Pornography and Spiritual Formation Part 1

By Dallas Willard

John Ko:

I want to welcome you my name's John Ko. I'm the director of the Institute for spiritual formation. This is I think our sixth lecture series on spiritual Christian spirituality and soul care. And Dr. Willard has been with us at each one of these even before the institute got going. So we're very thankful. I will say about this lecture series. I sent an e-mail to Dr. Willard saying well what would you like to speak on this time. And I got an e-mail rather quickly and he said pornography and spiritual formation sounds good and that was it.

Well you know Dr. Willard has a strange sense of humor. So I sent him back and I thought you know this is great. I think this is a wonderful thing that we should talk about. But are you joking. And then he sent me back a longer e-mail saying John I'm deadly serious. Those were his words. And as he talked and as I as we began talking amongst our faculty this is where we think spiritual formation really meets reality and real life. This is a test case of whether spiritual formation whether there's something to say about this.

So we decided to follow suit and so the series is entitled spiritual formation in real life so tonight it will be on pornography and spiritual formation. Now next week I'm going to be speaking on what I call the spiritual discipline of emotional chastity. And it's going to really be about what I what I think of his relational lust or what would what would spirituality what would the training
of that capacity we have for romance for union what would that be to do this in the spirit. And I have two 14 year old daughter so this is a very present topic in my life.

We're also going to talk about the family and how our family has affected our spirituality and now how we have a new family of God and how that can affect our spirituality encountering some of the things that happened in our family. And then we're gonna have a time on talking about the relationship we had with our parents the attachment and how that affects our prayer life for good and for bad. So again this has been an opportunity for us to give you a taste of some of the real gritty issues that we're interested in doing with our students in the institute.

Now let me just say a couple of practical things. There is a handout. Has everybody received the handout? Does anybody not have one right now? Okay. If I think someone's in the back just keep your hand up and they will bring you the handout let me say also that this series is being taped and so we're going to sell it for twenty dollars at the end. And I think there is some sign ups on the outside table if you want to get this. It'll be on C.D. Also if you haven't registered yet and you've come late please go out at the break and register it'll be sometime around 8:00 ish or 8:15. Also restrooms are over here in this side of the room if you need them.

What I'd like it to before introduce Dr. Willard. I want us just to take a moment to open to the spirit. He's our teacher. So I'd like you to do and I just want to do this for like a minute or two minutes I'd like you just to grab a person next to you. Introduce yourself if you need to just you know tell him your name and then what I'd like you to do is just to pray for one another. You don't know that person perhaps but just open your heart and pray what comes to your mind.
Especially for Dr. Willard that he would experience openness to the Spirit even here that he might speak words of wisdom to us and just pray for one another that we would have hearts to hear. And then I'll come back and bring us together. So I just want you to take one or two minutes introduce pray and I'll be back.

Our Heavenly Father. We want to open our heart to you Lord it is not within our power to transform ourselves as we ought but we open our heart to you. We have it within our self to present herself to you right now regardless of this day of what we've done or not done and we come to you Lord and we ask for mercy kindness we open our heart for wisdom that we might hear and we want to bless really a father in our Faith Dr. Willard that you might open his heart to greater wisdom and obedience and love by your Spirit and so we bless him and one another in the name of Jesus. Amen Okay go ahead and find a seat.

I wanna introduce Dr. Willard. He is. He needs no introduction really. He is a friend to Bible University and Talbot and to the Institute for spiritual formation I think to us we consider him a father a father in our faith. A father in this movement of wanting to open our hearts to wisdom and to formation in the spirit. He is a professor of philosophy at USC. I think that has added a real element to what he has to say to us. We want to bless him for that. And so I want to introduce Dr. Willard and why don't we both all welcome him.

[Applause]

Dr. Willard:
Thank you John. Thank you very much. Thank you John for those prayers and good words. Thank you for coming. It's always a joy to be back down here and to meet so many people again and to see how you are prospering in the Lord and what you're accomplishing. And I'm especially happy to be a part of the Institute from time to time. And happy to refer many people to you as someone who can help if they if a church or an individual decides that they actually want to live the kind of life that you might expect from a candid reading of the New Testament.

Many people have not decided to do that. Live like they're Christians. And sometimes they haven't decided to do it because no one told them they could. And so we need to get the word out and preach the Gospel in its fullness. Now I'm not going to preach to you tonight but I do want to read some Scripture to you to start with and I would like first to read a few verses from Ephesians 4 verses 17 and following you have to understand I believe that Paul was a profoundly insightful person about the make-up of human life and why it goes the way it does.

And here's what he says verse 17 of Ephesians 4 and following this I say therefore and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk in the futility of their mind being darkened in their understanding excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their hearts the ignorance is in them because of the hardness of their hearts and they having become callous.
That is to say unfeeling have given themselves over to sensuality. That's what you do when you don't have normal feelings. You go to sensuality to feel something because it's very important to have feeling and we'll talk about that in a moment. They have become callous they've become callous have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. See that's the progression. They become callous. They turn to sensuality and sensuality in the nature of the case does not satisfy. And dulls quickly and so more and more for feeling the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

But you have not learned this of Christ has another way second Peter chapter 1: 2-3 grace and peace be multiplied in you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord even seeing that his divine power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us to his glory and excellence for by these. He has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust becoming partakers of the divine nature or Paul put it in terms of not participating in the life that is in God or in God's life.

So you have an alternative. The alternative is to live for your desires or to live in the goodness of God. Now we know that the choice has been made for the human race to live for its own desires. That's why it's important for us to understand that what comes to us by the grace of Jesus Christ is that we escape from the corruption that is in the world through lust corruption is a matter of things breaking up and not working. The most obvious case of corruption that you know of today is the collapse of the financial system.
Why did it collapse lust people did what they desired and not what was good. People dressed in 2000 dollar suits with high priced degrees impressive credentials led the whole nation down a path towards financial disaster that's corruption when we speak of corruption like in corruption of the government or corruption of character.

We're talking about the breaking up of something that should work right and would work right if it were subjected to what is good but it has. So if it is subjected to simply what is desired it will break up it will become non-functional and that is true of life in general. And that's what Peter is talking about when he mentions the corruption that is in the world through lust. Now he's not talking about wanting a drink of water when he talks about lust. He's talking about an intensive kind of desire that control your life.

Very few people whose lives are controlled by thirst for water other kinds of thirst can obsess you and take over your sense of what is good and what is right. And it's that conflict between what is good and what is right. And human desire that leads to the breakup of human life will keep that in mind now. I want to talk about pornography tonight and involvement with pornography because it presents us with a peculiarly vivid case of spiritual formation. We need to say what I believe is often said here an instruction that everyone gets a spiritual formation the most degraded person in the world has had a spiritual formation and that is why they are like what they are like Hitler had a spiritual formation a person who is engaged or involved with pornography.
Pornography is so because of their spiritual formation. Spiritual formation refers to how the basic elements of human life—the will, the thoughts, the feelings, the body, the social relationship, and the depths of the soul—have been shaped so that character and life come out of how they’ve been shaped. The fundamental distortion is in the will but the will quickly subordinates the mind and the will that is turned against God or turned against good hijacks the mind to justify what it is doing and it takes the emotions and feelings with it.

And very soon you have a whole person who is wrapped up in something which perhaps others who are not in that possession would look at and wonder how could that ever possibly happen. How could that be? How could someone do that sort of thing? So I want to think about pornography tonight as a peculiarly vivid case of spiritual formation and of possible transformation and also of course it is such a widespread problem as you no doubt know we need to talk about it with a view to helping people with it so that they can find their way out of it.

A promise keepers survey found that 53 percent of its members consume pornography 2000 a year. Christianity did a survey found that 37 percent of pastors said pornography is a current struggle of theirs. Fifty seven percent called pornography the most sexually damaging issue in their congregations. Barna Research study released in February of ‘07 said that 35 percent of men and 17 percent of women reported having used pornography in the last month. The pornography industry in the United States is indeed large. Adult Video News an industry publication estimates the industry's 2006 revenues at thirteen point two billion dollars. The U.S. is the world's largest producer and consumer of pornographic material. Porn websites draw 72 million visitors every month more than 13000 pornographic video titles are produced yearly.
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I have a special feeling of this because for some time this little city around which our post office is located Chatsworth was the leading producer of pornography in the United States if not in the world. It's curious how these things work work because it actually happened because they overbuilt industrial buildings and couldn't find anyone to use them. And so they go pornography like many other most of the other things that might trouble us are is in fact interwoven with a whole lot of other economic and social issues. Now you have a handout and I'm not going to read it to you but I'm going to work through it with you and I guess I fix this because I just felt like it was important to have something written down to put in your hand. We can do PowerPoint or something of that sort.

But then you are apt to be looking at the PowerPoint not paying any attention to me so I'm jealous of that let's just start with saying what pornography is. It consists of writings drawings images and pictures. You can do that in various media for use in arousing sexual desire and frequently and stimulating the body to achieve sexual discharge or release. That's what it is it can vary somewhat in how it's presented and how it's consumed but fundamentally it is an exercise in the excitation of desire. That’s something to keep in mind now because we want to talk about desired or good bit lust as the scripture as the New Testament often translate translates the word epithumia.

But desire is a neutral term and lust already has a little wrong connotation to it. But really what we're talking about is desire and the curious thing about human beings is the importance of desire to life. Pornography is on a continuum with viewing actual people around you in order to stimulate Foster and cultivate lust which Jesus warned against. In Matthew 5:28 it is a part of the
boiling pot of sexual titillation and misbehavior. It's a continuum of activities some of which are
innocent and some of which are perhaps innocent but dangerous and it's all focused on the
cultivation of Desire when Jesus says in Matthew 5:28 responding to those who said I'm okay
sexually because I don't do the deed and he said that's not the full story the person who uses
others to excite their desires is on a continuum. They are entering willingly into temptation and
they should stay out of that because once in you never know what's going to happen after that if
you say yes to temptation.

You've already said yes to the wrong thing and that's what Jesus was talking about. You're not
talking about having a thought he is talking about cultivating thoughts for the purpose of exciting
desire. Now you know human life is full of that advertising politics all kinds of things get messed
in trying to get people to do things by manipulating their desires. So we need to understand that
this is a pervasive kind of reality.

Sexual desire sexual thoughts inherently there's nothing wrong with them. It's very important to
say that because especially one gets when one gets involved in them wrongly then it tends to
spread to all things associated with sexuality as it has in times past in our society. So that
sexuality itself takes on a shady or wrong tone and the way this works is that actually makes it
more powerful because what is forbidden has in its self a way of calling for action and desire.
And if you ever had children you know that and Paul talks about how the very fact that the law
forbids certain things excites the wheel and pulls people into it. So it's important to understand
that sexuality thoughts of sex sexual desire itself is a good thing not a bad thing. And that's true
of desire in general.
The third paragraph there on your handout the use of pornography is rooted in the fundamental role of desire in human life. Desire on the Biblical understanding is not in itself bad but it is dangerous because it has a tendency to take over one's life. What happens with desire is we lose sight of what is good. That's how desire takes over and if we relent to desire as the guide to our life then we lose touch with what is good desire has the power to make us do that that's partly because it makes us focus on something.

It gives us a very intense obsession with something desire obsesses isn't it interesting. You rarely ever find anyone who is obsessed with what is good we should be but we're not. But you find people all over the place who are obsessed with something that is not good because they have come to desire it. Now it may be something that is silly and see a lot of that in sports but they're obsessed with it. And obsession closes the horizon of the mind.

And you just have that one thing that is there and the question is it good is not allowed to arise desire must be subordinated to what is good and it is the role of the will to see to it that desire is subordinated to what is a good. That's the difference between will and desire will always has a broader view. It is looking at alternatives. It says this may be good but is it the best and that's how the will functions in our life. Now the real danger is that desire will capture our will.

I wonder if you know that there are many people who do not know they have a will distinct from their desires. Have you ever observed that in human beings they think that if they desire something that's all that is needed? They have allowed their will to obsess their desires and when they do that than their mind closes down and they learn that to hold on to their obsession they
must not open their mind to the truth. And of course when it comes to freeing one up from obsession then you have to go to the mind and you have to go to the will the will can do what it's supposed to do. Only if it understands what is good and is strongly oriented toward it. This is definitely not the case with those who are unaligned with God in them. Those unaligned with God the will falls captive to desire.

Think of the paradigmatic temptation in the Bible Eve and the serpent and think about what was said to her she desired the fruit so the teaching about what was good what God had said disappears and so she does the stupid thing see that's the general form of sin is to decide that I know better than God or better than good and I will have what I desire to John says there are three things in the world. The last of the flesh the last of the eyes and the pride of life that's all desire and the world runs on desire not on what is good.

So now the general condition of humanity is laid out very carefully by Paul and we've already read one passage in which he describes that in Ephesians 4:17-19 I'm not going to read it because I think all of you know it very well and that is the passage in Romans 7 and the heart of that passage. The saying the things I would that I do not and the things I would not that I do. You know that's the basic condition of humanity when it has been captivated by desire it no longer thinks about what is good it just thinks about desire. Now you want we will want to think more about how a person what kind of condition a person is in when that is true the task of morals in humanity is always to put people in a position where they can do what they don't want to do and not do what they want to do if it were not for the overpowering and distorting or to use Peter's words the corrupting role of desire in human life.
We wouldn't need any ethics the whole task of ethics is to find a reason or a basis to stand to enable you not to do what you want to do. That's why I often ask my students in class do you think ethics is a good idea. How do you think they respond the most you can get out of them is it's a necessary evil but you don't find people cheerleading for ethics or saying Thank God for ethics and why is that. Well that's because of this general condition the corruption that is in the world through last and of course any individual who does not have the power to do what they don't want to do and do not do what they do want to do is in real trouble.

You sure don't want to hire them. You want to hire someone who can do something they don't want to do maybe even come to work on time they're doing the Dolly Parton 9 to 5 thing downtown you know 9:00 to 5:00 what a way to make a living well you need some ethics if you're gonna do that. So now we have to think deeply about the role of desire in human life. We must understand it's not bad in itself but if we allow it alone to control us it will ruin us and ruin everyone around us. Because desire is not determined by what is good and that leads us to one of our deepest cultural quandaries. Now that reaches into the very heart of our churches and that is the idea that we can't know what is good independently of what we want that it is only desire that tells us what is good and then love which should be directed to what is good is distorted to what you want. Either one of the best illustrations on that point is you may say Love you love chocolate cake but you don't you want to eat it and believe me that's very different from love.
If you were a chocolate cake and you heard someone standing by saying I love chocolate cake you would know what to expect a knife. All right so have you.

Perhaps you can take that as a way of hanging on to this distinction between what is loved and what is desired and love and desire are not the same thing. Love is always directed to what is good you love something if you are set to advance what is good for it if you love chocolate cake you'd just be taking care of it. So we need to make sure that we have and right Love of course is what redemption is all about. It's to bring us to right love.

Now then in relationship to pornography as we all develop this as we go along the cure is love treasuring what is good and what is right but that's not something you can do just by telling yourself to do it and we will go into that more in just a moment. The primary role of you of desire in human life I'm down to the next to the last paragraph on the first page if you're following the primary role of desire in human life is to impel us to action because you might say well if desire is such a dangerous thing why do we have it.

The short answer is without it we'd be dead if action were solely under the direction of thought we would never survive infancy. And life would be an intolerable burden in which much that is good would not be realized you'll occasionally find people for example who've grown a little older and they don't really get much fun out of food and they wind up eating because it's good for them now that might help some of us who eat too much because of our desires. But on the other hand if you had to run your life just by your thoughts about what is good it would be intolerable and so God has arranged that we have desire and that it gives pleasure and desire gives pleasure
because it thrusts us in a direction and makes us feel alive. And feeling alive turns out to be a major problem for human beings especially in a highly regimented and organized culture you may.

If you would like to enlarge that and you're so moved like to read Sigmund Freud little book Civilization and Its Discontents and it is not everything Freud did was helpful but that particular little book is very helpful because he talks about what happens when you have to have a system that depresses desire and how if you didn't have one you couldn't have civilization if people just did what they wanted all the time there just be chaos so we have to understand the importance of it and at the same time understand why it has to be limited. It's important because life runs on it and when you have desire you feel alive because you put in motion by it or sort of if it's not moving you towards something so disastrous that you can't go then on the other hand you have to have this.

You have to have desire because you're not capable of thinking about all of the things that you need to do. That's just a part of the economy of the self-habit also comes in here because habit allows us to act without thinking and believe me that's a good thing. The person you don't want to be riding with in the car driving is someone who has to think about what they're doing you hope. They think occasionally but if they have to think about when to put on the brakes and how to do that and how to turn the wheel and all of that you're probably going to be lucky to get out alive especially here in Southern California.

So desire moves us. That's good. It makes us feel alive. We are moved since we speak of passion grabs us. We like to be grabbed. Did you know that well in a way but you see that's the reason
why people get addicted to things because being grabbed usually involving desire involves them in life keeps them moving and that's essential. Now keep that in mind because when you get around in a moment to talking about the causation involved in pornography we're going to find things like boredom alienation purposeless is a major factor in inducting people into pornography hold those things together. Now if you would you rarely find anyone with a rich full exciting life who who's engaged in a pornography there's a connection.

It's very important in understanding why there is such a thing as pornography and what we can do about it the gratification of desire gives us a sense of completeness and power for a moment or so a depressed person is typically one who has little or no desire and we'll say I don't want anything and when people get locked into that it is extremely hard to do anything that's helpful sometimes something if you can just get them physically active to moving of some sort. It will help them but it's very hard to pull them out.

So that's why that's why desire is so important and those are some of the problems that it creates. The primary problem is the contrast between what is desired and what is good and the fact that desire brings feeling and excitement and passion so that we wind up doing things just to get the feeling and that's where serious trouble begins. OK so because of all of that we do many things to excite desire flirting. There are various kinds of flirting and titillation are major parts of life in fallen humanity and this is kind of like a danger zone filled with minds where people tell them oh this is innocent and in a sense it may be but it leads into dynamics that can destroy you someone says you know I'll just try cocaine once for some people that's enough and they wind up addicted.
That's the trouble with flirtation and titillation. It's exciting. It plays with desire and you always want to remember this because it's all around us. But when you step into it you have no idea what's going to happen. That's part of what makes it exciting and interesting is the adventure and you find a lot of trouble in faithfulness in marriage comes from just this very sort of thing. Temptation to sin is exciting because it plays with desire sports by the way provide interesting cases also where one actually chooses to desire things. Of no significance whatsoever crossing a line with a funny shaped ball in your hand.

And yet you see people go oh oh oh well why did they do that their whole life and their lives. And you spike it with a little alcohol and some gang and you wind up doing the things that soccer spectators in Britain do but it's a good illustration you see because here's something where I mean what's the point. Of sports. Now actually there is. There are good points to sports but thinking about it. I mean what's the point of this kind of excitement about sports I have I have some people around SC today that are depressed because they think there aren't going to be any interesting football games this fall. What's the deal? Well it's the excitement of desire. They want to get in there and desire. We choose these kinds of things drugs food work and violence also bringing feelings that give a sense of being alive. Please hold on to that. I'm trying to lay a foundation here for understanding pornography and understanding how you can come out and you cannot do it unless you understand how desire works. So be patient with me if you have questions or comments. Make a note and we'll be there shortly pornography is only one I'm at the top of the second page would you believe pornography is only one of many ways in which the world can be enslaved.
It's only one there are many others that we can talk about here we often talk about sex and violence. If you look at what turns up on television and or movies and ask yourself why would anyone want to look at that. Most of it is simply sex and violence. Well those are two of the primary ways of exciting desire different kinds of desire. But people do like to look at violence that's why you. Well I don't want to get started on that but they really do. They like to look at it. At the same time they may be disgusted with themselves for looking at it. That's a part of what John called the lust of the eyes remember three things in the world the loss of the flesh the lust of the eyes and the pride of life the desire to look and to see and violence draws that desire to look and to see so pornography is only one of many ways in which the world can be enslaved it can be enslaved to getting what it wants.

Some people are enslaved to having their way there will is addicted to their will and all you have to do is to oppose their will and then anger comes out. Anger is a response to your will being crossed. That's the way it works if your will is crossed. No matter how trivial it is. Anger is a response. So what to do with anger. Well think about how the world works. And I'll bet you can come up with some things that Jesus also had to say can be enslaved to looking good. Or dominating others. Many are enslaved to simple rebelliousness you'll see that in young people and then you see some people who are no longer young who are still enslaved to it. I have a problem with any kind of authority or anyone telling them what to do automatically. No to those they're enslaved we are some of the Christian disciplines deal with that. For example the discipline of submission is designed partly to help people break the enslavement to rebellion so that's why John says what he does about the three things that are in the world.
Because he's looked at the world and he lists these things and he sees them OK now let's get more specifically focused on pornography. You may know of my vim formula VIM.

This is in this in the first full paragraph on page two that is spiritual transformation into Christ likeness results from getting the right vision of reality and goodness the right intention and decision to actually become like Christ and adequate means to carry out the intention V I M then as in vim and vigor but it's an acronym that stands for vision intention and means that's in Chapter 5 of the renovation of the heart where I discuss that at some length however this is not just a formula for transformation. It works quite generally. I mean if you want to lose weight or develop your muscles or save money or learn to speak French or whatever it all works on the same principle.

Personal change that's the way it works when you watch someone who is oriented towards something has a vision of its goodness decided to do it gets the means you will see them successful. It always works. But now on the other hand we need to realize that everyone has had a spiritual formation and everyone has a vim that has active in where they are that's true of pornography or gluttony or you name it. Every condition of the sort. Good or evil incorporates a vim a vim that is in action and it is the key to understanding whatever condition one is in and this applies to the spiritual life.
Is very important for us as Christians to understand that if we're going to come to grips with the picture of the good life that the Scripture sets forward as to followers of Christ because it will be yours if you want it and you have the vision and you implement the means there isn't a single thing that Jesus taught us to do that we cannot do but we have to have the vision and we have to have made the intention and we have to employ the means. You can't do it just by there isn't a single thing he taught us to do that we can do that way but there isn't a single thing he taught us to do that we can't do if we appropriate this kind of pattern.

What is the vim of the person who is engaged with pornography involvement with pornography is not an ultimate undefinable fact that simply falls upon a person and there it is now that's true also anger resentment contempt. These are not conditions that just there you are they come from your vision your intention and your means and we employ them in the wrong way the means and there we are think of the lengths to which some people go to implement their resentment of others or their resentment of other types of people or their resentment of their situation in life and so on so I've underlined here and put in bold print if you want to get out of such involvement with pornography you work on replacing the VIM that put you there and hold you there with a godly vim oriented to what is good to desire.

That is something you can do God will help you God will help me but he will not do it for me. Now here we run into a lot of very deep theology having to do with the misunderstandings of grace for example the idea that Grace eliminates effort or effort illuminates Grace and we stay frozen where we are because we can't make the intelligent effort to change the conditions which result in situations like basing our happiness on food or you know whatever it is.
So now let's go into some details. What is the V of pornographic use? What's the vision? What's the V.? I think probably this is the most important thing we have to understand it is a vision of women or for simply for simplicity's sake. This is a day of equal opportunity but let's just talk that way. It is a vision of women as something to be used to stimulate and or gratify a sexual feeling and desire. That's the vision. Now it may be complicated by moments of repentance and thinking different things but that's what governs the use of pornography if you don't have that vision you will not engage in pornography because you will be thinking about the woman involved here in a way that shuts down the whole enterprise. But typically a person is thinking that is what they are here for. Usually this is accompanied by contempt for women. And if you know what pornography is and you don't see that it is contempt for women. You're blind it's also contempt for you or me if I'm using that. I've never known a person who is engaged with pornography who thought it was something to be proud of and to talk about with others in a favorable way never known anyone almost all are engaged in hiding because of how it makes them feel about themselves. They are actually using their own bodies and minds to gain pleasure and desire and they know that that somehow is not right.

In most cases this will be accompanied by vision of one's own body as a source of and means to pleasure. It may be that this is prior in time in child development to pornographic view of women. These foundations of pornographic involvement easily develop further into various forms of perversion as one pursues sexual stimulation and satisfaction. And that's what the passage I read to you from Paul in Ephesians 4 is about because it's in general a rule of desire that if you satisfy desire you don't stay satisfied. And if your goal is simply status satisfaction
and desire the satisfaction of desire will dull your gratification. And so you have to up the ante and go for something more stimulating. And of course that is why in the end this sort of thing is so terribly destructive. The period of vision must be replaced by a vision of women and of one's self as creatures of God for His blessing. Walking the hard path of life where people suffer afflictions and death. So that actually we look up on others with compassion and with love as creatures of God. That's what has to come back into place. And actually that alone in many cases simply puts pornography away and you no longer have to deal with it to see everything in the light of God.

Now this is another illustration of what I was talking about how desire narrows your vision will opens your vision because Will is looking for alternatives and in general the way you can deal with any temptation is to broaden your view any temptation you broaden your view you put things in a larger context and of course the context is gone now the pornographic eye or intention is the intent and decision to use sexual sensuality as a major source of gratification. That is an intention that is a decision often this is supported by the view of oneself as deprived or hopelessly burdened.

Studies have been made on this a man named Lasser has made a study of people involved in pornography and he found that people who have high demand but low structure jobs and who spend a great deal of time at their computers initially for work related reasons but also for social connection and entertainment are the ones most in jeopardy. He points out three elements that foster sexual addiction loneliness anger and boredom and generally speaking I think when you think about the pornographic eye and you see how it is focused you'll see that it is the view of
oneself as a deprived and hopelessly burdened facing some sort of situation where they see no way out and no way to deal with it. An unhappy marriage for example for someone who thinks that they cannot get out of the marriage or deal with it in other way they will say well this is my safety valve. This is how I deal with this situation.

Thus the wrong vision of God lies at the foundation of pornographic practice because ultimately that picture of one in life is a picture of one who is alienated from God or has a view of God according to which God doesn't really care and may just be the one who puts you in this situation where you are miserable. A lot of resentment of God is involved in these kinds of things. Needless to say a right view of God in God's world would of itself break the grip of a life of sexual sensuality I'll read that again.

One reason why I wrote this stuff down is because I want you to be able to take this away and look at it. I mean you may disagree with it OK but I want you to understand what I'm saying. So I read that again a right view of God and God's world would of itself break the grip of a life of sexual sensuality. The work to be done here should be obvious. The transforming of the mind by the truth about God and his world but one also had to come to grips with the fact that they do intend to decide and to use pornography.

This I think is one of the things that people have most difficulty with if they if they are among those who feel like they're hopeless in the grip of this sort of thing they are unable to deal honestly with the fact that they do choose to use it that they intend to use it. Now we're going to talk more in a moment about some of the things we can do to help us with that but until you
come to the point where you can say I don't have to over eat I decide to overeat I intend to overeat or if that's too hard at least I don't intend not to. And the role of intention in all of these cases of addiction like phenomena is difficult to come to grips with because it is nearly all of them involve intense degrees of shame and to own up to the intention.

Why am I stuffing myself with all this food I intend to like it was I was walking by the refrigerator and it just jumped out? Started going down my throat. No I intend to deal honestly with intention in the role of pornography and other things of the sort. Lying all of the things that trouble us as people living in this world. The role of intention has to be owned up to. So once we own up to it then the intention and decision not to use it must be formed. So that's the positive side. Or the way out. That will not be possible until the vision element is transformed along the lines suggested one of the things I hope you take away is the idea that you cannot accomplish at the intention level what has to be accomplished at the vision level and you can accomplish at the means level.

What has to be accomplished at the intention and the vision level and that's important because one of our problems is that we tend to accentuate the means and get all the means we don't have the vision or the intention. If you've heard me use this before I'm sorry but one of the best illustrations of this is how people learn languages in our universities. Or rather I should how they don't you learn languages at USC we have multimillion dollars floors full of equipment in one of the buildings the students generally do not learn the languages in broad parts of the world there are people with no equipment and they learn to speak English better than a lot of people in America. What is the difference? They have the vision and they have the intention.
That's what you have to do the work at the vision and intention level it is possible to deceive oneself about what one really does intend so one must be very careful and searching and honest in dealing with what one does and does not intend what they have and have not decided to do. This is very slippery and we have to be careful with it. And some of the things I've mentioned about how we can work our way back in a minute relate to this. The fact is that people engaged in the use of pornography have decided to be there and have not decided not to be there but willpower alone. This also has to be added it will not solve the problem. It won't be solved without willpower but willpower alone will not solve it. The vision must be right and the appropriate means will have to be employed to extricate oneself from pornographic use.

Now among the primary means to deliverance is taking care to see pornography in all of its dimensions for what it really is. So now this is working on the vision for many people just to see the terrible degradation of others and one's self involved in pornography will strongly bolster their will to have no involvement with it. This is important. It is an application of the general truth that temptation of all kinds is defeated by broadening the view and looking at the solicitation in the larger context of life and of gone.

Now you have to have the intention to defeat that temptation or you won't broaden your view so vision and intention interact and that's where the main problem is and that's where the main solution lies desire overpowers the will primarily by obsessing the mind please take that one with you it applies to life generally and not just to pornography desire overpowers the will primarily by obsessing the mind. Those of you who have a scholarly interest might like to follow that
sentence up by finding the two volume psychology by William James and reading his chapter on the will desire overpowers the will primarily by obsessing the mind what you obsess on is pretty much what you will do what many think they experience as inevitability depends entirely upon their failure to see things as they really are Will.

That's the human spirit in its very nature seeks alternatives and the best alternative. But when the person has conceded desire the right to rule the will desire blinds the mind and appears to give the will no alternatives. I've got to have a doughnut the doughnut is on its way. I've got to look at that picture well it's on its way. You see that's the power of the obsessed focus and desire. Does that so let me go back and just say a sentence or two about that again because I really hope you can take away this evening a better understanding of the relationship between desire and the will what desire does is it shuts down alternatives that the will might contemplate.

That's how that works so if you want to loosen the grip of desire you broaden your vision and you look deeper into what you're thinking. And one of the things you do is you look at the people in the pictures as persons a very effective DVD on breaking the grip of pornography is called somebodies daughter and the title itself is enough to just make you jump back. Let's see that's an I can tell you from my personal experience that learning to see in this way just changes everything. It breaks the struggle you see.

It breaks the struggle so you see that doughnut you think and then you think blood sugar feet falling off all of a sudden that doughnut looks different because now you've put it in a broader context right.
I really hoping that this basic point grips you and you go away with that burned into your mind. Well let me do just a little more here and we'll have a break and then you come back and you can holler at me on the other means must be employed in most cases to the most useful our openness to others and resolute avoidance of situations in which pornography can be indulged. As for openness this may involve confession to an appropriate person in appropriate ways. Be careful about that sharing with others of the same difficulty.

A buddy accountability system with a small group or others not necessarily all in the same difficulty because you need some people who are not fighting the battle but can be with you and with others and provide openness prayer allows you to meet and discuss regularly to call on others for prayer and support in the hard times. Somewhat like AA which is an ingenious system for helping people break alcohol addiction and should be studied and would be a good idea for most churches to institute a similar system not just for alcoholism maybe for gossip rush over and help me I'm about to gossip. Another measure that can be taken here here's to kneel down publicly and pray out loud for deliverance from your temptation. Perhaps you could do that in church. Think about what that would mean. Saint Benedict threw himself into a briar patch upon the occasion of salacious thoughts and it seems to have done wonders for him. Now at this point you might say are you serious.

And my answer would be are you actually a briar patch has a lot to recommend it against some other things you get into by avoiding the briar patch I've seen many people who would have been much better to have found the briar patch. I hope you think about this since I'm not. I'm afraid that they'll look to you outrageous but they really aren't. The real question is do you intend to
change now. If you don't intend to change. Well OK. Oh it's all off if you don't have the vision that would serve as the basis for such a firm intention to change. You won't do it so that's why you have to be sure that you look at these things together. With respect to resolute avoidance make sure that pornography is not within your reach. Get rid of it and when tempted to replace it resort to the help's mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Someone will say I just can't do that. But anyone who says that has not yet decided to break the involvement or still has the poisonous vision or probably both you cannot do the work at the means level. That must be done at the vision and intention level. And if you do not do the prior work means will certainly fail you they will not help you. Of course you can get rid of pornography and you can avoid replacing it. It's not like fighting gravity you are in a process of breaking habits that possess all dimensions of your being well thought feeling social context and so it will impose some serious difficulties. But you can do it and I'm sorry. You know I'm talking to you. Forgive me. That's just to save time. I'm speaking generally. You can do it and you will be aided if you are practicing a sensible schedule of spiritual disciplines. Solitude silence study fasting worship and so on. I see once again here I'm broadening the focus because one can get obsessed with breaking pornographic habits but that's like staying sober right. I mean you can be sober and still be a pretty miserable human being.

And what we need is a broader picture of our lives spiritual disciplines that are not focused upon the avoidance of pornography but upon the healthy fulfillment of your life under God in the dramatic goodness of God's world.
With others you love and serve pornographic involvement is a sure indicate an indicator of an impoverished life and here you need to remember Paul's advice in Philippians 4:8 whatsoever is true whatsoever is lovely. And so on. Think on these things. Well let's take a break and if you all come back I'll say a few more words to you and then we'll have questions and comments.

John Ko:

So let's come back in about 10 minutes and those of you who did not register yet. Make sure you go out and complete the registration. So in about 10 minutes I'll bring you all back.