

2018



harvestusa

CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME



Women,
Sexuality,
and the
Church



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CONTRIBUTORS



Ellen Dykas



Tim Geiger



Aimee Byrd



John Freeman



Jessica Harris



Juli Kellogg



Karen Hodge



Penny Freeman



HARVEST USA brings the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ by:

- Helping individuals and families affected by sexual struggles
- Providing resources that address biblical sexuality to individuals and churches

EDITOR

R. Nicholas Black

National Office Philadelphia
715 Twining Road, Suite 200
Dresher, PA 19025
215-482-0111
harvestusa.org

Greater Pittsburgh Region
11743 Frankstown Road, Suite E
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
412-723-2966

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From the President

Women are Also Struggling

The church still has a long way to go in dealing with the fallout of the Sexual Revolution and the emergence of the internet. Both these events reshaped our culture. Sexual morality has been turned upside down; the only boundary line not to be crossed is consent. Sexual license has gotten a free ride on the internet; it remains an anything-goes smorgasbord of visual excess and perversity.

While the culture proclaims this as freedom, HARVEST USA sees it as God does, as slavery to sin. Sexual sin uniquely leads to compulsive and addictive struggles that become life-dominating. That is why HARVEST USA is here: to be a safe place where men, women, and families that have been impacted by these struggles can find healing and change in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But we want to see the church do this work. Another essential part of our ministry is to assist local churches in training men and women to step into the lives of sexual strugglers who cannot find freedom. Thankfully, we are beginning to see the church start such ministries, and we have been privileged to help many churches across the nation implement ministries to sexual strugglers.

But there is one demographic where this is not yet fully taking place: women.

This issue of *harvestusa magazine* focuses on this fact: women are as affected and impacted by sexual struggles and sin as men are. Men have been given the lion's share of attention when it comes to issues of pornography, for example. But women are struggling here, too.

In this issue on *Women, Sexuality, and the Church*, Ellen Dykas, HARVEST USA's Women's Ministry Director, explores three blind spots the church has when it comes to women and sexuality in her article, "Women and Sexuality: The Church's Blind Spots." These blind spots keep a church

from recognizing that women are wrestling with sexuality. Ellen gives practical ways a church can eliminate these blind spots and bring hope to struggling women.

Juli Kellog, a volunteer in our women's ministry, tells her story of sexual abuse and the ramifications it had on her life in "Sexual Abuse, Brokenness, and Redemption: A Journey of Seeing and Healing." How Juli came to see clearly the impact abuse had on her as a child and how God brought healing gives hope to women who have walked a similar path.

Jessica Harris, a guest writer whose ministry to women is found on her website, *Beggar's Daughter*, talks about her addiction to hardcore pornography in "My Problem Wasn't Amish Romance Novels." Her struggle with pornography as a woman is what we are encountering more and more at HARVEST USA.

And I write about how I'm speaking to my daughter on what it means to be a godly woman in a culture that is aggressively erasing the essence of who women were created to be in "On Being a Woman: A Father's Words to His Daughter."

I invite you to read these articles and the other informative and practical writing in this special issue geared to women. I hope it will help you personally, and my prayer is that it will help the Church see the real needs of women and reach out to them with much wisdom, love, and healing grace.

In the Lord,

Tim Geiger
President
tim@harvestusa.org

Women & Sexuality

The Church's Blind Spot

By Ellen Dykas



Crunch! My little Civic didn't stand a chance when the larger SUV swerved into my lane. Even though I passed it slowly, a few seconds in the driver's blind spot racked up hundreds of dollars of damage to my car.

Blind spots are dangerous when you're driving. We have blind spots in our lives and relationships, also. When we don't acknowledge that we have them, the results can be devastating. Relationships in our jobs, friendships, families, and even in the church are impacted when we fail to see what we can't or don't want to see.

I want to address three blind spots I have seen over the past 11 years of my ministry here at HARVEST USA, three areas where the church has repeatedly failed women in their sexuality. There are others, but these three are the ones I consistently see when I talk to women who struggle with sexual issues. When churches recognize these three blind spots, they will be better equipped to understand and help women.

BLIND SPOT # 1:

Women don't struggle with sexual sin and lust like men do

A few years ago at a HARVEST USA fundraising banquet, I found myself defending my full-time position as Women's Ministry Director. The conversation went like this:

Well-meaning man: "You're full time? Are there that many wives who have Christian husbands looking at porn?"

Me: "Well, yes; not only do wives reach out for help, but Christian women who are struggling with things like pornography and casual sex do as well."

Well-meaning man: "Really? I never thought women struggled with that stuff!"

It wasn't the first time I had to defend my job. Women have felt invisible in the church. When it comes to sexuality, most of the attention has gone to men. So, when a woman looks for help, no one is there for her because we rarely acknowledge women's sexual struggles.

Darcyⁱ came to me for help because she couldn't stop hooking up with men. She'd sought out more men than she could remember, and her face and voice communicated shame and pain as she gave me her diagnosis, "Ellen, I guess I'm just more like a man."

Why did Darcy think that? Because in her church circles, she only heard that men had problems with lust. Yes, there was something wrong with Darcy, but it wasn't that her sexuality was more like a man's. She needed help understanding that lust and sexually-sinful behaviors are gender neutral! Idolatrous and lonely, selfish hearts don't belong to one gender.

I see two reasons that contribute to this blind spot. One has to do with how men perceive women. Men do tend to have stronger sex drives as a result of their biology. And since men are overwhelmingly in church leadership, they know their own issues but somehow think that women are radically different than them. The standard script is: women are drawn to relationships; men to sex. You mean *women* have libidos? Why does the church have this blind spot when current statistics on porn use show that 60% of females ages 18-30 acknowledge that they look at porn at least monthly?ⁱⁱ

She needed help understanding that lust and sexually-sinful behaviors are gender neutral.

Secondly, I have noticed that women contribute to this blind spot, too. We don't talk much about sexual issues (at Bible studies, retreats, etc.). If men are ignoring our struggles, we are complicit in not speaking up. It's what I call the ABC mentality: A, men don't think women have these struggles; B, women aren't speaking about them; therefore C, churches don't devote resources and ministries to women in this area.

Pardon me, but I have to yell: **THIS IS A DANGEROUS BLIND SPOT!** It's leaving Christian women to struggle alone in silence and shame! I have taught on sexuality to women from all over the United States and several countries, and their testimony is consistent: *we are struggling, we don't hear the church talking about this as a women's issue, and we don't know where to get help!*

How can churches eliminate this blind spot?

First off, recall that Jesus had no problem coming alongside women who struggled sexually. From the "sinner" who most likely was a prostitute (Luke 7:36-50) to the Samaritan woman who had multiple husbands (John 4:5-26), to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), Jesus did not ignore women. Jesus engaged these women as who they are: sexual sinners who need forgiveness and truth woven in with compassion.

Here's how we can follow the example of Jesus:

1. Pastors and women's ministry leaders, teach a full-orbed biblical sexuality. God gifted women with their sexuality for his glory. Even though the Fall has marred its beauty, Jesus came to forgive and transform sexual sinners, women as well as men! When you speak or preach, utilize illustrations and testimonies that highlight how the gospel gives hope, courage, and holiness for women who are bound up in sexual sin. Perhaps do a sermon series or Sunday school class on the three passages listed above, explaining how we can follow Christ's example to protect and extend grace to women.

2. Take the courageous initiative to weave sexual topics into ongoing discipleship ministries, and equip women to come alongside each other. Our workbook, *Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing from Sexual and Relational Brokenness*,ⁱⁱⁱ was written for this purpose and has a companion E-Book Leader's Guide. Also, our website has loads of free articles and blog posts on sexuality that can give you ideas for rich discussion topics.^{iv}

BLIND SPOT # 2:

The primary sexual issue in Christian marriage is that husbands want sex more than wives

The first blind spot leads to another erroneous belief that married women, in particular, do not care about or lose interest in sex. Wives are often told and counseled that this is why their husbands are looking at porn or have gone outside the marriage for sexual encounters.

The reality is far different. More Christian marriages than we realize have sexually-unengaged husbands. Peek into my ministry world:

- A woman's husband has not initiated sex, or responded to her initiation, in over two years.
- A pastor's wife who hadn't had sex in ten years with her husband said, "I guess life just got busy with his ministry, and we got out of the habit."
- Finally, there is a young wife who wants sex more frequently than her husband. There's no sexual sin going on; she just has a stronger sex drive!

Of course, there are many reasons for these stories. And yes, some wives are less than enthusiastic about sex with their husbands. I have met many wives who do not enjoy sex and even disdain it. But if you look a bit closer you'll see reasons that are important to know.

Past sexual trauma will influence a woman's view of her husband and her own body. Sex that is not physically pleasurable, like rarely experiencing orgasm, will impact a woman's desire. A full life of working and being a mom leads to exhaustion. Who has the energy? And, I see this more all the time: wives who feel like nothing more than an object for their husband's sexual pleasure.

Now, hear me on this point. I've already said that women have battles with sexual sin too, including pornography, fantasy, lust, compulsive masturbation, and adultery. And like men, they bring the residue of past sin or current struggles into the marriage. So do *not* hear me playing a blame game on men here.

But in the age of the internet, one stark reality is that far too many Christian men are more than dabbling with a





little porn here and there. It should not surprise us, given the degree to which the internet is embedded in our daily life, and the ease with which pornography can be accessed, that Christian men are viewing pornography in greater and greater numbers (with the use of porn among youth and younger men being far higher). As one study concluded, "Men of all ages and stages, but especially married men, are coming to pastors for help with pornography struggles."^{iv}

When a husband trains himself to be aroused and satisfied sexually by images or other types of pornography, his ability to be aroused by his wife often diminishes. Real life — and real bodies — pale against the photoshopped, fantasy stories the internet sells. Porn-induced erectile dysfunction is now a thing.^{vi}

And when porn doesn't reduce a husband's interest in having sex with his wife, it can become the coach for what he wants sexually from his wife. The result is wives who feel manipulated and used.

Pastor, when you hear of a marriage problem involving sex, dig for the reasons why.

**I see this more all the time:
wives who feel like nothing more
than an object for their husband's
sexual pleasure.**

1. Do not accept pornography usage as being either a "small porn problem," or "just what men do." Regardless of how often a husband views it, pornography teaches a way of life and relating that is so terribly damaging. Do not say to a wife of a husband who is involved with porn that she should "have more sex," so that he won't look at it. I've heard so many tragic stories from wives who were counseled this way.
2. It is time to offer marriage classes that have discussions on sex. There is a lot of confusion about sex among God's people. I've been asked many questions from Christian married women like, *does anything go in marriage as long as it's mutual? What do I do if my husband wants to do things I'm uncomfortable with? Is it ok if we watch pornography together before we are intimate? I masturbate secretly because I rarely orgasm with my husband...is that ok?*
3. Be proactive with pre-marriage couples. The best time to catch problems that will likely destroy a marriage is before the wedding. Pre-marriage counseling must include a frank and honest discussion of sexual history, current sexual sin struggles, as well as a clear emphasis on God's beautifully good design for husbands and wives to serve and love each other selflessly in their sexual relationship.

Women with this history transfer their fear and distrust of men to male leadership in the church. Far too many men in leadership do not recognize this as a substantial issue for women.

BLIND SPOT # 3:

Women should have no problems talking to pastoral leadership when they are struggling with a sexual issue

There is a sad and tragic reality that I have seen in working with women. Most women do not feel safe going to pastoral leadership to talk about sexual struggles.

A 40-year-old woman came to me for help after two decades of promiscuity. She ran a highly successful business: an escort service which offered sex for money. At 19, she was an active member in her church, singing on the worship team, and living a life of sexual integrity. What happened?

She had a secret: she had feelings for girls. She was scared and confused but finally mustered the courage to seek help from her pastor. She explained that she'd never pursued any romantic or physical experiences with girls but needed help.

His response? "We don't have anything for you here, and it's best you step down from the worship team." She did step down—and out of that church and found acceptance in the LGBT community, which became her home for 20 years.

I've sat with too many women who have shared stories that have made me ache with tears; others have infuriated me. Single women have been counseled like this, "If you'd just find yourself a husband then you wouldn't have these kinds of issues." Wives have been told to submit to their husbands in the bedroom, even when that submission meant feeling degraded and used. Wives have been diagnosed as paranoid because they suspected their well-known and respected-by-the-church husband of infidelity.

Experiences like these teach women to keep their struggles hidden and silent. They live with shame for feeling like a failure in their life or marriage, and they are desperate to talk to someone who understands and is safe.

And there's the sober reality of sexual abuse survivors who are in your church. It has become common knowledge, backed by numerous studies, showing that 20% of women

have experienced some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18.^{vii} This trauma is devastating, and while survivors respond to their abuse in unique ways, it is not uncommon for many women to fear men and authority. Far too many men in church leadership do not recognize this as a substantial issue for women. It's a glaring blind spot.

Here are a few ways church leaders can cultivate an atmosphere of safety and grace for women sexual strugglers and wives.

1. Examine your beliefs about women and sexuality, and discuss this article with women you respect. Ask them: *where do you see my blind spots? What do I need to learn?*
2. Offer anonymous surveys to the women in your church to learn from them about what their reality is regarding sexual struggles and sin.
3. Work to make your church grow into a place where women have a voice and will be protected, defended, and helped if their husbands are unrepentant. Raise up and train women leaders to whom the women in the church can go for help. This would greatly encourage women to address their fears of talking to pastors and leaders.

Paul's pastoral benediction to the Thessalonians, a church obviously struggling with sexual sin, was this, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Brothers and sisters, our God's peace has been entrusted to us as his ambassadors. It is our calling to extend Christ's *shalom*, or human flourishing, to women and their sexuality. Will you engage it? Will you consider implementing changes to the way you teach, preach, and disciple your people? Your women? I hope you will and will pray to that end.

Ellen Dykas is the Women's Ministry Director of HARVEST USA. To reach her with questions or advice about her article, she can be reached at ellen@harvestusa.org.

ⁱ All names have been changed.

ⁱⁱ Matt Frad, "Do women look at porn? Yes. Here are the stats," *CovenantEyes*, February 13, 2015, <http://www.covenanteyes.com/2015/02/13/do-women-look-at-porn>

ⁱⁱⁱ To purchase: www.newgrowthpress.com/husa (Note: the workbook is in print; the Leader's Guide is in eBook format.)

^{iv} www.harvestusa.org

^v David Kinnaman, "The Porn Phenomenon," *Barna Group*, February 5, 2016, <https://www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon/>

^{vi} Chris McKenna, "The Curious Correlation Between Porn and Erectile Dysfunction (PIED)," *CovenantEyes*, June 1, 2017, <http://www.covenanteyes.com/correlation-porn-erectile-dysfunction-pied/>

^{vii} "Child Sexual Abuse Statistics," *The National Center for Victims of Crime*, <http://victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/child-sexual-abuse-statistics>

Sexual Abuse, Brokenness, & Redemption

A Journey of Healing and Seeing

Juli Kellogg



For months, I've seen and heard story after story of women who were sexually abused, mistreated, and manipulated. I can imagine how hard it was for these women to tell their stories.

I know because it happened to me.

When I was 12 years old, my family was in turmoil. My biological father left when I was two. My mother and stepdad were struggling through an impending divorce, and life was chaotic. I didn't know what to expect from day to day, so I learned the art of taking myself out of real life and fabricating my own reality. When trouble brewed on the home front, I read books, lived in fantasy worlds, and hid under the stairs for hours to rock with my knees hugged tightly to my chest.

During this time, my mother left me for a month with a man she thought she could trust to take care of me. After my first week with him, he began coming into my room nightly and raping me for the rest of my time there. Moreover, he spent the days prepping me by taking me out to dinner, paying stylists to make me look a particular way, and showing me pornography.

I reacted to this just like I had trained myself to react for years; under the guise of protecting myself, I pretended I was unaffected. While I could not control what was happening to me, there was one thing under my control: I refused to acknowledge that it affected me. When asked how things were, I put on my rose-colored glasses and replied, "Everything is fine." My security was purchased at the cost of reality.

After going back home, I even returned to his house and endured several more months of abuse. Why did I go back? Why did I not protest? Because in my mind, nothing bad had taken place. If I didn't go after he invited me back, I would have to acknowledge that something awful happened to me. A war ensued inside me: either I give up reality to have control or give up control to live in reality. I chose to ignore what was happening to me for the illusion of control.

Reality, however, was about to come for me.

In the midst of this turmoil, a friend invited me to church. A few months later, God captured my heart, and the landscape of my life underwent a gradual transformation. Growth was slow, messy, and painful, as I grew in understanding that control does not lie with me but with a sovereign God. At times, I felt safe believing this. Other times, when I encountered hard circumstances, I would slip back into my typical way of controlling my world. I felt safe then, not because I believed God was in control, but because I wouldn't acknowledge the reality of what was going on.

This continued into my marriage. Friends since middle school, Jacques and I got married in college. A great job offer moved us to a scenic city where we became leaders

within our church, expanded our friendships, cherished our extended family, and had a beautiful son. Things were “good.”

All these wonderful things were cut off in an instant when Jacques took his life.

Like all human relationships and marriages, we came up against difficulties. Jacques struggled with depression, and the more he struggled, the harder it was for me to believe I was secure. So, when things started to get hard, I slipped back into my old way of denying reality, seeking to control my interpretations as a means for security. I believed that things were, in fact, “good,” and I did nothing to deal with reality.

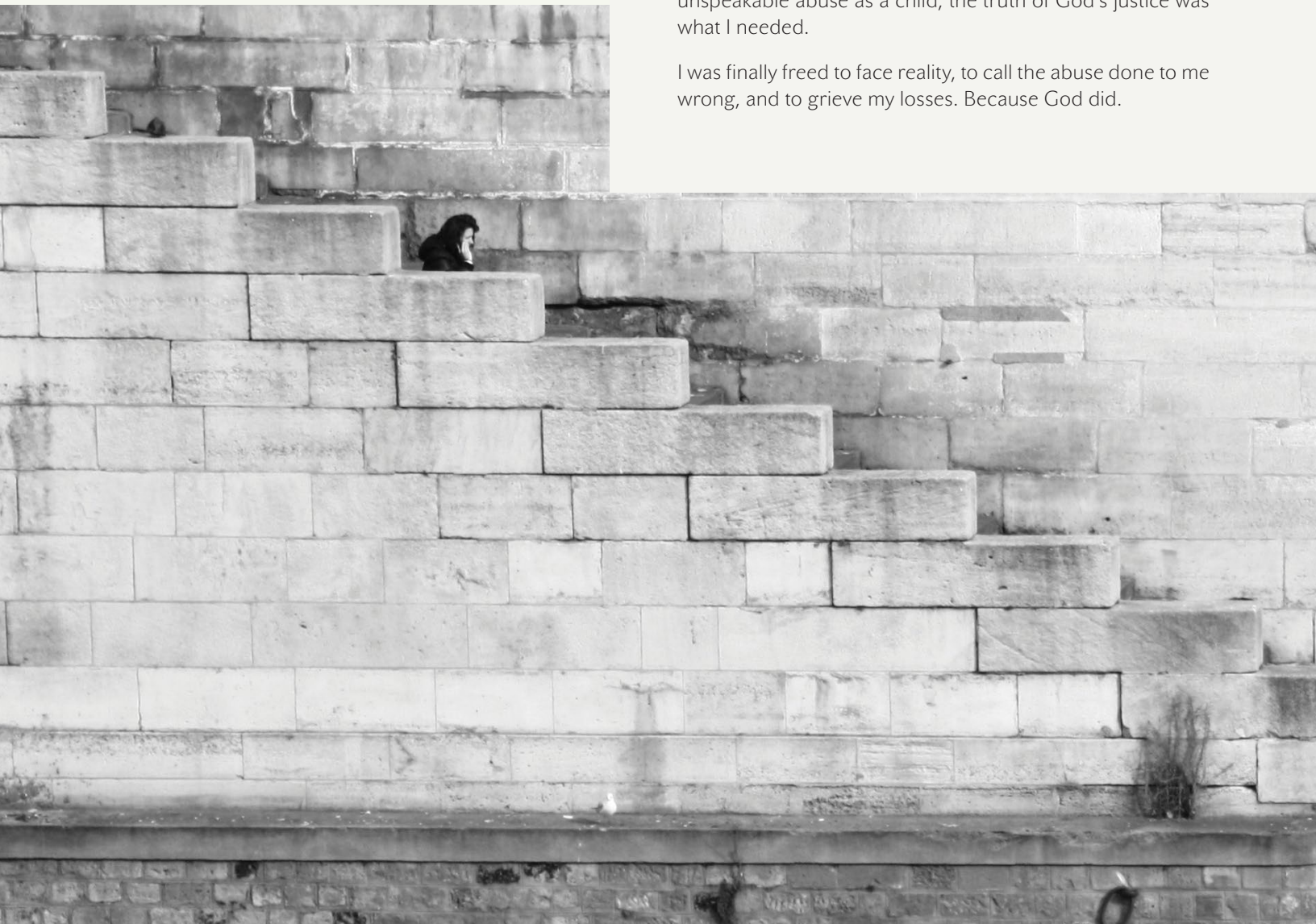
My husband’s death finally blew apart my way of handling life. Ignoring reality was no longer an option. Thanks to the loving pursuit of others in the church, I sought counsel. In counseling, other issues were brought in, including the abuse that I had reinterpreted in such a way that seemed to deny the bad. My counselor challenged me to face the trauma of my experience. Yet acknowledging the evil done to me invariably led to the question, where was God during the abuse? In my mind, it seemed that both could not exist at the same time. I had no answer.

As I began wrestling with this question, another believer guided me to Ezekiel 34, which radically reoriented the way I looked back at my story and God in the midst of it. This chapter begins with God speaking to the shepherds of Israel, accusing them of treating the sheep with “force and harshness.” They abused their authority, leaving the sheep “scattered” and defenseless, “food for all the wild beasts” (vv. 4,5).

As I read the passage, it seemed that God was just letting this happen. But then I read verse 10. He says, “I am against the shepherds.” This is not a weak response. This is an indictment. In Jeremiah 23:1-2, speaking of the same shepherds, God pronounces judgment upon them: “I will attend to you for your evil deeds.” Then it hit me: I saw the connection between the abuses the people of Israel endured with my own. We both had shepherds charged with our care who, instead of caring for our needs, used us for their appetites. God hadn’t ignored what happened to me. He didn’t look past what was done to me. Rather, he condemned the shepherds who abdicated their responsibility and said that he would demand full payment for the weight of their atrocious actions.

As I continued to read, God’s wrathful response to injustice became as much a comfort as his grace was to me when he first saved me. To somebody like me, who had experienced unspeakable abuse as a child, the truth of God’s justice was what I needed.

I was finally freed to face reality, to call the abuse done to me wrong, and to grieve my losses. Because God did.



I saw the connection between the abuses the people of Israel endured with my own. We both had shepherds charged with our care who, instead of caring for our needs, used us for their appetites.

I saw that God did not relinquish control to these wicked shepherds. Instead, he was enraged by their abuse, and he was always the ultimate Shepherd, fully in control, as he promised, "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak..." (Ezekiel 34:15-16).

I found this incredible! "I," "my," and "myself" are repeated more than almost any other word in the entire chapter. It is so personal. Far from being far away, God mourned for me, as he reminded me that "I am the Lord [your] God with [you]..." (Ezekiel 34:30). My security lay not in myself – through my habit of denying reality – but in God, who, through everything, was with me and watching over me and would not leave me, until his purposes would be accomplished in my life just as he promised Jacob (Genesis 28:15).

Not only was God present, but he also was not watching idly. He was working out his plan of redemption in my life. "Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out... and I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered..." (Ezekiel 34:11,12). God himself came to the rescue in Jesus, who said, "I am the good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Jesus, God incarnate, identified with me in experiencing perversion, betrayal, abuse, and all the pain this world has to offer. Then, Jesus experienced the full justice of God's wrath, so that he could rescue me.

Now, when I struggle, I am freed to look to the God of Ezekiel 34. Instead of battling to feel secure by denying what is happening, I can recognize the reality that I have a protector who came to battle against the powers of evil on my behalf, who has redeemed me, who knows my pain, and who continues the work he began in me through his Spirit.

I have found that living in the reality of God's story is far richer than any false reality I could ever create.

Amidst these joys, I fight to remember that in healing, terrible wrong is not meant to be simply washed away, but it can be used as a tool, in God's hands, to drive me deeper into relationship with him and others. Remembering that also brings to mind the faces of those he sent to me in my church, walking with me in my pain, showing me how to live and love.

I look forward to that glorious day when the brokenness I see in myself and the world will truly be healed. On that day, we will meet our Savior face to face and "[we] shall dwell securely, and none shall make [us] afraid," (Ezekiel 34: 28).

Juli Kellog is a Women's Ministry volunteer at HARVEST USA. Originally from Ukraine, she has a B.S. in Neuroscience from the University of Rochester and is currently pursuing her Masters in Biblical Counseling at Westminster Theological Seminary.



"HARVEST USA regularly meets with our new missionaries as well as our leadership to help us proactively engage issues related to sexual integrity for our workers as well as learn how to engage our broken world with compassion and truth around these issues. We've been immensely blessed by their practical, biblical, and grace-filled approach to these issues."



Bob Osborne
Serge Executive Director

My Problem Wasn't Amish Romance Novels

Jessica Harris



When I first felt God calling me to share my story, my answer was no.

I had spent my entire high school career addicted to pornography. In college, I was caught looking at porn after logging in on a school computer, but they concluded it couldn't be me. "Women just don't have this problem."

My struggle escalated to the point where I sent nude photos to a stranger online. This was back in 2003 before sexting was in vogue. I was 17 years old, and from my dorm room on a Christian college campus, I, a newly-converted Christian who had grown up in the church became someone else's pornography. To me, that was all my life was worth.

A year later, I finally told somebody about my struggle with porn. I confessed to the Student Life staff at the second Bible college I was attending. They began to work with me intensively, and after nearly two years of a long, hard fight, I found freedom.

In my mind, freedom meant I didn't have to think about it anymore. The past was behind me. No one ever had to know this was part of my story.

When I realized God might want me to share it, I resisted. I tried to find anything else to do with my life. I told Him He could send me to China. He could call me to some jungle somewhere.

Anything but this.

But I felt a bit like Jonah getting tossed around in life's boat. There wasn't peace. Everything I tried to do wasn't working. So, angrily, I created my website and shared my story of porn addiction and shame. I wondered if God hated me and that's why He was making me do this. It felt like a permanent form of branding and punishment. Now, the one thing I never wanted anyone to know was the first thing anyone would know about me. I was going to be "that girl who watched porn."

I was convinced I was alone—the only woman in the world who had managed to become addicted to porn.

Then, the emails started coming in. A year after starting my site, a large Christian conference asked me to lead a workshop for women on the topic of lust. When women realized this workshop wasn't going to be your typical "Proverbs 31, and True Beauty is on the Inside" workshop, they started planning to skip theirs and come to mine instead.

Every seat was filled. Women stood along the back. Women even sat on the floor at the front of the room. God moved mightily in that workshop. At the end, I watched the small groups as women shared their struggles with each other and prayed together. God was setting women free.

I walked out of the room and had what I call my Esther moment. It was as if God said to me, "You can have what you want. You can do whatever you would like. No one really knows you, so you could keep silent and move on with your plans, or you could be part of this."

That day I decided I was all in, having no idea what that might mean. I knew women were struggling, lost, and hurting, and I knew how they could get help. How could I leave them? How could I just walk away and pretend they weren't there?

I moved forward more publicly, telling my story, trying to write for various magazines, and reaching out to churches. The response was often, "We don't need that kind of stuff for our women. Our women don't struggle with that." It quickly became clear that the biggest enemy I was going to face wasn't pornography itself, but an old script and layer upon layer of shame.

There's a script we have when it comes to things like sexual struggles and pornography. It goes something like this:

Now, the one thing I never
wanted anyone to know
was the first thing anyone
would know about me.
I was going to be
"that girl who watched porn."

Men are visual, so men struggle with pornography. Women are emotional, so women struggle with Amish romance novels. Men are the eyes. Women are the heart. Men get *Fight Club* with resources and accountability groups. Women get tea parties with talk about dating and "protecting your heart."

And that leaves thousands of visual women who struggle with pornography with nowhere to turn. They need *Fight Club*, but when they knock on the door, they're met with disapproving glances or a belittling of their struggle.

When I stand on a stage and say, "My name is Jessica, and I was addicted to pornography," I have to clarify exactly what I mean. People try to change my story to fit the script. They either water down what I mean by "addicted" or what I mean by "pornography." They assume, at the very most, I was compulsively into soft-core pornography.

That's not the case. I was never into soft-core pornography. Instead, I spent hours, every day, watching hard-core pornography: the same type of porn men are known for watching and worse. Mine is not a story of a young girl entrenched in romance novels. It's a story of a young woman having her identity completely warped and lost to years of compulsive, daily, hard-core pornography use.

Sharing that story, whether from a stage, on my site, or through my book, *Beggar's Daughter*, has never been easy. I still get emails questioning my experience or what might be wrong with me. After all, the email will say, "This is a man's problem."

The advantage is now, I know my story is not unique. In fact, it is far from it. The script we're using is old and needs

to change, because the script itself is causing shame. The script itself is leaving women feeling trapped and hopeless.

How do we change that script?

1. **Use the word “and”** — When you address issues around sexuality, know that sexual struggles do not respect genders. Men and women can struggle with pornography. Men and women should be able to find hope, healing, and grace in your community.
2. **Train women to help** — Equip women in your midst to be able to minister to women in this area. Women’s ministry isn’t all homemaking tips and studies on Proverbs 31. Equip and encourage your teams to tackle harder issues with truth and grace.
3. **Stop worrying about “causing” problems** — Many ministry leaders are concerned that discussing these issues will introduce sin into their circles. In the years since I published my book, I’ve not once had someone say, “I wish you hadn’t written this. It made my problem worse.” When we talk about issues in the light of God’s redemptive grace, people find hope and freedom.

Discussing an issue, no matter how hard, in relation to the Gospel and grace will always bring light, not darkness. Mentioning that women struggle with pornography doesn’t take women captive; it sets them free. It opens up the door for them to come forward, confess, and find hope and healing.

As the body of Christ, that should be our mission. We should welcome His redemptive work in each other’s lives, regardless of what He is redeeming us from.

It might be an overused saying, but if you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem. If your church or ministry isn’t speaking out about these issues, then your silence is trapping women in shame. Don’t withhold grace from the women in your midst. We need to get rid of the script that destroys a woman’s identity and, instead, speak the truth and invite grace to redeem our identities and be a part of every woman’s story.

Jessica Harris is an author, blogger, and international speaker speaking out on issues of sex, singleness, and pornography, especially among young women in the church. Her memoir, *Beggar’s Daughter*, was published in 2016 and her devotional, *Love Done Right: Reflections* was released in 2017. Visit her website for more information: beggarsdaughter.com



Does a Woman's Sexuality Hinder her Capability for Friendship?



When we think about sin's impact on sexuality, we usually think of things like pornography, broken marriages, rape, sex trafficking, and other abuses. But one category that we often neglect to recognize regarding sin's impact on sexuality is the gift of friendship. When we over-sexualize men and women made in the image of God, we are unable to view one another holistically and fellowship platonically. And this has been a historical problem, even in the church.

Women Incapable of Friendship

I don't know of anyone in our contemporary culture that would say women are incapable of the virtue of friendship. In fact, sociological studies reveal that men open up more about themselves when a woman is involved in the dialogue.ⁱ But ancient philosophers did not believe that women had the moral capacity for what they held as the highest virtue of communion—friendship. Echoing the same mindset taught by Cicero, Aristotle, and Plato in their treatises on friendship, even Augustine joined in this reductive thinking about a woman's nature. One of our greatest theologians in church history, "although he knew that well-educated and cultured women existed," and respected his own mother's wisdom, wrote, "If God had wanted Adam to have a partner in scintillating conversation he would have created another man."ⁱⁱ While this kind of statement is a shock to our modern sensibilities, we can still be reductive about virtuous friendship between the sexes.

Men Incapable of Friendship with Women

Almost thirty years ago Billy Crystal uttered a line in the infamous movie *When Harry Met Sally* that still haunts us today: "Men and women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way." As the character Harry seemed to represent every man, and Sally, every woman, consumers lost sight of the fact that this is just a movie. Now the tables

have turned, and instead of a woman's nature being incapable of attaining relational moral perfection in friendship, it is the man who lacks virtue. Sally, representing all women, argues against this assertion. She sadly concludes that she really could have used a friend, as Harry is the only person she knew in New York.

It's such a strong scene because in that argument and conclusion, women's value, worth, and contribution are at stake. Man reduces woman to her capability of gratifying his uncontrollable sexual urges. But man is also reduced to his supposed animalistic impulses, even to the point where he cannot be a friend to someone in need.

Men and Women Can't Even be Acquaintances

Under the good intentions of upholding purity and faithful marriages, the common teaching in evangelical circles is that men and women shouldn't even share a meal, a car ride, or a text message without a chaperone. Considering that a number of prominent preachers have fallen into sexual immorality, wrecking their marriages, their ministry, and the faith of some of their followers, taking steps such as these seems prudent.

Many leaders and laity have since followed this example with the same godly intentions. Christian leaders should certainly model sexual integrity to us. But we need to see it displayed with mature spirituality and godly friendship, not with suspicion and fear. I've been in conversations with men afraid to give a woman a ride to the hospital, to share an elevator, or to send an email about work. Is this the message the church really wants to send about our design for communion—that women are threats to a man's purity and that we are incapable of serving as an acquaintance in ordinary life, much less being an actual friend? Yes, take precautions, be accountable, examine your heart, but



A woman's sexuality should not be a barrier to friendship, but it should call men to treat her with all purity, like he would a sister or a mother (1 Timothy 5:2).

I wonder if our design and life as new creations in Christ can show us a better way?

Does a Woman's Sexuality Hinder Her Capability of Friendship?

Since there will be no marrying and no sexual intercourse in eternity, we know that God's plan for human sexuality is not ultimately expressed in the sexual intimacy of the bedroom. A greater understanding of what we are created for, who we are in Christ, and where we are headed will help shape the way we relate to one another. A woman's sexuality should not be a barrier to friendship, but it should call men to treat her with all purity, like he would a sister or a mother (1 Timothy 5:2). Christian men and women are co-laborers in the gospel, brothers and sisters in Christ, both given the same, affectionate "one another" exhortations in Scripture that teach us how to relate.

Created for Holy Communion

Christians, we were created for the high calling of joyful communion with the Triune God and one another. We get to participate in the Father's great love for the Son, through his Spirit. God has revealed himself to us in the Son so that he can make friends with us. Is this what we represent in the way we relate to others? Does the world see us exemplifying God's love for mankind in Christ? Do we treat one another as men and women made in the image of God? If the church cannot model virtuous friendship between the sexes, why

would the world take us seriously when we say we are being sanctified even now as we look to our glorification as brothers and sisters serving together in the new heavens and the new earth?

The world should look to the church and see a household of fellowship between siblings in Christ that overflows into the way we relate to everyone.

What does that look like on this side of the resurrection, as we all still struggle with idolatrous tendencies, sexual brokenness, and over-sexualized messages regarding men and women? Scripture tells us, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters" (Romans 12:9-10, CSB).

To love our brothers and sisters well, we are called to be wise at separating good from evil. We pursue godly relationships and we warn against sin. This means we will have to be honest in self-evaluation regarding our own maturity and emotions and open to the counsel of our brothers and sisters in Christ, as honesty is achieved in community. We are God's own possession, so we are to "abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Here are some common areas we miss in self-evaluation:

Confusing attraction with sexual temptation

Let's not fool ourselves by saying we will never be attracted to anyone but our spouses. What do you do when you discover you are attracted to someone? We are to offer every part of ourselves — body, mind, and soul — to God. It's easy to misread appropriate feelings that could be a godly attraction and reduce our feelings to romantic or sexual attraction since we hear so many over-sexualized messages. Let's learn to recognize the difference and properly handle them so that we don't miss out on the proper affection we could experience as brothers and sisters.



Assuming we won't be tempted

Self-evaluation will also help us recognize when we are weak in this distinction or with a particular person. Perhaps we perceive a weakness in someone else. In this case, we should not put ourselves in situations that would feed a temptation to sin or cause anyone to stumble. This is when proactive measures are called for, such as seeking accountability from someone we trust and establishing clear boundaries. If we understand the sin within our own hearts, we should exercise proper discretion, never assuming that we couldn't be tempted.

Christian men and women are co-laborers in the gospel, brothers and sisters in Christ, both given the same, affectionate "one another" exhortations in Scripture that teach us how to relate.

Expecting marriage to fulfill all of our relational needs

Looking to a spouse to fulfill all of our emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs puts an unbearable burden on one person. This unhealthy dynamic can contribute to temptation that leads to affairs. When a wife or husband can't measure up to these expectations, it is easy to romanticize a quality in someone else that we see lacking in our spouse.

Not valuing a spouse's insight

If you are married, it is dishonoring to your spouse to pursue a friendship with anyone he or she feels uncomfortable about. Also, our spouses often have insight into a situation where we may have a blind spot. Are you open with your spouse about your interactions and friendships with the opposite sex? Do your friends promote your marriage? A spouse may notice that someone has harmful intentions or manipulative ways. I have shared advice with my husband

when I thought a woman had more romantic intentions in her friendship with him. He didn't notice that until I pointed it out. My husband has given me insight about some of my friends being competitive with me in a destructive manner. We should always give heed to our spouse's wisdom.

What is God calling us to in friendship? He is calling us to image the love he has for us in Christ. He is calling us to look at one another holistically, because along with our bodies, we have minds, souls, and emotions that matter. He is calling us to uphold distinction between the sexes, without reduction. He is calling us to growth, maturity, and a love for obedience that is greater than our fears. He is calling us to wisdom and discernment, not blanket extra-biblical rules that stereotype and hinder growth. He is calling us to a biblical understanding of purity that rightly orients all of our affections to God, as a proper response to understanding that by the help of his Spirit our purity is from Christ, through Christ, and to Christ in grateful offering (Romans 11:36). He is calling us to promote one another's holiness and to condemn sin.

We do this by being a friend, because friendship is something you do. Friends pursue a common mission, and the church is the ambassador of the gospel in the great commission God has given us. These relationships with our brothers and sisters in the faith will benefit us as we are sent out into the world to be good neighbors to all creation.

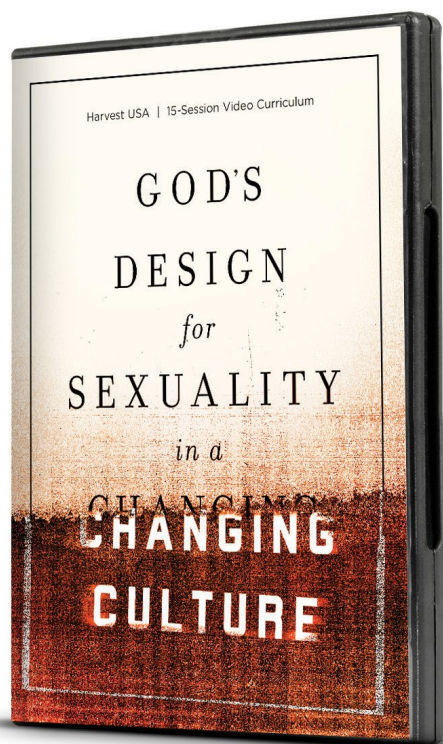
Aimee Byrd is the author of several books, including *No Little Women* (P&R, 2016), and soon, *Why Can't We Be Friends?: Bringing Out the Beauty of Brother and Sisterhood in Christ* (P&R, 2018). She blogs at www.housewifetheologian.com for the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. Along with Carl Trueman and Todd Pruitt, Aimee is a co-host of the Alliance podcast *The Mortification of Spin*.

ⁱ For example, see Dee Brestin, *The Friendships of Women* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988), 16.

ⁱⁱ Translated by Henry Chadwick, St. Augustine, *Confessions* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), in Chadwick's Introduction, xviii. Quoted from St. Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis*.



NEW 2018 RESOURCES

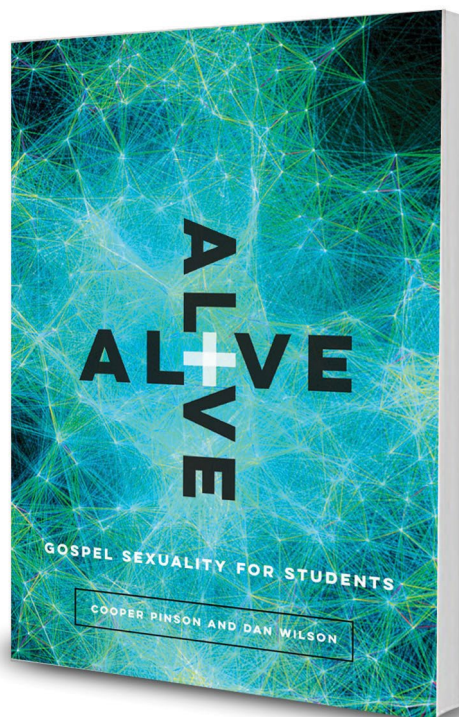


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On Being a Woman

A Father's Words to His Daughter

Tim Geiger

This article is different from others you'll find in this issue. Why? First, I'm a man. Second, I'm sharing with you the counsel I'm giving to my 14-year-old daughter about what biblical womanhood looks like *from a father's perspective*.

To fathers everywhere, I make this earnest appeal: *Teach your daughters that it is safe and good to live as a godly woman in a world that would teach them otherwise.*

I make this parallel appeal, as well: *model for your daughters what godly masculinity looks like.* This is a huge topic and beyond my words in this brief article. Godly masculinity reflects what Paul says in Ephesians 5:25-26 about how husbands are to love their wives in ways that mirror how Christ loves the Church. Similarly, a father should love his daughter with the same kind of sacrificial love. He should pour into her life every good thing she needs to grow into the woman she is, created in God's image.

That is our task as fathers, helping our daughters establish a biblical worldview concerning how to live as a woman.

I think this has never been more critical. The world in which my daughter is growing up threatens her as a woman. A culture shaped more and more by sensuality and sexualization (fueled by pornography) has left women more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, to be viewed merely for their physical beauty and sexual allure. The post-gender culture denies the separateness and uniqueness of being a woman.

As her father, I *must* speak truth into the lies and confusion she hears from the media, from her peers, and from her own sinful heart. Along with my wife and our church, I must help her discover what it means to be a woman who is faithful to the Lord's design. I want her to find her true identity in the Lord and not in what the culture says nor what others say about her. I want her to think of herself as God thinks of her.

Here are the words I am speaking to my daughter:

You are not inferior to a man. Genesis 1:26-28 teaches that women are equally created in God's image to partner with men in kingdom work and to reflect the Creator's image and design throughout creation.

But you are different from a man. The differences here are more than biological. Contrary to what the culture would have us believe, the roles of men and women are not interchangeable. God created Eve as a "helper fit for [Adam]" (Genesis 2:18) in marriage. Within that context, God provided an order: in marriage, the man is the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). These roles are not interchangeable. Reordering and redefining what God established leads only to confusion, chaos, and ultimately to destruction. Living within God's loving parameters is the only way to flourish in life.

You were made in God's image as a woman. That is your core identity.
You are a sexual being, but you are much more than that.

The term "head" has several implications, but let me talk about one that is paramount: the husband is to be a *servant leader*—as Christ is to his Bride, the Church. For our redemption, Christ, our Husband, lays down his glory and life for his people. Human marriage functions allegorically. Husbands are called to lay down their lives for their wives, and wives are called to submit to their husbands' leadership (Ephesians 5:22-27). But submitting to your husband's leadership doesn't make you a doormat; you are his partner in life, called to love him with a love that speaks into his life on all matters, including correcting him when he is wrong.

One more thing here. All women are single at some time like you are now, and some are called to a life of singleness. As a single woman, you are not called to submit to men in general, but you are to submit to Christ. One way you experience that is through the ecclesiastical authority he delegated to his elders in the church. They are not perfect, but Christ is, so always teach your heart to submit to him.



You are to be treated with respect and dignity. A woman should not be treated with less respect or dignity than a man. God does not treat his sons and daughters differently: he assigns to them all the highest level of esteem and blessing. That is one reason Paul writes in Galatians 3:28, "there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Do not accept being sexualized as a woman. In this warped culture, women are sexualized both by men and women. Women are commercialized to attain an ever-changing ideal of beauty, and the pursuit of that is unhealthy. Our culture also sexualizes women by turning them into objects of lust (particularly pornography), making them nothing more than a means to an end to satisfy one's own self-centered desires. This isn't love; it's using others and being used.

You should never tolerate sexual harassment. Sexual harassment takes many forms. No one should make sexual comments about you or anyone else. Resist any threats or manipulation to coerce you to do anything sexually. Paul tells us: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths..." (Ephesians 4:29), and, "Put to death...sexual immorality, impurity, passion..." (Colossians 3:5). No son of God should treat any woman this way. No daughter of God should tolerate it.

Your core identity is not as a sexual being. The world today says who you are as a person is based on your sexual

attractions and desires. In other words, the deepest part of who you are is what you feel. But your feelings and attractions are fleeting and changeable. Our desires are fallen and subject to sin and corruption as anything else in life.

You were made in God's image as a woman. That is your core identity. You *are* a sexual being, but you are much more than that. Your sexuality is an important part of you, but sex is not the ultimate thing in life. It is not easy to live as a single person, but it is doable. Do not think like so many think today, that to live without sex

is a tragedy. God may call you to this, and in his Word singleness is a high calling (1 Corinthians 7:8, 17-40).

You were created to bear the glory of God himself. That is your core purpose in life. You were created to reflect him to the world and help restore this world, now fallen, to again display his glory to all of creation. Live as one who will live forever. Jesus endured the cross "for the joy that was set before him" (Hebrews 12:2). What was this joy that propelled him into and through that suffering? That you and the rest of his people would live with him in a new heaven and new earth in perfect and joyful union. That's the glory you were created for: to be with the Lord forever, without the veil of sin and shame creating any barrier between you and the Lord.

Keep sex sacred and within God's design for marriage. One reason sex was created is to be a physical act analogous to the mystical reality of the believer's perfect, intimate union with Christ (Ephesians 5:32). That's a lot to take in, but one thing is clear: sex is more than just a

Along with my wife and our church,
I must help her discover
what it means to be a woman
who is faithful to the Lord's design.

physical act. The world says sex is nothing but a biological drive meant for one's enjoyment. This tragically diminishes sex, marring its deeper beauty.

God designed sex as a crucial part of the covenantal bond within marriage between husband and wife, who promise fidelity and exclusive intimacy with each other. To engage sexually with someone outside this covenant is sinful.

Sex is powerful, so do not take it lightly. As long as you are single, pray and work to steward your sexual desires, as you need to manage any other desires and feelings for anything else. Be governed by the spiritual gift of self-control (Galatians 5:16-24). Jesus taught adultery is an issue of the heart, not the body (Matthew 5:28). To even look at someone with lustful intent is enough to break the seventh commandment. So to lust after someone else, and to engage in inappropriate touching, kissing, or any other physical or

emotional interaction with someone else that could lead to sex is sinful. The Bible views any type of genital contact as sexual activity.

You are imperfectly loved by me but perfectly loved by God. As your earthly father, I will continue to lead, cover, and nurture you imperfectly as long as I live. But your heavenly Father loves you perfectly, knows you perfectly, and delights in you always. You are his precious daughter! He loves you well in all the ways in which I sometimes fail you. When you feel unloved, turn to him. When you feel lonely, seek first his companionship. When you feel rejected, seek comfort in his presence. Don't look primarily for love and meaning in your human relationships. Glory in your relationship with Jesus.

Tim Geiger is the President of HARVEST USA. Tim is a Teaching Elder in the PCA and is husband to Susan. They have one child.



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Join Ellen Dykas, TGC speaker, and Harvest USA at their exhibit booth.

For the first 25 women who come to our booth and mention this ad, we'll give you a free copy of Ellen's book, *Sexual Sanity for Women*.

PEOPLE & LIVES IMPACTED BY HARVEST USA

ANNUAL REVENUE



Let me begin with a brief financial update for our ministry partners: We received \$531,000 of our \$500,000 calendar year-end goal in 2017. **Thank you so much** for your prayers and donations! We're exceedingly grateful for the Lord's provision and your generosity to us! Together, we are impacting lives, families, and churches through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you are new to our ministry or reading this magazine for the first time and our mission resonates with you, I invite you to partner with us. Approximately 96% of our annual revenue comes from donations made by churches and individuals across the country, so God's people make it possible for us to:

- Offer direct ministry to individuals and families affected by sexual struggles, *free of charge*.

- Produce resources that address biblical sexuality like this bi-annual magazine and our weekly blogs and videos at harvestusa.org, *free of charge*.

Becoming a monthly donor is one of the most helpful ways you can partner with us. Monthly gifts allow us to more accurately predict our income and establish a budget, but there are other ways you can help us too:

- Give a one-time gift in the enclosed reply envelope.
- Donate a gift of stock. Learn more at harvestusa.org/stock-donations.
- If you need an anonymous and confidential giving option, you can now support HARVEST USA through The Generosity Trust. We expect this to be most beneficial to Christian business owners who want to partner with us but have been hesitant to do so in this political climate. For more information about this new giving option, please let me know.

Finally, we covet your prayers. Please pray for the Lord to bless those who come to us for help, read our resources, or attend one of our seminars. We yearn to see sexual strugglers know Jesus Christ better, and we long to see the Church better equipped to teach a biblical view of sexuality and to care for sexual strugglers.

Every blessing, in Christ,

Lauren Berkhouse,
Development Associate
lauren@harvestusa.org

Are you a Christian business owner?

You can now give anonymous and confidential gifts to Harvest USA through **The Generosity Trust**.

Contact lauren@harvestusa.org for details.



Sexual Sanity for Women on Campus

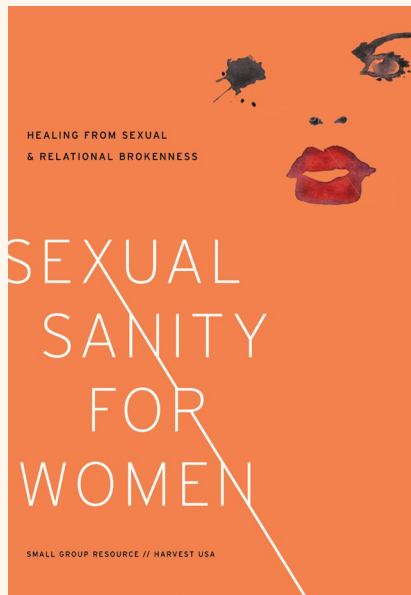
In a sexually-charged world of instant gratification, instant access to images and information, and declining depth of personal relationships, we see sexual wholeness as a “mission-critical” objective for our campus ministry – not just for our college students but also for our *staff*, both men and women.

To that end, I have the privilege of leading groups of campus intern ladies as they journey toward sexual wholeness. As they experience the power of the gospel in their brokenness, they become more effective ministers of the gospel to others. As I’ve traveled this path with young women, I have found Harvest USA’s *Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing from Sexual & Relational Brokenness* to be an

invaluable resource. It addresses areas of broken sexuality candidly and graciously, pointing women to the Bible as the source of truth and to Jesus as the answer for their hearts’ deepest longings. It is a powerful tool – especially when used to journey together with others.

Alexis and I worked through *Sexual Sanity for Women* together last year. She shares this about her experience: “Over the course of this study, God began a new work in me. Before, I thought God was only interested in smoothing out my rough edges, removing my sin from sight, but God has been showing me how He cares about so much more than that. God wants to transform me from the inside out, from every thought, desire, and temptation, to transform me into the person I was meant to be: His beloved, perfect, holy daughter. Because of Jesus, I am all of those things in God’s eyes, yet God desires to heal my brokenness and make me into the perfect daughter that He already sees me as... I have a lot of brokenness just like everyone else, but God doesn’t just see my sin on the outside; He sees my broken and confused heart on the inside. Our wonderful Father does not merely want me to stop sinning; He wants me to be whole and to have my deep wounds healed!”

Katie is part of a group working through the material together this year. She writes, “The most valuable lesson I’m learning... is that our sin struggles are a spiritual battle. Not only is



God fighting for my heart, but so is the enemy with all the temptations and pleasures that the world is so quick to glorify and normalize. However, I see now that my battle is not solely an individual one but a struggle that cuts to the very core of my relationship with the Lord and my beliefs about him.”

Moreover, Katie shares the great hope for victory that she has found. “Never in my past have I ever totally believed that overcoming my sin struggles was completely possible. But now I am coming to see that freedom is not only in reach but is already available today through total surrender to Christ. And so today, I see this spiritual battle differently, largely as a result of this

study because I now understand that freedom is already at hand.”

I praise the Lord for his work in each of these women’s lives, and I look forward to seeing the eternal impact it will have on countless others.

“...this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor...”
(1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, ESV)

Erika Beehler is a field staff worker in campus ministry and wanted us to hear about how Ellen’s book, *Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing from Sexual & Relational Brokenness*, is helping the young staff whom she disciples.

“I learn from HARVEST USA, support HARVEST USA, and believe their ministry is essential for the church.”

Ed Welch, M.Div., Ph.D.
CCEF Faculty and Counselor



Real Life Conversations

Remember the Women

John Freeman

In 1776, when colonial statesman John Adams was helping to form the new government of our country, his wife, Abigail, wrote him these words, "...I desire you would Remember the Ladies..."ⁱ Her concern was that the new government not disregard the rights and needs of a significant part of the population, and in a somewhat analogous move in 1990, two women who came to HARVEST USA for help asked to speak to the ministry's Board.

Their message was the same: Remember the women. They urged the Board to care enough about the women who came here for help to fund a part-time staff woman and carve out a women's ministry position. Their plea was the culmination of years of caring for women strugglers, but up until then HARVEST USA only had women volunteers.

The women seeking help kept coming to us, and it became increasingly apparent that we needed paid staff dedicated to helping women. When the two women approached the Board, the time seemed right to take a leap of faith and hire a part-time staff.

My wife, Penny, became the first part-time paid woman staff, a position she held for the next ten years. During the '90s and into the next century, other women stepped into the part-time position, and others volunteered. The needs of women during that time became more pronounced, while at the same time the ministry of HARVEST USA expanded. From its original focus centered on the gay community, we began to minister to men and women dealing with all types of sexual struggles, including women who struggled with pornography and parents whose children identified as LGBTQ.

It was clear that the limited, part-time staff approach was inadequate to carry on in the future. A more comprehensive approach to women's ministry was sorely needed. But we had no money. Thus began my attempt to fill a full-time women's staff position, a position that would not just be limited to directing our women's ministry but would include speaking, training, and writing. A generous donor provided a large grant, and we set off looking.

I interviewed about a dozen potential candidates and then was contacted by a woman from St. Louis who was a graduate of Covenant Seminary, a former missionary to Romania, and a recent graduate of CCEF's counseling program. I was impressed by her resume but even more so by her humility and her heart for the gospel and women who struggle sexually.

Enter Ellen Dykas

In July 2007 Ellen became our first full-time paid staff woman and has become more of a blessing to our staff and organization than I could have ever imagined. Not only has she grown our outreach to women and the number of women volunteers, but she has also instituted and managed

a women's internship program and developed many helpful women's resources, both in-person training events as well as in-print resources. The Lord has used and continues to use her book, *Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing From Sexual & Relational Brokenness*, in amazing ways. In the 11 years Ellen has been on staff, God has taken Ellen's influence, literally, nationwide and around the globe as she has ministered in places like the China Reformed Seminary in Taiwan and South America.

Gaining a respect and influence in several church denominations, Ellen is also involved in committees on a denominational level within the PCA and is now a regular presenter at the national Gospel Coalition Women's conferences.

Enter the future

The women's ministry continues to flourish, and our vision is to hire additional women's ministry staff to strengthen and expand that growth. Our women's biblical support group, *Journeyers in Grace*, just ended their five-month season of discipleship. These women, spanning three decades in age, three ethnicities, from all over the Philadelphia region, came not only for help with their sexual struggles. They came because of their desire to learn how to invite Jesus into those places of pain and slavery to sin, and grow in Christlikeness. They wanted him to increase, and the pull of their temptations to decrease. By God's grace, that happened—and will continue to happen as women's ministry grows.

For those reading this article, especially our women readers, we would ask that you pray both about God providing additional women staff here and also for God to pour out his blessings financially for the maintenance and growth of the women's ministry at HARVEST USA.



Recently we hired another part-time staff, Susan Geiger, to assist Ellen as the women's ministry continues to move into the future. Susan, like all our ministry staff, is currently recruiting ministry partners to pray and financially support her. Would you consider joining her team?

And maybe, who knows, the Lord might be moving on your heart to join us.

John Freeman

John Freeman, Founder

ⁱ "Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March — 5 April 1776," *The Massachusetts Historical Society*, <https://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17760331aa>

"It has been a good partnership to complement the individual therapy I provide with biblical support groups at Harvest USA. The wives' group has been a safe place for women to deal with their grief and shame of the sexual addictions of their spouses. Thank you for investing in things that have eternal value."



Rowan Moore, LCSW

Therapist with Diane Langberg & Associates

Come join Harvest USA's Women's Ministry Team!

We need more women to partner with us in bringing the gospel to women who struggle and wives of husbands who struggle.

If you are a woman with:

- solid experience in discipleship
- a desire to help women apply the gospel of grace into painful situations
- and a willingness to recruit a team of financial and prayer supporters

...then you may be a great fit for our team!

Email or call Ellen Dykas to find out more.
ellen@harvestusa.org, 215-482-0111

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing the words 'you are so loved' in a cursive script on a piece of light-colored paper. The paper is slightly crumpled and has some faint lines. The background is a warm, textured surface, possibly a wooden table.

Caring for the Shepherdesses

What Women Leaders Need

Dr. Penny N. Freeman

As a 20-something on staff with Young Life, my supervisor gave me a six-page form to fill out that asked me hard questions about life and ministry. The questions were frighteningly personal and, I feared, would expose me as a ministry fraud.

I waited until the last minute to hand it in, confident I was going to be fired. My big reveal? I didn't have devotions every day. I struggled with depressing feelings. And God didn't always make sense to me in moments that were hard or disappointing.

My wise supervisor sat me down, listened, and assured me my job and future with Young Life were secure, but she wanted to help me develop and grow. There was a sigh of relief when I found out I was safe under her care. Later that year, at a regional retreat for female staff, I found out that I was not alone. The sharing revealed:

- We all struggled to believe the gospel when hard events were happening in our lives.
- Ministry was rewarding but tended to create loneliness.
- Praying felt difficult to practice.
- We all often lost our tempers.
- We all struggled with "imposter syndrome" and wondered about leaving ministry for "secular" jobs.
- Most women had a counselor or "safe relationship".

This was the important lesson learned for going forward in ministry: Ministry leaders needed a safe space to be honest about their hearts, their struggles, and their fears.

So, who shepherds the shepherdesses?

Women are working hard in many thriving churches and parachurch ministries as leaders, pastors' wives, and other support staff, and we should care about their hearts and souls.

As a female leader, I have been equipped for ministry by the multiple mentors and caregivers who have poured into my life over 40 years. Here are some simple ways people have disciplined and shepherded me, enabling me to both function more productively and flourish in ministry.

1. **Ministry leaders need to practice self-care.** Women who are in ministry rarely take care of themselves or have avenues to do so. While caring intentionally for others, many times they run on fumes themselves. Moreover, most live on shoe-string budgets and rarely have the income to pay for things that might encourage their care. One concrete way to care for a woman in ministry would be to encourage regular time to herself. Self-care for caretakers should not be optional. Burnout is a real thing. Invest in your female staff members and volunteers by providing movie passes, personal rest days where she can go away and reflect

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and rest, and any multiple ways she can step away from ministry to do something fun. Although these things may not seem very “spiritual” in nature, they help women gain and maintain a sense of health, enjoyment, and value for self and others.

2. **Ministry leaders need safe listeners.** Text or call your ministry leader routinely and ask her how you can pray for her. Some of my best supporters are folks I can simply text “PRAY” to, knowing they are safe enough that I don’t have to explain all the details; they know the details of my life well enough to pray.

Spend time to earn her trust and let her unburden her heart on her own terms. Safe listening sometimes means no advice, no judgment, and no well-intentioned prying questions for more information. Just listen and validate your friend’s experience (you can validate her experience without agreeing with everything she says). Finally, be a “vault” listener. What she says stays in the vault (never gets repeated). You are a trusted source of confidence.

Being a safe listener is the only way she will come to you with deeply personal struggles, especially ones involving her sexuality. She may have a husband whom she discovers is looking at porn; she might be struggling with that herself. Sexual issues and ministry are an explosive combination! Too many struggles stay hidden until they blow up, for reasons of shame and fear of losing one’s job. Being a safe listener invites her to ask for help and communicates that you will stick with her for her good.

3. **Ministry leaders need hard conversations.** Our marriages, our kids, and our hearts are targets for the enemy. If ministry leaders fall hard, we potentially take a lot of folks down with us.

If you are a trusted friend, be willing to have hard conversations. Where is she tempted to compromise her biblical values or moral integrity? Is she living within her budget? Is she spending time on Facebook scrolling for old relationships because of marital disappointment? Is she gossiping on the phone about people who have hurt her or looking at websites she shouldn’t? Is she harboring bitterness about events she can’t resolve? Is she dealing with emotional or physical abuse in her relationships?

By all means ask these questions. And don’t be shocked if your ministry friend has far more in her life than you can shoulder; invite her to glean wisdom from others and from professional counselors in your area. Help her with the cost if she needs it.

4. **Ministry leaders need encouragement.** Most women ministry leaders walk around with a secret critic in their heads that renders null and void any praise they receive. But when they are affirmed in their character, God’s gifting in them, or how their ministry makes a difference in your eyes, they feel encouraged.

Send her to a conference or seminar where she will be fed spiritually and emotionally. Remind her that her relationship with God is more significant than what she accomplishes. Tell her what you see God doing in her, that she is his daughter and reflects him more every day.

These, then, are some concrete ways to watch over the hearts of those women who bear the mantle of gospel ministry. We need to thoughtfully and proactively support these women as they continue assisting others in growth and sanctification.

Dr. Penny N. Freeman, LPC, is on staff with Parakaleo, a ministry to church-planter wives, and ServingLeaders, a counseling ministry to pastors and church leaders. Penny was the first paid women’s staff at HARVEST USA 28 years ago. She is married to John, and they have three children and four grandchildren.

“The pervasive and oppressive nature of sexual brokenness is wreaking havoc in our culture. So many people are trapped in a downward spiral of hopelessness and despair. Local churches stand in need of trusted partners who will help them in their work of mending lives with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. HARVEST USA is that partner: Christ-centered, Church-focused, and committed to the authority and power of Holy Scripture.”

Raymond M. Johnson, Ph.D.

Pastor, The Journey Church of West Chester, PA



It Takes the Whole Body of Christ to Raise Up a Woman

Karen Hodge



For many years our church hosted regional gatherings for church planters to encourage and equip them as they began their work. It was always my joy at these events to feed them as well. Several years ago, over a slice of Chicago deep-dish pizza, I listened to a young pastor tell me about the church he intended to plant. It would be relational and organic. There would primarily be small groups and absolutely no programs. He said he did not see the relevance of men's or women's ministry.

I asked him about his family. He told me all about his wife and three daughters. At this moment it probably would have been nice if I had informed this church planter that I was a church planter's wife of 27 years as well as the Coordinator of Women's Ministry for our denomination (PCA) because I am pretty sure he thought I was just the pizza lady. I then asked him, besides his wife, who would train his daughters about what it means to be a woman. He said the pulpit ministry and their teaching at home should be enough. I said maybe so, but I had recently reflected as my daughter got married that it took all kinds of women in the church to help Anna Grace understand who God was and who He was calling her to be as a woman.

One of the books of the Bible that captivated my heart as a young church planter's wife was the book of Titus. Paul encouraged Titus that in order to plant a healthy church he should instruct the older men to train the younger men and the older women to train the younger women. These older and younger people lived together in Crete.

Paul said of the Cretans, "(they) are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). It was a worldly and evil place. "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work" (1:16). There was a fundamental disconnect between what they professed to believe and the way they lived their lives.

Crete sounded a lot like South Florida where we were planting a church. God was bringing so many women who did not know Christ to our fellowship. I knew programs were not the answer, but I found myself in a living room full of women. So I went scrambling for answers; I was eager to know the strategy.

The strategy is in the text: we are not called to necessarily start a stellar women's ministry but rather to "teach what accords with sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). To "teach what is good and so train the young women" (Titus 2:3-4). Older women (chronologically or spiritually speaking) are to train the younger women what sound doctrine has to do with all of life, including parenting, relationships, their marriages, and their personal character.

The word "train" means to show, unpack or demonstrate. This command implies proximity. You can't show someone something unless you are near them. It is a call for life-on-life discipleship. The word "sound" means healthy or hygienic. I knew that the air I was breathing in South Florida all around me was polluted with unhygienic

worldly thinking. So, Paul was telling me that sound doctrine was just what my heart and the hearts of the women around me needed. Sound doctrine makes sin-sick people healthy. Sound doctrine yields sound living, sound homes, and sound churches.

So why was I trying to persuade the pizza pastor that there needed to be some provision for gender-specific discipleship in his church and for his daughters? I believe gender distinctness was God's very good plan.

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....

So, God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God saw everything that he had made,
and behold, it was very good"
(Genesis 1:26-27; 31).

In God's design, both maleness and femaleness are necessary to image God. Maleness and femaleness are also essential to fulfill humanity's purpose, to be fruitful and multiply and spread God's glory to the ends of the earth. And it takes maleness and femaleness to be one flesh. "Therefore, man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). And yet maleness and femaleness image God regardless of marital status. In all of these dimensions, we see equality of being and yet a necessary diversity of function. Maleness and femaleness, no matter how hard we try to delete it or separate it from each other, remains inseparable. United as one, men and women are used by God to display the gospel story together.

Furthermore, women are products of our theology. What we think about God and His Word profoundly shapes all our actions, attitudes, and thoughts. Because the Fall has distorted maleness and femaleness, I believe it is essential to train women to be keen theologians, showing them the hope of the gospel in light of the fact that all of us are sexually broken and teaching them to think biblically about all of God's Word, including the implications of their gender.

I believe women's ministry begins when a young woman is born: teaching, training, and showing her through our words and deeds what it means to be a woman who follows Christ in our sexually-chaotic age. We must be zealous in encouraging and equipping her to have a sound doctrine concerning her sexuality. While avoiding gender stereotypes, we must encourage her to fulfill her God-given calling as a woman. In a culture where gender is being aggressively deconstructed, seen as being unnecessary for who we are as persons, we must

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come alongside her in the highs and lows of life and help her to delight in her femaleness as part of God's good design. I believe it takes more than a mother to do this; it will need a community, the Body of Christ.

Fast forward to last year. I got a call from the pizza pastor. He planted a great church that had grown rapidly, but so had the issues his congregation was facing, especially those of the women. His women had begun to gather together and were looking for guidance and direction. He wondered if I would be willing to come and help the women begin to think biblically about womanhood, to encourage them both with sound doctrine and to not lose heart in this unhygienic world. I responded that I was delighted to come, and I even offered to bring the pizza.

Karen Hodge serves as the Coordinator of Women's Ministry for the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). She also serves alongside her husband, Chris, Senior Pastor at Naperville PCA in Naperville, IL. She is a frequent speaker and author of *Transformed: Life-taker to Life-giver*.

"Harvest USA is a standout ministry that equips individual Christians and congregations to understand and communicate the truth of biblical sexuality. Their workshops, conferences, written materials, and training are practical and God-glorifying."



Melanie Cogdill
National Women's Ministry Trainer
for the Presbyterian Church in America



What women wish church leaders knew about their experiences with sexual brokenness

What is most helpful to me is when women are not afraid to have conversations about my sin and have the courage to engage and ask questions, and who in turn share their weaknesses with me whether it be impatience or anger or other sin patterns. This helped me know that I was in the company of sisters who needed Jesus just as desperately as I did and dispelled shame and isolation that held me captive for years.

L.T., 41

The church, as a whole, must become better equipped to walk alongside the wife when a husband's sexual sin is revealed. Even though our pastors reached out to both my husband and me in the wake of his addiction to pornography, it wasn't until my husband shared his testimony one year later that they began to grasp the devastating impact sexual sin has on a wife. It's so encouraging to both of us to see God working in the midst of pain, as our church leadership is now moving forward with the initial steps to start support groups for those dealing with the fallout of sexual sin.

B.S., 58

I love my church family, but hearing my pastor's harsh words against homosexuality crushed my spirit and sense of hope. I learned quickly that I needed to keep my struggle hidden and try to deal with it on my own. Being able to talk to a women's ministry staff person at Harvest USA allowed me to be genuinely broken in the presence of another. It marked the beginning of the transformational part of my journey. Ultimately, it gave me the ability to approach God with my confused feelings and unmet longings. Instead of "coming out," I was called out and away from my shame and towards my heavenly Father.

K.B., 41

I would like church leaders to realize that when sexual unfaithfulness happens, both spouses need counsel, support, and accountability. This is the only way healing can happen. After my husband's sin came into the light, he was the only one getting the support he needed, and I was left to figure out the mess for myself. I was very lonely and hurt, and all I could do was isolate until I couldn't handle it anymore and started reaching out to people myself. It's a very lonely and devastating place to be in and in my experience, it triggered PTSD.

L.S., 33

I have come to see my pastor as a strong, God-given ally in the struggle and brokenness of sexual sin. He has wept with me, listened to me, prayed with me, spoke truth to me, and encouraged me to just keep walking through very dark times. He has not been afraid to enter this battle, and I believe he has taken his position as shepherd very seriously. I'm convinced that God desires to use His church and its leaders to boldly engage in the war against the rampant sexual sin of this day, resulting in the restoration of many lives and marriages.

R., 30-something

As a woman who has struggled with pornography and masturbation for over 20 years, I hardly ever heard pastors talk about the issue in the context of women. I felt so much shame and guilt already and on top of that, I felt like there was inherently something wrong with me as a woman because I also struggled with this particular issue. I just wish women would be more included in this general topic!

Y.T., 34



CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE
IN JESUS' NAME