

Actor Stephen Collins Needs to Hear This Message

Stephen Collins, an actor who played an exemplary character on *7th Heaven* for 243 episodes between 1996 and 2007 has reportedly confessed to inappropriate sexual behavior with three young girls.

Stephen provides a lesson for parents and for boys and men. You can be involved in all sorts of good things and still fall prey to evil.

Only ten percent of children who are molested are molested by strangers. Sixty-eight percent of molested children are molested by family members. Forty-eight percent were molested by stepfathers and uncles. Ninety-three percent of child molesters are religious. This is partly because being religious reduces suspicion and provides greater opportunity. Building trust is part of the operating procedure of those who want private access to children.

Wise churches have strict guidelines regarding the interaction of adults and children. These guidelines actually protect both the children and the adults. They include:

- Background screening of youth workers
- Six months minimum church involvement before assignment to youth activities
- Two or more adults present at all youth activities
- No physical horseplay between adults and children

Both temptation and the possibility of false accusations are reduced by avoiding situations where adults are alone with children. Child molestation is almost never a group activity. The typical pedophile has opportunity to be alone with a child and gradually introduces inappropriate behavior. It's wise to avoid allowing your child to be alone for repeated visits with

an adult; even with adults you consider trustworthy.

The most important lesson from Stephen's story is for boys and men who want to avoid following in Stephen's footsteps. The behavior that can ruin your reputation and your life begins with lust, usually fed by pornography.

Lust is not your friend. It's your mortal enemy. It can become a driving force that takes you places that will hurt others, including children. The earlier you resist lust the easier it is to defeat. To recognize that all pornography is destructive, and to reject its use, is the wisest way to avoid becoming a child molester. Guard your heart in the private moments when God is the only one who knows what you're doing.

Stephen Collins and many other men who wind up exposed for inappropriate behavior toward children do many noble things. Their lives become double. Lust drives their dark side. They become enslaved. They know their dark side is evil, but they have a compulsion they can't control.

The heartbreaking news about Stephen Collins is not the beginning, or the end of his story.

Stephen apparently took a wrong path; a path taken by many young men. These stories don't begin with inappropriate behavior toward children. They begin with the most basic of sexual desire.

God actually created sexual attraction and called for it to be properly enjoyed in the bonds of marriage. Throughout Proverbs God warns again and again about the dangers of lust luring young men into sex outside of marriage. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches it's better to pluck your eyes out so you can go to heaven than to lust your way to destruction. He even advises cutting off your hand if it would cause you to stumble. The typical pornographic experience usually involves both the eyes and the hand. Between the two, you wind up with a hormonal rush that impacts the structure of your brain. Your

brain literally builds patterns of desire.

Teenagers don't think, "Someday I'd like to become a child molester and go to jail. I'd just love to be on sex offender locator maps the rest of my life." They just think some magazine or website enables them to experience sexual stimulation. That stimulation leads to a desire for more stimulation and, over time, requires variation to reduce boredom. The path is treacherous and can take unexpected turns, such as attraction to children, to violence or to homosexuality. Even by today's lowered standards, there are things people get into that most people would consider perverted.

Typically, the pornographic experience can be like having a meal. One's hunger is satisfied and you can get back to daily life, perhaps even to noble deeds. Then, as the hours go by, the hunger returns. You become distracted from daily life. The brain screams for a new thrill. You wind up looking for an opportunity to get satisfaction. If your desire is for children, you can find yourself meticulously planning opportunities.

Stephen Collins would probably tell you, blessed is the young man who never gets on that path.

Here's the good news. Stephen Collins' story is not over. Neither is yours. God can use the most horrible things in our lives for good if we will totally surrender to Him. God can take away lustful desires and replace them with love and compassion. God can use disgrace as part of a testimony that will save others from disgrace.

Jesus Christ paid the price for our forgiveness. When that forgiveness is understood, and accepted, it makes healing possible. It makes freedom possible. It doesn't negate the consequences of sin. Someone can be sent to prison for their criminal behavior while experiencing a wonderful spiritual

freedom.

If you're on the wrong path, you don't have to stay on it. You can turn to God now. You can take the right path. This is true for Stephen as well. Yes, he took a wrong path, but there is a right path he can take even now.

Please pray for Stephen and for all those children who were hurt by his behavior. Pray as well for the others in Hollywood who are on the wrong path but have yet to be exposed. They too can be set free. Hollywood does not have to have a reputation as the pedophilia capital of the world.

Finally, pray for the many young men who can learn from this sad story and avoid repeating it. The more young men who reject the path to which lust drives them, the more children who will grow up unmolested.