

Church movement confronts 'elephant in the pew'

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What sits in church pews like an elephant, is seen by 40 million people daily and generates more revenue than all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises combined?

Pornography, according to the organizers of National PornSunday, who say the annual event that will be observed Sunday by more than 100 congregations aims to confront issues surrounding pornography's presence in society.

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, 515 Cumberland St., Lebanon, is one of two Pennsylvania flocks listed by organizers as participating in PornSunday.

"We believe pornography destroys lives and relationships," said Jay McCumber, Cornerstone's pastor. "Pornography is a scourge on the cross all across the world."

According to McCumber, pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry nationally. Most children are exposed by age 11 to Internet porn, and boys ages 12-17 are one of the largest consumer groups of Internet pornography, he said.

National PornSunday is sponsored by XXXchurch, an online ministry that encourages conversations about pornography.

"We have a national day of prayer, national day of fasting," XXXchurch Founder and Pastor Craig Gross says in a news release. "The church needs a national day of porn, with direct and honest talk about the issues surrounding porn."

The news release characterizes porn as "the elephant in the pew" because it is so prevalent but rarely discussed.

XXXchurch.com offers a preparation kit that worship leaders can use to tailor their messages about a taboo issue McCumber says can be tough to talk about. The issue is like a "big blue elephant," he said.

PornSunday aims to achieve restoration by establishing a community of people who confront pornography-related issues head-on, McCumber said.

"No one can beat pornography on their own," he said. "If you try to beat pornography on your own, you're going to lose."

McCumber said he hopes to establish a community based on honesty and trust, one in which people who experience shame about being addicted to pornography met with love by people who understand and want to help.

The key to such a community is accountability, said the 30-year-old, who served for five years at Hope Church in St. Louis before becoming Cornerstone's pastor three years ago.

"Accountability is the idea that someone is going to be checking up on you," he said.

Ideally, friends hold one another accountable for what they look at and how they spend their time, McCumber explained. Installing software that reports one person's Internet activity to another can help establish accountability.

"People who want to receive freedom from this addiction are unable to do this on their own," he said. "It can be the porn that owns the addict more than the

addict owns the porn.”

Effectively dealing with pornography addiction means seeking freedom from it by offering something better, McCumber said. The aim is “to live in another dimension where Christ rules.”

Because Cornerstone does not look to defeat pornography, it does not look to promote censorship, he added.

“We do not seek to beat down the person who is addicted to pornography,” he said. “The goal in this is to expose pornography for what it is. It’s detrimental to lives and families.”

The biggest message at Cornerstone’s PornSunday event is that there’s hope and restoration in Christ, McCumber said. Pornography can happen to anyone, including Cornerstone’s 200-250 regulars.

“This is not a novelty item,” he said. “This is a real issue in homes all across the Lebanon Valley. It’s destructive and hurtful.”

Cornerstone’s 10:30 a.m. service Sunday will include basic worship. Attendees will hear stories through media and firsthand from others who have battled pornography addiction. There will be teachings from Scripture about pornography based on concepts of restoration and healing, and the extent of pornography’s destructive nature will be emphasized, McCumber said.

Sunday will mark the first time Cornerstone will participate in PornSunday, and while McCumber said he doesn’t know what to expect, he hopes it won’t mark the only time the ministry participates.

“This is something that I believe will be an annual thing at Cornerstone,” he said.

Anyone wishing to attend the service is welcome, he added.

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<http://www.pornsunday.com>

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