So we're talking about pornography, which is not talking about sex. Porn has nothing to do with sex, any more than rape is sex. And as we're going see what pornography does to the brain, it IS like rape, rape of the mind.

I could talk about Job, making a covenant with his eyes.

I could talk about the covetousness of pornography, idolatry, “Oh, God didn't give me what I was supposed to have, I want THAT!” And you've just carved your own god.

Then there is the internal adultery of pornography, we know about that, it's giving yourself to someone else, and how that can hurt your wife and family, both the emotional pain, as well as the risk of exposing your children to this thing you are hiding.

I could talk about how it can destroy your reputation, your career, your witness.

What I'm going to talk about is how we are in a war, and pornography is a weapon against us, but we don't have to be a victim.

Peter wrote, "your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour". (ESV) Satan's walking around looking for someone to eat!

Paul told us that our struggling is not against flesh and blood, "but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual [forces] of the wickedness in the heavenly realm. (ALT)

We have an enemy who is trying to destroy us. That's who we're fighting against.

So, let's start with the Gypsy Moth.

It was the late 1800's, and someone thought it would be a good idea to import Gypsy moths from Europe to mate them with our domestic silk moths, in order to produce a stronger hybrid strain. No one could figure out how to get American moths to produce like the China ones.

Some of them escaped, and their larvae just love the American forests! They started eating. And within the next 50-75 years these moths had destroyed 1000's of acres of American forests. And no one could figure out how to stop them.

It's a lot like the early church. First just a few, then the whole world is turned upside down!

No one could figure out what to do, or how to get rid of them. The moths, that is. Well, and the Christians! Then, in the 1950's, they figured out, Pheromones!

Chemical communication between the moths, so they could mate and reproduce. Sexual scents, wafting out into the breeze. And we could fake it. And deceive them. And so deceiving them, slay them.
So we made synthetic pheromones, and flooded the forests with pellets, and traps, and they over-saturatated the environment with this sexual signal.

This massive over-stimulation desensitized the boy moths so they couldn't even find the girl moths. They were so overwhelmed with the sheer volume of pheromones, it confused them, and sent the boy moths chasing after things that were not girl moths, til they had expended all their energy, and died without mating.

Then there were the traps. The boy moths would go, “OH! Over here!” Then they'd get caught in the traps, and again, die, without mating.

God had designed these little moths with this chemical process that would enable them to find their mates, and reproduce. Humans exploited just one part of that process, and turned it into a weapon in order to destroy them.

Paul wrote, This is 1 Corinthians 6:18 – I know every verse I'm going to reference here you already know, you've heard these over and over.

My hope is that nothing I'm going to say will apply to you, but the fact is, just counting those who will actually answer yes on the surveys, the majority of us have seen pornography, and that says it lightly, doesn't it?

I know about pornography addiction, that was me. It went on for years. And, getting through it, getting past it, was not just 'switch off the switch'.

I've had my relapses, and I've had some difficult times, and I have zero interest in judging anyone.

There's one thing I care about.

It is for freedom that Christ made us free. I want to see everyone here walk in that freedom. And I'm here to say you can! You absolutely can!

Paul wrote, here's that verse finally, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body."

So let me tell you something about our bodies, and in particular, the brain. When David said, I am fearfully and wonderfully made, this is no exaggeration!

What God did when He built us, it's just incredible. The more that scientists study, the more they realize the complexity, that just goes deeper and deeper and deeper. There are all these different systems, integrated with each other, managing the body, and the mind. And we know how devastating it can be when there is imbalance. We see it in diseases like schizophrenia, bi-polar, and depression. We see the ravages of drug addictions, as they take over a person's life.

God's intent for man was to be married to a single woman, and that this marriage would last for life. Jesus, when He was answering the Pharisees, said,
Matthew 19:4-6 ESV
"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

God created man designed in a way to find pleasure and fulfillment in his wife, and that they would become deeply bonded together. He created in our bodies certain chemical processes, not unlike these little Gypsy moths, that would enable and facilitate this process. We feel emotions, we feel sensations, we think thoughts, but you can also study that scientifically, and see electrical patterns and chemical processes happening.

Scientists have mapped out many different parts of the brain, and learned a lot about how the function. You may have heard of the “Reward Circuit”, or “Pleasure Circuit”. This describes how certain parts of the brain work together to reinforce behavior, and to help choose behaviors.

The basic ideas of what's happening is this. When you accomplish something, something you want to do, something good to do, something that fulfills you, something that is a goal of yours, measured amounts of a chemical called dopamine are released.

Dopamine is one of the brain's "feel good" chemicals. It is picked up by special dopamine receptors that are called dendrites. Certain neurons – brain cells – have these little tentacles growing from which are called dendrites, which pick up this dopamine, and which register the dopamine as the feeling of pleasure.

So when you feel, Hey, I just did something good – I feel good! That feeling can be described scientifically as the release of dopamine, and it being received by the receptors.

When dopamine is released, it triggers the release of something else called Delta-FosB. Delta-FosB is a chemical which among other things, it facilitates neurons in your brain to grow more dendrites.

So Dopamine is released, the dendrites pick it up . . . “I feel good!” And the Delta-FosB is released, and grows more dendrites. “This is a good experience, let's reinforce this!”

And that happens in the particular part of your brain that being stimulated by whatever it is that you're doing that causing the initial dopamine release. OK, so you probably see where this is leading.

So you see a girl you like, you ask her out, she says "yes", ah! Cool! You feel good, and your brain gets a little dopamine. And you take her to a restaurant, she's impressed, Cool! More dopamine. It's a good dinner, you talk, and you share, and you have a good night, and everything goes well.

And you take her home, and you can just tell, you're starting to connect, and something good is happening, and you feel good. And there is dopamine being released, and received, and Delta-
FosB being released, and dendrites growing, and you're starting to build a circuit in your brain. This pleasure/reward circuit. Something good is happening, and your body is reinforcing it.

And so on, through your courtship, your wedding, man and wife, together, and the whole time, your brain is building this special area that takes pleasure in growing closer to your girl, and bonding to her, so every time you see her, or think of her, interact with her, you feel good, and you're happy, satisfied, attracted, all in this context of sharing your lives together, holding hands, gazing into her eyes, sharing dreams and hopes, becoming intimate, building a family. And God is knitting the two of you into one.

And these feelings, and attachments, all involve chemical processes which scientists can study.

Now, it may be that some of you, given the topic, are feeling a certain surge energy. If your blood were tested, you'd probably find elevated levels of adrenaline.

Adrenaline does a lot of things. Adrenaline energizes you for fight or flight. It also imprints memories. When you experience something, and you experience a surge of adrenaline at the time, you remember this thing.

God built this into us. So the bear is attacking out from the woods, well, you remember, there's a bear in those woods! There's a reason for this.

That nervous energy you feel as you're asking for a date, the rush of excitement when the pastor says, I now pronounce you "man and wife", there is an adrenaline release, particularly epinephrine and norepinephrine, two adrenaline hormones, which not only energize us, but also cause those memories to become more deeply imprinted in our minds. This is part of the function of adrenaline.

When we consummate the marriage, particularly during orgasm, a hormone called oxytocin is released. Oxytocin has a very particular function. It creates a feeling of attachment. Oxytocin is a very powerful "bonding" hormone. And it's released during sex. Interestingly, this hormone is also released during breastfeeding.

What happens is that you become emotionally bonded to whatever is associated with the release of that hormone. It's a chemical process that God designed to happen in a certain way, at a certain time. But it IS a chemical process, and that's how it works.

So when this hormone is released, it causes emotional attachment to whatever is associated with that release.

God's intent is for us to become deeply bonded to our wives. Then you've got things like serotonin, which is released afterward, which brings relaxation and a general sense of fulfillment and well being. And so long as we've only been with our wives, all of these feelings, all of these attachments, emotions, will be focused and centered fully on her. That's God's plan. God designed us in a certain way to build strong families.
God has designed systems inside of us to compliment His plan for us in marrying our wives, and remaining with them in faithful marriages.

Now . . .

"The sexually immoral person sins against their own body".

I pondered that verse for a long long time.

Our culture has become so saturated – I don't have to tell anybody here – so oversaturated with sexualized imagery, in advertising, movies, television, clothing styles, music, it's everywhere. I doubt whether you can drive 5 minutes down the road in any direction without seeing some kind of sexualized image. And if you spend your nights watching television – which I do not, and I haven't for years, and I will never turn back . . . and I recommend that to everybody here . . . take the TV, shut it off, anyway, that's beside the point . . . Even without going to pornography, you're still in a culture where this is all over the place.

God's intent is that a man remain sexually pure until his wedding night, in all senses of the word. And within God's plan, the way He designed this, all these physiological processes happen at a measured rate, within this certain context of a growing relationship, in a natural, orderly fashion, which God designed with good intent, and with a good purpose.

Most guys aren't even looking for porn the first time they see it.

The surveys say that the most common first exposure to pornography is that you just happen to stumble upon it. That's what happened to me. They say that the average age for the first time to see porn is from 8 to 10 years old. I was 10 years old. I opened a cupboard one day. This isn't what I was looking for. And the next thing you know, here it is right in front of my eyes.

The surveys also say, and this is true of me too, that guys tend to remember the first pornography they saw. Because I was shocked! I mean, like, what's this! And the adrenaline comes surging. And it imprints the memories. Because that's what adrenaline does.

That adrenaline, Instead of being used for self-preservation – God's intent – something else came along and used it a different way, used it against me. So now I remember.

This is the thing about pornography. It hijacks these natural brain processes. It takes what God build into you for good, and uses it against you. And this begins to happen immediately.

But instead of just duplicating how it happens naturally, something else that the scientists have learned is that the dopamine release caused from viewing pornography is from 2 to 8 times more than normal.

Excessive dopamine is released because of the excessive mental stimulation that occurs in your average porn session. What's supposed to happen at a low measured rate suddenly skyrockets to this ultra-high rate.
So you've got this excessive dopamine going into your system. And with the excessive dopamine, you've got excessive Delta-FosB. And with the excessive Delta-FosB, comes the excessive growth of dendrites, and they all want their dopamine! They're made to have dopamine, and they Want It!

These new receptors want to receive their dopamine, and since they were grown by using porn, they are wired for porn, and that's what they crave. That is the craving you feel. It's a special nerve cell in your brain that was formed that way, you might say, fashioned according to our former lusts.

It's like when your body is low on salt, and you're driving by a McDonalds. You crave the fries, not for the potato, but for the salt. Your body knows where to get it.

Hyper-stimulation over the course of time produces addiction, and this is true whether we're talking about pornography, drugs, social media, video games, whatever it is.

And then when you hyper-stimulate the sexual part of the pleasure/reward part of the brain, the other parts get weaker, because nothing else is giving anything like that same dopamine release.

You're just blowing the top off of this one little part of your brain, and nothing else can compete. Everything else gets boring. There's this overall numbing of all the other areas with this massive over-stimulation.

Nothing else measures up. And something else they've measured, Frontal Cortex activity decreases the more a person views pornography. That's where you make decisions based on values, consequence, evaluating your behavior, things like this.

So it weakens your ability to make good choices. Simply stated, it has a direct negative effect on our will power, weakening your will power. The more you look, the stronger it gets. And the harder it is to stop.

At this point, our brain chemistry has been turned against us.

The current science of porn addiction is that this is a drug addiction. It just has a different deliver mechanism from the classic forms of drug addiction. It plays on our lusts, but hooks us like drugs.

Instead of consuming a drug from outside our body, we begin to over-manufacturer drugs right inside our bodies.

Now, there's a tendency in a lot of guys, if you're caught up in this . . . this was true of me . . . to think, “there's something horribly wrong with me! I must have such a flawed character! Some huge defect . . . what can I do??” There must be something so devastatingly, implicitly wrong with me! But there is a reason why you feel the way you do.

It's a double-whammy, guys! We've got the lusts of the flesh, which we know all about. We've got
this old nature in our body. It wants what it wants, and it wants terrible things.

But, there's also a lot of chemistry behind it, which puts a lot of energy and power into the repetition of the process. Some people refer to pornography addiction as “arousal addiction” since each click of the mouse brings a fresh, novel image, with its dopamine release. Click. Click. Click.

The massive number of images you can look at in a single session just intensifies this whole process. All of this is true of any pornography, regardless of the source, whether online, in print, in movies, or on TV. But internet porn is like graduating to heroin.

Whether it's viewing, or fantasizing, what's happening in the brain is just the same. The root issue is indulging sexual lust within the mind. It destroys.

There's the chaos and confusion, as Christians, we know how wrong this is! But we can't seem to pull away! There's the fear of being caught, the shock at some of the things you end up seeing. There are your feelings of guilt and shame, which are right there! Now the brain is trying to make sense of all this, and recontextualizes these feelings to become part of the arousal experience, and it can really mess up your head.

After all, that's what you're expecting, to be aroused, and so all these other feelings just become a part of that. And again, this has a lot to do with the way the brain chemistry functions.

What you see becomes stored in the brain in the same way as real memories, as if it were real, and changes the way you look at other people. And we stop seeing women as our sisters, as our mothers.

They become more just objects to lust after, and compare them, how do they rate compared to what I've been looking at.

Instead of defining relationships by intimacy and touching and sharing and nurturing and helping and all the Godly ways that God intended, relationships become defined, again, by how they compare to the porn. Because this becomes the strongest part of the head.

Now, we're talking about the body.

Something else that researchers have found in this, the same part of the brain that's activated in this way is the the same part that cocaine and methamphetamine take over. It reacts in the body the same way as cocaine and crystal meth. And we know those are both very strong addictions. The way the body reacts, the way it looks in brain scan imagery, it's exactly the same.

Oh, and this also happens with the so-called “smart phones”, and particularly with social media. We can see thousands of people living their lives with their head bent down over their phone. This is a big part of it. You need to control it.

So God built into us these processes towards building strong families, and the evil powers at work
in this world, the world rulers of the darkness of this age, have discovered a way to exploit these processes, this one particular part of this process, in order to destroy us. Just like we did with the Gypsy moth.

And, I don't know. I look at the timing on this. In the 50's we learned about Gypsy moth pheromones. By the mid-70's we learned how to exploit this to destroy them. During the 80's the internet was being expanded largely funded by porn. The so-called sexual revolution that had started in the 60's was mainstream in the 80's. Maybe they learned it from us!

They saw what we did with the moths and said, “Hey, that's how we can get them!”

The obsession to keep looking, the feeling of weakness and hopelessness, the continual returning to it . . . every time you swear to yourself to stop . . . you've got this whole brain chemistry thing feeding the frenzy.

Our feelings of guilt, weakness, and condemnation become overwhelming. Until pornography traps us inside a secret inner life we're too ashamed to acknowledge.

Pornography becomes a barrier against living our true lives, as we feel trapped inside a secret inner life.

So why do I want you to know these things?

I want you to know that there's a reason why you feel the way you do.

And then this oxytocin thing, the bonding hormone? You know, how stupid is it to become emotionally, romantically bonded to your computer, or your so-called “smart phone”, or whatever it is you go to. I mean, that's enough to just say, “Oh, get that away!” Bonded to your stash!

Paul wrote, “flee from sexual immorality.” To Timothy, he wrote, “flee from youth lusts”. So how do you stop the porn habit? The same way you stop smoking. You simply put it down, walk away, and wait.

Now, we know with smoking, you've got all this nicotine going around in your body, and your body is used to it, and you've just got to give it time. Once it's out of your system, and your body returns to it's normal balance, then the cravings are gone. Your chemistry has re-normalized.

Here's the good news. This gets to the primary reason I wanted to tell you all this chemistry stuff.

There's what the scientists call “brain plasticity”. All these changes are fully reversible. Because the brain simply follows what you are doing.

You cannot take anything I am saying here and say, “Oh, that's the reason I do this. I can't help it . . . I've got this brain chemistry.” The fact is, your brain follows your choices. It simply reinforces what you are doing, and what you are choosing.
But the brain is also constantly reforming itself to go along with what you have chosen.

So if this is describing you, and this is what is happening in your life, you can make the choice to put it down, and to walk away, and your brain will immediately begin to reverse these changes.

Your brain can heal. It does!

Now for the really good news, let's turn to Scripture.

Romans 6:4-12
(4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
(5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:
(6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
(7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.
(8) Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
(9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
(10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
(11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Buried and dead, then alive in Christ.

Gal 5:24-25 “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

So then the flesh is a mess – corrupt in sin – In my flesh Nothing Good lives.

But we're not our flesh, we've been removed from that corruption.

That's if you've been born again. If you haven't, here is some truth to consider. We're not as good as God is, and we never will be, not on our own. Jesus took on Himself all of our sins, and carried them away by His death on the cross. He was dead and buried, but not for actual cause, He never sinned Himself, so out of that tomb He came. He created us, He is the Head, not us, and because He died, we are forgiven, and because He rose, we can live new lives.

If you believe that, if you are relying on Jesus for your life, you have new life. All who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.

We may be stuck with these bodies for now, but it's no longer who we are.

It is for freedom that Christ made us free.
Think about that! The glorious liberty of the children of God! The glorious liberty in being born from God, sharing His Own nature, which frees you from the power of sin.

And you can choose to walk in that freedom, any time you are trusting in Jesus for a holy life.

God has already committed Himself to you:

2 Peter 1:2-4
(2) Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, (3) According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (4) Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

God's great and precious promises, this is our Faithful Creator getting His creation back on track.

What this means is that God wants this for you, has committed Himself to work in your life to make this reality.

And again, I'll tell you from experience, you might go back and forth into it, we can be a weak people. My advice to anybody with any sin . . . every time you come to your senses, you just push it away as hard and fast as you can. It creeps back in, push it away! It comes back in, push it away.

Again, with the full knowledge that our Creator is leading us to freedom. He's given us freedom in our spirit, now we are to put that freedom into our behavior. We don't have to sin anymore.

If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, all things have become new, now all things are of God.

And so deliverance, your freedom, is right here, Free for the taking.

Sometimes pornography is the problem itself, and we just have to overcome it by our faith, our reliance on Jesus to be free.

But sometimes pornography is a symptom of a deeper issue, and when you stop the porn, you may find yourself confronting any number of feelings. If you're using porn to cover an inability to be vulnerable, and therefore to be intimate, stop the porn, and the emptiness sets back in. For example.

But then you can see more clearly the underlying issue. So now you can trust Jesus for that, and so we get better.

If you've been into porn a lot, for a long time, you can literally experience physical withdrawal. You've had this whole flush of dopamine in your head all the time, from this certain stimulation, and you cut it off, and your dopamine just goes flat, because everything else has just gotten so
atrophied.

Again, you just wait.

You can even go to your doctor, for those of you who are so bold, and say, “This is where I'm at, this is what's happening.” They have different medication, for instance a dopamine re-uptake inhibitor, which takes whatever little bit of dopamine that's still in your brain, and makes it stay there a little longer so you can feel a little better until you've re-normalized. There are a lot of guys out there that have realized how much their porn addiction is taking away from them, and there's no shame in getting help.

Or you simply wait. You wait, and you wait for your head to get straightened out again.

Something else that they've done through studies, they've hooked people up to brain scan machines, and shown people stuff. They've learned that simply making the decision to not let what you see affect you interrupts this hijacking process. You have to make the choice.

Yeah, we're in a culture saturated with this sexual imagery, advertisements, radio, TV, all that stuff. We can purposely shut the door on a lot of that stuff. We don't have to see it. You don't have to turn on the TV. You don't have to listen to that radio station, you don't have to have internet into your home.

I don't. You don't have to.

But then something is in front of your face. And you didn't plan it, it's just there. But you can choose to not be affected by it. To know that, Yes, there are evil forces that are trying to destroy me, by putting this front of me, but I will not be destroyed.

I will stand for the Lord. I am going to see women as my sisters, and as my mother.

As a child of God, Satan wants you to think that it condemns you, and destroys you.

Well, it will destroy the time spent in your life doing this. It will rob you of the fruitfulness God has in store for you. There are the works that God wants you to do, and we trade them away for whatever sin we choose to commit.

We're not condemned by God. We're condemned by ourselves, we're condemned by the devil, but God doesn't condemn us.

He's not chasing after you to judge you. But He is chasing after you. He's chasing after you to help you, and to counsel you, and to liberate you. To make you able to live your life clean and pure and holy and righteous.

God has made us righteous. We need to live that righteousness out in our lives. We are righteous and holy. Let's live – righteous and holy.
So put it away. Get rid of it. Block it. Filter it. Tell somebody, so you don't feel alone. Make it your determination, your commitment, that you're not going to let the 'prince of the power of the air' use his children of disobedience – make no mistake, that is exactly what is happening.

Their not up there in the Valley making this stuff, just, it's a good way to make a living, it's because Satan wants to destroy you. And he's manipulating these people, and destroying their lives at the time, in his efforts to destroy you.

So don't be the Gypsy moth.

But do more than just say no.

The Bible says that if we walk according to the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

One of the things I've been focusing on in my studies is, what does it mean to be walking in the Spirit? How do I know when I'm doing that? What is the practical application in my life.

And here's what I've come to.

I think that at least of goodly portion of walking in the Spirit is to be actively serving the people around me. To serve the physical and spiritual needs of other people, like Jesus did. Learn to see the people around you. They need things from you. They need your help.

If you spend your time seeing other people, seeing what they need, learning how you can help them to meet their needs, your family, friends, co-workers, church body, whomever they are. Spend your hours serving other people, you won't be spending them doing things you shouldn't be doing, going where you shouldn't be going.

I have a friend named Tom English, I always have to give him credit for this, because I loved what he said, and it's always stuck with me. He said, “I learned the fear of God when I realized just how much He could mess with my life.”

There was a turning point in my life. I was driving in my car one day, and suddenly became terrified I had actually crossed over a line, and that God was about to start ripping me to shreds to get me back on track.

Nothing ever happened, except for that terror, but that terror was very significant to me. And that was my point when I came to the same realization that He can do whatever He needs to do.

But Bible says that “He who began a good work in you will complete it”, and it says that God is faithful, and we know that He will do it. That's the truth! God is faithful, and He will do whatever He has to do, and it may be fun, and it may be not. But He will do whatever He has to do.
2 more Scriptures. Proverbs 14:27 "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death."

And that's exactly what pornography is. It's a snare of death, and one that you can avoid.

If you want that freedom, do what you have to do!

One more thought.

Romans 5:1-5
(1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
(2) through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
(3) And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
(4) and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
(5) Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.