

Internet porn a click away for teenagers

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An increase in the number of computers around the house may lead to a higher number of marital problems for the first generation of adolescents maturing with Internet access in their rooms, some youth ministry specialists assert.

For many young people, pornography is simply a click away as an increasing number of teenagers can surf the Internet without supervision in their rooms, said Leighton Flowers, who leads the Baptist General Convention of Texas' youth ministry efforts.

In this environment, teen viewing of Internet pornography is extremely common, according to Scott Helbing, chief operating officer of Pure Online, a group that helps teens address their addiction to pornography.

Nearly every young man his organization has spoken with across the country has looked at pornography, as have an increasing number of young women, he said.

A recent survey revealed 70 percent of teens ages 15-17 said they have

“accidentally” come across Internet pornography, Helbing noted. One-fourth of boys have lied about their age to gain access to a pornographic website.

In a survey of senior high school students who attended BGCT Super Summer events, 85 percent said they have struggled with pornography on some level, Flowers said.

Such common issues with pornography may harm the marriages of this generation, Flowers and Helbing fear. Social scientists commonly agree that pornography can desensitize a person to sexual acts, dehumanize sex and create intimacy issues.

“Pornography can drive a huge wedge between spouses and ruin the intimacy God has intended in the sacred bond of marriage,” Flowers said. “For singles, pornography can become a replacement for true sexual intimacy and can give them false expectations and mental scars that will only have a negative impact on their future relationships.”

Pornography creates a desire for more frequent and intense images to satisfy the same craving, Helbing said. Addiction, obsession over sex and an objectifying of women can result, he added.

However bad the effects of pornography are on the individual, the societal effects may be even worse. This is the first time American society has been this infiltrated by pornography so pervasively, Helbing said.

“We know the long-term effects on the individual,” he said. “In extreme cases, it can lead to child pornography, prostitution, and criminal punishment. I don’t think we yet know the consequences to society from the long-term exposure to pornography by a significant portion of the population.”

The potential emotional and relational damage of pornography is why

Christ warned people of things that make them “lust in their hearts,” Flowers said. Teens are faced with this temptation more than ever before. How they handle it may determine the fate of their relationships, he insisted.

“We are in the midst of a huge social experiment in that we are waiting to see the impact of raising a generation with the Internet at its disposal,” Flowers said. “What will the impact be on the marriages of this cyber-spaced generation? I don’t know, but the possibilities scare me.”

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