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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

February 26, 2023

Shame Free Sex Week #2 / The Problem With Porn

Pastor Paul Taylor and Farrah Taylor

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Share a favorite joke with the group. *Keep it appropriate!*
2. Last week's discussion guide ended with a challenge to begin having any important conversations - with your spouse, yourself, or God - related to experiencing shame free sex. Rivers Crossing also developed a set of Conversation Starters for this series that can be found online at <https://riverscrossing.com/shamefree/>.

If you're willing to share, what conversations have you initiated since our Shame Free Sex series began? How have these conversations gone?

"73% of couples simply weren't comfortable talking together about the most intimate part of their relationship. Just 27% of couples reported that they could talk about sex without awkwardness or difficulty." - Marriage Intimacy Project

3. Between statistics on the abundance of pornography use, scientific information on how porn affects brain development, and the harsh realities of porn addiction, Pastor Paul and Farrah worked to convey the problem with porn.
 - a) What stood out to you from the information they presented? Was there anything you heard for the first time or that challenged or confused you?
 - b) Do you agree that porn is a problem? Explain your answer.
 - c) In his book *The Death of Porn: Men of Integrity Building a World of Nobility*, Pastor Ray Ortlund presents five myths about porn:
 - o Myth #1: Porn will satisfy you. It will even turbocharge your sexuality.
 - o Myth #2: Porn is common, even normal. So what's the fuss?
 - o Myth #3: Porn isn't hurting anyone. It's an innocent distraction in your stressful life. You deserve a break today.
 - o Myth #4: Porn has no deep or lasting impact. You can stop at any time. You're in control.
 - o Myth #5: Doesn't God want you to be happy and just live your life?

Using a Christian worldview, how would you engage with these statements if you're talking to a person who doesn't see porn as a problem?

DIVING DEEPER

4. Pastor Paul vulnerably shared his story of past exposure to and consumption of pornography. We learned last week that shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. Shame leads us to conceal our struggle with sin, including porn. In order to break the shame cycle of porn and begin to experience healing, we have to bring it into the light. To reveal it through confession both to God and to others we trust.

Read the following quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) and several Bible passages. Then engage with the corresponding questions.

“In confession the break-through to community takes place. Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen even in the midst of a pious community. In confession the light of the Gospel breaks into the darkness and seclusion of the heart.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

1 John 1:9 (NIV) – If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

James 5:16 (NLT) – Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

1 John 1:5-7 (NLT) – ⁵This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

a) If you're willing, share your own story with porn. Whether it's part of your past or is something you're currently struggling with – how has pornography impacted your life, relationships, and connection with God?

b) If you're struggling with pornography, how can your group best support you?

Rivers Crossing has curated additional resources on pornography. Those can be found online by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/shamefree/>.

5. Read Matthew 5:27-30, Matthew 15:19-20, and Proverbs 4:23. Then discuss the corresponding questions together as a group.

Matthew 5:27-30 (NIV) – ²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Matthew 15:19-20 (NLT) – ¹⁹For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. ²⁰These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) – Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

a) Jesus' words teach us that using porn is ultimately a heart issue. Underneath a person's use of porn is often a deeper heart issue that causes shame and needs healing. Can you relate to this deeper truth about porn use? If so, explain.

b) Read 1 John 3:1-3 and the following quote by Pastor Ray Ortlund.

1 John 3:1-3 (NIV) – ¹See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

“Your battle against porn isn’t about porn. It isn’t about sex. It isn’t about willpower. Your battle is about hope. It’s about your heart believing that in spite of your many sins—like my many sins—God *rejoices* to give you a future you can scarcely dream of. You’ll win your fight by believing that *God’s love for you is too great to be limited to what you deserve.*” – Ray Ortlund, *The Death of Porn*

Do you believe that living purely and/or experiencing victory over porn use is something people can achieve on their own? Explain your answer.

How can the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ provide healing from using porn?

TAKING IT HOME

6. What’s your biggest takeaway from this week’s sermon and group discussion? How can you put that into practice? Is there a conversation you want to or should have with any of the following – your spouse, yourself, or God? If so, schedule that conversation and commit to having it!

If it helps to facilitate conversations, know that Rivers Crossing has developed a set of Conversation Starters for our Shame Free Sex series. You can find those online by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/shamefree/>.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING – THINGS TO KNOW

1. When Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary | Join us for a night of worship and prophetic ministry on Sunday, March 19th at 6pm at our Mason campus. When Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary is an incredible way to experience God’s power firsthand in a tangible way through extended worship, ministry time, and corporate prayer. Come expectantly and join us as we seek the extraordinary life together.

2. Baby Dedication | Have you welcomed a new baby to your family over the last year? If so, we're excited to celebrate your child at Baby Dedication on March 25th. The Baby Dedication experience will teach you how to lead your child in their faith, show you ways that Rivers Crossing will partner with you on this journey, and give you the opportunity to dedicate your child. Learn more and register using the link below!
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1544572>
3. 2023 Global Trips | Have you ever wanted to serve on a Global trip to help our international church partners? From Ghana to Guatemala, this year might be the best time for you to get involved with what God is doing beyond our borders through Rivers Crossing! Find out more information by clicking the link below!
<https://riverscrossing.com/global/>
4. 2023 RC Students Summer Camp | Next summer (June 19-24, 2023), RC Students is going to Eagle Sky of the Ozarks for camp! We truly believe that Summer Camp is one of the best ways for your Junior High or High School student to get connected in RC Students. They'll build lasting bonds with other students and their leaders that will continue throughout the year. Most importantly, your student will have a week to focus on connecting with Jesus in a new way. Learn more and register below:
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1450605>