

CHAPTER 6

Using Your Spouse (or Your Singleness) to Fight Pornography^a

The first car I ever owned was a 1987 Oldsmobile Cutlass Ciera. You might not think that sounds like a very cool car, but that's because you never saw it. If you'd seen it, you would be *positive* it was not a cool car. It was boxy and gray. It made a not-so-stylish whistling noise that didn't help my reputation in high school. The noise and the boxy, gray exterior was just the beginning, though. When you actually squeaked open a door, you saw the hyper-uncool burgundy seats made of Naugahyde. If you don't know what Naugahyde is, then you are uncommonly blessed. It's a fabric that they coat in plastic so it resembles leather. Eventually it cracks, pinches your skin, and even sticks to you. I was thankful for my car, but it was not a great car. In fact, now that I think about it, I really don't want to think about my old Olds anymore.

I'd like to stop thinking about the unpleasantness of whistling Oldsmobiles and cracked Naugahyde digging into my thighs. However, it's hard to get the image out of my mind. What should I do? I could

try really hard *not* to think about the car. I could try thinking to myself, *I need to stop thinking about that Oldsmobile. That Cutlass brings back bad memories of expensive repairs and classmates' jokes made at my expense—memories I would like to get out of my mind. That car was a rolling junkyard, so I need to quit dwelling on it.*

Do you notice something about my effort to quit thinking about my old gray car? It isn't working. Even though I'm trying really hard to quit thinking about that unpleasant automobile, my efforts are ineffective. Every thought that goes through my mind—though motivated by a desire to quit thinking about the car—only presses the image of it deeper into my mind. I need another strategy.

My problem is that I am focusing on the very thing I want to stop thinking about. Instead, I need to start thinking about something else—something different. Let me tell you about the car I drive now. It's a Toyota Camry. I admit it's still not the coolest car on the market today, but I can't help liking it. The air-conditioning actually works. The engine runs so quietly that I literally cannot hear it. At times I've turned the key twice, assuming the car wasn't on because I couldn't hear anything rattling. It has a CD player, cloth seats, automatic windows, and cruise control. I may not be hip, but I don't care. I am thankful for my Camry.

Did you notice what just happened? I had to stop thinking about my old car in order to begin thinking about my new car. Focusing on my Camry is more effective in changing my thinking than trying *not* to think about my old Cutlass Ciera. This illustrates a

think about my old Cutlass Ciera. This illustrates a very powerful principle: *You can never stop thinking about something by trying not to think about it.* If you want to get something out of your mind, you must begin thinking about something else.

The Bible tells us this is a vital principle for how we change. We must refocus our thinking away from porn and toward something holy. God wants to change our thinking, not by having us focus on the things we're trying to quit thinking about, but by replacing old, sinful thoughts with new, righteous thoughts.

So what does all of this have to do with the title of this chapter—the idea that you can, and should, use your spouse (or if you are single, your singleness) to fight pornography? A key passage of Scripture—Proverbs 5—powerfully expresses this principle of redirected thinking and calls you away from the impurity of sexual immorality and toward the purity of a sexual relationship with your spouse. We will look at the entire chapter in two sections. Here is how the first section reads:

My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
 turn your ear to my words of insight,
 that you may maintain discretion
 and your lips may preserve knowledge.
 For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey,
 and her speech is smoother than oil;
 but in the end she is bitter as gall,
 sharp as a double-edged sword.

her steps lead straight to the grave.
 She gives no thought to the way of life;
 her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not
 know it.
 Now then, my sons, listen to me;
 do not turn aside from what I say.
 Keep to a path far from her,
 do not go near the door of her house,
 lest you lose your honor to others
 and your dignity to one who is cruel,
 lest strangers feast on your wealth
 and your toil enrich the house of another.
 At the end of your life you will groan,
 when your flesh and body are spent.
 You will say, "How I hated discipline!
 How my heart spurned correction!
 I would not obey my teachers
 or turn my ear to my instructors.
 And I was soon in serious trouble
 in the assembly of God's people."

Proverbs 5:1–14

If you are looking for the word *pornography*, you will not find it in Proverbs 5. Although there wasn't anything like our modern idea of pornography when Proverbs 5 was written, the adulterous woman mentioned there can be taken to include any sexually immoral woman—whether encountered through porn or in any situation in life. With this in mind, Proverbs 5 is one of the most honest statements about pornography you will ever read.