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How Can I Help Young Men Who Accept Pornography Addiction as Normal?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about the ideology behind pro-prostitution advocates' argument that using your body to do work in other jobs is the same as selling your body in prostitution and how to get through to a small group of young men who are addicted to pornography and have largely accepted it as normal.

* What's the ideology behind pro-prostitution advocates' argument that prostitution is just like any other kind of work one uses one's body to do, and how do we refute this?

* What can I do to get through to my small group of young men who are addicted to pornography and have largely accepted it as normal?

Transcript

#STRask How Can I Help Young Men Who Accept Pornography Addiction as Normal? Welcome to Stand to Reason's #STRask podcast. I'm Amy Hall and I'm here with Greg Koukl and we're here to answer the questions that you send to us with the hashtag #STRask. Great.

Okay, so Greg, today we have a couple questions that are a little more adult-themed just to give the listeners a little bit of a question. It's a little warning if they're listening on the way to school or whatever it is. So this one comes from Vanessa.

A frequent argument from pro-prostitution advocates I hear is that it's work just like any other work. If you use your hands to type or your legs to lift two by fours on a job, it's the same as selling your body. How do we refute this biblically? And what's the ideology behind thinking they are equivalent? You don't need the Bible.

Now we did a show, actually it was the first show we recorded this morning, so I don't know when it played. But part of my point is that there are challenges that are being offered now to the Christian worldview that trade on a complete lack of common sense.

Okay.

So I'm trying to think about the best way to put it. So this is not like PG-13 rated. But when you use your legs to lift a box because you're storing things on the shelf at a grocery store, that is very different than using those legs as part of a sexual embrace.

Well, what is that difference, Mr. Koko? If you have to ask that question, there's nothing I can say that's going to make a difference. But it does betray that a kind of, and I would say a shallow conviction because people actually know better. It does betray a shallow conviction that sex is simply moving body parts.

Why should prostitution be illegal? That prostitute is just moving her body parts in a kind of a way that a person stocking canned goods at a grocery store is moving their body parts? Well, they're both moving body parts, but it's a very, very different kind of activity. So, but notice how this reductionism. Now, I know people don't believe this because when there is any kind of unwanted sexual overture, nowadays the culture is excessively sensitive to that.

So, even something that is in other times would have been taken as totally innocuous or just a little bit crude but brushed off. Now, it's a violation of a person's, I don't even know what a violation of their person. And now there's lawsuits, people getting fired for what? For this what? Small thing.

Now, so it's so interesting that on the one hand, these are people that are hypersensitive to any even verbal statement that might intimate something sexually suggestive to them. And that's harassment. And by the way, this could be six-year-olds, you know, or eight-year-olds.

And then, on the other hand, largely the same group has this idea that, "Oh, it's just it's body movements. It's no big deal." Okay. Well, why can't you say regarding the so-called sexual harassment in the words that were spoken? Why can't you just simply say, "Well, they were just moving their lips and making noise out of their mouth? We do that all the time.

We're doing it right now. It's called talking." So what's the big deal? Well, it is. Not all talking is the same.

Not all touching is the same. And not all body movements are the same. The context makes a huge distinction, difference as to the moral propriety of the actions.

And sex is a big deal. And when I say it's a big deal, I mean, it's a very intimate central part of being human. It has a number of different functions according to God's purposes.

And it is to be guarded for that reason because of its power and its appropriate role in human flourishing. In other words, there was a good purpose for sex and it isn't just to

make babies. All right? And so when people are utterly dismissive of that, "Well, we're just moving body parts," it just strikes me that either they're being dishonest or they have lost any ability to have common sense in form these circumstances.

And I think both are true in some measure, depending on the individual you're talking to. It's not the same as doing any other job just because your body's involved. There's kind of a materialism involved here.

And by materialism, I mean the idea that the physical body is all that there is. In other words, there's no real dignity. There's no real soul involved in sex.

Yeah, there's nothing transcendent. It's just physical bodies doing physical things to get physical pleasures. But ironically, then they turn.

So they deny the soul's involvement in sex and then they turn around and deny that there's any dignity in the body because these parts are just the same as every other part. So in every way, you just are denigrating the whole enterprise, really, in every way possible. And by the way, you can see elements of a spiritual warfare here.

And when I say spiritual warfare, I would just want to remind people that my view of spiritual warfare is not power encounters with the devil. I don't think that's most, they certainly agree with that. But it's mostly truth encounters.

What are the lie schemes, the strategies, Ephesians 6, that are being played out in culture? And if human beings are image bearers and God has made human beings a certain way, bearing his image and having certain purposes for their flourishing, of course, the devil who eats God hates the image bearers. He's going to do everything he can to destroy their ability to flourish as image bearers. And so we see all of these kinds of things being challenged that are part of the created order.

The body's not just a machine. It's a sacred in a particular way, being the domicile of the soul made in the image of God. And it's not even just a tool.

It's actually part of you. Your body is part of you. And that's why there is a dignity to our bodies.

And our laws reflect this. You know, Vanessa asks, "Isn't this the same as selling your body?" Well, you know, we're not allowed to sell body parts. That's part of the law because we recognize the dignity of human beings and their bodies.

So for the same reason, this is nothing that's completely outside of the laws we already have. We're already not allowed to sell human bodies. We're not allowed to have slavery.

We're not allowed to sell body parts. We're not allowed to do any of those things. So it makes sense that we're also not allowed to sell our bodies in this way.

And so one, just to add a little bit more about the biblical view, because she asks about refuting this biblically, Paul talks about how the reason why we're not supposed to join ourselves to a prostitute is because we become one flesh with them. So that's a deep union. It's not just the the intimation.

There is not just a mechanistic joining of two bodies. Right. It's more than that.

And that's the idea that's given in good ways in the Bible and in warnings against doing it in bad ways because the one flesh union was meant to come in marriage as a picture of Christ in the church. It's a picture of our being joined to Christ of him being our head of him giving us life. All these sorts of things.

I think that's an Ephesians, right? Ephesians five, right. So that is what sex is meant to do. So when we use it in the wrong way, we are doing something pretty egregious.

In fact, one thing I've noticed as I've been reading through the New Testament this time is how often the two biggest sins mentioned are sexual immorality and greed. They're usually mentioned together and then maybe even paired with idolatry saying that both are idolatrous. New Testament ones? Yeah, because I was thinking old Testament would be idolatry for the Jews, but there was sexuality all wrapped up in that because that's what the high places were all about.

So I'm thinking in particular, like second Peter, I think Jew does this. I think even Paul does this. But the idea that when he's talking about the sins that are so egregious, he's talking people who turn away from the faith and people are leading people astray, what they mention are sexual immorality and greed.

It's something that, and then usually paired with the idea of being idolatrous. And I'm still working out exactly why all those three go together, but they show up together all the time. And it gives you an idea of how significant sexual immorality is.

And I think in our culture, we've forgotten that. But if you look in the Bible, it is there. It's definitely there.

So the second question comes from anonymous. That was like exhausted, sigh thing for me. What he's facing is people that are enslaved by an addiction.

I don't mean by that language to suggest that they're victims. That's not what I mean. But they have acted in such a way that now they are captured by this thing.

Ironically, they acknowledge the wrong and they habitually and willingly engage in it. I think one of the, as a Christian person who struggles with sin, I'm speaking in a general sense here, there are things that our flesh overcomes us with in moments. And then we fight against that.

That is, we're having an argument with somebody in our family and we get out of line and then we just explode and we say things that we're sorry for. We shouldn't have said. Then we, then we apologize, resolve and everything.

And then we, and then we, we seek to pursue virtue in that relationship until maybe there's another extreme circumstance and a weakness. However, if that's different in my mind than somebody who is verbally abusive all the time. Oh, I know it's wrong, but it's just I keep doing it.

And that's, that to me is a very different kind of situation. Now my response to a person like that is to say, well, then stop doing it. Because I think you have the capability to stop doing what you're doing.

Harshward turns away, stirs up anger, right? You know that right. Okay, when you fear yourself getting harsh, stop talking. I have to do this myself because I get, you know, I get kids.

I got teenagers. Okay, I'm married man. Okay, everybody who's married with teenagers knows what I'm talking about.

Marriage has its challenges and, and gracing kids, especially teenagers in the culture now has the challenges. And so we're always getting pushed and the flesh is going to take over. So we're, we have to work at being virtuous.

This, this other issue, pornography is similar. Although I do think there's, there's another element and I'm not exactly sure how to describe it because what ends up happening is you, from what I understand about that. There's a physiology that you end up in Tim Barnett has talked about this.

You know, you get into a physiological groove that could, a rut. Not a hat, just a habit rut. There's a physiological thing going on.

And, and so there is, this is more akin to drug addiction, I guess, in this sense. And so now you've got an added component that one needs to overcome. I think it's tragic that is, is kind of seen as normal now.

Just like extramarital sex is seen as normal, even in Christian circles, younger people in particular, from what I understand. And, and, and so yet it says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 9, "Fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, and there's more bad things listed here, but will not inherit the kingdom of God, do not be deceived." So these are habit patterns that people have gotten into that are unchristian, that are contrary to Christianity, that are contrary offensive to God, that aren't just little picadillos or little, or the thing you kind of falter on occasionally, but they're lifestyle choices. And Paul says, "If that's what you're living, you are not in the kingdom." Now this isn't this works based salvation, this is an indicative.

People who are born again do not surrender to habitual sin. They fight it constantly. Sounds to me that Anon here is anonymous, is asking, is interacting with people who have given into it.

I know it's wrong, but I just do it every day. Well, I guarantee you, if they had, if they were obliged, this, this, say any individual he's talked to, to confess to their pastor every time they looked at pornography. Let's just say that was a, we're going to stipulate that that's a given.

That's going to change their behavior. I guarantee it, because now there's a price associated, an experiential price. I got to tell him, are you kidding me? So this is why there's accountability patterns that do help people get out of these things.

And this kind of thing is a temptation for the vast majority of men. Okay, and I'm not excluded from that, because I'm a man too, and I live in a culture with all this stuff going on. And there are emotional things that drive people towards that, not just central things.

And so this is why having relationships with people where you have integrity and accountability makes a difference. And most of the programs, well, I don't know, I've never had to go to any of those programs. There are programs to help people get out of these ruts.

But as I recall, they do entail accountability, and that's one of the most, you take the thing that's in the darkness and you bring it into the light. How about if a person had to wear a badge to church that had a record of every occasion in the last seven days that they have viewed pornography? What about that? I just got a letter right. But I mean, the point I'm making here is that if they had to be completely transparent with the people around them about their sinful behavior, that transparency itself is going to decrease the occasion.

So I think what gives this in some of its forcefulness in individual life is it's allowed to stay largely secret. In this case, there's some discussion between anonymous and his friends, which is good. But the friends seem to be just doing a shoulder shrug and saying, well, you know, I know it's wrong, but whatever.

So, but so that means they don't take anonymous seriously as someone they confess to. Okay, but if there were other people that they had to be transparent before regarding this, then that it has a greater emotional impact on them. I'm not offering an RX, a total RX like where the sign.

What I'm saying is that there are levels of transparency regarding behavior that begin to affect the behavior itself. And sometimes you have to go extreme. If you're really serious about dealing with the behavior, if you're not serious about dealing with the behavior,

you're just going to live right in it.

You're probably not a Christian. I mean, I take that first Corinthians nine, six nine rather. So, I think there are two approaches that need to be taken.

I think they're both necessary. And it sounds like you're probably done the first one, but I just want to give you a couple ideas. And the first thing to do is to help them understand the severity of what they're doing.

There are a few different ways to do that. We've talked about the severity of sexual sin. You could go through all the warnings about sexual sin and what it does to you.

There's proverbs. Oh, yeah. Certainly things in the New Testament.

Another idea. I can tell you there have been men sitting in front of me in tears talking about how it is affected. Their marriage, their relationships.

Sometimes just having maybe a woman come in and talk about how it's affected her because of her spouse. How her spouse is addiction to pornography has affected her. It might shock them a little bit into kind of seeing, because this is the problem, the culture.

It is. The culture, because the culture is constantly telling us it's okay. It's hard to believe it's not okay until you're confronted with examples of it not being okay.

So, that might be another idea. But that's only one half of the equation. It's only one half of the equation to convince them that of the severity of the evil of this and the gravity of the the gravity of sexual immorality, like I just mentioned, how it's mentioned over and over as the top thing.

That's a problem. And the other side of the equation is we do not give up pleasurable things until we find something that we love more. We have to love something more than our sin.

We have to love God more than our sin. We have to desire to be obedient more than we desire that thing that we want. We have to get over this idea that God's holding out on us.

We have to trust that He wants what's best for us. And we have to want to keep in a, and when I say a right relationship, I don't mean that we lose our justification or anything like that. But there certainly is.

When we sin, there's a sense of loss of communion. There is. There is a sense of that.

And it's a relational thing. It's not a justification thing. But it's real.

We have to desire that closeness with God and we have to desire not to grieve Him. And

we have to trust that obedience is the best way. Because the truth is, obedience is, if we are living obediently in whatever situation we're in, that's the only way we don't miss out.

Now, let's say they feel like I'm going to miss out if I don't look at this pornography. No, the truth is, if you do that, you are missing out because obedience is the best way to live. And it is the most fulfilling way to live.

Despite your brain tricking you into thinking and your fallen heart tricking you into thinking. And the rest of the culture tricking you into thinking. The rest of the culture.

That sin is the best way to live. It's not true. So the way out of this is to cultivate a love for God.

And that means the more that they desire God and obedience, the more that the better they know Him, the more they love Him, the more they desire not to grieve Him, that is when they start to leave their sin. So you can focus as much as you want on how bad it is, and you might even create some guilt. Maybe you'll shock them into some guilt.

But to change, I think what we need is to know who God is and desire to please Him and not to grieve Him. So basically, it's kind of a roundabout way to address this. Start, maybe leave it to the side for a bit and start talking about who God is.

Or you can pair them together. You can pair the grievous nature of sexual immorality with the beauty of God. But start focusing on the beauty of God and cultivating that desire in them and see if that gets you somewhere.

Yeah, you mentioned Proverbs, and that applies to the first aspect, a more pragmatic aspect. And there's a lot in the first, say, eight chapters of Proverbs. There's a comparison between wisdom and the harlot.

So there's a literary thing. But it's not just literary. How can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned? He said, "This is stupid.

You are going to your execution." Is what the writer is describing about men who go into a harlot. And so there is more of a graphic characterization there of the weight of the danger of the issue. But I want to say two other things.

God has a provision for male sexuality, which is the most aggressive between women and men. No duh, okay? And that is marriage. First Corinthians 7 talks about this.

It's not good for a man to sexually touch a woman. This is the way the chapter starts out. It says not to touch a woman, but the implication is it's sexually.

And that's why I mentioned have wives. Because wives are the place where that kind of relationship is fulfilled. And so that's what we have a lot of guys who don't get married

for a long time.

And part of it is they're not, this is a generalization, but they're not taking responsibility for their own lives and building a life so that he can have children. The whole culture puts that off a real long time. Lots, a lot of times because women are professional and all of a sudden they're 40.

And they realize, hey, I've gotten not married yet. And I want to eventually have kids and they're moving past that childbearing age functionally. So the culture pushes all that forward.

But a lot of guys are just hanging around with three time or maybe they're working or whatever, but they're not thinking about establishing a family, getting married and having a family. And of sinking those roots that's part of growing up. That's a standard.

That's the biblical standard. In other words, it's the normal thing is to be fruitful, multiply. And because men are not doing that in our culture, it's dismissed.

Now it's, oh, live together. So you can get the sexual favors without having all the responsibilities applied to it, taking care of somebody committed to them and whatever. Men are taking that, women are letting them do that.

And so that's one difficulty, another difficulty. If you're already married, if the relationship is not good, if there is, if there is a, if, here I'm just going to talk to women. If a man does not feel respected by his wife and that it shows itself in their intimate relationship, they are going to be a lot more vulnerable to the fantasy of that happening in a pornographic environment.

You know, men want to be welcomed and enjoyed. This is how they experience that their wife loves them, that they are welcomed and enjoyed. Okay.

Now that always can't be the case, you know, especially the enjoyment part, things change and kids happen and people get older, whatever. But I'm just saying this is what this is how men understand love. And if that's not happening and their heart wants to yearn for love and women have the same yearning, but it's satisfied differently.

Okay, somewhat differently. If that's not being satisfied, they become vulnerable to looking elsewhere to have a fantasy of that happening for a moment. And that's right there in 1 Corinthians, chapter 7. So Paul is actually quite direct about that.

And so I just, this is not something that almost anybody ever talks about from the Paul Bitter anywhere else, but it's right there in 1 Corinthians 7, 1 4 5 verses. And marriage is meant to satisfy that need for men in that relationship. If men don't get married, they're still going to have sexual desires, but they're not going to have an appropriate outlet for it.

Okay. And so this is part of the problem. Men are not settling down and taking the responsibility of raising a family.

And so that makes them more vulnerable. And even in that relationship, when things aren't going well, and a man doesn't feel respected in that relationship, then or loved because the respect and that kind of responsiveness does translate to love in a man's mind. It's the number one way that men experience the love of their wives.

Then they're going to be left out. Women often feel unloved, understandably because of the way the relationship is. That same feeling is felt by men, but in the context of this aspect of their relationship, that makes them vulnerable.

It doesn't mean they're not responsible. And Paul never suggests that for their inappropriate actions. But he does say that this creates a vulnerability, and this is why married people need to attend to the healthiness of that relationship to keep both people safe from philandering.

Well, thank you for the question, Anonymous. And we really appreciate your desire to confront this in your youth group there with the men. Hopefully this gives you some ideas and you can let us know how that goes later.

Well, thank you also, Vanessa. If you'd like to send us your questions, send it on Twitter with the hashtag #STRAsk. Or you can go to our website, go to the #STRAskPodcast page and you'll find a link there that will take you directly to a page where you can give us your question.

Just keep it short. Make sure you keep it short like a tweet. All right, this is Amy Holland, Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason.

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