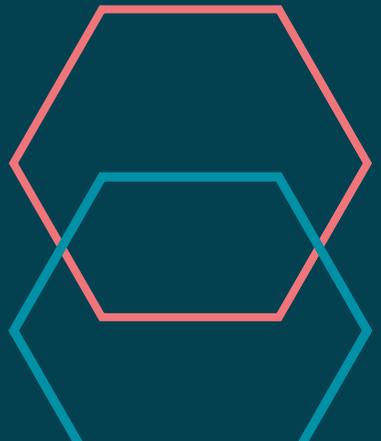


Free Indeed.

WINNING THE FIGHT
AGAINST PORN.

Stewardstrust



Free Indeed.

**WINNING THE FIGHT
AGAINST PORN.**

from Jackson Adkins, Alex Warren and Matt Chisem

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Preface

'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'

Jesus

In the beginning, God created men and women to live in eternal relationships with Him. But we messed up and turned away from God, choosing to go our own way and live for ourselves. This is the very essence of sin.

The penalty of sin is death.

But Jesus, God's Son, came to give us life, to restore our relationship with Him. He **freed** us from sin, taking it and dying on a cross in our place. He declared '**It is finished**' as he died. Having risen from the he offers us eternal life with Him. Which begins when we turn away from our sin and accept His sacrifice for us. The battle for our **freedom** has already been won. Now.

We can live in **freedom** from sin through faith in God's grace. We can become more like Jesus each day through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

What stops us?

Many of us face sexual temptations, as this precious part of our humanity is twisted under the power of sin. We see the violation of sexuality everywhere. In a world obsessed with porn our technological advancements have served our most unhealthy desires. From videos on the internet to images in adverts, from social media feeds to Netflix shows, porn is everywhere. Pornography comes from the Greek word 'pornia' meaning 'sexual immorality' – sex which doesn't match up with what God created it to be.

Porn has a destructive impact on our relationships and society, and fuels modern day slavery, yet many people are addicted to it.

We know this battle and we've written this to encourage you that you can live **free** from porn and the shame that comes with it. As you read this, we pray and hope that you would have a much deeper understanding of God's love for you.

Much love and peace,

Alex, Matt and Jackson

Wholeness



**PORN PRODUCES EMPTINESS;
JESUS PROVIDES WHOLENESS.**

'You will never know the fullness of Christ, until you know the emptiness of everything but Christ'

Charles Spurgeon

Pleasure-seeking

There is a 'God-shaped hole' in each one of us. Most people spend their life trying to fill it with other 'gods', seeking pleasures and possessions to bring a sense of satisfaction. A good job, relationships, sex and often porn. Each of these things may feel good for a time, but none bring permanent satisfaction.

Nineteenth-century millionaire, John D. Rockefeller, was once asked, "How much money is enough money?" He replied, "Just a little bit more." Rockefeller's response sums up the mindset most people have: constantly desiring more, never being satisfied.

The Bible makes it clear that the pleasure of sin doesn't last. In Genesis we read that the fruit Adam and Eve ate in the Garden 'looked delicious' - it was attractive and pleasing to the eye. Yet it was deeply destructive. It led them to feel exposed, embarrassed, ashamed and empty.

Porn is an example of this type of pleasure. It looks 'good', 'pleasing' and often 'fulfilling', but its effects are the opposite, leaving us completely empty.

Not all pleasure is bad

Wonderfully, God actually created pleasure. God desires us to have pleasure and joy that is way better than what we get from porn. His pleasure isn't short and shallow, it's deep and everlasting and comes without guilt, shame or emptiness.

Wholeness

'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.'

John 10:10

Jesus' mission and purpose is to bring us a life of complete fullness and wholeness. God created us so He knows how we can live life to the full! This life comes when we have a personal relationship with Him. Jesus by dying and rising again, paid the price, so we could live in peace with ourselves, with others, and with our Father in Heaven. In Jesus, we are made complete and whole (Colossians 2:10).

This is what peace looks like. Peace, or Shalom in the original Hebrew, isn't the absence of conflict, it's the wholeness we find in Jesus. Our prayer is that you would experience God's wholeness, His shalom peace, which frees you from seeking pleasure elsewhere. When we allow God to fill us with Himself, He fills that 'God-shaped hole', so we don't desire turning to porn.

Father,

I thank you that the life you have for me is whole and full.

I repent of where I have looked to anything but you to satisfy me.

I pray that today you would fill me afresh with your Holy Spirit, and the fullness that comes from you.

*In Jesus name,
Amen*

TOP TIP

Speak out this prayer regularly, so that you are not tempted to fill the 'God-shaped hole' in you with the brief pleasure of porn (For more action points, check out the 'Now what?' section at the end of this booklet)

Love
02

PORN PRODUCES LUST; JESUS PROVIDES LOVE.

'Love always seeks to benefit others, at the expense of self. Lust always seeks to benefit itself, at the expense of others.'

Dr. Edwin Louis Cole

Lust is a desire for self-centred pleasure. Our sex drive is natural and God-given. But when we desire to seek our own pleasure through porn we turn from God's best plan for our lives. Consuming porn produces lust in us, which causes us to want more of it. A destructive addiction is formed which damages ourselves, alters our minds and objectifies both women and men. This seriously impacts our friendships with others.

Jesus challenges us all by saying that if we even look at a woman lustfully, it's like cheating with them in our hearts (Matthew 5:28). Jesus highlights lust as the motivation of sexual sin.

Thankfully God provides us with a better way of living: love.

What is love? In our culture 'love' has become a rather fluffy word. You may love pizza, you may also love your Mum, you may love God. In each of these circumstances 'love' has a different meaning.

Free Indeed

Love has a much deeper meaning in the Bible. The Apostle John writes that 'God is love' (1 John 4:21). Love is not something God possesses, it is who He is. The Greek word for love here is 'agape', meaning unconditional love. To have 'agape' love for pizza would be choosing to love it regardless of its taste. That's crazy. But that's what God's love for you is like.

God's love is constant, reliable and unchanging. Jesus died for us, the greatest ever display of love. Everything He said and did was love.

As his followers, this is our command; to love Him and to love others. We have been called to be the greatest lovers on the planet. What an honour!

So how do we win the battle between lust and love?

We cannot conquer lust using just our own willpower to deny sexual feelings. Eventually we give in to temptation.

Instead we need God's help. Seeing yourself as a son of God brings you close to Him and away from temptation. Your focus changes as you see His love for you.

Winning the fight for freedom from porn and lust, involves trusting in God's incredible love for us and His timing and purposes for our sexual desires. Praying that He will teach us to walk in purity and not exchange His gift of love for a short term, unsatisfying, cheap imitation.

Father,

I'm sorry for when I have looked through the selfish lens of lust. I pray that you would give me self control and protect me from temptation.

I surrender the desires you have given me to your timing and purposes. I pray that you would show me how to receive your love and selflessly share it with those around me.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*

TOP TIP

Each morning put on the 'armour of God' so that you can stand strong in the spiritual battle over lust and love. (Ephesians 6:10-18) (For more action points, check out the 'Now what?' section)

Creation

03

PORN DISTORTS SEX; JESUS CREATED SEX.

God's design for sex

God designed sex for marriage, a covenant, where a husband and wife grow in intimacy together. It was created as an act of love and unity, to give ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. It is built on trust, patience and communication.

Marriage is a safe and secure relationship where each person can be fully seen, known and loved by one another. A space of total vulnerability, where we bring ourselves as we are. In marriage, sex is an act of selflessly serving and pleasing one another, which reflects Jesus' Kingdom of "valuing others above ourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Porn's distortion of sex

Porn reduces sex to a performance, presenting controlling, abusive and humiliating behaviour as desirable. Porn is plastic, shallow, and a broken version of sex. It is to sex what FIFA is to football; a hollow, unrealistic version of something beautiful.

Porn promotes being unfaithful as part of the "thrill" of sexual pursuit, requiring no commitment or trust. It shows sex as something we can have whenever or however we want, reducing people to objects.

Our view of God, others and ourselves is distorted.

Porn's distortion of us

Porn changes our brains functions. It's addictive nature releases hormones giving us quick 'pleasure', which we become increasingly reliant on. In order to satisfy us, an appetite for more regular and extreme porn is formed. This reliance means that we return to porn, even though it makes us miserable.

We often view porn in hope of escaping stress, anxiety and boredom, but these increase the more we consume. This diverts us from the fullness of God's plan for our lives and adopting the mind of Christ.

Our hope

There is a power much stronger than the brain – the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us (Romans 8:11). Only Jesus can bring lasting freedom from porn and transform our minds and hearts.

God transforms us through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) by replacing old habits and ways of thinking with new ones that bring life, rewiring our brains to His purposes. Through surrendering our lives to God and not the misery of porn he brings freedom, replacing stress, anxiety and boredom with joy, hope and peace.

You might think: "What does this have to do with me?" You're

not married and the prospect of sex may be far off, so you can address these issues at a later date. However, your view of sex influences how you treat those around you. Consuming porn sows seeds of disrespect, dishonour and lust, that will bear fruit in future relationships.

Father,

I thank you that you created sex for marriage.

I'm sorry for where I've twisted your design.

I pray you'd renew and purify my mind.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*

TOP TIP

At the end of this booklet there are some verses to help you pray and focus on the renewing of your mind (For more action points, check out the 'Now What?')

Freedom

04

PORN PRODUCES SHAME; JESUS BRINGS FREEDOM.

The misery of shame

Shame is powerfully destructive. It makes millions miserable, destroys families and relationships, causes doubt, despair and depression, and disconnects us from God.

What is shame?

Shame is an “intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging” (Brené Brown). Shame creates the lie that we are the problem, rather than our sin.

People often wrongly think guilt and shame are the same thing. They aren't.

GUILT: FEELING BAD ABOUT THE STUFF WE DO

SHAME: FEELING BAD ABOUT WHO WE ARE

Guilt or ‘conviction’ has an important purpose – without the feeling that we have done something wrong, we can't clearly know when we have sinned. Conviction of sin leads us back to God to ask for forgiveness. Guilt is temporary, but shame can become permanent.

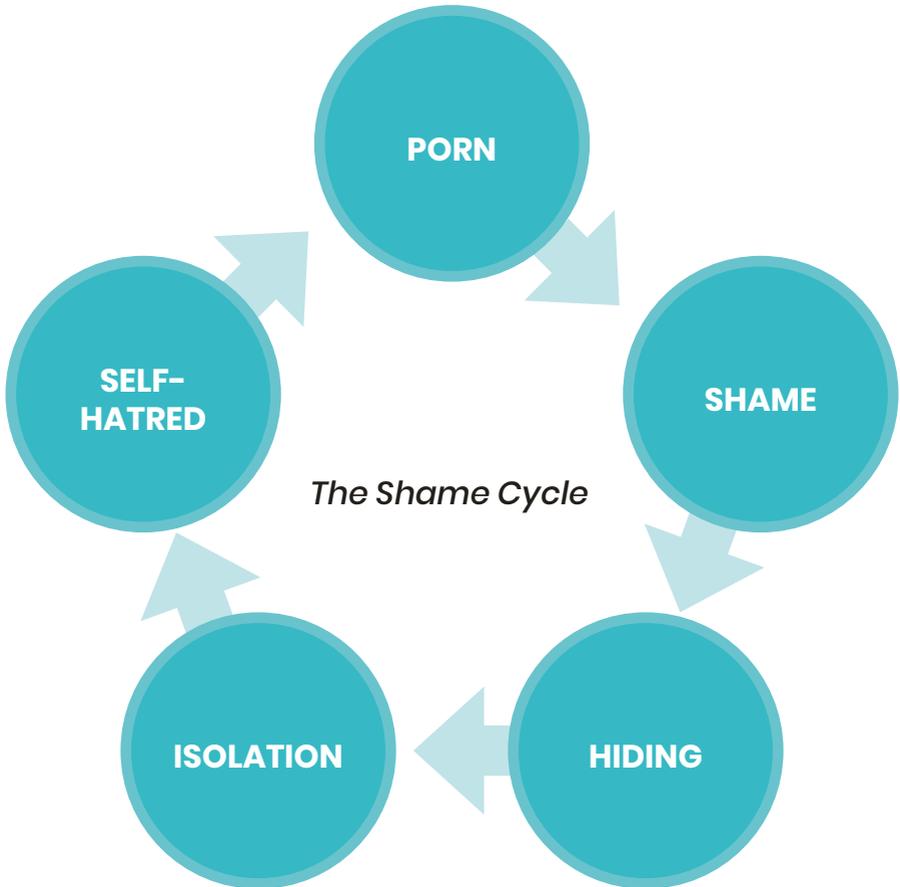
Shame has nothing good to offer. It keeps people stuck in cycles of sin, self-hatred, and brokenness and offers no route to freedom from sin. Shame makes us feel distant from God.

What has shame got to do with porn?

If you have watched porn before, you may have felt this afterwards: a strange mix of dirtiness, guilt, frustration, emptiness, dissatisfaction, and numbness. We may have 'only' turned to porn because of boredom or frustration, but it is important to realise that watching porn will lead to shame if we don't quickly take that guilty feeling to God.

The Shame Cycle

- Shame causes us to hide and not tell anyone about what sometimes feels like your 'dirty secret'.
- When we hide a part of our life from everyone, even our closest friends, we become disconnected – the feeling that no one truly knows us and who we 'really are'.
- Shame can eventually convince us that we are dirty, worthless, and undeserving of love, which leads to a retreat into isolation, and ultimately a sense of self-hatred.
- To try find escape and comfort from this, we turn back to porn, and end up in a vicious cycle:



The freedom that Jesus bought

But here is the hope – the cycle can be broken! Jesus bought **freedom** for us through the cross – his forgiveness, mercy and grace are more than enough to cover all our mistakes and our shame.

“We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ, we were set free from the power of sin.”

Romans 6: 6-7

Yes, you may feel trapped in that cycle today and may have been for a long time, but because of Jesus there is always a way out, no matter how narrow that way might seem. The Bible promises that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, **there is freedom**” (2 Cor 3:17). The Holy Spirit lives in us when we invite Jesus into our lives. **Freedom** comes when we admit (confess) our mistakes to God and ask for His forgiveness, and then our relationship with the Father and with ourselves is made new! This gift of grace (undeserved forgiveness) gives us the **freedom to choose to love ourselves**, breaking the cycle of shame and self-hatred.

So to be **free** we must not hide our sin and shame from our Father – instead, confess it to Him, ask for forgiveness from Him, and through Him we will be given the grace we need to shove shame out of our lives! (See 1 John 1:9.)

Father,

*I thank you that you are the only
way to total freedom.*

*I thank you that your work means I
am no longer a slave to sin.*

*I pray you would give me the faith and grace
to walk in freedom today.*

*In Jesus name,
Amen*

TOP TIP

Use the beautiful Psalm 51 to lead you into prayers of confession to God and repentance - 'Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean...create in me a clean heart, O God' (verses 7&10) (For more action points, check out the 'Now What?' section)

Belonging

**PORN PRODUCES LONELINESS;
JESUS PROVIDES BELONGING.**

“Porn promises immediate satisfaction, endless excitement, and easy intimacy, but in the end, it robs the consumer of all three. The more pornography an individual consumes, the more he or she tends to withdraw emotionally from real people and rely on porn. Eventually, it becomes more difficult to be aroused by a real person or to form a real relationship, and the resulting isolation and loneliness fuel the need for more porn.”

Fight the New Drug

Creation

We are created to **belong**. To thrive and have life to the full when we are in strong and secure community with each other and God. We find **belonging** when we allow ourselves to be fully **known** and **loved**:

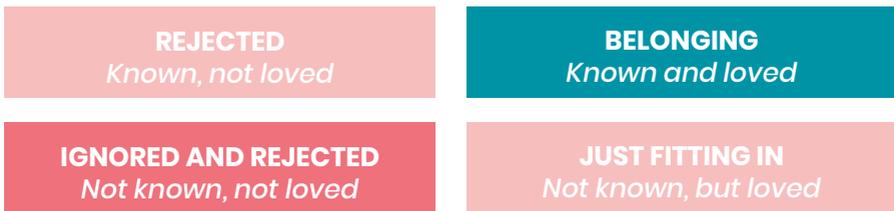
- To be fully known, we must open up to God and to trusted Christian friends and mentors about everything, even our struggles with porn.
- To be fully loved, we must be accepted despite our struggles and failures, which only God and good friends will do.

Belonging is a basic human need. We long to **belong**, not to just ‘fit in’. God created us with this longing for deep connection with Him and with others, in the same way that He is perfectly connected in the community of the Trinity.

Fall

Sin ruins our relationship with God and crushes our connections with others. All sins have this tragic effect, but watching porn is particularly destructive and leads to loneliness, poor mental and physical health, and even a loss of meaning and purpose in life.

This is loneliness. A state we were never meant to be in. Where would you put yourself at the moment in different parts of your life?



It will be painfully obvious to us whether we have been ‘Rejected’ or even ‘Ignored and rejected’. But ‘Just fitting in’ is much harder to notice. We may be loved by others, but let’s ask ourselves: ‘Am I fully known by these people?’; ‘Have I allowed myself to be known by my friends and family?’

If we don’t fully **belong** with God and with others, we will never feel fully whole or satisfied – we will always be longing for something more. This often leads us to porn to try to find that ‘something more’, but we never find it. Without **belonging**, we risk being shaped by others in the wrong way

as we try to fit in, rather than being moulded and shaped by Jesus. So how do we actually find **real belonging**?

Vulnerability leads to belonging

It is so important to be vulnerable – opening up about our struggles – with close and trustworthy Christian friends or mentors. What remains in the darkness grows, but what is brought into the light can be tackled by the power of accountability. By sharing our battle with porn we can celebrate and suffer together as we work towards the same goal – becoming more like Jesus:

“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ.”

(Romans 12:5)

“If one part [of the body] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.”

1 Corinthians 12: 26

Despite what the world will tell you, being vulnerable with people does not show weakness, it shows powerful strength and humility, and is vital in our path to **freedom**.

People say, ‘a problem shared is a problem halved’, and this is because when we allow ourselves to be fully known, and then another person fully loves us all the same, we are no longer lonely and isolated in our struggle! Then we can work together, using prayer, vulnerability and accountability, to face our struggles with porn.

Father,

*I thank you that you know us and love us fully.
I thank you that we can find our home in you.*

*I'm sorry for where I've looked for connection
and belonging away from you. I pray that today we
would know more of your love for us.*

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*

TOP TIP

To get more practical ideas like how to create accountability groups, check out the 'Now what?' section on the next page.

Now what? practical tips for freedom.

1. GET RIGHT WITH GOD

“If we confess our sins [to God], he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9

Before you do anything, get right with God. As we see in chapter 4, if we confess and bring our sins to Him and ask for forgiveness from Him, we will be made clean by Him, and get right with Him (Psalm 51). This forgiveness comes with the freedom, grace and strength to choose to shove shame out of our lives. Although we might slip up again, we are no longer stuck in sin and shame, we are forgiven.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY FRIENDSHIPS

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”

James 5:16

To move towards freedom, it is vital to share your triumphs and struggles with porn and other issues with close, trusted Christian friends of the same sex. We know that this can be tough or awkward, but freedom is worth some awkwardness! Maybe choose one or two of your closest mates who you can be fully open with and regularly encourage and challenge each other. Ask difficult questions, share in the sadness of sin, but point each other back to the hope of freedom in Christ.

Why not challenge each other to be accountable to some practical steps on the next page.

3. REMOVE THINGS THAT TEMPT YOU TO WATCH PORN

“So we, too, should run the race that is before us and never quit. We should remove from our lives anything that would slow us down and the sin that so often makes us fall.”

Hebrews 12:1 (ERV)

We have found these tips to be so helpful in removing porn and bringing freedom to our lives. Some of them will be tough to do at first, but they are so worth it in the long run!

- Charge your phone and laptop away from your bed:
 - Taking devices to bed is risky, so put them somewhere else, preferably in another room.
 - Taking them into the bathroom can also be tempting, so be wise about this.

- Get ‘Covenant Eyes’ or ‘Ever Accountable’ – the software we use to remove porn from our lives:
 - They offer amazing internet filtering and blocking on laptops and phones.
 - They use ‘Screen Accountability’, where an accountability partner will get a regular report about any explicit internet activity.
 - For more software options visit:
<https://www.communicatejesus.com/accountability-software-comparison/>

- Use restrictions on your devices:
 - Set controls like Screen Time (iPhones) on your phone that restrict adult sites, block 'dangerous' apps for certain times, and stop you downloading dodgy apps.
 - Get your accountability partner to set a passcode so you can't get round the restrictions.
- Delete apps that cause you to be tempted (e.g. Instagram, Netflix).
- Check out amazing websites such as 'Fight the New Drug' and apps such as 'Fortify'.
- Be wise about what you watch, listen, read and talk about
 - what you fill you mind with influences your thoughts and desires and can lead to lust and temptation.

4. TAKE STEPS TO TRANSFORM YOUR HEART AND SELF CONTROL.

- Pray through the prayers in this booklet regularly to invite Jesus into your struggles.
- Fast (don't eat) for a meal or two each week and use the time to pray – this is a powerful way to break addiction by practising self-control and denying our own selfish desires.
- Read the Bible.
- Remind yourself of the gospel and the fullness of life that Jesus offers.
- Read Genesis 1-3 and Song of Songs to see how love, sex and relationships were created to be.
- Meditate on the verses on pages 36-39. Take time to read them aloud and even memorise them.

Now what?

Helpful verses

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

John 8:36

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:32

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

2 Corinthians 3:17

Helpful verses

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”

1 Corinthians 10:13

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7

“Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” [in this world] to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.”

1 Peter 2:11

Helpful verses

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

2 Timothy 1:7

“We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ, we were set free from the power of sin.”

Romans 6: 6-7

“God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterwards they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

James 1:12

Helpful verses

“Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

“So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery.”

Galatians 5:1

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Jesus

76 per cent of young Christians and over 50 per cent of pastors regularly search for pornography. Porn is ruining millions of lives. Causing emptiness, lust, isolation and shame, none of which are God’s design for us.

But amazingly, Jesus brings freedom.

Jesus is in the business of restoring our brokenness. He takes us as we are, leading us into a life of wholeness, love, belonging, freedom and trust in Him. We pray this truth-filled booklet will help set you free, leading you into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

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For more information visit:

www.stewardstrust.org.uk

instagram: @strustlife

