother believed in going to church when she felt guilty enough, and my father created his own religion focused on himself. Needless to say, my parents didn't care about my relationship with God and actually instilled a strong sense of skepticism in me. **I felt like God was only there to punish me and rid me with guilt, or that God wasn't real at all. Despite my confusing outlook on God, there were also times when I felt like God was there for me, even if I didn't understand it or accept it.** Thankfully he shielded me from drugs and getting into trouble as a youth. It wasn't until late in High School that I started to regularly go to church, when my now wife demanded I go to church with her if we were to continue dating. It wasn't until a few years later that I could actually call myself a Christian, working through the doubt and skepticism, and God is still working in me.

**As time went on I felt more and more alone and turned to escape mechanisms to get away from my negative feelings.** I turned to porn and videogames mostly, jumping into fantasy worlds where I was the most important person and felt I had control. My father introduced me to videogames as a way to connect, and we had little else to talk about. I didn't think about the negative impact porn had in my life until I married my wife. **I expected marriage to take away all the problems in my life. I wouldn't have to deal with my parents at all if I didn't want to, and I'd have real and right intimacy with my wife. I fully expected the desire to watch porn to disappear, but it got worse.** My wife and I were not connecting as well as I thought; we had more stresses as we were living together for the first time and were both busy figuring out our lives together. I doubled down and watched more porn, shut out my wife, and reinforced my addiction through that negative cycle.

**My wife and I had pretty bad fights every week for the next seven months, and at one point I just broke and explained what was going on. She was incredibly hurt and filed for divorce, which I agreed was not ridiculous or undeserved.** She said I had six months to show major improvement or she would continue with the divorce, which was a great show of grace to me. The next six months we fought almost every day in the worst possible way. I found a therapy-based program that gave me some tools to fight my temptations. The program was useful in day-to-day living, but I felt something was missing. It focused on tools and tricks to get through life and involved prayer, but made it very clear healing was not an option. Our leader left, a new draconian leader took over with some ideas and outlooks that were not uplifting and I could not agree on, and the group had changed dramatically. I decided to look elsewhere. **My wife had seen someone from Reconciliation Ministries speak in person at a High School ministry event through our church and suggested I give the ministry a call. I came to Living Waters shortly after and immediately saw the difference.** At first it was challenging, but it became apparent Living Waters was a place where I could begin to find real healing and connect with God. I began to learn how to surrender to God and begin understanding where the healing would be happening. **Living Waters has changed my life. It goes beyond a therapy regimen and allows for real healing.** My relationship with God has never been better or more important in my life. My marriage can finally be described as happy and we have never been closer. My personal relationships have improved, I feel more motivated in my work, and I have finally have a feeling of contentment in life in God's plan. Now I can't imagine life without Living Waters.



**The process has not been comfortable.** Coming clean to my wife was not comfortable. Learning about myself was not comfortable. Continually facing my fears and doubts instead of running and hiding is not comfortable. Surrendering to God is not comfortable. **Despite no part of the process being comfortable, it is worth it. Being able to walk free, without the haze of lies and denial, is something that is better than I could imagine.** No longer feeling like I have a terrible secret makes it so much easier to look people in the eyes and feel my own self-worth. Knowing I have a God on my side and learning the truth about how God feels about me has given me peace I couldn't believe before this process. One of the most surprising gains is when I stopped focusing only on my own needs. I could reach out in community with others and finally feel like I don't have to be isolated and alone. **I would suggest Living Waters to everyone, since I feel everyone needs to know about themselves more deeply.** If you think porn use isn't a problem like drugs or alcohol, you really need Living Waters. It's unlike anything I have done before and helped me better my relationship with my God and understand myself.