

WHEN YOUR HUSBAND IS ADDICTED TO PORNOGRAPHY

HEALING YOUR
WOUNDED HEART

VICKI TIEDE

WHEN YOUR HUSBAND IS ADDICTED TO PORNOGRAPHY

H E A L I N G Y O U R
W O U N D E D H E A R T

Vicki Tiede



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This book is dedicated to
every woman who is seeking hope and healing
in the midst of her husband's addiction
and
to Jesus,
for putting my heart back together and
making something beautiful out of my mess.
I'll love you, trust you, and follow you forever.

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Most of all, I thank Jesus, my Healer. This is my offering to you. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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Introduction

As I sit here with my fingers poised over the keys, ready to write what God is calling me to write, I am reminded of Christ's final hours before he was crucified. As the crowds followed him, surely they thought Golgotha was the last mountain Christ would climb. They were wrong. When he climbed his last mountain, he never stopped until he was in glory with the Father.

If you are reading this introduction, it's most likely because God has unveiled your husband's secret addiction to lust, masturbation, and pornography. Perhaps I am the first to say this to you: I'm so sorry. I'm sorry for all the feelings you have experienced that have risen from the depths of your toes and threatened to strangle you. My heart breaks for the things you've seen, the choices you've had to make, and the ramifications of this addiction on your marriage and your family.

This mountain in your life may look like Golgotha, but if you have Jesus as your Lord and Savior, this mountain only makes possible your Mount of Olives—the place where you stand in the presence of your Father.

This book is not meant to give you tools and skills to fix your husband. It is for and about *you*, not your husband.

When Your Husband Is Addicted to Pornography addresses six themes: hope, surrender, trust, identity, brokenness, and forgiveness. Rather than dividing the book into chapters, I divided it into weeks. Each week addresses one theme. The six weeks are further broken into five days of reading and contemplation. You may approach the text in a variety of ways. You might read it exactly as it's written, completing one week's theme in one calendar week, or

Introduction

you might choose to linger on a particular day or week of reading for a longer period before moving on. You might also read the book straight through at a quicker pace and then cycle back through it a second time to work through the questions. Perhaps you have a friend on a similar journey and you will choose to go through the book together. In other words, I hope you will approach this book in whatever way works best for you. Just please take the time to make it truly meaningful by answering the application questions.

To be sure we are speaking the same language as you read, I want to define the four levels of sexual addiction I will describe in this book. Dr. Patrick Carnes, a nationally known speaker and author on sexual addictions, identified three levels of addiction in his book *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*. I've chosen to divide his Level I category into two levels.

Level I: This is often considered “acceptable” by mainstream society and includes lust, fantasy, masturbation, and pornography (magazines, video, cable/satellite TV, Internet).

Level II: Fulfilling sexual desire with live porn: strip clubs, nude dancing, massage parlors, physical affairs, and fetishes.

Level III: Criminal behavior including voyeurism, exhibitionism, phone sex, inappropriate touching, and prostitution.

Level IV: Violent criminal behavior including sexual assault, rape, and child molestation.

As I did my research for this book, I interacted with twenty-five women who were willing to be part of a focus group. They completed an extensive questionnaire, participated in an interview, and read and completed the questions on each chapter as I wrote them. At least 25 percent of the husbands represented in this group exhibited behaviors from Levels II–IV. One hundred percent of those men started at Level I.

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This book is for women whose husbands have engaged in Level I sexual behaviors. If you are aware that your husband has struggled with lust, fantasy, pornography, and/or masturbation now or in the past, this book is for you.

If your husband has engaged in Level II–IV behaviors, this book is also for you. I want to be clear, however, that the primary focus of the book will be to deal with our own issues and feelings regarding a husband's lust, masturbation, and pornography. It will only minimally address issues in Levels II–IV. Therefore, if your husband has had an affair, paid for prostitutes, or raped someone, and you are looking for a book that will focus on those specific issues, it will not be this book. However, many of the feelings you have, the ramifications of these behaviors on your relationship with your husband, and the needs you are experiencing are addressed in this book, and I pray that you will be blessed by what God teaches you here.

This book is not a handbook for fixing your husband. However, I'm very aware that you may be seeking information specific to your situation. In the appendix I have listed numerous nonfiction books that I encourage you to investigate. I have also listed sexual addiction ministries, online resources, and counseling opportunities for you to prayerfully consider.

In the end you are only responsible for yourself and the choices you make. Sometimes in life you have to make the best decision you know how to make, given the information you have at the time. When my first husband did not take responsibility for his actions or recognize a need to repent of his behavior, the behavior escalated, and my emotional, physical, and spiritual health was at risk. I was advised by a Christian counselor and my pastor to end the marriage, and I did. Please hear me when I say this: God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16 NIV), and I have never met anyone who has gone through a divorce who doesn't agree with God on this one. It is God's desire that every heart and marriage be restored (Job 22:23). Some issues may make a marriage irreconcilable, but the purpose of this book is not to point you in that direction. Rather, it is to point you to the One who can bring about restoration and reconciliation.

Introduction

I decided to write this book for women who want and need to know that there is hope and that God is big enough to meet all of their needs. However, this subject is extremely sensitive and complicated, and many women and couples will need outside assistance. The appendix contains information on how you can find the right assistance.

I thank God that you are holding this book in your hands right now. You are not alone. As you make your way through this book, you will meet many other women who have experienced the same hurt and betrayal you are experiencing. I pray that you will find the help and hope you need in these pages.

My prayer is that you will focus your eyes on the God of hope rather than base your hope and happiness on your husband's choices. Learning to allow God to meet your greatest needs is a long process, probably longer than this six-week book. It's a slow dance through brokenness in the arms of the Almighty. I know. I have been in your shoes, and I have learned the intricate steps to finding hope in the midst of a husband's addiction to pornography.

Our God longs to meet you in the center of your pain. He can handle your tears. He knows your anger. He understands the feelings you are experiencing. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3 KJV).

I invite you to step into the embrace of Jesus as you face your Golgotha. The sin has been unveiled. Now allow Jesus to reveal God's grace, truth, and hope as he leads you into the Father's presence, picking up the pieces of your broken heart and creating a new mosaic heart that reflects the beauty and grace of the Redeemer.

I have used the *English Standard Version* of the Bible unless otherwise noted. If you do not own the *ESV*, you will still be able to answer nearly every question without confusion.

HOPE

WEEK 1

Day 1: Truth Unveiled

Greg has always been a little unfocused. I've noticed that he's often inordinately distracted at the checkout counter, and he lingers on racy scenes longer than necessary when surfing TV channels. I've chalked it up as normal guy behavior our whole marriage.

When I caught him lying to me about petty things, I concluded that I was married to Peter Pan. Why else would he tell a ridiculous story about working late and not being hungry after missing dinner, when, according to the receipt left in his jeans pocket, he was at a gas station buying a donut and Dew at dinnertime? There was no point in confronting him; it wasn't worth it. He was just a boy who didn't want to grow up.

Then one afternoon as I puttered around on the computer, I discovered a new tool our Internet provider offered. In the Favorites menu, it automatically created and displayed all of the sites most frequently visited so the user could easily return to them. The more frequently a site was visited, the higher it appeared on the list. To my shock and horror, there was a lengthy list of pornography websites topping the list.

—Audrey

HOPE: WEEK 1

No doubt the beaming faces of your friends and family members reflected the joy on your own face as you walked down the aisle on your wedding day. Your heart overflowed with love for the handsome man waiting to exchange vows with you at the front of the church. You never felt more beautiful, loved, and desirable. Your mind was a warehouse of dreams and expectations for the rest of your days as Mrs. Right.

Then the unthinkable happened. Whether you have been married a few months or celebrated numerous milestone anniversaries, your “happily ever after” has been tarnished by the discovery of your husband’s sexual addiction. Perhaps you stumbled upon something on the computer, or you unwittingly uncovered a secret stash of pornographic magazines and movies. Maybe you walked in on your husband in the middle of an act of self-gratification.

Each of our experiences is different. Our reactions, needs, and solutions will be different as well. How I wish I could peer into your life and offer you an individualized solution to your unique situation! I’d love to be able to say, “Friend, if you do X, then Y will happen.” If you think that is what this book will provide, you are going to be sorely disappointed. I can’t possibly offer that kind of hope and healing myself. However, I have walked in your shoes, and I know how desperately you long for a solution and some guarantees. I don’t have the answers, but I know Who does.

I believe that the most pressing need we all share is to embrace the hope that God is able and willing to pluck us out of the slimy pit, remove the filth that’s clinging to our hearts and minds, and usher us to the next step of healing. Amen?

For a while you didn’t even know you were in a pit. Like undetected termites that eat away at a foundation until one day the house collapses, an ongoing sexual struggle has been undermining your home. God had to expose what was going on with your husband for you to rebuild on a firm foundation. As 1 Corinthians 4:5 says, God “will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.”

Day 1: Truth Unveiled

While the discovery of your husband's sexual addiction pulled the rug out from under you, it came as no surprise to the Almighty. He sees the sins committed in a darkened office or bedroom just as clearly as those done in broad daylight.

It's not uncommon for a revelation to come as a complete surprise, however. Consider the apostle John. As an elderly man he was banished to the island of Patmos by the Roman authorities for faithfully preaching the gospel. In his wildest dreams, he probably never thought he'd meet Jesus on Patmos. The title of the book chronicling this experience is found in the first five words of Revelation: "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1). The Greek word for "Revelation" is *apokalupsis* (ä-po-kä'-lū-psēs), meaning "unveiled." God knows what has been unveiled in your current situation.

Read Daniel 2:22: "He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him."

What does God reveal?

What does he know?

How does it make you feel to realize that he knows and reveals things that were once hidden in secret?

Secrecy shrouds sexual addiction. Until a man confesses or is caught, his struggle with lust is his own burden to bear. For 70

HOPE: WEEK 1

percent of sex addicts, the Internet is the primary source of their pornography.¹ Online porn is extremely accessible, anonymous, and affordable, making it especially easy to hide. When your husband's addiction is made known to you, the secret becomes the albatross around *your* neck.

I've been married for forty-five years and learned about my husband's struggle with masturbation two years after we were married. He's a good man, but he once said, "If this came to light, there would be nothing for a man to do but commit suicide." I felt so alone. For all these years, I couldn't tell a soul.

—Esther

Read Psalm 44:21: "Would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart."

What does God know?

It sounds ridiculous to suggest that you should be grateful that God has unveiled the truth about your husband's addiction to you, but that's exactly what I'm going to do. Christ longs to set us free from the things that have been hiding in the shadows. To do so, those issues must be brought to light.

Read Ephesians 5:8–14 (NASB):

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for

Day 1: Truth Unveiled

everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (*italics mine*)

Verse eight is like the *Reader's Digest* version of the gospel, neatly wrapped up in one verse. Read the first half of the sentence very carefully: “For you were formerly darkness.” Most of us tend to read what we *think* something should say or what we would prefer it to say rather than what it actually says. This passage reads, “You *were* . . . darkness,” not “you were . . . *in* darkness.” Ouch. But that makes sense in light of Paul’s words to us in Romans 3:23, doesn’t it? “For *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*emphasis added*).

How are we to live according to the second part of verse 8?

What do you think that might look like for you right now in your circumstances?

What *doesn't* it look like?

HOPE: WEEK 1

(For the record, whenever I see the word “but” in Scripture, I find that it often means “That was the bad news, but here’s the good news.” It’s certainly true in this passage.)

By what means are you now “Light”?

That little preposition “in” carries the meaning “through.” We cross from being darkness to being light *through* Jesus Christ when God takes the wages of our sin and puts them on his Son instead of on us (Romans 6:23). Jesus took all our darkness onto himself and threw open the gates of heaven for us at the same time.

The second sentence in verse 8 tells us that in response to this amazing news we are to “Walk as children of Light, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” Let’s be honest: when we first learn of our husband’s addiction or realize that he’s relapsed into pornography after a period of sexual sobriety, we’re not always sure how to “walk as children of Light.” Living as children of Light doesn’t feel natural when your emotions are off the charts. Feelings of rage, despair, betrayal, grief, self-loathing, and stupidity have you on emotional overload.

Listen to the promise we are given in Jeremiah 32:17: ““Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.””

Did you catch that? *Nothing* is too hard for our Lord God.

Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 9:5) and “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). In other words, he can handle this, even when—or *especially* when—we can’t. By his outstretched arm, he has pulled back the curtain and revealed what you needed to see in your marriage so that he can shine his light into those dark places.

Psalms 139:11–12 assures us that the darkness doesn’t have a chance in heaven of overcoming the light: “If I say, ‘Surely the

Day 1: Truth Unveiled

darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you."

Pay special attention to the last line of that passage. First John 1:5 says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." When we become Light, we are filled with the light. The sinister quality of the darkness no longer has any effect on us.

It's sad but true that sin causes a chain reaction. Your husband's sin may very well have triggered a sin reaction in you. Now that light shines into darkness, shadows of sin are bound to be cast.

What do you suppose might be lurking in the shadows of your heart?

Ephesians 5:13 tells us that "when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible." When the light of Christ shines into the shadows, the shadow disappears. God has chosen to reveal to you the truth of your husband's sexual addiction to free you from what was growing in the shadows. One day "night will be no more. [We] will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be [our] light" (Revelation 22:5). Hallelujah!

As we wrap up our first day together, I want to encourage you to persevere. You are beginning the journey of healing a broken heart. The two parts of the word "persevere," "per" and "severe," actually mean *through* and *causing great discomfort, damage, or distress*. Press onward despite the discomfort, because at the end of the journey is hope.

HOPE: WEEK 1

What has God revealed to you about your husband's sexual addiction?

Take a moment to thank Christ for shining into the shadows.