

## **Accountability as a Lifestyle (Part 1): Purity in the Grey Areas**

It was your typical Christian men's conference. I was standing at the Covenant Eyes booth when I was approached by a young man who smiled at the sight of our table. "I love you guys," he began, "I used your accountability software for a year or so." "Why did you stop?" I asked. "Oh, well, I used to really struggle with pornography online, and your software really helped me. But I don't really struggle with that anymore."

I know the value of long-term Internet accountability, and I hate to see people give up on it when the perceived threat is over.

### **The Threat of Pornography**

When a man is lured by Internet pornography, this struggle can cost him dearly. He may be caught by his wife or girlfriend, sending his relationship into a tailspin. He may begin to feel a loss of self-control in this area and the sting of a guilty conscience or a sense of mounting shame. Often, these costs propel a man to seek help.

This is why many adult men find Covenant Eyes: they want to have someone else they trust hold them accountable to where they go and what they see online. Just knowing someone will receive a weekly report of every website you've visited tends to sober you up pretty quickly. But when the temptation has subsided, when there has been a track record of victory in your life, why continue in accountability?

### **Battling in the Gray Areas**

It takes very little time on the Internet to discover that even common Web pages can contain questionable images and links. There are millions of seemingly "gray areas" that can lead a man into lustful fantasy or flirtatious interactions.

- You might regularly visit an Internet news site that contains tabloid-esque stories featuring the latest celebrity's weight losses and makeovers, or the latest break-ups and hook-ups.
- You might be accustomed to running Google image searches, occasionally glimpsing a thumbnail image of the female form.
- You might be watching a YouTube video when you notice a "suggested" videos with a relatively immodest and attractive young woman staring back at you.
- You might be logging on to Facebook and discover that one of your old girlfriends or crushes has appeared in the sidebar as "someone you may know."

While none of these things may be a problem at the beginning, left unchecked they can turn into seemingly insignificant ways that we flirt with temptation.

Christian author Nate Larkin mentions this is one of the main reasons he continues to use Covenant Eyes. "There is always a voice within me—this ever-patient, relentless voice—that is trying to move me back toward the edge." He is candid about how easy it is to justify brief glimpses at sensual images because, "Hey, it's not porn."

The Covenant Eyes Web rating system doesn't only catch pornographic content, but a wide range of questionable links. For a Christian man who is seeking to have "not even a hint" of

sexual immorality in his life (Ephesians 5:3), Covenant Eyes has helped many people stay open and honest about the day-to-day temptations online.

Worship leader James Cordrey writes, There is plenty to explore, even when a report doesn't indicate that any porn sites. I have recently spoken with a few men where something from an Accountability Report opened up a conversation. I have spoken with guys about "gray areas" like reading entertainment news or even regular news when the subject matter was feeding a craving for lust within them.

### **Deepening Humility**

Modern psychologists call it a "restraint bias": people underestimate the strength of their urges when they aren't in the midst of temptation. King Solomon wrote 3,000 years ago, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

I've met many godly people who simply do not feel they need any protection on their computer against lustful images. That being said, I've also met many people who use a pretense of godliness as an excuse for avoiding protection. For them, admitting a need for protection is an admission of weakness, and for them an admission of weakness is a step in the wrong direction

Pastor Richard Smith doesn't have a great struggle with Internet pornography but has continued to use Covenant Eyes for years. "I know I'm pursuing God," he says, "but I know that temptation screams at me through the Internet even while I'm pursuing Biblical studies." Humility is the key to his integrity. He says, I don't think I'm an especially holy person, but if there's been any key to my life in ministry, it's my refusal to live a lie. It's not that I always get everything right, but somebody knows the truth about my life. I'm so intent on wanting truth that I make myself accountable, especially in the area of the Internet.

Christian hip hop artist Trip Lee also doesn't speak about a great struggle with pornography, but like many men he senses a need to be on guard about what he lets go on in his heart when it comes to the opposite sex. He says: "I just do not trust myself enough to try to do my Christianity on an island. If I trust myself so much that I don't feel a need to have other people in my life, I'm setting myself up for failure."

The key to continued victory in the area of lust is brutal humility—admitting that even in our sanctified moments, sin is not far behind (Rom. 7:21). "What I love about Covenant Eyes," Lee comments, "is there's no opportunity for me to be dishonest." \*Contents modified from: [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)