Ep 171 - Pornography: Addiction and the Hope of the Gospel with Juli Slattery

[00:00:00] **Shelby:** Welcome to Daily Grace. We believe the Bible is true, trustworthy and timeless, and we want to help women like you know and love God's word. The Bible shows us who God is and who he is, changes everything. My name is Shelby.

[00:00:18] **Krystal:** And I'm Krystal, and we want to invite you to come join us as we chat about the truth of God's word in our everyday lives.

[00:00:28] **Shelby:** Before I introduce today's topic, I do want to let you know that listener discretion is advised. We are going to discuss issues of sex and sexuality. This conversation probably isn't fit for children. And we do want to let you know that sexual abuse will be mentioned briefly in a couple places during this episode.

[00:00:50] One of the most common topics we receive requests to cover on the podcast is pornography. We receive questions from women who are addicted to pornography and want to know how to be free from their addiction. We receive messages asking why pornography is wrong.

[00:01:07] We get requests to give guidance on how a marriage can heal if a spouse is addicted to pornography. And we get asked how to protect young minds and hearts from exposure to and use of pornography.

[00:01:20] And so we have put together a four part series on pornography that we are very excited to share with you. And each episode, we'll bring in an expert to teach about this topic and the freedom and healing that is possible from a biblical and gospel centered perspective.

[00:01:37] We pray that this series is helpful to you, whether you yourself struggle with the issue of pornography, if someone you love struggles with it, or if you just want to understand more on this topic from a biblical view.

[00:01:48] You are listening to the first episode in this series titled, Pornography Use, Addiction, Recovery, and the Gospel with Dr. Juli Slattery. Dr. Juli Slattery is a clinical psychologist, author, speaker, and the president co-founder of Authentic Intimacy. Juli earned her college degree at Wheaton college, an MA in psychology from Biola University, and an MS, and a doctorate degree in clinical psychology from Florida Institute of Technology. From 2008 to 2012, Dr. Slattery served at Focus on the Family, writing, teaching, and co-hosting the Focus on the Family broadcast. In 2012, she left Focus on the Family to start Authentic Intimacy, a ministry devoted to reclaiming God's design for sexuality.

[00:02:35] In 2020, Juli launched Sexual Discipleship.com, a platform designed to help Christian leaders navigate sexual issues and questions with gospel-centered truth. Juli is the author of 12 books in the host of the weekly podcast, Java with Juli. Juli, and her husband, Mike, are the parents of three sons and they live in Akron, Ohio.

[00:02:56] Dr. Juli is a dynamic communicator. And every word she speaks is full of grace and gospel centered truth. Come join us and our conversation with Juli as we discuss a foundation for pornography and the hope that there is for pornography use and addiction in the gospel.

[00:03:17] Hey everybody. Thank you so much for joining us for the first episode in our four part pornography series on the Daily Grace Podcast. I am here with my wonderful co-host Krystal.

[00:03:30] **Krystal:** Hey everybody.

[00:03:31] **Shelby:** And Krystal and I are joined by Juli Slattery to talk about God's design for sex, why pornography is outside of that design, and why that matters.

[00:03:42] Juli, we are so glad to have you here with us today.

[00:03:46] **Juli:** Well, thanks for having me on I'm looking forward to this conversation.

[00:03:49] **Shelby:** So Juli, your book, Rethinking Sexuality, is just such a much needed gospel centered resource on sex and sexuality. And for me personally, I just wanted to let you know that reading it has been challenging. It's been encouraging and it has caused me to connect and not exclude sexuality to my theology and to my knowledge of God.

[00:04:13] And so I'm really looking forward to the wisdom and the insight that you will share with us and our listeners today on the topic of sexuality in general, and more specifically on pornography.

[00:04:25] But to get us started today, you know, we'd love to just get to know a little bit more about you. So, can you tell us about yourself and about your ministry, Authentic Intimacy?

[00:04:35] **Juli:** Sure. Yeah. I never dreamed that I would be running a ministry that addresses sexuality. And that's what Authentic Intimacy is. It's a ministry with a mission of reclaiming God's design for sexuality. And if I were to describe it to anybody, I would say we help people make sense of God and sex.

[00:04:54] And so we do talk about the big picture of why did God create sexuality in the first place? What are the various ways that we experience pain and brokenness and confusion around sexual issues? does God care? What is his redemption look like? What does that journey, uh, of seeking the Lord in different areas of sexual pain and confusion? What does that look like? So I've been running this ministry now for almost a decade and it's been quite a journey.

[00:05:24] My background is I'm a clinical psychologist, so started more in the counseling room, helping people. And then over time, just developed a passion for helping people integrate the truth of God's word into real life issues. And for the last decade, those real life issues have all been around sexuality and intimacy.

[00:05:44] **Krystal:** So what led you to start this ministry? I know you use a term, sexual discipleship, which I'm sure you'll define. So what was it that led you to really start this ministry?

[00:05:54] **Juli:** Yeah, it sounds cliche, but it was totally God. So at the time when He put it on my heart to start this ministry, I was working for another ministry for Focus on the Family. And I was more of a generalist in addressing women's issues. And, again, relationships, family, things like that. And I had written and spoken on sexuality within the context of marriage before.

[00:06:17] But I went through a really, deep time of intimacy with God that lasted almost a year of Him just really calling me to seek His face. And out of that time came this burden of the churches and talking about sexuality about sexual brokenness. God kept bringing to me, women who had all kinds of sexual brokenness and they just weren't getting, uh, help from the church.

[00:06:44] And so the call was so obviously from God that I took the step of faith and stepped away from my job and started this ministry and with my co-founder, linda Dillow. And it's nothing more than me, just, waking up every day and taking the next step that God gives me and I am learning as I go. So every day I'm learning more and just hoping to pass that on to other people as God teaches me.

[00:07:13] **Shelby:** I love that. I think so much of our search is doing that. Just waking up and seeing what's next and learning as we go. I know we feel like that in, in our work as well.

[00:07:21] You know, we've brought you on today to talk specifically about pornography addiction and shame and the hope of the gospel. And we're going to get to that in just a second, but, your ministry is aimed at reclaiming God's design for sexuality as a whole.

[00:07:36] And so I'm wondering if you can just share with us, what is God's design for sex and why do we need to reclaim it?

[00:07:44] **Juli:** Yeah, what I've realized over the last decade is a lot of Christians don't really know how to think biblically about sexuality. And, we're all running around with a backdrop or a narrative of how we see sexual issues. And most of us have maybe a partly true narrative that isn't fully biblical.

[00:08:02] And so I think every conversation about sexuality has to begin with more of that big picture of why do you think God created us as sexual people to start with? And most people would only say, well, I guess it's because of marriage. And it's because it's how we make babies. And, and that's as deep as our theology goes, instead of really wrestling with, well, God could have created us to make babies any way He wanted to.

[00:08:27] Why did He make us male and female? Why did He give a sexual organs? And why did He give us hormones and desires? And so those why questions are really critical and most Christians don't know how to answer the why questions from a biblical perspective.

[00:08:42] We are either borrowing from the culture's story of sex, which says, sex is an important part of self-expression. If you don't have the freedom to express your sexuality, you can't be a whole person. That's a predominant narrative of our culture.

[00:08:58] Or they're working from sort of a traditional church or purity narrative that just says, sex is so important because it's how you show that you're obedient to God.

[00:09:08] It's like the test of, are you a good person? Are you a good Christian? Uh, and in our current day and age, we're seeing the fallout of that purity message and people really grappling with, there has to be more because this rule-based message has led me to more pain. So we're hearing a lot of stories about that.

[00:09:29] And so there has to be a richer narrative of why God created us as sexual people. Indeed there is. If we read the Bible, not just looking for the passages that tell us what to do with our sexuality, but read the Bible as a story, and we read it from Genesis to Revelation, we see that God created us as sexual people as a way of Him revealing Himself to us.

[00:09:53] And so we see sexuality as this metaphor of how God pursues His people with passionate love, with committed, faithful love. He asks us to be faithful and committed to Him, and it involves this journey of intimate, knowing, of being fully known. It involves giving oneself to the Lord and Him giving Himself to us and us giving ourselves to the body of Christ.

[00:10:19] And so that love that God has for us is in some ways written in our sexuality, is embodied in our sexuality. When we look at the scripture, again, Old Testament, New Testament, we see this story is a predominant story related to sexuality and marriage and singleness, but nobody's telling that story.

[00:10:40] And so in order to really understand why sexuality is so powerful, why it's under such spiritual attack, why sexual sin feels so much heavier, we have to understand that story because then it's like, oh, okay, now this is starting to make sense to me. Like, I can start to get God's heart for this, not just look at His rule book.

[00:11:02] **Shelby:** Yeah. And so when you talk about having like a deeper and a richer, just understanding of sex and sexuality, I know one thing that I've heard you say before is that before we can talk about sex, we have to talk about what we believe about God. And so why, is that your approach to sexual discipleship?

[00:11:22] **Juli:** Yeah, it's not just my approach. I think, as I read Christian thinkers and writers from the past, one of the things that A.W. Tozer says is the most important thing about you is what you believe about God. Because once we've established what I believe about God, everything is going to come out of that.

[00:11:42] So we see a lot of confusion in our culture around sexuality. That predominantly began with confusion about God, that begins with, is He trustworthy? Does He exist? Is there truth? What does it mean to be a good person or a bad person? All of that is rooted in our view of God.

[00:12:01] And even as we look at the church, as the church becomes more confused about the nature of God, the symptom of that is now we can't agree on sexual issues because we can't agree on who God says that we are.

[00:12:14] And so I think that these are deeply theological questions, and the sexual questions around it are just sort of the, the symptoms of the deeper, you know, what does it mean that God loves me? What does it mean that He can forgive my sin, that He can remove my shame? If we're not dealing with those foundational questions, then we're going to continue to wrestle and not find resolution in the sexual questions.

[00:12:40] **Shelby:** Hm, yeah. And, you know, I think it's important that we address one more thing before we get, you know, much further in this conversation. And that's just that, in your book, you say that we are all sexually broken. Some people that struggle with sexual sin, but all of us. So can you explain what you mean by that?

[00:12:58] **Juli:** Yeah, so we define brokenness only in contrast to what it means to be whole, right? You don't know if something's broken until you know what it's supposed to look like whole. And, uh, I think traditionally in the church, we've had such a limited definition of wholeness that that's really made us have a limited definition of brokenness.

[00:13:18] So if being sexually whole means I haven't broken God's rules, I saved myself from marriage. I got married as a virgin. I haven't slept with anyone else. That's how we have defined sexual wholeness in the church. And so we'll point to people that have broken those rules and say you're broken.

[00:13:37] And instead of saying, "No, actually sexual wholeness is so much more complex and integrated than how we defined it. It means that my sexuality is an accurate reflection of what God created it to be. That it images God. That it reveals the nature of his love to me. That gender matters. That intimacy matters."

[00:14:03] And when my understanding of what wholeness looks like expanded, I'm like, "Wow, we all fall so far short of that." And of course that's a consistent message of the Bible is that none of us are righteous. That the gospel says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But for some reason we haven't applied that to sexuality.

[00:14:26] And, uh, and so I think we really need to begin with the starting place of, even if you have saved sex for marriage, you still have elements of the world's thinking, the enemy's lies, shame, selfishness, you know, that have infiltrated your sexuality, that God wants to reclaim, that God wants to expose for the purpose of His redemption.

[00:14:48] And so that changes the conversation from an us versus them, the church is here to fix the world, to know like we all need the redemption of Jesus Christ in this area of our lives.

[00:15:01] **Krystal:** Hmm. I think it's so helpful. Being able to really have a new starting point when we talk about sexuality and, as we get into pornography and addiction, you know, we're talking about it as sin. And that should be the same starting point when we talk about other sins. And yet we've kind of put it into another category and how we talk about it is so different.

[00:15:20] So I think this is a really helpful framework and conversation as we get into this. So just in light of all of this, let's talk specifically about pornography use and addiction. So let's think about this first question, why is pornography outside of God's design for sex?

[00:15:37] **Juli:** Yeah. So first of all, we have to go back to, okay, what is God's design for sex? And we're not just talking about His design for sexuality, which is another whole conversation, but what is His design for sexual expression? And God created sex to be a physical way that a husband and wife cement and celebrate their covenant promise.

[00:16:01] So it was really helpful for me to hear how Tim Keller described this. He said, "God has given us a way physically to act out our spiritual vows to each other." So when I got married 27 years ago, I made a vow to my husband that I give myself to you. I forget the words we used, but he made the vow to me to like, for as long as we shall live, we belong to each other.

[00:16:26] And so we made that spiritual and emotional commitment and God gave us a way physically to actually act that out. To give our bodies to one another, to give and receive each other, to be faithful to one another to celebrate together. And so one way I'll describe this as like sex is the party that celebrates the covenant.

[00:16:47] Sex is meant to remind us and celebrate the fact that my husband and I have given ourselves to one another, which gives sex this rich, beautiful meaning. But what the enemy wants to do in our lives is he wants to say, you can have the symbol of covenant without having the covenant.

[00:17:08] That you can have the symbol, you can have the party, the parade, but it means nothing. And pornography is perhaps the greatest example of that because you don't even have a relationship. You don't know who this person is. They're an image on a screen. and it's so disconnected from what God created sex to be.

[00:17:29] It teaches us to view people as objects. It teaches us to be consumers related to sexuality instead of being drawn into the kind of covenant that would ask us to unselfishly love one another. And so again, until you understand what is God's design for sex, you can't really grasp, like why would pornography be such a big deal.

[00:17:54] **Shelby:** Yeah, absolutely. I love that. We have to go back to definitely go forward in this conversation and that you're helping us do that. You know, you briefly mentioned this, but you describe in your book that there's a link between sexuality and God's covenant love. And so can we talk just a little more deeply about what that link is? Cause I think that plays into this conversation about pornography in an important way.

[00:18:18] **Juli:** Yeah. So when we use that term covenant love, that's not a term that we're used to using in our world. Like the only time I've ever used or heard the word "covenant" used outside of churches, like signing my HOA covenants, you know, like I won't have a trailer in my backyard or something.

[00:18:35] So we don't use the word "covenant". We don't really know what it means. We might've read it in the Bible, but a covenant is a completely different kind of relationship or love than the way we usually even define marriage today. But it's a relationship based on a promise.

[00:18:52] And I am so thankful that God loves me with a covenant love, because it means that even if I mess up, He's going to be faithful to his promise to me. Like He has chosen me. I belong to Him. As Paul would say, nothing can separate me from the love of God through Christ Jesus. And so it's the cementing of Him saying," I'm not going anywhere. I'm the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. And I will be with you to the end of the age. I'm not going anywhere."

[00:19:20] And so when we talk about God's covenant, love, it is the message of the Bible. The story of the Bible is how God loves people with covenant love. Now, when we read the Bible, everything in the Bible is about revealing aspects of who God is, right? It's how we know God. But in the scripture, the Bible constantly uses physical things that God created on earth to help us understand spiritual truths.

[00:19:46] So when you read the Bible, you're going to read stories about trees and sheep, and, uh, you know, all kinds of physical things, vineyards, because God created the physical world also to reveal spiritual truths.

[00:20:01] And this is true of our human experience. Why does Jesus say so much about hunger and thirst? You know, why does he say I'm the living water? I'm the bread of life? You know, if you eat of me, you'll never be hungry again. If you drink of me, you'll never be thirsty again because God has given us the physical experiences of hunger and thirst to relate the spiritual hunger and thirst we have.

[00:20:26] Now let's apply that to our sexuality. God created us as sexual people so that we would have a physical experience of longing for covenant of wanting for that kind of love that's not going to leave, of longing for intimate oneness, a passionate celebration.

[00:20:45] And so our sexuality is a way that God is revealing to us, in a physical and emotional and psychological way, how He loves us. And again, as we read the scripture, it, especially if you look at the prophets, they're constantly using sexual language to describe the relationship of God in Israel, because the physical helps us understand the spiritual.

[00:21:07] **Shelby:** Hm. Yeah. So bringing this back to pornography, how do you think understanding that link between God's covenant love and our sexuality, how does that impact the conversation on pornography?

[00:21:20] **Juli:** Yeah, I know what it did for me, understanding this helped me see the spiritual battle around this.

[00:21:28] So often we think about sexual temptation, sexual sin, as, okay, I've got to defeat this, like I know this is bad, but you know, I just got to say no. But when we zoom back, and we begin to see that there really is this intense, spiritual warfare around this beautiful metaphor of sexuality, we start to realize that this is a fight worth having.

[00:21:53] And I can't have it myself. I really need God's power in my life. I need the fellowship of the body of Christ around me to wage this battle. And so regardless of where someone is struggling sexually, whether it's pornography or some other element of sexual struggle, this is not just about having a better life or preparing for a better marriage or something that you fill in the blank.

[00:22:16] This is about Satan wanting to tarnish in your heart the beauty of what God reveals through sexuality. And it's about Jesus saying, "Will you invite Me to redeem this picture for you? Because if you understand sexuality, the way I designed it to be, you're going to know My love in a deeper, more significant way."

[00:22:39] And so it really changes the reason why this is such an important conversation and why in our own lives it's worth fighting for.

[00:22:48] **Krystal:** Hm. So as we're talking about pornography, I feel like there's two kind of sub categories that come up frequently. So the first is masturbation, which is rarely, if ever, talked about in the church, especially with women. And the second is shame. So I would love for us just to talk about these two topics first.

[00:23:08] How does the Bible speak to masturbation? And then second, you know, let's talk about like sexual shame. What is it? And is there freedom from it?

[00:23:19] **Juli:** Yeah. So first that topic of masturbation, it is something that we talk about a lot in our ministry. We actually did a whole podcast episode on it recently. But the Bible doesn't say anything about the topic. It's silent. And we have to wonder, well, why is that? You know, God certainly wasn't shy about addressing sexual issues, both in the Old Testament and New Testament.

[00:23:40] And most people I ask, well, I'll ask them you like, do you think that was a struggle in biblical times? You think they had figured this one out? Everybody's like, yeah, I think they probably did. Um, so why, why do we not see in the gospels, for example, Jesus training his disciples not masturbate? Like why is the Bible silent here?

[00:24:01] I don't know the answer to that, but here's what I do know we have to do. When the Bible is silent on something, we have to be careful to avoid two extremes. One of them is legalism, which is says, I don't think it's right, so it's always wrong. It's bad. It's sinful. And the second extreme is licensed where we just say, well, because the Bible doesn't mention it, then, hey, everything's fair game.

[00:24:25] What we want to do instead is we want to press into the heart of God and this what the Bible does speak on and apply it to this issue. and so we do know through the scriptures that the primary purpose of sexual expression is marriage. It's supposed to be between a husband and wife, this celebration of covenant.

[00:24:44] And so that's the end goal. It's this revelation of covenant. And so when somebody is struggling with masturbation, at the very least, it's a very immature expression of God's design for sexuality. I encourage people to think, if masturbation isn't a moral issue, perhaps it's more of a maturity issue.

[00:25:05] And so if you're talking to a 14 or 15 year old that has these raging hormones and is trying to figure things out and doesn't have a deep relationship with God, doesn't understand God's purpose for sexuality, I would say we'd have a different conversation than if we're talking to a 35 year old believer.

[00:25:23] It's like, wait, you really should have grown out of this. What are the issues underneath masturbation? What are you using it for? And that's another biblical principle is that, you know, Paul says everything is permissible for you, but not everything is beneficial and don't be mastered by anything. And so don't let this become an addictive pattern.

[00:25:44] And for a lot of women, that's the case. It's where they go if they're lonely. Where they go if they're feeling shame or depression, and so God wants us to grow and say, okay, how do I identify those triggers? And how do I address them in a healthier way?

[00:26:00] And then the third thing we do know that the scripture speaks to is lust. And for a lot of people, a masturbation is automatically paired with pornography or lustful fantasies. And so in that case, the scripture says, "Hey, it's not necessarily even what we're doing with your body that is the issue. What is more important is where your heart is going."

[00:26:23] And really we need to be bringing that issue before God. And so I think it's a complicated issue, because it represents, even with your second question, it represents so much shame for people, particularly women. But also we can kind of get stuck in this place where we're never maturing. We're never growing. We're just looking at trying to get rid of behavior.

[00:26:46] The topic of sexual shame is also a very important one. And, uh, you know, I think we need to make a few distinctions as we talk about shame in general.

[00:26:54] First of all, there is a difference between feeling guilt and feeling shame. So in general, feeling guilt is I feel guilty for something I've done. I'm feeling shame has this more pervasive sense of, I feel awful for who I am. Like something is fundamentally wrong with me. And so when we talk about that shame component of, "Man, I just feel dirty. I feel like I can never be clean because of what I struggle with or what I've experienced."

[00:27:23] I think we have to ask shame a question. We have to ask the question, is my shame telling me the truth? And there are some times where our shame is not based in truth. It's totally based in lies and in the enemy's accusations.

[00:27:39] So a good example of this is women who have been sexually violated. Shame is something almost without fail that a woman who has experienced sexual trauma will struggle with. And she'll feel like I'm forever tainted and damaged. Somehow I must have be responsible for this. And the enemy will keep her in that place of shame that is not even based in truth.

[00:28:02] Another area of false shame is when women feel shameful about their bodies. I feel ashamed to be naked in front of my husband. I feel shame because of my weight or you name it Those are the kinds of shame that have no basis in truth. And when we encounter that kind of shame, we have to call it out.

[00:28:22] We have to speak the truth of God into it, and community needs to do that with us. But there is an element of shame that does tell the truth. So even if we look back at the Gospel, the Gospel is saying, it's not just what you've done that's a problem, it's an element of being a sinful person. There's something about me that means I'm not holy.

[00:28:45] And so there are desires and longings I have. There are things that sin patterns I have that are genuinely wrong. And there's an honesty in that. I think Paul expresses in Romans chapter 7, he says " I can't even do the things I know that are right." And he goes, "Oh, what a wretched person I am."

[00:29:06] Like, that's an expression of shame. And when we encounter that kind of shame that is speaking into the truth, the great thing is that God never intends us to stay there. And so the next thing that Paul says is, "Praise be to God because He alone can save me from the shame." And then he goes right into Romans 8, which says, "So there's no condemnation. There's no shame for those who are in Christ Jesus."

[00:29:33] And so for that true shame, we very clearly are given instruction that don't hide it, confess your sin, and when you confess that sin, God will cleanse you. He removes all shame, all condemnation.

[00:29:46] And then the challenge is, "Okay, how do I walk by faith in that truth that sometimes doesn't feel very true?"

[00:29:54] **Shelby:** That's really great. For someone who's listening, who may be, is a user or is addicted to pornography, just what would you say to them? Like what are some steps they can take to move forward and to begin to recover from that?

[00:30:09] **Juli:** Yeah, I would say the most important step is to come out in the darkness. So shame grows in darkness. Shame grows in secrets. This topic, whether we're talking about pornography or masturbation or sexual trauma, it creates so much more shame because we don't have a place to confess it. We don't have a place to find community around it.

[00:30:31] And this is particularly true among women. And I know you're having my friend and colleague Joy Skarka on and she'll be sharing her story with your listeners of how important this was in her journey. But that first step, even as we see in 1 John chapter 1 is tell the truth. You know, come out into the light. And yes, that begins with God, confessing our sins. But it also means solidifying that, confession by telling another person, another trusted person.

[00:31:02] When I've talked to women who struggle with pornography, there's more shame around the secret than there is around the action.

[00:31:09] So once they can get the secret out and they can be among other women who are saying, "You're not the only one. Like, I'm so glad you said that because that's my story too." All of a sudden now we're not just battling the shame anymore. We're just saying, okay, how do we get set free?

[00:31:25] You will never heal by yourself. Never. And I would even go so far as to say, you're not likely to heal with just you and God. Like, God works through His body. And that means sharing this journey with other people.

[00:31:39] **Shelby:** Hmm. That's really helpful, you know, for a moment too, I want to talk to those who don't personally view pornography, but someone they love does. Maybe it's a friend, maybe it's a spouse, or maybe it's one of their children. What advice would you give to them? How can they walk with their loved one and maybe even help them find freedom?

[00:32:00] **Juli:** Yeah, I think the first thing is to be a safe space. And so let's say it's your spouse. And you caught your spouse looking at pornography. Your natural reaction is going to be anger, shock. And there's good reason to feel those things. If it's your kid, you find out that they're using pornography. Again, your natural reaction is going to be anger, fear. "What did I do wrong?"

[00:32:25] And it's natural to feel that way, but when we approach the individual that way, we're essentially saying, "I'm rejecting you. Like, I can't handle this."

[00:32:36] Instead of being a place where it's like, "Yes, this is messy, but I love you, and I'm not going anywhere, and we are going to walk through this."

[00:32:46] So I think that's critical. I think also the importance of realizing that if this isn't your struggle, you have your own struggles, and not approaching people with a sexual sin struggle as if they're like a different category of sinner.

[00:33:01] And you know, if we look at, in Proverbs, the seven things that God hates, nothing related to sexuality is on that list.

[00:33:10] You know, it's haughty eyes. It's people that cause division, you know. It's hands that shed innocent blood. It's pride. When I battle pride, Proverbs would say, "God hates that."

[00:33:22] Now God hates all sin, but, man, I need to be honest with the things that I wrestle with on a daily basis and not, be judgmental towards somebody that has a different sin struggle.

[00:33:34] And I think that really provides the environment of, "Hey, we're all pursuing the Lord. We want to be honest with how we struggle. You might struggle differently than I do, but that doesn't mean that you're a less of a child of God than I am."

[00:33:49] **Krystal:** So, how would you encourage if there's anyone listening who maybe leads within the local church. Whether they're a small group leader, maybe it's a pastor's wife. How would you encourage them to create a safe place for women to be able to talk about these kinds of issues?

[00:34:03] **Juli:** Yeah, I think the first thing is we have to provide safe places for women to talk about sex before we create safe places for them to talk about pornography. And, we have begun conversations about sex by segmenting problems. Like we've got the group for pornography. We've got the group for survivors of sexual trauma.

[00:34:25] We have the group for LGBT questions. Those, those kinds of conversations are important, but they shouldn't be our primary conversation. We have to start with some of this bigger picture of, why does God care about our sexuality? Let's level the ground here and say, we all have questions. We all have issues we're struggling with.

[00:34:46] This is a safe place. Let's talk about sexuality from a gospel and discipleship perspective first, and then we can have these conversations about, okay, like, how is this playing out in your life? Pornography? All right. Let's, get some help and materials related to how you overcome a struggle with pornography.

[00:35:07] But you have married women who haven't had sex with their husbands for five years. You have singles who are stuck in cycles of hooking up and, you know, we're all struggling. The conversation has to be broader than just addressing one issue.

[00:35:23] And also this is true, particularly of women, we don't just have one issue. I love the book, entitled Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti. It's an old book marriage.

[00:35:33] But it talking about how like men tend to compartmentalize. And so when men get together and they talk about sexual struggles, they will focus just on pornography because they compartmentalize.

[00:35:44] Spaghetti, every noodle touches every other noodle. And so when you bring up topics of sexuality, women want to talk about their body image issues. They want to talk about the shame that they grew up, maybe from purity culture, experiencing. They want to talk about their longings to be known.

[00:36:03] And so, the conversations cannot just be, let's get rid of pornography. It has to be, how does God's love and his relationship with you transform how you see everything, including the struggles around sexuality. So that's a long way of answering. Um, we have tons of resources, especially related to women at Authentic and we see that help guide those conversations. We have several studies that, you know, we have a book called Sex and the Single Girl for single women.

[00:36:33] We have a book called Passion Pursuit for married women. You mentioned Rethinking Sexuality. We have a podcast. We have a book called Surprised by the Healer, that help give you tools to begin conversations around biblical sexuality in a way that will really bring women in a place of safety and a journey of healing.

[00:36:54] **Krystal:** Yeah, I really, I appreciate that. And even just framing our conversation that way for many of us. Our first conversations around sex were negative. It was just, don't do it. And so when we get married, it's like, oh, now we're supposed to drop the don't do it. And then what do we do next? And it's, it's a hard transition to make, I think, for a lot of women.

[00:37:16] So I appreciate just even being able to start with, just a more broad question and being able to look at God's design for sexuality, um, and everything stemming from that I think is really helpful.

[00:37:29] **Shelby:** Yeah, it is helpful. And I think you talked too about how, you know, we want to have like a rich and deep understanding of God, but we almost say, but my sexuality is outside of it. That's a personal issue. And so I love the idea of just integrating that with the rest of our, faith.

[00:37:45] But, you know, you've touched on this in different parts of the conversation, but I just want to speak really plainly to how does the gospel speak to the issues of pornography addiction, shame and recovery?

[00:37:58] **Juli:** Yeah. So w if we back up for a minute and I'll just ask you, how would you describe the gospel? What is the gospel?

[00:38:07] **Shelby:** Yeah, the gospel is the good news that we've been saved by from sin and death, by the grace and goodness of God, through the shed blood of Jesus. And that we have the hope of glory and eternity with Him.

[00:38:18] **Juli:** Yeah, absolutely. So good answer. I didn't, you didn't even know I was going to ask you that.

[00:38:23] So if we were explaining the gospel to our children, we would say the gospel is that God created us for fellowship with Himself, like a relationship with Him. But sin got in the way of that relationship. And we are lonely, like we can't make it without God.

[00:38:40] But Jesus loved us so much, the father loved us so much that He sent His Son, and Jesus died on the cross so that we could have a relationship with Him. And when we have a relationship with Him, we are on this ongoing journey of becoming more like Him. That's what we believe. That's the heart of what we believe. If we take that and just apply it to sexuality or pornography, we can say, "Hey, God created you to experience your sexuality in a way that actually reveals how He loves us. But we are all sinful and we're all fallen. And your exposure to pornography, your reuse of pornography has separated you from knowing the love of God, and God's design for your sexuality. But Jesus loves you so much that His death on the cross covers all of that sin, all of that shame."

[00:39:28] And when you receive that gift, the call then becomes, " How do I surrender this to the Lord? How do I become more like Him? How does Jesus begin redeeming what has been so broken in my life?"

[00:39:41] You you say, I use the word sexual discipleship or that phrase. And I love that phrase because discipleship is a journey. It's not a one and done. Like, receiving Christ is a one and done. But learning to walk by faith and learning to surrender more of a heart to Him is a lifelong journey.

[00:39:59] And that is the case with our sexuality is every day waking up and revealing more and becoming more and more Jesus, and letting His truth be more true than the lies. and we all need to be on that journey.

[00:40:13] **Shelby:** Yeah. Julie, we thank you so much for all the wisdom that you've shared for us so far. I think this is a great baseline for us to just begin this conversation on pornography.

[00:40:24] I love the way that you just described, the reason that God created our sexuality and how that integrates into His love and into the Gospel.

[00:40:33] In closing, you know, we just want to ask you one more question and it is a question that we ask every guest we have on the podcast. But at the Daily Grace Co, we often say that the gospel changes everything. And we're wondering, what has the gospel changed for you?

[00:40:49] **Juli:** My goodness. I can't just say the gospel changes everything, right? It's changed everything.

[00:40:55] The gospel continues to change everything. So, as I understand more of God's love for me and His claim on my life, you know, I realize more and more that nothing this world has to offer can sustain me. Success and even relationships and, like, everything else can be taken away from.

[00:41:17] The one thing that can't be taken away is God's love for me. And so, as I continue my journey of discipleship, it's how do I make that truth the reality of my life? That Jesus is everything? So He has changed everything, He is changing everything, and He's an amazing God.

[00:41:39] **Krystal:** Amen. Well, thank you so much just for joining us. I just want to echo everything that Shelby said, and I just, I appreciate the gospel hope that you bring into this conversation. Because again, it's not a conversation that a lot of women are having in the church. And so I pray that this encourages them and challenges them to just step out of their comfort zone and put this kind of discipleship into practice.

[00:42:03] So thank you so much for joining us today.

[00:42:05] **Juli:** Sure. Thank you for giving me the chance to share.

[00:42:08] **Krystal:** Hm. So remember this is the first of four episodes in our pornography series. We have three more episodes coming where we will talk about pornography, addiction, and women. And that it's not just a men's issue. Pornography, addiction, and recovery and marriage, and how to disciple our children well on the issue of pornography.

[00:42:26] We hope that you'll join us for each of these episodes. And we're just so thankful that you joined us today on the Daily Grace Podcast.

[00:42:33] **Shelby:** Yes. And don't forget to subscribe to our weekly newsletter where you'll receive resources related to the podcast, straight to your inbox. Today, we'll be sending you all the links so that you can connect with Juli, her ministry, her books, and so much more. And you can click on the link in the show notes to subscribe.

[00:42:52] **Krystal:** Until next week, come join us as we continue the conversation over on Instagram @DailyGracePodcast. We'll see you next time.

[00:42:59] **Shelby:** Bye everybody.