

Porn Scars



One Night Plan



Read out to the whole group:

Freddy's Story

Finally, Freddy's parents got him a smartphone. And not just any smartphone - it was 4G, with dual core processor and unlimited internet. It was faster than his dad's laptop. He wasn't allowed it at school, but as soon as he was home he was surfing the net, messaging friends and playing games. As far as Freddy was concerned this was the best present ever.

One day he was watching the latest viral video on Youtube. It was pretty funny - something about sneezing pandas dancing to Korean pop songs. At the end there was a link to another video. It was a compilation of girls in bikinis falling over. Pretty funny too. Then there was another link. This one was basically just the bikini girls.

At this point, Freddy plugged in his headphones. He didn't want anyone to hear. When the "bikini girls falling over" finished there was another link - this one from a porn site. He swallowed hard, locked the door and clicked again. It was nothing he hadn't seen before on TV but there was an address on the video. He typed it in and instantly his screen flashed red. Freddy almost jumped out of his chair. It was a massive sign saying "Restricted Access. You must be over 18 to enter this site."

In a fit of honesty Freddy clicked the box saying "No I am not 18". Suddenly he was returned to Youtube. "Oh!" he said, surprised by how loud he said it. It felt like he'd come to the borders of a mysterious land but instead of exploring, he had turned back to boring normality. Nothing on Youtube seemed remotely interesting now. He took a deep breath and hit the back button. This time he clicked "Yes, I am 18+". In an instant he had a dozen naked women in the palm of his hand. His heart was pounding so hard it felt like it might beat a hole through his chest.

Where to begin? He clicked on one image, then another, then a video. It wasn't like he'd imagined it would be. He had pictured soft lighting, romance, couples in love. This was like animals in heat. Oiled up models shrieking and grunting and grimacing. It was an assault on the senses and it triggered something like an electrical storm in his brain. There was something ugly and violent about it all. But it was also gripping.

"Freddy! Dinner's ready!" called his mum. Quickly he switched it off. He buried the phone under his pillow, took a few deep breaths and went down to dinner. But the images were right there in his mind. He would have to return to that site.

And he did. Later that night. When he had watched 6 videos in a row he finally turned it off in disgust. As his head hit the pillow Freddy prayed for the first time in weeks: "Sorry God... I... Sorry. Please help me not to...." He couldn't even finish the sentence. Images from the videos flooded his mind. It was hours before he got to sleep.





Next morning Freddy woke in a panic: "My internet history!" What if his parents found out!? He went to the list of pages he'd viewed the night before. The titles were disgusting. Had he really become 'the porn guy?' His finger hovered over the Delete button. But for some reason he clicked on the links instead. Back he went to the site and he watched another two videos. This time it was the cold light of day – a Tuesday morning, before school!

This was how it began for Freddy. Very quickly watching pornography became a daily habit. He tried not to do it in the mornings and he made a rule for himself: "Never on Sundays." Sometimes he kept his rules, sometimes he didn't. He prayed about it often.

Later on, when Freddy looked back on this time, he realised that the only thing he prayed about was porn. It came to dominate how he felt about his Christian life. When (occasionally) he didn't watch porn, he decided he was doing ok. When (more often) he watched it, he decided he was a total failure. But either way it was porn that defined his Christian life.

And it defined the way he viewed the world too. He found himself looking at girls almost like a hunter views his prey. He hated himself for it, but even friends and teachers became sexual objects.

He found himself becoming much more withdrawn, much more irritable, much less talkative. He would spend his time thinking about when he could next go online, when his parents would be out of the house. He planned his whole life around it.

Over time Freddy started living life on two levels. On the surface of things he went to school, to youth group, to church, but it felt like going through the motions. Beneath the surface there was another world that consumed his heart. It was like there was an ugly, sweaty basement to Freddy's life. Up above was a world of people, schoolwork, sport and fun, but that seemed less and less real. Underneath felt like the real world, and that was all about animal instincts.

Freddy could feel himself becoming more and more de-sensitized to the life 'up above' and the porn 'down below'. He began watching hardcore stuff that would have sickened him a few months earlier. But when he was done, he didn't feel sickened. He didn't feel much of anything.

"God, if you're there,
why don't you stop me?"

He'd pray that kind of prayer a lot. He even started praying that he'd get caught, just so that something would shake him out of it. But nothing did. He started to believe that nothing ever could.

Questions for Discussion



Here are four areas you might want to explore in response to Freddy's story, lettered A, B, C, D.

How you divide up the questions will depend on the size of your group and the amount of time you have. You might feel that every group needs to address every area. You might feel that each group addresses a different area and then feeds their answers back to the room. You might want to address only one or two areas because of time constraints.

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A)

- What is Freddy getting out of porn?
- What is this habit costing him?
- Where do you think this story is heading?

Here we're emphasizing the fact that sins always promise us some reward (or else we wouldn't do them!). Freddy gets something out of porn and we would be foolish to ignore that. He gets a powerful physical buzz (which releases addictive endorphins), an outlet for lust, the feeling of a grown-up world that's bigger than the everyday, the sense of a secret that no-one else shares.

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On the other hand the habit is turning him in on himself, deeply affecting his view of women, enslaving him to a powerful addiction, cutting him off from other people and making him despair of Christ's forgiveness and love.

The story is only heading bad places unless there's an intervention. Freddy can't "pull himself together", he needs help. If not this addiction will massively shape his view of women, sex, his body and it will make him shut himself off from Jesus and the good news.

B)

- Is what he's doing wrong? Why or why not?
- Is it hurting anyone? If so, who?
- How big a problem do you think pornography is, in our culture? In the church?

Freddy is lost in sinful behaviour on a number of levels. First he is feeding his lust – which is never satisfied by porn but only inflamed further (Matthew 5:28).

He is mastered by this addiction which is controlling his life (1 Corinthians 6:12). He is training himself to view women in extremely degrading ways. He is supporting a wicked industry that is rife with illegal activity, widespread drug use, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and which, in many cases, uses and abuses women in appalling ways. Even if he never pays a penny for porn, the hits he gives to these sites is what generates their advertising revenue.

To see how big an issue porn is in our culture, refer to some stats.

C)

- Why do you think Freddy hasn't told anyone about his habit?
- What do you think would happen if he did?
- What would you say to Freddy if he confided in you?

Sin thrives in the dark. The more shame Freddy feels the less likely he'll be to discuss it. But the less he talks the more he'll descend into the behaviour and the less he'll want to talk in the future. It's a horrible spiral which he is involved in. Freddy might well think he's the only one who struggles and that Christians don't ever sin in these ways. The more he feels isolated like this, the more he will want to keep quiet.

If Freddy did open up he would hopefully find someone who would understand and not condemn him. In that situation it would be a great relief to be able to confess his sins and unburden himself of this secret life (James 5:16).

If Freddy confided to me I hope I'd communicate to him the infinite forgiveness of Jesus, who purifies us from all sins (1 John 1:5-10). Sin (pornography) does not define his Christian life, Jesus does. And "in the light" of Christian community and through the forgiveness of the cross, Freddy can walk in a new way. The past is totally forgiven and the future can be totally different.

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D)

- What sort of picture does Freddy have of God?
- What sort of picture does God have of Freddy?
- Why do you think prayer hasn't saved him?

Freddy seems to picture God as very distant. When he first fell into porn it had been months since he last prayed – that's significant. It's when we're spiritually dry that we are most open to temptation. And once we fall into sin, it's very easy to picture God as One who is simply disapproving. But the real God – the God of Jesus – is with Freddy and He has His arms open to him saying "I love you, look to me, I'm better than porn!"

God pictures us in one of two ways. We are either 'enemies' outside of Christ (Colossians 1:21) or we are "holy, without blemish and free from accusation" in Christ (Colossians 1:22). If Freddy is a Christian, the Father sees him as "clothed in Christ" and holy in His sight.

Prayer is a great first step for Freddy, but he also needs community and he needs a fresh vision of the forgiveness of God. He needs to confess his sins, find help from Christian friends and have his eyes set on Jesus in a new way. In that context, prayer is incredibly powerful. And even outside of that context prayer is powerful, but God works through His word and through His people and that's where Freddy needs to seek help.

Bible Study

Read Colossians 3:1-17



Freddy thought his standing with God was only as good as his internet history. How do verses 1-4 disagree with that?

Our standing with God is as good as Christ! It's not about our goodness, but about Christ's goodness. He is our life.

How does God see Freddy - even in the midst of his worst sin?

God looks on Freddy as He looks on Jesus, His Son. God loves Freddy with the same love He has for His Son! It's not about Freddy's performance (which is not good, and neither is mine or yours!), it's about Jesus.

Verse 3 talks about us as though we died on the cross. What does it mean?

Jesus represented us on the cross. He took responsibility for all our sins and put the whole lot of it to death. If I trust in Him, I'm connected to Him and His death is my death. Every sin I've ever committed has been punished already. I've already died the death I deserved to die because Jesus died that death for me!

If we know that Jesus loves us even in the midst of sin, will that make us want to sin more or less? Why?

If we know Jesus' unconditional love, we will want to sin less. I never want to hurt the people who love me unconditionally – I actually want to please them. Jesus' unchanging love doesn't cause me to sin, it makes me want to stop.

Knowing Jesus' love, how will that shape our "hearts" and "minds"? What does that look like, week by week?

We will "set" our hearts and minds on Jesus. That happens through reading the bible, coming to church, being encouraged by friends to keep looking to Jesus (Look at v16 for more).

In verses 5-11 we see "the old self". What is the "old self"?

It's the old selfish way of living for me. It expresses itself in all sorts of ways – lusting (v5), loathing (v8) and lying (v9).

Imagine wanting to wear an old pair of smelly trainers to your wedding. Do you think the person you're marrying wants that? They'll say "Take them off and burn them." And because we love them, we will.

In verse 5 we're told to put to death whatever belongs to our old selves. That means chucking out our smelly sins. What's our motivation for doing that?

We do it because we're already loved by Jesus and we want to enjoy the new self that he's given to us in verse 10.

Are there practical things Freddy can do to "put off the old self"? Are there practical things we can do?

Telling parents about the phone? Putting a block on adult sites on the phone? If need be, giving up the phone! Promising to tell someone when you're tempted / when you fall?

In verse 9 it tells us to stop lying to each other. If we told the truth, do you think there'd be much room for addictions?

Addictions flourish in the darkness. The truth brings things out into the light. Just talking about our struggles is a powerful blow against porn addiction.

From verse 12-17, we see that we've been called to live in a family of forgiving love.

What are all the ways the Christian community can help us when we struggle with addiction?

- The love of church can replace the emptiness of lust.
- The peace of Christ can replace anxiety over sin
- The Word of Christ can give me a vision for Jesus that really captures me
- The worship of church can engage my heart in what's truly satisfying

Do these verses challenge the way we look at God? How?

Discuss.

Do these verses challenge the way we live as Christians? How?

Discuss.

