

## 131. Using Spirituality When Quitting Porn



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sara Brewer**

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 131, Using Spirituality When Quitting Porn.

Welcome to the *Overcome Pornography For Good* podcast where we take a research-based, trauma informed and results focused approach to quitting porn. This approach has been revolutionary and changed thousands and thousands of lives. I'm your host, Sara Brewer.

Hey, everyone, this is going to be a fun topic today. I am excited to talk about spirituality. And I'll preface it with a few things here in just a minute. I'm looking to see if I have any announcements. There's just a bunch of stuff coming up. July, we're kind of taking kind of a slow July. My assistant and my project manager are out of town for most of the month and so we're just keeping it as bare minimum as possible and then we'll get right back to releasing a whole bunch of fun stuff for you guys come August and September.

But using spirituality when quitting porn, so I consider myself really close to my spiritual side and it's something that I really value and that I love, and I don't talk about it a lot. And you probably hear me, more often than not, speaking out against systems that are harmful and creating shame. Whether that be cultural systems, whether that be systems that come from purity culture and some harmful religious systems.

Now, I don't speak out against any specific religion. And there are lots of cultural religious things that come up in high demand, like you guys have heard me talk about. I talk about it all the time. There's just some stuff that is really harmful and really hurts people when they're trying to quit porn. And so you've probably heard me talk a lot about that, talking out against sexual shame, talking out against purity culture, a lot of those systems do exist in our current religious spheres.

But that doesn't mean that I am anti-religion or anti-spirituality. I am very pro spirituality. And religion can be such a really great way to access that

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spirituality that is really, really, really helpful in quitting porn. So I do want to talk about that today.

Now, part of my business values that are so important to me, I have three that are really important to me, and one of them is inclusivity. So what that means is that I try to be as inclusive as I can. And I'm always learning and trying to be more inclusive and trying to do trainings on inclusivity. And so you'll hear me, you know, we do episodes for LGBTQ+. My program is welcome to anyone of any sexual orientation and we talk about and coach around that, and I hire coaches who are safe people to talk to about all of that.

And I also want to be inclusive of religion. So whatever religion that might be, so Christianity, or Muslim, or religion or no religion. We have quite a few people who listen and who are in the program who have taken steps away from religion and have experienced religious trauma and we make space for them and we want to help them.

And so because part of my business values is inclusivity, I don't talk about, you know, it's not a Christian based program, basically, is what I'm saying. And it's not a Christian based podcast. And that said, there are a lot of benefits to practicing spirituality, especially when it comes to quitting porn. And I want to talk about those today, which I'm so excited about.

It's going to be fun. It's going to be so fun because although you hear me talk a lot about harmful systems and ideas, and that some of that, a lot of that exists in religion, that doesn't mean that all religion is bad. And that doesn't mean that spirituality is bad.

So let's spend today talking about the benefits of spirituality and some of my personal spiritual experiences. And with that goal of inclusivity, these are, of course, all things that are not specific to any religious denomination, and ways that you can experience and practice spirituality, whether or not you are a part of a specific religion, okay?

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For some people, religion is a great way for people to access spirituality. And for other people, it's not. It's really harmful and it's hard for them to access spirituality in religion. And so spiritual practices are such a beautiful tool for overcoming porn and for living a whole beautiful life. And I do want to share just a few things for my Christian listeners, which is a lot of you.

I have a great episode coming out with Tyson, who we're going to be talking a little bit more about sin and this idea of sin in the Christian sphere and reframing that in a way so that it helps us and serves us and doesn't bring a lot of shame. So I'm very excited for that discussion with him.

I love Brene Brown's definition of spirituality. She says spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us. And that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning and purpose to our lives. I love this quote.

So spirituality can be so, so beautiful and so helpful when we're connecting and finding worth with this higher power, whether that be prayer, meditation, scriptures, attending a holy place, going to church, whatever that is, finding worth with this higher power. Now, when it can become damaging and harmful is when that connection with higher power is rooted in shame. So this higher power is disappointed in me. God is disappointed in me. And if I don't do everything right, God is going to be more disappointed in me.

So it can be such a beautiful, helpful thing when we're connecting and finding worth there. It can be really harmful when the main feelings around it are that God is disappointed in me. And I've experienced both, which is why I'm bringing up both.

One of my most beautiful spiritual experiences came from when I really got into meditating. I've always been very good at prayer, I practiced a lot of prayer. But there was something really, really powerful for me when I

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learned how to meditate. And I practiced and I learned how to just quiet everything.

And I remember I was practicing while I was hiking by where I live. And I was just breathing and then I sat down, and I got really quiet. And as soon as I did that, and the shame was quiet, and the voices were quiet, and this was when I was going through a lot of work in getting rid of my own shame and getting rid of a lot of things that were kind of holding me down and holding me back and beliefs about myself that weren't good and just all that fun stuff that we all get to deal with as humans.

And I quieted all of that. And I could just feel God. And I don't know how much more to explain it than I could just feel love. And it was just everywhere. And it was kind of like my eyes were opened and I could just feel love. And I didn't have to do anything to earn it. And I didn't have to be anything specific. And I didn't have to be good enough. And I didn't have to do X, Y or Z. It was just there and it was always accessible.

And in this meditation practice, I really learned that what keeps me from my spiritual self, from whatever you want to call it, God, the universe, the source of love and of power and of mystery and of worth, the only thing keeping me from that is myself. Is myself thinking that I'm not worthy of it and not knowing how to quiet those voices and not knowing how to just be still.

That is one of the most, you know, anyone who has had really spiritual experiences, most of us, you know it's hard to describe. But I really, really felt that when I learned how to quiet things. I've had lots of those too with prayer when I've been talking and talking and talking, but it's now a lot easier for me to access when instead of talking I just exist and be with that.

And then that harmful side that I talk about where if our spirituality is creating this belief that God is always disappointed in me, that can be really harmful and bring a lot of shame and it is not you using your spirituality to help you quit porn. And so I want you just to be aware of that.

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If those are a lot of your feelings around your religious practice, around your spiritual practice, there are some things to look at. How can we change this so that the main feelings I'm feeling is not like I'm not good enough and I'm disappointed god/

I love the Richard Rohr quote, he said the people who know God well, mystics, hermits, prayerful people, those who risk everything to find God always meet a lover, not a dictator. I'm just kind of eating this episode up and eating these quotes up. When I hear one of my meditation teachers, Thomas McConkie, talk about this, he talks about tasting words sometimes. That's what I feel when I read this. They always meet a lover, not a dictator. So good.

That's when spirituality is powerful. That's when spirituality helps us quit porn, when we find a God who is a lover, not a dictator. And recently in the What's Possible interview with Steve Still, I think it was Steve, who was talking about this, he talked about how he used his worth in Christ, he's a Christian so those are the words he used, to find his worth. He used that to find his worth, and used the program, used all the tools. So, so helpful.

And then a piece that was so helpful for him was using his spiritual practice to find that worth. That spiritual practice that is very personal and like a deep practice, to find his worth. And for him that was through his background and beliefs in Christianity. Beautiful, I love it.

So again, where spirituality can be so helpful is when we use prayer, scriptures and wisdom text to help us feel motivated to become our best versions, the best version of ourselves. For example, when I'm reading stories that inspire me to be a good person. When I'm reading stories about Jesus sitting with the outcasts and listening and loving and being a lover and having his harshest critic be those who are upholding harmful religious systems.

I'm like, oh, I want to be like that. I want to be someone who sits with all the outcasts. And I kind of am an outcast, so that's a little bit easy for me. And I

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want to be loving and I want to be merciful and I want to be loving and kind and I want to be this good person.

It becomes damaging when we use that spiritual practice or religious practice to become conditional and scrupulous. So I can't get blessings, unless I do X, Y, or Z. And so we're reading these texts and it becomes, oh, I can't get blessings unless I'm always trying to be perfect and I'm always doing things the exact right way and I'm 100% pure in all my thoughts, words and actions, right?

That's when it can become damaging and when this all or nothing stuff can sink in and when the shame can sink in. And it becomes less about just our worth being inherent and our worth being focused on whether or not we're doing things the right way.

I experienced this a lot as a missionary and I think a lot of my returned missionary listeners might relate to this. And I loved my mission. I had a really great mission and experience and it was beautiful. And I probably liked mine a little bit too much, whereas I didn't want to come home because I loved it so much. But I had a lot of scrupulosity tendencies, and we'll dive into that when I have Jill Freestone come on the podcast and we'll talk about OCD.

But it was like I have to be exactly obedient or I won't get blessings. And that kept me from God and that kept me from spirituality and love and goodness. I thought that being exactly obedient was going to put me right by God. But what I found in my experience, and I think a lot of you will relate, is that it actually kept me from God because I wouldn't allow myself to experience God unless I was perfect. Unless I was perfect.

So another one, this spirituality can be so, so, so, so helpful when it increases and teaches us our connectedness to wisdom, to a higher wisdom and to our self, our self-wisdom and our self-trust. It can be really damaging when our spirituality is used to keep us from trusting ourselves and teaching us that our desires are bad.

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So using prayer and spirituality to make decisions about your life and to listen to yourself can be so, so helpful. It can be really damaging when we use it as a way to not trust ourselves and think that we aren't ever going to know the answer, so we always have to look to a source outside of us to know the answers, whether that be a leader, whether that be a certain Bible verse, and we can't trust what we're feeling and our own divine spirit.

We can only trust what other people tell us because other people know better than we know. Or scriptures know better than we know. Or this one verse in the Bible knows better than we know. Or this one leader knows better than we know. And I know that might bring up a lot of feelings for you, and so I want you to explore that if it is bringing up feelings for you. What are the reasons that you believe that you can't trust yourself?

And if we really get past all of the woundedness and if we heal ourselves what is there that we can't trust? A great story I love, this was Julie Hanks, I had a great conversation with Julie Hanks a little while ago and she gave an example. Not in the podcast episode but I think in some of her own personal stuff I heard her say when she was a young mom in the 80s, the religious counsel was for moms to stay home and not work.

And she felt really strongly that she needed to work and that she wanted to go get her degree. And she wanted to be a working mom. And that was pretty rare back in the 80s. And she talks about how grateful she was that she was able to trust those desires, even though it was against some of the counsel of that day, because it's been such a blessing to her.

And so using that spirituality and all of her spiritual practice that she knows, she was able to connect herself, connect to what's good and make good decisions in a trusting manner of herself. Rather than saying, oh, well, this is what I'm feeling, but I don't think I can trust myself. I'm going to trust what someone else tells me. Okay.

So that's also when spirituality can be such a beautiful, beautiful part, especially when it comes to quitting porn. I talk about this in my latest

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episode where you are the authority. You are the authority for your life and you are going to know what you need even more than like us professional coaches. We've got tools and stuff to help you but we're always going to check in to see if things are resonating with you because you know.

You're going to know better. Your body, your spirit, your soul is going to tell you what you need. And our job is to help you develop that and to trust that and to give you the tools that you need. And then we're always, always reminding you that you know and you can build that knowing for you.

Okay, last one I want to talk about. Spirituality can be so, so, so beautiful and helpful when it's used to help us connect to others in love and compassion. What I love about my spiritual upbringing is that I was taught to mourn with those that mourn and comfort those in need of comfort.

Spirituality and religion can be so damaging when we use it to pit ourselves against others, or we use it to other other people, or to not listen to other people. And we see this really, really clearly, in the LGBTQ+ space. And we hear this online a lot, right? It can be very, very damaging when we use religion and our spiritual practices to other other people.

So what that means is we don't listen to them. Or we listen to other people talk about them, instead of listening to the people and their actual experiences. So we listen to people talk about people who are gay or transgender, instead of actually listening to people who are gay and transgender. Or we use it to, you know, in a lot of religions it's like our religion is the best, we have the highest truth and no one else has this. Othering other people, putting ourselves above other people.

One of my most spiritual experiences that I've ever had was, and it's sad that I'm going to say this and that I'm worried that people are going to just shut me off when I say this. That's very, very sad to me. But one of my most spiritual experiences that I've ever had was when I was listening to someone who is non-binary talk about their experience. And it was kind of

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at the beginning of some of my spiritual awakening and I was getting out of some harmful ideas that I used to have about people.

And I listened to someone non-binary talk about their experience and it was that same experience that I told you guys about earlier when I was meditating, like I just feel like my whole body filled with light. They weren't even saying anything that was super mind blowing, they were just talking. But just being in their presence I could just feel so much love and goodness. And I was like, this person is so good. And I started to cry a little bit.

I told my husband about it. I was like, I had this amazing experience just listening to this non-binary person talk. Where can I just go listen to more people talk? Because I just want to learn more about them. Anyways, and then, this is pretty crazy, two days later someone so close to me, like one of the closest people to me, came out as non-binary.

And I was like, oh, that was spirit or God or whoever telling me, hey, you've got to listen up. You've got to up-level you've got up-level your thinking. You've got to listen to more people. You've got to be a lot more, you know, you think you're inclusive, but there's a lot more you need to be doing. So that's what that spiritual experience was for me.

And as I say that I'm saying like, oh, I'm so worried about what people are going to say and I'm trusting that you guys who are listening to my podcast, you're not someone who is going to be super turned off by that and go off on rants about how terrible it is that I said that. Oh, that's just horrible. I think some people who follow me online on Instagram are that way. But I think those of you who listen to my podcast are not that way, a lot more open minded.

One thing that I love, love, love, love, love, a resource that I love for those of you who want to make sure you're using your spirituality to connect with others in love and compassion is the podcast, *Listen, Learn and Love* by Richard Ostler. Richard Ostler was a YSA, like a young single adult Bishop.

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And is he still? I don't know if he still is, but he's still very active in his church community.

So he has a great podcast where he just invites people to tell their stories. And his whole thing is we're just listening, we're just listening. And I cannot tell you how powerful and what a beautiful experience it is just to listen and connect to other people in love and compassion. When religion and spirituality can be so damaging, is when we use it to pit ourselves against others or when we don't listen to other people.

I've had someone tell me before, well, aren't you afraid of listening to people because aren't you afraid of getting mad when you hear about their stories? And my first thought was like Jesus would never. He would never avoid hearing people's stories in fear of being angry about how they were treated. He would never do that. He would not do that, he would listen.

And if there is anger that comes up, that's something to look at. That's not something to be afraid of. That's something that we can look at and ask ourselves, what is this telling me? What is this telling me about my value system? What is telling me that needs to change? And how can I be a part of that change? How can I be more like Jesus and help these people?

So I'm recording this in June, but it's not coming out in June, it's coming out in July. I was going to say in the last week of Pride Month, I'm talking about this a little bit, I do want to just share to that for those of you who are members of the LGBTQ+ community or who maybe you're like, am I gay, and you're kind of questioning it or maybe you're struggling with whatever questions and stuff that's coming up around that, I have an amazing podcast with TJ Thomas who can help you with that. So it's LGBTQ+ and Porn, I think is what the episode is called. And he's an awesome guy.

Okay, so just to recap, spirituality can be such a beautiful, beautiful thing to help us in our journey to quitting porn when we're using it to connect to others in love and compassion. When we're using it to increase our connectedness to wisdom and self-trust and to higher wisdom. When we're

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using it to feel motivated to become our best versions, the best versions of ourselves, when we're using it to find our worth and connecting to our worth.

It can be harmful and not helpful when we're using it to feel feelings of disappointment and that we're always disappointed in ourselves and God's always disappointing me. And when we become conditional and scrupulous and when we use it to pit ourselves against other people, or when we use it to not trust ourselves and not trust higher wisdom that we can feel.

All right, you guys, that was fun to talk about. Have a great week. We'll talk to you next week. Bye bye.

I want to invite you to come and listen to my free class, How To Overcome Pornography For Good Without Using Willpower. We talk about how to stop giving in to urges without pure willpower or relying on phone filters so that you can actually stop wanting pornography.

We talk about how to stop giving up after a few weeks or months. And spoiler alert, the answer isn't have more willpower. And then lastly, we talk about how to make a life without porn easily sustainable and permanent.

If you're trying to quit porn, this class is a game changer. So you can go and sign up at [Sarabrewer.com/masterclass](https://Sarabrewer.com/masterclass), and it is totally free.