

STUDY GUIDE

“A free people,” writes Bishop Loverde, “can combat the tremendous moral, social and spiritual danger of pornography with great courage.” The following suggested questions are intended to assist individuals, parish groups and ministries, and parents in applying the takeaways, practices, and tools outlined in *Bought with a Price*.

Questions are divided into three groups:

Individual

Parish Groups

Parents

For further tools, visit www.arlingtondiocese.org/purity

INTRODUCTION

1. Recognizing that everyone is tempted by lust at one time or another, what issues might I be avoiding that lead me to turn to lust in order to seek escape or relief? Do I see pornography or sex as a refuge from what's really bothering me?
2. Am I inclined to educate myself and others around me about the harms of pornography? Why or why not?
3. Do I look at pornographic material, even only occasionally? If so, am I aware of how it affects me in my daily interactions with others? Why do I continue to go down that path?

1. Are my fellow parishioners aware of the pornography epidemic in our culture? How has my parish attempted, in age-appropriate ways, to study the Church's teaching on the truth and meaning of human sexuality?

2. Are there forums in my parish such as men's groups or ministries where men can talk about the challenges of life, to share their ideas and concerns? Do I recognize that such fraternity and friendship can protect and strengthen my faith and help me to be spiritually and psychologically healthy?

1. Do we talk to our children about their problems? Do we create a culture and environment where our children can talk openly to us, or do we become prematurely argumentative, impatient, or dismissive?

THE CURRENT THREAT

1. Pornography addiction and sexual problems in general worsen in a climate of isolation and hiddenness. Do I have a confessor and close Catholic friends with whom I can discuss my isolating tendencies? If I suspect I may have an addiction, have I sought competent psychological counseling that embraces the full truth of our sexuality as taught by the Church?

2. How does pornography isolate an individual from other people? What are some ways to re-establish contact with someone who has become isolated?

1. Bishop Loverde states that pornography “damages first of all the family,” “injures the common good by producing a consumerist and licentious view of sexuality, particularly of women,” and “worst of all, ... damage[s] ... man’s ‘template’ for the supernatural.” Studies show how quickly our moral life erodes when we act out sexually. What types of results do families experience when husbands and fathers “dabble” in pornography?

2. How might the secrecy inherent with the use of pornography be part of an unwillingness to discuss the topic? What is the source of the attitude that this behavior is harmless to me and to my family?

3. Is silence an implicit affirmation of pornography use? How might the prohibition of false witness in the eighth commandment (CCC 2464) be an incentive to break the silence on discussion of pornography?



1. What is our strategy to prevent the use of pornography in our home? Is it possible that the growing isolation of a particular family member could be fed—at least in part—by pornography use? Is someone acting secretly about their technology use? What other signs might alert us to possible use of pornography?
2. Is our technology equipped to shield our home from possible abuse of pornography or other illicit activity? Are Internet filters installed on our computers and have we put parental controls on cell phone accounts? Do our children have a computer and/or a TV in their bedroom? If we have not discussed these issues, where should we begin?

FOUR FALSE ARGUMENTS

1. Four false arguments on pornography are stated in this section:

- A) “There are no victims, so no one is being harmed.”
- B) “The temperate use of pornography can be therapeutic.”
- C) “Pornography can be an aid in maturing, both emotionally and sexually.”
- D) “Christian opposition to pornography comes from the Christian hatred of the body.”

If one or more of these arguments has crept into my own thinking, how is my attitude changed after learning more of the facts about the effects of pornography?

2. Do I exhibit self-mastery in my life, not only with respect to pornography, but with other temptations (overeating, excessive alcohol, watching too much TV, etc.)? When I begin to falter in this self-mastery, what triggers can I recognize to avoid falling into sin?



3. How are the above-mentioned temptations that challenge self-mastery different from an addiction to pornography? How are they similar?

4. Do I believe that using pornography is gravely sinful? Why or why not? How does this affect my attitude towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

5. Do I understand that immoral “private actions” also have victims? Who are they?

1. Which of the four false arguments are the most prevalent in our culture? How can we refute these arguments? Which are the biggest temptations to me and why?

2. Restricting freedom by eliminating pornography results in greater freedom for the individual and all society. Why is this true?

1. If we suspect that one of our children is struggling with pornography, how might we approach this to begin to achieve a solution? What outside resources might be used with the child?

2. If a member of our family is addicted to pornography, what steps can we take to approach the matter effectively?

WHAT CAN BE DONE

1. How can I help others to grow in awareness of the urgency of fighting the spread of pornography? Am I aware of any groups which help pornography users end their addiction?
2. Have I ever considered contacting my elected officials regarding the drafting and enforcement of anti-pornography laws? How might I become involved in protecting the public, including children, from the evil of pornography?
3. Do I see value in the regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, of fasting, and of seeking professional help when pornography seems overpowering?
4. How does prayer help in avoiding the occasion of sin in moments when a trigger surfaces, tempting one to indulge in a sinful act?

1. "...[Y]outh cannot control their natural desires and practice the virtue of chaste intimacy." How do you react to this "lie of immaturity"? How has this lie allowed you to let down your own defenses to pornography or other private sins?
2. How might a deeper prayer life, including prayer and fasting with regular use of confession and reception of the Eucharist, help to protect against the temptation to impurity?
3. Is there a stigma against seeking help for pornography addiction? If so, how can we help to remove this barrier for those seeking help?

1. How can we protect our children from the assault of pornography which comes to our family in nearly all media? Do we as a family talk openly about problems as a way of diminishing the lure of lust?
2. Are our children inclined to keep secrets that might include serious sin? How can we as parents keep lines of communication open so that dangerous secrets will become known early enough to take quick, effective action? Would our family be embarrassed to confront serious sin of any nature in our children? What can we do to create a climate of open discussion in the family?
3. What can we do to encourage our cable provider and our cell phone carrier to strengthen parental control options to protect children from pornography, and to help others do the same?



THE GIFT OF SIGHT

1. Do I yearn to “see God”? Consider Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” Do I recognize that sin blinds me and that this sin in particular prevents me from fully seeing others and God?

2. Do I pray for strength to resist sexual sins in my own life? How am I tempted and how do I fight the temptations of the flesh? If I yield to these temptations, what interferes with my seeking the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Do I experience the joy of “seeing God” when I experience the consolation of God’s forgiveness of my sins?

1. If I am a member of a men’s group or women’s group in my parish or elsewhere, has “purity of heart” ever been the topic of our conversation? How does striving for “purity of heart” help us to have a closer relationship with Jesus?

2. Does our parish participate in any activities that would address and help to fight the problem of pornography? How can groups in our parish, in age-appropriate ways, promote the truth and meaning of human sexuality?

1. Does our family have regular prayer together? Do we pray for each other and support each other as a family?

2. How does an attitude of forgiveness affect our ability to “see God” as a family? Describe your family’s culture of forgiveness. Does forgiveness flow freely in our family? Do we feel free to approach one another with a loving and forgiving heart when conflict arises? Do I model forgiveness either by asking it of my children and spouse or freely offering it when someone has trespassed against me?



CONCLUSION

1. Consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." How is the sin of pornography particularly destructive?

2. How often do we consider the "price" Jesus paid for all of our sins, great and small? Does considering that price alter the way we think about our resolve to avoid future sin?

1. Do we consider that Jesus will help us to fight these problems and temptations, or do we tend to attempt to go after them on our own?

2. Other than praying about this, what concrete action steps are we going to take away from this reading?

1. "We stand at the threshold..." ready to take action. What steps can we take now to create a healthier family culture?

2. How often does our family go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) together? If our children attend Catholic school and confess there, do we still make a point to receive this sacrament together on occasion? Do we celebrate as a family after going to confession together? Is our family culture in need of improvement in the area of this sacrament?