



Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain

William M. Struthers

InterVarsity Press (Jan 30, 2010)

Unknown \$16.00 (216pp)

978-0-8308-3700-7

Sexuality and spirituality may seem like an odd couple; not so, says William Struthers. From a Christian perspective, it's important to look at these two together, particularly when it comes to men's fascination with pornography and its potential to interfere with a divinely inspired life. With plenty of research to back up his claims, Struthers methodically describes the physiological phenomena that occur in men's brains and bodies from regular viewing of pornographic material and its detrimental effects, not only to men's personal psyches but also to their relationships with women.

A professor of psychology, neuroscientist, and researcher, Struthers explains in clear language how men's brains are far more predisposed to becoming addicted to pornography than women's. Viewing it becomes a reinforced neurological habit that is difficult to break. "With each lingering stare, pornography deepens a Grand Canyon-like gorge in the brain through which images of women are destined to flow through..." Struthers writes. "All women become potential porn stars in the minds of these men." Along with this habit come the myriad ways in which men defend their obsession, from denial, to minimization, to justification.

In spite of the Christian parameters of this book, Struthers does not cloak his argument in harsh judgment or engage in holier-than-thou finger pointing. Rather, he delves into the consequences of addiction to pornography, namely that men's drive for real intimacy is thwarted and their marriages suffer. "The intimacy-starved man is analogous to someone who tries to meet his body's need for food by only eating chocolate," Struthers writes. "It may taste good but it doesn't meet the true need of the body."

The concept of sanctification is an important one to Struthers and he stresses it throughout the book: "Our sexual nature is...a force that we must harness and direct to aid in the process of sanctification, toward becoming holy." As prevalent and readily available as pornography is, and as challenging it can be for men to free themselves once they've established the habit, the author offers some hope for how to deal with sexual compulsion; he advocates a Christian approach to healing that encompasses confession, awareness of thought and behavior patterns, and seeking out a mentor.

This book will appeal to the Christian ethic. Other readers may balk at certain conservative precepts, such as that sex should be reserved for married couples only or that masturbation borders on sin. But the bulk of this book and its thorough scientific examination of how pornography actually changes the brain is fascinating and highly informative.

(January) Luise Bolleber

(January / February 2010)

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