



By Brother Tim Scolaro

When I was a teenager growing up in the 70s, there was no Internet. Hard-core pornography was only available at adult bookstores, where the minimum age to enter was 18. When I turned 18, I found myself curious about the sexually oriented materials in such establishments, and while I resisted the temptation to actually enter, staying away required what seemed to be at times an almost overwhelming effort.

I knew that pursuing this temptation would be displeasing to God, and I thought no one else in Church had the same problem resisting it that I did, so I kept my struggle a secret and asked God to help me stay faithful. He answered in a most unexpected way.

I was the Sunday school teacher for the lower-elementary aged children in my branch, and every Sunday, I taught a lesson. One Sunday during the

period when I made this a matter of prayer, in the middle of a lesson that had nothing to do with the subject, an 8-year-old, very sweet, innocent little girl raised her hand and excitedly reported a dream she had had the night before.

In the dream, she saw the outside of an adult bookstore and then heard a voice stating "This is the house of the devil!" I was shocked to hear her say this. It had nothing to do with our lesson or anything we had ever discussed in class. There was no way that little girl, the daughter of an active elder, could have known that what she said could mean so much to me. It changed the way I looked at such facilities from that point on. It became much easier to avoid what I now viewed as "The House of the Devil." There is no question in my mind that the dream was a message from God directed to me, and I have to thank Him for such love.

### Not the Only One

Back then, I only knew my own experience in dealing with this temptation and assumed that other brothers in the Church had less of a problem dealing with it than I did. I realize now that my struggle was not unique. The Bible documents very well the danger of viewing pornography and harboring lustful thoughts, though in that day and time, the lack of technology meant that the means of access was limited compared to what is available today.

If we read about David in 2 Samuel 11, we find that he spotted Bathsheba bathing from his rooftop and did not turn away. That illicit stare at her exposed body served as his version of pornography. Rather than turn his back, walk away, and stop thinking about it, he inquired about who she was and came up with an excuse to

get a closer look. The sin grew as he sought to keep it secret, and the outcome of his actions was far worse than he ever could have imagined.

### Chemistry of Desire

What David did not know in his day was that men receive a chemical high from sexually charged images. A hormone called epinephrine is secreted into the bloodstream, which helps lock into memory whatever is viewed at the time of the emotional excitement.\* A similar thing can happen when we dwell on thoughts of this nature. Unchecked, what this little kick also does is alter our thinking so that we are compelled to seek more of that stimulus.

Our priority moves from seeking to please God to seeking to please the flesh without us even realizing what is happening. We stop thinking about the consequences of sin and instead seek pleasure.

Once David gave in to the desire to seek more of that stimulus, he stepped away from the protection of God's restraints. He was in enemy territory. He had, in effect, stepped away from the Spirit of God's direction and into "The House of the Devil." If you are not familiar with the rest of the story, I encourage you to read it. The consequences were great, even though David did repent and step back into God's good grace.

### Strength to Turn Away

So, I learned that I am not alone. In David, someone about whom the Bible tells us God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart" was subject to such temptation, how can I expect to be any different? I can be different because I can learn from his example and choose to avoid the temptation

rather than start on the slippery slope of looking just a little.

A better example is found in Genesis 39. Potiphar's wife sought to seduce Joseph of Egypt, but rather than succumb to that temptation or even fantasize about what it would be like to do so, his reaction was "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" I am sure that those around him teased him about missing out on pleasure and ending up in prison, but as we read on, we see that his initial suffering resulted in long-term blessings beyond what he could have imagined. We, too, will receive a great reward in the long run if we choose obedience instead of sin.

### The Danger of Just Looking

With the Internet, materials of all kinds are at our fingertips. One could ask, what is the harm if I am only looking? Christ explains how God views "only looking":

Matt. 5:27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

God is concerned with not just our outward actions but the condition of our hearts and minds. That's because He knows that our thoughts eventually lead to actions. You may not think you are "hurting anyone else" by looking, but you are harming yourself by pushing God away.

So, let's learn from David and Joseph and keep ourselves focused on pleasing God rather than subjecting ourselves to temptation. It is interesting to note that David succumbed when he was older and well established as King—you would have thought such weakness was

behind him. Joseph, on the other hand, was a very young man when he boldly stood up to Potiphar's wife's advances. It just goes to show you that we don't outgrow temptation. We have to continually keep our eyes on Christ to maximize God's blessings in our lives.

\*Arterburn, Stephen, and Stoeker, Fred. *Every Man's Battle*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, copyright 2000.

## What's the Harm?

You may think there's no harm in just looking, but it's important to consider the subtle (and dangerous) messages that pornography sends.

- Pornography gives you a false, overly fantasized view of sex, which can lead to disappointment with reality.
- Pornography is selfish; it's all about *your* gratification. True sexual intimacy requires unselfishness, serving your spouse and meeting his or her needs.
- Pornography rarely shows two people having loving sex. It often involves twisted scenarios characterized by disrespect, two partners using and then discarding one another.
- Pornography objectifies people, especially women, implying that they are only valuable for their sex appeal.

When you're tempted to look, remember Alma's advice to his son Corianton, who suffered the consequences of unchecked sexual desire. He said to "cross yourself in all these things" (39:9). That means "cut yourself off from the temptation" or "nip it in the bud."