

Quarter 4
2014



harvestusa

CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME

**STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT AFTER
A LIFETIME OF SHADOW LIVING**

Testimony

WHEN PASTORS STRUGGLE

Dave Wiedis

Living in the Shadows: Life as a Game-Player

John Freeman



CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME

WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 1: **Living in the Shadows: Life as a Game-Player**
John Freeman, President, HARVEST USA

Page 4: **Women's Ministry: "Yeah, we need one!"**
Ellen Dykas, Women's Ministry Coordinator

Page 6: **When Pastors Struggle**
Dave Wiedis, Executive Director,
Serving Leaders Ministries

Page 8: **Stepping into the Light after a Lifetime
of Shadow Living**
One man's journey of transformation

Page 9: **On the Road with HARVEST USA**
Ellen Dykas, Women's Ministry Coordinator

Page 10: **From the Executive Director:**
Tim Geiger

Page 12: **From the President's Desk:**
"Doing Church" today is complicated!
John Freeman, President, HARVEST USA

CONTRIBUTERS



Ellen Dykas



Dave Wiedis



John Freeman



Tim Geiger

EDITOR



Nicholas Black
Education & Program Director



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

National Office Philadelphia

3901B Main Street, STE 304
Philadelphia, PA 19127
215-482-0111
HarvestUSA.org

Greater Pittsburgh Region

11743 Frankstown Road, STE E
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
412-723-2966

FIND US ON



FIND US ON



READ OUR BLOG
HarvestUSA.org

A close-up photograph of a hand moving a clear glass chess piece, likely a king or queen, over a black chess piece on a black and white checkered board. The hand is in the upper left, and the pieces are in the center. The background is dark and out of focus.

LIVING IN THE SHADOWS: LIFE AS A GAME-PLAYER

By John Freeman

Below is a brief excerpt from John Freeman's new book, *Hide or Seek: When Men Get Real with God about Sex*, coming out in October 2014 from New Growth Press.

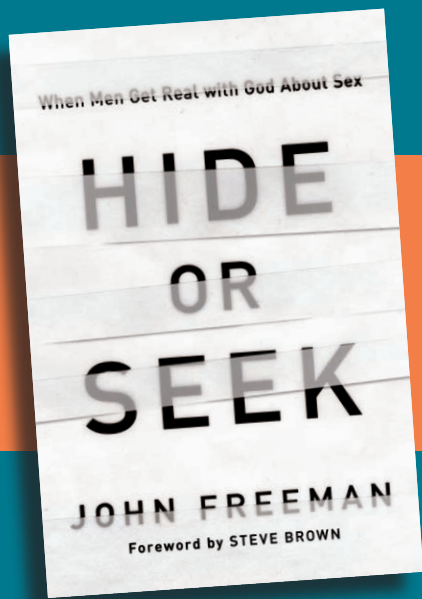
Men struggling with sexual sin are, at deeper levels in their lives, God-haters and idol-makers. A third element that goes on under the surface in the men who come into our office is that they are accomplished *game-players*, juggling all the seen and unseen parts of their lives. I see this game-player category in virtually everyone who struggles with sexual sin, but more so with believers. Why? Because in the church, struggles are kept secret from others as the pressure of appearances takes over. You are accepted if you have it all together; but you are viewed differently if you admit you have problems or difficulties. This is especially so when the struggle involves sex, with its attendant shame and guilt. In other words, Christians believe they should not have these problems. The church should not be this way, but oftentimes the "culture" of a church creates this relational dysfunction.

This was made clear to me a number of years ago when our ministry placed carefully-worded ads in local newspapers and magazines, aimed at those who might be questioning what was going in their lives. The short ads would say something like, "Porn Struggle? Help Is Available" or . . . "Does Porn Have a Grip on You? There's Hope for You." When we ran those ads, we could get up to forty calls a day.

As I talked with people who responded to these ads, I noticed something: A good number who called were non-Christians, but the ad spoke to them with some kind of clarity and hope anyway. One of the verses that has always been foundational for our outreach is Proverbs 14:13, "Even in laughter the heart may ache." No matter how much people's lives look "put together" as they bask in their sexual freedom, there can still be a lot of pain and hurt underneath—even in an unbeliever!

I realized something else about those who initially came to us as unbelievers. If men came into our ministry, joined one of our Bible study/support groups, and then eventually came to a first-time, saving knowledge and faith in Christ, they often had a much better prognosis for dealing with their sexual sin biblically and sincerely. They had a healthier journey of growing in Christ and "putting off" their sexual sin than did believers who came to us after living disjointed, compartmentalized lives for many years.

How could that be? First, you've got to realize that, if you are a believer dealing with struggles. . . no one may know about your hidden struggles because you've designed it that way! Maybe no one even suspects the deep waters of your heart in this area and the efforts you make to keep it all working. People can go on for years with these heart-crushing, life-devastating behaviors. No one in your life may ever catch on, and you're worse off because of it. If you are ever going to deal with your heart with integrity, you will have



If you or someone you love is struggling with sexual sin, then you know how easy it is to live a lie. But what if you stepped out of the shadows and into the truth—starting with the truth of God’s love for you right now? Stop hiding. You’ve been found by the only One powerful enough to change you.

“Of all the people we have met and organizations we have encountered in ministry to those want sexual sanctification, John Freeman and HARVEST USA are the ones we trust. The fruit of John’s experience in this book should be a help to many.”

Dr. Timothy Keller, Senior Pastor,
Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY;
author of *The Reason for God*

“John Freeman has written a book for men who are sexual strugglers—in other words, he’s written a book for all men! Bridging the gap between theology and practice, this book is a call to biblical integrity and wholeness, where the inner life matches the outer appearance.”

Paul E. Miller, Director of seeJesus,
author of *A Loving Life*

to unlearn all the coping mechanisms you’ve developed to function in both worlds—your sin-oriented, secret world as well as your “Christian” world.

We have a wonderful man named Bob Heywood on staff in our national office in Philadelphia. He disciples men and works with some of our small groups. His is an amazing story of how the Lord broke into his heart over a dozen years ago, as he lived one of these game-playing, compartmentalized lives. Bob talks about the way his half-hearted Christian life was able to co-exist for so long with his sexual addiction. Bob was an active elder at his church. . . but he had hidden problems that were compounded by the fact that he was able to get away with living a double life. Bob says, “As I began giving in to this temptation, I realized I was getting in way over my head. I felt like I couldn’t stop. I’ll never forget when I came to what I now consider the worst soul-deadening conclusion ever in my life. And that was, ‘Maybe I can do both. Maybe I can be a leader in the church and look at porn at the same time.’”

When Bob teaches and shares his testimony now, he often uses Proverbs 7:13-18 to describe his experience. In that passage, Solomon describes the way a prostitute seduces a young man.

She seizes him and kisses him,
and with bold face she says to him,
“I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
so now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.
I have spread my couch with coverings,
colored linens from Egyptian linen;
I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes and cinnamon.
Come, let us take our fill of love till morning;
let us delight ourselves with love.”

Bob uses this vivid picture to say that he was more like the prostitute than the seemingly innocent victim of someone’s charms and seduction. Bob will tell you that for years he did what the prostitute did—he “offered sacrifices and paid vows, thinking this would take care of his spiritual problem and relieve him of guilt and shame. In other words, he did all the Christian stuff—went to church, read his Bible, prayed, put money in the offering basket, etc.—just as the woman in the passage carried out her religious activities. At the same time, he spent twenty years viewing adult videos. Bob’s Christian life had become a works-oriented, graceless world where doing was more important than being. His carefully crafted façade allowed him to function in two worlds and fool everyone because he looked really good—at least, on the outside.

When it comes to sexual sin... men can live for years without anyone knowing how they’re misusing sex. The secret nature of sexual sin allows it to go on for years without anyone ever knowing. Therein lies its deepest power to do soul and heart damage. It can lead to dozens of years of

being a game-player, even as a Christian man. How does it happen? Easy. We learn to compartmentalize, that is, to wall off many parts of our lives early on. . . We can be this person over here, that person over there. And the person, even as a Christian, who learns to do that at age fifteen is soon the person doing that at twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five or fifty-five.

Being a game-player can be exhausting. But one of the most deadly consequences of learning how to live with a pornified heart is the inevitable corrosion that takes place in our hearts over years. The problem, though, is that you won't know that your own heart is decaying! You may be the last to know.

The Real Effects of a Corroded Heart

Our sexual sins not only cause our hearts to go dead, but they also keep us from being who and what we should be as men, husbands, and fathers. Due to years of sexual temptations and unforsaken sins, our neglected hearts will rob everyone in our lives of something! There are at least three ways that this happens.

First, a continued history of failures, a commitment to playing games with these issues and with the Lord, and a commitment to silence will rob you of your effectiveness as a man of God, as a husband, and as a father. It will rob you of the gospel words you're called to speak on a regular basis to your own heart and to the hearts of those closest to you. You can no longer preach the gospel to yourself with authority. It falls on deaf ears. You cease to believe it for yourself, even though you may go through the motions of acting like you believe it. This can be true even if you are in ministry.

Think about it. You lose your bout with internet porn on a regular basis. You're filled with guilt and shame most of the time, with the harsh realization that you're living in defeat all the time. Now, are you going to be engaged emotionally and practically the way you should be with your wife? Are you going to be proactive in speaking into her life and your children's lives the way you know God wants? Probably not. You know the reality of your record, and it's zapped your relational strength, vitality, and integrity. You've come to see yourself as a fake, a phony, a sham.

Second, this heart-neglect robs men of their confidence in, love for, and excitement about things of God, especially about the gospel. How could it not? When you know deep down what's going on in your heart, how you've been taken captive by your own untamed desires—and when you know your own record of defeat—it robs you of the love for the gospel you once had.

Third, our unaddressed struggles, our sexual idols and compulsions also rob God! How do they do that? . . . The counterfeit sexual idols we bow to vie for a deep place in our hearts, a place where only God was meant to dwell.



So, does your continual inaction, resignation, and inattention to your heart rob God? You bet. Do they rob you and those around you? Absolutely. *They keep you from being fully available to God and others.* They rob the body of Christ in a very real way. Your secret sexual idolatries, your addictions, and your compulsions keep you from being who you were called to be. In our addictions, our hearts seek attachments that cripple our image-bearing capabilities and the exercise of our gifts to bless others. This is one of the saddest, most damaging consequences of our hidden sin—everyone loses out.

Real change isn't measured just by what we stop doing. It's always measured in character change; whereas your former preoccupation with yourself robbed others, now you begin to be more interested in others than yourself. You see yourself wanting to bless others, desiring their good and not just your own. You no longer hide what you are doing; instead, you are increasingly open with others about your struggles and faults. As one man said to me about his decades of hidden sexual struggles: "I've been a liar all my life." But now, he is learning how to be a truth-teller, to his wife and to everyone he knows. Character grows when we live for God and serve others." One of the ways God starts to change us is to move us to start dealing with our sexual idols.

What does it take to want to start walking in repentance and find the help you know you desperately need? How do you get there? What is the path to freedom? How do you start to live with sexual integrity when you know you don't have the human resources to do so? You have to be willing for God to do something new and to begin to see yourself as you've never done before.

John's intent in this chapter is to give hope to sexual strugglers who feel the pain and pressure of their hiding (from God and others), yet feel either hopeless to do anything about it or falsely believe that they can battle it on their own. The book lays out a way to go forward into freedom from sexual sin. Check out the testimony in this issue for one man's story of hope and change.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY AT HARVEST USA: "YEAH, WE NEED ONE!"

By Ellen Dykas

In 2013, when our women's discipleship curriculum, *Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing from Relational and Sexual Brokenness*, was published, I received an email from a woman. "Ellen, you do know, right, that 99% of women in the church will never read this? Most churches won't even consider this!"

I was disheartened, frustrated and angry. All the hard work that went into this years-long effort, and I get this right after it gets published?

After prayer and reflecting a bit more on what she wrote, I felt the Spirit challenging me with this question: What if this woman is right? So what? Are the 1% worth your effort?

I felt my anger and frustration melt away, because I knew the answer: YES! I could not help but recall the many women God sent my way over the years whose stories broke my heart, and whose genuine efforts at healing, growth and repentance became a source of deep encouragement to me.

It has been a unique joy to have increasing numbers of women contacting HARVEST USA with a desire to be equipped in gospel-driven ministry to women battling sin of a sexual nature. The woman who wrote that discouraging email to me did so in the throes of her own personal struggle with the church. But we stayed in contact, and over time she has now become a ministry leader in her church—and an advocate for HARVEST USA! You see, she had a reason for saying what she did: she rarely heard her pastors or elders addressing sexual sin *as a women's issue*. After we talked a few times, God gave her the courage to seek the help she needed for her own soul, and then to learn how to disciple others. Her story beautifully illustrates HARVEST USA's two-pronged mission of targeted discipleship to hurting people and equipping the church to reach out to sexual strugglers.

"Ellen, are you telling me that **women** in our church are struggling with things like this too?"

Not too long ago a pastor asked me, after a conference at his church (led by a co-ed HARVEST USA staff team), "Ellen, are you telling me that **women** in our church are struggling with things like this too?"

His surprise and disbelief indicated once more why it's so important for HARVEST USA's women's ministry to not only be "doing" ministry, but equipping women to do the same. The needs are deep and wide for churches to educate and equip women who can unfold the truths of gospel-grace into the struggling hearts of women. Women know that sexual struggles are just as real to us as it is for men. Equipping women for this type of ministry will help to get across the message to church leaders that failing to see the needs of women is tragic, and needs changing, now!

HARVEST USA does women's training. One way we do this is through our internship program in our Philadelphia office. This year Rebecca Meyer joins me as a Women's Ministry Intern. She'll work alongside me as we enter into the lives of women who need help to access and apply God's grace to struggles like pornography, lust, promiscuity and homosexuality. Please pray for us as we minister together this year, and also to ask God to raise up full-time staff for HARVEST USA Women's Ministry!



Rebecca Meyer

By the numbers...

87

The number of people currently being ministered to each week through the biblical support groups held in our offices

NEW MINISTRY OUTREACH

STUDENT AND CAMPUS OUTREACH

In July, HARVEST USA launched its Student and Campus Outreach, our new ministry targeted to educate, equip and encourage youth pastors, student and campus ministry workers, and parents of youth, age 12 to 25.

Youth today are facing overwhelming cultural and peer pressure to dismiss biblical sexuality as time-bound and irrelevant. Lacking a comprehensive understanding of why a Christian apologetic of sexuality is right, good and relevant has led to a widespread questioning, if not abandonment, of faith. And this has led to more and more young people experiencing significant sexual struggles and brokenness, which have the power to impair their lives well into adulthood. Unaddressed, these struggles can deeply impact their relationships by distorting healthy, God-given boundaries. For many, sexual behavior, with its guilt and shame, hinders their relationship with God, leading to more confusion about following Christ in this area of life.

We want students to hear good answers to their questions about sex and sexuality. And we want to help them apply the gospel to their temptations and struggles, learning to trust Christ in this powerful area of life.

Dan Wilson, who served HARVEST USA in our Chattanooga office for nine years, has moved up north to take up this critical challenge. Cooper Pinson also migrated from the south, having served in junior high ministry for six years.

In August, Dan and Cooper attended a focus group of thirteen student ministry leaders to hear what they thought youth needed from HARVEST USA. Based on some of their input, here are the things we are working on:

- Develop easily-accessible resources for students. Students often feel that their parents and church leaders are not safe to reach out to for help on sexual issues. Gospel-centered resources they can get on their smart phones or tablets can be a great resource.
- Develop resources on what we are **for**, not just against. Too much teaching to students are the “thou shall nots.” Student pastors want help in communicating the positive teaching of how God’s design leads to the best relationships and good sex that is also morally good. Students need a sexual theology that gives them a grand vision for being a sexual beings who glorify God and flourish in relationships and community.
- Student ministry leaders want a website to get biblically relevant blogs and videos by HARVEST USA staff and other student ministry leaders on meaningful topics.
- Mini-books that help parents understand their student’s world, get a better handle on issues like technology, social media, and modesty, and, most importantly, how to engage their children’s heart in ways that lead them to trusting the Savior more.

There’s a lot more! To get more information or to schedule a presentation by the Student Outreach ministry, contact Dan (dan@harvestusa.org) and Cooper (cooper@harvestusa.org).



Cooper Pinson



Dan Wilson



WHEN PASTORS *Struggle*

By Dave Weidis



It is a sad and uncomfortable fact: Pastors struggle with the same temptations and sinful inclinations as “lay” people. Although we long to have pastors who display unwavering faith, have model marriages and families, provide strong leadership, and deliver excellent preaching, the reality is that pastoral leaders are human, and struggle just like us. And while pastors expend much great effort to meet and exceed those expectations, they often fall short and then find it difficult to admit they need help. This is especially true because pastors are accustomed to being the ones to whom people turn to for help; they are the “experts” in the “helping” role and are supposed to “know better.” So, like many of us, their needs often don’t get adequately met.

Unfortunately, there are severe consequences for the church when this happens. Pastors often can:

- **Engage in the dangerous cycle of “masking and medicating.”** Experiencing difficult issues and internal pain in ministry contexts where the pastoral leader is supposed to “have it all together” can cause pastors to hide their pain from others. This often leads to masking over the problem and then medicating emotionally to feel better. Pornography and masturbation, sexual misconduct and substance abuse are tempting and easy sources to medicate emotional pain. Yet, the consequences are staggering, both personally and professionally.
- **Lose touch with the reality that God is the one who sanctifies** (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Struggling alone in ministry often leads to a cycle of over-working, which leads to more struggling. The line between God’s sanctifying work within the leader’s heart and pressures to demonstrate competency becomes blurred. They continue to proclaim a gospel of grace for all, but emotionally, they struggle to experience this grace for themselves.
- **Strive to maintain their identity as the “successful leader” by engaging in ministry related activities rather than finding their identity in Christ.** This striving cycle serves the purpose of maintaining a pastoral persona that temporarily wards off feelings of failure and insecurity. This makes it exceedingly hard to enjoy God’s refreshing, healing presence. Like Martha, they continue to endlessly serve, placing “doing” above “being” (Luke 10:38-42).
- **Develop subtle ways of running from suffering rather than healthy ways of moving through their suffering.** Pastoral ministry necessarily involves suffering because it requires being in relationships with people who themselves are wounded. The pain and disappointment that comes from receiving criticism and rejection can be excruciating. Sadly, persons receiving training for

ministry often do not have a corresponding training in managing their own emotional life and the emotional lives of others. This leads to burn-out and compassion fatigue as they experience profound suffering in the workplace.

Pastors and their congregants must honestly face the reality that being in ministry is difficult and can be detrimental to the health of the pastor and his family. A pastor is first and foremost a human being with emotional, social, spiritual and physical limitations, and unless these are wisely addressed, the pastor, the pastor’s family, and the congregation will suffer. In addition to leaders needing trusted friends to help them do good self-care, they especially need a safe place for them to be honest with others about specific, potentially damaging habits, like sexual struggles and pornography. The shame that is associated with sexual struggles and sin keeps the pastor living “underground,” and then when everything comes to the surface, the implosion of their families and their congregations is tragic and widespread.

So, what can pastors and their congregations do to address these ministry hazards? Pray for them, and love them well: keep expectations realistic, and give them adequate time off and away. But take it one more step. Encourage, and help them, to find a “safe” group of friends and/or colleagues where they can practice being “real,” and find support to stay clear of the ever-present sexual dangers that haunt ministry leaders.

ServingLeaders Ministries is a unique, non-profit ministry that provides a safe, and confidential haven for pastors and ministry leaders. It offers pastoral and professional counseling, seminars, retreats and other services tailored to meet the special needs of ministry leaders. Please check out the website at www.ServingLeaders.org for more information about what ServingLeaders provides to the ministry community.

In addition to contacting Dave Wiedis, you can also send a confidential email to John Freeman at john@harvestusa.org if you are a pastor needing help. Both ServingLeaders Ministries and HARVEST USA understand the unique pressures on ministry staff, and want to help.

By the numbers...

59

The number of teaching and equipping events HARVEST USA has done in churches, and over podcast and radio over the last year, reaching an estimated 7,000 people in person, and thousands more over the airwaves.

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT AFTER A LIFETIME OF SHADOW LIVING

A TESTIMONY: ONE MAN'S JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

When does the healing from a lifetime of viewing porn begin? How do I measure victory over a sin that has dogged my footsteps for decades? How many days must I make it without giving in yet again to temptation? These are questions I struggled with for years before finding any answers.

At ten I found a hidden stash of pornographic magazines that proved irresistible to my young mind. I began a life long journey of living life in the shadows, one foot in the world of my family, church, and jobs; the other foot hiding in the darkness of fantasy and sin and increasing despair.

The first thirty years I was successful in hiding my sin from everyone, but like most men enslaved to pornography, I got caught. More than just my sin was exposed; my whole life crumbled. My wife discovered not only that I looked at porn, but also that I was not the man, husband and father I pretended to be. For the next twenty years I struggled to be the man I was supposed to be while wrestling with the man I actually was.

Years of disappointing and isolated self-effort got me nowhere. I would go for as long as six months before falling. Then the hiding cycle, with its lies and deception, began all over again. Even when I had some success resisting porn, my heart and mind remained trapped in the lies I was living. The biggest lie I believed was that no one could possibly love me if they really knew me. That drove me to believe that I had to fight this battle on my own. I could stop doing this, and no one had to know the real me, especially the ugly parts that I carefully kept hidden.

But this also meant that I was cutting God out of all this. You see, if God was a part of my change, I knew things would be really messy. While I had prayed for decades for God to rescue me from my sin, I also was dimly aware that I was terrified

he would answer that prayer. Did I want to be clean? Yes! But I knew God wanted more of me than just being a man of sexual integrity. He wanted all of me, not just that particular part of me of me that needed fixing. I spent most of my life in fear of being discovered. This sin warped and twisted all my relationships, from God, to my wife, to my children, to my friendships. With God in the mix, I would be completely exposed for who I was, and in my mind I was unlovable.

Did I want to test the limits of everyone's love? No! I'm not a stupid guy. I'd rather remain hidden. But to change, that would mean no more hiding. I would need to live fully in the open. No more lies, half-lies, rationalizations, excuses; I would need to confess, admit failure, acknowledge how I hurt people, be a truth-teller, and learn to live fully in the present without escaping into my fantasy world.

Only in the last few years has that elusive healing finally begun. What happened? I joined a community of men who also struggled.

When I started to meet with other men I found out I was not alone. I was pushed to examine my life in a safe environment. There is no judgment on Monday nights. I found I could confess my lies and struggles, while also helping other men who struggled. In this group I learned to trust Jesus. I learned that I was not unlovable, but loved beyond anything I could imagine. I knew all along that Jesus died for my sin, but I didn't know it deep in my bones, deep in my heart. The reality of Jesus and His love for me is now being woven into the tapestry of my life; it is becoming a part of who I am.

I discovered that I cannot learn, much less know, of the love of Jesus by myself. I need men, sinners like myself, to remind me of Jesus and how his costly love pursued and embraced me. Do we hold each other accountable for our sin? Absolutely, but even more importantly we hold each other accountable for seeing Jesus at work in our lives. The question we ask over and over of each other is this: Is Jesus enough for us?

For far too many years the answer for me was no. Fleeing to porn to escape was my instinctive reaction to pain and difficulties. Now when asked that question, I stop and think and step out in faith, knowing that he is. When I attend a service in my church and look around the sanctuary and see those men whom I meet with, I am reminded of Jesus, because these men know the real me and love me anyway. When I come home now, it is not in fear, but in relief, knowing that my long-suffering wife knows who I am and like Jesus loves me anyway. Is Jesus enough for you?

For the next twenty years
I struggled to be the man
I was supposed to be
while wrestling with the man
I actually was.

ON THE ROAD WITH HARVEST USA:

ELLEN DYKAS AT THE GOSPEL
COALITION'S 2014 NATIONAL
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE,
JUNE 27-29, IN ORLANDO, FL

"So, how are you going to handle the line of women who will want to talk to you afterwards?"

Penny, a friend and experienced counselor, asked me this question just before I gave my workshop on "The Impact of Sexual Abuse and How God's Grace Heals and Transforms Lives" for the 2014 Gospel Coalition Women's Conference. To be honest, I kind of shrugged off the question; after all, it was a late afternoon slot in a long day's schedule. Who would want to stick around after such a heavy presentation?

I couldn't have been more wrong. The room I was in filled up, standing room only.

After I finished, a line of 20-25 women formed, and I spoke with one woman after another for more than an hour. One dear sister threw her arms around me and exclaimed, "This is so long overdue!" She spoke about her horrific abuse as a child and as a teen. Now in her forties, she has been dealing with the affects of abuse for many years. She, and many of the other women whom I spoke with, told of a church that was painfully and heart-breakingly silent about sexual abuse.

In that hour-long line of tender, teary, even "sacred" confessions of pain, I spoke with a mom, a grandmom, and women ranging from their 20s to 60s. In seven years of ministry at HARVEST USA, I've met hundreds of women who have sought out help because of their personal battle with sexual struggles and sin. Conservatively, I'd say there have been fewer than twenty who have not experienced some form of sexual abuse done against them. Now, sexual abuse does not cause a woman to pursue her own sexual sin, but the trauma from that experience can profoundly shape a woman's view of life, affecting her relationships with men, other women, and God.

Women need each other to walk through this pain; to help one another find healing from the One who himself suffered horrific abuse and who redeems and restores "the years the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2:25).

If you're interested in my notes or a resource list, send an email at ellen@harvestusa.org with "TGC Notes" in the subject line, and I'll be glad to share them! My talk is also available,

both on the conference website:
<http://thegospelcoalition.org/2014>
and on our website: harvestusa.org.



<http://thegospelcoalition.org/2014>

"... FOR AT ONE TIME YOU WERE DARKNESS,
BUT NOW YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD."

By Tim Geiger



“How long do you suggest a sexual struggler remains in a support group?” was the question from Jay. Jay is a new leader whom HARVEST USA was training to work in a Partner Ministry—a local church-led ministry designed to minister to those affected by sexual struggles.

It was a good question. HARVEST USA’s biblical support groups are designed to serve as places to grow in discipleship, faith and repentance. They exist to provide a temporary place to help those affected by sexual struggles to receive specific encouragement and support to walk with increasing integrity and hope. They’re not meant to become permanent refugees, or to become a replacement for the church.

My response was biblical—literally. I read Ephesians 5: 8, 11, 13-14: “...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... Take no part in the unfruitful works of the flesh, but instead, expose them. [W]hen anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, *for anything that becomes visible is light*” (emphasis mine).

Paul’s message here—that the behavior which once *characterized* darkness, which we hid *in* darkness, is redeemed in the life of the believer by the light of Christ, so that it actually becomes a source of thanksgiving and joy (*light*) itself. Not thanksgiving and praise because of the sin. Rather, thanksgiving and praise because the believer testifies to the power and goodness of God in breaking the stranglehold of sin and death in his or her life. What was meant for death has now become a source of praise and celebration!

The point in my response was simple: group members should remain engaged as group members until they have completed this Ephesians 5 cycle—until they: 1) grow solidly in their relationship with Christ (“now you are light in the Lord,” verse 8); 2) begin to live transparently in godly humility and honesty (“expose [the unfruitful works of darkness],” verse 11); and 3) begin to use their repentance as a way to honor God and serve others (“anything that becomes visible is light,” verse 14).

How do sexual strugglers generally begin to live in the light? Through authentic, life-on-life relationship with other believers. Believers like Jay, who had himself struggled with patterns of sexual temptation and sin, and is now walking in the light. Jay has experienced the joy of finding that, in Christ, he is able to turn from sin and to enjoy relationship with his heavenly Father. In the joy of living in that light and the rich realization of all its benefits, Jay wants to walk alongside others who experience what he experienced. He wants to be the one who proactively, passionately, leads others from hiding in the shadows of darkness and death into the light of life.

But you don’t have to have come yourself from a pattern of sexual sin in order to help someone who struggles sexually. As a matter of fact, many who help others *don’t* come from a background of struggles that look the same on the surface. What makes a good helper (our term for a discipleship partner or accountability partner) is someone who knows that whatever their particular struggles may have been or may be now, they have come through that Ephesians 5 cycle themselves. The things which once demanded to be hidden in darkness, which one ruled their hearts and their behavior, are now subject to the transforming power of Jesus Christ—and have become light—light that the Lord frequently uses to lead others out of shadowy secrecy and isolation.

One of HARVEST USA’s ministry goals is to help churches like yours start Partner Ministries. There are men and women in every church who live in the darkness of secret sin, and who need others to lead them into the light. If you don’t see these people in your church, perhaps you might pray that the Lord would raise up a few people to openly shine the light of their transformed lives through testimonies and other ways to publicly highlight the transformation from darkness to light they’ve experienced. Remember—the testimony doesn’t need to be one related to sexual struggle. Those affected by sexual struggles will likely follow anyone who has a testimony of light, into the light.

If you’d like more information about Partner Ministries and how to have us help you start one in your church, visit HarvestUSA.org. Or, call or email me. We’re here to help you help others!



Tim Geiger

Tim Geiger is Executive Director.

You can reach him at tim@harvestusa.org

By the numbers...

\$28,846

The amount of money it takes to keep
HARVEST USA running each week.

REAL LIFE CONVERSATIONS:

"DOING CHURCH" IS BECOMING MORE COMPLICATED!

The call came from a PCA pastor's wife. "John, an elder's wife asked me a question recently which I thought I knew how to answer. However, the more we talked the more I realized, as did Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, that 'We're not in Kansas anymore.' I soon realized it was more complicated than I, at first, thought."

The elder's wife had asked, "Now that gay marriage is legal in our state, if a gay couple begins to attend our church and if one or both of them claimed faith in Christ, would we encourage them to separate? How can we stand against something which is now legal?" She went on to say, "And we certainly wouldn't encourage them to separate if there were children involved, would we? I mean, would we want their children's experience of Christianity to be: 'My mom became a Christian and it destroyed our family'?"

I heard a similar dilemma in another pastor's phone call. In his church's membership class the issue of homosexuality came up and several people, desiring to join the church, expressed support both of homosexuality and gay marriage. While they, themselves, were not gay, they nevertheless supported and agreed with those who were.

These situations are happening in conservative churches right now. How do we think about these things? First, we need to remember that people coming into our churches today come out of a culture inundated with postmodern, totally secularistic beliefs. And while we all bring our faulty and fallen thinking into our relationship with Christ, it must be our job, as leaders in the church, to offer venues to openly discuss these things and offer sound biblical teaching.

As I result, I encourage all pastors and church leadership to begin addressing these issues in membership classes (and other venues as well). It is naïve of us to believe our people are on the same page in how they think about sex and sexuality. Please consider spending an hour or so in membership classes talking about God's intention for sex and sexuality, and why God intended marriage to be between a man and a woman. If God's *very first words* to man and woman were about sex (Genesis 1:28), why are we so afraid to talk about it?

One PCA church recently contacted us, where several people in the congregation had come out in one year. As the Session moved to enter into these situations with gospel mercy and truth, several families ended up leaving the church, having fallen victim to a "bait and switch" framework. In other words, the church prided itself in being known as a church of love and mercy, yet when members found out that the church saw homosexuality as sin, they felt surprised and betrayed. A lot of turmoil resulted which, now several years down the line, is still being felt in the church. Much of this could have been avoided had the leadership spoken directly about biblical sexuality. Our church community is always impacted by the culture more than we realize regarding these issues. Even those with a more solid grasp of the Scriptures are being impacted.

Much of the turmoil and hard feelings could have been avoided had the leadership addressed these issues in some of the "entry points" in the church, like small groups, membership classes, etc.

HARVEST USA is here to help your church leadership in this area. Please contact us if we can be of help. We'd love to talk with your church staff and elder boards/leadership teams about this. If you're within a few hours of the Philadelphia or Pittsburgh area, we can do this in person. If you're farther away, we can do this with a Skype or WebEx meeting. We're here to serve God's church and her leaders.



John Freeman
President, HARVEST USA
john@harvestusa.org

By the numbers...

515

The number of in-person targeted discipleship conversations we conducted in our offices last year to minister to individuals and families affected by sexual struggles. We didn't charge for any of them...and never will.

CHANGING LIVES BY GIVING

ONE MAN'S STORY

Twenty-seven years ago I stepped through the doors of HARVEST USA after decades of struggling sexually. From early childhood, I knew the stigma of “feeling different,” and feeling isolated from my peers. Feeling trapped and helpless, I gave in to my same-sex attractions while I lived life in a different persona.

My life became a mess of falsehoods, loneliness, and longings for something greater. And I discovered those longings at HARVEST USA, where I was introduced to a Savior who could love me in all my mess and forgive and restore me to what I was made for. I didn't see a bolt from heaven and I didn't suddenly experience the newness I was looking for, but without a doubt, I was changed. Jesus gradually made me whole, and I am no longer in bondage to homosexuality and pornography.

I know one more thing: had it not been for HARVEST USA, I wonder if I would even be around today. I needed hope, real hope, and in Christ I have found the life I always wanted.

Ed LeClair
Development Director



THIS CHRISTMAS AND END-OF-YEAR, we have a unique opportunity to continue helping the same people who desperately need to know and learn of the grace of Jesus Christ.

For those who have never given to HARVEST USA (or who have not given in the past 12 months), a donor will match up to \$55,000 in gifts. That's for individuals and churches.

We are a faith-operated ministry, dependent upon financial gifts from individuals and churches. If you know of us—or if you are just learning of us—then this opportunity to help sexual strugglers is one that will further increase our efforts to be there for men and women who need us.

For those who are givers to HARVEST USA, we continue to thank you—and God—for being our partners in ministry. You already know that we are seeing more and more men, women and families broken and devastated by sexual struggles and sin. The work we do to help them is given freely, at no cost, as we did with Ed twenty-seven years ago. We also speak and teach at churches and organizations about these struggles, at low cost.

For this Christmas and end-of-year, **here are some ways you can give—to make a difference through HARVEST USA.**

SUPPORT HARVEST USA ON A REGULAR BASIS —

One of our greatest needs is for people to pledge regular support, on a monthly or quarterly basis. This helps us plan our budget. The easiest way to do this is through Electronic Funds Transfer from your bank account. Visit our website, or call us, and we can help you set it up.

GIVING FROM YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL OR FAMILY BUSINESS —

Did you know that giving by companies that want to be “politically correct” is a huge source of revenue for gay-promoting organizations? We believe God has those whom he has blessed in their own businesses that could do the same for HARVEST USA.

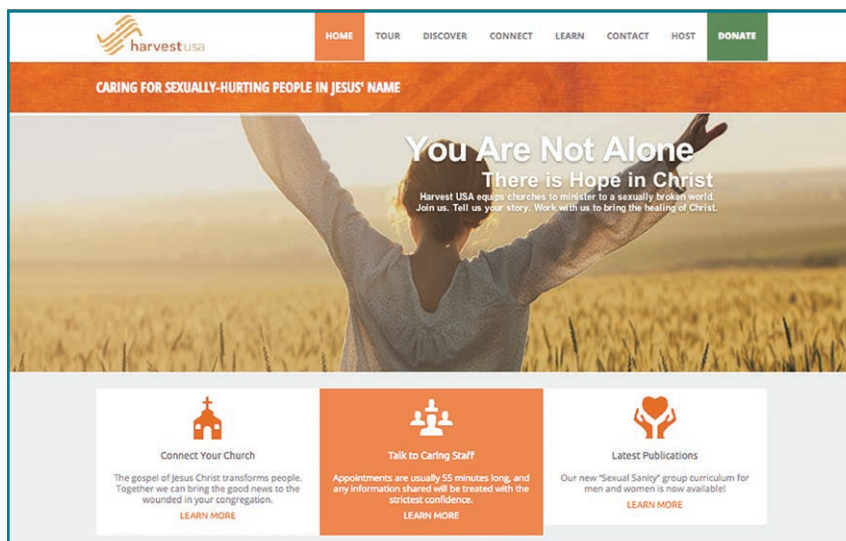
INCLUDE US IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING —

Designating us as a beneficiary to your life insurance or estate can be major way to give powerfully for the future.

GIVE NOW! — Give an online gift now by going to our secure website: www.HarvestUSA.org and click the **Donate Button**.

www.HarvestUSA.org

WE HAVE A NEW WEBSITE.
WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT IT—
WE REALLY ARE—AND WE
HOPE YOU WILL BE, TOO!
COME TAKE A LOOK AT IT:
www.HarvestUSA.org



FOURTEEN MONTHS IN THE MAKING!

First, you probably don't know how hard it is for us to find partners out there. We not only watch every penny, but finding a web developer who would work with us took a lot of time. It's not just about the limited money we had to do this, but because of the work we do, we are routinely turned down by companies who do not want to do business with us. But you don't find our type of discrimination stories in the news!

But after partnering with the awesome team at Patheos Labs and availing of their web design expertise and knowledge we now have a site that reflects the mission and vision of HARVEST USA. Patheos Labs, if you don't know them, developed Patheos.com. The Patheos site features portals with material on over 50 belief systems - the largest online religious/spirituality portal on the Internet - a veritable online Aeropagus! The Patheos Labs team members that worked

with us help manage the evangelical portal for Patheos.com and develop sites for other organizations and companies.

Second, God came through for us in another way—as he always does—and moved many of our donors to pay for the rebuild. **Thank you, donors (you know who you are)!**

The new website's focus: Helping individuals, equipping churches, and providing resources. You'll also notice that our blog and informative articles are smack dab in the middle of the front page. And finding out where we will next be teaching is easy, too—scroll to the bottom of the page for calendar highlights. No more hunting for them.

New stuff on the way! Articles, blog posts, and, somewhere down the line, we hope to develop podcasts, online training. We've still got a lot of work to do here on this one—and, if we may be so bold, we need more funding for this, too.

ANSWERING YOUR Questions?

Q: What makes an accountability relationship effective?

A: Accountability relationships are supposed to not only be a place to confess sin already committed, but to honestly and proactively head off sin in the first place. This entails commitments by both parties in the relationship to the biblical principle of **speaking the truth in love** (Ephesians 4:15). Briefly stated, what this means is that the sexual struggler is committed to being honest with his or her accountability partner, not only about sin already past, but about sin that is yet in the planning stages. The question to be raised and answered is: "Where am I making room in my heart and in my schedule for sin?" The accountability partner needs to be committed to **pursuing** the struggling friend with love and integrity, even when doing so means that his or her life might be greatly disrupted.

For a more in-depth answer to this question, please email Executive Director Tim Geiger at tim@harvestusa.org for a copy of the free resource *Proactive Accountability*.