



FIGHT FOR LOVE

ROSIE MAKINNEY

FOREWORD BY JOSH McDOWELL

R O S I E M A K I N N E Y



How to Take Your Marriage Back from Porn

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Contents

Foreword	xiii
Introduction.	1
Chapter 1: The Problem with Porn	7
Chapter 2: How Porn Hijacks the Brain	19
Chapter 3: The Faithful Response.	33
Chapter 4: The Truth about Recovery.	49
Chapter 5: The Tools of Recovery	63
Chapter 6: Freedom through Fellowship	93
Chapter 7: Your Healing Journey.	109
Chapter 8: Bringing Light to the Church's Fight.	125
Chapter 9: Women Who Struggle with Porn.	145
Chapter 10: Porn-Proofing Your Kids	161
Notes	187

Foreword

For the past fifty-five years, I have led Josh McDowell Ministries to help thousands of people across the globe discover a purpose-driven, faith-based life, which includes healthy relationships and sexuality. After commissioning the most comprehensive survey of porn use within the church (The Porn Phenomenon 2016), I can say with absolute certainty that the biggest threat facing Christian marriages and families is Internet pornography. That's why I am so grateful that Rosie Makinney is empowering women to speak up and have a voice on this topic, spurring them on to take action in a healthy way. For too long, the most neglected people in the church have been the wives of porn addicts.

If we really want to change the trajectory of where porn is taking the church, we have to acknowledge that porn is not exclusively every man's battle. Porn is everyone's battle. Wives are not only deeply affected; they are vital to winning the war. They are indispensable. Instead of denying porn's presence in the home, or worse, accommodating it, what we need is an army of

proactive and faith-filled spouses standing firm against the sin that enslaves their husbands' hearts and minds.

Rosie Makinney has done an excellent job in writing the recruitment manual for such an army, helping wives recognize and understand the crucial role they have to play in keeping their household porn-free.

Using neuroscience and Scripture, and unflinching honesty, Rosie brings hard facts and hard truths for these hard times. This book has a challenging message, but it is beautifully wrapped in hope and grace and gentle humor. I'd consider it essential reading for Christian wives trying to navigate life and relationships in a pornified culture. It's time to equip and encourage women to pick up their swords and join in the fight.

—Josh D. McDowell, author

Introduction

Discovering my husband was a porn addict was devastating and confusing. How could the smart, funny, kind man I had just married be hopelessly addicted to porn? Up to this point, my knowledge of sex or porn addiction was limited to tabloid scandals involving celebrities. Hardly comforting reading. Isolated in my shame, I desperately needed answers to my questions. Why did he continue to look at porn, even though he knew I hated it? Was this the reason he'd started acting differently toward me? Could it be my fault? Should I still have sex with him? Should I try to compete with what he was watching? Would I ever trust him again? Could he ever be free of porn? Was there any hope?

When my world was spinning, and my head and heart were conflicted, this is the book I needed to read. Just so you know, it's part memoir (validating the experience of living in crazy-land with an active addict), part informational (looking at the science behind porn addiction and explaining why things seem to be getting worse), and part biblical battle plan (showing how to fight lovingly and effectively for a porn-free marriage).

I wrote this book for women who are tired of feeling rejected, inadequate, and used because of their husband's porn use. Women who need to hear that their longing for emotional connection, their desire to feel cherished and adored, their hope for a truly monogamous marriage, and their need to feel valued and heard are not naïve or unrealistic. Women who refuse to accept that this is all Jesus has for them.

Do you remember—before you were hurt and rejected—how your heart's deepest desire was to be fully emotionally, spiritually, and sexually intimate with your husband? That craving was God-given. Marriage is one of the most sacred and intimate relationships we can experience here on Earth. There's a reason that Jesus calls the Church His bride.

Your desire for deep intimacy is holy and good.

You were made in the image of God, and He is all about relationships. God the Trinity is three persons in one. You can't get more intimate or relational than that! The anxiety you feel at being disconnected from your husband is a bittersweet reminder of how you were made to love and be loved. In that way, your discontentment in the way things are is actually a holy unrest, an impulse from God Himself.

You were created to be fully known, understood, and accepted.

It's tempting to think that if you could just find a way to get over yourself and be okay with your husband's porn, you would be able to feel close to him again. But the problem with this belief is that it depends on *you* and your ability to be okay with porn—and that is never going to happen. The Holy Spirit dwells within

you. In the eyes of God, you and your husband are one, and by allowing porn into his mind, he is poisoning you also. Your spirit will always be distressed by the presence of evil. And evil is not something to get over in your marriage. It's something to get *out* of your marriage. The Holy Spirit isn't going to leave you alone until you address this, because He's the one who designed marriage and sexuality in the first place.

If it sounds a bit dramatic to you to call porn satanic, then brace yourself. It's time to learn the truth about what your husband is actually watching. I want you to feel righteously indignant every time you hear porn casually referred to as "the sin that all men struggle with" or mentioned in the same breath as watching too much football. Porn is literally ripping hundreds of thousands of families apart. A survey undertaken by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers revealed that over half of divorce cases (56%) involved one person having an obsession with pornographic websites.¹ Yes. *Half* of divorces. How many families are being destroyed by *Monday Night Football*? Okay, maybe that's not the best example, but you get what I mean. Porn must not be swept under the rug or dismissed as "men being men." It is a lie to say that it is inherently male to arouse yourself by lusting after other women. If this were the case, it would be inherent for Jesus Himself to purposefully lust, and of course, He doesn't do that. In fact, He forbids it for any of His disciples.

Though it's certainly not all on you to "fix" your husband, you are one flesh with him, which means you *do* have a vital role to play in helping your husband become the man he was created

to be, but exactly what that looks like may surprise you. In this battle against porn, knowledge is everything.

Our journey together begins with taking a good hard look at the enemy we face. You will learn why you need to take up arms, what weapons you have at your disposal, and most importantly, who you have fighting with you as your champion, because “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Over the past ten years, my husband and I have had the privilege of walking alongside hundreds of couples coming out of porn addiction and into wholeness and happiness beyond their greatest expectations. This book is inspired by them and written by them, through me to you. Everyone who contributed their stories to this book did so enthusiastically and joyfully. Now that they are on the other side of recovery, all they want to do is reach out to you, give you a massive hug, and reassure you that there is hope.

So much hope.

They, like me, are living proof that you have *a living hope* in Jesus. Everyday miracles happen. I wish I could guarantee that your miracle will come in the form you want. But if you are in an abusive relationship with an unrepentant man who refuses to get help, your miracle may come in the form of strength to remove yourself and your children from further harm.

However, let me say this loud and clear: I can guarantee that educating yourself on what porn is doing to you, your marriage, and your family is not going to make things worse. It might *feel* worse, because now you are aware that porn is like a venomous

snake slithering around your house, but the danger was always there. You just didn't realize it.

This book is a wake-up call to bring in the snake catcher, and block up the holes. If you want intimacy and trust back in your marriage, you (and your husband) are going to have to fight for it.

So, without further ado, let's begin by finding out why doing nothing, and hoping the issue will go away on its own, is a risky option.

CHAPTER 1



The Problem with Porn

Enough.

Not a word a bride usually says to her husband on their honeymoon. But I did.

I said it on Day Eight, one week after we'd taken our wedding vows. You see, there weren't just the two of us in the bedroom. There were three. And the third was porn. I would have called it earlier, but I was stuck on a remote Italian island (coincidentally, the same one that Napoleon was exiled to as punishment).

Now I'd like to say that this remarkably assertive move was down to a strong sense of self-worth, but it wasn't. Far from it. The sad truth was, prior to becoming a Christian, I had already been in a significant long-term relationship with an unrepentant porn addict and I knew exactly how this played out. I was not going down this road again. No way. If I had to compete with porn, I knew I would lose, every time, hands down. I was already well acquainted with the all-consuming mistress of porn, and it

was obvious to me that she had her hooks deep in my brand-new husband. I knew the signs. He was edgy, critical, and highly resentful. Sex was a minefield. Nothing satisfied him.

I had already learned the truth about porn the hard way. I had wasted years trying to placate, plead, and pretend porn away. This time, I was not making the same mistakes. Fortunately, this time things were different. My husband had already lost a previous marriage to porn addiction, and he was done trying to win the battle on his own. He was ready to get help.

As we entered recovery and I began educating myself about porn addiction, I was shocked and amazed to discover the extent to which porn affects the brain and negatively impacts relationships. I remember thinking, *How did I not know this information? Why is this not public knowledge? How can all these studies exist and yet the media and popular culture would have us believe that porn is harmless and good for relationships?* When I finally understood that the cause of our difficulties was neither because I was fatally flawed, nor because my husband had a serious mental health issue, I felt tremendous relief, and, for the first time, hope.

I was not crazy. He was not crazy. The problem was porn.

Wives have a vital role to play in the battle against porn, but in a far more proactive manner than the one the church currently promotes. Though not every church offers bad advice, unfortunately, there are many that do. And let me tell you, being non-critical, non-confrontational, and always sexually available will

do nothing in terms of helping your husband break free from porn. The answer is not simply “have more sex with him” or “show up for his fantasies.” In fact, this approach will actually make the problem worse, by enabling your husband’s behavior to continue without him experiencing any natural consequences. Advice like this sets couples up for years, if not decades, of mistrust and hostility.

The truth that many churches seem unaware of—with much “men only” teachings on porn—is that married men do not often seek recovery unprompted. Though husbands *should* seek out repentance and change on their own, the unfortunate truth—one my husband and I have concluded, after dedicating our ministry to this over many years and helping hundreds of couples—is this: the catalyst that propels the vast majority of husbands into recovery is their wife forcing the issue. However, it usually takes many long years of suffering for a wife to finally reach that point. And the longer a wife endures, the more traumatized she becomes, and the harder her journey back to a place of health, trust, and reconciliation will be.

According to Josh McDowell, prominent apologist and author, “Pornography’s the greatest threat to the cause of Christ in the history of the world.”¹ Fifty-five percent of married Christian men look at porn at least monthly, and one in ten looks at porn at least daily.² Yet only 7 percent of churches have a ministry program for those struggling with porn.³ This leaves millions of Christian men struggling on their own, and millions of heartbroken wives wondering how best to love their husbands: *Should I get angry? Should I hold my tongue? Should I try to spice*

things up? Or should I simply just get over myself and stop making such a fuss? Should I deny it's happening or accommodate it?

Without informed, biblical advice, wives are often left in a spiral of self-sabotaging, self-defeating efforts to fix their relationship.

My pastor's wife informed me that my role as helpmate was to support my husband without judgment or criticism. Gentleness, grace, and sexual availability would solve all our problems. If I loved him enough, he would stop using porn. So, for the next few months, I made no demands on him and was always positive. It was not always easy to ignore his coldness and continue to be sexual with him, but I was determined. My efforts were rewarded with an Internet history that revealed he was using porn whenever I left the house.

I confronted him, we argued, he promised to stop, we tried again.

And again.

And again.

We started seeing a Christian marriage therapist, and she helped me understand how men struggle with porn, and that my anger and bitterness was not helpful. I worked hard on my forgiveness and holding my tongue. Then one night I woke up

and found him on his phone. The look on his face told me everything I needed to know. Even after everything we had been through, he still chose porn over me. He would always choose porn over me. (Anna, age 32)

With the information she had, Anna tried everything she knew to get porn out of her marriage. She tried so hard, and for so long, but, no matter what approach she took to get her husband to stop, nothing made any difference. However, as traumatic and painful as Anna's experience was, it did get her to a point of saying "Enough," and this was the turning point in their marriage. Anna gave her husband an ultimatum—he could have porn or her, but not both. Fortunately, her husband chose recovery, and they finally received the help and support they needed. Their story has a happy ending, or rather a happy new beginning. Yet, the years Anna spent enabling her husband's addiction took their toll on her heart and her trust. Their journey back to a place of restoration was long and difficult.

At some point in the future, public awareness about the harmful effects of porn will become widespread, just as it did with smoking. But, until that time, it is down to us to educate ourselves, and each other.

The Facts about Porn

Porn Creates Dissatisfaction in and out of the Bedroom

If you feel sexually inadequate and body-conscious when you are being sexual with your husband, be reassured that your instincts are working fine. It has been proven that the more porn a man watches, the more likely he is to be thinking about porn to maintain his arousal when having sex.⁴ You are not being paranoid. Subconsciously, or consciously, your husband is negatively comparing you. In one study it was found that both men and women felt less satisfied with their partner's looks, affection, and sexual performance after being exposed to nonviolent porn for only one hour a week for six weeks.⁵ And compared with the amount of porn most users consume, that is not a lot of porn. A brain imprinted with unlimited fantasy women—who are always full of desire and who never place any emotional demands—is not capable of being satisfied with just one real woman.

And if that wasn't bad enough, the damage is not limited to what's going on inside the mind. The body is also affected in major ways. The dreadful irony of watching porn is that while it creates higher sexual desire, it also makes it harder to become aroused and/or sexually satisfied with a real person. Just like cigarettes, porn really does need to come with a public health warning. A Cambridge University study found that sixty percent of men with compulsive sexual behavior experienced low sex drive or erectile function.⁶ Another study revealed that of those who viewed seven or more hours of pornography per week, 71 percent

reported sexual dysfunctions, and 33 percent reported delayed ejaculation.⁷

This is the reason many husbands don't touch their wives for months. Or why others find it so difficult to become aroused, or have trouble being satisfied. In the absence of a public health campaign, I need you to hear this loud and clear.

It's not you; it's porn.

The toxicity of porn also extends far beyond the bedroom. Married couples who use pornography more often report lower satisfaction with their decision-making as a couple.⁸ Pornography use is strongly and negatively related to marital quality over time. The longer porn is present in a marriage, the unhappier you both become.⁹ And it doesn't take long for things to escalate quickly. When a husband or a wife starts watching porn, they double their chance of getting divorced within the following two years. The risk of divorce is even greater for younger married couples.¹⁰ Engaging in pornographic use also makes it three times more likely for a man to have an affair.¹¹

Porn Destroys Authenticity and Intimacy

Even when it is unspoken, pornography creates a wedge between husband and wife. Not only is it hard to be authentic and present when hiding such a big secret, but after the pleasure-numbing high of porn, everything else in life can seem unsatisfying, stressful, and irritating. Everyday challenges and frustrations become easily overblown. Do you feel like your husband is constantly unhappy with you, even snapping at you for minor inconveniences? Do you feel like you can never

measure up? Do you feel that even when he is with you he doesn't want to be there?

You are not alone.

Many wives report feeling like they are walking on eggshells. As soon as they bring something up, it is twisted around and the blame is put back on them. Psychologists know this tactic as "gas-lighting." In this situation, a wife learns that speaking what's on her heart normally comes back to bite her. So, she grits her teeth and hides her hurt. She doesn't share how deeply dishonored she feels, or how confused she is about why he keeps looking at porn even though he knows it hurts her.

Now there are two people hiding in the marriage, seeking outward (and false) harmony over truth. Both feel like actors in their own lives, inauthentic and distant from everybody. This is no long-term solution. The answer is not to find a way to manage these painful emotions. Pain motivates us to make changes. When we hide our hurt and anger—and continue to be sexual with our husbands as if nothing is wrong—we reinforce the lie that porn is acceptable and benign. By holding back our righteous indignation, we prevent God from using our voice to speak truth and life to our husbands.

Porn Is Idolatry

Just because today's carved idol fits in a back pocket and is worshipped in secret does not make it any less sinful in the sight of God. The consequences of idolatry are no less serious. Sexual immorality robs us of our inheritance of power, peace, and authority here on earth.

For know and recognize this: Every sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, who is an idolater, does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph. 5:5)

It's time for Christian women to stand up and say "Enough." Enough blaming ourselves, enough trying to compete, enough burying our heads in the sand, enough hiding our hearts, enough keeping our voices silent on the matter, and enough waiting for him to change. If your marriage has been hijacked by porn, the most faithful way to love your husband is to send a strong message of zero tolerance. And remember, it's not you versus him. It's not *your* will be done. It's *God's*. By drawing a line in the sand, you are helping your husband follow what *God* says—not what you say, not what culture says, and not what porn says. God has an opinion on our sexuality. More than that, God has a design for it and a will for it, and it's right to fight to stay within the lines of it:

For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. (1 Thess. 4:3–5)

Confronting the issue of porn in your marriage requires faith, especially in the early stages when things don't seem "that bad." The world, your husband, and possibly your church, may not initially agree with you making waves. But God doesn't ask

His children to do easy things; He asks us to do the hard things. God is glorified when we show the world that we trust Him enough to work in us and through us.

In Judges 6:25, God asked Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal and the Asherah pole they worshipped. Gideon obeyed the Lord, but, because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than the daytime. Gideon was visited by an angel—he knew he was working for God—but he was *still* afraid. Can you relate with that at all? I know I can. See, God doesn't need you to be perfectly fearless before He'll use your obedience. He works through us just as we are. He honors our obedience, even if we are shaky as we obey. And here's the best bit. After he was done, Gideon used the wood of the Asherah pole to build a fire upon which to burn his sacrifice. Gideon took what was once used to worship Satan and used it to glorify God. Isn't that beautiful?

Time and time again, ordinary people in the Bible were used by God in audacious ways to accomplish His will. The same God is at work in us today.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one
of power, love, and sound judgment. (2 Tim. 1:7)

Do you sense how God is working behind the scenes in your own story? Can you see Him pointing out an idol in your home that He wants torn down? Do you feel like God is using this time to call you back to Him, to strengthen and prepare you for a time such as this?

“For the LORD has called you, like a wife deserted and wounded in spirit, a wife of one’s youth when she is rejected,” says your God. (Isa. 54:6)

Evil has infiltrated our households and is infecting our husbands and children, and perhaps even ourselves (see chapter 9 for that). Is God really asking us to be silent? To sit back and watch our marriages and lives disintegrate? Or is He calling us to rise up and tear down the idols of porn within our homes?

We cannot afford to sit around and wait for help that may or may not arrive; we have to pick up our sledgehammers now. As we shall learn in the next chapter, when it comes to the impact of porn on the brain, time is of the essence.

“Essential reading for wives in the twenty-first century. Hard facts and hard truths for these hard times. A life-changing resource for those who suffer the most and get heard the least—the wives of porn addicts sitting in the pews.”—**JOSH D. McDOWELL**, author



ROSIE MAKINNEY is a writer, speaker, and podcaster, who ten years ago entered the fight against her husband’s compulsive porn use. Through her faithful and uncompromising stance and his repentance, counseling, and group work, their marriage is now porn-free. From the very beginning of her journey, Rosie has been bold and

relentless about reaching other wives struggling with porn-invaded marriages. There is now a thriving recovery community on the central coast of California, supervised by her husband, Mark, a certified sexual addiction therapist. Rosie is the founder of Fight For Love Ministries, which empowers women with both the facts and the faith to fight against porn addiction and its effects on them, their spouses, and their families. Connect with her at www.fightforloveministries.org.