

PORNOGRAPHY – THE NAKED TRUTH

Ian Henderson

IAN HENDERSON SHARES HIS PROBLEM WITH PORN, TO OPEN THE EYES OF THE CHURCH AND TO FREE LIVES.

I loved my old job. I was part of an incredible and inspirational group of people who were making a difference for the Kingdom across the world. Honestly, it was the kind of job people dream of. Yet in 2014 I left to set up Naked Truth, a project that aims to open eyes and free lives from the damaging impact of pornography. Yes, pornography! To be honest, that had never been part of my plan, and I certainly didn't sit down with my careers advisor at school and tell her that in my forties I hoped to start a porn project.

A few years later and I still get the question, but only from the brave ones. 'So, did you start Naked Truth because YOU had a problem with porn?' I love that kind of honesty, so I try and be honest in my reply. 'I STILL have a serious problem with porn, but not in the way that you think I do.'

MY PROBLEM WITH PORN

The birth of the internet followed swiftly by its big fat brother broadband, were game changers both for those making and those looking for porn. Then in 2007, Steve Jobs introduced the world to his new invention - the iPhone. It was a revolutionary idea and great news for Apple fans like me, but also the beginning of a huge shift in our culture.

The internet is great, and I can't imagine trying to end a 'family discussion' without getting out my phone for Google's final say. But also, we have become the 'porn in our pocket' generation, with anytime, anywhere access to unregulated content. Arguably never in history has pornography been more accessible, affordable, anonymous or potentially addictive. **That's a problem.**

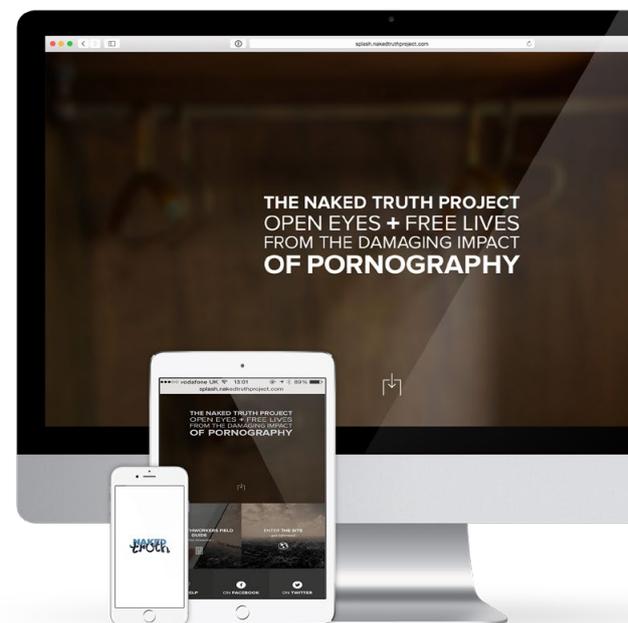
In 2016 ONE pornsite reported 23 billion visits a year ('Pornhub', Year in Review, 2016); that's 1.9 billion a month - over seven times the monthly visits to BBC iplayer (downloads. bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/iplayer/iplayer-performance-apr17.pdf). That pornsite's top five search terms include: Teen, Step Sister, Step Mum ('Pornhub', Year in Review, 2016). **That's a problem.**

After analysing top-selling porn content, 88% of the scenes contained physical aggression ('Aggression and sexual behaviour in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update,' Violence Against Women 16,' Ana Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Chyng Sun and Rachael Liberman, Oct. 2010, 1065-1085). **That's a problem.**

An association of lawyers reported 56% of their divorce cases involved one party having an 'obsessive interest'

in pornographic websites (American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 2002). And in a study of 800 regular porn users, 20% said they prefer the excitement of viewing porn to being sexually intimate with a partner (Katie Szittner, 'Study exposes secret world of porn addiction,' 2012). **That's a problem.**

In a recent government report 94% of teens said they had seen porn by the age of fourteen (taken from a sample of a thousand teens - 'Dare to Care' report, 2016). In another report, 40% of 11-14 year-olds have used their mobile phones or computer to send pictures of themselves or receive naked or topless images of friends ('SW Grid for Learning,' March 11). **That's a problem.**



41% of Christians admit to being addicted to pornography (PremierChristianMedia 2015). Only 7% of Churches have programmes to help those struggling with porn ('Covenant Eyes,' 2016). **That's a problem.**

Porn use leaves individuals broken and beaten down with shame and self-hate, feeling disconnected from God and community. Spouses and partners feel betrayed, isolated and to blame. Young people's expectations of sex, intimacy and self-image are being shaped by profiteers and porn use. Porn performers speak of being coerced and controlled with some even the victims of trafficking. **That's a problem.**

I think you get the picture. Things have drastically changed in the last 10 years. Porn is no longer an issue that some people struggle with sometimes. Porn has become a problem for all of us. It may not be because of our own personal porn use, but because of its impact on our friends, our partners, our children, our pastors, our churches, our culture. An issue so immense and so destructive for so many, shouldn't be ignored. That's why we provide lessons in schools, anonymous online recovery groups for adults (clicktokick.com), workshops for parents and support for spouses. THAT's why I started Naked Truth.

WISDOM & FOLLY

Proverbs 9 famously personifies both Wisdom and Folly as women calling out to passers-by in their city. Folly, who

lives in the busiest part of town (v14), simply sits in her doorway and entices all who, as the Message translation puts it, are 'confused about life' (MSG, v16). But listen to her words, they summarise so much of the power and pull of pornography. 'Come into my house... Stolen water is sweet, food eaten in secret in delicious' (v17). There is a whole sermon in that verse alone, but I am going to focus on the next one. 'But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead' (v18). Talk about bait and switch. This isn't a case of over-promise and under-deliver. This is a case of promising satisfaction and delivering desperation and destruction. Folly will always maximise the impact and minimise (or even hide) the implications.



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WISDOM'S HOUSE

In Proverbs 9, Wisdom also shouts out an invitation, she also wants people to visit her house. She has prepared a feast of meat and wine there and everyone gets an invitation (v2). (This idea of a meal is rich with the language of God's Kingdom - look at Isaiah 25:6.) Finally, she makes her way to highest point in the city; I imagine her standing outside Folly's house, crying out 'Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live' (v5&6). There is something better, something beautiful, something more.

The other day I was sitting at an event listening to one of the Naked Truth team tell her story. Bethany was describing her time at university where she was studying Theology but would run home from her lectures to watch



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION / GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Did any of the statistics shock or surprise you?
2. In what ways do you think Folly's invitation resonates with the 'pull of pornography'?
3. What are some of the do and don'ts for churches that wish to support porn users and partners?

porn. Or how she would lead worship on Sunday, exhausted and crippled with shame, because she had watched porn all of the night before. But she also described the moment she broke the secrecy and told someone in her church. The day she started the journey to Wisdom's house and the forgiveness, hope and freedom that she feasted on. That's what Naked Truth is all about. Open Eyes and Free Lives.

Ian Henderson is the CEO of Visible Ministries and Founder of the Naked Truth Project. He lives in Manchester with his wife and two daughters. You can find him on twitter as @hende. To find out how to get help or give help, visit: thenakedtruthproject.com

