



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

More Than Friends / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

Getting healthy requires extreme measures.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that when it comes to breaking free from things that enslave them, they can't keep just make a commitment or promise to themselves and expect a different result.

SCRIPTURE

"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away" (Matthew 5:29a NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

In this verse, Jesus gives us an extreme metaphor for how

we should react to sin. Through this metaphor, Jesus is telling His audience—and us—to go to extreme measures to against the things that cause us to stumble. This is a principle that can be applies to all areas of sin, and this week we're applying it to the area of pornography.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

In this series, we're talking about relationships

TENSION

You can do a quick Google search and find tons of things you how to have great relationships.

In the same way, you can also find a list of things to *avoid* if you want a great relationship.

There's something else that is a relationship-killer, and I'll bet you don't expect it: **Pornography**.

This is a real thing that many people are dealing with, and it would be irresponsible and foolish of me *not* to talk about it.

The point is this: We can't act like porn *doesn't* exist, affect us, or affect the people around us.

Porn can hurt or even destroy your relationships.

Even moderate porn use is correlated with damage to parts of the brain involved with motivation and decision-making.

The good news is that what we talk about today has the power to bring you some freedom.

TRUTH

I want to tell you about a famous message Jesus gave one day to a large group of His followers.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

Sin is anything that hurts or dishonors you or other people around you.

When Jesus spoke about things that were bad, sinful, or evil, He often did so because they hurt the awesome things God created and designed for us, including relationships.

Jesus is saying, "Become a FIERCE enemy of anything that could create hurt for you, your future, or other people. If something creates problems, take extreme action to get it away from you!"

When He talked about stumbling, He assumed His audience had *something* that came to mind.

Become an enemy of the thing that causes the greatest "sin" problems for you, your future, and your relationships.

Getting healthy requires extreme measures.

APPLICATION

Making decisions like recommitting, promising, or getting accountability are good.

You have to admit you can't handle it, don't have it figured out, and need more help.

According to Jesus, we have a choice: Do extreme stuff and move toward health, or keep doing the same things we're doing, which will likely lead to the same outcomes.

You have to tell someone & you have to restrict your access.

LANDING

Distancing myself from porn is not just about sin and my relationship with God, although those are factors I take very seriously. It's about protecting the relationships I care about the most.



TEACHING SCRIPT

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BOTTOM LINE

GETTING HEALTHY REQUIRES EXTREME MEASURES.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

In this series, we're talking about relationships. And the reason we're talking about this is because we all want great relationships. Whether it's friendships, dating relationships, or classmates, we all want to kill it in this area!

But we also know that what we want doesn't always line up with the *reality* we're living in.

Whether you're in a dating relationship now, or if you're hoping to be in a dating relationship at some point down the road, you probably want it to be a good one. No one wants to be in an average or below-average relationship. Or a totally terrible one! No, you want to find someone who you enjoy spending time with, and who enjoys spending time with you!

Some of you may even want to get married one day. And no one sets out wanting a bad marriage. Not everyone wants to get married, but those who do want it to be great, which is why we are talking about this relationship stuff *now*. Because the sooner we can get an idea of what we want our relationships to look like, the sooner we can start making the changes we need to make *now* to make those kinds of relationships a reality.

TENSION

3 MINUTES

You can do a quick Google search and find tons of articles, blogs, and resources that teach you how to have great relationships. To be exact, I found 800 million.

They'll show you things to do that set you up for success. Things like . . .

- Communicate.
- Show respect.

- Use kind words.
- Spend quality time together.

In the same way, you can also find a list of things to *avoid* if you want a great relationship. Because even though all relationships are different, there are certain things that will take the health out of every healthy relationship.

They include things like . . .

- Being selfish.
- Being a cheater.
- Being abusive.

Everybody knows those are a bad idea, but there's something else that makes this list. It's a relationship-killer, and I'll bet you don't expect it.

Pornography.

Let me go ahead and pause here for a moment. Because any time you bring up porn in a room full of people, it's a little awkward. *Especially* in church!

But let's be honest. It's not weird unless there's a stage involved. If you heard someone say "porn" at theatre practice, in the locker room, or in conversation in the halls at school, it wouldn't be as shocking, would it?

The point is, this is a real thing that many people are dealing with, and it would be irresponsible and foolish of me *not* to talk about it. In order for you to know what's best when it comes to your present and future relationships, porn has to be part of the conversation.

If you're still not convinced, let's look at some stats . . .

- Porn makes up 1/3 of the Internet.
- Porn gets more views than Netflix, Twitter, and Amazon combined.

The point is this: We can't act like porn *doesn't* exist, affect us, or affect the people around us (guys *and* girls).

I may be wrong, but if you're a Christian or you've been in church a while, I'm going to assume that you already know that porn is a sin—it's something bad, not good.

With that said, let's move on and talk about one of the side effects of pornography that you probably *haven't* heard or even thought about before:

Porn can hurt or even destroy your relationships.

I want to share some psychological statistics with you. This isn't make-you-feel-guilty time. These are simply facts about what happens when pornography affects the relationships that you want to be great. This is what science has told us about the effect of porn:



TEACHING SCRIPT

Even moderate porn use is correlated with damage to parts of the brain involved with motivation and decision-making. It makes you more likely to self-harm and experience depression.

- Studies have found that people who use porn enjoy real-life relationships less.
- Porn retrains your brain to find real partners less attractive and decreases your ability to feel close with a real person.
- Porn makes you more likely to experience a breakup or divorce even years later.¹

That's the bad news.

The good news is that what we talk about today has the power to bring some freedom into an area that may feel like a prison to you right now.

And it has the ability to help all of your future relationships!

TRUTH

4 MINUTES

I want to tell you about a famous message Jesus gave one day on the side of a hill to a large group of His followers. This was during a period of time when Internet pornography didn't exist. (By the way, that's why the Bible doesn't have a bunch of verses on porn—because the Bible was written pre-Internet.)

The Bible *does*, however, have a lot of verses on relationships. And Jesus had a lot to say about things that could help or hurt relationships, and the people we're in relationships with.

Sometimes you'll hear people talk about "sin," and it seems kind of like a vague, undefined thing. So let's simplify it: **Sin is anything that hurts or dishonors you or other people around you.** If something you do hurts someone else, that's the opposite of love, and it's not a good thing. That's what makes it sin.

So when Jesus spoke about things that were bad, sinful, or evil, He often did so because they hurt the awesome things God created and designed for us, including relationships. As you learn more about God, it's no surprise that relationships are a high priority in His "don't mess this up" category.

With that in mind, look at what Jesus said about something that could hurt us or others:

"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away" (Matthew 5:29a NIV).

In other words, Jesus is saying, "Become a FIERCE enemy of anything that could create hurt for you, your future, or other people. If something creates problems, take extreme action to get it away from you!"

¹All statistics adapted from *The Harmful Effects of Pornography 2016 Reference Guide from FightTheNewDrug.com.*

TEACHING SCRIPT

Let's be clear:

- Jesus *wasn't* recommending you blind yourself. This is a bad idea on multiple levels, but mainly because it wouldn't be effective. People with one eye can stumble just as much as people with two (Looking at you, pirates.)
- Jesus *wasn't* saying, "Hey, if there are a bunch of people on this planet who have one eyeball, this world is going to be a less evil place."
- He *wasn't* saying, "Hey, that painful act of you removing one eyeball is going to prevent you from struggling with anything that you currently struggle with."

He's saying, "*If something causes you to stumble . . .*" Which means He knew His audience would recognize the things that created trouble for them. **When He talked about stumbling, He assumed His audience had something that came to mind.** They identified the things in their life that were bad for them.

Which brings us back to porn.

- Do you see that it's creating problems for you and your future?
- Do you acknowledge that it could hurt others?
- Do you admit that it could harm or destroy future relationships?

If you *do* see those problems, then you can relate to Jesus' audience. Now imagine sitting where they were and hearing Him say what He said . . .

Become an enemy of the thing that causes the greatest "sin" problems for you, your future, and your relationships.

In other words, *don't* go home and take your eyeball out. But *do* commit to getting intense about the problem. Why? Because . . .

Getting healthy requires extreme measures.

Jesus was committed to different results, so He challenged us with a different action. Great relationships are one of the things people want most in life. And statistically, we know that porn can hurt or even destroy those. That means that it's worth our time and attention to figure this out and get healthy!

APPLICATION

4 MINUTES

When it comes to porn, making decisions like recommitting, promising, or getting accountability are good. But they don't seem quite like "gouging out an eye," do they?

Pornography is one of those areas where it doesn't work for us to just say, "You know what, I'm going to try harder next time."

It's one of those areas where, to get healthy, you have to feel kind of stupid.

Meaning, you have to admit you can't handle it, don't have it figured out, and need more help than you feel comfortable asking for. (For the record, this is true for a lot of things that affect us in a harmful way.)

Getting healthy requires extreme measures. Extreme measures may mean that . . .

- You feel a little bit embarrassed.
- You feel like you're doing something that requires a lot of work.
- You have to do some things that feel unnecessary.

According to Jesus, we have a choice: Do extreme stuff and move toward health, or keep doing the same things we're doing, which will likely lead to the same outcomes.

If you're going to take a gouge-your-eye-out approach to porn, two things are true:

1. **You have to tell someone.** There may be a case where someone got free from porn on their own, but I don't know of one in my experience. (And I've been in youth ministry for 19 years.)

But it's not *just* about telling someone—it's about telling someone who can help you. Look for someone you trust who shows you grace and forgiveness, and *also* gives you strong support and accountability. Someone who regularly checks in with you and asks hard questions.

The hardest step is asking for help. But the next hardest thing is continuing to go to that person for help.

You have to restrict your access. As of right now, I have a software on my computer called Qustodio (Qustodio.com). Not only can I not access pornographic sites on my computer, my friend Daniel is able to see *anything* I view on my computer. He's also able to disable sites like Netflix or YouTube if they lead me toward watching things I don't need to watch. There are a few programs out there that can help with this, but in my experience, Qustodio is better than most.

Also, Daniel disabled Safari (the Internet browser) on my iPhone. I have 0% ability to surf the web on my phone. At least once a week, I'll be in a situation where having the ability to get online on my phone would be helpful. But I can't.

It's frustrating. It feels like an overreaction to the problem. But I know myself. **So I gouged the Internet out of my phone.** And it's helped me win in a way that's worth the frustration it's caused.

One more thing: **I don't have the password for my app store on my phone.** If I want to download an app (like Chipotle or Uber), there are two guys who know my app store password. They're both guys that I see, on average, once every two weeks. So if I know I'm about to see them and there are some apps I want to download, I'll text them ahead of time: "Hey, when I see you today, there's an app I want to download. Will you type in the password when I see you?" They're always happy to do it (because they understand the power of this struggle as well.)

Look, it's not convenient, but it also hasn't ruined my life or my relationships. I can survive without those apps. But not having access has made my life better.

TEACHING SCRIPT



It's amazing how much the temptation of porn is weakened when I know I don't have any way of looking at it!

I'll be directly honest when I say this: My goal is that my ONLY way of accessing porn is to go to a gas station and buy a magazine. And that's something I would probably never do.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Distancing myself from porn is not just about sin and my relationship with God, although those are factors I take very seriously. It's about protecting the relationships I care about the most. Right now, that's my wife. When I was single, it was about protecting my relationship with my girlfriend and my hopes for a future wife.

Pornography and relationships—either current relationships or future ones—are not mutually exclusive. They are connected. And it may take some extreme measures to protect those relationships.

But trust me when I say this, from somebody who's been there: It's worth it!



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
