



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: America's Pornemic – Part 1

Guest(s): Jim Cress

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and thank you for joining us for this program.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Today's topic on Family Talk is for mature audiences only. If there are children with you, please listen to this program at another time or at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Thanks for taking that precaution.

Roger Marsh: I'm Roger Marsh, today on Family Talk we're going to focus on a very serious subject, and that is America's pornemic. That's right; the growing threat that pornographic material poses to our society. No one is safe; it's devastating for women, it's devastating for men, for children, and families alike. It tears apart relationships. It destroys marriages and unfortunately, it's everywhere and pornographers don't plan to stop anytime soon. These peddlers of smut erode every fiber of decency from our culture.

The porn industry is a seemingly endless money-making machine built on lust and carnal sin. For example, did you know that the US produces more pornographic DVDs and online content than any other country in the world? The revenue from porn grows every year, bringing in billions upon billions of dollars. There's no definitive annual revenue figure for the porn industry because quite frankly, it slithers around in the darkest corners of our country. It's difficult for the authorities to pin down a pornographers income, let alone their illegal activity. Let's listen in now to part one of Dr. Tim Clinton's indispensable conversation with Jim Cress, right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: During the COVID pandemic, there has been a huge increase in pornography consumption, which has been dubbed as a "virtual pornemic." Over 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites. There are around 42 million porn websites, which totals around 370 million pages of pornography. The porn industry's annual revenue is more than the combined revenues of *ABC*, *CBS*, and *NBC*; think of that. 47% of families in the United States reported that pornography is a problem in their home. Pornography use increases marital infidelity by over 300%. In fact, 56% of America's divorces involved one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites. 11 is the average age that a child is first exposed to porn, and tragically, 94% of our kids will see porn

by the age of 14. Christians are not immune; 68% of church going men and over 50% of pastors view porn, hear me, on a regular basis. Of young Christian adults, 18 to 24 years of age, 76% actively searched for porn. Only 13% of self-identified Christian women say they never watched porn, 87% of Christian women have watched pornography. And 57% of pastors say porn addiction is the most damaging issue in their congregation.

Welcome to Family Talk a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host of Family Talk, and president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. This is a tough subject. Joining me today is Jim Cress, a licensed professional counselor, certified sex addiction therapist, and a certified Daring Way facilitator through the Dr. Brené Brown Program. A graduate of the Colorado Christian University, Jim studied with, and was trained for three years by Dr. Patrick Carnes, the founding father of the Sex Addiction Therapy Program that's widely known in our country. Jim helps men who are trapped in pornography, affairs, and sexual brokenness. He has a private practice in Matthews, North Carolina. He led sexual addiction workshops for the Bethesda Workshops in Nashville for six years. He's a national speaker for the AACC, the American Association of Christian Counselors. He's also a 34 year veteran broadcaster and radio talk show host. He formerly hosted and co-hosted the national call in shows *The Men Minirth-Meier Clinic*, *Turning Around*, and *Hope in the Night* with June Hunt. Jim's been married to Jessica since 1985, they have two adult sons, one of adult daughter. Jim, welcome to Family Talk Tim.

Jim Cress: Good to be with you. Back behind microphones together, right?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah Jim, we've done a lot together through the years, and it's great to have you here in studio at Family Talk.

Jim Cress: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As we get started, Jim, the pandemic and everything that came with it, by the way, the gift that seems to keep on giving to us, it's like, is this ever going to go away? But Jim, with it came something that you understand really well, and I referenced it earlier; a pornemic. Tell us about what you're seeing out there in the front lines.

Jim Cress: The level of anxiety, and just uncertainty, and fear that is gone on, that we're really not even talking about, because a lot of it's like that crawl on the bottom of a TV screen where the headlines or the ticker tape is running down here. We're not really watching it, it's kind of a screen up here. Here's life being lived, down here's this ambient anxiety that says, "well, yet again, another Delta variant, the new variant coming." Another Greek letter of a variant coming. And to be vaccinated, to not be vaccinated? Friends or loved ones close to us, or just someone I know, died or has COVID pneumonia. It's that fear of, what if? What might happen to me or someone I know or love? Economically, what's going on

with the economy? Obviously we went through the whole election cycle and all that went on with that.

So, there's this underlying fear of, well, what's next? What will happen? And anytime there's a high level of fear and anxiety, what a great time, albeit sinful and unhealthy, what a great time to find ways to escape through medicating. And because pornography, especially, is such a quick... It's like the crack cocaine of the soul. So quickly can someone, just by watching the pornography and the different images, and how it fires dopamine in the brain, that's a medication that's at someone's disposal so quickly; it's accessible, Tim, it's affordable, it's anonymous. It's airbrushed, it's not even real. Sometimes it's accidental; people stumble into it. And it's accelerated; they're hooked so quickly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, a lot of people began to struggle, I think, with their relationships. The loneliness factor, the boredom because we were locked down, everybody's just kind of staring at one another. I think people got confused, with that emotional chaos came a lot of anger, frustration. And Jim, you are right; when our relationships or expectations about life, that maybe God or those closest to us aren't working the way we want them to work, we get disappointed. And then you are right; we begin to reach for something else to fill the emptiness inside of us.

Jim Cress: And that emptiness is so important Tim. Oswald Chambers, you know him from *My Utmost for His Highest*, he said, "When I sin it's because, believe it or not, I have the suspicion that God is not good." And GOD, God does not stand for "God on demand." See, we're an on demand society. And then Jeremiah 2:13, which is the ultimate verse for this, God said, "My people," this applies today, "My people have committed two sins." Well, what are they? There's not five, there's two. "They've forsaken me, the fountain of living water." We must start with; I'm in my sin saying, "God, you're not enough." Then I get a shovel and dig out a broken cistern, and there's porn; a broken cistern in the ground that can hold no water. It's dirty, nasty, putrid water, but it's on demand. God addressed this way back in the Old Testament, isn't that fascinating?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Jim, when we grew up, things were a little different. But Jim, it's different today. Pornography, you talked about being accessible. When I read some of these statistics, I want to go back and ask you, do you really think these are accurate? 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites?

Jim Cress: I don't think they're accurate at all, Tim. I think, and matter of fact, I know for a fact. You get any stat out there on porn, it's always higher because people will under report because of the shame factor. I guarantee, it's been proven. You look at these stats, including among pastors, it's so high. Barna Research did the research; it's always higher than even what you've read.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, 47% of families in the United States are saying that porn is a problem in their home. Josh McDowell said, "It's the number one problem in the Christian home." And yet people act like it's the plague; nobody wants to talk about it.

Jim Cress: Right. Well, and I think the shame factor around it... I say S-H-A-M-E stands for "self-hatred at my expense." It spells shame because since Genesis 3, we've been hiding behind fig leaves, covering our inadequacies; we're naked and ashamed. And the last thing I want you to know... And by the way, it's not fair, it's not a level playing field. I can tell you I've got a problem with alcohol, or maybe drugs, or maybe gambling... Or I wear it outwardly; I overeat and I have a problem with gluttony. But to tell you I've got a problem with pornography or infidelity, that's whole different world that the world's going to think that I'm a pervert or that I'm really, really weird. It really keeps us hiding behind those fig leaves.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Porn increases marital infidelity by 300%, I guess that's intuitive in a sense.

Jim Cress: Sure. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Makes sense. You know, "The lips of a strange woman," Proverbs 5, "drip us honey." Jim, it's interesting to me that we're seeing now a lot of marriages try to add a little aphrodisiac, if you will. They're looking for some love, some dynamic to bring connection to them. And porn is becoming that drug of choice to help them get there.

Jim Cress: Very well put. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And it's just sad because it may, up front, bring a little spice to the relationship, because why? "The lips of a strange woman drip us honey;" when you inject that into the relationship, you're going to see that. But they forget the rest of the verse, "but her end," is what? "Destruction."

Jim Cress: Destruction.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It destroys the relationship. Jim, when you think of porn and marriages, I want to talk a little bit about what you see regularly in your counseling sessions and the destruction that's taking place.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Tim, somebody's going to think they're getting, pick your favorite, Texas Pete or Tabasco sauce, to spice up their marriage. They're spicing it up with arsenic; that's what they're spicing it up with. And so...

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, and I'm going to say this, a lot of couples are there.

Jim Cress: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A lot...

Jim Cress: And they're getting misinformation or wrong information. And the boredom factor, by the way, is the number one trigger. I use BS Halt, as far as triggers, it's real simple. B is bored, S is stressed. By the way, stressed spelled backwards is

the word desserts. Like I'm going to get my dessert. Bored, stressed, hungry, angry, or anxious... A lot of anxiety, lonely, or tired... So these marriages who are there... By the way, they don't have the true "into me see" intimacy connection, the one flesh part. So they had that unhealthy one flesh part with porn. Paul did this way before modern counseling. Paul said, "If you have sex with your wife, the two become one. If you have sex..." Did you believe this? "If you have sex with a prostitute," Paul said... Think of the prostitute as pornography. I absolutely believe that applies. Paul said, "If you have sex with a prostitute, even those two become one." So there is a bonding that goes on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's like an imprinting that's going on, isn't there Jim?

Jim Cress: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And it's really affecting your brain, we're going to talk a lot more about that in a moment. But that dynamic gets hard to scrub out, you can't get rid of it.

Jim Cress: And a guy can't take a computer mouse and click to make his wife nuanced in different ways. When he's wired his brain for hours looking at porn, no guy looks at one image and acts out, he's going to look at, "click, click, click." He can't swipe left, swipe right, so he's wired his brain all day long toward, and I say it this way, toward junk food. So in holy matrimony with his wife, there could be a prime rib, a great wonderful, delicious meal, he won't even want that. So he has to pornographize his wife in his mind, the brain research shows it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I want to stay with that, Jim, because that is a real mess in Christian marriages.

Jim Cress: Yeah, it is.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When you get into that side of the ledger, it begins to leak back over into the marital relationship, and not in a healthy way. It takes away the beauty of that oneness over here. There's no way a wife can meet that level of performance, or what he sees in that online space. And so, if that's true, she feels terrible and a mess in this whole thing.

Jim Cress: They always feel compared. They tell me that the wives feel compared to the pornography.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They do. And then he loses his appetite for her because the expectation's there. And so some people, Jim, have used the term "sexual anorexia." Can you explain that to our listeners?

Jim Cress: Just like anorexia with food. Sexual anorexia, Dr. Patrick Carnes has a great book by the very title, is the sense that they are basically really trying to control things. They will fast or starve themselves away from being sexual, almost being asexual, to avoid it at all costs. And after a while, when that brain is wired toward pornography, that's false intimacy. A guy actually said this to me one

time, he said, "Every now and then I will take a break from self-sex with pornography to endure having sex with my wife." He's wired his brain. As we know, there's neurons that fire together, wire together. Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do." So he's wired his brain toward that. That he will actually begin to prefer false intimacy in pornography versus real godly intimacy with a wife, and that's where I see it hit as much as anything.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This is a problem, Jim. And to our listeners, again, we're not just trying to pound or grind on this. We're trying to expose one of the greatest issues in the modern day church and in the family. Let's go a step deeper.

Jim Cress: Sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark Laser, a good friend of ours; Mark's gone now. Mark would say to me on any given Sunday, Tim, "25, maybe up to 40% of those seated in the pews are full blown sex addicts." And I would say, "Mark, no way." And he'd say, "Tim, you need to wake up. It's true." What's your thought?

Jim Cress: Well, there's a delineation between, and people often ask me this question, a person who is randomly or casually viewing pornography and someone we would call a sex addict. You look at some of the criteria, an addiction like that, like any addiction, it's obsessive; "I think about it all the time." It's compulsive; "I just keep doing that. It continues despite adverse circumstances." It's secretive; "I try to stop and I can't." That's where it becomes more of an addiction. And here's what I believe, rather anecdotally, if a person, because what we see in the brain research, is going to be looking at pornography... And what happens, the pleasure center of the brain's called the nucleus accumbens, and you fire all that chemistry... I tell the people, "You choose the behavior and the brain will choose the addiction." And you literally will become addicted to it, especially the ability not to stop. Or, "I stopped and got victory for one week and then I'm right back at it." So I think Mark was right. I still think that stat's actually low.

Dr. Tim Clinton: 68% of church going men, 50% of pastors "view porn on a regular basis." Of young Christian adults 18 to 24, again, 76% actively search for porn. I mean that's, "Houston. We really have a problem."

Jim Cress: And Tim, we stay as sick as our secrets and unhealthy as our secrets. The pastors that I, like you, have worked with, so many of all sizes of churches, and they come in and say, "Jim, am I going to really talk to my elder board, my deacon board, whoever about this? And I have such a heart from ministering to pastors because they're thinking, "It is absolutely professional suicide if I go in and tell anyone I have this struggle currently. Not in a sermon that says, 'I once struggled.'" So they are isolated, and I have a real heart to help pastors find freedom because they don't know where to turn.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Only 13% of self-identified Christian women say they've never watched porn. 87% of Christian women have watched porn. Jim, it's a pretty big issue with

women too. We typically classify this as a men's issue. But "mommy porn," 50 Shades of Gray...

Jim Cress: This is where I was going next. You read my mind.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Go there.

Jim Cress: I couldn't believe the Christian women who had book clubs, reading that garbage. And I said, "Are you all..." And I say this respectfully ladies, "Are you all just out to try to be like us?" And I remember Dr. Dan Amen saying to me one time, who is the brain expert, he said, he's literally seeing where women's brains are starting to look like male brains, it's no wonder. But the rising step, the highest one we've seen in the last many years, not as high as men yet, but the fastest rising stat, is women looking at pornography. It's a day I thought I'd never see.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, what's even more sobering to me, is how it's impacting our kids.

Jim Cress: Yeah. Very young.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, kids are getting exposed to porn. It's beyond alarming rates. These kids are exposed to stuff that grown men can't handle.

Jim Cress: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And a child cannot handle; there's no way.

Jim Cress: Remember Song of Solomon, "Don't awaken love before it's time," which is a reference to, we believe, "don't open sexuality yet before it's the right time." And these kids now, Tim, we're singing at age four on some device, a gaming device, a PlayStation, it's a little portable thing and, "Okay. We're safe." They can actually access, because of WIFI, porn. And they're getting it in so many ways that most parents said, "Jim, I would never have thought they could even access that." It's worse than we think.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Barna said that 89% of teens and 95% of young adults actually talk about porn with their friends in a neutral, accepting, and encouraging way.

Jim Cress: Like we used to trade baseball cards. It's just crazy, isn't it?

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's crazy. Jim, what do you think's happening to our kids? We hear the word sexting a lot. Kids are sending pictures back and forth to each other. Barna found in one survey that 62% of teenagers and young adults have received a sexually explicit image from someone, and 41% of those surveyed acknowledged that they had sent their own sexual image through texting.

Jim Cress: I see it a lot. And I see it a lot, quite frankly, with a lot of adults. Patrick Carnes said, "When a person's acting out like that, it seems they're disconnected from their prefrontal cortex." Yes; because I'm thinking, why would you do that? And various states have come up with laws now that if you are, example, if you are 18, still in high school, but you sexted a picture of yourself to someone else, then that can be almost in the realm of statutory rate. But it is rampant and everybody's... They're joking about it, and mocking... Of course, Justine Paul would say, "They're just laughing and thinking it's fun." I've got a daughter. You've got Megan, a daughter. What gets me, is the girls who are doing this. It's just the girls who are doing this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, we're fighting time here on the first of a two part series we're going to do together. But Jim, we're dealing with the scope of the problem, and it's potential impact. I remember talking to a pastor one time, and he said this to me, I'll never forget these words. "I'm the last person, Tim... I'm the last person you would've ever thought, that would've had a problem like this." But he said, "Tim, it was me. It was my secret and it consumed me. It destroyed me," and he wept. Some would say, "Come on, why can't you just get over it? Why can't someone who is up on porn, just give it up? Why can't they break free? Why can't my husband stop? I prayed with him. He's cried to me. He's told me that he wants to stop." What's going on in the midst of this journey? You mentioned a little bit about the brain, you've mentioned the word addiction; help us understand it at that next level.

Jim Cress: 2 Corinthians 10:4, everybody needs to memorize.... 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. 10:4 is, "It is a strong hold." We are dealing with strong holds with people. Now this is a multifaceted problem that needs to be addressed in a multifaceted way. Looking at the brain, the body, sin, dynamics, family of origin, attachment issues from childhood. But there is a strong hold for so many of these people that they're not even recognizing that they're really living under the father of lies, not the father of lights there.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. I'm not given an excuse. I'm wanting to make sure people understand though, there's something that takes hold here.

Jim Cress: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think of Romans, chapter one, somewhere they cross over.

Jim Cress: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You can cross over here, Jim. It's very threatening and consuming, it's like a consuming fire.

Jim Cress: And with that Tim, the idea that, again I'd said from Aristotle again, "We are what we repeatedly do." Think about giving cocaine or heroin to, and this is say, a 12-year-old, and then at age 24 thinking they're just going to go off cold

turkey. Anybody that's been around addictions know they need to go through detox. We have to recognize, and many do thank God now, that pornography, especially the HD effect, the 4K effect of high speed internet and all that goes with porn there... All that accessibility and what it does to the brain; we must address this like crack cocaine actually. Like an addiction, that it's going to take some detox and time to get off of it. Because a guy can come off of porn for a week or two and think he has victory, and then it rears back up, then he's full of shame again.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, you dedicated your life to helping people break free. I want you to give just a brief flyover, if you will, of where we're going tomorrow on the broadcast. Because it's when you really look under the hood of this and you see everything that's going on. And it's so threatening, especially with our kids and their future relationships. Give us hope.

Jim Cress: The hope that I say to people all the time, it's maybe a simple line, but I use, "We have more help than you have problems;" that is a fact. So as bad as it gets, there is a way out. I am personally 16 years, sober as we call it, free from an addiction to pornography. It's true in my story, and there is a way out. But I'll tell you what, and this is as biblical as it gets because we bear the Imago Dei, the image of God in the Trinity, we represent the Trinity. You do not want to do this alone. You're not going to do this, you and your Bible out there on an island. You have to be in community. Watch, we were wounded in relationship, we go out and act out in isolation, come back ABA form. We're healed in relationship like Nehemiah; life on the wall. Next to him, rebuilding the wall next to him. I want you to be encouraged today, man or woman listening, we have more help than you have problems. And if you will work through this, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is for freedom, not bondage. It's for freedom. Christ has set is free; we'll talk about that next time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Galatians 5:11, one of my favorite passages.

Jim Cress: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're going to talk about breaking free personally, breaking free in your marriage and the impact there and bringing that intimacy back. We're going to talk a lot about our kids. How to get them on that right trajectory, where they're free and not caught up in that insanity of the sexual chaos; it's so prevalent in our world. God be with us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim. Thank you for joining us. So look forward to tomorrow's broadcast.

Jim Cress: Thank you, Tim.

Roger Marsh: A hopeful, compassionate conclusion to this first half of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Counselor and Sex Addiction Specialist Jim Cress, here on Family Talk. Pornography is a blight in our society, our churches, and even our

families. But like Jim said, there is hope and, there is freedom from this addiction. Now, to learn more visit drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Well, that's all the time we have for today. Please join us again tomorrow to hear the conclusion of this important conversation. Dr. Tim Clinton and Sex Addiction Therapist Jim Cress, will address how the pandemic has affected our relationships and impacted our kids. They'll also offer some hope and some next steps we can take. I'm Roger Marsh, hoping you'll join us again next time for a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.