

INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY

A MINISTRY LEADER'S HANDBOOK



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Internet Accountability and Filtering



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Preface

LUKE GILKERSON

“For neither man nor angel can discern hypocrisy, the only evil that walks invisible.” - John Milton -

Double life. As someone who used to be a card-carrying minister and also habitually viewed pornography, this expression carries a lot of meaning for me.

People are often fascinated with the concept of the struggle between personal sin and social respectability. This theme comes out most powerfully in Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic science fiction story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Dr. Jekyll is a benevolent, respectable scientist who learns from a young age to present his best side to the world while repressing his darker impulses. Deeply troubled by his duplicity and wanting some outlet for his sin, he resorts to the field of science to solve his problem. The good doctor creates an experimental potion that he hopes will divide the two sides of his personality.

Taking the potion, Dr. Jekyll is transfigured both physically and emotionally. Inside he feels lighter, younger, unencumbered by conscience with no regard for morality. Outwardly he looks sickly and deformed, colored with evil. This wicked persona he names *Edward Hyde*.

What starts as a bizarre experiment turns into a double life. As Dr. Jekyll, he carries on his respectable public life. As Mr. Hyde, he indulges in every lustful wish. The potion can change him back and forth, and for a while Jekyll enjoys the sort of freedom this affords him. "I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil," Jekyll writes, "and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine."

Sadly, over time Hyde begins to emerge as the dominant personality, surfacing more and more *without* use of the potion. As Hyde becomes more reckless and less discreet with his evil, Jekyll feels he must prevent Hyde from rearing his ugly face. But no matter how hard he tries, he cannot control the demon caged within him.

As Hyde becomes more difficult to conceal, and as his sins become more sinister and harmful, Jekyll is dismayed when he discovers his potion no longer has the original potency to keep his evil persona under control. Jekyll hates the monster he had become. In his final account he writes,

I could have screamed aloud; I sought with tears and prayers to smother down the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed

against me; and still, between the petitions, the ugly face of my iniquity stared into my soul.

.....

In complete despair, and fearful of the punishment that awaited Hyde for his crimes, Jekyll takes the only course he feels is left to him and commits suicide.

Reading the fictional memoirs of Dr. Jekyll, I cannot help but sympathize with him. For me, the Internet was my potion. It was the place where my anonymity was secure, where I could become a different person, where I could let my most lustful desires run free. Once my lust was satisfied (but never *really* satisfied), I could then swallow the anecdote of “ministry” to cure me, to bring me back to “reality.” This was the sad habit of my life for years.

By the grace of God, my Edward Hyde did not drive me to total despair and ruin. He did not utterly take over. (Of course, by “he” I really mean “me.”) Like a father, God orchestrated events in my life and relationships that brought me out of hiding and into the light. Today, I walk in a much greater measure of freedom from pornography, but it is a fragile freedom. This side of glory, Hyde will never really go away, and from time to time, he likes to remind me that he’s still around.

As a Christian, my marching orders are clear: I must throw myself on the mercy of God and put these inclinations in my flesh to death. Easier said than done, I know. But over the years, God has been faithful to slay the sin in my members and give me a fresh joy in Him that displaces the pleasures of sin. I pray the same will be true for you.

The Purpose of This Book

This book is written to church leaders who feel the tension of a double life. How do we break free of our compulsion to view pornography? This is a great question, but before we answer it, we must ask the more basic question: how can we have what King David called “an undivided heart” (Psalm 86:11)?

This book is not a step-by-step guide away from lust and pornography. It really isn't a step-by-step guide to anything. This book is about one step—one crucial step—that ministers must take: get honest with ourselves and with others we trust about the real nature of our sin. No pretense. No minimizing. No rationalizing. No games. Just gut-level honesty.

This book is about repenting of drinking our religious potions that enable us to wear our titles like masks and keep us from bringing our sins into the light. Just as sure as we must repent from our Hyde-like lusts, we must also learn to turn from our Jekyll-like pretenses. Your Hyde is not your only problem. Jekyll too must change. He must learn the first step to stopping Hyde is exposing him, not trying to manage him.

We must shatter the illusion that we can simply quarantine our sin and still carry on as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The same Jesus you serve from the pulpit will simply not let you entertain idols at your computer.

This book is also written to those who work with or are close to ministers who struggle with pornography. We

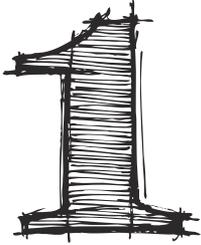
hope these pages contain practical resources for you to identify with and counsel a struggling minister.

Well before the dawn of the Internet, British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge said, “Sex has become the religion of the most civilized portions of the earth. The orgasm has replaced the Cross as the focus of longing and the image of fulfillment.” How much truer is this quote today in our Information Age, with seemingly anonymous sexual images and interactions available to us as the click of a button. Now more than ever, ministers and pastors need to renew their delight in the living Christ so the fleeting pleasures of sin cannot compete as rival gods.

This book is only a first word, a beginning to the conversation. It is not the last word on this subject. Real freedom isn’t learned in a book. It is forged in prayer. It is experienced through gut-wrenching conviction. It is practiced and celebrated in honest friendships. My great hope for this book is that it woos you out of hiding and helps you step into the light of accountability and freedom.

Yours in the battle,

Luke Gilkerson



The Double Life

DARRELL BRAZELL

It's 1:45 on Tuesday afternoon and I'm logging onto the Internet to check my e-mail, read a newspaper article, and begin doing research for Sunday's sermon. Well, that's what I'm trying to convince myself anyway. Since my secretary leaves at 2 p.m. and I will be alone in the building, deep down, I know exactly what I'm doing. Yes, I will check my e-mail and I will probably read an article or two, but as soon as I hear the door close behind her, I will do what I have done more times than I care to count. I'll type "sex" or "porn" or something worse in the search engine and spend the next three or four hours in the pigpen of my bondage.

I will enter a trance that will often lead me to neglect important projects, ignore phone calls, forget appointments and lose track of time. Finally, I will look at the clock and panic because I know my wife was expecting me home 15 minutes earlier, and I am just now starting my cleanup ritual of trashing files, clearing

the history and doing what I can to put myself back together so I can seem okay when I walk in the front door. In my shame, I'll drive home using every minute to create a believable excuse for why I am late. I'll also try to put a good face on even though I know pornography makes real connection impossible. Usually, I'll fail miserably and we will end up in a fight within the first 30 minutes.

On Wednesday, I'll go to the office with a new commitment to not answer the siren calls of the porn sites. I'll start the morning in prayer, confessing my sin and begging God to give me a fresh start. I'll return the phone calls I ignored on Tuesday and work diligently on my mid-week lesson. I'll do fine all morning, but when my secretary leaves, the battle will rage again. Most Wednesdays I'll win, but still feel the shame of Tuesday as I stand before my evening Bible class teaching the holy Word of God.

Thursdays were almost always a nightmare. In fact, as my addiction escalated, I sometimes looked at porn with the secretary and even others in the building. Sure, I all but panicked whenever someone knocked on my door or (even worse) just walked in. However, I always had a legitimate window to click to in the background and my laptop screen pointed away from the door so no one ever caught me.

Friday was repentance day. I can't tell you how many Friday mornings began with tearful prayers, begging for God's mercy and promising this was my new beginning. Once my repentance ritual was done, I would scramble to write a sermon, having done little to no prior

preparation. It became so bad that sometimes on Friday afternoons, after I had a rough outline sketched out, I would give in to the siren call once again.

Sunday mornings I would arrive at the building early so I could once again beg God for a fresh start and finish my sermon. Standing in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday, I could hear the Accuser of the brethren screaming at me. "Who are you to proclaim God's holy Word?" and "What would they think if they knew what you did during the week?" One Sunday was especially painful. Throughout the worship service Satan pounded me with the club I handed him through my sin. It was so bad that during the song before communion I seriously contemplated not partaking. "I'm not worthy" and other messages pounded in my brain. Imagine what it would look like if the preacher in the second row refused the elements?

I almost did just that. However, just before the usher handed me the bread, I heard the words from a story I had written a few years earlier about a young man who felt unworthy to partake. "It is your willingness to admit your unworthiness that makes you worthy." In spite of my mess, in spite of my sin, I knew my gracious heavenly Father was speaking to me through my own words, so I ate the bread, drank the wine and felt renewed once again. However, I continued to struggle with whether or not I was worthy to preach, but then I heard the same phrase once again, "It is your willingness to admit your unworthiness that makes you worthy." So I preached, and strangely enough, sensed God speaking through me.

Unfortunately, even that experience of God's grace didn't set me free from the bondage of my addiction. Week

after week, I repeated the cycle. Oh, there were some weeks where I was “victorious,” but I am certain they were even less frequent than I now remember. In fact, I’m guessing many of my “victorious weeks” were really just times when I didn’t act out as much.

I also played my role as pastor. I preached, did weddings, funerals, prayed with the sick, received confessions, led elders’ meetings, and did all the things a good pastor should. I looked the part, and my family appeared on the outside to be perfectly fine. However, there was a secret hiding beneath the veneer. I was the whitewashed tomb. I was the Pharisee. I was Saul telling Samuel, “But I did obey the Lord,” even after Samuel asked him, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle?” (1 Samuel 15).

The signs were all around me just like the animals and the plunder Saul was supposed to have destroyed. My computer constantly had issues, as porn sites are notorious for bugs, viruses, etc. My marriage, while looking good on the outside, was in shambles. In my shame, I hid from my wife for so long that she had chosen to try to make life work without me. My young daughter was already starting to do the same. My ministry suffered. Very few people sought my counsel. There were other signs as well.

The cycle got so bad I seriously contemplated suicide on more than one occasion. I felt hopelessly trapped. I tried everything to get out. I tried Scripture memorization, praying more, fasting, Internet filters, and even eliminating the Web browser from my computer. I tried everything, except the most important thing: I was

terrified to tell anyone what was really going on inside of me. After all, while people confessed their sins to me, to whom could I confess? My confession could cost me my position, my income, and even my family. My confession could have a tidal wave effect in my congregation. Surely God wouldn't want that kind of devastation for a problem that I thought only impacted me?

I remember one of my pigpen days when I almost told a ministry friend. I had just started downloading porn when my phone rang. (Thankfully, my struggle was in the days of dialup so at least it took longer.) He responded to my "Hello" with "What in the world are you up to?" I came within a whisper of responding, "I'm looking for porn on the Internet." Looking back, I wish I would have been courageous enough to have been honest that day because it was at least a year later before I hit bottom hard enough to begin telling others my story.

Thankfully, in February of 2000, I finally broke. I finally began telling some other men and my wife where I was. I began seeking help. I began reading books specifically on sexual addiction and admitted to myself, my wife and to others that I had a problem. As I moved into the light, I began to discover the power of confession and the inherent weakness of living a life of duplicity.

For the first time in my life, I understood I didn't have to be a "double-minded" man. For the first time in my life, I began to understand why James 5:16 says that when we confess our sins to one another God brings healing into our life. I learned that "walking in the light" (1 John 1:9) doesn't mean getting it right, it means getting it in the light and being honest with myself, with God and with

others. In fact, it's interesting that the word the NIV translates as "confess" literally means "to agree with." It means we agree with God that our sin is repulsive and needs to be removed.

In my old life of addiction, a significant part of me didn't want to agree with God or others. I wanted to believe I could maintain this duality: I could be a man of God, preaching His holy Word and still indulge my fleshly lusts. Honestly, bearing my soul with brothers in Christ who would lock arms with me in the heat of the battle began the process that has enabled me to live the past 10 years completely free from pornography and masturbation.

I can't begin to describe the way this has transformed my ministry. My sermons now speak of God's grace and deliverance from personal experience rather than theoretical theology. Individuals and couples now seek my counsel so much that I have to be careful to not spend all my time and energy as a counselor and neglect other responsibilities. When I am with people, I am really *with* them. Whether it is a leadership meeting, a counseling session, or even praying with someone before a surgery, I am no longer hiding behind a wall of shame. While people may not be able to put their finger on what has changed, they experience me very differently, and the power and the impact are significant.

Even more important is the way my recovery has transformed my marriage and my life as a father. Ten years ago, my wife and I, while still physically together were emotionally divorced. Her contempt for me was so

close to the surface she was barely able to hide its biting edge. I resented her for a myriad of things that were not her fault. We constantly fought, bickered, and avoided each other. By the grace of God, however, we are now in a very different place. She is now my best friend, and we genuinely enjoy being together even if it is simply a quiet evening at home.

Recovery has also transformed my relationship with my children. I can vividly remember sitting in another room like a zombie while my 2-year-old daughter cried in her crib and honestly the only thought in my head was, "When is she going to shut up?" I can remember watching my wife play with her in the backyard and feeling a cringe of pain because I didn't know how to enjoy just being on the grass, playing with my child. My son was born two-and-a-half years into my recovery and I remember having a sense of God telling me, "You are now ready to be the father of a son." I have since learned to enjoy simply being with my children. I can now meet them where they are, and I can't tell you the joys I have found being with them in the simple things of life.

Don't get me wrong. I still struggle at times. God is still at work healing the damage done to my heart that made me vulnerable to pornography in the first place. He is also at work continuing to heal the damage I did to myself and to my family through my sin. At times my kids still annoy me more than they should, and I sometimes still resent my wife for things that aren't her fault. However, the difference between now and then is night and day.

If you are reading this and can identify with the struggle, but not the victory, please find the help you need. Whether your struggle is as frequent and intense as mine or even if it is much less or even more, you must know, no one gets out in isolation. You must also know that left unchecked, it will take you to even darker places than I have described. I've worked with numerous pastors who have gone from pornography to prostitution, one-night stands, affairs with church members, homosexual encounters, and even sexually violating children. Don't assume you will never cross any of those lines. After all, think of how many lines you have already obliterated that at one point in your life you said you would never cross.

Your recovery is more important than your position or your ministry. Ironically, your recovery might even be the very thing that opens your church or your ministry to the deep work God really wants to do. Call someone. Call me. Don't allow another day go by with your struggle growing in the darkness. God's grace is even more amazing than you have preached it to be, but the only way you will know its beauty is to embrace it by facing your struggle head on and with the help of others who will walk with you.

Our role as pastor, minister, or whatever title we wear is worn only by grace. God brought this point home to me five years ago. In a communion meditation, I had told my story about God reminding me of my own words, "It is your willingness to confess your unworthiness that makes you worthy." I told it because I knew of two individuals attending who were struggling with a tremendous sense of shame. I wanted them to know

they could partake of the elements. Then, as I was getting ready to step into the pulpit to preach, I sensed God asking me, “Now that you have been porn free for five years, are you any more worthy to proclaim my holy Word then when you were before I set you free?” I chuckled, and answered, “Of course not, Lord, but by your grace, I will stand before your people as a forgiven saint and trust you to give me the words of grace you want your children to hear.”

We will never (outside of the redemptive work of Christ) be worthy of our calling. However, when we find the freedom He has for us from the compulsive sin in our lives, we will find ourselves speaking, teaching, living and breathing from a radically different place. I pray you find the freedom He has shown me.

2

The Occupational Hazards of Ministry

DR. HARRY W. SCHAUMBURG

The Bible holds the office of elder in high esteem. Whoever desires to be a pastor has set his heart on a noble task because it involves the oversight of God's people through ruling and teaching. To do the job requires not only knowledge and wisdom, but also a well-guarded heart, for danger lurks in the elevated pedestal of recognition. It is here that sexual sin is most subtle and appears eminently reasonable.

Pastor Tom is a typical example. He was a pastor for more than 25 years when he began an affair with his secretary. He told me in counseling that while sexually involved with another woman he could still preach against adultery, counsel others to stop an affair, and then tell himself that God didn't care if he was unfaithful to his wife because the church was growing. Such thinking is unreasonable, arrogant, and just plain foolish. Yet this story points to an occupational hazard for everyone who holds the office of pastor.

Why is such a high office so prone to sexual sin and therefore so dangerous?

It is true that sexual sin is pandemic in the culture, but the greatest danger of entering into temptation is within the four walls of the church building. With more than 50% of the congregation struggling with cybersex and new studies indicating that it is increasingly a female problem, the danger is real. On any given Sunday, how many sitting in the pew are truly spiritually and sexually mature? How many men and women routinely engage in heart adultery towards the opposite sex; even towards the man in the pulpit?

Some years ago a woman came to Colorado to see me for counseling. She shared her little secret about how she enjoyed visiting with her pastor because he always gave her a hug. She went on to explain that she went home and sexually fantasized about him and comforted herself. As I ended a rather painful counseling session, she asked me for a hug. If I had been ignorant of her sinful pattern I might have thought it was merely a caring gesture. I gently explained why a hug would never be a part of our counseling. Pastors need to think of Christian fellowship as an unseen danger. In looking with lustful intent, some have already committed adultery with the pastor during the worship service.

So we must take careful heed, for the pulpit offers neither shield nor immunity from any form of sexual sin. In fact, I think that most preachers are more vulnerable than their parishioners. Pastors are constantly bombarded with sexual temptations, yet we prefer to ignore the danger signs.

Ralph was a young pastor, preaching three services each Sunday morning in a church that had grown from a dozen to thousands. In his overwork he justified neglecting his wife for the work of God, and continuing his life-long struggle with pornography. It started at age 11, looking at his Dad's secret stash of porn magazines. Now it regularly involved looking at sexual images on his laptop and iPhone. Eventually this led to sexual chats and then a sexual liaison with a woman across town. Today, fewer affairs start in the counseling office. Rather, they begin online, where physical and emotional relationships easily develop. The tragedy is that such dalliances are avoidable.

In decades of counseling hundreds of pastors dealing with the fallout of unfaithfulness, I have learned a lot about sexual sin, but one thing stands out in my mind: In ministry, unfaithfulness is an occupational hazard. If a pastor understands this hazard he will be better prepared to avoid disaster.

First, each man called to ministry must fully understand the occupational hazards related to internal corruption. The root problem is not your family of origin, but original sin. Spiritual and sexual maturity requires that we “put to death therefore what is earthly *in you*: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5, italics added). Internet filters, avoiding counseling a woman alone, and taking your wife on trips out of town are helpful but they don't address the reality of sin. If we only set boundaries we are only looking at the problem through the eyes of reason. Sexual temptation always makes one's thinking unpredictable, uncontrollable and

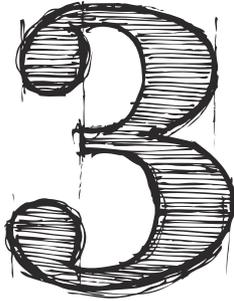
irrational because it comes out of the heart, not just from the object of lust. If the life of God indwelling you does not rule the heart, the sin within will kill the life of God in you, while maintaining a public image of spiritual maturity. While it is the pastor's duty to help others mortify the power of indwelling sin, it is the failure to do so in one's own heart that creates the greatest danger to the servant of God. Lose this battle, and you could lose the war within.

Second, each man called to ministry must fully understand the occupational hazard as it relates to the pedestal. The more public your ministry and the more esteemed your preaching, the more dangerous and effective the schemes of our enemy. There are two natural elements that are accentuated in public ministry. First is arrogance in finding satisfaction in self rather than the glory of God. This is a deadly poison. It will ultimately kill your ministry and your life. Right along with arrogance comes natural abilities, gifts and accomplishments that we allow to feed the soul more than the Word of God. Both of these elements are a setup to engage in risky thoughts and behaviors, believing all the time that you can get away with it. How in the world did Ted Haggard think he could conceal his identity from a male prostitute?

Third, each man called to ministry must fully understand the occupational hazard as it relates to relationships. The pulpit is a lonely place. Pastoring is more than a full-time job and the pastor's wife and family are easily neglected. Ask yourself, "How do I handle the compliments from women?" A woman with a compliment and a need for attention is a force that

doubles the temptation. Know this fact, that such an object immediately excites lust lying dormant in the heart. Don't go near this door of opportunity; let your wife's evaluation of you as a man be the only one that counts.

Given these hazards in ministry, we need to become actively aware of the issues, challenges, and have an effective prevention strategy to avoid being caught in this web of consuming desire and destruction. I strongly believe that to be sexually mature you must be spiritually mature, and to be spiritually mature you must be sexually mature. In other words, don't separate your sexuality from your spirituality, nor your spirituality from your sexuality. Prevention is possible when we recognize that everything we do in ministry relationally and sexually must point to one purpose, the glory of God. Our entire motivation is to be set on fire for life by the driving desire for the glory of God. If ministry and relationships have that one purpose, then our masculine sexuality will serve that one purpose with all women, including our wives. It is not about me! It *is* about God! When we truly grasp that reality, ministry, relationships, and sex are in the service of God, for the glory of God. When pastors hear that calling, and maintain it, their lives can become imbued with a vision that guides them personally and in ministry.



The Danger of Pedestals

MARK BROUWER

I know from experience that pedestals are dangerous. People come into the church with a powerful mixture of expectations and illusions about what an uber-spiritual person should be, and assume the pastor will embody that. This is a problem when we let them down—when they see how we fall short of the ideal that they created in their minds.

But maybe an even bigger problem is when they don't see our flaws because they don't want to see our flaws, and we get too good at hiding them. Most of the people in our churches want to see us in a good light, because this affirms their faith...the leader of their spiritual community can serve to validate the power of that faith.

In spite of whatever we might say about honesty and authenticity in relationships, this idealization creates an opportunity—and a motive—to appear holy. And

because we are human, the only way to appear holy is by hiding parts of ourselves and becoming ever more isolated. It might seem to be a good thing...they get to have their faith encouraged by this example of a person who's pretty "together," and we receive higher esteem from others than we really deserve.

But this all comes at a price. When people who've idealized their spiritual leaders are forced to face their less-than-savory humanity, they are often disillusioned and angry. Somehow they expected us to "be better than that." So reactions to perceived slights, and evidences of imperfections can often be magnified, because people cling to their hope that their leader will not be struggling with the things that other people are struggling with.

But even more dangerous is what the pedestal does to the soul of the leader. The leader who is dehumanized in this way is trapped by the expectations of other people. The leader must keep his or her personal struggles and foibles hidden. This creates unbearable tension and fear for many leaders. *"What would happen if people in my church found out that I was struggling with _____?"*

So pastors don't get help. They may try to live in denial, and minimize how serious their problems are. They live in isolation, and the shame and fear escalates.

The reverse side of the problem of pedestals is that for some pastors it tends to reinforce the tendencies of narcissism, pride, and judgementalism. The less in touch I am with my own faults, the more spiritually superior

I feel. No one is really in a position to challenge most pastors about their behavior or attitudes, because they don't let people close enough to them. They hide behind the cloak of spiritual authority, and thus stay stuck in blindness to their true condition. When you add the fact that hundreds or thousands of people are listening to the pastor speak God's truth to them each week, you have a dangerous mix. As someone said, this is like "pouring Miracle Grow on one's character flaws."

What is the answer?

Humanity. Let the leader be human.

A meditation from the recovery book *Today* has this to say about pedestals:

Sometimes we expect far too much of the people around us, and because no one can ever live up to those expectations, we are almost always disappointed. But wouldn't it be better if we just let go, and let people be who they are? Then we'd be able to see them as they are - with all their beauty and goodness in which we take joy, and with all their faults, which we can also see in ourselves.

When we have put someone up on a pedestal, sculpturing them to fit our needs and desires by smoothing out the rough edges and creating new curves here and there, we cannot see the real person underneath our work. All we see is the illusion we have created. That is denying the person's real identity and is disrespectful. It's much better for our

friends and for ourselves if we drop our expectations and illusions, and accept them all just the way they are.¹

.....

I may not choose to tell the congregation everything about my struggles—especially my sexual struggles—but I must have some people with whom I am fully honest. I must guard against the pedestal syndrome. It only serves to isolate us further.

Getting off the pedestal

I served as a pastor for 15 years, working as a church planter and senior pastor of two churches. I tried to establish these churches as safe communities—places where people could be honest about their struggles. The sad irony is that all the time I was working to create a safe place for others, I was unable to be honest about my own struggles with pornography. When I initially sought help for my struggles, I was absolutely paranoid that someone from my church might find out about it.

I made a secret bargain with God. I promised God that I would work on my “lust problem,” and asked for His help to heal me...as long as we could just keep it between us. I wanted God to fix me, but I didn’t want the struggle—or the process of being fixed—to impact my ministry.

Over the years, the disconnect between the message I was preaching and the way I was living got harder to deal with. I remember it coming to a head when a

1 Emotions Anonymous, *Today* (Hazelden Publishing, 1989)

young woman asked for prayer after a church service, because she had just discovered her husband's stash of pornography. Later that week, the three of us met to talk about this. Here I was, trying to help them deal with his pornography problem, when I was struggling to deal with it myself. I wanted to talk about my own experience, and share the things I was learning and struggling with. Instead, I kept a safe pastoral distance and gave them the usual lines about accountability and praying for victory. When they left I hated myself for being such a hypocrite.

Around that same time, things came to a head in my marriage, as my wife got more in touch with her anger and unwillingness to put up with a husband who was not staying sexually "sober." I wound up taking a leave of absence after telling people in the church that I was struggling with pornography. Because things were going so well in the church, and we were moving into a big building project, it was the absolute worst time to take a leave of absence. I felt I needed to give some explanation for why I needed the leave. If I didn't, there would be wild speculation. And I didn't want to lie about it and cover up the treatment I was seeking for addiction.

It was a huge step to take, and it fundamentally altered the course of my life and ministry. When I came back from my leave of absence, it was clear that it would not work for me to continue as the senior pastor in the church. I left my role, and eventually found my way into a ministry that works with sexual addiction. Now I am teaching, writing, and coaching people in this area as my full-time ministry.

If I had to make the decision all over again, I would do the very same thing. I would go public, take the leave of absence, and deal with whatever fallout there would be. At the same time, I also firmly believe that most pastors who want to recover from sexual struggles do not need to go public like I did, and in fact probably should not go public. Going public creates challenges that make recovery harder.

The exception to this principle is the pastor who tries to recover without people in his church knowing, but keeps on struggling. If you are genuinely and diligently working a plan of recovery while in the ministry, and you can't stay sober, you may need to do something more drastic. Your ministry role might be part of the problem.

We like the pedestal too much

For most pastors, what makes ministry such an obstacle to recovery is this issue of being on the pedestal. Many of us like it too much. Many of us get so attached to having people look up to us that we have a hard time facing ourselves honestly. And if there's one thing we need to do in recovery, it is to face ourselves honestly. We have to get honest about our resentments. We have to get honest about what we are looking for, and what we are actually doing with our sexual behaviors. We have to get honest about how deceitful we have been. We have to get honest about how unsatisfied we are in our marriage. And we have to get honest about how lonely we are.

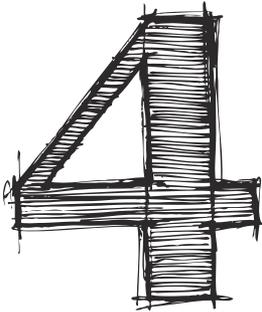
If that's not enough, we also have to be vulnerable. We have to get off the pedestal. Being on a pedestal creates a mindset where we are reaching down to help all those poor, needy people around us. But sometimes we are one of those needy people that need help from other people. As pastors we are good at helping others, and we are awful at letting others help us.

After my problem with pornography became public in our church, a number of people did things to reach out to my wife and me. They wrote letters, made calls, and some even brought meals to my wife when I was away at a workshop. I had conversations with guys in the church who would earnestly ask me, "How are you doing?" I was the one who was supposed to be asking them that question! On one hand it was great to get this kind of support, but on the other, it was really uncomfortable. I didn't know how to be on the receiving end of people's care.

Support groups have been an important part of my recovery. I have struggled with the same dynamic in these groups: it's easy for me to take the lead and help other people, but sometimes I am the messed up one who needs help. For a long time I would censor myself when I would speak up in our group meetings. I wouldn't say what I was really feeling if I thought it was too disjointed, or might seem selfish or petty. I had to face the fact that I was censoring myself because I was still trying to be on that pedestal. I wanted the guys in my group to like me and respect me, and I was afraid they wouldn't if they knew how messed up and small-hearted I am.

Now I see things differently. I realize that both things can be true of me: I can be helpful and I can also be needy. I can be funny and happy, but I can also be pathetic and self-absorbed. I can be all those things and still be loved. Instead of having people look up to me, I can have them walk beside me. Instead of people I reach out to—from the vantage point of how “together” I am—I now have fellow-strugglers with whom I share the journey.

Amazing.



Finding Others You Can Trust

DAVID BLYTHE

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”
(Proverbs 27:17)

I'll never forget one day after I presented a workshop on pornography and sexual addiction, when a youth pastor approached me to tell a most sad story. He explained how he had recently moved across country to take a position at a church. He was in the office early on his first day and was attempting to set up his computer, but was having difficulty connecting to the Internet. As he tried to find someone who might be able to help, he walked into the sanctuary.

As he explained it to me, there was a large stained glass window behind him, a huge cross in front of him, and a video screen right beside the cross. He stood in amazement as a pornographic video was being played on the large video screen. As he looked up to the control

booth, he saw his new senior pastor huddled up and watching the video. Out of sheer disbelief and anger, the young pastor screamed, "What are you doing?" and quickly walked back toward his office.

The senior pastor gathered himself, stormed past the young man, went into his office and slammed the door. In a later discussion with his senior pastor, it became apparent that a very proud and defiant stance was going to be the approach against this youth pastor's discovery. Ultimately, this event cost the senior pastor everything. However, what was even more revealing was his attempt to blame the youth pastor for his demise and not to accept any responsibility for his actions.

This is not an uncommon story. Of course, the details are not the same in each instance, but there are pastors all over America that have lost it all to a pornography problem. They live their lives with no accountability whatsoever because they honestly believe either it's too risky or they are simply above it. Like the pastor in this story, many have a lofty attitude regarding not only their problem, but also regarding accountability.

Being a pastor myself, I understand how everyone looks to us for spiritual guidance, and we become the spiritual authority in many people's lives. But if we're not careful, this authority mentality can carry over into everything.

You see, when you are never challenged, when you are always the one giving the answers, casting vision, bringing perspective, it is easy to develop an "I'm the man" mentality. It is within that mindset that the idea of accountability is not at all embraced and yet it is the

very lack of accountability that propagates this attitude. The subject of personal accountability cannot even be addressed when this attitude prevails. So please understand if you don't want accountability and if you think you are above accountability, you will simply continue with the status quo.

I Corinthians 10:12-13 tells us, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability." That's good news, but it goes on to say, "but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

Personal accountability involves looking for that way of escape before temptation comes, like removing any porn from your home or office immediately, keeping your office door open at all times, calling your accountability partner—and the biggest one of all—Internet Protection²—because without it, you are just wasting your time.

Who can hold you accountable?

First and foremost, you've got to get away from the "Lone Ranger" syndrome. You are not in this battle alone, unless you choose to be. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his

² Now you are probably thinking that because I am writing a chapter in this book, that the good folks at Covenant Eyes told me to mention their product, but that's just not true. This is Square One for any pastor. If you are not willing to take this most obvious first step, you are not applying any personal accountability! Pastor, if you use a computer at work or home, Covenant Eyes is essential! Internet surfing accountability should be standard on all computers at all church offices and home offices.

fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!" I love this Scripture because it establishes the need for someone to come alongside you to pick you up when you fall. But really, accountability is not only about helping you up, but staying the course, so that you won't fall to begin with. It can become one more element of successful Christian living and a voice of reason when yours is distorted by lust. Accountability is something you should seriously pray about and ask God to give you guidance and discernment over.

1. Fellow staff member

A great place to start is another church staff member, if you are blessed to have one. You are both in the same situation, living life in a fish bowl, serving the Lord in the capacity of ministry, and needing a sounding board and someone to be transparent with. There has to be one man in your life with whom you can be brutally honest and allow the same for him.

I happen to have lunch weekly with another staff member at my church who has become my accountability partner. We talk about many things and nothing is taboo. He knows my thoughts and I know his, and we help each other along the way. It has developed into an incredible friendship and I trust him with my life and that is what accountability breeds.

You will find through accountability that a close friendship will develop and every man needs one good and close friend. Something interesting about

an accountability partner is how comfortable you can become with one another. When that relationship is strong there really isn't anything you can't talk about. When you see that the inner thoughts and struggles that you share are kept confidential it only propels you to share in greater ways and this is key. We *all* need someone like this in our life.

2. Long-distance friends

Some pastors have long-distance accountability partners. These are relationships that have stood the test of time, men who they trust and have a relationship with but who live somewhere else. It could be that friend you went to college with, the friend that stood up at your wedding, the guy you played ball with—the one who has simply been a trusted part of your life. This is the best kind of long distance partner.

This sort of partnership, as well as any accountability, must begin by identifying your need for it. A starting point might sound like this: "As you know, I am a pastor and in my position it is difficult and even risky to share any personal struggles I may be facing. I know however, that away from my title, I am still a man and I too have to deal with stress and temptations and as you can imagine, I want to walk away from them with victory. You have always been a friend that I can count on and I would like to ask a very important favor from you. I need someone in my life with whom I can be totally honest, who will hear my concerns and issues, will support me through them, and hold me accountable to be the man of God I am supposed to be. I need you listen

to me, pray with me, encourage me, as I will you, and keep this only between you and I. Can you commit to this for me?"

You have now just ignited a new kind of friendship that will go even deeper and more meaningful than what you have experienced up to this point. We should never view accountability as a burden, but instead as an incredible honor. To be asked by a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be their partner will be an incredibly special opportunity for your friend that they will not only take seriously, but will do it with a love for you that few others could.

If you choose long-distance accountability is the method you choose, you must make time each week to call this friend and share from your heart. It is important after the normal small talk of catching up to have a process you go through each and every time you talk.

No matter whom you choose, you and your accountability partner must establish a "covenant of confidentiality" about anything that is shared. Honesty must be a cornerstone of this relationship. Transparency is essential because accountability without transparency is a waste of time. Always pray for one another. Have Scriptures ready to share with each other as an encouragement for the week ahead. Become a partner to him and help him in his walk as well. You must also have an agreement of being available for each other whenever needed, outside of these weekly calls. You must be ready and willing to call your partner or receive a call from them whenever either of you is struggling. You both have to take accountability

seriously enough to drop whatever you are doing to help your friend in need.

I have heard some pastors say that all they need is an “anonymous” long-distance accountability partner. It will never work. How in the world is an unknown voice on the other end of the phone going to help in holding you accountable?

One of the reasons accountability is so powerful is because you know you will have to face your partner and openly share the times when you fall. This makes you stop and think before you embark upon premeditated sin. It is simply one more level of clarity prior to you making a decision to either partake or walk away from sexual sin.

When someone knows you well, they know how you act, talk, and express yourself. If you chose to be untruthful with an anonymous partner, how would they even know if you were lying? Accountability partners who know you and have a history with you can clearly see when you are being honest and when you are blowing smoke.

I believe with all my heart that an anonymous partner would be a waste of time, because there really isn't accountability there. It simply becomes an exercise between two guys who don't know one another and truthfully don't care. There has to be a vested interest in each other's lives in order for accountability to work.

3. Another pastor in town

Another form of accountability is to consider teaming up with another pastor in your town. Remember he is in the same boat as you and also needs accountability. I am aware how competitive church building can be, and yet I know this is not an attitude that God embraces. We are all working on the same team toward the same goal—winning people to Christ. We have to move past that competitive nature within all of us, break down those walls, and be there for one another.

Some smaller communities will have regular breakfast meetings with fellow clergy members, and in larger metropolitan areas, many denominations will have luncheons with other pastors within your particular fellowship, where solid relationships can develop. As you develop a friendship, you will become more transparent with each other and accountability will naturally develop. Who better to hold you accountable than a man who clearly understands everything you are dealing with? And there is absolutely nothing wrong with cutting to the chase and simply telling your fellow pastor you have found accountability essential in your Christian walk and how you would be honored if he would consider teaming up with you.

But I can't think of anyone...

A statement I hear often is, "There is no one to whom I can go for accountability," and I must tell you just how arrogant a statement that is. Truthfully, this plays right in line with the mindset that I am above accountability.

Our enemy uses our positions of “spiritual authority” against us. We think no one is capable enough, or spiritual enough, or strong enough, or discreet enough.

Yes, I know your personal struggles getting into the wrong hands can create trouble for you, but let's get real here. If you have prayed about this there comes a point where you have to truly trust God in ways you have been teaching your flock...completely. I believe with all of my heart when God sees you attempting to do something about your struggles, He honors that effort by directing you to the right person.

Ultimately, whoever you choose to help you in your struggle must exhibit a strong walk with Jesus Christ. He can't be intimidated by your position and must not be afraid to call you out. Like King David, you need a Nathan in your life. Also like King David, your accountability partner should be a Jonathan to you. The two of you must have other interactions besides just accountability conversations over your sexual struggles. You must take time to be friends and simply develop that bond which is required for true accountability, because true accountability develops through a relationship where true love for one another exists.

Allow yourself to be held accountable, because accountability before man is a stepping stone to integrity before God.

Men of God, if you are struggling with pornography or sexual sin of any kind, the first step is to confess it. It is the secrecy of this problem that will continue to keep you bound by it. “For everyone who does wicked things

hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” (John 3:20-21). If we live by the truth, and that is what we profess publically every week in front of our congregations, we’ve got to bring our sin and weaknesses into the light. Secrecy about your struggle with porn will get you nothing but a deeper addiction for it. This is the essence of our faith: being transparent before God, confessing our sin, and being cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Never forget, God’s grace, forgiveness, and mercy still apply to you, man of God. Your position doesn’t preclude you from this and truthfully, you need it now more than ever.

Once you decide to come clean, not just with God but to a fellow believer in Christ, your path away from this problem begins. There is something liberating about openly sharing your struggle with another. Chains are broken and you can for the first time start down a path of freedom, because no longer is your secret holding you captive. Just like you have habitually created this problem, you methodically break away from it. This is where accountability becomes powerful. But no one can hold you accountable until you empower them to do so.

Lastly, let me say that our greatest form of accountability is to Jesus Christ. It becomes easy in the ministry to run on autopilot. We stay so busy preparing sermons, counseling, planning for the future, and keeping it all together that few find time to really nurture that most important relationship we all have.

Often, when we are in the Scriptures, it is usually developing a sermon. We pray for so many people about so many things that we can forget to pray for ourselves and take time to commune with God.

To be a spiritual authority in others lives, we must truly know the heart of God and understand and dwell in His Word. Pastors cannot afford to run on yesterday's experiences. We must have new encounters with God and new revelations in our own lives if we are to be effective at leading the Church of Jesus Christ. When we are truly living the life we preach about in a passionate and all encompassing way, this is when we are led by the Holy Spirit. So, when times of temptation come, we feel the Holy Spirit's conviction, and we act accordingly. We don't tune it out. This is the ultimate form of accountability in the life of any believer.

Don't get lazy in your faith! Refuse to live in the status quo! Seek God daily and develop an even deeper understanding of Him and what He requires of you!



Gospel-Centered Accountability³

JONATHAN K. DODSON

Put ten bucks in the jar to keep from sinning.

When I recall some of the popular discipleship disciplines I advocated in college, I shudder. Did I really think that they were *biblical* or even helpful?

When one of my disciples caved into a particular sin he was “being held accountable for,” he had to put ten bucks in the jar. Sounds awfully close to an indulgence doesn’t it? Yet, in our aim to promote “holiness,” ten bucks was the penalty for pandering to sin. We thought this approach to accountability was especially good for fighting sexual sin. If one of the guys I disciplined had a particularly lustful week (viewing inappropriate TV, reading pornographic material, or masturbating), he had to “pay the price.”

³ This chapter was adapted from material in a forthcoming book by the author to be published by Crossway in 2012.

When we met for our weekly accountability meeting, I would ask a range of questions designed to promote accountability, but as I recall, we only assigned sexual sins the steep penalty of ten dollars. “Other sins” were considered less grievous. Sometimes the accumulated cash was put in the offering. Other times it was used to celebrate “not sinning” over dinner. Somehow, this practice was supposed to motivate holy living, but instead, it fostered a legalism that displaced the gospel. Other times it promoted license in sinning, knowing that the worst it would cost us was a few bucks.

Maybe you’ve had a similar experience with an accountability group. Ideally, accountability groups foster personal holiness and faith in Christ through corporate confession, repentance and prayer—a noble aim (James 5:16; cf. 1 John 1:9). However, as my experience reveals, this is not always the case.

Gospel Accountability

Accountability can remind us of the necessity of holiness: “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). But do we have to choose between legalism and license? Is it possible to find a middle ground between these two extremes?

I believe we can. God wants us to experience *gospel-centered accountability*. Gospel-centered accountability avoids the extremes of legalism and license by making the gospel *the central motivation for Christian holiness*. It addresses the goal of accountability—holiness—

as well as the motivation for holiness—the gospel. I wish I had discovered the proper motivation sooner. Of course, it was under my nose all along, right there in the pages of God’s Word, hidden by my own sinful inclination to displace the gospel from its central place in accountability.

Pastors have a double need for gospel accountability because we are disciples who will give account for disciples. As a minister of the gospel, I realize that it is critical that I show myself as an example in speech, conduct, faith, love and purity (1 Timothy 4:12). I will be judged not only by how I have lived as a disciple, but also how I have taught disciples (James 3:1). If I don’t keep close watch on my life and my doctrine, I jeopardize not only my salvation but also the salvation of my hearers (4:16). Whether you have had a positive, negative, or no experience with accountability groups, we all share the struggle against the flesh in our pursuit of holiness.

Because of our tendency to drift towards legalism or license, we need a biblical alternative to help us set a course for pastoral holiness. This accountability can take many forms. My aim is not to create a new set of rules. Instead, I suggest that if we apply several key principles, we can foster *gospel* accountability. In turn, gospel accountability will produce holy living that redounds to the glory of God.

Legalistic and Confessional Booth Accountability

Although the aim of accountability groups is good, the practice is often misguided. Accountability groups often smack of *legalism*. Failures to obey God are punished through graduated penalties (an increased tithe, buying lunch or coffee for the “partners,” or unspoken ostracism from one’s peers). Instead of holding one another accountable to *trusting Christ*, we become accountable for *punishing one another*. The unfortunate result is a kind of legalism. This legalism replaces the good news of repentance and faith with the bad news of peer prescribed punishments. As a result, our motives for holiness get warped.

Alternatively, accountability can devolve into a kind of *confessional booth* from which we depart absolved of any guilt, fearing merely the passing frown of our fellow priest. I confess my sin; you confess yours. I pat your back. You pat mine. Then we pray. Accountability groups become circles of cheap grace through which we obtain cheap peace from a troubled conscience. This approach to holiness backfires and we begin to take Christless comfort in our confession of sin. Confession is divorced from repentance, reducing holiness to half-hearted morality. Accountability becomes a man-made mix of moralism and cheap peace.

With legalistic accountability, the main motivation for not sinning is punishment or embarrassment. We refrain from sinning because we don’t want to lose something or to be embarrassed by confessing sin to a friend. Confessional booth accountability empties

the power of holiness by hollowing its motivation. Earnestness for holiness is replaced by ritual regurgitation of our sin. Whether we drift toward the confessional booth or legalistic forms of accountability, we risk our salvation and the salvation of others.

How can we pursue this holiness in accountable relationships? What might such a pursuit look like within a group of like-minded brothers or sisters?

Gospel Adorning Holiness

In my personal accountability journey, the writings of the great Puritan pastor and theologian, John Owen, have been tremendously helpful. In particular, I have drawn from Owen's *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers* and *On Temptation*.⁴ In his preface to *Mortification* (an old word meaning "to put to death"), Owen articulates the purpose for his writing on the subject:

.....
[T]hat mortification and universal holiness may be promoted in my own and in the hearts and ways of others, to the glory of God; so that the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be adorned in all things.⁵
.....

Owen sets the mortification of sin in its rightful place—as a means to glorifying God and making much of the gospel of Christ. Mortification is not a morbid end in

4 All references to Owen's writings are from *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 6, ed. William H. Goold (Bath, England: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850-53; rep., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000).

5 Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, 4.

itself. It is a way for us to make much of the gospel, by *relying* on the gospel in our fight against sin. We adorn the gospel by acknowledging our need for it.

Owen anchors his reflections on mortification using Romans 8:13: “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you *put to death* the deeds of the body, you will live.” He notes that, while it is our responsibility to mortify the “deeds of the body,” this is only made possible through the enablement of the Spirit. Mortification requires our effort and the Spirit’s enablement. As we take seriously the warnings and actively trust in the promises of God, like Romans 8:13, we access the power of God in Christ through the Spirit to triumph over sin and temptation. This is gospel power.

Three Principles for Gospel Accountability

Using Owen as a guide, I recommend three principles to foster gospel accountability.

I. Identification: Know thy Sin.⁶

Identify your personal patterns of sin and share your places of temptation with others you trust. For example:

- » Does sexual lust creep in on Mondays after a demanding day of ministry on Sunday?
- » Are you tempted to view porn after a disagreement or frustration with your wife?

6 Owen, *On Temptation*, 131-32.

- » Does sexual temptation increase after watching a movie with sexual humor or innuendo?

Share your specific patterns of temptation with your friends. Confess your sin to them and to God. Confession breaks the power of private sin. By going public with our unbelief we heighten the tension between sin and holiness, fostering the mindset of mortification. Ask your friends to help you mortify sin by reminding you to avoid these patterns and places of unbelief. Knowing our sin is the first principle for gospel accountability.

II. Mortification: Be killing sin lest it be killing you.⁷

Owen reminds us of our relentless foe when he writes: “Be killing sin lest it be killing you.” With salvation on the line, it is critical that we help one another fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7). Mortification is the habitual *weakening* of sin through constant fighting and contending in the Spirit for victory over the flesh. We need the Spirit to fight, and we need to remind one another to rely on Him for mortification.

Gospel accountability doesn’t just identify patterns; it asks questions. We should pay attention to the *kind* of questions we ask. Are we asking moralistic questions or gospel questions, questions that reinforce moral performance or questions that encourage faith in Christ? Our questions should be pointed *and* point to Christ. For example, instead of asking one another:

- » “Did you view porn this week?”

⁷ Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, 9.

- » “Did you masturbate this week?”

Ask a question that points to sin and beyond to Christ.

- » Are you finding your pleasure in Christ or in porn?
- » Are you relieving your anxiety through faith in Jesus or through masturbation?”

Gospel accountability strengthens our resolve to cherish Christ over the fleeting promises of sin. It helps us put to death the lies of sin and trust the truth of the gospel. Killing sin is the second principle in gospel accountability.

III. Sanctification: Set thy faith on His promises.⁸

We are always exercising faith, trusting God or something else. We might put our faith in the promise of deep pleasure from viewing porn. Or we might rely on masturbation to relieve us from anxiety, frustration, or fear. These sins are acts of *faith*, albeit placed in unworthy and unreliable objects. Owen reminds us that we should *set our faith on God's promises*.

Very often we take God's promises for granted. We read them but don't *believe* them. Instead of trusting God's Word, we use it for a sermon, a counseling session, or a ceremony. Other times, we pilfer through His promises for an experiential buzz, but rarely do we look to trust *Christ* in His promises. Consider some of the following promises that point us beyond sexual sin to Christ:

8 Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, 79, 125-26.

- » “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8)
- » “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3)
- » “Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22)

Those who pursue purity will become pure at Christ’s return. Those who cultivate a pure heart will *see God*. Our pursuit of purity and flight from lust should be done in community, with the help of others who are trusting in the Lord. Gospel accountability should compel us to treasure Christ over all other fleeting promises.

Principles Applied

In an accountability meeting I shared an impending temptation of masturbation. My wife was leaving town and I would be home alone in the evenings. I shared this concern with my accountability buddies. Instead of facing the struggle alone, my friends exhorted me to find my pleasure in Christ, reminding me to trust in the promise of Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” When temptation came, I considered and trusted this promise—those who cultivate purity of heart will see the living God, enjoying His presence forever. During a phone conversation

after my wife returned, my friend asked me if I had struggled well and been satisfied with Christ. Gospel accountability helped me say "Yes!" The principles applied.

Applying the principles of identifying temptation, mortifying sin and exercising trust in the sanctifying promises of God can foster gospel accountability. By relying on God's promises of grace, we can avoid the pitfalls of legalism and license and adorn the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Defeating Online Temptations

NATE LARKIN

My name is Nate Larkin, and I'm addicted to pornography. When I say "I'm addicted," I don't mean that I'm actively using pornography. I mean that I can never use pornography again—not even in its milder forms—without soon spinning out of control. I'm very much like the sober alcoholic who hasn't had a drink in 10 years but still calls himself an alcoholic. That guy understands his weakness and embraces it every day, and in doing so he protects his freedom. He stays away from alcohol because he knows, from bitter experience, that "one drink is too many and a thousand is not enough." I'm like that guy.

For years I tried to stay away from pornography all by myself, without admitting my problem to another person or asking anybody else for help. For me, it was a matter of pride—or, more accurately, a matter of shame. I was ashamed of my appetite for porn, ashamed of the

things I looked at, the things I liked, and I was deeply ashamed of the things pornography led me to do. No doubt about it, pornography took me plenty of places I had never intended to go, including marital infidelity. And I was a Christian! I was a pastor, for Pete's sake, until the stress of my double life finally drove me from the ministry.

I tried to escape the tyranny of pornography by running to private religion, seeking refuge in my personal relationship with Christ. That relationship was (and is) real, but I could never induce Christ to grant me a secret miracle that would free me forever from lust. Time and again, I begged Jesus for a private solution to my private problem, but He never gave me one. Looking back, I now understand that by refusing to make me morally self-sufficient, Christ was actually allowing my sin to drive me toward what I really needed—real relationships, real humility, and love.

The pain of pseudo-recovery

I got my first taste of hope 12 years ago, when I attended a 12-step meeting in a desperate, last-ditch effort to save my marriage. In that meeting I found other people with stories like mine, people whose lives had been governed by sexual obsession but who had found victory in surrender and freedom in fellowship. These people talked openly about their brokenness, speaking in the present tense, without shame. They exhibited a very real faith in a loving Higher Power. Most of them, it turned out, were Christians.

Several of the recovering addicts I met in the 12-step meeting had disconnected completely from the Internet, just to keep themselves safe. That was not a viable option for me because I make my living on the Internet. Others had installed Internet filters or accountability software, measures I found repugnant. I wanted a solution, not a babysitter. In my opinion, products like Covenant Eyes were crutches for people whose recovery was defective. I was sure that if I just did the work of recovery right, I would build up my resistance to porn and would not need a crutch.

I approached recovery as though it was a subject to be mastered rather than a lifestyle to be adopted, and to nobody's surprise but my own, I stumbled badly in the early years. Striving mightily to out-think my addiction, I relapsed again and again. I was religiously arrogant, refusing the help of non-Christians because, well, my Higher Power could beat up their Higher Power. I found it terribly difficult to be honest. I wanted to be an ex-addict, not an addict, so I trumpeted my successes and remained silent about my failures. With every relapse, my feelings of guilt and shame intensified. I found myself lying to conceal my guilt and hiding to cover my shame. In the end, the twilight of early recovery was almost as soul-killing as the old days of full-blown addiction.

I've heard it said that most of us never change until it becomes less painful to change than to stay the way we are. That's certainly true for me. When the pain of solo pseudo-recovery finally exceeded the pain of initiating an honest relationship with another person, I relented. I got myself a tough sponsor and started calling him

every day, talking with him in detail about what I was feeling, what I was thinking, what I was doing, and what I was thinking about doing. I also installed a filter and accountability software on my computer. It was at that point that the trajectory of my recovery finally changed.

Called into community

The new lifestyle of collaborative recovery opened doors and windows on the gospel that I had never seen before. I came to understand that Jesus offers a personal relationship to each of His disciples, but He never, ever offered *anyone* a *private* one. He first said “Follow me” to *two* guys, not just one, quickly collected ten more, and had the whole group follow Him around for a couple of years as He taught them the connection between loving God and loving each other. Whenever He sent His disciples out to minister, He sent them in pairs. As He was approaching His crucifixion, He told His disciples: “I’m going away now, but I will still be with you... Whenever two or three of you are gathered in my name, I’ll be there.”

Eventually I started sharing my story with Christian guys I met at church or in Starbucks, giving them the sordid details about my addiction and the hope I was finding in recovery. Most of the guys I talked with were not porn addicts or sex addicts like me, but all of them could relate to my story. Every man has something in his life that is bigger than he is. Eventually, we started a group, a mutual aid society for Christian men called The Samson Society. The Society is a place within the church

safe enough for a guy to be completely honest, a place where he can find authentic, no-bull brotherhood.

The Samson Society is not a 12-step group. We don't have sponsors, but we do encourage every member to designate a traveling companion, a guy he can talk to every day. We call that person a Silas. I serve as a Silas to several guys, and most of them have followed my advice and subscribed to Covenant Eyes. I subscribe myself, and my Internet activity reports are sent to *my* Silas, a guy named David.

David is a good friend, because he reviews my Covenant Eyes reports closely, and he calls me whenever he sees anything that looks even slightly fishy. "I see you made a Google search for 'swimsuit' last Thursday night," he might say. "Can you tell me what that's about?" He asks the question directly and graciously, as a request for information rather than an accusation, and I know that it's safe for me to give him an honest answer. No matter what the truth is, he won't condemn me for it. He's there to help me.

It's good that David has access to specific information about my Internet activity, because I'm a guy who tends to omit details, and that tendency has gotten me into trouble in the past. When I'm afraid or angry or out of sorts, I feel the natural urge to escape those feelings. If my judgment is impaired by something like hunger or fatigue, I might seek escape in some excursion on the Internet—not a trip to pornography exactly, but a walk in a gray area, to a place others might consider innocent. This is very dangerous behavior for me, because once I wander into the fog I am in grave danger of slipping

over the edge—if not this time, then at some point in the future. Armed with Covenant Eyes, my accountability partner helps prevent that disaster from happening.

For me, subscribing to Covenant Eyes brings an enormous spiritual benefit. It is an act of surrender, an admission that I am not bulletproof, a confession that I am incapable of living the Christian life alone. It signifies my acceptance of the fact that I do not belong to a federation of autonomous individuals but to the Body of Christ, a living, breathing organism whose members are so interdependent that they can only move together.

Covenant Eyes cannot make me any more acceptable to God (Christ has done everything necessary on that account), but it does make it easier for me to walk in the light, where positive change takes place. As the old disciple observed: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).



An Environment of Grace

CHRIS BEALL

Those of us who have been given the privilege of pastoring get to do what very few people get to do. We have the opportunity to provide leadership, care, direction, correction, teaching, and compassion to God's church and His people.

Pastors are human, though. We sin just like everyone else. Our pastoral profession does not exempt us from the struggles that the rest of humanity faces.

So what if we wake up one day, like today, living in a world of sin? What if our private lives bear little resemblance to the sermons we preach or the counsel we give? What if, in the absence of accountability, we have allowed pornography and sexual sin to take root in our lives? Due to the fear of losing our jobs, we find ourselves with no other option but trying to manage the sin and attempt to overcome it on our own power.

That was my life.

Fears That Kept Me From Confessing

In addition to the very real fear of losing my family, I battled those exact fears which kept me from confessing the bondage I was in. These fears kept my healing at bay. I had struggled with pornography since I was 8. And contrary to what many believe to be true, it only got worse when I got married. When I stepped into my first vocational pastoral position, I struggled even more.

You might think because I was living with secret sin that my ministry would have been utterly ineffective. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. God was using me like I had never experienced, to lead a fast growing church and reach many people for Christ. My “success” made it easy for me to pretend that this would never blow up in my face.

I was wrong.

“But if you fail to keep your word, then you will have sinned against the LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.” (Numbers 32:23, NIV).

I took a position with Craig Groeschel at LifeChurch.tv in 2002. By this time I had allowed my pornography addiction to get completely out of control, to the point that I had physically acted out and had been unfaithful to my wife multiple times. I was sure that moving to a new city and working with a new church was a way to have a “do-over,” a way to not have to expose my sin.

During one staff meeting six weeks into my job at LifeChurch.tv, Craig shared about being “the real deal.” He challenged us: if we were dealing with some sin issues in our lives, we should confess it to our supervisor and we would find grace. If we got caught, that would be a different story. God completely broke me that day and I confessed everything to my wife, my family, and to Craig. I had been unfaithful and dishonest, and because of that, I resigned my position on staff at LifeChurch.tv.

Receiving Grace from the Church

So what did grace look like at LifeChurch.tv? It wasn't the preservation of an occupation or a paycheck. It wasn't a slap on the wrist with a “don't do that again” lecture.

Grace was a group of leaders who entered into the mess of my life and my marriage with the hopes of God healing and restoring that which was broken, to make it better than new. That is exactly what He did. Over the next couple of years, with intensive and godly counsel, great accountability, and focusing on my family, God began to heal my heart and heal my marriage. I began a journey of learning why I sought out a counterfeit form of affirmation in pornography, and how God felt about me.

My encouragement for those of you who find yourselves in the difficult spot of being a pastor who struggles with pornography and sexual sin is this: Be honest! Confess it. We delude ourselves if we think healing will come

from asking God to forgive us and trying to avoid it. Trust me, I did this constantly and conveniently, time after time after time, only to find myself on the dreaded drive home confessing to God: "I'll never do that again."

Receiving Healing

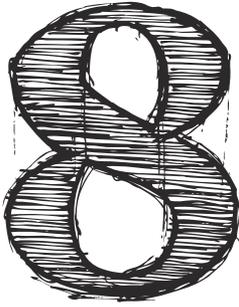
"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NIV).

We need to be healed from this struggle. Scripture doesn't call us to confess to God for healing, but to one another. Amazing freedom is found once the secret is out. The power the Enemy had over it has been broken.

As a result of walking away from ministry and getting honest about my sin, God healed me. Today I am nearly nine years free from the addiction of pornography. It is not an easy journey, but I have found that freedom is just as contagious as bondage. I learned that God wanted to do a work in me before He did a work through me.

After being away from ministry for several years, Craig called me up and told me he thought that God wasn't done with me. I was invited back onto the LifeChurch.tv team and have been pastoring there ever since.

I pray you find freedom and healing. I pray that God would burn in our spirits the desire to become the men and women who live what we preach.



Leading with a Limp

TAL PRINCE

God did not save you because He has good taste.

You know that, right? So why do we labor to create the illusion that we were really a great marketing move on God's part? I know that I have done that, and have seen countless others doing the exact same thing.

The stages for us, as pastors, are high. One slip up and we may see it in the all-important tithes and offerings, or worse yet, we may see it reflected in attendance. That's just if we say something offensive, or we cut someone off in traffic. So, what will they do if they find out that we actually—you know—sin? The pressure is intense—screw up and you will lose your job and the confidence of the people.

It's so easy to boast in our achievements and attendance numbers. When the question is asked, as it always is,

“How’s your church?” We immediately slip into a talk about our attendance numbers and the new building campaign. All too often this is to present a veneer of success and an illusion of having it all together as leaders. We flex our ministry muscles as if we are in a competition.

Current ministry drop-out rates hint that more is going on beneath the mask.

Do you fall into that pattern? Do you boast in your achievements and try to present yourself as a great role model to anyone who will listen? I fear that many of us fall into the same trap that the Socratic teachers did in Corinth.

We have allowed the standard to become perfection because we like the idea of our people thinking that we really are just that wonderful. In a culture that values celebrity, and personalities as brands, we carefully cultivate our own images that in turn have become unachievable standards. The pressure of maintaining the mask is exhausting, isn’t it?

We believe that our people need this type of example of how to “be Christians.” We somehow think that if they don’t see us as wonderful, and nearly perfect, that they won’t have a standard at which to aim. This all makes great sense to us as leaders who know that image can make or break the offering on Sunday. We think, “I’ll do Christianity right.” But this is really “Christianity Lite.”

So, how do we handle Paul when he writes in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “Therefore I will boast all the more

gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me”? It flies in the face of current ministry culture, doesn’t it?

Have you ever noticed that we tend to sanitize our leaders? We make the great pastors perfect, and when they die, we really go over the top with it. Take a look at the Reformers—all too often they are talked about with hushed tones of reverence. There’s little to no mention of their imperfections, let alone their sin.

Martin Luther looms large in my life. Have you ever really looked at his life? Talk about a sinner! He drank heavily, and his language could often have embarrassed a teamster. His anti-semitism is reprehensible, and he thought James’ epistle was heresy and should be removed from Scripture.

How could we call a man like this one of the great Christian leaders of all time? How could we make *him* an important figure?

Because he, like Paul, really got the gospel.

Listen to what he wrote to George Spalatin, a brother who worked with him during the Reformation:

My faithful request and admonition is that you join our company and associate with us, who are real, great and hardboiled sinners.

You must by no means make Christ to seem paltry and trifling to us, as though he could be our helper only when we want to be rid from imaginary, nominal

and childish sins. No. No! That would not be good for us.

He must rather be a Savior and Redeemer from real, great, grievous and damnable transgressions and iniquities, yea, from the very greatest and most shocking sins; to be brief, from all sins added together in a grand total.

Read that again and let those words wash over you. You agree with that, don't you?

Why don't we preach like that?

Why don't we lead like that?

Then why don't we live like that?

Because it's easier to believe that it is true for *those* people in the pews, but not the pulpit. It can't be true for us, right? We fall for the lie of our enemy that says, "Hey, Pastor, you can't be open about your current sins—it will undermine your position. The sheep may lose confidence that the Gospel really works."

Once that becomes our mind-set then we have emasculated the Gospel and doomed our people to hollow lives with a hollowed-out Savior. Remember the words of Spurgeon? "If your sin is small, your savior is small, but if your sin is great, your Savior must be great."

So tell me—since becoming a Christian, has your Savior been decreasing in size? If we, as pastors, have "small" sin then all we can really do is point people to a small

savior who can really only save from those small sins. Your people need a big Savior, and they need to see that you need Him too. It can't look like the Savior needs you. It is uninspiring, frustrating and discouraging to God's people.

I constantly counsel people that come to me struggling with porn and sex, and when asked why they are not talking with their pastor, do you know what they say? "Oh, I could never tell him about this. He would be so disappointed and disgusted."

On more than one occasion, a member of a church has told me this, not knowing that I am also counseling their pastor.

Do we believe in the power of this Gospel we preach? What if you let the people in your church see the sanctification process at work? I promise you—it is far more inspirational to other Christians to see the power of the Gospel at work in their pastor.

Quick—what work is Augustine best known for?

Confessions.

What about you?

We have cut James 5:16 out of the Bible from a practical standpoint, haven't we? Confession is not the norm today. In too many places, there is no confession because safety and freedom have been replaced by judgment and rejection. This builds a church where no one can confess any sin—a church with an unnecessary Savior.

Was David allowed to keep his adultery a secret? Do you see how inspirational his story has been for thousands of years now? Why? You've preached it to encourage others by saying, "He was still a man after God's own heart." Why won't you allow that to be applied to you, too?

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:15 that he is the chief of all sinners. The verb tense is present active indicative—it's present and ongoing with no conclusion.

Present.

Ongoing.

No conclusion.

Do you see what has happened as a result of our need for acceptance, and job security? We have doomed our people to a life of behavior modification and hiding their sin. This is not the Gospel! Do we believe Romans 8:1? Does it apply to us as pastors?

What if we changed it? What if we routinely confessed our sins? What if we led the way Paul teaches us in Scripture? What if we actually boasted in our *weakness*? None of us know for sure what Paul's thorn was, but we do know why it was there. Second Corinthians 12:7 tells us, "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited."

He pleaded for God to remove this thorn. You have too, right? But what is His response? “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Do you believe that?

What if you were the Chief of All Sinners at your church? What if you wore that mantle and let the people see your sin? The mess of your life and the glory and power of your Savior to love you anyway, and his power to forge you into the image of Christ? Is it possible?

Have you ever noticed how non-threatening a real sinner is? We love to put the testimonies up don't we? Someone that got into some real trouble, and Jesus loved them and saved them. We love to hear the stories, and God usually uses those stories to convert and change many more hearts. What if you were non-threatening? What if you were that story in living 3-D every day?

This changes the Gospel from a walk down the aisle into a lifestyle for you and your people. Radical? Yes. Threatening? Yes. Biblical? Yes.

We like to talk in terms of giving people the “gift of going second.” When I tell people my story of 24 years addicted to porn and sex, something happens. The Holy Spirit takes that moment of vulnerability and transparency and reveals the truth of the Gospel to the people I'm talking to, and to me. It is simultaneously life-giving and life-changing for everyone in earshot, and he will do that for you, too.

I speak regularly to groups of pastors, and when I crucify my image and ego and tell my story, they are most often in tears. They routinely talk to me privately afterward, or they call or e-mail and wish they could do the same. You can! Philippians 4:8 is true, right? You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

The Gospel is not behavior modification—our behavior does not make us righteous before God, or the people in the church. Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism makes it clear:

.....
How are you righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them, and am still inclined to all evil, yet God, without any merit of my own, out of mere grace, imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me, if only I accept this gift with a believing heart.

.....

Because this Gospel is true...

You can boast in your weakness.

You can give people the gift of going second.

You can be transparent.

You can get help.

You can recover.

You can, as Dan Allender writes, "Lead with a Limp."

The only question is,

Will You?

Will you let your people see the sanctification process in you?

Will you let your people see that God is chiseling you into the image of Christ?

Will you let your people see that your sin is great, and that your Savior is Greater?

Will you begin the process of ridding our churches of the hollowed out, emasculated Savior we have been worshipping for far too long?

Will You?

Appendix A:

Does Struggling with Pornography Disqualify a Pastor from Ministry?

BOBBY SCOTT

It seemed like just another picture perfect fall day. My grandfather called my teenage cousin and me to go with him for a ride. We loved to spend time with him—especially on road trips. As it turned out, this would be a very different kind of trip. Coughing all along the way, he drove straight to the hospital. While my cousin and I waited for hours, my grandfather was admitted. That was our final road trip. My grandfather died after a brief stay in the hospital.

I loved my grandfather. It ached my heart to think: *what if he had gone in sooner?* Would his doctors have discovered the cancer in time? But men don't like to go the doctor, do they? We don't like to admit that we have

problems, and we certainly hate confessing that we need help. But acquiescing to the fear of vulnerability and to our culture's false standard of masculinity (i.e., "I'm a man, I can handle it") often makes for tragic endings. There's a lesson in this for all pastors. Living by the motto, "I don't need help, and I can't expose my vulnerabilities," can lead to ministerial death, even when Christ offers abundantly abounding grace to rescue us.

In his classic essay on the dangers of ministry, "The Almost Inevitable Ruin of Every Minister," Donald Whitney writes that:

.....
Almost everyone knows someone who used to be in the ministry. Almost everyone knows someone who shouldn't be in the ministry. And every minister knows another minister—if not several—he does not want to be like....So I think it's important to address the subject of the almost inevitable ruin of every minister...and how to avoid it. Once when a Southern Baptist denominational executive was on the Midwestern Seminary campus in the late 1990s, he asserted that statistics show that for every twenty men who enter the ministry, by the time those men reach age sixty-five, only one will still be in the ministry.
.....

Doesn't your experience confirm Whitney's warning—too many pastors don't make it to the finish line (1 Corinthians 9:27)? With the pastoral canvas already strewn with landmines, another lethal one has appeared. Porn, to a staggering degree, is infesting the lives of pastors. Churches and denominations are being forced to implement policies to handle this growing

problem. The determinative factor regarding how to respond to pastors who struggle with porn must be found in the Word of God.

It is, therefore, my aim in this chapter to provide an exegetical/theological study of critical passages in order to answer the question—“Does struggling with pornography disqualify a pastor from ministry?”

Can a Genuinely Godly Pastor Struggle with Porn?

The Word of God has much to say to pastors who struggle with porn as well as to their churches. In the highly disputed verses of Romans 7:14-25, the apostle Paul speaks of a person—“I”—who can readily identify with any pastor in a battle against a besetting sin. The fact that this “I” loved the law and hated sin, strongly suggests that “I” is a believer; and because Paul wrote Romans, the “I” most likely is no one less than the apostle himself.

In his brilliant Th.M. thesis, Steve Black persuasively argues that the use of “I” in Romans 7:7–25 is simply too definite, too sustained, and too passionate and personal to allow anything other than the autobiographical sense.⁹ Perhaps more stunning is the observation that Paul is writing about his present condition as the author of the book of Romans and as evangelizer of all of ancient Europe.¹⁰ If these conclusions are true, then

⁹ For a full and excellent exegetical treatment of the interpretive challenges in Romans 7 cf. “The Spiritual Condition of ΕΓΩ and His Relationship to the Law in Romans 7:14-25” (Th.M. thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2005).

¹⁰ The exclusive use of present tense verbs in vv. 14-25 (in contrast to the aorist in vv. 7-13) leads to this conclusion.

the Word of God in Romans 7:14-25 offers a candid look into the ongoing war against sin fought by one of the greatest leaders God has ever given to the church. Therefore, there is much to be learned about a leader's battle against sin from this passage.

Openly confessing his lapses in his war against the flesh, Paul provides an illustrative example of the principle that until our "corruptible will have put on the incorruptible" all Christians, godly leaders included, will lose periodic struggles against sin. According to Paul, the moment any believer fails to yield to the Spirit, in some way he yields to the flesh, allowing himself for that duration to be a slave of sin (Romans 6:12; 7:14, 23b).

While this is the painful experience of every believer, including every pastor, "doing things that we hate and failing to do things that we want to do," this must not be the normative pattern for any Christian's life (Romans 8:13). Christ's gift of the Spirit enables believers to deny the flesh and to resist the temptation of sin (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16). So although Christians will experience episodic defeats, victorious living by the Spirit, as described in Romans 8, must become the pattern of their lives. This is true because of the reality of the believer's death to sin and resurrection with Christ, described in chapter 6.

Pastors then, like all believers, rest in the hope-giving promise of the gospel to forgive all of their sins. They must also exemplify the powerful transforming work of the gospel, which instructs believers to deny and to not indulge in sin (Romans 6:1, 15; Titus 2:11-12). Thus

the difference between pastors and other Christians isn't the complete absence of sin in pastors' lives but the consistent pattern of living by the power of the Spirit.

So yes, sadly, at times pastors, like all believers, will be defeated by sin and cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Like all true believers, by faith they must allow God's grace to fill their hearts with the exclamation, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25), rejoicing that one day they will be completely liberated from the presence of sin (Jude 24).

However, since that day has not arrived yet, and since some pastors will struggle with lust, the question that remains is, "Does the lustful sin of viewing pornography rise to a level of disqualifying him from the ministry?" In order to answer that question, we must determine at what level, and under what circumstances, such a sin could render a pastor reproachable.

Can a Pastor Struggle with Porn and be "Blameless"?

According to the Word of God in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, pastors must live by the highest moral standards. Written with the force of the moral imperative "must be" these passages delineate, without exception, the moral qualifications which God requires of every man whom He deems fit for the office of pastor/elder/bishop. A classic example in Scripture of a man who lived a blameless life is Daniel. When his opponents sought to discredit him by finding something in his life that they

could use to scandalize his name, they found nothing (Daniel 6:4). Likewise, in the New Testament the standard “above reproach” is an honor conferred upon a man because he lives by God’s standards in his public and private life. So if or when a pastor’s life is fully exposed, it must be scandal-free.

The conclusions drawn from Romans 7 add another clue to understanding the meaning of “above reproach.” No pastor will perfectly keep all of these moral demands all of the time. Luther was correct when he coined the Latin phrase *simul justus et peccator*—the Christian is “simultaneously righteous and sinner.” Being *above reproach* therefore demands that all pastors consistently exemplify mature lives but not perfection.

This also means that there is something inherently relative about the moral standards in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3. For instance, a congregation’s overall maturity level can affect what it means to be an exemplary model of maturity for others. A man considered to be mature in a newly planted church in a mission field deprived of biblical resources may be noticeably different from a man in a church in which even the children’s pastor has a Master’s of Divinity degree.

In the greatly debated phrase “husband of one wife” there is another clue that can help answer the question, “Is a pastor who struggles with lust not *above approach*?” If the phrase is interpreted as a moral quality, and it seems that it should be because it is placed in a list of moral qualifications, the phrase means a pastor must be a faithful “one woman kind of man.”

For single and married pastors alike, this qualification requires that pastors cannot be womanizers and must be the kind of men who are and who will be loyal to one woman in every sense—body, heart, mind, and eyes.

By way of application, this means that since pornography is a sin where the viewer is intimately engaging women with whom he is not married (Matthew 5:27-31) then succumbing to the sin of pornography can plummet a pastor below the point of being an above reproach, faithful, one woman kind of man. And since being blameless is an honor that a church/denomination confers upon a man based upon what they see, that title is illegitimate when a pastor involved in porn maintains that reputation by wearing a façade of being a “one woman kind of man.”

Obviously, using tech-savvy skills to clear a computer's history and cookies in order to give the impression of being “blameless” does not qualify a man as being above reproach. Conversely, the affirmation that comes from transparent accountability with other leaders of one's church/denomination confirms before God and his congregation that a leader, although not sinless, is living above reproach and is worthy of the honored title “Pastor” (1 Timothy 5:17, 22).

Should a Pastor's Response to His Sin Influence a Church's Decision to Counsel or Disqualify Him?

A little over a year ago, I was a guest on a radio show of a very prominent Christian host to discuss what I

thought would be a dialogue regarding what Christian men can do to resist sexual temptation. On live air, he asked me if I thought genuine Christians could struggle with pornography. Having no idea where he was going with that question, I simply answered “yes.” He emphatically replied, “no,” citing 1 John 3:8-9 as his proof text. At first, I gently tried to correct his misunderstanding of these verses. I explained that without exception, the apostle John identifies unsaved professing Christians as those who indulge in lifestyles of *unbroken sin*.¹¹ However, he does acknowledge that genuine Christians *do sin*. In distinction from the professing unsaved though, John describes Christians’ sins as *acts* and not indulging unrepentant patterns (1 John 1:9; 2:1-3).¹²

His position was that real Christian men live sinlessly in the area of lust. I argued that the statements in 1 John 1:8-10¹³ could be understood to be exposing the real spiritual state of those who did and those who did not have genuine fellowship with God (cp., 1 John 5:13). According to 1 John 1:7 and 1:9, the hallmark of godly Christians is *not sinlessness* but *a habitual pattern of obedience* accompanied with a continuous habit of *confession of sins*.

11 Without exception, John uses the continuous present tense throughout 1 John to mark out the apostatized unsaved professing believer (1 John 2:18-19). This conclusion as well as the ones reached in notes 8 and 9 are based on the contextual uses of the present and aorist tenses throughout 1 John as well as the aspectual senses of these tenses.

12 Again, without exception, John distinguishes the sins of genuine believers in 1 John by denoting their sin with the ingressive aorist tense.

13 John uses these if then conditional statements to assert that when the if part of the conditional statement is true, what is discovered about that person’s profession of faith is revealed in the then part of the statement.

Here's my application to pastors. Pastors will sin, therefore, a pastor's sin that has the potential of affecting his blameless status must be confessed to God and to those who are responsible for affirming that he is maintaining an above reproach reputation. Otherwise, how can a congregation be assured that they are being led by men who are blamelessly following Christ (1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28)?

When men refuse to allow the true fruit of their lives to be inspected, they prove that they are not qualified to lead God's church (Matthew 7:16, 20). Such men, who are dangers to the church, indulge in sin, and contrary to living in the light of a thrice holy God, they deny the guilt of their sin and the acts of sin that they commit (1:8, 10, respectively). Whereas God's posture towards the habitual confessor¹⁴ is forgiveness, which John attests God faithfully does (1 John 1:9; 2:1), John gives no such good news to professing Christians who do not consistently and humbly confess their sins (1 John 1:8, 10).

These truths have a profound impact on understanding how pastors need to respond to their battle with sin and how churches and denominations can respond to their pastors who are struggling with lust. Pastors are privileged to preach the wonders of God's forgiving grace, and therefore carry a greater responsibility of modeling God's holy hatred of sin by confessing it (James 5:16). Pastors, who preach to others to refresh their souls from the sweet fountain of God's grace, must themselves drink from that same fountain of forgiveness (Hebrews 4:16).

¹⁴ This is a syntactically significant use of the present continuous tense describing the one confessing as one who does this habitually.

- By Bobby Scott

If you are a pastor struggling with pornography, after reading this you will respond in only one of two ways. One, you will trust God and confess your sin by bringing it out into the light of God's grace, or two, you will try to hide your sin from God who is omniscient. If you confess your sin, then God will forgive you. That is a wonderful thing! Depending upon the depth of your involvement, our loving God, who grants grace upon grace, will measure your discipline. The means by which He applies discipline for pastors is through the leaders charged with oversight of the congregation (Acts 20:28-31). Church/denomination leadership must not be a good ol' boys club who cover up each others' sins. They are responsible before God to help each other live blamelessly (Titus 1:5-6). Therefore, whatever discipline they prescribe—a warning, assigned counseling, increased accountability, or time off—a pastor must accept by faith.

God is holy, and through discipline He enables us to share in His holiness, for without holiness no one—including preachers—will see God (Matthew 5:29; Hebrews 12:14b). This is how He grants all of His children His full aid to live a life of repentance. However, you can choose to not confess your sin (Psalm 32:1-4). If you do, know that your non-confession actually is a confession that you do not believe Psalm 130:4, "there is forgiveness with [God]." To hide our sin is to add sin upon our sin, and is to proclaim that "God cannot see and He does not require anything" (Psalm 10:11, 13). I plead with you not to respond this way. It will only grease your slide further into the abyss of sin. This is what the wicked do (Psalm 10:4). These two radically different options will lead to two radically different

outcomes. For every pastor who refuses to confess his sin, who will not repent, and who plumbs the depths of the darkest recesses of porn, remember 1 Timothy 5:20, “Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.” Such a life is not the way of an above reproach faithful “one woman kind of man,” and therefore does not qualify that man for pastoral ministry.

How Should Churches and Denominations Respond to Pastors Who Confess Struggles with Pornography and Pastors Who Won't Confess?

Developing policies to help pastors struggling with lust is not an easy task. Many pastors are guilty on some level of violating Jesus' admonish of not looking lustfully (Matt 5:27-28). However, the Word of God gives ample truth to guide us. Here are some general principles based on these biblical conclusions that can be used to develop specific guidelines for your church/denomination:

Before you discipline, teach. Approach writing your policies with the same intent that Paul gave to Titus. He left Titus in Crete to raise men up to the moral standards he outlined, and not just to discard everyone who fell short.

Make it your aim to help your pastors. Apply the words of our Lord, “A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out” (Matthew 12:20, NASB).

Strive to always restore whenever possible.

Remember how Christ mended the sin-inflicted wounds of a broken shepherd called Peter and how He restored him to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). And don't forget the story of John Mark. After Paul rejected him, Barnabas worked with him and brought about spiritual growth. In the end, he became useful to Paul.

Clearly identify the problem. What are the triggers, the patterns, the lies being believed, the status of his marriage, the dangers of his work environment, his level of spiritual maturity and health, etc.?

Get to the root of the problem. In other words, dig as deep as the problem goes. How does he respond to accountability? Is he transparent? Did he ignore previous warnings? How often does he engage in pornography? Is he looking at soft or hardcore porn? Does he masturbate? Does he involve live persons? To what extent does he go to hide it? Does his behavior become reckless and endanger others? Does his sin include illegal behavior, etc.?

Make a clear distinction between the pastors who humbly confess their struggle and submit to help versus pastors who persist in denying their sin, hiding it, and rejecting accountability. God often exposes sins to uncover wolves among His flock.

Measure your discipline to the degree of the sin.

God always disciplines his children in love and with the most gracious means that will bring about repentance. Is a warning and the taking of further preventive steps, e.g., Covenant Eyes accountability software, enough?

How about counseling and accountability only? Is an administrative leave necessary? Is permanent disqualification or a criminal investigation required?

Take a clear stance that pornography is a serious breach for any man, especially a pastor. In other words, make sure your policy is specific. For example, if a pastor intentionally looks at soft porn then your policy might prescribe automatic accountability. Try to make sure your policy aims to put out a fire before it turns into a blaze. Or in the case where a pastor initially looks at what you define as unquestionably pornographic, then your policy might prescribe mandatory counseling, and if repeated (once, twice, three times), a mandatory suspension. My point is not to write your policy, but to encourage you to make it specific enough that the pastor's conscience can be strengthened to draw clear lines that he can not cross without incurring disciplinary consequences (Hebrews 12:6).

Do not be a respecter of persons! Remember God's warning to Aaron, "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored" (Leviticus 10:3 NASB). If a pastor must be removed, then the church must remove him. We must be jealous for the name of Jesus and be convinced that we do great harm to the church and even to the leaders themselves when we leave men in ministries when God has made it obvious that He wants them removed.

Pray! Consistently make it a point to pray for the purity of your pastors and for the Lord to lead them not into temptation but to deliver them from evil. As you pray, remember Jesus is a High Priest who can empathize

with all of our weakness. He Himself prayed for Peter knowing that he would fall. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32 NASB).

In closing, let me offer two final words of advice.

First, intervention is a process that will vary from situation to situation. Therefore, leave room in your policy for case by case discretion. Be wise.

Second, removing a pastor for disciplinary reasons is always hard. So after intense prayer and a careful application of Scripture, if your situation requires dismissal of a pastor because of egregious or unrepentant porn use, then fearing God, do it with great courage and resolve.

May God help our pastors to be and remain blameless, “one woman kind of men” and grant His church the discernment to guard against those who refuse to be.

Appendix B:

A Word from a Pastor's Wife

MARSHA FISHER

Wives often experience a tidal wave of emotions when confronted with their husbands' pornography secret, including rejection, confusion, shame and failure. Some are so shocked that for a time they are completely numb to any feelings. For me, it was 100% pure anger.

Our life turned upside down the day my husband Jeff, a pastor of a small congregation in the Northeast, came home and told me he had lost his job. Earlier that day, his spiritual mentors had discovered he had been viewing pornography online at work. They asked him to immediately resign and for us to leave the area—quickly.

Looking back, I now understand why I felt very little personal betrayal and so much anger. After 10 years of marriage, our understanding of intimacy was still so immature and unhealthy that there was very little

connection there for Jeff to destroy. However, the image of a happily married and stable ministry couple that was so important to me was instantly destroyed. I vowed to never forgive Jeff for losing our ministry and ruining my life.

I agreed to couple's therapy only because our life was spinning out of control and I knew we needed wise counsel. We were asked to move, but we didn't know where to go. We needed to find new jobs, but what would we do? I had no real hope that our marriage could ever be healed, but I did know that we desperately needed the Lord's guidance as we made important decisions that would impact not just us, but our two young sons as well.

Unexpected Compassion

As we began marriage counseling, it was important to our counselor that I understand that pornography was more than just a bad habit for Jeff. Rather, it was something that he didn't think he could live without. Something unexpected happened as I learned about the shame Jeff had been struggling with since his teenage years when he first began viewing pornography and regularly masturbating. I found that my anger toward him slowly began to change to something else: sadness. Not only was I sad for what was happening to me, but I was sad for Jeff too. As some of that anger lifted, I saw that my husband was genuinely repentant, committed to recovery, and most of all, broken.

I felt a growing sense of compassion for Jeff, who was dealing with failure, shock, shame, and depression. In addition, he had been abandoned by many of his spiritual mentors in his darkest hour. Even though I was angry for the position he had put our family in, my heart was broken because I could see he was experiencing a tremendous amount of pain himself. I began to wonder: could the Lord really redeem this disaster?

I was encouraged by our counselor to read testimonials of couples who were enjoying healthy intimacy in the wake of pornography addiction. Inspired by their stories and sensing God was doing a tremendous work in both of us, I committed to walking the road of marriage recovery with Jeff. For me, this meant that Jeff and I weren't just going to share a home and parenting responsibilities, but we were going to work through the hurt and pain and discover how God could make all things new in our marriage.

The Road to Recovery

After selling our home and moving to my home state, Jeff and I began meeting with Christian counselors who specialized in pornography and intimacy issues. We started the necessary but painful process of unpacking our marriage to find out where we had missed God's design for healthy intimacy. It was an excruciating process, like sorting through disgusting garbage trying to find what was causing the most offensive stench. But slowly, we began to identify areas that were clearly problems, but had just been swept under the rug of our busy life.

Jeff's pornography problem had not come as a complete surprise to me. Early in our marriage, he had shared that he had struggled with porn in the past, but felt like being married would "cure him." When he confessed years later that he had slipped a few times while on the computer, I was really surprised. It just seemed so out of character for him. My response was direct: "You can't be a pastor and view pornography, so stop or step down."

At that time we added filters on our computers and Jeff even met with a counselor for a short period. I would occasionally ask him how he was doing and he always assured me he was stronger than ever. I had assumed my stern warning had done the trick. In reality, Jeff was determined to keep his fantasy world a secret, even if it included blatant lying to his wife. Over time, Jeff convinced himself that pornography was harmless and I was overreacting. But in reality, he was secretly undermining an important cornerstone of our marriage—intimacy. His distorted perception of intimacy, painted by people who know nothing of God's plan for "oneness," was influencing our marriage bed. As a result, I was overwhelmed, confused, and uninterested. When Jeff came looking for intimacy, I would retreat, explaining that I was too tired or too busy. This left him feeling rejected and lonely, which then inevitably led to more porn. The vicious cycle continued for years and did untold damage to us both.

Restoring Trust

Even after Jeff was completely broken and fully committed to healthy intimacy, we still had to deal with

the far-reaching effects of broken trust in our marriage. Because Jeff had lied continuously and convincingly about the pornography, I had no reason to believe he would be honest with me if it happened again. It wasn't that I doubted the sincerity of his repentance at the time, but I questioned how long that would last. I would often say, "What makes this time any different from all the times before when you have tried to quit?"

We have found first-hand that the only way to rebuild trust in marriage is to work at it one day at a time. First, Jeff had to accept my suspicions as a valid consequence of his actions and be willing to give me as much time as I needed to work through our trust issues. Rebuilding trust is not a process that takes weeks or months, it is taking years. Day by day, month by month, Jeff is demonstrating his trustworthiness by being authentic and truthful in all areas of his life.

Jeff and I have come to understand that because we are both sinners saved by grace, our marriage will be in a continual state of recovery until death do us part. We are committed to extending both accountability and grace to each other as needed throughout the journey.

Trusting Jeff doesn't mean I'm certain he will never view porn again. I know he still struggles because he shares those struggles with me. However, I do trust that if and when he slips, he will talk to his accountability partners and me within 24 hours so that a slip doesn't turn into a landslide. Like many wives, I believe the lying and secrecy associated with pornography is more dangerous to a marriage than the actual pornography. Once a

husband decides to lie, he starts down a dark path of hiding and deception.

Biggest Regrets

I'm so grateful that the Lord intervened in our marriage when he did. While it was a devastating experience, our marriage is better for it. My only regret is that we missed out on so much God had in store during the first 10 years of our marriage. As we started to replace unhealthy patterns with healthy ones, I couldn't help but think, "What if?" What if we had gotten help sooner? How would things have turned out if we had tackled this problem early on?

I also regret that in the first few months of our world falling apart, we had no idea how many others had lived our same nightmare and were now walking in truth and grace. That was the loneliness and most hopeless point of my life, and it was based on lies. In reality, many Christians struggle with pornography in their marriage. Even more important, many are finding victory, thanks to a number of ministries designed to speak specifically for husbands and wives seeking sexual purity. Eventually Jeff and I discovered the tremendous resources available to help couples struggling with unhealthy intimacy, broken trust and sexual sin. It was like we had stumbled upon an underground club of survivors who could relate to all of our feelings and concerns. It was such a relief to find these resources, but why did it take so long?

I think this “club” remains a secret because many couples are too ashamed and embarrassed to ask for the help they need. Not helping matters, many churches aren’t willing to openly discuss the impact pornography is really having on families in their pews. As a result, everyone struggles alone in the darkness.

A New Ministry

Early on, Jeff and I found that when we were able to talk about pornography recovery with people who were “safe,” our hope for recovery increased. It was almost as if the power pornography had over our family was lessened when we brought it out into the light. We also felt like the church needed to know about the wonderful ministries and books that were available for couples struggling with pornography in their marriage.

One afternoon, we started to make a list of all the resources we had found regarding recovery addiction from a Christian perspective. That list became the impetus for PornToPurity.com, a website we launched just two years into our own recovery journey. It features the resources list, as well as blogs and podcasts to encourage men and women to pursue sexual purity and recovery.

The response has been phenomenal. Christians from all over the world have e-mailed us with their own stories of struggles and successes. Not only has the Lord restored our marriage, but he has restored us to ministry—a ministry I had never envisioned. Now we are encouraging other Christian couples to join us

in fighting for our marriages by pursuing the healthy intimacy that God intends. Jeff no longer preaches behind a pulpit, but he continues to teach God's Word and share God's mercy with each blog and podcast. I no longer lead Bible studies, but I do write words of hope to wives who have just discovered their marriage wasn't what they thought it was.

I tell people all the time the day Jeff got caught with pornography was both the worst day and best day of my life. It was the worst day because the consequences were so drastic and immediate. Back then, financial stability, position within the church and our daily routine served as the foundation that I had built my life upon. Suddenly, all of that was gone.

Yet it was the best day, because it was the turning point in my marriage. It was the day that we began to examine in great detail our intimacy issues, sensing that God had something much better in store for us. And spiritually speaking, I learned that financial stability, routines and positions had become idols in my life that needed to be removed. For the first time, I was truly dependent on Jesus for my every need and he has provided every step of the way.

A Final Word

BY LUKE GILKERSON

In 2002, 30% of pastors surveyed said they had visited a pornographic website in the past month.¹⁵ If this statistic is still representative of pastors today, then the testimonies in this book are relevant for nearly a third of ministry leaders. Many today—myself included—fear this statistic is conservative.

The panel of voices in this book was hand-picked because these authors all have an intimate and sometimes painful familiarity with the topics about which they've written. They represent different theological positions and church traditions, but all of them share a similar passion to see ministry leaders live lives of integrity and purity.

This book felt somewhat incomplete without a final “So what.” Readers will likely walk away from a book like this drawing their own conclusions and with their own

15 Covenant Eyes Pornography Statistics. <http://www.covenanteyes.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Covenant-Eyes-Pornography-Statistics.pdf>

opinions, but when it comes to sexual sin we are warned by Paul to not be deceived by empty words (Ephesians 5:6). For a man entrenched in pornography, especially someone who has yet to confess his sin before others, the cloud of self-deception can be a thick one. Let me try to pierce it with some direct words of exhortation.

If you are a ministry leader who habitually falls into sexual sins like pornography, God wants you to confess your sins (James 5:16) to spiritual men who can help restore you (Galatians 6:1). After gleaning from the experiences of many ministry leaders and counselors, I recommend the following course of action:

First, find one spiritually mature person you trust to whom you can divulge your secret. This should be someone you not only trust to be confidential, but someone you trust to give biblical advice. If you don't know of anyone, then continue praying for someone. As a preliminary step, if you want to talk to someone anonymously about your problem, some of the authors in this book lead ministries geared towards men in your position. Call them. Contact them. But remember: anonymous accountability is only a *preliminary* step, a springboard of advice and counsel that can help you take the next step.

In your accountability relationship, begin working through some of your most pressing questions. Why do you feel drawn to pornography again and again? What are some of your most noticeable triggers? What can you do right now to begin putting distance between yourself and pornographic temptations? Should you find good Christian counseling? How can you tell your

wife? What is the best way and time for you to bring this problem before the right people in your church/denomination? Set a precedent in your relationship to have “gospel-centered” accountability (see Chapter 5).

The next step—possibly the hardest step to take—is to confess your struggle to those who are responsible for overseeing your character and ministry position. This will be different for each minister, depending on both the official governing structure and informal relationships of your church or organization. Some are accountable to a board of directors, a board of elders, a district office, or a group of fellow ministers. I recommending finding one representative from this group that you believe will be treat you graciously and treat your sin seriously.

After Paul was converted, he wanted to join the disciples in Jerusalem, but they—perhaps justifiably—didn’t trust him. Paul’s role in Stephen’s death and the arrest of many believers was well-known. Not knowing about his dramatic conversion experience or his fearless proclamation of the gospel in Damascus, they feared what would happen if Paul met with them. He needed a mediator to make the introduction. This was what Barnabas did. He brought Paul to the other apostles.

Who is your Barnabas? Who can you talk to among the leadership of your ministry/denomination who can help in the transition of making you accountable to those who oversee you?

Last, you should work with your accountability partner(s), counselors, and other leaders on a plan for change. Perhaps your fellow leaders or those who oversee your ministry will measure out some kind of disciplinary actions (such as required counseling, accountability, a leave of absence, or removal from ministry altogether). Trust God amidst this process—even if you believe your fellow leaders are not handling the situation with wisdom (see Appendix A). As you continue in ministry, work with these people to understand how open you should be with your congregation and community about your struggle.

Remember, accountability partners, counselors, or fellow ministers are not your judges. You have only one Judge. It is to Him and Him alone that you will give a final account (Romans 14:12). When Christ appears He “will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart” (1 Corinthians 4:5). For the Christian this is a great comfort, for at that time “each one will receive his commendation from God”—not condemnation (v.5).

While these people are not your judges, they are men indwelt by the Spirit of the living God, and as such, they are some of God’s appointed means to help you be godly. God has given us the gift of honest and transparent Christian friendships to stir our hearts and encourage holy living (Hebrews 10:24-25). As much as we might fear the opinions of others about our lack of holiness, we should fear more what life might look like if we cut ourselves off from the very means God has appointed to transform us.

About the Authors



Luke Gilkerson is the Internet Community Manager for Covenant Eyes, where he serves as the primary blog author and general editor of educational materials, including the e-book *Porn in the Pews: Teaching Your Church about the Dangers of Pornography*. He is currently working on his MA in Religion from Reformed Theological Seminary.

Before serving at Covenant Eyes, Luke was a campus minister at the University of Toledo for more than five years. He and his wife Trisha live in Owosso, Michigan.



Darrell Brazell has been in ministry for more than 25 years and serves as pastor of New Hope Fellowship and director of its Recovery Ministries. He has been married to Debbie for 23 years and has two children, ages 13 and 8. He has a passion for helping men walk out of the bondage of sexual addiction and into the freedom God has for

them, as well as a passion for protecting the women and children suffering from the collateral damage of sexual addiction. His recovery manual, *New Hope For Sexual Integrity*, is the outgrowth of his personal journey of recovery, extensive research, and experience of walking with hundreds of men and couples in the recovery process.

About the Authors



Dr. Harry W. Schaumburg, and the ministry of Stone Gate Resources, addresses the problems of sexual sin within the church. His pioneering Biblical Intensive CounselingSM program has drawn more than 3000 laity and clergy from the U.S. and 18 foreign countries. For more than 30 years, Dr.

Schaumburg has been involved in pointing people away from sexual sin to restored intimacy with God and others. He is the bestselling author of *False Intimacy* and his newest book, *Undefined*. Read more at www.restoringsexualpurity.org.



Mark Brouwer is a counselor, workshop leader, and author whose work focuses on overcoming ongoing sexual struggles and the spiritual dynamics of recovery. An ordained minister who served for 15 years as senior pastor in two churches, Mark now teaches at workshops with Faithful and True Ministries and directs *The Recovery Journey*,

a confidential online community for sexual strugglers and their spouses. He is also the editor of sexualsanity.com, one of today's leading recovery blogs.



David Blythe is an Associate Pastor at Phoenix First Assembly of God. He currently leads the Converge Couples Ministry, a ministry he developed in 2008, designed to meet the needs of engaged, young married, and married couples with young families. He is the author of *The Secret in the Pew*, a book about his former sexual addiction and the path the Lord brought him through to

complete freedom. David has spoken at men's ministry functions all over the United States. His message is one about freedom from the bondage of pornography and sexual addiction through Jesus Christ.



Jonathan Dodson (M.Div, Th.M) is married to Robie and proud father of Owen and Ellie. He serves as one of the pastors of Austin City Life in Austin, Texas, where their mission is to redemptively engage peoples and cultures. Jonathan is author of *Fight Clubs: Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, as well as a number of articles in various journals and webzines

such as *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, *The Resurgence*, *The High Calling*, and *Boundless*.



Nate Larkin is the founder of the Samson Society and author of *Samson and the Pirate Monks: Calling Men to Authentic Brotherhood*. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Nate is a conference speaker, retreat leader, and host of the weekly Pirate Monk Podcast. He and his wife Allie live in Franklin, Tennessee.



Chris Beall has been married to his wife Cindy for 18 years. They have three children, Noah, Jack, and Seth and live in Edmond, OK. Chris is the campus pastor for the OKC campus of LifeChurch.tv and also serves on the teaching team. Chris and Cindy are passionate about sharing their redemptive story as a means of ministering to those who are walking through the devastation of infidelity.



Tal Prince (B.B.A., M.Div.) is the founding pastor of Tapestry of Hope in Birmingham, Alabama, and a recovering porn/sex addict. After a highly successful 10-year career in international business, he surrendered to a call to full-time ministry. Tal serves as the Director of External Relations for Beeson

Divinity School. He is also a regular part of the Ruth Graham and Friends Conferences where he conducts workshops about the plague of pornography. He is the host of *Tal Prince Live!* on Sirius Satellite Radio. Tal is married to Teresa and has two daughters.

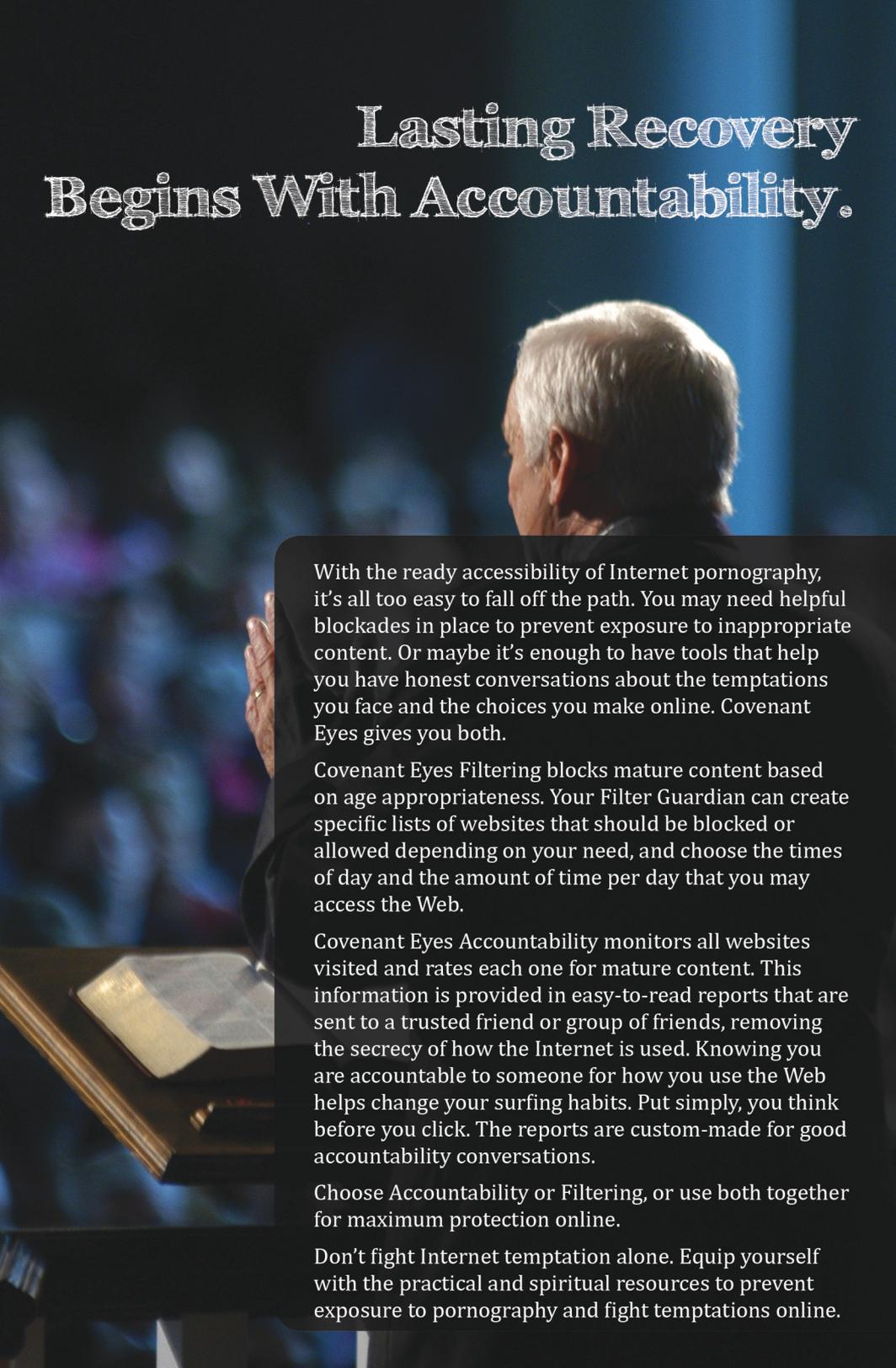


Robert (Bobby) Scott has served the Lord as the Pastor-Teacher of the Los Angeles Community Bible Church since 1994. He holds a B.S. degree from UCLA, an M.Div., and a Th.M. from The Master's Seminary (TMS) and has been honored in Who's Who Among America's Teachers and Who's Who in Black Los Angeles. Robert is the general editor of *Secret Sex Wars: A Battle Cry for Purity*, a scripturally saturated biblical theology on sexual purity, and a former number one Amazon Bestseller in Christian Sexual Ethics.



Marsha Fisher is a professional communicator and a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Marsha and her husband Jeff launched www.porntopurity.com in 2009 and she continues to write blogs for the website and participate in podcasts. Marsha was also a contributing author to *Love Is a Flame: Stories of What Happens When Love Is Rekindled*, compiled by James Stuart Bell and released in 2010.

Lasting Recovery Begins With Accountability.

A man with white hair, seen from the side, is speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit jacket. On the podium in front of him is an open Bible. The background is a blurred blue and purple light. A dark semi-transparent box containing text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

With the ready accessibility of Internet pornography, it's all too easy to fall off the path. You may need helpful blockades in place to prevent exposure to inappropriate content. Or maybe it's enough to have tools that help you have honest conversations about the temptations you face and the choices you make online. Covenant Eyes gives you both.

Covenant Eyes Filtering blocks mature content based on age appropriateness. Your Filter Guardian can create specific lists of websites that should be blocked or allowed depending on your need, and choose the times of day and the amount of time per day that you may access the Web.

Covenant Eyes Accountability monitors all websites visited and rates each one for mature content. This information is provided in easy-to-read reports that are sent to a trusted friend or group of friends, removing the secrecy of how the Internet is used. Knowing you are accountable to someone for how you use the Web helps change your surfing habits. Put simply, you think before you click. The reports are custom-made for good accountability conversations.

Choose Accountability or Filtering, or use both together for maximum protection online.

Don't fight Internet temptation alone. Equip yourself with the practical and spiritual resources to prevent exposure to pornography and fight temptations online.