

PORNFREE RADIO

015 Porn! Recorded Live in Indianapolis

Welcome to Pornfree Radio. I'm Matt Dobschuetz. This is the podcast for people who want to live 100% porn free. I'm really excited about this week's episode. This was our first episode that we recorded LIVE. This past weekend I was in Indianapolis, Indiana, at a conference for ministry leaders and I did a small workshop called Porn! That's right, just p-o-r-n exclamation point. In the workshop I talked a little bit about porn addicts and specifically, working with them in a church setting. And I also talked about things that we as porn addicts know. And then things that we don't know. And so that's kind of the setup for it. It's in a small room, there's a number of people listening and there's a short question and answer afterwards. I will let it go for a couple of questions because they're kind of relevant to our podcast. But then I'll cut it off because some of the questions get very detailed into how to run a certain type of group and it's not as much benefit to the group to the Pornfree Radio audience. Anyway, I'm excited and I'm going to play it for you now. Hope you enjoy it.

Well, I'm Matt and I lead a group in Chicago and I wanted to start by asking how many of you in this room have seen porn in your life? All right, so everyone's hand went up. That is not a surprise. We're all adults here. We've lived in an age where porn is accessible and so we definitely all saw it. What's more surprising is that if we were a group of sixth graders, like my youth group at church that our youth group leaders leads. He asks all the incoming sixth graders every year how many of them have seen porn and they all have their heads down and they put their hands up and everyone's hand goes up. Now that's a little more shocking that not a room full of adults, but a room full of 12 year olds, boys and girls, have all seen porn. And that's the generation we're living in now.

Now when I first starting dealing with my porn addiction and I have a lifelong porn addiction. Eight years old was when I was first exposed to it and got hooked right away. Essentially, in different types in my life, either stole it, bought it, downloaded it, all those things happened until I was 31 and my wife caught me downloading pornography and kind of exposed my hidden life. And so that was in 2001 and that's when I started dealing with my porn addiction and the compulsion to masturbate and look at porn. That's when I started dealing with it. And in 2001, I was still using a dial up modem and it was rudimentary.

It wasn't until a couple years later that broadband came around. About 2004 is when broadband started getting more popular. So if you think about it, we're in 2014 now. For about 10 years, we've all had some access to broadband in some way or another. So think about those sixth graders again. The sixth graders in 2004 are now all 22, 23 years old. So as we start welcoming new people into our groups, and our churches, and our support groups, that new generation of people who are coming to us have all seen porn and they've grown up for 10 years with access to broadband internet. Myself, you know, I was scratching around trying to find magazines growing up, or an illicit videotape later in my teenage years. They've had access every day for 10 years to high quality, and when I say quality I mean the actual delivery, not high quality in terms of content, but they've had access to high quality porn. So we're dealing with a completely different animal than our parents did or even we did. I'm 43, even than we did 10 years ago.

Not to mention, the rise of mobile use. Now, my iPhone can get high quality video with just clicks on LTV, not even... wireless, not even broadband, a wireless connection. So I think 10 years later from now, there's going to be an even more of an exponential problem because devices are so much more personal and private and hidden. And access is more accessible than ever. So we have a big challenge, those of us who are in this space of trying to help people walk out of addiction to porn, walk out of this kind of compulsion because of the accessibility, because of the access that people have.

I could quote stats all day long. I was looking at some stats last night and I actually got overwhelmed by some of the stats. But I'll share one stat that's relevant to ministry and relevant to churches. This was about 2 years ago. Rick Warren has a site, the pastor of the Saddleback Church, has a site called pastors.org. And they did a survey of about 1200 pastors, which is a pretty good sample size. They said how many of the 1200 pastors have seen porn in the last year? How many do you think it was? [Audience answer is not audible.] It was a little lower, I'm thankful to say, 50%. So about 600 pastors had viewed porn in the last year. I think about 30% of that total had looked at porn in the last 30 days. Now that is pastors of churches. So you can only extrapolate, if pastors are struggling, if pastors are getting isolated and looking at porn, then how much more the people in the congregation are struggling?

So I am really under the impression that this affects us all. That there's other things that we deal with in ministry that affect a percentage of us and a good example would be like childhood sexual abuse affects a percentage of us. There's other things with gender insecurity and other things that we struggled with growing up. But I am under the impression that porn is affecting all of us. If it doesn't affect us directly, it indirectly affects relationships that we're in if we're in relationships with people who are actively looking at porn. It affects our children and so I think that porn and this topic, and this title is PORN with an exclamation point, is a real challenge.

It's an epidemic to Christians but it's also, it's hurting people who wouldn't consider themselves Christians who are just out there. There's actually a number of online groups that have formed around just trying to let go of porn or masturbation because even in secular circles, or non-religious circles, people have found effects. One of them is a porn induced erectile dysfunction or a desensitivity to normal sex that so much compulsive masturbating connected with looking at porn has made sex in person sort of a desensitized act and it just isn't quite as stimulating. So there's a group of men and women out there who are trying to actively stop looking at porn not even for some sort of sense of Christian sexuality or any sort of moral reason. There's an effect that they're seeing.

So I wanted to talk about some things that someone who is struggling with porn knows already when they come to our groups, to our support groups. And some things they don't know.

Here's the things that they know:

I got this quote from a guy named Paul Robinson, he's a blogger. And he wrote... And this important from a Christian context. "If you're a porn addict, believe me, the last thing you need to hear is that you're a sinner. We already know that. We know that it hurts us and it prevents us from being fully human and experiencing true freedom. We get it."

It's like the person who is struggling with porn knows it a problem. They might rationalize some of the use, they might minimize how bad it is, but they know it's a problem. Most people know it's wrong for them. They will verbalize that. You know when I get asked, when I get emails or whatever from the podcast; I don't have to convince people that it's bad for them. They're already coming in with that. That's why they're looking for a podcast. That's why they're looking for a group to plug into. They know that it hurts them. They've either experienced that erectile dysfunction, if they're a guy, or experienced some kind of desensitivity or they've gotten... they can't stop themselves, they feel out of control. It's affected relationships. They can't have meaningful relationships.

This idea that it prevents them from feeling fully human or experiencing true freedom, they feel very hopeless and very cut off. You know I got an email from someone, or a post, someone said, "I can't cry. I have no ability to cry or feel any kind of sadness." And I thought about myself back in the 20s before my wife caught me. I don't think I cried during my 20s. I was so cut off from pain and so cut off that I wasn't human. I wasn't experiencing sadness like a human would, or grief, or loss. I was just numb.

And so we know that when we come in as porn addicts to a group we know that it's wrong for us, that it's bad for us, that it hurts us, that it hurts our relationships that we can't become fully human and experience true freedom.

But here's what we don't know. We don't know that we're free to let go of shame. Paul Robinson he writes this, he goes on in the statement that I just read: "If it's true that nothing we do will separate us from the love of God, then that has to work both ways. It means that even if we're 10 years sober, we're no more loved by God than if we looked at porn an hour ago. Right away there's no need to feel shame if it's separated from all these ideas of who you are and whether God loves you."

So whether we're 10 years sober or we looked at porn an hour ago, we need to let go of the shame. We need to be able to experience love from God and from others even in the midst of being kind of swallowed up in the addiction. We need to know that we can let go of the shame, the hiddenness. There's so much of what I got stuck into was lying and then hiding. And when I stopped lying and hiding, I didn't immediately stop the temptation or the draw to porn. It didn't stop me from looking at porn. But it created a dialog for me to actually ask for help and for me to be able to let go of some of the shame of it and the hiddenness. To tell others, this is what I was struggling with.

I remember I went to a group in 2001 and in that group we had to sign a commitment that we wouldn't drink for the 9 months of the group. And that was just so that we wouldn't be numbing any pain with alcohol. That maybe we'd be cutting off by looking at some of these other issues in our lives. So for that 9 months I didn't drink and I had to sign a contract. It wasn't legalistic. It was really just meant to sort of help you.

But every time my coworkers would go out for a drink or you know I'd be at a party in that 9 months, people would see me without my beer and they'd be like, "Dobber, what's up? Are you having a beer or what?" And I'd have to say no. And I'd have this choice. Do I want to be known? Do I want them to really know? So I would... I chose that every time someone would ask me about drinking I would tell them why I wasn't drinking, that I was in this group because of my porn. And that really... I experienced a lot of love and support from people in unexpected places. People at work, for example, who didn't have a Christian context, maybe didn't even have a moral problem with pornography, but they knew that it was a problem for me and they knew that I was struggling and they were supporting me. They were supporting my recovery and the way I identified my pain.

We need to know that we're free to let go of the shame and talk about what's going on with us internally, to be open and transparent. We need to know that there's hope for change. I think there's many of us who've experienced some change and some growth in a sexual area. Sometimes we get focused on what we haven't gotten yet. We haven't gotten that relationship that we want or that perfect marriage or some other thing that hasn't quite happened for us. But we discount how we've moved out of a lot of dark places. And that just moving a

short path a lot of times seems monumental for people who are in the midst of their struggle.

I'll give you a good example. A number of guys have reached out to me doing the podcast have not even got to 30 days of sobriety. And I'm right now at a little above 4 1/2 years. But I remember those days when 30 days seemed like monumental. 4 weeks. I remember when 14 days was a big deal. And that's not in that far back of my memory. It's not like that's back in the 70s. It's like, I remember 14 days being a big deal in college. If you've had any success, let's say, in over 14 days, you could give hope to someone else.

They need to know, we need to know, when we're coming to group that there's hope for change, that there's hope that you can journey out of stuff. We need to see that we're avoiding pain. I was just talking about this earlier today with my friend Dan. I'm sure that the illicitness of porn drew me in and the secretness and the titillatingness of it drew me in. But you know what really drew me in? Pain. I had a lot of pain growing up: a lot of separation, a lot of abandonment, some relational brokenness and grief in my family, some trauma in my family. And so porn came along at a wonderful time to help me survive and medicate this pain that I was feeling as a child.

The problem is, as I grew into an adult, I was still medicating like a child or like a young adult who isn't mature. I was still avoiding pain. And the person struggling with porn needs to see that. And they might not even be aware of it. Back, think about me in my 20s. I wasn't crying, I wasn't feeling grief, I didn't know what my pain was. Even today, I was talking with Dan and I just realized that my first five years of school, from kindergarten to fifth grade, I went to five different schools. Every year I started at a different school. And I'm like, what kind of effect did that have on me? How did I cope with that? I know for one I started gaining weight as a child. But, you know, come sixth grade, that's when I started acting out with porn. So it's like, how did I deal with all that pain?

So, the porn addict needs to know that very possibly, or not even possibly. There's pain there. They may not know what it is, they may not know how to access it, but it's there. So we need to just help them start acknowledging pain. Because if they don't deal with the pain, if they just want to deal with the behavior, it's never going to go away. Because unless you deal with the pain, you're never going to get free of the porn. So they need to know that they're free to let go of shame. They need to know that there's hope for real change. That we're avoiding pain.

This is a key one here. They need to see God's image revealed in others. So often when we're struggling with porn you start to see people as objects that either titillate you or excite you. You almost deconstruct them as people into body parts and different things on the screen. And the longer that you're in real

relationships with people and in a group where there's group dynamics and stuff, you look at people for who they really are.

I was... a friend of mine told me a story once that he was interested in this one porn star, and sometimes guys will get hooked on one porn star and they'll just sort of binge watch this particular star. So he had done a search and found a video of her when she was very young. He knew it was her, it was her, I don't know if she had the same name, but he knew it was her. And he started watching this scene and it was before anything happened sexually but he knew where it was going. And there was a moment and he just saw her eyes and the youngness and the sort of almost naiveness of her. And he immediately saw her as a person and he turned off the video. There was something about seeing her in that more innocent state that he realized this is a real woman, made in God's image. This is a real person. This isn't just a fantasy.

And when he told me that story, I thought of that story of Jesus where it talks about him looking on the crowds and having compassion, because they look like sheep without a shepherd. And I thought, for just that moment, he saw that woman as Jesus sees us. He saw her for who she was. Lost and kind of swallowed up in this thing. Not a sexual goddess or some diva to worship, but this lost sheep. If we're not having real relationships, if we're not being exposed to that in people, then we'll continue to see people as two dimensional objects. Some of that involves being in a group, I think. Being face to face with people and their pain, starts to really break that fantasy life.

So we need to see God in others. We need to see God's image revealed in others to help us leave porn. We really need others. We need to learn how to ask for help. And just as I said before, we sometimes get hung up on the word "confession", but we really need to tell our stories and confess things in order to be fully seen.

Just as I was telling my coworkers about my porn problem, we need to continue to talk about what's going on in the inside. We need to expose the hiddenness. And it's an ongoing thing. That seems counter-intuitive to the person who's been hiding in porn. Telling on yourself seems like the worst thing you could do. You would look bad or exposed for your weakness. But that actually is freeing. That continues to unlock the hiddenness and the shame. That's really important.

So we need to know that we're free to let go of shame. We need to know that there's hope for real change. We need to see our pain. We need to see God's image revealed in other people. We need others. We need to ask for help, Be able to ask for help and be able to confess and be fully seen and be transparent with one another. That's what we need to learn as porn addicts. That's what we need to learn to really journey out.

It's not about behavior modification. It is in some sense. You need to change what you're doing. You need to get strategies and tools in place to help you. But the real growth comes from dealing with the pain and being in a place where you're being transparent.

So I want to finish by pointing out a couple things that, for those of us who are helping people journey out of porn, what we need to be doing.

Number one, we need to be in regular confession. We need to be speaking out the things that we're continuing to do to meet our own needs or to hide. If we're not confessing, if we're not being transparent, then how can we help someone else walk in that? We ultimately need to have clean hands.

If you're struggling in an area of porn or if you're struggling with a media addiction or some other types of things that are similar, it really dulls you as a leader. You cannot help restore someone else if you're falling in the same way. Cause you just don't have the hope. You're avoiding your own pain. How can you show someone else their pain and give them hope if you're numbing your pain and you're hiding in shame. The same things that the person needs that we're helping, we need.

Porn dulls leaders. I started out with that thought about the one stat about pastors and that one kills me. Do you want to know why? Because it dulls their ministry. We talk about a sheep without a shepherd. What happens when the shepherd is looking at porn? Where are they getting their guidance from? Porn dulls leaders. So you need clean hands. You need regular confession.

I think we need to rethink too how we teach accountability, or how we teach relationships where people are transparent with one another. I know some ministries there's high boundaries about how group members work with other group members or small group leaders. Well, that makes sense for protection and safety of the group, but for the porn addict, that's tough. So it's worth thinking about how do you... can your group members call you outside of group? Is there a way for them to text if they're having a problem? Because from my experience, someone who's struggling with porn needs more than once a week check-ins. They need at least two times a week. I'd say if you have group on a Monday or a Tuesday night, you probably need to check in at some point on the weekend 'cause that's a long time from Tuesday to next Monday. That's a long time. So think about how you create accountability. How you create structures.

Another thing I think is helpful, too. Now, I'm not a proponent of having someone who's in a vulnerable state and they're getting help, helping others in the sense of leading. But, are there ways that people in your groups can help serve one another? Is there a chance in small group to invite some others to speak into one who's struggling or to pray for one who's struggling or to bless or say something

positive about that person? Are there ways that you can involve others even if they're in their stuff?

Because I think that the key for someone who's coming out of porn addiction is that they need to realize they need other people. They also need to know that they're essential to other people's journeys and freedom, that they have something to give. That they're just not needy sheep who just take and everything kind of gets given to them that they're helpless. I think a lot of times people who are struggling with porn feel kind of helpless. Like there's nothing good that they have to offer. They're powerless. So we need to figure out ways to empower them. Are there ways that they can serve or help?

On the podcast a few weeks ago I talked about maybe there's a soup kitchen, maybe there's a food pantry or some other ways of service that the porn addict who's still in their journey, not able to help others in a sexual addiction. But are there ways that they can just plug into something that just is at the root, serving people, focusing on other people's needs. Just to build that into their life, build that habit. So as much as we can, how can we empower them to help serve one another?

And then creating healthy structure. What do they do when group ends? What do they do when they need a new group? What do they do when they move to a different city? How do they start to form those relationships that are going to help them be able to ask for help, to be transparent? Those are things as leaders that we need to model and to show.

So, I've dumped a lot of information on you. I've said a lot of things. We have a few minutes. Are there any questions that I can answer?

[Audience question is just out of mic range.]

Question is what are good ways to get into their pain?

One thing is ask them to tell their story. Talk about how they grew up and get into some of the details. What was Dad like? What was Mom like growing up. A lot of times someone who's not in touch with their pain will say something completely traumatic and horrible and say it almost matter-of-factly, almost with a smile on their face. I've found that if you could just mirror back, that just sounds really hard, as a child that would be hard to deal with, the divorce. Sometimes that can start to unlock, like, oh, that would be hard.

Another thing you can do, too, if they're a parent, if you transpose their child or them as children onto their children, what would you do for your children, what would you do for your son if this happened? And then all of sudden, the light bulb goes off, wow, that was really horrible that I had to deal with that. I didn't have anybody to go to.

So those are some ways to kind of help them look at it from another perspective, mirroring back. That's one way I've found. How about you? What are ways that you've found, Dan?

[...What would you think if your son went through that? It takes it away from them. So then they're better able to see it without insulting them. That must have felt horrible.]

Yeah, I agree. One other thing that I try to say a lot if possible... we can't look back at childhood pain with sort of our adult eyes and discount the impact of things. Children are not good interpreters of what's going on around them. And so something that we look back and go, well, our parents got divorced. That happens. The child could interpret that in all sorts of ways, as being the most traumatic thing that ever happened. It probably was the most traumatic thing. So we need to help them not reframe all their experiences through adult eyes, but really to look at things from how did that trauma affect you? And to not compare their trauma to other people's trauma. Well, it wasn't as bad as Tim's family. Or I wasn't sexually abused so I'm not as bad as this person. Everyone's pain is important.

[Question is out of range.]

What suggestion do I have for adolescents?

The thing that I felt most as an adolescent was alone. I remember I once bought a book, I think I talked about this on the podcast, I bought a book called Eros Defiled which was about sexuality and sexual Christianity and sexuality. And my parents, you know I bought this at a Christian bookstore, and they saw the book, they didn't say anything to me about it. And what that said by not saying anything to me about it was this is a very shameful issue. Read it on your own. This isn't something that we talk about. So as awkward as it is... awkward conversations are more powerful than no conversation. By not saying anything, you're saying something. I encourage people, if they have kids that they're working with, or their own children to just have awkward conversations. Keep having them until they become less awkward.

I was just talking to a pastor the other day and he was saying, you know, when my boys were growing up, we did the things with the computer in the family room and we kind of had the boundaries and we kind of generally talked about the danger, but my children are all in their 20s now and I wonder how they're doing with stuff. He said he saw them all for dinner recently and he still having a hard time bringing up the subject. And this guy is a great guy, great dad. So if he's having a hard time that means we're all having a hard time.

I just happened to see this the other day. My son and I went to the gas station, my 6 year old son. And right by the counter they had some kind of herbal, erotic thing, like a supplement that you could take before sex to make you more amorous. And it had a picture of a man and woman in a close embrace, with their shirts off. There's no nudity, but it definitely looked intimate and interesting. And my son looked at this. So we got back in the car and I said, hey, I noticed in the store that you saw this thing. And he immediately had a shame response. And I said, it's okay, I still love you, you didn't do anything wrong. I understand why you're curious. He did not want to talk about it. He felt very shameful. So, I tried to bring it up. I tried to say I loved him and it's hard. But I'm committed to continuing to bring up the conversation. But I knew he saw. He knew I saw him and I said something about it. So I realize I've got my hands full with this guy. I'm going to have to keep it up with him in particular,

Well, that's it. Thanks for listening. The question/answers go on a little longer there. As I said, it gets a little specific and to certain types of groups and so I'm going to cut it short here.

If you have any questions for me after listening to this, you can always reach me on [Twitter](#) @MattDobschuetz. I'm also Matt Dobschuetz on [Google+](#). As I've mentioned in the last couple of episodes we now have a Facebook page. It's [Pornfree Radio with Matt Dobschuetz](#). You can look that up, like it for show updates and you can connect with us there. I'm also on [reddit](#) on occasion as PornFreeMattD. Love your comments, your emails. I've gotten some emails this week. I've gotten some good comments. You can reach me at [pornfreeradio.com](mailto:matt@pornfreeradio.com). The show notes for this show will be at pornfreeradio.com/15.

And as always, your ratings and iTunes reviews are a major help in getting the word out. Now, I keep hearing from people that they're struggling to figure out how to review something in iTunes. I would invite you to look a little bit harder, spend a few minutes and try to figure it out. I did create a little video on how to do it. So if you're really, really having trouble, go ahead and send me an email: matt@pornfreeradio.com and I will send you a link to exactly how to review and rate on [iTunes](#). That would be totally helpful to me and I'm only speaking to a couple of those friends of mine who keep mentioning it. So, if you're really struggling, I will send you a link on how to update a review, how to make a review, how to rate in iTunes because that's awesome, that gets the word out in iTunes, the most powerful podcast library on the planet. I want as many people to know about Pornfree Radio as possible just because I want people to get help. And I know that you're into that, too. You find value in this and so I'd love for you to help me.

Once again, great talking to you this week. And I just want to give a shout out or just a heads up. The next two weeks, I'm really excited we're going to have Craig Perra from The Mindful Habit on the show. We're going to do two shows with him. We're really excited about it. We're just going to dig into his story and also

just kind of talk to him about some of his ideas about recovery of porn. It's going to be a really great podcast for us to share ideas and there's a lot we have in common. It's really awesome and I'm excited to talk to him. So definitely check out Pornfree Radio, Episode 16 and 17 in the weeks to come. It's going to be a special couple of podcasts.

All right, I'll talk to you soon. Thanks again for listening. This is Matt. See ya.