

DEALING WITH THE ELEPHANT IN THE CHURCH

Helping the Friend Who Struggles With Sexual Sin



Case Study (used by permission): John is a 38-year old married man, having been married about 12 years. He is now meeting with you over a cup of coffee, asking you for help. His wife has left him because she caught him in the study late one night, looking at pornography on an internet site (and this wasn't a one time failure, but something he had been doing for all 12 years of their marriage). She hasn't said whether she will divorce him or not. John tells you that his struggles with pornography go back to when he was a young person. When he was 10, he was molested by a teenager who lived in his neighborhood. About a year later, this same teen introduced John to pornographic magazines. Since then, John has looked at 1000's of pornographic magazines and internet sites. He has been enslaved to pornography since his early teen years. John grew up in a Christian home and believed on Christ as His Lord and Savior at a teen camp when he was 16. Every time he looks at pornography, John is overwhelmed with guilt. Afterwards, he always seeks God's forgiveness. His sin has been a private thing, at least until his wife caught him. John confesses to stealing magazines from several local bookstores and gas stations. He has stolen magazines for years, but most recently, he can account for about 10 different magazines that he has stolen from various stores in the city in which he lives. Every time he fails he seeks God's forgiveness and prays and asks God to remove this struggle from his life.

John seems incredibly sorrowful for his sin. He has told "everything" to his wife and now to you. He says he wants victory over this sin, NOW!

What are you going to do to help him? Where do you begin? What are some things you'll have him do to begin to have victory over this enslavement?

Heather (used by permission) is a 44 year old successful business woman who is active in your church and is one you have interacted with quite often over the years. She calls you one afternoon asking if there is any way you could meet with her, as soon as possible. She seems fairly emotional as she makes this request and you agree to meet. She offers to stop by your home and shows up 30 minutes later. She is tearful as she explains that she believes her marriage is now over. The evening before, she confessed to her husband, Bill, that she has

failed miserably and has had an ongoing adulterous relationship with a coworker. Bill was obviously devastated and asked her to leave the house. He hasn't interacted with her since, but Heather is fairly confident that he will not want to stay in the marriage, given that this also happened when Heather was 27 and they had only been married for several years. She confesses to you that this relationship has gone on for several years and that her supposed long days of working late were related to the adultery. She explains that she confessed to him because she was tired of the guilt and she knew that she needed to make things right with him. "I just have a terrible problem," she confesses to you. She confides in you that, "Sexual sin has been in my family for generations. You know, generational sins. I don't know if I can save the marriage, but I know I need to do deal with the sin in my life. Can you help me?" she asks.

I. The Problem Stated:

A. We Have a Problem

B. What are the typical strategies used to deal with this?

C. Clarifying Points:

1. People change in this area only when they truly want to change
2. There is not a set of steps you take. Each case is unique.
3. No situation, no other person, and no physiological problems cause a person to step into sexual sin.
4. A person doesn't fall into sexual sin. It's the end result of a long process.

II. The Point of Decision: Which Path We Choose (The "Y" Chart)

III. The Quadratic Formula

IV. I Corinthians 10:1-14

A. The Blessings

B. The Failures and Consequences

C. The Heart Issues

1. James 1:14-15

2. Matthew 15:19/ Mark 7:21-23

D. Paul's Counsel

1.

2.

3.

4.

E. Defining Sexual Immorality: (porneia=any and all sexual sin); adultery=a person breaking marriage covenant and involved in sexual intimacy with a person whom they are not married to.

V. Practical Elements To Helping a Friend:

A. Five things to remember about sexual sin

1. It is self-focused

2. We are not to do anything for "self" (I Corinthians 7:4; 6:19-20; 13:5; Philippians 2:3-4)

3. It involves lustful thoughts (Philippians 4:8)

4. It is enslaving (I Corinthians 6:12)

5. It removes any desire for self-control in sexual area (Galatians 5:22-23)

B. Help your friend (Re)-establish_____

C. Have your friend_____ the gospel to self every day

Luther: Preach the gospel to yourself every day.

C.J. Mahaney: “Reminding ourselves of the Gospel is the most important daily habit we can establish. If the Gospel is the most vital news in the world, and if salvation by grace is the defining truth of our existence, we should create ways to immerse ourselves in these truths every day. No days off allowed. . .Your audience is your own heart. And the message is simple: Christ died for your sins. It’s a matter of sitting down, grabbing your own attention, and telling yourself, “Hey, listen up! This is what matters most: You’re forgiven! You have hope! Your hope is based on the sacrifice of Jesus. So let’s not view this day any other way. Let today be governed by this one defining truth.” (Living the Cross Centered Life by C.J. Mahaney pg. 132-133).

D. Challenge the friend to be disciplined in_____ (I Timothy 4:7/Philippians 4:8)

E. Help your friend identify_____

F. Admonish your friend to go into _____ (Matthew 5:27-30)

The English word, ‘lust’ comes from the Greek word, “epithumia” which simply means desire. It can be used in a positive or negative sense. It is also translated, “covet” in the Septuagint in Exodus 20:17. Here we strike at the heart of the problem of lust as the Bible conceives it. We want things that don’t belong to us. Leave sex out of it entirely for the moment. We are not content with what we have. We want something more— and that desire drives us. Lust, or covetousness, is a basic component of what the Bible calls sin. All two-year-olds, and all truthful forty-year-olds, confess it: I want what I want because I want it. Nobody and nothing else figures. Jesus’s comments on sexual lust fit into that. Lust shows that in your heart of hearts, you want somebody else’s sexual life. When a man lusts for a woman, he is not grateful for what God has given him. He is making himself sick thinking about what he wishes God would give him. The psychology of lust is a simple process: It begins with attraction; it turns quickly to dissatisfaction; it results in fixation. It leaves us ungrateful, discontented, and obsessive. When you are filled with lust—for it does indeed seem to fill you—you can have nothing in your mind but that appetite for what you lack. This is true not just true of sex...

G. Encourage your friend to not _____

1. Ephesians 4:22-29
2. Romans 13:14
3. Normal:
4. Failure:
5. The Role of Repentance In Change

H. Encourage your friend to use their _____ (I John 1:6-9; Matthew 18)

I. Help the friend set up a _____ (Verse Memory)

- >Psalm 119:9-11
- >Example of Christ

J. Exhort the friend to not go back to _____

1. Galatians 5:1,13
2. Matthew 6:24

K. Challenge the friend to ponder the issue of _____

“Pornography is cheating. It is an expression of desire to experience sex without intimacy. It is often connected to a problem of laziness. The person who is involved in pornography and masturbation doesn’t want to strive for intimacy in his relationship with his wife or strive to keep himself pure until he has a relationship with a wife. Anytime you see a person engaged in illicit sexual behavior, you can be sure he is a cheater. He wants sexual gratification without intimacy. That means that when you are counseling someone who has a problem with pornography, a sexual problem in the marriage relationship, or even an involvement in some bizarre and perverted form of sexuality, at the root he does not want to experience sexuality in the context for which God designed it. This person must be confronted with God’s program, and that program is intimacy.”

People who are “addicted” to pornography aren’t so much addicted to lurid material as they are addicted to self-centeredness. They are committed to serving themselves to doing whatever they can to find a convenient way not to die to self, which is the nature of companionship in a relationship. The self-centeredness shows up in many different ways.

VI. A Suggested Approach:

A. Questions To Ask Your Friend:

1. When Did This Begin?
2. How Often?
3. To What Extent?
4. Have you been with anyone physically, other than your wife? (If yes, does she know that?; Have you had a physical to make sure you have no STD’s?)
5. What have you tried to do to stop this sin?

B. Discuss: Why They Contacted You For Help Now?

C. Discuss: What Is Their Goal in Getting Help From You?

D. Discuss: What Is Their Purpose For Living?

E. Discuss: Process of Change Biblically

F. Where Do You Start?

1. **Gather Data**
2. **Assign: Memorization (I Corinthians 10:31; I Corinthians 10:13)**

OTHERS:

3. **Journaling**
4. **Developing Relationship With Christ**
>Quiet Time/Devotional

>Have Them Reading God’s Word (Probably The Gospels, such as Mark and writing down things they observed about Christ and following Him, or obeying Him, etc.)

5. **Get Commitment From Them To Change God’s Way.**

G. Next Session:

- 1. Go Over your data with them and what you believe are the core issues.**
- 2. Always Go Over Previous Week's Homework Assignment**
- 3. Look at their journaling and discuss what they saw and learned:**
- 4. Homework For The Next Time**
 - >Memorize I Corinthians 10:13**
 - >Come up with at least 5-7 accountability questions (very specific)**
 - >Continue to journal**
 - >Continue Devotional**
 - >Write down at least 5 ways that you are not glorifying God in your life, especially in relation to your specific struggle.**
 - >Write down at least 5 corresponding ways that you can begin to glorify God in your life, especially in relation to your specific struggle.**
 - > Begin a Thankful List (Remember Romans 1)**