

288. Sexual Shame: We Are Sexual Beings



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 288.

Welcome to the *Overcome Pornography For Good* podcast. I'm your host, Sara Brewer.

Hey everyone, welcome to the podcast episode this week. I'm so grateful and so excited that you're here. I am looking forward to talking to you about sexual shame again today. And honestly, I'm feeling a little bit emotional around this topic today. And I think this is why. I've recently received a couple of emails of people's experiences with sexual shame. This is one of them.

They wrote to me and said, "I'm working through sexual shame that I've experienced for most of my life that is causing problems for me. I had experiences in high school with my boyfriend where I felt sexually aroused. And we never did anything but kiss, but I felt so guilty for those feelings that I confessed this to multiple bishops.

It was humiliating at the time, and it was so unnecessary. But the only thing I'd ever been taught about sexual feelings is that they were bad. So I didn't know what else to do. I beat myself up for years because I had sexual feelings while I was kissing a boy in high school."

They say, "I sincerely thought that I was dirty and broken because of these feelings. And I wish so badly that someone would have talked to me, explained sexuality, and told me that those feelings were not bad, but a normal part of growing up."

Okay, so that's the first message. The second message is from someone who said that they had randomly masturbated in the middle of the night. They said, "There was no pornography, just masturbation. But I am sincerely trying to repent. I feel so dirty and unworthy for this experience." And they asked if they had any advice to make sure that it never happens again.

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My heart seriously hurts, it genuinely hurts from these examples. Because as I read these, I realize that we have taken this beautiful principle of chastity, and keeping sex sacred, and keeping it between someone that you're committed to, something really beautiful, and we've turned it into a farcical and a shameful view on our bodies and on normal, natural development. And it's very wrong, and it's very harmful.

That first message I read, all this does is keeps us feeling horrible, and bad, and broken for something that is just a normal part of having a body and a normal part of developing into an adult. I almost wonder if when we read the scriptures about the Pharisees and how they took things way further than they needed to go, they took a simple principle, like keep the Sabbath day holy, and they turned it into only take so many steps on the Sabbath.

I wonder if we've done that with sexuality in certain cultures and in certain experiences, right? So now instead of we have this beautiful part of ourselves, and we want to keep it safe, and we want to use it for good, the sexual part of ourselves. Instead, we've turned that into never experience it. And when you do, because inevitably you're going to, because you are a human, you have to feel horrible about it.

It really breaks my heart. It's such unnecessary suffering. And not only that, but that shame around sexuality, it creates more problems with pornography and unwanted sexual behavior and doesn't do anything good. Okay?

So listen, you guys, we can choose to avoid pornography for a lot of reasons. You can avoid it because of the negative effects it has on society, that it tends to have on our body image, on having us escape from our lives and escape from relationships. But we don't avoid it, we don't quit porn because sexual feelings are bad. They are not bad.

And that's the message I want to send to you today, because if no one else is going to tell you that, I want to be someone to tell you that. Like Glennon Doyle says, I love Glennon Doyle and her book, *Untamed*. Which, by the

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way, that book just took my breath away. It was amazing. In that book she has a whole chapter on talking to someone who is worried that their child is looking at pornography.

And she says, "We want you to avoid porn not because sex is bad, but because sex is so good. Because real sex is vulnerable, is connecting, and is not fake like what we see in porn." She says, "We want you to avoid porn, not because sex is bad, but because sex is so good. And we don't want fake sex ruining real sex for you."

If you were raised in a more conservative religious household, which is who I mostly talk to, people who are raised in more conservative religions. You might experience symptoms of religious scrupulosity around anything sexual.

If you haven't heard of religious scrupulosity, I am honored to introduce it to you, I think it'll be really helpful for you. Scrupulosity is when you feel pathological guilt or anxiety about moral or religious issues. Another word for it is religious anxiety.

And there are different levels of it, there are levels of it where it is keeping you from functioning normally. And then there are smaller levels of it that you might just see flare up occasionally. But it's when you feel a lot of guilt and anxiety about moral or religious issues that keep you from doing good.

This might look like where with any sexual feelings that you have, they cause you to go into distress and you're extremely careful to not allow yourself to experience or have anything sexual pop up in your life. So any sexual experiences, like an uncommon random masturbation event, or a wet dream, or any of these might cause you to feel shame and confusion and unworthiness before God.

And if that is you, if you experience a deep sexual shame, I am so, so sorry. The truth is, you guys, is that God is love, and we know if something is from God by how it feels. The Scripture, the New Testament, Galatians 5:22 through 23, where it gives you the fruits of the Spirit. It tells you these are

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the fruits of the Spirit. This is how you know if something is from the spirit. It's like love, patience, kindness, goodness, right?

But there is nothing in there that mentions shame and fear. If something feels shameful and fearful, it is not from God. We know if something is true and if something is from God by the way that it feels. So if you're really struggling with this, I want to invite you to open up your mind to this principle and to start asking yourself what feels like love? What feels like goodness? And that's how I know it's from God. If it feels like shame, if it feels like I'm not good enough and I should be afraid, that is not from God.

And if no one else tells you this, I want to be the one to tell you this today. There is nothing wrong with sexuality. In fact, sexuality is a beautiful, beautiful, good thing. And as you get older, you will experience sexual feelings and you will experience sexual climax. And that does not make you a bad person. And that doesn't mean that you're doing anything wrong. It means that you are growing. That you're growing into this human body.

And, of course, we can stay away from porn. And of course, we can exercise sexual conservatism. But you're still going to have these experiences as you grow into a human adult.

I love my friend Carlie Palmer-Webb, her account on Instagram. I haven't met her in person, and I've only messaged her a few times. But I'm going to call her my friend, I really like her account. She calls herself the Christian sex educator and she recently did a post that said men's sexuality is also a gift from God. I think I'm going to read you her caption, and then I'll encourage you to go follow her. Her name's Carlie Palmer-Webb.

It says, "As Christian women, we have made so much progress in learning to accept and embrace our God-given sexuality. But I've recently been thinking a lot about how we don't often encourage Christian men to do the same. Men's sexuality is often demonized. It's viewed as out of control, lustful, and selfish. Can it be those things? Of course, but those things are not the default settings. Just as God gifted women with great capacity for sexual pleasure and connection, he gifted men with the same thing.

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God has given all of us the capacity to love, and heal, and bond through sex. Do Christian men deserve to celebrate and embrace this gift, just like Christian women? Absolutely. Men, your desires for sex are God-given; they're good. Your capacity to connect with your spouse through sex is holy. You absolutely are capable of directing those desires in good and healthy ways.

Any desire can be used for evil, and sexual desire often is. My heart aches for those who have been victims of sexual desires being used in evil ways by men or women. But the desires themselves, they are a part of who we are as beings created in the image of God. And those desires deserve to be celebrated no matter the gender of the person experiencing them."

Yeah, I love that. And we've talked about on the podcast before, how demonizing our sexuality and demonizing pornography does nothing but create more problems for us, right? So I deeply, truly believe in God. And I believe and think that sexual conservatism is a good thing.

I believe in saving sex for people that we're committed to and that we're safe around. And I believe in respecting our bodies and respecting other's bodies. And I believe in learning to exercise control around our sexuality and using it for good.

But when we fail to accept and love our bodies, including this sexual part of our bodies, we create problems. We create suffering. We create feelings of unworthiness. We create more pornography use, more unwanted porn use. We create more dangerous sexual behavior.

We create this belief that we are inherently bad and that we can't control this sexual part of us that's bad, which just isn't true. There is nothing wrong with being a sexual human and experiencing sexual things as you grow into adulthood.

And in order to quit pornography for good, truly, you guys, truly, this is how it works. I've seen this in the model, I've seen this in all my clients, I see it over and over and over and over again. In order to quit porn for good we have to, we must drop sexual shame.

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And remember, the opposite of sexual shame isn't justification, right? The opposite of sexual shame is worthiness, humanness, and wholeness. When you drop sexual shame, you're not going to immediately be justifying unwanted porn use for the rest of your life. When you drop sexual shame, you will be able to have more control in your life. You will feel more worthy. You will feel more human, and you'll be more whole.

Okay, that's my message for y'all today. Hope you have a great week. We'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

Thanks for listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast. If you're ready to take your next steps, visit centerforovercoming.com. We'll talk to you next week.