



Close to Home Study Guide

Dealing with Pornography

1. Opening (1 minute)*

Dear God: We rejoice that you created us in your image, male and female. We also celebrate that in Jesus you lived among us, showing us once again how much you value life on earth. We therefore affirm the goodness of our bodies and embrace our sexuality as a good part of your creation, part of your image within us. We also celebrate the rich variety of body shapes and sizes you have made, and lament the ways in which our media images dehumanize, degrade, and restrict us. May we always remember that you love us fully and seek our well-being in all areas of our lives. Amen.

2. Story-telling (8 minutes)

Refer to the opening story and highlight how Steve was drawn into using pornography, what some of the consequences were for him, what he experienced at church, and what finally led him on a path to healing. If the group is close, you may want to ask if anyone knows someone struggling with pornography and how they are finding help.

3. Review of pamphlet (7 minutes)

Highlight the definitions of pornography and addiction on page 4-5, including what's listed in the brown box. Ask how they would explain the difference between pornography and artistic beauty. Mention that the word *pornography* is drawn from the Greek words *porne* (female captive, slave or prostitute) and *graphos* (writing or drawing). The very origin of the word therefore links graphic portrayal of women with bondage and inequality. It continues to undergird and increase abuse, especially of women and children. It is also degrading to the women, children, and men used to make these images.

Encourage the group to look at the facts in the purple box. Are there any that are particularly surprising? What are some of the factors driving this reality?

4. Reading of Scripture text (20 minutes)

Refer to the story of creation (Genesis 1-2) and the Song of Solomon and discuss:

- How did people in your class learn about sexuality? You may want to give each person a handout with four concentric circles: the *individual* in the center, circled by *family of origin*, *culture of origin*, and *congregation of origin*.¹ What messages did they receive from each of these circles?
- Focus especially on what they learned in church. What did their congregation teach about creation or the Song of Solomon?
- What does your congregation now teach about sexuality?

Turn to the story of King David and Bathsheba and the way it parallels the use of pornography. Pay special attention to the consequences for David, Bathsheba, and those around them. How might pornography result in similar losses?

*The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

¹ McClintock, Karen A. *Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations*, Alban Institute, 2004, 16.

If there is time, ask the class to read Psalm 51, David's confession to God after this incident. In addition to God, who else might be looking for his repentance? Who is hurt or sinned against by those who make and use pornography?

Finally, draw attention to the last paragraph on page 7, which refers to Jesus and his ministry of bringing wholeness to those held captive by oppression, illness, or sin. If you have time, divide into small groups to explore further:

- How, in the Gospels, did Jesus bring release and healing to people? Some ideas: Jesus freeing the woman caught in adultery (John 8), his visit with Zaccheus (Luke 19), and his conversation with Peter after the resurrection (John 21).
- In each case, what was needed in order for healing to occur? How can your congregation follow Jesus' example?

5. Steps toward healing (8 minutes)

- Find out what support groups, such as Sex Addicts Anonymous, are available in your community. Also make a list of local therapists skilled in dealing with sexual addictions. Bring this information to class for people to pick up.
- If these resources are not available locally, brainstorm what your congregation might be able to offer. What other groups might be willing to help?
- Consider ideas for how to teach healthy sexuality and work at preventing harmful behavior.
- Pray together for those struggling with this addiction and their family members. Pray also for all those who are being used and violated by this industry, that they too might find release and healing.

6. Closing (1 minute)

Read these verses from Psalm 139:14-15, 23-24:

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.



This study guide is written by Linda Gehman Peachey, Director for Women's Advocacy in the Peace and Justice Ministries section of Mennonite Central Committee US. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from the Mennonite Publishing Network of the Mennonite Church (see www.mpn.net/closetohome) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions (www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome).