

If Your Life Has Shattered from Sexual Betrayal...Speak Up!

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Sexual sin has become like a tsunami. Sexual sin can take the form of many behaviors, including masturbation, fantasy, pornography, strip clubs, massage parlors, prostitution, phone sex, sexual affairs, emotional affairs, on-line chat rooms, and posting profiles to connect with others. New technology allows us to connect so effortlessly, affordably, and anonymously with one another that living a sexually pure life has become an enormous challenge.

Twenty-nine years ago my husband's secret sexual behaviors were discovered and he was brought to me to confess his sins. It was a devastating day. Everything I thought was true about my life seemed to have evaporated in a matter of minutes. I was on a roller coaster ride that took me to highs and lows that were confusing and frightening. AND, because of Mark's willingness to 'own' his problem that day, we began to slowly walk ourselves into the light of God's plan for healing and transformation. James 3:5 reminds us, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." James was absolutely correct: our new life began with owning the problem.

I work with hundreds of wives who have shared stories with me about the pain of sexual betrayal by their husbands. They are often living desperate, lonely, and isolated lives, not knowing who to talk to about their husband's pornography use or even worse, his emotional and/or sexual infidelity. These women have many fears that keep them quiet. There is fear of their spouse's anger if they uncover their secret life. There is fear that they will be blamed for being an inadequate spouse. There is fear of destroying his character and career. There is fear that no one will understand. There is fear of being a single parent or of living alone. These women live like victims who have no voice and think they have no choice about their shattered lives.

If you are one of these women, I also want you to hear the hope that I hold for you. I have counseled many women who have had great courage to walk out of isolation and reach out for help. They have spoken up about the problem in their marriage and declared, "Sexually infidelity is a problem in my marriage, and I want help." These brave women have refused to live with the status quo. They don't care if everyone is doing it; they don't care if others are blaming them for their husband's sexual impurity; they don't care if the problem is *just* pornography and hasn't crossed the flesh-line. They want something better for themselves and their marriages. And they have taken the risk to speak up. I say, "Congratulations to every one of you for not adding one more wave to the tsunami!"

I know that the problem with sexual sin is not about bad people. I know now that my husband was struggling with deep pain in his life. And not until we both began this discovery journey did we have understanding and tools to grow emotionally and spiritually through this pain. Owning the problem of sexual sin was the beginning of a new life for both of us. We are not the same people we were. Mark is a sexually pure man. We have *both* grown individually

and can 'own our own problems', we have enriched all of our relationships, including our relationship with God. For those who will own this problem and get help, it is about claiming the good person behind the sinful behavior—and committing to work on both.

If you are a woman whose life has been shattered by sexual betrayal and your husband is not ready to own this problem, I pray that you will have the courage to tell the truth and live in the light. Speak up. Find professional help. Know that it won't be an easy journey. AND, it is one that can change your life. "Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2, NIV)