

Freed By the Holy Spirit: Part II

Part I

Testimony 2: Rescued from Satan's Clutch

I cannot explain how it began, but I found myself viewing pornography on the Internet. A little was not enough. At the same time, I knew without a doubt that it was wrong. I made no excuses. I wanted to stop; yet I found myself going back again and again. My self-discipline went down the drain, and no amount of resolve worked.

The pornographic images flooded my mind even when I was not in front of the computer. I continued to visit the forbidden sites, despite ongoing repentance and prayer for discipline.

The cycle repeated itself many times: inappropriate behavior, repentance and prayer. The threat of being discovered was not enough to strengthen my determination to stop. I realized I was addicted to pornography, but I felt powerless over my behavior.

I began to notice that I looked at women differently. It terrified me that I couldn't make a distinction between the women I saw on the screen and the women around me. At the time I was confident I would not act on my fantasies. Yet I wondered, *how long would it be before I did?*

I was desperate. I was in agony and felt totally helpless. Nothing worked until finally, I got serious with the Lord. I told Him that my behavior was not glorifying Him and it was undermining my testimony—I needed help!

Several days after my prayer, I realized that I had not visited a single pornographic site. I was set free! I was astounded! I praised the Lord that He had closed the door on

my addiction.

I use the Internet daily in my work. I am aware that pornography is only a click away, but the Lord has constrained me. I have learned the warning signs. When I am tired, emotionally drained and lonely, the “old me” is more than ready to return. But I know that through the power of the Holy Spirit, Satan is held at bay.—*Anonymous*

Shameful Addiction

The confession was on the tip of my tongue, and I trembled at the thought of revealing it. It was 1997, and I was about to tell the woman I wanted to marry that I had a long-term addiction. Not to drugs or to alcohol, but to photos. The term is “pornography addiction,” and the shame and fear it visits on so many men in and out of the church is staggering.

As a young boy, I came across an adult magazine in my father’s sock drawer. It was captivating. It was stimulating. It was humiliating. I didn’t really understand why there would be pictures of women in my daddy’s drawer, yet even at six or seven years of age I knew that it was wrong that I had seen them. The pictures captured my young imagination.

Sleeping Giant

I didn’t give it much thought until I was in art school. The beast that had been dormant was about to awaken. I was attending Allegheny Center C&MA Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., and had recently recommitted my life to Jesus, being baptized at a college retreat. Coming off this high point, I entered a “desert place,” and at a point of weakness and deep loneliness, I walked through a part of town known for its pornographic materials and movie houses. I knew that I needed to honor my newfound commitment to Jesus, but I threw it aside—for just a moment. The regret of that choice still lingers.

With my heart racing, I ducked into one of the bookstores and

began to look at the magazine racks. My pulse quickened as I flipped through the pages and filled the screen of my mind with these dark images. I repressed any sense of decency and plowed ahead, stopping at each photo to indulge my obscene thoughts. I bought one of the magazines and concealed it in my backpack as I walked to my apartment.

After a few hours of filling the darkness in my mind, I tossed the magazine in the trash. I justified that it couldn't really be that bad—after all I had thrown it away. But something had begun. It has been said that a rut is a grave with the ends knocked out, and I dug for myself a monstrous rut. I continued with this broken pattern of pain, guilt, indulgence, regret and back to pain. I was medicating my pain with pornography.

I've Got a Secret

Years later, my girlfriend and I were talking about getting married. I knew she would be completely appalled at the secret I kept, but I continued to live the lie. I was working for a prominent national Christian ministry, attending church every week and frequenting my newfound source for pornography—the Internet. With anonymity assured on the Web, I was able to satisfy the raging lust in my heart while living outwardly as a Christian.

But like the Pharisees, I was a whitewashed tomb. The weight of this lie was too difficult to carry, so I broke down to a coworker. He shared his life story of how the Lord had freed him from homosexuality. We had a meaningful conversation about admitting my problem to my girlfriend as well as shining the light of truth on this shameful offense. So at the next opportunity—during a team chapel—I let the light of truth shine on this dark corner of my life.

The most difficult part was telling my girlfriend. She sat across from me at a shopping mall food court, and I was about to unload my shame on her. “I’ve got a secret,” I said. “And I’m not at all sure how to let you know.” I went into the

details about my addiction. I revealed that just a few days earlier I had indulged my fantasies and told her I was sorry.

“Phew, am I glad to get that off my chest,” I said.

Her hands grew cold as she pulled them from mine. The tears that flowed down her cheeks were an absolute surprise, and the pain in her eyes told me everything. She got up to leave, and I thought that I was going to be stranded at this shopping mall 30 miles from home. All the while I was still thinking about myself.

Help and Healing

She began to tell me what this revelation had done to her—how my choice to sin was a smack in the face of our love. It hit me—my choices affected not only me but also her. I began to pour out my heart and from the deepest places ask for her forgiveness. To my surprise she forgave me. She was and is the hand of Jesus to me. The cleansing of God washed over me as I cried all the way back to my apartment.

I would love to say that this was the end of my addiction and I no longer wrestled with the deep longings I was trying to fill with pornography. However, I had other failures. After we had been married and while she was on a retreat for young mothers, I ventured to another pornographic Web site. The rush of shame covered me. I knew that on her return I must again confess and ask her forgiveness. I did so. She graciously granted it to me and gently said I needed counseling.

The thought of asking for help was appalling. It meant admitting I was broken. It meant revealing that I needed help. It meant putting myself in a position of vulnerability and humility. What man in his right mind would want to appear weak? This one needed to. We found a local Christian counselor and began weekly meetings. For approximately two months I received godly counsel.

During this time, I came clean to the group of men I was

meeting with every Friday. Another member of the group was dealing with the same issue and was attending a Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) group. From that moment of honest confession, our group of men became a band of brothers committed to wholeness in Christ.

We read books, set up accountability time and knew we could call each other whenever we needed to ensure personal purity and holiness. I am no theologian, but I feel like brokenness is the beginning of restoration. Being broken in the hands of a loving Creator is the epitome of grace, and being in a community of grace is extremely helpful to experience the redemption of God.

Moving from regret to remorse to godly repentance is a daily journey. I regret my decision to have “ducked into” that bookstore. Yet, I have seen the grace of God in ways that I would have never known were it not for that choice. I don’t recommend this path, but I do know that He can take a bad choice and work it for His good plan.

I intend to share this story with my son, and anyone else God puts in my path. I want everyone to know that God is a God of restoration and redemption—He showers us lavishly with His mercy and grace. This journey is made easier knowing that we are not alone in our struggles. To God alone be the glory.

Top 10 Principles to Sexual Purity

We live in a sex-crazed culture where sexual temptation is every man’s battle! Men, how can you learn to say “no” to sexual temptation? How can you gain and maintain sexual purity? How can you teach sexual purity to your children?

The following principles go beyond describing what not to do by detailing what you can do positively. I periodically return to these principles and renew my resolutions. May I challenge you to make the following resolutions to maintain sexual purity?

1. Maintain sexual purity through the power of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:3; Rom. 7:24–25). Exercise self-restraint by bringing my body, mind, will and emotions under complete control through Christ (Gal. 5:16).
2. Never look lustfully at a woman, entertain lustful thoughts or commit adultery (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Exod. 20:14, 17; Rev. 2:22).
3. Never make sexual or seductive advances toward another woman (Prov. 6:27–29) and resist any sexual advances from another woman (Prov. 2:16, 6:24–26).
4. Never allow my mind to pursue stimulation through sensual advertising, obscene or perverse material, nudity, indecent television programs, computer images, the Internet, movies or visit a place of sexual promiscuity (; Rom. 12:2).
5. Hate evil and put to death earthly desires at work in me for sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil passions and greed. Run from sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18; Ps. 97:10; Col. 3:5; 2 Tim. 2:22).
6. Fill my mind with things that are pure (Phil. 4:8).
7. Use my body to serve the Lord and keep my body clean and pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:13, 19–20). Obey the desires and commands of God in all that I do (1 Pet. 1:14–16).
8. Always treat my wife with godliness and humility, honor and respect, dignity and purity (Eph. 5:25–28) and always have my needs for sexual intimacy met by her alone (Gen. 2:24; Prov. 5:18–19; Song 1:2; 1 Cor. 7:3–5).
9. Live as a Spirit-filled Christian in expressing value and worth to all people (John 3:16; Rom. 13:9, 15:7).
10. Quickly and fully repent of any moral failure and trust the Lord for full deliverance (1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:10).

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