

THE A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES
JOURNAL

Vol. 30 | Third Quarter 2013

*Escaping the
Tornado:*

OVERCOMING
PORNOGRAPHY
ADDICTION



We Had No Idea!

“WOULD YOU PLEASE PRAY FOR MY HUSBAND?” Abigail* asked our prayer group one day. “I want George to be the spiritual leader in our home and go to camp meeting. He brought me into the church, but he doesn’t want to go to church. I don’t want to go to camp meeting without him.”

We prayed for this request for many months, and yet George refused to go to camp meeting. After camp meeting, we decided to ask God how we should pray for him. So we prayed together for God to show us, then waited in silence. The idea came to us to pray that it would be his idea to go to the next camp meeting. So we started praying for that, and kept praying he would be the spiritual leader in the home and go to church.



Many months went by, and one morning my phone rang. It was Abigail. "Last night George came into the kitchen rubbing his head like he was not sure where this thought was coming from. 'I want to go to camp meeting,' he said. 'I have some time I can take off from work, and I can borrow Frank's trailer.'"

"Praise the Lord!" I was thrilled. "He has answered our prayers! You need to turn in the registration for camp meeting, because we fill up."

"No, when it comes down to it, he won't want to go," she said.

Now I was frustrated. "God has answered your prayer. You need to send it in."

Abigail wouldn't do it. Instead she put the application on the front of her refrigerator with magnets.

About three weeks later Abigail called again. "Last night George came into the kitchen and asked why I hadn't sent in this application for camp meeting since they fill up quickly. I told him, 'Well, I thought when it came down to it you would not want to go to camp meeting.' He said, 'Of course I want to go to camp meeting! I told you I did, and I have extra time I can take off work, and I can borrow Frank's trailer. I want to go to camp meeting!'"

She was a praying woman, and I think God had her wait until it was really his idea to go to camp meeting!

George and Abigail were there when camp meeting started. But not many days passed before Abigail found me. "Fine!" she said, her arms crossed and foot tapping. "He's here at camp meeting, but he doesn't go to any meetings. All he does is sit in our trailer. What good will it do?"

"I don't know, but we'll pray for God to get him into the meetings!" I quickly found some people who would pray, and we poured our hearts out to God, praying for Him to get George to go to all the meetings. We met several times and prayed this same prayer.

George never did go to all the meetings. But he did attend one seminar on prayer with Abigail. Previously, he had never participated in small-group prayer times during meetings. But this time, the speaker asked George and Abigail to pray with him at the end of the meeting. Whether that was what did it or not, I don't know, but I know that George went home a changed man. He started reading his Bible, going to church, and leading out in family worships.

About two weeks later Abigail called me in tears. "He is leading out in family worships, but it's terrible! He is so authoritarian and strict that the kids hate it!"

Well, she was a wise woman. She kept her mouth shut, and we earnestly prayed for God to mellow him. It took a few weeks, but he changed and it got better.



It is so important that when someone around us starts to grow spiritually, whether it is our husband, young adult child, or a new church member, that we not tell them what they are doing wrong. It is better just to pray. The Holy Spirit is fully able to tell them how they need to change.

Now whenever the church doors were open, George was there, asking how he could help. He was consistently having his own private time with God too.

One night after family worship, when the kids were in bed, he asked Abigail to help him with something in the living room. He asked her to wait, then returned with a huge stack of pornography magazines.

“Will you help me burn these in the fireplace?” he asked, shaking all over.

“I would love too!” she responded.

When the magazines were burning, she said, “They’re burning. Let’s go to bed.”

“No! Not till every one of them is in ashes. They have so controlled my life!”

George went on to become an elder in his church. He started preaching powerful sermons, giving Bible studies, and winning people to Jesus. Would all of this have happened if we had not prayed?

Our little prayer group had no idea George was suffering with a pornography addiction. But we knew he had a spiritual problem.

I love this quote:

“Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?”

Testimonies to the Church,
vol. 7, p. 21

Today, because of the Internet, TV, and movies, pornography has become rampant. Men aren’t the only ones who struggle with it. Women and children are susceptible too. Many parents do not realize that their sons are addicted to pornography. We cannot let Satan win on this one! It is destroying lives, marriages, and ministries.

God is mighty to save and can help each one caught in Satan’s trap to win the





battle with pornography. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NKJV).

Could I boldly suggest that we all join in fasting and prayer one day a week for this? As I write this, my heart goes out to those whose self-esteem and hopes of true love have been sickeningly destroyed through pornography. Could we also join in prayer for them to regain their self-worth and for their marriages to be filled with true love?

God promises that our prayers will be effective. “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will

be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19, 20, NKJV).

Won’t you join me in persevering prayer for our brothers and sisters entangled in pornography? Let us “press [our] petitions to the throne, and hold on by strong faith” (*Early Writings*, p. 73). 7

**The names in this story are pseudonyms.*

Janet Page serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer.

Escaping the Tornado

OVERCOMING PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION

“Lord, answer me because your love is so good. Because of your great kindness, turn to me. Do not hide from me, your servant. I am in trouble. Hurry to help me! Come near and save me; rescue me from my enemies.”

Psalm 69:16-18, NCV

WHILE LIVING IN TEXAS, I developed a deep respect for, and quite frankly a fear of, tornados. There is something terrifying about a storm that comes up so quickly, lashes out so violently, and is so thoroughly destructive—mangling homes and trees, leaving nothing but debris in its path. In 2001 a different kind of tornado hit my world. It came rolling in, the sky turned dark, things began to twist, and thankfully God was there by my side holding me. The storm that rocked my world was pornography.

The revelation was an accident. I stumbled upon a website that my husband, Bernie, had forgotten to erase from the computer history. Shocked and sickened, hoping and praying that it was a mistake, I confronted him a few days later with what I had found. I was stunned when he revealed that he had been struggling with pornography for a long time, even before we had met. My world was spinning. The marriage I thought I had, the man that I thought I knew, the life that I thought we had created together, no longer existed in the same way for me.

At that point, I had no idea of the ways in which pornography entangles itself in one’s mind. I assumed that after we talked, cried, and prayed together that it would be over and that would be the end of it. Boy, was I wrong! The two stormy years that followed made the initial revelation of my husband’s addiction seem like a gentle spring rain shower. Two years of on-again, off-again struggles. Two years of Bernie trying to break free from the grip of pornography on his heart and mind. For every step forward, it seemed that we took two

or three steps back, with Bernie going for weeks without pornography and then falling right back into it. While he was battling to stay pure in his heart, my world was out of control. I was anxious over every minute he spent on the computer, and I was checking the website history filled with worry and doubt. Instead of a home filled with love, ours had become a home of fear and sadness.

I wish I could say that I reached out to someone or shared our struggles with even another pastor's wife, but I remained silent. What would people say? How would people react? After all, my husband is a *pastor*. The fear that held me back and kept me silent did far more harm than good. It served as my personal shame factor; each time I thought about reaching out to someone, fear of judgment would rush right in.

In retrospect, both Bernie and I see that pornography has strength in the dark. Anonymity makes it stronger, but sharing the struggle with other Christ-followers helps to break its crushing stronghold.

Finally I'd had enough. Away at camp meeting with my parents and our daughters, I decided that I was going to ask Bernie to leave. As heart-wrenching as that decision was, I knew that living this way was not what God had intended. Instead of being a godly wife and mother, I had become obsessed with being my husband's porn police. Things simply had to change.

I returned to our home in Texas ready to ask Bernie to leave, but in my absence, something had changed. While I was away, God had been working on Bernie's heart. He had finally made the decision to ask for help from a friend. That action changed things. God had been waiting for Bernie to be open and vulnerable to others, and finally he was willing. Light was breaking through in our marriage and our home. I chose to stay, praying that God would keep moving in our lives.

In October 2003 Bernie attended a Christian conference about sexual purity called *Every Man's Battle*.¹ There he

learned principles and tools to help him gain victory. It was like a rebirth in many ways, for both Bernie and our marriage.

Women often ask me how we got back to the healthy, happy place where we are now. The answer? Simply God's love and grace. I am always amazed by it and overwhelmed by it, but most of all I am a recipient of it. God's love and grace changed my husband; it freed him from an evil that had enslaved his heart for years. I watched with amazement as the man I'd been married to for nine years became a different person, a better person.

I cannot say it was an easy process; it took years to undo the havoc that Bernie's addiction had wreaked on my self-esteem and trust. Thankfully, God allowed us to be in a location where healing could occur, and He placed people in my life whom I could lean on.

This year my husband celebrates 10 years of being pornography-free. His life is forever changed, our lives are forever changed, and God has cleared away the debris.

Pornography is the enemy of intimacy. Satan uses it to destroy lives, *especially the lives of pastors*. A 2011 poll by a major Christian magazine indicates that about 40 percent of pastors struggle with porn. That is a staggering number! We cannot be silent on this issue. We must battle for our families, for our marriages, for our homes.

God is waiting for us to allow Him to help us survive the storm. If you (or someone you love) is caught in the tornado of sexual sin, please seek help—because there is hope. J

¹ A book is available by the same title.

Christina Anderson works as a Child Life Specialist in a pediatric hospital. She and Bernie have three daughters—Madison, Brooklyn, and Liberty—and a dog named Lucy. In their spare time they enjoy traveling and watching football. Currently they live in Apopka, Florida, where Bernie serves as a pastor at Forest Lake Church.

RESOURCES:

We understand that sexual addiction can be a very private struggle. We offer these resources as a starting point for help and healing, whether for someone in your own family or for you to share with others in your sphere of influence who would benefit.

Every Man's Battle, by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker with Mike Yorkey

Breaking the Silence, by Bernie Anderson

www.settingcaptivesfree.com

"The Broken Image" (a 2-part audio presentation), by Nicole Parker <https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/recordings/3873/the-broken-image-part-1.html>

"Call It Anything But Love" (a 2-part audio presentation), by Nicole Parker <https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/recordings/3875/call-it-anything-but-love-part-1.html>

EXCEED Ministry (EXcellence in Christ thru Evangelism to the Erotically Defiled) <http://exceedinglory.org>

Pure Life Ministries (a Christian resource that is not Adventist) <http://www.purelifeministries.org>

At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry, by Steve Gallagher

Look for Celebrate Recovery and Men's Purity support groups in your area. Or start one for your church. If you'd like more information to share with someone in need, email ministryspouses@gmail.com for any information we might have in your area. We can recommend outstanding confidential counselors in North America and in some other parts of the world as well.