

A4 – ALTERNATIVES

“One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.” (Proverbs 27:7)

This ancient verse makes the simple observation that when we are needy we will try to fulfil that need however we can. In the absence of healthy alternatives the hungry will even eat something bitter and it will seem to taste good, because at least it's better than nothing.



In the New Testament, this point is made by Jesus in his discussion with the woman at the well (John 4:1-38). She is going from husband to husband, from sexual encounter to sexual encounter, without satisfaction. Jesus points out that she also goes back to the well again and again to try to quench her thirst. Jesus then makes the bold claim that he is the only true source of satisfaction: *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* (John 4:14)

Porn is just like this. We go to it for many reasons. We may know it's destructive, we may know it won't truly satisfy, but we go back time and time again hoping to find something that will fulfil our desires and our needs.

Now, sometimes our desires are flat out sinful. We may go to porn purely because our hearts are dark and twisted and lustful. Those desires need to be repented of and we need to seek God in order to change our hearts. But sometimes the issue is not with our desires, but with the place we are going to fulfil them.

It is important to reflect on what draws you to porn. What is porn offering you that you are enticed to go back to it? What promises does it hold out to you? What needs or “hungers” are you trying to satisfy? It may be that the solution to our desire for porn may be to see that porn is not really our desire. We may not have to *kill* our desire, but *redirect* it to that which truly satisfies.



“The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire... Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” – C S Lewis

4 ways that God responds to our desires

God will either...

1. C_____ IT.
Galatians 5:13-24, James 4:1-10

Sometimes our desires are fundamentally sinful. When this is true, it's not just that we are seeking something good in the wrong way, it's that what we are ultimately seeking needs to be repented of. An example of this might be our desire to live independently from God's rule, or our desire to exert cruel power over another person. These desires God wants to change and replace with godly desires.

2. F_____ IT.
Psalm 37:1-11, Matthew 6:31-33

Sometimes there is absolutely no problem with our desires. They may be good and healthy and God answers our desires with a resounding "yes". Our desire for forgiveness – if it comes from a place of genuine repentance – is a good example of this. Even things like our desire for friendship or a job or spiritual comfort, might be an example of this.

3. P_____ AN A_____ FOR IT.
Psalm 103:1-18, John 4:14

Sometimes our underlying desires are good and healthy, but we are seeking their fulfillment in a way that is sinful and unhealthy. A simple example is being hungry (which is a healthy desire) being fulfilled by going to Maccas (which is unhealthy), or trying to fulfill our desire for intimacy by going to sex outside of marriage. Often we find these attempts at fulfillment leave us even more dissatisfied. God doesn't want us to suppress or repent of these desires. He wants us to embrace his alternative for meeting them.

4. H____ YOU E_____ IT.
2 Corinthians 12:7b-10, James 5:7-11

Sometimes (and this may be frustrating to hear) God does not want us to change our desires, but at the same time he does not allow for them to be fulfilled immediately. Sometimes, his answer is "Not yet" and he calls us to faithful endurance. For example, we may have a healthy desire for marriage and God may want to fulfill that desire, but we may have to wait a decade or more for that to come to pass. This is hard and at times disheartening, but God wants us to lean on him, not simply for relief, but also for comfort and strength to persevere.

Consider your own interest in porn.

What desires or needs are you seeking to satisfy in it?

What do you hope porn will do for you?

What promise is it holding out to you?

When you are tempted, how do you hope you will feel from giving in?

Look at the words below. Circle the words that ring true for you.

They may speak to what you are seeking to get from porn or they may speak to the feelings you are trying to avoid by going to porn.

Excitement	Companionship	Power	Intimacy
Lust	Education	Sex	Beauty
Sexual release	Relaxation	Stress	Tired
Affirmation	Orgasm	Sleep	Depression
Feeling wanted	Interest	Marriage	Adrenaline
Boredom	Self-harm	Feeling dangerous	Humour
Comfort	Feeling dirty	Curiosity	Feeling of connection
Loneliness	Attraction	Danger	Fantasy
Anger	Affirmation	Excitement	Escape

(Or write your own...)

- Pick one of the desires you have circled. Try to write down the desire in a sentence. For example: "I look at porn because I desire to relax after a stressful day."
- Now go back to the previous page. Which of the 4 responses is most appropriate for this desire? Does God want to change that desire? Fulfill it? Provide an alternative for it? Or help you endure it?
- What are some lies that you believe about your desires or about how porn will give you fulfillment?
- When these desires come to you again (as you can be sure they will) what are some truths that you should remember?



Fighter Verse #2

"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." (1 Corinthians 10:13)