



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: America's Pornemic – Part 2

Guest(s): Jim Cress

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: The following program is intended for mature audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

Welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today on the broadcast for the second day in a row, we'll be addressing the disturbing subject of America's pornemic. It was back in 2018 that Yahoo Finance published an article that stated the low end estimate of revenue that the global porn industry accumulates every year is \$6 billion. They reported that a mid-level estimate is closer to \$15 billion in revenue each year, and that number continues to grow. One major porn website boasted, that in one year they had 28 billion views of videos on their site. Can you imagine if we tallied all the sites, clicks, views, users, and time spent on these sites? It's amazing. Here's another statistic, 40 million Americans regularly visit porn sites. And according to a US study conducted by the Barna group, 55% of married men say that they watch pornography at least once every month.

No one can escape the devastating carnage that porn leaves in its wake. Pornography is a threat to families, to children, to relationships, to marriages, to men and women. Dr. Dobson has been warning about the dangers of pornography for years. From 1985 to '86, he served on a commission that was instigated by President Reagan to study the effect of porn on society. Dr. Dobson often says that this was one of the most difficult things he's ever done. He was happy to serve the nation and his president, but he was grieved deeply by the images that he saw during his time on that commission. Our guests again today here on Family Talk is Jim Cress. Jim is a licensed professional counselor who specializes in the treatment of sex addiction, trauma and abuse. Recently he sat down with Dr. Tim Clinton to discuss our country's pornemic. They'll be continuing that conversation right now on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, so great to have you back in studio talking about a really delicate, difficult topic. As we get started, Jim, yesterday we basically laid out that we've got a

real problem in our culture. We've got a real problem in our homes. We have a problem in the church and we've got to do something about it. Jim, when you think about this modern day challenge with pornography, and you've used the word sexual addiction here, let's start with the hope side of this piece; that, Jim, people are breaking free. Because a lot of people think it's one of those brown paper bag topics; we just don't want to go there, first of all. Then we struggle to think whether or not we can break free.

Jim Cress: It can be quite discouraging. Like, "Is there any hope?" The alleged number one cry of the human soul from submariners, men trapped in submarines, in Morse code to tap out, "Is there any hope?" And so wives, in a case of marriage, husbands are thinking, "Can I really ever be free? For, you see, I've stopped looking at pornography for a couple of weeks." Or "I went to Promise Keepers" or went to some event and, "Maybe had a month where I was clean. And then it all came back. I'm even more discouraged." Again, as I said yesterday, we have more help and hope than you have problems, it just takes work to work through this. It is going to take time. It's not going to be something you're going to fix overnight. But be encouraged, there is a way out of this dark web.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A conversation with a pastor I had one time, he said, "Tim, so broken inside. I just hate myself for this addiction that I found myself in." And he said, "I would get to a place where I would pray, and I would promise God that I would never do this again. How much it must break God's heart, how much it's impacting my marriage, how embarrassed I am by it all." And he said, "Tim, I would finish my prayer. I'd be right back over clicking right back in for porn." And he said, "Tim, I wanted to throw up." Jim, speak to that real quick, because a lot of women have asked me, "Listen, I prayed with my husband. We made a covenant together that this was going to be over. That we were going to stop doing porn together as a couple. That he was going to stop, that I was going to stop as a wife and not do this stuff anymore." And Jim, that, "Just say no" piece... I don't know. Here's what's scary, when those covenants, when those commitments are broken, it grinds us deeper and deeper into this downward spiral, and it's not easily undone.

Jim Cress: Well, let me say for a moment, and if this sounds trite, the Lord knows I don't mean that; but sin is the ultimate addiction. I'll have people say to me, a lot of times wives will say, "But I don't understand how would he keep doing this? How do we keep doing this?" I said, "Let me ask you a question. We'll get back to that in a moment. But as a Christian, do you believe it's wrong to sin?"

"Yes."

"Do you still sin from time to time?"

"Well, yes. Everybody knows I do."

"Have you tried with... Maybe it's gossip." Interesting; Paul listed that amongst a bunch of other sins. "Have you tried to stop?"

"Yes."

"And you can't?" And I said, "I'm not calling it a classic addiction, but sin is the ultimate addiction if you think about it. So you've admitted ma'am or sir, that you have tried to stop acting out and you can't. You can't stop." That idea... So they can get a relationship there; they can think, "I can understand." Now when you look at it, we bring in the neurochemical part of the brain and firing all those neuro-transmitters, and dopamine, and PEA, and serotonin...

Dr. Tim Clinton: Something's going on in the brain. So it's like taking a drug or drinking alcohol, or whatever. You take a substance to create a state of euphoria, or some type of feeling; a buzz. People look for that. That's what's happening, right Jim, when you look at pornography? You don't have to ingest a chemical, a substance, all you have to do is trigger a thought. The same process that's going on in substance abuse or use is what's happening with pornography.

Jim Cress: That's why, when I teach and lead workshops and speak on it, every sex addict is a drug addict. Because of dopamine, serotonin, PEA, catecholamines, norepinephrine, adrenaline, all of those firing and oxytocin... The problem is that's God's bonding chemical. Acting out by yourself with porn, there's no oxytocin. As Dr. Bill Struthers says in his book *Wired for Intimacy*, "You're bonding with the abyss. There's no skin to skin contact there as God ordained for you to be with your spouse." But it absolutely meets the criteria, often, for addiction.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A guy told me, Jim, he said, "I knew I was in trouble when I was at work, and I started watching pornography at work." And he said, "This particular day," he said, "I was so consumed with it. I thought it was lunchtime." He lost track of time. People came into his office. It was time to go home.

Jim Cress: Hours later. Tim, we call that losing time in addictions work. Literally... and it happened to my addiction, hearing birds chirping. I had been up all night looking at pornography and I thought, "It's 6:00 AM in my ministry, then to go out and host a national Christian radio show." I never felt like I was just a phony, or a scam on purpose. I would cry out, "Lord God, help me. I don't..." I felt the weight of the addiction. I didn't want to say, "I'll just fake everybody out." It was like, "God deliver me from this."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, in the early days, when we would have these conversations, we would often reference a guy named Harry Schaumburg. Harry made some really strong statements. But he said, "You don't just get rid of pornography."

Jim Cress: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He said, "It doesn't work that way. You really break free when you learn how to have a healthy relationship with another person." Tell us your take on Harry and his insights early on.

Jim Cress: I love Harry, and his book, *A False Intimacy*, is transformative. I used to talk with him at the AACC gatherings, and he had this concept that was so important about false intimacy. That it will feel, to the guy looking at pornography, like he's really connecting. No. that's dots on a screen or some page in a magazine. It will feel like an intimacy, but it is a false intimacy. And he said, "In that intimacy," Harry said that, there among what he called, "there's like these shadowy brides," and they are these false intimacy, "and he can be anybody he wants during that time." It's really all about attachment and connection, because the body will feel like, "I'm really being intimate with these images." It's a false intimacy, needing to be replaced with a real intimacy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So, when you take a drug away from someone, Jim, there's a lot of kicking and screaming. When you detox, it's a battle. And so you're removing something from the equation, and when you remove something from the equation, nature hates a vacuum And rushes to fill it. You've got to put something into that space. So when you're thinking about your son or your daughter, and you're trying to get them to break free from getting caught up in, consumed by pornography, as we remove this, something's got to go in there. Really, at the end of the day, that false intimacy concept make sense, because it's about a relationship. "I've developed a relationship in this pornography." Albeit, remember the old song, Imaginary Lover?

Jim Cress: Yes, mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Clinton: "I've got an imaginary lover, who by the way, has become really real to me." And this virtual world we're living in, that's even more real than ever, isn't it?

Jim Cress: That's right. It seems like it, in the moment, just like a drug to an addict feels like. "This feels more real in the moment." So with that is too, nature, as you said, abhors a vacuum. To look at, what do we put in that? I think there's a gap before we put everything in right away.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So, we've got a relationship problem...

Jim Cress: Well, you hit it. It always is going to come down, primarily, to a relationship problem of attachment and bonding, including with myself, "Who am I, really? See when I'm in porn, I could be anybody I want to be, with anybody I want to be, any way I want to be." Fantasy; that works good at Disney, but that's not real life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Let's bring it home. What are we going to do, Jim? We got a problem. Let's start with the home. Here I am; I'm a wife, I'm listening, you've described my husband, you described my marriage. We're in trouble or fighting like crazy. I

feel empty. I feel alone. I'm exhausted. I feel like all hell's coming against us. What are we going to do?

Jim Cress: I start with Romans 13:14. Now part A of the verse says, "Clothe yourself for the Lord, Jesus Christ." But listen to part B; "Make no provision for the lust of the flesh." We have to sanitize our homes and we have to get educated and wise. We have to know, as parents, that you've got them locked off the WIFI. But do you ever hit the WIFI button on your phone and see there's 40 other WIFI's in your cul-de-sac around, that they could hack into or their buddy at school shows them how to hack in. You've got to look at, do they have any devices? Gaming? You're not being paranoid, you're being proactive so you don't end up being reactive.

But to look at and educate yourself; water accesses ways. Open portals that they may be able to get pornography, start with... That's not going to cure a problem, but people amaze me of how many open portals they have in their home that they would never would have thought about. You know who's leading the way here? The kids. They know far more about all this technology.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, I have no idea; I'm functionally illiterate when it comes to that stuff. But nevertheless, you've got to get yourself dialed in and into that world. Because it's like dealing with explosives. Our kids have explosives in their hands and we've got to figure out how to help them. Stay with this theme of our kids' Jim, how do we help them here? Most parents don't even want to have the conversation there. They're afraid to have this conversation because they don't necessarily want to hear what they're going to hear.

Jim Cress: You and I sat, both of us, back in the green room at AACC world conference a few years ago, and Josh McDowell came in and rocked that crowd with his talk on porn. I'll never forget, and you got to know Joshua McDowell and how he speaks... And Josh said, "If you are waiting to have 'the talk' with your kids, you're already too late." So they're having the conversation now at 6, 7, 8...

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, how do you start that kind of a conversation with your kids? Seriously...

Jim Cress: Part of how we did, even with our kids, is... I went to Dallas Theological Seminary, Howard Hendricks, who'd been with Dr. Dobson many times, he said, "Name the body parts what they are instead of calling it 'woo-woo' and 'hoo-hoo'..." He said, "We're starting off having a weird distorted view of sexuality." He said, "This is what they are; ankle, thumb, finger... and then we call it a weird name." Talk to them organically. Remember Deuteronomy 6, "Talk to your kids about the things of God," and all these important things, not in some weird, "Let's shut down and have the talk." But as you rise up, as you sit down to eat a meal. As you walk along the way...

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know why? They're having that conversation with their buddies. They're hearing it at school.

Jim Cress: Yeah. Everywhere...

Dr. Tim Clinton: They're hearing it at church in the youth group, they are. So why aren't we having those conversations? So number one, have a conversation. Number two. "Okay. Dad, I have a problem."

Jim Cress: Yeah. One of the reasons that a lot of the parents I work with, a lot of the men, they're saying, "Hey, Jimbo, how am I going to have this conversation? When I'm just being honest, I still struggle with porn."

Dr. Tim Clinton: "When I have the problem?"

Jim Cress: "When my boy looks at me and says, 'Dad, did you ever struggle? Do you struggle now?'" That's why I work with a lot of Christian men, I say, "You want to vision. Bible says, 'without a vision, you will die.' And if you don't have a vision," I say, "and don't live it out, you'll die. Either way, you'll die." You got to have a vision. Get help because you're scared spitless to have that conversation with your kid. Because if they turn and say, "Pop, how'd you get out of it?" So I tell guys, "Do your own work around that. You don't have to be perfect, but at least say, 'Son, I'm addressing this too'"

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, I've found through the years, that there's an "aha" experience when you take a Proverbs 5 for a moment, and you look at a couple and say, "Listen, hear me just for a moment, porn can add some spice to a relationship upfront." Hear me, "The lips of a strange woman does drip as honey."

Jim Cress: The Bible says, "Sin is enjoyable for a season." Doesn't hide it, "For a season."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. But the end thereof, as we talked before, Jim, is destruction. And being honest about that piece, "Wait a second, I want connection with my husband." "I want connection with my wife." But make sure you understand where we're going here. People don't see where they're going, what the end result is. And it's because we're frantic, we're desperate, and we're not having conversations about what we need to do to have the intimacy that we crave, that we're hungering for. So we've got to figure that out. And by the way, we need to have those conversations about, "Listen, it's not okay between us. This isn't fun. I've got a secret; I don't like you, I don't like this." We've got to go there.

Jim Cress: You got it. And to add to them, the strategic practical side, our friends at Covenant Eyes; to get internet software filtering. Here's the thing, the kids laugh at me; they'll come in when I talk to them, they go, "I can get around anything." And some of the adults too, "I can get around any filter you want." It's a stutter step. A filter on the internet is not to guarantee you can't go there, but we're trying to put some speed bumps in there, to keep you from going there. So that's how; use some of this filtering software, like Covenant Eyes.

But having the conversation ahead of time, and being able to teach your kids about, "These are some of the things as you develop..." Proactively try to beat Johnny, down the street, from talking to him down in the cul-de-sac. Here's some of the things for women, for men, to talk about these things proactively, and normalize them, and get past the weird factor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, in this lane, "I'm in a mess. The object of my mind... My fantasy is not my spouse." And here's what I hear all the time, I hear this all the time from women, "I just want my husband to love me. I want him to think about me." How do we help scrub out that stuff that's not easy to get out? We've trained our brain, "All I need is one simple trigger." Boom; and it's going there. How do I get that?

Jim Cress: We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Here comes the neurochemistry piece that brain research shows; this is pure hope today, can lay down new neuro pathways. We do it with heart bypasses all the time. The brain will literally say, "We're usually going south to, you know where, now we're going to go north to where we really want to go." And literally, are all those images most likely still on the DVR of your brain? Sure. But they get so buried, further, deeper and deeper in the vault. And you are transformed, both in your mind, but also the very brain and neuropathways. That this is now, as Paul said, "Some of you, here's what you used to be," and all this, including sexual garbage, "but you've been washed, justified and sanctified." That's the hope. Plus the living word of God and how it cleanses and changes and transforms us. There's far more hope than we have problems.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jim, I love sports, you know that. My son, Zach, was a three sport athlete. We lived in that lane. One of the things we learned there, is it takes a lot of work to become successful at something. You got to do a lot of training. Paul said, "You need to train yourself in godliness." When you think of getting rid of something and putting something in its place, it's not easily done.

Jim Cress: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: If you have a bad swing, it takes a lot of work to fix that swing. You don't just walk up there, and one time, it's over. I'm not giving an excuse, we are not excusing things. We're saying get down to the business of doing the work that's needed, because you spent a lot of time training yourself in this path of destruction. We've got work to do to get out of it.

Jim Cress: And since you brought up sports; muscle memory. The old muscle memory is, my guy, excuse me, Peyton Manning, and we've got Big Ben for you and others, they're not sitting there... "How do you throw the ball out there in the flat or that far, and it goes..." It's muscle memory. Well, the old muscle memory took me right to pornography. The new muscle memory is when I throw the ball this way, I would have been normally triggered by that, or that event, or something came across the TV screen of the computer. "No, I don't want to do that;" New muscle memory. It works, because it's worked in my own recovery to say, "Nah,

I don't want that." I don't even want it. It's not like even a temptation. "I don't want that."

Dr. Tim Clinton: So, we've got thought stopping that we've got to figure out. I've got to stop this insanity in my mind. I've got to do thought insertion. I've got to put something in there to replace it. Then I've got to figure out how to build closeness with God and others, so that when the magazines in front of me on an airplane, when I come across the website and I see it, how can I make sure that in in this Job 31 piece, "Where I've made a covenant with my eyes." How I make sure that that doesn't trigger me into that lane all over again?

Jim Cress: Big practical step here, I tell all people all the time, "Stop being surprised when Satan sends something your way. There's only three enemies. You got three; the world, the flesh or the devil." The magazine comes up. I tell people talk out loud. Say, "Satan, you don't win today. Not today, Satan." Or flesh, "I don't want to look at that," and take it. People are surprised when it comes up and say, "That's not what I really want to do."

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm going to go to marriage just for a moment. We're fighting time, but it's so important. Jim, if my spouse is caught up in pornography and I'm on the receiving end of it, and you've heard the stories over and over again, it's an ugly place to live. Because I feel like I've lost myself and the person that I love isn't with me. A lot of women feel their own sense of shame, right there. What about her? She's like forgotten in this thing, all the attention's gone on him. What about her?

Jim Cress: We now are, more and more, stepping up for the wives left behind and saying, "You have to look at, not fun, but look at your own trauma story or your own times of woundedness before you met this guy, did you... And this is hard, I know. But did you see any signs of him being unhealthy in sexual ways before you were married?" Don't condemn yourself. Then look at, what I call fact and impact. A very dear friend, mutual friend Lysa Terkeurst, wrote her book on this, on forgiveness. Fact and impact, *aphiemi*'s the Greek word for forgiveness. It means to cancel the debt. So when I work with wives, and I work with many of them, I'll use three by five cards on the table and say, "What is the debt? What is it caused you? Where's this hit you, uniquely in your story, because of his unfaithfulness?" And then FIT; fact, "This happened to me." Impact, "I," "What did it do to me?" "T," track; "What track do I want to take?" Forgiveness usually won't happen... Experience; forgive the husband who has been unfaithful. It won't happen, usually, very quickly; it takes time. It's both a decision and then a process for her to work through her trauma. It really helps to remember with the guy, trust is built over, and rebuilt, over time. Plus reliable provable experience; it's hard for her to reunite with him if he's still acting out.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You bet. So a word of hope, here for a moment. We need to pay attention to everybody in this equation, and give them strengthening, and help, and hope and encouragement, and more. Jim, let's close out where we're struggling here. It's been a fascinating discussion.

If I can't break free... "We've tried. We've been down this road, you guys have no idea how many tears we've shed, and we think it's hopeless." Jim, you've been there many times. You've sat in that discussion with a lot of couples; what do you say?

Jim Cress: Well, again, I'm so hopeful in Christ for the hope that awaits

Dr. Tim Clinton: Nothing's beyond redemption.

Jim Cress: Nothing's beyond redemption. And again, the time factor; it takes time. What I don't work out, I'm likely to act out. So you get with a good counselor, I call this "Naming, not blaming." We're not going to parent-bash, but look at your family story. Look at that, and what was the impact? Look at some of your childhood secrets. Jim Cress, on this broadcast, I was sexually abused at age four; That's in my story. What am I going to think about that? Some of you have had that happen. To get with a good therapist, a counselor, a biblical Christian counselor, it's what we do. Tim, you lead AACC to help people; it's story work. Brené Brown says this, "You either walk inside your story and own all of your story, or you'll spend your life walking outside your story, and hustle for your worthiness."

"Maybe I'm worthy here..." Walk inside your story, and the healing awaits. Just do the story work. And by the way, that one thing you think, "I'm never going to tell anybody. I'm going to take to my grave. I'm never telling a therapist," bring it into the light. 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, that's where we connect, as he is in the light. It is there we have fellowship, one with another." By the way, "and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from one, two.. No, cleanses from all sin in the light."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Get some help. Many of you listening, you're in this battle right now. Maybe with your kids. Could be your marriage. It could be you personally, husband and or wife, male or female. This is a war zone. We need freedom. It's for freedom. Jim had said early in Galatians 5:1 that, "Christ has come to set us free, kiss the son and you'll be free indeed," and that's the hope message today. Jim, what a great conversation. We've got to do this again and again and again, because there's so many different paths we could go down, so many topics to cover. What a great conversation starter here. We're praying that God uses it to speak life into the hearts of people. Thank you for joining us.

Jim Cress: Thank you, Tim.

Roger Marsh: Well, that was the second and final installment of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with his friend and colleague, sex addiction therapist Jim Cress, here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Jim and Dr. Clinton have spent the past two days delving into the difficult topic of America's porndemic. Pornography is always devastating, not only to the personal life of the individual who views it, but also to their closest relationships, because God didn't intend for us to have imaginary relationships with airbrushed actors and actresses. He created us to

have loving relationships with those around us and especially with him. Now, if this two-day broadcast really spoke to your heart, you can go to our broadcast page and request a CD copy, go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. And while you're there, you can learn more about Jim Cress and find other resources, including information about Covenant Eyes Internet Filtering Software. Again, that address is drjamesdobson.org.

Thanks for listening to Family Talk today. We hope you'll join us again next time. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, may God richly bless you and your family.

Announcer:

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