



# Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle

*Michael John Cusick*

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**“Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is knocking for God.” – G. K. Chesterton**

What if lust for porn is really a search for *true* passion?

In a world where there are 68 million searches for pornography every day and where over 70 percent of Christian men report viewing porn in the last year, it's no surprise that more and more men struggle with an addiction to this false fantasy. Common wisdom says if they just had more willpower or more faith, their fight would be over. Is the answer really that simple?

According to the counselor and ministry leader Michael John Cusick, the answer is no—but the big truth may be much more freeing. Backed by scripture, Cusick uses examples from his own life and from his twenty years of counseling experience to show us how the pursuit of empty pleasure is really a search for our heart's deepest desire—and the real key to resistance is discovering and embracing the joy we truly want.

Cusick's insights help readers understand how porn struggles begin, what to do to prevent them, and most importantly, how to overcome the compulsion once it begins. In the end, this powerful book shows us all how the barrier built by porn addiction can become a bridge to abundant life.

## Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle Details

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# **From Reader Review Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle for online ebook**

## **Nathan says**

There is a lot of really good information in this book, and I really enjoyed reading it. Its main emphasis is finding the deep, core need that underlies a person's sexual struggle, and learning to fill that need in a healthy way. This concept is incredibly powerful, and has helped me tremendously in my own journey.

The book also contains much other good content, including a practical overview of the neurology relevant to sexual compulsion, and practical advice on how to handle cravings and care for one's self.

The main reason I'm not giving this book five stars is how it ends. Near the end of the book the author spends a fair amount of time promoting mind-emptying transcendental meditation under the terms "centering prayer" and "entering the silence." While I do believe there is much value in learning to be mindful and to slow down and listen to God's voice, I don't believe transcendental meditation is the biblical route to these outcomes.

Should you read this book? There's a lot good here, a lot which is likely to benefit you if you or someone you love struggles with sexual compulsions. Unfortunately, I can't recommend this book without reservation, and would ask that you compare what you learn with scripture and not accept anything without critical thought and comparison with the Bible.

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## **Kevin Naylor says**

Cusick does the church a great service in this book. There is so much misunderstanding when it comes to how personally handle struggling with pornography and how to help others struggling with pornography. Cusick cuts through the crap and helps us get to the heart of the issue in a deeply transformative way.

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## **Raul says**

I have been waiting for a book like this in a long time! As I have recovered from the snares of pornography and still battling from the weight of lust, I have longed for a book that would address the taproots of sexual struggle. Now my longing has been satisfied with this thought-provoking and life-changing book.

"Surfing for God" is hands down the best christian book I have read on sexual struggle to this point. I definitely concur with Michael Cusick and G.K. Chesterton who states that everyone knocking on the door of a brothel or surfing on the web for porn is really seeking for God.

For more than 10 years I have been serious about my walk with God but would continually fall under the fervent grasp of porn. Despite my constant praying, fasting, Scripture-reading etc., I would continue to act out by drinking the insatiable salt water of lust. I always thought that if I just prayed more and performed more good deeds, somehow I would free myself from these chains. It wasn't until I entered a Christian-based Marriage and Family Therapy program where my eyes were opened to the underlying issues of my heart. I

was filled with shame and guilt. My eyes were opened to my weakness, brokenness, and woundedness. Once I accepted this truth, God's grace started to liberate me from the prison of porn. The reason I say all this is because everything I have experienced and continue to revel in has been beautifully and profoundly expressed in "Surfing for God" by Michael Cusick.

Cusick wonderfully bridges the truths I learned as a therapist-in-training and the faith I have had all along in Christ. Cusick has written what I had wanted to express all along. He provides a holistic approach to healing from the wounds of not only porn but of any addiction. If anyone is really wanting to be transformed from the heart and not just change their behavior, I would definitely recommend this book. Cusick talks about the taproots of desire, purpose, grace and truth from our Father in Heaven that induces healing. If you are struggling with sexual sin, please open up your hearts to what God is trying to reveal to you through this book. You will never regret it.

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## **Andrew says**

Surfing for God is about the hidden struggles men are facing almost on a daily basis. Men feel the need to hide and suppress their deepest needs and desires. Many men have a hard time displaying intimacy and showing non-sexual affection to a woman. Out of feeling alone, worthless, and insecure we turn to lusting after a woman and watching porn. Regularly as men we turn to masturbation to comfort us and to relief ourselves with an orgasm. But it only makes us feel better for a little while, and then we want more. This book explored the core beliefs men believe about themselves. These beliefs are "I'm A Bad Person", "Nobody Would Love me as I Am", "I Can't Get My Needs Met By Depending on Others", "Sex is My Most Important Need". The beliefs were formed early and the big issue is that we have believed them to be true. When we get done viewing porn, we still feel empty and ashamed that we have committed this act.

Michael John Cusick knows firsthand the effects of viewing porn and lusting after woman. At only twenty four years old, he was going to adult bookstores, visiting strip clubs, drinking alcohol to numb his shame, and paying prostitutes money for sex. Eventually he revealed his secret life to his wife and she was devastated and heartbroken. He also shared a personal story about never going on a date until he was twenty-three years old. He had to face the truth of his brokenness in order to gain healing. Throughout this book he will guide readers into breaking free from the strongholds placed on their life regarding porn.

I would recommend this astonishing book about dealing with the triggers that makes men lust towards women and view porn to ALL men! Satan is bombarding us with many more sexual images than ever before. I'm twenty-two and never been on a date so I connect with Michael's story. This book has shown me the truth about my own struggle with viewing porn and masturbation. I will admit that I turned to porn when I was feeling lonely and broken from my past. Really I was looking for affirmation that I was a real man, acceptance, and affection. This book helped me to know that I wasn't alone in my struggle. It was comforting to know that other men were going through the same type of things I was dealing with.

I also realized that I believed the deadly lies from the enemy. I believed in my core that no one would love me for who I truly was. I especially enjoyed the hope that Michael shared in overcoming the temptations of lusting and porn. This book assisted me in believing that I was pure and clean in the eyes of Christ. When I received Christ as my personal Savior, he took my sins and forgave me for all my sins. This book has helped me to identify the triggers that caused me to look at porn and masturbate. I truly believe that this book would benefit men if they will take to heart the concepts and deal with their feelings and brokenness. Being vulnerable is something that most men hate, me included, but it leads to our healing no matter how painful it

might be. If you're struggling with viewing porn, then this book is written just for you!

"I received this book free from the publisher through the Book Sneeze book review bloggers program."

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### **Allizabeth Collins says**

#### **Review:**

Watching the news recently I noticed how many stories revolved around extramarital affairs, addiction to pornography, and call girl solicitation, and most of the people involved were married. I was appalled thinking about the guilty party's significant other. Did they know? Were they shocked? Were they angry? What did they decide to do about it? Etc... To find out that someone you love is cheating, (physically or mentally), must be absolutely horrible, and I can only imagine the pain and emotional hurdles one must face after such a transgression. So when I got the chance to read *Surfing for God* I was compelled to hear Michael Cusick's take on why some people are so tempted to indulge in forms of cheating or adultery online. I admit, I have seen an occasional pop-up advertisement for "Find Sexy Singles Now!" or "For Better Sex, Click Here" while browsing the inter-webs, but my thought has always been, "Who the heck is going to click on those?". Well, I haven't, but I do know people that have, and that forbidden curiosity got them into more trouble than they thought possible, nearly toppling a marriage and leaving their relationships strained.

I liked the overall format of the book. The flow seemed to work pretty well and the progression from "What's Better than Porn" to "Becoming the Hero that You Are" followed an enlightening and scripture-filled path that allowed for deep reflection on discussed topics. Michael Cusick talked about his own struggles with pornography/strip clubs throughout the book, using his experiences with temptation to emphasize the debilitating effects of any addiction. I could tell by the way that he described the situations, and how he dealt with them, that he genuinely wanted to help other men with similar problems; allowing the lost sense of kinship with God to return to them. However, I felt that the overall tone was one of punishment, and some of the sections seemed to berate the reader - don't get me wrong, in these situations someone needs to "put their foot down", but will a man read a book that continuously blames him, with no reprimand for society and the media? It is not just the individual's fault, (though they are the primary instigator), but also the fault of those that allow such material to be showcased for all to see. There was a lot of judgement going on, and even I felt guilty - for what? I am not sure. For this reason, I cannot call the book inspirational, even if it is meant for Christians. Another aspect that I did not quite care for was the language, which was very crude in some instances - it got the point across, but there were other ways to explain things without it. Overall, I feel that *Surfing for God* is a great tool for any man who struggles with indiscretions or addiction, or those who are curious them, but I wish that women had also been a target audience. There are women with the same types of problems that could definitely benefit from some guidance. Good book for getting control of core issues and getting back to God.

Rating: On the Run (4/5)

\*\*\* I received this book from the author (Book Sneeze) in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

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### **Henk-Jan van der Klis says**

Rather than condemning fellow believers for their sexual struggles and covering his own, Michael John Cusick (1964) shares his own story in *Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle*. He goes all the way and offers hope. G.K. Chesterton is quoted as “Every time a man knocks on a brothel door, he is really searching for God.” Since

25% of search engine requests are for pornography – 68 million per day

70% of the hits on Internet sex sites occur between 9-5 on business computers

Over 50 percent of evangelical pastors report they viewed pornography last year

Over 70% of Christian men report viewing pornography in the last year

surfing for porn is not just a ghost-story, a heathen practice or easy to get rid of. Cusick has 20 years of counseling experience after becoming free (a long process) in 1994 of his own sexual struggles. He even changed his name from Mike (then a cheater, an adulterer) to Michael (be like God). The author helps you to understand how porn struggles begin, what to do to prevent them, and most importantly, how to overcome them once compulsive behavior presents itself. From a downward soul snare cycle to a soul care highway. It's a path that consists of so much more than sin management. You also need to know that your masculine soul is deeper and truer than your desire for porn. Part of you longs to walk intimately with God.

Real Christians know they're not perfect. The apostle Paul is quoted as doing the things he doesn't want and vice versa. following Jesus consists of so much more than trying harder and white-knuckling your way through it. In part one, Cusick demonstrates why struggles with porn are really not about sex. He identifies the mistaken reasons men give for why they struggle with porn. The filthiness, devilish lies and shaky grounds to build human relationships are made explicit. That's necessary to seek a cure for the right problem. Brokenness is essential on the path from lust to love. It's a matter of the heart, and so the author uncovers the inner workings of our brains and transmitters like dopamine as well. Could a passion for God inside you run deeper than my desire for sex and porn? The gospel of Jesus Christ: a heart transplant. It is possible to become free and whole. This includes learning about the life of Christ within you and how this is nurtured through solitude and attentiveness. You will learn about how to care for your soul and meet deep God-given needs in healthy ways. And finally, you will understand God's patterns for bringing about change.

Accessibility over popular accountability approaches. We need a circumcision of the heart.

Michael Cusick took a lot of illustrations in the books of C.S. Lewis, Tim Keller, Henri Nouwen and Peter Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*.

God longs to transform your lust into strength. It won't happen, however, through more religious effort. It won't happen by recruiting one more accountability partner. It won't even happen just by reading this book and deciding that this time you're going to be more serious about avoiding temptation. Choosing life instead means believing that your heavenly Father has a better way of doing your life than you. God faithfully pursued Adam, even as he disobeyed, hid, and lost his bearings. And God is faithfully pursuing you. Where are you?

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### **Stephen Garcia says**

A fantastic book for anyone with addictive tendencies. Geared toward guys. It's the only book I've read on this topic and I wholeheartedly recommend it. This book treats sinful behavior as fruit of a deeper-rooted issue, and gets to the heart of what brought freedom in my own story.

If you really want change, buy it.

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### **Josh Baker says**

I don't personally know of any better resource when it comes to this topic. So good.

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### **Tim says**

Awesome book. Cusick does a great job at helping the addict reader look beneath the behavior and try to see the root issues. Super explanation of shame and dealing with it.

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### **James says**

Pornography is a real problem. Consider these statistics:

25% of search engine requests are for pornography – 68 million per day.

70% of the hits on Internet sex sites occur between 9-5 on business computers.

Over 50 percent of evangelical pastors report they viewed pornography last year.

Over 70% of Christian men report viewing pornography in the last year.

And I would say, that as a whole Christians have responded rather poorly to what amounts to a sin epidemic in our culture. So I am happy to recommend a book which gets at the heart of some of the issues which are tangled up with pornography. Michael John Cusick is an ordained minister, licensed professional counselor and spiritual director. He is also is a recovering sex addict (living in freedom) who had an addiction to pornography, strip clubs, masturbation and prostitution. He sees the bankruptcy of a life in bondage, but he also knows that men act out in sexual sins because they are broken and wounded.

But before I tell you about this book, let me briefly tell you where I think other Christian approaches get this wrong. One popular Christian book seems to say:

Objectifying other women is wrong, just objectify your wife. She is there primarily for your sexual pleasure(based on a reading of Job's famous 'covenant with his eyes in Job 31).

Women who are not your spouse are sources of temptation and should be avoided at all costs.

You should also avoid places like parks, the beach, roads that women jog on, supermarkets, hair salons and shopping malls.

The problem with this advice is that it basically gets guys to modify their behavior, but does not touch the wounding and longing that led them to a pornography addiction in the first place (although to be fair, this approach takes serious the idea of sexual sin and the need for accountability). It is also unrealistic. Only stay-at-home dads can avoid women, who are increasingly colleagues and men's bosses in all walks of life.

Cusicks approach is much more holistic. He sees pornography and other sexual sins as symptomatic of the deep longing for connection and reality (and yes, ultimately God). By sharing the story of his own struggle (and victory), he addresses the root issues of pornography, the empty promises and real idolatry, personal brokenness and the cycle of shame, but also the real freedom that is ours in Christ and transformation that is possible and the disciplines which care for your soul. He is also attentive to a very real, spiritual dimension to this struggle and the dynamics of temptation (and its relationship to idolatry). His advice for those lost in sexual temptation online is to unplug, pay attention to your desires and cravings to find out what is

happening in your heart, and to practice solitude and centering prayer. Ultimately he wants people to journey from their self medicating numbness, to a relationship with God where desires are rightly ordered and they are attentive to their own soul care (in community, of course).

Nevertheless I think this book has two limitations which I think are significant:

It treats sexual sin and pornography as a personal, individual sin. This needs to be addressed but he never addresses the other side of the equation. Men who go to prostitutes victimize women; men who view pornography, go to strip clubs and seek out adult entertainment, have participated in an unjust system which truncates the humanity of women (and men) and causes tremendous psychological, physical and sociological damage. I applaud Cusick's efforts to address the ways sin and acting out come from personal brokenness. I just want him also to address the significant justice issue that is wrapped up with this.

This book is also limited in terms of audience. This is a book written by a man for men, and speaks most meaningfully to men who are married. Single guys can read this profitably while making adjustments in a couple of places; however, I have friends who are women who also struggle with an addiction to pornography. While much of this advice is applicable to them (solitude and centering prayer, the need to pray through and address woundedness and idolatry), they will find themselves unaddressed by Cusick. When you consider the real shame that comes with sexual sin and that pornography is considered by many Christians a 'man's sin, the cycle of shame is compounded for women who are stuck in addiction to porn and sex. This book could have easily been inclusive of both genders in addressing a real struggle which affects both sexes.

But for the particular niche of 'men who struggle' working through their own personal issues, I think this book is one of the best. This is a book I would use pastorally and found a lot of it personally helpful. So it gets a solid recommendation from me.

Thank you to Thomas Nelson for providing me a copy of this book in exchange for this review.

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### **Jason Kolar says**

Amazing resource for anyone struggling with sexual sin. I would highly recommend it!

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### **William "Spig" says**

This isn't a coffee table book but as I've looked back over my life and poor decisions I made before I started my walk with Jesus and the baggage that I brought in my marriage. I need this breath of grace. I didn't need a list of how to work harder. I've tried that. This book challenged me again to look at my life story and try to rewrite the ending.

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### **Brandon Rathbun says**

This is the best book I have read on the topic. So much so that I bought 10 copies for people to give to when the conversation comes up.

The author digs at the heart of the issue unlike other resources I've found.



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## **Andrew Husen says**

Overall, I think this book was better than average when it comes to contemporary, Christian books. About a third of the book was the typical (for the genre) presentation of a model without really giving the reader a good reason to adopt that model. Another third of the book was moderately helpful insight on the topic. And the remaining third gave a very general but helpful explanation of the biophysical mechanics of the topic along with strategies and tips in light of those biophysical realities.

This book was not a waste of time, but I also did not find it particularly groundbreaking either. Two stars: "it was okay".

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## **Lucas says**

Unfortunately, I began reading this book again and could not stomach it. Although I do understand the author's heart and admire his realization of the brokenness of pornography versus the satisfaction of a relationship with Christ Jesus our Lord, I feel he went off into the deep end and this became almost the entirety of the book. The majority of the book focused on how we view pornography because our heart wants a meaningful relationship with Christ. All I can say is this, like with any other sin, we view pornography because we are dead in sin until Christ has mercy upon us. We enjoy it. To spend a book speculating on the premise without producing any solutions seems a waste to me. I also found it concerning that at the end he had this manipulative form of contemplative prayer, in which he tells the reader to say these specific words to have a life changing encounter with God. I would most certainly not recommend this book to anyone. Instead, I would suggest "Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace" by Heath Lambert, which is full of such rich, biblically sound advice in this struggle. Please believe me when I say that it brings me no pleasure to write such a critical review, but I hope to speak the truth in love in order that the body of Christ may continue to pursue Him in all sincerity without distractions such as this, which promotes meaningless speculation.

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