

## Transcript 113

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Our continuing effort to have conversations about some of our most frequently asked questions and today's episode is going to be a big one. Today we're going to be discussing pornography and we get a lot of questions about pornography. So today my guest is Jonathan Daugherty. He is the president of Be Broken Ministries and we're going to be discussing the most frequently asked questions we receive about pornography. But we want to focus in on how can this sin be overcome because that's the question we get most often. So Jonathan, welcome to the show today.

Jonathan Daugherty

Thanks so much, I'm glad to be here.

Shea Houdmann

Jonathan, I'm sure you'll relate to this, but so often we received questions, it'll start off something to the effect of there's this sin that I'm really struggling with and I just can't seem to get victory over it. I feel like I'm the only one who's struggling with this, and every time I do it, I feel so guilty about it and then I commit myself to God. I'm never going to do it again. And then few days later stumble into it again and again, and they're going through all this effort to not tell us what they're talking about. And yet we totally know exactly 9 times out of 10 what they're talking about. That they are struggling with an addiction to pornography. So tell us a little bit about yourself and also about Be Broken Ministries and the ministry that you provide.

Jonathan Daugherty

Yeah, so Be Broken was founded, I founded it back in 2003 and it really was born out of my own story of sexual brokenness and addiction and pornography use and all of that, and it came to a head for me in 1999 after I've been married for four years. And just I was a full blown sex addict. People want more of the story they can go to the website and and see more about that. But there was a breaking point in my life. I was depressed, suicidal. All of these things that we see in somebody that's developed a really profound addiction and compulsion. And yet there was grace that I was met with by God.

Jonathan Daugherty

I'd been raised in the church, so I'd actually I'd actually come to faith when I was a kid and it just kind of had this on and off relationship with God. Not necessarily relationship but on and off, just in terms of my own devotion to following the Lord. And then my recovery really started in 1999. And out of that, God was really starting to transform my life and we'll talk a little bit about that in terms of what that looks like for somebody who's entangled in pornography. And by the time 2003 rolled around, it was God was saying I want you to tell your story in order to try to build a bridge for other people to come into this same kind of light and recovery process and all that. So that's really how Be Broken was born, is just out of my own story and and journey and then realizing that God wants to help others as well.

Jonathan Daugherty

So Be Broken started really, as a uh, recovery ministry for men who were entangled in all kinds of sexual, unwanted sexual behavior. Eventually it has expanded now to where we help men, women and families move from sexual brokenness to wholeness in Christ, and then also equip others to do the same. That's our mission, and so it's been exciting to see how God reaches out to people who are entangled in these various sins that, like you said, find it really hard to talk about. It's like we know exactly what a person is saying when hey, I've got this besetting sin, or I've got this thing that's really I'm entangled in and I don't know how to get out of it. You're right nine times out of 10 it is a sexual sin. It's a pornography sin. You know something of that nature, and so what we're trying to do in our ministry is created, help create environments that are grace based so that people can actually share their full story without sense of punishment or shame, so that now we can see how the grace of God can weave into that and really bring about you know life transformation. So that's what we're all about, providing resources and spaces for people to go on that journey with us.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely, and just so our listeners know in the the show notes, also at [podcast.gotquestions.org](http://podcast.gotquestions.org), and when this video goes live on YouTube in the description field will include links to we can learn more about Jonathan and Be Broken Ministries in the services to help the ministries that they provide. But so Jonathan I would try to break down the different questions we're asked most frequently. Maybe for this first one to kind of a 2 parter like one, what does the Bible say that would apply to pornography and why is pornography so dangerous?

Jonathan Daugherty

Yeah so. You know it's it's hard sometimes to unpack in a very short period of time that question about what would the Bible say about you, know, fill in the blank because I tend to be a person that when I think about trying to give a biblical answer, man, I want to give the overarching. I want to give the arc of Scripture I want to go back to the origin story and I think that really matters, even here in trying to answer this question.

Jonathan Daugherty

When you ask the question, what does the Bible say about to try to address this issue pornography I think first and foremost you have to understand the original design of God's intent for sexuality and sex in order to then be able to answer the question well what does the Bible say about pornography? In other words, I think sometimes we have to know what was good and right in terms of what God designed. In order for us to understand why they're why he drew lines around certain things when sin entered the world.

Jonathan Daugherty

And so real quickly I would say that you know when God designed sex and sexuality, sex was meant to be this picture that he put within this covenant relationship of one man with one woman in the marriage covenant in order to express or give us a picture of what does intimacy look like? What does fruitfulness looked like in terms of the procreative act and he gave us all of this as a picture that was ultimately meant to point us to him in the sense of the kind of intimacy and love and covenant and faithfulness and fruitfulness that he can produce in us through our faith relationship with Christ.

Jonathan Daugherty

So therefore then, when things like pornography come into place, this distortion of God's design it is. That's where you see things like God saying in the 10 Commandments don't commit adultery because that's that's a form of you could say pornography because it's a distortion of the design. Even then, when we get to the New Testament where Jesus in the sermon on the Mount is actually talking about the law in terms of the letter of it, but then saying I want to show you the heart of it he actually points out the issue of sexuality, and he says you've heard it said, don't commit adultery. Porneia don't commit this act of distortion of God's design for sex. But he said, I say to you if you look on a woman with lust you've committed adultery in your heart. So that's one area in which, in a really pronounced way in Matthew chapter five, Jesus addresses the issue of pornography in the sense of this idea of a distortion.

Jonathan Daugherty

So we have to know the origin story of God's design for sex in order for us to have a good understanding. And that's why I think pornography is dangerous is because what it does is it draws our minds and our attention away from what the design was, in order that we can create all kinds of scenarios that break the picture that God intended to give to us to help us better understand him actually. Not just about you know the physical union of a man and a woman.

Shea Houdmann

It's very true and I love your breakdown of the Greek word porneia and how it refers to anything that distorts God's intention for for sex, that's a powerful reminder that what pornography ultimately is is the distortion of the beauty of what sexual relations between a husband and his wife was supposed to be. Closely related question, maybe this is not quite as explicitly biblical, but the Bible doesn't really get into the mechanics of it, but why is pornography so addictive? Why for some people is it as addictive or even more addictive as some drugs, and that there's this an overwhelming craving for it. That is very, very difficult to resist.

Jonathan Daugherty

Yeah, so this is where biology comes in. The the chemicals that are released in our brains when sexual activity is going on. Chemicals like dopamine and oxytocin and vasopressin all these kinds of chemicals that are that are being released. They're creating patterns. That's just kind of the way our brains work. God has designed our brains in such an amazing way. Both in the electrical circuits, but also in the chemical compounds to where when certain activities are engaged, chemicals are released in a certain way and dopamine being the biggest shot that somebody is going to get when they look at pornography. So what's happening is a person looks at pornography and they kind of get this, as as one person put it, kind of the the champagne chemical released in your brain. That causes this euphoric kind of high and think about how easily accessible that is. There's no, you don't have to go down a dark alley to buy it. It's literally already in your biology.

Jonathan Daugherty

Now and today the trigger effect that we can have in terms of connecting connection to porn is so much more affordable and available than it was even just 20 or 30 years ago. I mean, literally you can carry around this chemical trigger mechanism in your pocket with a smartphone. And so early on what a you

know preteen or a teenager can start to get happening in their in their own brains as they're looking at this material and firing off these chemicals. They are creating powerful patterns that the body then starts to want to repeat because it's saying, hey, you know what I like that release of that chemical. And the brain is very malleable in the sense that it can be, it can be sort of reshaped based on the kinds of behaviors that we're engaged in, which is why a lot of times you can look at a brain scan of a person who's like a cocaine addict and you put it right next to the brain scan of somebody who's a porn addict and they look very similar because the ways the chemicals are being fired off when they're engaged in those particular behaviors, it produces a very similar effect in the brain. And so in some ways that's why it's so addictive. 'cause we say everybody would say, well, we know that cocaine is addictive. I mean there's all kinds of research for that right?

Jonathan Daugherty

And now people you know scientists have been coming along and saying, well, why, then does the brain scan of a porn addict look almost identical to the brain scan of a cocaine addict? There must be a similar addictive kind of quality, even though you're not introducing a foreign substance into the body, and that's why I think honestly, it can be so addictive. Is because it's so accessible. It's literally woven into our biology and the more we actually do things that are going to create more of that chemical dump, so to speak in our brains. It's just going to compound on itself, and that's also one of the reasons why it can be also so difficult to break free from the addiction to pornography because it's not like an external substance that you can try to move away from like cocaine or alcohol or a needle or something else. Not saying that that makes it any easier to do those things, but at least they are external substances to your body. This is something that you're having to, you're having to regulate and realign internally, that's part of your own biology.

Jonathan Daugherty

You know the good news and we'll get to this is that that can be realigned. It can be reshaped. Your brain can be reformed, but that's what makes it so difficult is that it's already an internal chemical that's comprised in your biology, and so you can't just put it away.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, that leads very well into the next question, and this is probably the one that we want to hear the most with people who struggle and that is the question of how can I overcome this? When the person gets to the point where they no longer want to embrace it, they recognize the damage is doing to them and to their relationships, whether potential future relationships or current relationships and then like I've got to beat this. Hopefully they understand with God's help. But to tell me a little bit in your experience, what are the most effective ways to overcome an addiction to pornography? And please, by all means, share specifically how Be Broken Ministries does that. Some of the tools or resources that you provide.

Jonathan Daugherty

Yeah, I think the first thing that's so important for for everyone watching or listening to this to know is that because any kind of addiction affects the whole person, recovery is part of dealing with the whole person. And what I mean by that is the way in which God has made us, of having a physical body. Having a soul. Having a spirit, the idea that we are physical, emotional and spiritual beings, we need to

address all of the issues that that the addiction has infiltrated in each of those areas. And I think sometimes what what can be so frustrating, especially for Christians sometimes who are trying to overcome a pornography addiction is they have singled it out as all I need are spiritual solutions in order to address this problem. Now the good news is that God is the most interested of in the whole person because he created the whole person. So therefore we don't need to say because I need to go see a doctor and maybe get some medicine for depression or something like that that somehow I'm not abiding under, you know, God's law or God's ways or anything like that. But I think we need to recognize that. There's there's a biological need that we have to address in terms of what I was just saying about the chemicals.

Jonathan Daugherty

When I started my recovery, I was clinically depressed because that's another one of the outcomes of addiction a lot of times. Because it's an exercise in futility. It never actually satisfies, even though the promise on the front end is hey, if you do this, if you try that, it'll be the best. And then on the back end it's like that didn't work and so it kind of just, it creates depression. About 80% of sex addicts are also clinically depressed. So when I got into my recovery, I spent about the first year on antidepressants just as a way to try to chemically help the rebalancing of my brain. In order to say the fog has to be lifted so I can actually focus on some of the emotional and spiritual elements that need to be addressed.

Jonathan Daugherty

So that's the first thing I would say is the whole person needs to be addressed. Which means you're probably going to need a doctor, a counselor, and a pastor that are going to be part of this process for you. 'cause the doctor can deal with the physical. The counselor can deal a lot with the emotional and some and the spiritual. And of course the pastor can help deal with a lot of the spiritual. But the other thing I want to say is don't think that any of those people can necessarily competently speak into any of those other fields. Don't think that your pastor can give you good medical advice or that your doctor can necessarily give you good spiritual or emotional advice. So that's why we also say it's important to kind of build a network of support as you are going into a journey of healing.

Jonathan Daughter

But one of the other key things that I think is important in terms of breaking a porn addiction is to just recognize on the front end and go ahead and admit that I don't know what I don't know. And what I mean by that is, is it's hard to even imagine how much the that pornography can warp your thinking in more than just the area of sex. 'cause think about it, you think you're going to pornography just to get a sexual release. Hey, I just I just need a little pop here. You know I need, I need something that feels good. What you don't realize is that every bit of pornography that you are consuming is training you. It is teaching you something, and it's not just teaching you something about the act of sex or or pleasure. It's teaching you something about relationships. It's teaching you to take instead of give. If it's teaching you to be selfish and self-centered rather than somebody who is going to give their lives in service to others. So there's a lot more going on there, and so on the front end you just need to be willing to say as I step into this, and maybe I hear some things that seem like they're coming at me from a different angle, or they're not addressing specifically the the sexual compulsion issue, recognize that's because you've had poor training from pornography in more areas than just the sexual.

Jonathan Daughtery

So when a counselor is starting to talk to you about your anger or starting to ask you questions about your relationships, you might think, what does that have to do with my pornography use? But when you when you allow that to play out and start actually talking about that, you'll realize that more than you can imagine, pornography has become kind of a lens through which you are seeing all of life. It becomes a filter through which you are actually engaging everyone, and so and everything. All your decision making processes are even influenced by pornography.

Jonathan Daugherty

And then the last thing I would say as far as I'm, well, not the last thing but one other major thing I would say is that recognize that a lot of the work that you're going to have to do in order to actually see healing and transformation is work around the truth of your identity. Every sin, ultimately, at some level distorts our understanding of who we truly are as image bearers of God. And I think in many ways pornography more than anything else, gives a huge distortion because especially for Christians, there can often be so much shame that we bear because we know it's not as if a Christian can necessarily go view pornography and say, oh, I didn't know that was wrong. I mean, for the most part, if a Christian has been, you know, reading the word and engaging in fellowship with other believers and being disciplined, there's a sense in which we know that's that's a sin. So there's an additional amount of shame there that then starts to corrode a sense of the true identity that I'm a son or a daughter of God.

Jonathan Daughtery

And the other thing too, that I think is really important here, is don't try to travel this road of of restoration and recovery and transformation alone. We were made for community and that's why it's important that you get plugged into a grace based community that is going to say this is a place where your worth doesn't fluctuate. We're going to tell you the truth about your identity in Christ. That if you're a if you're a follower of Jesus, God declared your worth on the cross. He said you are worth the life of my only son, and because he doesn't change yesterday, today or forever. And that's the value that I placed on your life. Therefore, your worth and your identity can't change before me. You are in him and therefore my love for you can't go up or down.

Jonathan Daugherty

And so when we establish that and we have that that rooted in that environment, now we can do all of the messy work of dealing with the issues of shame and triggers and temptations, and historical traumas and all that kind of work. But we need to 1st establish that baseline that says if you're in Christ, there is nothing that can change your identity or your worth before God.

Jonathan Daugherty

And so that's kind of just a very quick kind of summary of some of the key elements that need to happen. In our ministry we have three day intensive workshops for men and some other tools, online courses that men can use. We've also got some great connections with some other ministries that do work with women who are struggling. Because we know this is not just a man's issue. Men and women struggle with pornography and we want to be the same kind of safe grace based environments for women to deal with this too, because sometimes women have felt like they've had to

bear a a double burden of shame because it almost seems like, well, it's sort of acceptable that guys struggle with this, but it seems like it's the, you know, it's a scarlet letter. If you are a woman and deal with this. So we've tried to provide opportunities for anyone who is struggling with this to take their next step towards freedom.

Shea Houdmann

Well, what you said is so true and it definitely agrees with our experience and that we're not a pornography help ministry by any stretch, but with so many questions we receive about it that we can't always just refer someone to someone else. So we've had to learn some of these tools and these lessons ourselves. Both for ourselves, but also for how to help people or struggles is it's a plague out there. I mean, it's truly the easy access to it as it's made it so exponentially worse. I mean, I remember when I was a kid and. I mean, there was it truly was you had a friend who stole his dad's magazine and go in the backyard and hide and look at it.

Shea Houdmann

But now access to unlimited amounts of pornography where you don't steal anything. It's right there on your phone. Making it super super easy to access and it's it's so sad and it also speaks to our human nature that there's something like the Bible says we have a sin nature. There's something inherently wrong with us that causes us to crave perversions rather than the Real McCoy but with God is really designed as for as his image bearers.

Shea Houdmann

One thing that we get a lot of questions about. And you've touched on this briefly because people who they've been addicted or been struggling for a long time and they've got to a point where they're just convinced that God doesn't love them anymore. God is forsaking them. God does want anything to do with them. They've just committed the sin is like one too many times. They might as well give up, because why, how, why, or how could God possibly want anything to do with them anymore?

Shea Houdmann

And so this this answer to this question really isn't applied solely to pornography, it's to any sin, but I'm sure you've dealt with that many times. So what's this some encouragement that you give to people who the struggle is for a long time and are feeling very defeated, just to remind them that God isn't done with you yet, that God still has a plan and he can and will bring you through this.

Jonathan Daugherty

You know my initial response to that that idea of like listen I've I've gone too far or I'm you know, I've sinned too many times God's grace can't extend that far. My first response can often sound harsh, but I want to unpack it and and that is if somebody says that to me, I say to them, you know that thinking proves that you are full of self centeredness and pride. And of course, at first it feels very offensive, like what are you talking about? I'm trying to actually I'm trying to, I'm trying to do something that feels contrite here. I'm trying to say listen, I'm I'm too broken, I'm too whatever. But when I start unpacking it, I'm like actually it's showing that your sin has gotten you completely self absorbed. Because the reality is your worth, your value, and even your salvation before God is not based on how you feel, not even about yourself.

Jonathan Daugherty

The reality is, is our faith, our salvation is based fully on the completed work of Christ. That God says in his word was finished on the cross, finished, like no more to be done in the sense of what was necessary in order for us to be reconciled to God. So what I want to walk a person through then at that point is saying this isn't an ignoring of your your guilt feelings or an ignoring of the shame feelings that you have, but we've got to have a more firm foundation than what you feel even about yourself, or God, or anything else in order to actually start seeing change happen. And that's where we have to get back to God's word and say there is an absolute concrete firm foundation here that says in Christ you are 100% accepted and whole before God.

Jonathan Daugherty

So my next question, that person is saying, do you trust that Christ is your Redeemer? And so basically just try to walk them through a salvation presentation, so to speak, to to confirm whether or not they have actually placed their faith in Christ alone. If that is the case, then now we can start having a new conversation that says, OK, that's true, period. Now let's talk about how your feelings have been lying to you for however long. And that's when I think we need to start working on that deception. 'cause we we need to be honest with ourselves. In any given day multiple times in a day, our feelings are going to lie to us. Our feelings are going to tell us something that is not actually true about us, about someone else about God, about life, about anything, and so I want to 1st lay that foundation that says the the root of our security is in Christ not in any kind of guilty or whatever feeling that I may have. Those are real, they're valid. We've got to deal with them, but I want to encourage that person to say isn't it good news that this is what grace based recovery actually means. Isn't it good news that your worth and your value in your salvation is not contingent upon you. It's like oh my goodness, let's breathe a sigh of relief. Now we can actually feel a sense of oh, there's freedom here. Now we can start talking about how how my feelings have lied to me and what does it mean though that I have all this guilt feelings? OK, let's talk about the real enemy that we have that wants to sow doubt and and deceit into your mind about your worth and your value and your identity before God.

Jonathan Daugherty

And that then starts a journey of really learning what does it mean not to just have an intellectual knowledge of my identity in Christ, but actually be walking in that identity in Christ. And that's so much of what the work we do at our ministry is. And in fact, some people you know, some guys that'll come to our workshop they're like, you know you didn't tell us once you didn't tell us a thing about like Internet filters. And it's like, right? Because if you have a thriving relationship with Jesus, it doesn't matter. That's the best Internet filter there is, so that's a lot of the work that we do is helping a person then start to learn how to live from that true identity so that when the feelings are kind of all over the place they now have a baseline from which they can say, oh, I know that that's just a feeling and I don't have to, I don't have to think that that is what I must rely on for taking whatever my next step needs to be.

Shea Houdmann

That's excellent and I love your point at the end is something I've like I, I will gladly recommend a Internet filter to someone who that would be helpful. They can choose the right accountability partner and but with that said, ultimately it's a heart problem and brief story, this is probably 15 years ago a



company come out with a new Internet filter accountability program and they were doing some advertising on Got Questions. And they asked me so Shea you're pretty good with technology. Would you be willing to test this to see if you can break it? In other words, like visit something that would normally trigger the accountability message. I was like you're not telling me to try to go to no, no, no look at pornography. Here, go to this particular page with nothing on it and that would know it's set to normally trigger. So long story short, it took me less than five minutes to figure out a way around it and. So it's it's a heart problem that if you install Internet filter on your computer and your phone well, what about your tablet? What about your wife's computer? What about your kid's computer? What about the smart phone that you stopped using two years ago, but it's been sitting in their closet? I mean it, it's a hard issue. No Internet filter is only going to prevent these things you got like one, make sure you have the relationship with Jesus Christ and two are committed to allowing him through his Holy Spirit to conform you to his image to help you to overcome this and other sins and that you're taking the steps you need to take to be victorious over this rather than trying to depend on external factors.

Jonathan Daugherty

Yeah, I think the. Yeah, and make no mistake. I mean we we do recommend certain technologies and things like that, but the the whole point that we're trying to make when we are when we're trying to walk a person out of a pornography or a sexual addiction is saying you know what there are going to be some guardrails here. There's going to be some tools on the front end going to be helpful for you in terms of just curbing behavior, but if that's all we do, you are not going to experience true freedom and transformation. We like to say we don't want to put our person on a journey, just of abstinence. We want them to experience total freedom in Christ. Like what does it mean to actually be fully free to where you don't even know if you have a filter on your Internet or not, because your heart is not pointed in that direction anymore. You have different desires.

Jonathan Daugherty

And that's the good news, and that's the good news that I would want to leave with your listeners. Is that if you're out there and you're thinking number one, I don't even think I can change behavior, but I certainly know that my desires could never change. Let me tell you, God is not only in the business of transforming behavior, he's mainly in the business of transforming your heart so that he can actually change, what I like to say, he can change your want to. You may have wanted to, you know, do all these other things, but he can change your want to. It doesn't mean you're never gonna be tempted again.

Jonathan Daugherty

I mean Paul made that clear in Romans 7. Like temptation continues. We still live with with sinfulness in our being, but you do not have to be overcome by it. And that's the good news I think of the Gospel is that God can change us on such a deep level that we actually desire new things and therefore we can live in a new way.

Shea Houdmann

Amen so so thank you Jonathan for that. Let's close. So if someone wants to learn more about Be Broken Ministries and what's the 1<sup>st</sup> step?

Jonathan Daugherty

The easiest way to get in touch with us is just at our website [BeBroken.com](http://BeBroken.com) and you can get all of the information there for resources for men, for wives, for families. We also have an online training platform at [purelifeacademy.org](http://purelifeacademy.org). Got over 20 courses on there that help help you just again move from brokenness to wholeness in Christ. But [BeBroken.com](http://BeBroken.com) is probably the easiest way to get in touch with us and all of our resources.

Shea Houdmann

Fantastic. Again I'll include links to we can learn more about Jonathan Daugherty and Be Broken Ministries. The different tools they provide, 'cause at Got Questions that are we are very aware of how big an issue this is and how many people struggle with it. We tell you, you're you're not alone, that there is a path to victory and God's not finished with you just because of a struggle in this area, so please hear that from us today. Obviously we said a lot more than that and a lot more depth, but something we it's vitally important for for you to understand and hope this conversation has been beneficial for you and Johnathan thank you again for joining me today.

Jonathan Daugherty

Thank you, that was my pleasure.

Shea Houdmann

This is the Got Questions Podcast on pornography with Jonathan Daugherty of Be Broken Ministries. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.