

White Stone Ministry

Houston, Texas

Christians and Sexual Addiction

by David Layman

The inspired writers of the Bible allow us to see the strong pull of sexual sin in the lives of some of our greatest heroes. Biblical giants such as David inspire us with their incredible courage and faith and, at the same time, shock us with their sexual sins and promiscuity. How can a man that is lustful and murderous be a "man after God's own heart?" How can a leader of God's people participate in such promiscuity? God's people have always struggled with sexual sins and overcoming bondage to these sins. Even our greatest examples of faith have struggled with the same temptations and sins that we encounter and struggle with ourselves. However, through technology, specifically the internet and media, sexually explicit material is more available and prevalent than ever before. Never before has the enemy been able to so efficiently and effectively saturate and infuse our society with "the flesh" as he is doing today.

As a result of the enemy's strategy, the church is being infiltrated with pornography, sexual temptations, and sin. Our members and church leaders are shrinking back and falling as the enemy takes great strides into the hearts and lives of God's children. Tragically, Satan has made deep inroads into the church of Christ with sexual addictions without the church being fully prepared for battle. In many cases the church has simply ignored the problem due to our inability and fear to address it. How will the church respond to the enemy's attacks? Will we ignore his weapons of destruction? Will we ignore the trend of Christians and church leaders falling to the enticement of pornography and sexual sin?

Who is Addicted to Pornography

The sex addict is not simply the "playboy" type guy who is sowing his wild oats or the depraved sex offender lurking in the shadows. Both of these individual fit nicely into our stereotypical idea of someone involved in pornography and sexual sin; however, this does not describe the majority of men with sexual addictions. Instead, most addicts are men who are far from our preconceived stereotypes. In many cases, the sex addict is the guy who seems to have it "all together" and would be the last person you would suspect of struggling with sexual sin. He can be a good father and husband, successful businessman, doctor, leader in the church or even a church minister, elder or deacon. Many times, the sex addicts are people we love, respect and admire and we hold them up as a role models and Christian examples.

Statistics show:

- Fifty-one percent of ministers say pornography is a possible temptation. Thirty-seven percent say it is a current struggle (Christianity Today, Leadership Survey, December 2001). Four in ten ministers have visited a porn site. (Christianity Today, Leadership Survey, December 2001.)

- Approximately 17.8 percent of all Christian adults (in America) have visited sexually oriented Websites. (Zogby survey conducted for Focus on the Family, 2000.)
- At a recent Promise Keepers' convention, 50 percent of the attendees confessed to using pornography the previous week.
- Of men attending "Men, Romance & Integrity Seminars," 63 percent admit to struggling with porn in the past year. Two-thirds are in church leadership and ten percent are pastors. (Pastor's Family Bulletin, Focus on the Family, March 2000.)
- "If you think you can't fall into sexual sin, then you're godlier than David, stronger than Samson, and wiser than Solomon." (Bill Perkins)

Clearly, pornography and sexual sin is an issue the church must face and aggressively reach out to those who are caught in bondage. We must face the fact that sexual sin is a strategic weapon of the enemy that he is deploying in full force within our churches.

Christians do not intentionally become in bondage to pornography or choose to become addicted to sexual sins; in fact, their involvement typically starts with nothing more than an innocent "peek" at a movie, magazine or web page. The enemy then capitalizes on the opportunity and plants a seed that may eventually grow into a vine choking the life out of Christian men. ". . . *But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death*" (James 1:14-15).

There are also some common threads woven throughout the lives of the sexual addicted Christian man. Typically, he has either experienced abuse as a child from a parent, relative or friend or he was introduced to pornography at a very early age. Whatever his situation, he will keep this experience a secret at all costs!

The Big Secret

Recently, I was driving on the 610 South Loop in Houston, Texas and noticed a large billboard advertising an adult oriented business. In addition to the provocative pictures, it read "*A Safe Place to Keep a Secret.*" I was absolutely amazed at this advertisement. It hit the nail right on the head! What more could a man, who is in bondage to sexual sin, need than a safe and secret place to engage in immorality. Here is a business that has created an environment for like-minded addicts to engage in immorality without any threat. In fact, this advertisement implies that the business understands what the addict needs and is accommodating their need for sex and their need for secrecy.

For most addicts, secrecy is fundamental! Christian men addicted to pornography or sexual immorality cannot fathom confessing their sin and admitting their addiction. The enemy has convinced him that he is alone in his struggle and no one else on earth has the same sexual temptations and sins that he has. The shame and embarrassment of sexual sins also convinces him to keep his situation a secret. Therefore, he lives life in bondage to his sins and his secrecy with absolutely no hope of freedom.

The secrecy of sexual sin is one of the enemy's most powerful weapons. He uses secrecy in two primary ways: He tells the addict that he can continue "acting out" because no one will ever know and no one will get hurt. The enemy provides the perfect environment for secrecy by bringing the pornography into the bedroom, office or hotel room via the internet. All the sex addict has to do is lock the door and turn on the computer, and no one will ever know! He can secretly and easily engage in his sexual rituals while out of town on business. If secrecy and privacy are not available, the sex addict can simply engage in sexual activity within his mind and heart and no one will ever know! Satan has created a bondage of sin that is easily accessible and easily concealed. Thus, the bondage grows more powerful and in many cases more dark and gross.

Secondly, Satan uses secrecy as a method to tighten his grip convincing men that there is no escape. God has provided pain and guilt as a method for us to know we are sinning. These emotions penetrate our hearts and are truly painful in order to alert us of our sinful condition. These emotions signal to us that we are headed in the wrong direction! Guilt and shame make us want to be different, but the price of freedom is honesty. The enemy has convinced many Christian men that "honesty" is a price too high to pay and they choose not to pursue freedom. Nothing can be more frightening to a man trapped in concealed sin than being "found out". He therefore chooses comfort over freedom and the enemy convinces him that the worst thing he can do is tell the truth. The man finds short-term relief through his addiction, only to find himself with more guilt and shame and more trapped than ever before. As long as our first priority is hiding our secret lives and feelings and our second priority is freedom, we will never be able to come out of the guilt and isolation that binds us. This situation is perfect for developing self-hatred and even further isolation. Solomon tells us the way of the unfaithful is "hard" (Proverbs 13:15) and like "deep darkness" (Proverbs 4:19).

The enemy says, "If no one knows about it ... then you have nothing to be ashamed of!" Our secrecy then acts as a protection from the shame of others. We ask ourselves, "What will people think of me if I confess? If I confess I may lose my wife, family and friends. I will no longer be respected as someone who "has it all together." Therefore, to avoid the pain of exposing our true sinfulness, we hide behind Satan's scheme of secrecy.

If you are someone concealing a life of sin, you must reach out to a loving and compassionate brother in Christ. Pray to God and ask Him to provide you with such a brother and relationship in which you can be completely honest and transparent. I also want to invite you to contact White Stone Ministry. We are here for you and want to help you. You may contact White Stone Ministry at (281) 486-9350 or via internet at www.clearlakechurch.com.

Message to the Church

We must acknowledge that the enemy is devouring Christian men through pornography and sexual addiction. These individuals truly feel in bondage to their sin and have very little hope of finding any freedom or help with their addiction. Due to the nature of sexual sin, these men are overcome with guilt and shame and therefore, do not reach out for help. They maintain secrecy, which simply fuels the fire.

Our churches must be safe places for anyone struggling with sin to confess and repent. We all

carry our pride as a badge of honor and it is counter-culture for us to admit sin, especially sexual sins and addictions. We must respond to the repentant with sensitivity instead of shock. We must have an environment of grace, forgiveness and reach out in love. In addition, we must help them bear their burden and support them to stand against the enemy.

Recommendations for churches:

1) Acknowledge the fact that pornography and sexual sin is a very serious problem within our society and even the church. Christian men in your congregation, who are concealing sin, will stand in unbelief to hear church leaders reaching out in a loving way to those caught in sexual sin and bondage. Their expectation is that the church will punish and rebuke such individuals instead of loving and helping them.

We must strive to create an environment that welcomes and encourages the sinner to repent and confess. A church that promotes self-preservation and pride will never be a safe place for true repentance and confession. Instead our churches must be environments that encourage honesty, brokenness and humility. We cannot forget that we all deal with sin. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:8-9).

2) Ensure that relationships are developed between a brother caught in bondage and loving mature Christian men who will help them seek freedom in Christ. Anyone helping a sexual addict must make it their goal to lead the addict to Jesus for transformation instead of trying to "fix" the addict themselves.

3) Provide resources such as biblical discipleship opportunities and Christian counseling.

When one looks deeply into what Christianity is all about, he finds that it is essentially God's effort to free man from the bondage of sin. There is a significant paragraph in the gospel of Luke, "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor'" (Luke 4:16-19). Jesus came to preach liberty to those who were in bondage to sin.

Another time Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ... If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36). In Galatians 5:1, we find an excellent summary statement, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." We were in bondage to sin, and then Christ came to free us from that bondage.