

How Secret Sin Destroys Your Family

Pornography is a serial killer! It violates your soul, destroys your relationships and derails your future. Many people who are stuck in porn (and other secret sin) don't realize the painful effect that it has on their family and children. In 1 Corinthians 7:14, the Bible says that one believing parent sanctifies the home. This truth can work the other way around and a parent can open the door to demonic activity for their whole family. People who are trapped in addiction often wonder why their children are oppressed or why their spouse is not happy, and it is often because their secret sin has opened doors and created ripple effects of pain.

The truth is that whether you realize it or not, and no matter how hard you try to hide and cover up your secret, this kind of sin breeds a myriad of effects that go far beyond the individual who is stuck in bondage.

For example, if a husband is stuck in secret sin, it can be extremely common for the wife to play the protector of the family role and try to "be strong for everyone." But what ends up happening when the man takes the journey of healing from hidden sin and getting free from his bondage? The wife may realize that she has her own pain to work through from bearing the weight of her husband's sin! Keep reading, and you'll see that very often, this is a journey of two or more people getting well together. And hear me on this—the kind of bondage I'm talking about is not just relegated to pornography; it's also about alcoholism, work addiction or any place where you try to hide your pain.

Betsy Jacobs is an author, speaker and life coach, and her story is one I hope many of you will glean freedom from. Check

out this incredibly raw and real story of a wife who was left in the wake of her husband's addiction to pornography, and how God intervened to heal them.

The following is Betsy's story:

On our one-year wedding anniversary, my husband introduced me to porn. While I was slicing up the top tier of our wedding cake that had been so perfectly preserved just for this occasion, he was planning to invite me in on an addiction that he'd held secret since childhood. What became of our marriage in the following years after that night was a literal nightmare. In my book, *Awakening Your Prophetic Voice*, I described our marriage like this:

At the time, my husband was an ordained youth pastor who self-medicated with pornography. He was more than a little bitter, at times suicidal, and though he was an excellent provider his tendencies were to "stuff and puff." On the verge of an emotional breakdown, he stuffed his pain, and then it came out in huff-and-puff rages that were emotional terror attacks. I, myself, was more of a "shove and unplug" type—a full-blown hidden stash of junk food in every room, an emotional binge eater who used food like a cutter uses a razor blade."

This is the sanitized version of what our life was. When my husband was Jekyll and Hydeing it, I was smiling and saying all the right things, hopeful it would work itself out but emotionally deferred in every possible way.

When he came clean and confessed to our family and friends that he needed help, I smiled and supported, again, but I was far from OK. It's a conflicting experience to spend years fighting to protect a relationship from the very person you are in a relationship with, but his breakthrough had been my sole prayer for years, and now it was here.

As I watched others console and comfort my husband during his healing process, truthfully. I grew angrier by the day. I felt as if I had been abandoned in the proverbial graveyard that he dragged me to and he never once stopped to notice if I had walked out of that living hell with him. I hadn't.

It's truly hard to understand the complexities of why women stick by, protect or even enable a relationship in the height of dysfunction unless you've walked through it. Note: I'm not endorsing or condoning women to stay in a situation that is unhealthy, I'm just acknowledging those who do. I believe, right now, there are many women who are living out exactly what I'm describing. To all the women who've embraced the hand of hope while standing in the long-cast shadows of a spouse's secret shame, I'm embracing your hand now. You're not alone.

In an effort to not disrupt his healing process, and mostly because I was emotionally numb and had lost my voice, I didn't share with him the pain I was in—until the day I did. One unexpected day, all the words, every word, came out. I don't remember what triggered this vomit of fury, but it wasn't pretty!

I'll never forget looking into my husband's eyes. Expecting he'd become defensive and revert back to old bullying tactics that admittedly I hadn't seen in a long while, his eyes softened, and he listened. The freedom that radiated from his countenance felt arrogant to my bruised and battered heart.

Somewhere in between the exhaustive screams and the hot tears, my husband told me that I needed to tell someone my side of the story; I needed to share all the ugly details. Did he mean telling about the time I found him huddled up in the garage cutting up his arms, threatening suicide while our babies were fast asleep inside? What about the dozens of times I stole his phone and spent hours in the middle of the night manically tracing his digital footprint knowing all I would discover was an utter disappointment? I wonder if he wanted me to share

about the time he discovered I was contemplating divorcing him through a texting conversation with an old high school boyfriend. Were these the details he wanted me to share?

It might as well have been Jesus standing across from me telling me to take heart, come out of hiding and not to be afraid, but it was God's redemptive miracle that it was my husband who was standing in front of me. This was when I realized that it would not be devotion to a doctrine that would save my marriage. It wouldn't be the grin-and-bear-it terror that optimistic delusion conflicts with; rather, it was his swift action to enroll us in marital counseling and his full support for me to write openly about my experiences in those early years of our marriage that has healed our relationship so greatly.

My husband and I recently spent eight days in Spain celebrating our 17th wedding anniversary. It was glorious! Our story is one of hope and committed friendship, but if you were to glean anything from our story, I hope it would be seeing the difference between having true hope in times of hardships versus being deceived by optimistic delusion.

In the first seven years of our marriage, I used religious rhetoric to affirm my inaction and avoidance to allow inexcusable behavior. I placated any and all negativity and was optimistic that things would change, eventually. What I've come to learn is that true hope not only can envision what a better day will look like, but it empowers you to take action presently. True hope is acknowledging what can be done today as it's taking responsibility for the future. Optimistic delusion, on the other hand, can envision a better day but it deflects responsibility and places it in a future circumstance or in the future potential of a person. This all-talk-and-no-action way of living is painfully disempowering, enables unhealthy behaviors and always defers the abundant life God has gifted you for a later day in time.

As it states in James 2, faith without works is dead; faith being the substance of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1). If you find the hope of your relationship deferred to a future circumstance that never seems to come, and you are heartsick from the disappointment that delusion brings, then I'm encouraging you to snap out of it. Stop invalidating the warning signs and speak up! Don't make decisions in your pain, but do seek wise counsel—share all the dirty details. This will be a guiding light out of the graveyard that delusion has you stuck in. Know this: you have a sound mind in spite of your pain; you have a voice in spite of the shame. God's peace will be always be found when you begin to actively take hold of the gift that is your life.

When facing painful situations with hope, there is a fine line between faith and fantasy. Fantasy is like false faith. I'm not talking about fantasy books or movies which are created to entertain. I'm talking about fantasy that causes you to live in denial about the facts of your life.

Fantasy and faith may both look like positivity about a negative situation, so what's the difference? Fantasy doesn't face the facts! Instead, it numbs you and tricks you into thinking everything is OK without ever looking at the real pain points. Whereas faith can have a vision for the future and still look at the painful facts and feel hopeful.

If you're in the middle of something difficult, my challenge to you is this: Are you able to look at the reality of your life and still feel hopeful? Or in other words, are you living in faith or fantasy? I believe it's living by faith that creates a pathway to promise, but living by fantasy won't create a pathway to anything real. {eo}

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all walks of life. She's taught in online prophetic schools, produced prophetic curriculum and equipped the church in hearing God's voice for over a decade. Her husband, Ben, and their two sons, Jake and Jackson, are known as a family who walks with God, who has planted them, for now, in Springfield, Missouri. You can connect with Betsy on Facebook.

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