

I'm sure all of us in here have said at some point (probably in the last couple of days): "I feel drained." You know how that feels, right? You're going along in your day and suddenly the notification pops up in your brain: [1 **Low Battery Notification**] WARNING BATTERY LOW.

Maybe you're an introvert and you spent the whole evening talking to other parents at soccer practice. Maybe you're an extrovert and you're trapped in a cubicle all day. Maybe it's just been a long day/week/month/life.

We all have the sense that we have a certain amount of energy, a certain level of emotional reserves to go around. And there are lots of blog posts and books and TED talks that talk about how to figure out what energizes you and how to recharge and all that. So today I want to ask a different question:

Who gets my best?

Given that we all have a limited amount of Self to go around, a limited level of social resources, who gets the best of my energies?

Is it my boss? My kids? My spouse, partner, boy- or girlfriend? My parents?

[2 **Series Map**] And since we're in a series called SOCIAL, I want to ask how technology plays into that question. In SOCIAL, we're thinking spiritually about screens, about all those technologies Jesus never had to deal with. We've seen in this series that our screens either help us embody God's kingdom or they hurt our relationship with God. Screens either help us bring heaven to earth or they help us bring hell to earth.

When we're talking about relationships and technology, of course we could talk about texting, dating sites, and more. But there's one particular subject we ignore to our peril - a dark sickness growing in the soul of our culture.

Today, we're going to talk about a particularly hellish technology: pornography.

I know... super exciting stuff, right? No one wants to talk about pornography. It's awkward. For most of us it's convicting. We'd rather just avoid it altogether.

But pornography is a disease. If the volumes of research are to be believed, pornography is only growing as an industry. And it's anything but harmless. It's a cancer, rotting out our souls and the longer we ignore it the worse it gets.

There's a big lie about porn we have to face if we want to find relational wholeness. [3 **LIE number one**] We've convinced ourselves that pornography is victimless. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that pornography hurts everyone. It hurts the actors who make it. It hurts the people who use it. And it hurts the families of the users. Porn hurts the spouses and children of those who use it as well.

Porn is toxic because porn hurts our relationships. It's like a hole in our gas tank, draining our relational energies far quicker than is safe or healthy. Porn creates injustice by reducing persons created in God's image to objects to be used for our pleasure. And the good news is that we don't have to be a porn-saturated church. We can be a people who puts our relationships first, who preserves and protect those we love (including ourselves) from the injustices of pornography.

[5 Infographic 1] So let's talk about porn. One of the first things we need to realize is that porn is *everywhere*. By and large, porn users feel isolated and alone, separated from everyone else by shame. But the reality is that pornography is *everywhere*. More than 1 in 10 of every website on the internet is pornographic (almost 25 million sites), and 25% of all search engine requests are pornographic (that's 68 million searches per day). 40 million Americans (that also more than 1 in 10) view porn regularly. And 7 out of 10 men age 18-24 visit porn sites at least once a month.

The myth is that porn is a male problem, but it's not. 1 out of 3 porn viewers in the US are female.

Porn is a *huge* deal, at least financially. In the US alone, pornography is a \$10 billion industry. In contrast, the NFL is on track to make \$9 billion this year, and that's by far the most lucrative professional sport.

Friends, we have a porn problem. That's the bad news. The good news is that we're not alone. Most of us struggle personally with porn. And those of us who don't love people who do.

We can talk about porn. We can overcome porn. The one thing we can't afford to do is *ignore* porn.

This is the moment where the big lie shows up. Many of us cross arms and lean back and think, "But porn isn't that big a deal. It doesn't hurt anyone."

Shouldn't we give more attention to sins like greed and wrathfulness and gossip - things that hurt other people? After all, the actors and models consent. And I'm doing in the privacy of my own home (or cubicle - a shockingly high number of persons admit to viewing porn at work!). So what's the big deal?

[Big lie graphic again?] The big deal is that porn *isn't* a victimless sin. Porn hurts everyone. Including the user.

[Scripture Slide] If you have a Bible, turn with me to Matthew 5. Obviously Jesus didn't have internet porn (and I don't think there was a huge magazine service that long before the printing press), but his words on lust readily include pornography.

This passage is from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon, Jesus is quoting laws from the Jewish faith, laws given by God to God's people, and reinterpreting them, calling his followers to a deeper faith.

So here, Jesus quotes the eighth commandment - Do not commit adultery. Let's read together how Jesus reimagines this commandment:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. -- Matthew 5:27-30

Jesus warns us that adultery is a symptom of a deeper problem - lust. Lust - one of the deadly sins - rots us from the inside out. Jesus says we need to pay attention to our hearts. And then, a bit of hyperbole - if your eye or hand causes you to sin, get rid of them. And you thought Jesus never talked about masturbation.

The truth about porn is that it's *not* victimless. Porn harms users and their families. Dr. MaryAnne Layden is a psychotherapist at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. She has studied the long-term effects of pornography on users, their families and those who make porn.

She says of long-term porn users, "Having spent so much time in unnatural sexual experiences with paper, celluloid and cyberspace, they seem to find it difficult to have sex with a real human being. Pornography is raising their expectation and demand for types and amounts of sexual experiences; at the same time it is reducing their ability to experience sex." -- Dr. MaryAnne Layden

Those who are married or dating and use porn see an increased risk of separation and divorce, a decrease in intimacy and sexual satisfaction and more. Both married and single persons who regularly use porn become more cynical of marriage over time.

And perhaps most troubling is that regular porn users (especially male users) over time show an increased appetite for more graphic porn involving violence and younger and younger actors.

That's because porn's dirty little secret is that it's *addictive*. As much as any drug, pornography is designed to hook users - that's why so much of it is free. All of it is designed to hook you and wean you onto harder and harder stuff more and more often. Until eventually you're paying for it.

The porn industry is carefully constructed to make money - *lots* of money. And everyone is hurt in the process: the people who use, the people the users love, and the actresses involved in the films.

We assume that because the actresses in porn signed on, that they are not victims. But that's far from the case. Dr. Layden, this time describing the plight of the porn stars, says, "Once [the pornography actresses] are in the industry they have high rates of substance abuse, typically alcohol and cocaine, depression, borderline personality disorder [...] The experience I find most common among the performers is that they have to be drunk, high or dissociated in order to go to work. Their work environment is particularly toxic [...] The terrible work life of the pornography performer is often followed by an equally terrible home life. They have an increased risk of sexually transmitted disease (including HIV), domestic violence and have about a 25% chance of making a marriage that lasts as long as 3 years." -- Dr. MaryAnne Layden

That's confirmed by former actresses like Jessie, who describe their time in the industry like this: [8 Quote] "People in the porn industry are numb to real life and are like zombies walking around. The abuse that goes on in this industry is completely ridiculous. The way these young ladies are treated is totally sick and brainwashing. I left due to the trauma I experienced even though I was only there a short time. I hung out with a lot of people in the adult industry, everybody from contract girls to gonzo actresses. Everybody has the same problems. Everybody is on drugs. It's an empty lifestyle trying to fill up a void. I became horribly addicted to heroine and crack. I overdosed at least three times, had tricks pull knives on me, have been beaten half to death..." - Jessie, former adult film actress

The point is: real people are harmed to make porn. Porn destroys the lives of these actors - especially women. To use porn is to participate in an industry that exploits the bodies of some for the pleasure of others. This is a clear injustice.

But God's vision of humanity is that every single person bears God's image. In the first creation story, in Genesis 1, God says this of every person on the planet:

God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. -- Genesis 1:26-27

[We need this illustrated somehow] God created us to be in relationship with each other - that's what it means to bear God's image. To say that you and I and our children and the porn stars and the porn producers all bear God's image is to say that we are all created to be in *relationship* with each other.

Not to treat another human being as an object to be used for my pleasure. How many of us have seen a commercial selling something that has nothing to do with sex, but they plaster a

curvy blonde in the frame? That's objectifying - treating a person as an object for pleasure. When we objectify a relational being created in the image of a relational God, we're hurting ourselves and them.

That's why it doesn't matter if we only look at the softcore stuff. That's why it doesn't matter that the actresses chose to be in it and the directors chose to make it and I can't take it down off the internet anyway so who is it really hurting at this point?

All our justifications fall flat because we are reducing someone who bears the image of an infinitely loving God to an object to be used for our pleasure. Using pornography is participating in injustice. Users are objectifiers. It's sinful. It's bringing Hell to Earth.

This is why porn is dangerous for kids, too, and the danger is only growing. Especially in the internet age, kids are finding and becoming addicted to porn earlier and earlier.

Today, the average age a kid sees porn for the first time is *nine years old*. And it's almost always at home, by accident. They find dad or mom's collection. Or they're playing on the computer, or your phone or tablet. And they come across a pop-up or a related video as they're doing homework.

Remember - pornographers design their products to be easily accessible. They WANT our kids to stumble across their highly addictive products as early as possible. More addicts means more money for them.

[9 Infographic 2] But for kids and teens, access to professionally produced porn is only the tip of the iceberg. Both mobile technology and the ready availability of porn are forming teens and children in dangerous ways. Sexting has become more-or-less normalized among teens (and in case you don't know what sexting is, it's just what it sounds like... sending naked pictures of yourself to a friend or friends). *More than 1 in 5 teens have sent nude or partially nude pictures to their friends or a person they want to hook up with. And of sexters, most of them (3 out of 5) admit they were pressured to send nude images at least once. Almost 1 in 5 of the persons who receive sext images share them with at least one other person.*

Apps like Snapchat were created specifically to make sexting easier (and less traceable). All of this feeds what teens and young adults call the hookup culture. Hook Up culture is again, essentially what it sounds like - two individuals engaging in some kind of physical activity (from making out to intercourse) - without any romantic relationship surrounding it. Though college hookup culture gets most media attention - and like everything the media covers, is prone to exaggeration.

The bottom line is that kids are growing up in a world where they're taught that being objectified (or objectifying someone else) is GOOD. That being treated like an object is what love feels like - and nothing could be further from the truth. Love is a relational energy that celebrates the

whole of the Other. Love doesn't say, "What can you do for me?" but rather "What can I do for you?"

[10 Net Nanny, PhoneSheriff] There are lots of great technologies out there to help you protect your kids (several are listed on the parents' resource we put out for you). But let's face the ugly truth: we can't protect our kids forever. Whether they're at a friend's house, on *their* instant messenger or phone. When they're at school. When they're innocently browsing and stumble across something.

[11 Parents and kids Talking] Our kids will encounter stuff they shouldn't see. So the most important thing you can do as a parent is *make it okay to talk about*. I know talking about porn is awkward (hello... doing a whole message on it here). But don't make your kids bring it up with you. Be the adult, the parent, and broach the conversation. Let them know why those images aren't okay to look at, and make sure they know they can talk to you.

If there's one thing you can get across to your kids, help them understand that those images/videos turn PEOPLE into OBJECTS. People are relational because we are made in the image of God who is relational. Therefore people are meant to be loved and cared for. Objects are used for our satisfaction or to help us. And when they are no longer useful, we throw them away. PEOPLE are not OBJECTS. Don't treat them like they are.

Teach your kids that they were created to be in relationships, not to be objects. Teach them that they are precious, beautiful creations who deserve all the love and respect we pay to the highest dignitaries. Teach them it's okay to say no. Teach them it's okay to ask questions.

Friends, we have some decisions to make. We cannot deny the prevalence of porn in our culture. None of us is immune from its effects, because porn hurts everyone. People are not objects to be used for our pleasure. To do so is sin. It's injustice. It brings Hell, not Heaven into our homes, onto our screens.

[Big lie picture again] Porn hurts the people who use porn. Porn hurts their families. Porn destroys the lives of the people who make porn. And porn is shaping our future generations to be cynical when it comes to love, to commitment, to marriage.

Let's be a church who stands against porn. Let's love the image of God in every person, including the porn stars. Including ourselves. Including our children.

Let's not be afraid to talk about porn, about our struggles with porn. Because porn is a disease that thrives in the dark and dies in the light.

I want to offer some space here at the close to consider how we can resist pornography. On your seats this morning were some handouts - these have some resources for you.

If you're addicted to pornography, you need to talk to someone about it. If you have a Life Transformation Group, they are a great place to start. You can't beat addiction alone. The decision you need to make today is to talk about it.

You may not have an LTG. You may not have anyone you can talk to about this. Maybe your first step is to be honest with God about your addiction. To spend some time in prayer, confessing and asking God to send someone into your life with whom you can be honest.

If you are a parent, you need to know what resources are available, and how to talk to your kids. And the decision you need to make today is to talk about it.

Communion Set Up

[Communion Slide] We close with Communion today because we must remember that porn destroys the image of God that each of us bears. When we approach the communion table, we remember the meal Jesus shared with his followers the night before he was killed, when the Empire destroyed his body but could not destroy the image of God.

In sharing bread and wine with his followers, Jesus affirmed the goodness of our bodies - that they are not accidents, they are not accessories to our faith. Rather, the bodies God has given us are the way we bear God's image in the world.

We come to the table remembering that Jesus' body was broken for our culture of exploitation and degradation. Jesus allowed himself to be shamed for our shame.

We come to the table remembering that Jesus was crucified naked. His naked body was hung before his culture as a spectacle, for their amusement. We remember that the violence of Jesus' crucifixion is not far removed from the violence of pornography. Jesus submitted to all the shame of nakedness and slow death in a public setting - his body treated as an object - so that our bodies would not have to endure objectification, so that our bodies could be restored into rightful relationality.

So we come to his table. We receive his wafers, dip them in this juice, to participate in his death, to affirm the goodness of our bodies. To remember the public spectacle of his death. And we leave saying No to a world that wants to destroy the image of God we bear. We leave participating in the relational life Jesus makes available to us through the Spirit.

You don't have to be a member of Catalyst to participate in Communion. If you are willing to say no to a culture of pornography, if you want to bear God's image in the world and love the image of God in others, then you're welcome to participate this morning.