



When I was young my school showed all the students a film titled *Say NO to Strangers*. In the film several young children were confronted by strangers and had to choose whether they should go with the stranger or not when, for example, a stranger would try to lure them away with candy or ice cream. If a child gave in, tragedy could result.

I thought of that movie recently when I read what the Lord said through the Prophet Joseph Smith at a conference of the Church in 1831: “The enemy in the secret chambers seeketh your lives” (D&C 38:28).

A Hidden Enemy

Pornography is like that evil stranger, that enemy operating in secret chambers. It targets children, teens, and adults—both male and female. Its purveyors often operate in secrecy and seek to deceive us by claiming to offer something normal and pleasurable that doesn’t harm anyone.

Pornography pretends that it is no evil stranger—that it is not a problem and is not addictive. That is a lie. One 12-year-old boy recently wrote to the *New Era*, telling of his experience viewing pornography when he was alone at home. While initially it was exciting, he soon felt deep despair. He wrote: “I have been trying my best to forget those images. I would like to say to anyone reading the *Friend* or *New Era* that while porn might be pleasurable, it really wrecks your soul and is hard to recover from.”

Pornography is more prevalent today than at any other time. For most people of earlier generations, pornography

was something hidden in the dark corners of society. Nowadays, because of the Internet, it seems that encountering pornography is increasingly not a matter of *if* but *when*. That is why it is important that you decide now to prepare a way to flee from this evil stranger.

Dr. Donald L. Hilton Jr., a specialist in neurological surgery and a Church member, says that even one viewing of pornography can be enough to sow the seeds of a future addiction. Its allure and the accompanying act of self-stimulation may not seem horribly bad at first. Excitement, fascination, and gratification all accompany the viewing of pornography, and because of that, he warns, you may not believe you are addicted until it is too late.

There Is Help

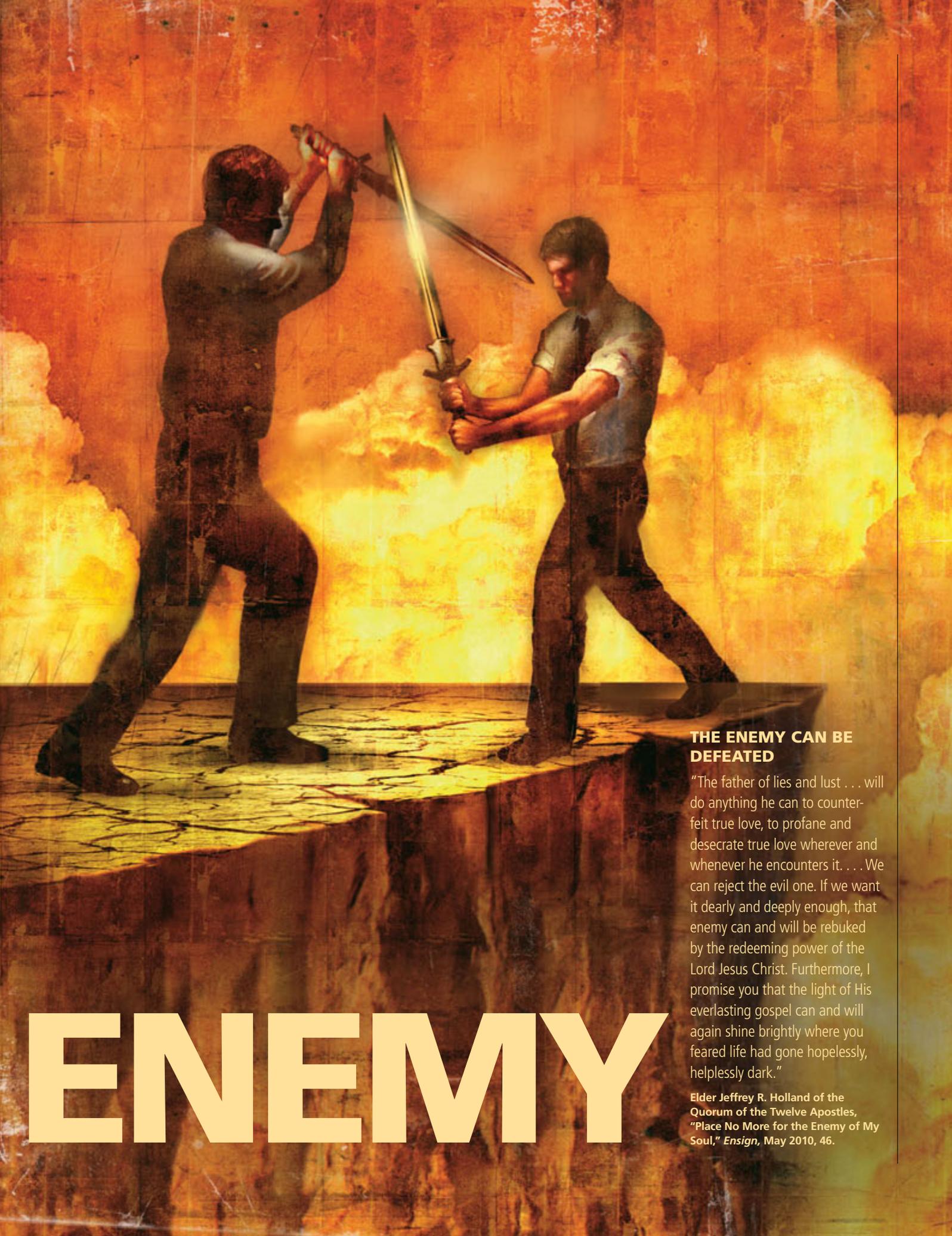
If you are tempted to view pornography, there are ways to resist. If you have developed a habit of viewing pornography, there is help. Talking with your bishop about these things may seem scary, uncomfortable, or embarrassing, but he, along with your parents and your Heavenly Father, loves you and wants only the best for you.

The best way to stay safe is surprisingly simple—talk to your parents and ask for their help in avoiding pornography. Make a plan together so that they can support you.

The best way to escape if you need to repent is also simple, though it may require courage: go to your bishop

You need to prepare a battle plan now to avoid or overcome pornography.

The Secret



ENEMY

THE ENEMY CAN BE DEFEATED

"The father of lies and lust . . . will do anything he can to counterfeit true love, to profane and desecrate true love wherever and whenever he encounters it. . . . We can reject the evil one. If we want it dearly and deeply enough, that enemy can and will be rebuked by the redeeming power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, I promise you that the light of His everlasting gospel can and will again shine brightly where you feared life had gone hopelessly, helplessly dark."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul," *Ensign*, May 2010, 46.



TURNING A VICIOUS CYCLE INTO A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

If you can recognize the sexual addiction cycle, you can make a battle plan to combat it. Counseling with the Lord, your bishop, and your parents will help you to discover ways that will help you personally. Then you can turn your behavior patterns from a vicious cycle to a virtuous circle, which will reinforce themselves as you repeat them again and again. (For more information on pornography addiction, see CombatingPornography.org.)

THE ADDICTION CYCLE

1. **Thoughts.** A person's mind becomes completely preoccupied with the object of the addiction, leading to an obsessive search for stimulation. Catching yourself at this stage and stopping yourself can help you avoid being trapped.
2. **Rituals.** A person goes through routines that intensify the preoccupation, adding more arousal and excitement. Again, recognizing these routines and altering them can help you to avoid the addictive behavior.
3. **Behavior.** A person acts out, feeling that he or she cannot control or stop this behavior (whether it's taking drugs or engaging in sexual behavior). But you have agency; you can stop the behavior, even if you've allowed yourself to get to the stage where it's much more difficult to withstand the temptation.
4. **Despair.** A person feels utterly hopeless about his or her behavior and feels powerless to control it. Often, because of the damage done to self-worth and as a way to cope with these depressing feelings, a person's thoughts turn again to the object of the addiction, and the cycle begins again. But even if you've gone this far, you don't have to let the cycle repeat itself. With the Lord's help, you can overcome it.

THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

1. **Thoughts.** Change your environment. Surround yourself with pictures, music, and literature that will inspire good and uplifting thoughts. Avoid media, people, or settings that have tempted you

in the past. Disconnect the Internet or television cable. Learn constructive ways to respond to conflict, boredom, or other negative feelings. Think about ways to serve others.

2. **Rituals.** Engage in positive activities, such as studying the scriptures, exercising, or talking with a family member or friend.
3. **Behavior.** Fast and pray for help, and do good works. Addiction, which is selfish by nature, can be replaced by selfless service to others.
4. **Joy.** President Thomas S. Monson has said, "Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness. Happiness comes from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others" ("Preparation Brings Blessings," *Ensign*, May 2010, 66–67).

DO I HAVE A PORNOGRAPHY PROBLEM?

Do you wonder whether you have a pornography problem that is compulsive or addictive? If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you may benefit from discussing it with a professional counselor in addition to your parents and your bishop. These and other questions can be found at CombatingPornography.org.

- Do you view pornography frequently or regularly?
- Have you ever promised yourself that you would never again view pornography?
- Have sexual thoughts interfered with your ability to function at school or at work?
- Do you sometimes think that you are the only person who has certain sexual thoughts?
- Do you view pornography in order to escape, deny, or numb your feelings?
- Do sexual thoughts interfere with your spiritual life?
- Do you use pornography to deal with, deny, or avoid problems in your life?



and confess completely and honestly. “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). Complete truthfulness with the appropriate authority is a necessary step. Talk to your parents, your bishop, or a professional counselor. You cannot overcome pornography alone; it will not stop without help. Willpower alone will not be enough to help you back on the road to recovery and peace.

When it comes to avoiding or overcoming pornography, there is help and there is hope. Talk to your parents. Go to your bishop. Turn to the Lord. You can defeat your enemy and find happiness, joy, and peace of mind.

There Is Hope

“Addiction is a collision with the adversary that causes a wound on the soul,” Dr. Hilton says. But although there may be a wound, even a deep one, repentance is the process by which there can be a complete healing of that wound.

For those in the grip of pornography addiction, there is a way out. Happiness, joy, and peace of mind can eventually be regained. The Church pamphlet *Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts* (available from your bishop) offers encouragement: “Your desire to change must be powerful—more powerful than your desire for pornography. Ponder your most sincere desires for your life and the life of your family, and focus on accomplishing good instead of dwelling on your struggles with pornography” ([2006], 10; also available at the Church’s website CombatingPornography.org).

Remember, there is hope. The Lord has said, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:43).

You *can* avoid and overcome the enticements of this enemy of your soul. You *can* take control and banish pornography from your life. **NE**

Help for Yourself and Those You Love

At CombatingPornography.org you will find a wealth of information and resources to help someone overcome a pornography addiction, including a section just for youth, as well as a section for parents.