

The Truth about Pornography

Quarter 11 | Lesson 11 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Play a game to learn that people should not be thought of as objects.
2. **Teaching:** Hear lies of pornography and learn truths from the Bible (1 John 3:1; Philipians 2:4; Proverbs 6:27–28; James 1:14–15).
3. **Responding:** Practice avoiding sexual sin and ask God for strength to resist temptation.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- 4 palm-sized stones
- 4 cups or bowls (large enough for the stones to fit into)

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- Pencils
- Student Pages

Since this lesson deals with a sensitive topic, if possible, divide the class into 2 separate groups: 1 group for boys and another group for girls. Have a male teacher teach the boys and a female teacher teach the girls.

Teacher Devotion

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Romans 7:18–20

Sinful desires invade nearly every part of our lives. They creep into our hearts and minds in ways we never expect or imagine. We begin by deceiving ourselves into believing that we can resist the temptation. Then we deny that the sin we are considering is wrong. Next, we give in to our temptations and disobey God, telling ourselves lies such as “A small sin will not matter!” or “Others have done much worse.” We get caught in this cycle again and again, and the end result is always the same—shame, guilt, and fear that separate us from God. We cannot break this cycle on our own. But God is the source of all truth, and He has overcome the lies of the world!

Where does this cycle of denial, deception, and disobedience repeat itself in your life? Where do you feel that you have lost the ability to do what is right? Call on God to help you to break that cycle of sin. His

ways are always true and good, and His strength is more than enough. Invite Him to erase the lies that tempt you and replace them with His truth.

Teacher Tip: The purpose of this lesson is to inform teens about the dangers of pornography and teach them how to resist these temptations. As you teach this lesson, be sensitive to the emotions of those who may have already been exposed to pornography, either by choice or because they were forced to view it. The shame and guilt can be overwhelming. Throughout the lesson, help them to understand that sexual sins separate us from God—as all sins do. Encourage them to ask God for forgiveness and healing.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play a game to learn that people should not be thought of as objects.

Greet the teens as they arrive. Ask them if they used the internet recently and what they did while they were online. Have them get into groups based on which of these uses for the internet their online activity fits into: communication, information, entertainment, or purchasing things. They will play a game in these groups for the Connecting activity.

When you are ready to begin class, have the groups form circles. Give each group a stone and a cup and have them put these things on the ground in the middle of the circle. Then assign each group 1 of the body parts from the list below.

Head
Foot
Elbow
Knee

Then explain the game.

You need to work with your group to put the stone into the cup. However, you can only use the body part I assigned to your group. For example, if your group is the “knee” group, each student on your team can only use 1 knee to put the stone into the cup. You will need to work together and use more than 1 student’s knee to pick up and move the stone. The first team to get the stone into the cup wins. Ready? Begin!

Give the teens 3 minutes to do this. Then assign the groups different body parts and repeat the game. Then have the teens sit in their regular places for discussion. Allow 2–3 teens to answer each of the following questions.

- Was the game fun? Why or why not?
- What was the hardest part about this game?

As some of you mentioned, the hardest part of this game was that you could only use 1 body part. If you could have used your hands, the game would have been easy. Even being able to use both of your knees or both of your elbows would have made it easier. But using only 1 body part made the game difficult.

God created us in unique and amazing ways. He sees us as whole people—body, mind, spirit, and soul—and He intends for others to see us that way, too. However, sometimes we think only of certain characteristics a person possesses and do not think about their other valuable characteristics. For example, we may not notice that a young lady who is smart in math is also very kind to others or that a young man who is handsome is also very helpful.

This is especially true when it comes to the way people look, and this is especially dangerous in pornography. Pornography is visual or printed material that is intended to cause sexual excitement. This includes books, videos, websites, or magazines that show pictures of private body parts or show or describe sexual acts.

Teacher Tip: If there are other common ways people in your community view pornography, tell the teens about those as well.

Pornography creates false realities in order to cause intense sexual excitement in those who view it. It often causes us to see people as objects instead of as God's precious creations who are worthy of love and honour. Pornography also often causes us to dishonour ourselves. Today we will talk about the lies of pornography and how to protect ourselves with God's truth.

2. Teaching: Hear lies of pornography and learn truths from the Bible (1 John 3:1; Philippians 2:4; Proverbs 6:27–28; James 1:14–15).

Sadly, many people have been exposed to some type of pornography, especially on the internet or through sexual text or social media messages. Often, we may accidentally find pornography when we are searching for something completely different. Other times, someone we know may share it with us or send it to us. Being exposed to pornography can cause an intense sexual reaction. Viewing it just once can cause us to desire to see it again and again.

Teacher Tip: If appropriate, share that it is normal to have a physical reaction when something excites a person sexually—God designed people that way. The physical reaction is not necessarily sin. However, continuing to expose yourself to things that cause this excitement may be sinful, and acting on those feelings outside of marriage is sin.

Pornography is addictive. Regular exposure to pornography causes the brain to form new nerve pathways that connect with the areas that control pleasure. As the exposure to pornography continues, these pathways grow stronger and stronger, and the body begins to desire more and more. Eventually, these pathways can become so strong that the excitement and pleasure received through pornography are greater than the pleasure of actually having sexual intercourse.

Teacher Tip: Though the internet is the easiest place to access pornography, sexually explicit materials are available in many different forms, including books, magazines, videos, television shows, and movies. All of these forms of pornography exposure are equally damaging. If you feel it is appropriate for your students, share this information and remind them to guard themselves against all types of pornography.

Pornography damages relationships. Viewing pornography regularly can cause a person to detach from real relationships in favour of false ones. People who use pornography often are less satisfied in their relationships and are less likely to give and receive love.

Pornography use grows. What is exciting at first soon loses its thrill, so people who use pornography begin looking for material that is more shocking, more sexual, more violent, and more graphic. They also begin to view pornography more often in order to satisfy their desires, and they may take risks in order to experience that thrill. This can lead to acting out things they have seen or imagined in real life.

Pornography hurts other people. It is linked to sex trafficking, sexual violence, rape, prostitution, and the mistreatment and abuse of others, especially women and children. Pornography communicates the message that others are objects to be used to satisfy our desires rather than human beings with needs and emotions who are worthy of honour.

Teacher Tip: It is possible some of your teens may have viewed pornography involving sexual acts between people of the same sex. Help them to understand that this does not mean they are homosexual. Pornography distorts normal sexual desires in many ways, which may cause confusion. But God has given us a healthy plan for fulfilling our sexual desires within marriage between a man and a woman. Encourage them to ask Him for guidance and truth. If possible, be available outside of class to answer their questions and pray with them.

Pornography appeals to our desire for pleasure, but not the healthy kind. And when our desire for pleasure overtakes our healthy desires, we may have difficulty deciding what is good and right. However, the Bible teaches us truth. We can use that truth to help us to overcome the temptation of pornography.

Truth 1: We are created in the image of God and loved completely.

Pornographic material leads us to believe that the world is filled with beautiful people who spend nearly all of their time satisfying their sexual desires. Pornography sets unrealistic standards for beauty and relationships, which may cause us to develop incorrect views of what a healthy sexual relationship in a marriage should be. This may cause us to be dissatisfied with ourselves and others.

When we compare reality to images that seem perfect, it can cause us to see ourselves and others in a negative way. With God's help, we can begin to see ourselves and others the way He does. We are created in the image of God, and He loves us completely. We are beautiful and precious in His eyes. Listen to what the Bible teaches us about God's love for those who believe in Him:

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

1 John 3:1

Have the students find partners and share their answers with their partners. They will do this with each of the questions in this section.

- **How does it make you feel to know that you are loved by God?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Be sure they mention that God's love for us is so great that He calls us His children. We are precious to Him. This is where we should find our identity and self-worth.

- **How could comparing ourselves and others to worldly standards of perfection damage our lives and our relationships?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Be sure they mention that it harms our relationships and can cause us to feel that we are not valuable or lovable.

- **How can God's truth help us to overcome these things?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Then guide them to understand that we can focus our self-worth on the knowledge that we are loved by God instead of measuring ourselves by unrealistic standards of perfection.

Teacher Tip: Some of your teens may have experienced unwanted sexual activity and violence, causing fear, guilt, and shame. They may think they should have protected themselves to avoid these situations. Be sure they understand that the victim is *never* at fault in situations of abuse and violence.

Truth 2: It is important to care about others.

Pornography leads us to believe that our desires are more important than anything else. We see things we desire, and we can think of nothing else. This causes us to focus inward, so we

are thinking only of ourselves and our selfish pleasures. We place our desires above others. This inward focus may cause us to think so much about our sexual desires that we make unwise and sinful choices. This damages our relationships with others and with God.

God has called us to focus on Him and others. Though our needs and desires are important, it is also important that we think about others and that we look to God to help us to determine which of our desires are good and right and draw us closer to Him.

Listen to what the Bible teaches us about thinking of others:

*In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.*

Philippians 2:3b–4

- **How could believing that our needs are more important than the needs of others damage our lives and our relationships?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Be sure they mention that it harms our relationships because it causes us to put our own needs above the needs of others and it harms our lives because we may make sinful and selfish choices.

- **How can God's truth help us to overcome these things?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Then guide them to understand that thinking of the needs of others can help us to live in ways that please God instead of simply pleasing ourselves.

Truth 3: God can help us to resist temptation.

While it may seem harmless to look at pictures, read books, send or read chat messages, or watch videos of sexual acts, these activities invite more temptation. Once we give in to these temptations, we may begin to think it is okay to continue to give in. This leads to more temptation and more sin. Soon we feel we have no control over our desires or our sinful behaviour.

God has called us to avoid things that tempt us to sin. Our sexual desires may be strong, and we may feel weak when we face strong desires. But we can call on God to give us strength in these situations.

Teacher Tip: It is important that your teens understand that sexual desire is normal and healthy. They should not feel shame or guilt about their desires and attractions. But they must learn to control these desires in ways that help them to avoid sin.

Listen to what the Bible teaches us about avoiding things that could be harmful to us.

*Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?
Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?*

Proverbs 6:27–28

- **How could believing that we can handle temptation damage our lives and relationships?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Be sure they mention that it may cause us to make more sinful choices; these choices may harm us and others.

- **How can God's truth help us to overcome these things?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts. Then guide them to understand that God can help us to avoid temptation and give us the strength to withstand it.

Listen to what the Bible tells us will happen when we allow sexual desires take control of our lives.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

James 1:14–15

- **What do you think it means that “sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death?”**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

As with all sin, pornography begins with desire. We are all human, and we all sometimes have sinful desires. When we allow these desires to deceive us, as often happens with pornography, we begin to believe the lies that fulfilling those desires through pornography is healthy and good. This leads to disobedience to God—sin. And, as these verses teach us, the end result of sin is death—eternal separation from God.

Teacher Tip: Be sure the teens understand that sexual desire is not a sin. God created sexuality for a number of reasons, including having children. But He also created sexuality for our pleasure, and He wants us to enjoy it within marriage. But, as with all things that give us pleasure, we must learn to choose pleasure in ways that are good and right. Anytime we allow our desires to take control, we are likely to sin.

We can choose not to be deceived by the lies of pornography. We can choose to believe God's truth instead. Here are some ways to honour God and avoid temptation.

Pray and read the Bible when you feel tempted. God will give you strength to withstand temptation, if you ask Him.

Ask God for forgiveness when you have exposed yourself to pornography. Admitting that your choice was wrong can help you to avoid the temptation next time.

Learn what tempts you and stay away from it. The best way to resist temptation is to avoid it. This may mean limiting your time on the internet and social media.

Think about the consequences before exposing yourself to pornography. The consequences may include damaging your relationships, becoming addicted, hurting yourself and others, developing a poor self-image, and damaging your reputation.

Find a trusted person to hold you accountable. Be truthful with this person about your temptations and your sinful choices. Ask that person to pray with you and for you.

- **What are some other ways to avoid the temptation of pornography?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

Teacher Tip: If you have students who seem to be struggling with the guilt and shame that result from pornography use, talk privately with them after class. Again, it is best for a male teacher to talk with young men and a female teacher to talk with young women. Be sure students understand that God grants forgiveness to those who ask Him. God can redeem those sinful choices and use them for good.

3. Responding: Practice avoiding sexual sin and ask God for strength to resist temptation.

The temptation of pornography can be strong, and the consequences are great. Exposing yourself to pornography can have very damaging effects, both on your life and on the lives of those around you.

I will read a situation about being tempted by pornography. After I read the situation, find a partner and talk together about ways to resist and avoid temptation in that situation. Remember the ideas we learned: pray and read the Bible; learn what tempts you and stay away from it; think about the consequences; and find a trusted person to hold you accountable.

Teacher Tip: If you are not able to divide your class into separate groups of boys and girls, be sure that the teens are matched with partners of the same gender.

Teacher Tip: If these situations are not appropriate for your students, please substitute some that would be realistic in your community.

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can do this activity on their pages.

Situation 1: You are looking at the internet. You do a search for clothing, and suddenly a pop-up window appears with a picture of a naked person posed in a sexual way.

- What can you do to resist the temptation?
- What could you have done differently to avoid the temptation?

Situation 2: Your friends found a book with descriptions of sexual acts in it. They invite you to meet them in the alley to read the book and look at the pictures. You meet them, and one of them hands you the book.

- What can you do to resist the temptation?
- What could you have done differently to avoid the temptation?

No matter how hard we try to avoid it, sometimes we are tempted. When we are faced with strong temptation, such as pornography, we can ask God for strength. Listen to what the Bible tells us about God's help in times of temptation.

*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind.
And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.
But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.
Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*

1 Corinthians 10:13–14

The Bible promises that we will not face temptation that we cannot resist. God will provide us with a way out when we are tempted, and He will give us strength to endure it.

Think of 1 area of your life where you face strong temptations. Think about how you can use the ideas we learned to resist or avoid temptation. They are: pray and read the Bible; ask God for forgiveness; learn what tempts you and stay away from it; think about the consequences; and find someone to hold you accountable.

Give the teens a few minutes to think and pray. Then close with a blessing based on 1 Corinthians 10:13–14:

Blessing: May you find comfort in the fact that you are not alone in your temptation. May you remember that God will provide you with a way out, and may you know that He is faithful even when we feel weak.

Family Connection: Encourage the teens to ask their family members, “What are some good ways to avoid temptation?” They can then share that God gives us strength to endure any temptation we may face.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter’s song, if possible. “Holy Forever” by Chris Tomlin
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkHgxCemCRk>