

Pure Life Ministries

At a facility founded in the Kentucky hills by an ex-L.A. cop, men are finding freedom from sexual addictions

Former Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff Steve Gallagher was a sex addict when he found Christ in the early 1980s. But by 1986 God had prompted him to begin Pure Life Ministries (PLM), a recovery program for men with sexual addictions.

Today Gallagher is free from his dependence, he says, and he oversees PLM's live-in treatment facility located 30 miles south of Cincinnati in Dry Ridge, Ky., that accommodates 34 men and has a 50-man dormitory in the works.

As a young man, Gallagher became addicted to pornographic videos. He thought marriage would "cure" his addiction, but it did not. His wife eventually left him because he was unfaithful.

Gallagher told Charisma that after his salvation he experienced overwhelming spiritual warfare, and for two years he continued to battle his addiction. In the 1980s, however, the addictive nature of sexual sin was not widely recognized, and Gallagher eventually quit looking to counselors for answers and turned instead to God for help.

God restored his marriage and began to help him grow spiritually. He says that in time he was completely delivered from sexual addiction. Today he compares the high of pornography and sexual activity with that of alcohol or drugs.

Since its inception, PLM has, in every sense of the word, been

a pioneer in its field. The ministry has earned the respect of numerous Christian leaders who commend its biblically based, no-nonsense treatment approach. Gallagher has appeared on a variety of Christian programs, including The 700 Club, Focus on the Family and Truths That Transform.

Jim Woodall, former CEO of Concerned Women for America, visited the PLM campus earlier this year to consult with Pure Life leaders on how to fulfill their calling more effectively.

“I have enormous respect for that ministry,” he said. “In five years I believe we’ll look back and say, ‘Thank God for Pure Life,’ because they were strategically placed to minister to men in need.”

Gallagher stresses that ministries with a focus like PLM’s can be effective even if they don’t use psychotherapy for treatment. A biblical approach to addiction treatment is employed instead at PLM.

“Jesus Christ has been transforming lives from the inside out for 2,000 years and has never needed the advice of Sigmund Freud to do it,” Gallagher said.

PLM’s method is stringent but sensible: biblical counseling, intense discipleship, unavoidable accountability, separation from ungodly influences for six to nine months (the length of the program) and, most important, prayer. These elements combine to create an intense spiritual atmosphere, which Gallagher said is precisely the atmosphere that draws men into deep and lasting repentance.

He also expects a lot from his 19 staff members.

“They spend long hours every day seeking the Lord,” he said. “Other Christians might go to movies, watch TV and make a life for themselves in this world, but these dedicated servants choose to abstain from such luxuries. When they come on staff they understand that they are expected to live in deep consecration and lay down their lives for the sake of those who come to them for help.”

Justin Carabello, a former junior high school teacher, is one who came. His life was restored at PLM.

“When I entered the live-in program, I encountered a depth of Christianity in the staff that was unfamiliar to me,” said Carabello, now a PLM staffer.

“Their words had the power to make me believe I could truly know Jesus in the same way they did. It was obvious that sin did not hold them, and I wanted what they had.”

During PLM’s 15 years of ministry, Gallagher has produced a wealth of teaching aids, including video and audio tapes, books, and other print materials. In addition, PLM offers an Overcomers-at-Home Program and counseling for wives.

Gallagher is eager to see the ministry expand. For him, the new dorm will simply translate into 50 more Justin Carabellos finding the Living Water at Dry Ridge.

—Randall Murphree