



## EPISODE 15

# We've All Seen It. Let's Start Talking! With Jason McDonald

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[Breaking the Silence Podcast by Reach 10](#) with hosts **Creed Orme** and **Crishelle Simons**

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*Creed and Crishelle talk with Jason McDonald, a 22-year-old student and former Reach 10 intern, about his story. Jason had a brief habit of using pornography when he was 13, and then decided it was making him feel terrible - so he quit. However, pornography had distorted his beliefs about sexuality at that formative age. It influenced his thoughts and behavior with girls in his teen years. In time he talked with a friend in high school who was experiencing the same struggle. He found that connection can help ease the tension and isolation that feed outbursts. Jason has learned to tell himself it's not a shameful thing that he struggled years ago with pornography. "I want to be as happy as I can. And that gets in the way." Nearly every young person today has some kind of history it. Today he wants to see more open conversation about the issue, and stop the shame and silence that keep people from talking and helping each other.*

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Creed:

Hello listeners, today we are breaking the silence with Jason McDonald. We're so excited to have Jason with us here today. Jason is from Spanish fork. He's 22 years old, currently going to Brigham young university and does Taekwondo. We're so happy to have Jason with us here today because he's gonna tell us some of his story, just as a normal, average, human being, dude, and also Jason has done a ton of

work with Reach 10. He was an intern through the on-campus internship at BYU last semester. He and others on his team came up with the idea to do this podcast and they helped incredibly with that.

Crishelle:

In fact, Jason is a huge reason why our podcast sound so great. He helped us with our jingle and our intro and the first couple episodes of just editing. So we are so grateful for you Jason, because if it wasn't for your help, I don't know if we would've figured out how to do all of that. So bless you.

Jason:

Thank you.

Creed:

So is there anything else we need to mention about you? Did we get it all down?

Jason:

I don't think so. I think that's it.

Creed:

Okay, sweet. Jason, please tell us why we have you here on this podcast, why you care to be vulnerable and share your story and why you wanted to be on Reach 10 just go ahead and start.

Jason:

Of course. So yeah, so I grew up here in Utah County and of course there's a weird culture around anything sexual in Utah County. And so when I was, I don't know, 13 or so, I was curious about things. I wanted to know what they were, but I didn't feel like I had anywhere to go to like anyone to talk to. And so I went to the internet like any good 13 year old does. And just—

Creed:

We talked a little bit about, you didn't have a great sex education in your family. As typical often is within the church for one reason or another.

Jason:

Yeah, So I didn't have good sex education. I mean, I knew In general, but when it got down to specifics, it's like, I mean, you know, even with little things like what does it, what does stuff look like and how does it all work? I just didn't know. So I went to the internet, one thing led to another and I got myself into a habit with pornography. And I say habit, not addiction because I was able to pull myself out of it. You know, I think it lasted about six months, six months off and on. But then I was like, this makes me feel awful. It's conflicting with my religious beliefs. And so there's all this cognitive dissonance. And so even like while in the moment like, okay, yeah, it's satisfying, I guess. It made me feel so terrible the rest of the time I was like, okay, I'm done. I gotta just stop. And so from there, I mean obviously I, I resolved things with my ecclesiastical leaders and stuff, but because it all happened right then when I was starting puberty and you know, my brain is forming and kind of we talked about earlier with like, the sex sexual templates, it shaped the way I viewed relationships and the way I viewed women. 'Cause I was like, Oh, this is what you do, this is what adults do, this is what sex is. And adult relationships I think are about sex. That's what media tells me. So it's, I feel like it's made me even today till even up until today,

like perpetually curious about that kind of stuff. And obviously now as I've actually talked to people and done legit research, I mean I understand that that's not entirely the case, but...

Creed:

And it's very typical and good and healthy that you are interested in that stuff. Right? That you care about sex and learning about sexual things. What does it mean? What happens? What's a, what's a good sex life? Like, you know, these are, these are things that we're all curious about.

Jason:

Yeah.

Crishelle:

And pornography has some messages in it that can be really harming. And so how did that affect your relationship?

Jason:

It made it difficult. It felt like the inside of me was pulling towards like, my relationship has to be about sex when like the brain side of me, the logical side was like, no, it's about, you know, caring and all this other stuff, like treating them like a human. Whereas, you know, the inside of me, the it or whatever is like, no, it's all sex and dehumanizing and stuff. And so that led to me doing things like, I knew pornography didn't make me feel good. And so I was like, okay, I'm stepping back from this. And I haven't had a problem with it since. But as a young teenager I had a problem with like sexting. I was able to justify myself. I was just talking like it's not a big deal, but at the same time it was disrespectful to girls I was talking to and it was dehumanizing and like, it was honestly all I would talk to specific girls for, and I feel awful about it now thinking back, I'm like, Ooh, I wasn't—that wasn't good. And I wish I had better outlets at that moment. But I mean at the same time it was formative. It was learning. You know, knowing that I had those urges and then it ended in those outbursts. I was like, ok, I need to find something else. And I think it's the end of junior year, beginning of senior year of high school, I was finally able to open up to a really good friend about it and he expressed that he had like the exact same, we were in the exact same situation, you know, struggling with pornography and it's shaped the way he's viewed the world. And being validated, I had my own emotions validated in the sense that, you know, I have this person that I trust and I love that is to go through the exact same thing. You know, it made me feel not alone and that I'm not a bad person. Like I've, you know, had been worried about for the last five years. And then we were able to like start sorting things out. It's like, well, why did we do this? Why did things end this way and you know, just putting it out in the air like that made me lose the urge to do things like sexting and all of those like outbursts because it's in the air. Like it's not pent up inside of me anymore.

Creed:

Right. You're talking about, it's a part of who you are, a sexual being, but just being able to talk about it and express those feelings, thoughts, experiences that you've had really relieves the tension because the tension just does drive you. The seclusion, the tension, the disconnection from people drives you to have those outbursts. Right?

Jason:

Exactly. Yeah. And that's what I found specifically got me doing all of the research for Reach 10. I think everyone has that when you're secluded and pent up and don't feel like you have anywhere to go, you have outbursts with yourself that you regret and they make you feel guilty and they make you feel bad about yourself. And I want to avoid that 'cause I don't like those feelings. I want to be as happy as I can. And that gets in the way.

Creed:

Totally. I think it's so important that as human beings, we all learn how to let feelings and emotions flow, allowing conversation, honest conversations about what we're actually going on in our head. What we're dealing with. What's a struggle is so helpful. I love going back to fantastic beasts and where to find them. The first movie with being an Obscurus, if you hide and squelch all the magic inside you, it's just gonna break out in unhealthy ways. Yeah. It's important to use all the magic that we have, haha. Right. And the way to do that is to have that intimacy "Into me. See." Open up, talk about things, and learn.

Crishelle:

Was it really healing for you to realize that hopefully you weren't like broken or damaged forever? Did you get to that place?

Jason:

Yes, but it did take a while. So like I was able to open up with a friend and my senior year of high school, but I don't think it was until this past year or so that I was secure in the fact that being a sexual being is okay. And obviously there needs to be good timing about it. Like, you know, it's like drinking orange juice and brushing your teeth. They're both really good things, but if you time them wrong, it's not good.

Crishelle:

That's a really good analogy. Yeah. It's like the literal worst. And I like, I mean we don't want to downplay things by using analogies and just...and I think that there's so much value to that if like the timing of your sexuality and like doing it in a way that's not just objectifying or like getting like a certain need met, but rather it's a full experience.

Jason:

Yeah. And it's, it's expressive. You're, you're saying I love you so much that I can't express it with words or you know, any of these other like quality time. Like it's to the point where I need to do these sexual things to show you like, 'cause there's that much emotion. That's what sex is for. That's what it's created for. That's why we have it. And then the pornography industry has said no, it feels good. It's hot, it's sexy. You know, let's just do it. It's animalistic. It's raw. It's like, it's a natural thing to do and that's how they justify it. But that's absolutely not why we have sex. That's not why God created it. That's not why, even outside of a religious context, that's not why you have sex, you do it to express emotion. And...

Creed:

Yeah, it's going back to that sexual wholeness idea of it's not just the sex, which is awesome, amazing, pleasurable, great. It's all about commitment to a person. It's all about the other love expressed in a relationship. Like being there for the person saying, doing what you say you will do supporting them and

their dreams and them as a person. It's not separated like that. It's complete and whole. You mentioned a little bit about what, when you found Reach 10, you were like so relieved, right? And you're like, yes! And tell us why you were like, so excited to find Reach 10.

Jason:

Yeah. So one of the things I talked about with my — My friend when I first opened up to him and then other people as I've, you know, been finding myself, I specifically remember having a conversation with my then girlfriend the semester before, you know, probably about a month before I got the internship with Reach 10 and I was, you know, we were talking about these things and I was like, it's a problem specifically in Utah County but in the whole world where there's not a healthy conversation about pornography. It's, you know, I have like wanted to change that conversation for so long that I've even like, you know, thrown stuff out, like jokingly, which maybe isn't the best way, But just kind of feel it feel out sometimes.

Crishelle:

Just try to see what other people think about it?

Jason:

Yeah, like, well, how do you feel about that? I was like, "Oh, I watched pornography once" and they were like, what? And I was like, Whoa, joke. Like calm down. Like, it's okay, but it was never received well. And just, I don't know, there's such a.

Creed:

well, nine out of 10 guys have used pornography, at least once, you know, it's, that's so sad.

Jason:

So it's something that everyone does. No one wants to talk about. That's not good. And so,

Creed:

and three out of 10 girls, making sure we throw in the girl party, 'cause girls use it too. Not just guys! Sorry, go ahead.

Jason:

No, you're good. But yeah, so I wanted to change this conversation, You know, away from the shame and I was like, I don't have the resources to do it, I don't even know where to start because I'm just a regular dude. Who's going to listen to me? But then I got this internship with Reach 10 and I started looking into it and I had talked to Vauna and I started, you know, listening to your guys' stories and you know, working through the podcast editing and stuff. And I was like, holy cow. Like there are resources, you know, you just have to find them. And so now I'm like, I'm a huge advocate. That's why I'm here talking about it today. Like I've never been willing to talk about it just because I've never known how it's going to be received. But now I know it's received really well with most people, but just in the room, people don't want to admit that, Oh, I've had a problem or I know someone who's had a problem or I know it's a problem because it's taboo or whatever the reason.

Creed:

So, so it's just this culture of silence that we grew up thinking it was like, okay, but really it's not okay because it perpetuates these problems of like you said, not talking about sexuality. So all these unhealthy behaviors happen, there's not enough learning. And then we feel like we're the only ones dealing with this kind of stuff. I'm so glad you figured that out, that you're a part of Reach 10, that you helped so much and that you know, that it takes just courage to change that culture, right. It's still hard. Like, I still have a hard time talking with people about it most of the time because it's like how will it be received? I don't want to be rejected by people, but, but it's so important to talk about it. It takes bravery. Right? Yeah.

Crishelle:

Yeah. I really, something else that you mentioned that I like is not just like talking about pornography, but like also talking about healthy sexuality and developing like, this is what sex actually is. It's not something that you want to just like put on a pedestal, but it is something that you share with someone that you're committed to that can be such a beautiful experience. And that's why I think this conversation is so important, is that we're not just fighting pornography and condemning pornography and talking about all the harms of pornography, but rather like, let's bring it into the light and talk about the good parts of sex because sex is good. It's such a good thing. And we're all sexual beings of course. And it's okay that I'm attracted to guys and that I, I think that I was excited to, to kiss him or whatever. That's a good, that's a good thing. That means that I'm a healthy human being, that I have those feelings within me. Right? But not like putting them in a box and hiding them and also not acting out in them in a way that brings pain. Right. So I really love that. Something else that I think is like why I am so passionate about this message and why I'm so stoked that we have this podcast and that people are receiving it well just like you're talking about. So I don't think we've done our job until we can talk about it and be honest and be like, you know what? Like I once used to, just like my friends who have struggled with alcoholism can be like, man, like I used to struggle with alcoholism and today is my five year sobriety date and celebrate that like publicly and hugely so. And throw a party, a dry party and I love that. And I'm always there for my friends that are in that boat. I want the same thing for this other side of things that when we're struggling with these things, and maybe it's not the exact same thing because drugs and alcohol and pornography and sexuality is a little bit different, but that we can have the conversation that we can be, dude, I'm so stoked for you. I'm so glad we're talking about this. And yeah, I've had those experiences too. And for it to be more of like a commonplace conversation. Yeah. And until it's like there and we're having those conversations with each other, with our kids, with everyone like, I don't think our job's done.

Jason:

I agree. 100 percent, yeah.

Crishelle:

And we got to keep sharing this message.

Creed:

We do. Got to keep going. So Jason, since you've started learning more about all these things, like is there anything that you're doing more so now to manage your sexuality, manage talking about these things, goals that you have?

Jason:

For me it's just been just telling myself that it's not a shameful thing that I struggled nine years ago with pornography. And just being really willing to talk about, I mean, I don't go out and advertise. I don't wear a sign on my shirt that says, you know, I had a habit or whatever. But at the same time, if someone asks me about it or if someone, if it's brought up in a room, I'd be like, Oh yeah, I've struggled with that. Like it's shaped who I am. And in working with being more genuine to myself and accepting, you know, maybe these more difficult parts of myself, you know, I get to talk about it because it's me and I want to be genuine to myself. And so why suppress it? Why hide it now when that causes, you know, a whole slew of problems we've already talked about.

Creed:

Well, awesome. Well you're taking a great step of doing that by being on the podcast today and wish you luck with continuing to be authentic and real with people. I hope people, you have experiences where people are like, yeah, thanks for opening up and let's talk about this.

Crishelle:

Yeah, I know I felt that way. So thank you. This has been so great to have you on the podcast.

Jason:

Thank you for having me.

Crishelle:

For sure. And we wanted to share a review. Creed's got a review for us today.

Creed:

So one of our reviewers has said...

Crishelle:

and this is from lightberry. Lightberry, whoever you are, reach out to us.

Creed:

Yeah, Let us know that and we'll give you some swag for this. So reach out to us. Lightberry said, "It's so encouraging to hear young adults talking about tough issues such as pornography and healthy sexuality in a way that respects the sacredness of intimacy and relationships. This is a much needed conversation."

Crishelle:

Amen! Amen!

Creed:

We agree with you lightberry, thank you for sharing that review with us today. And thank you Jason for being here. You're awesome. Keep it going with all that you're doing.