

# How do I Deal with My Partner's Fall Back into Pornography?

I wrote an article two years ago called, 'Lonely Men Watch Porn'. My own life-long struggle has been well publicised and I have given my testimony to many thousands of people. I always introduce myself in the following way: My name is Graham and I am a believer in Jesus Christ and I struggle with porn addiction.

Many have understood from my testimony that I have had the victory over porn. This is not completely true. I am happy to say however, that I have gone from watching up to eight hours of porn a day to a stumble of maybe once a year. As much as any fall is never good, it has given me an opportunity to understand the mentality behind the addiction even further. It has also given Mission Serenity another opportunity to reach out to families stricken with this addiction. I now have another bow to my testimony.

Recently, I was working with a local church in establishing an outreach program on manhood. This church had promoted the program for months and it was without doubt, the best-run promotion any of our programs had ever had. A large venue with several hundred seats had been hired and the stage was set for a huge turnout. On the first night of the two-day event only twenty-five people showed up and the venue seemed hollow. On the next day only twenty-seven came and the program was to end on the second day with my testimony. I expressed my sadness to the pastor that after all his team's effort to promote and stage this event, the turnout was so small. He humbly replied that perhaps God thought that they weren't ready to deal with this yet. That's when it hit me. It was not that this church was not ready; it was because God knew that I was not ready.

You see, I had recently had a stumble back into pornography. I felt like a hypocrite as I stood extolling the virtues of a Christ-centred recovery from sin when I had myself only just fallen. As I gave my testimony, God was telling me in no uncertain terms that He wanted me to tell the real story; but I couldn't. In the audience was the woman who saved my life and my reason for still living, my beautiful wife Michelle. While I had shared my recent fall with one of my accountability team, I had not ever told her, and I was not going to blurt it out in front of an audience, no matter how small.

The program ended and it was the next week when a woman contacted me for help with her porn addiction. I told her that I only have these conversations with women when my wife was present and asked permission to put the lady on speaker. She agreed and Michelle and I worked with her to help her understand her issues. When the conversation ended, Michelle hugged me and said, "You're my hero". I started to cry and she asked me what was wrong. I was

filled with dread as I pondered my next words. This wonderful woman has trusted me above all other men in her life and I was about to reveal something that could cost me that trust.

She sat on my knee and asked me what was wrong. With a deep and nervous breath I found the courage to tell her that I had recently fallen to porn. She looked into my eyes and stroked my hair. Tears started to build in her and she took a breath and said, "Oh sweetheart, are you okay?" I replied that I wasn't okay and felt like a dog. She continued to stroke my hair and dry my tears and then she asked me if it was anything she had done to cause my fall. I was stunned by her response, it was the opposite of what I had expected. She then went on to ask me if there was anything at all she could do to make me feel better.

This was totally unexpected and as I looked into her face I saw the face of Jesus. Then she said something that I will never forget, "You are more my hero now than you have ever been." We made a pact that I would make her my first call if I looked like stumbling again. She asked me if I had ever fallen before in the seven years we had been together. I confessed that I fell about once a year. She continued to love and support me through it. I want everyone to understand the magnitude of what has happened here and I will break it all down in bullet points.

- God made it clear that without hearing His voice I would be lost.
- God first showed me how this fall had restricted me as a man and my ministry as well.
- God created an environment that challenged me to the truth.
- He gave Michelle the courage and the good sense to see this for what it was and give me the best support possible.
- He wanted us to use this experience to help others.
- He showed me an opportunity to understand where Satan had tripped me.
- He showed us how we should respond to others who fall for Kingdom outcomes and much more.
- Here is how God showed us how to respond.

If your partner, male or female, has struggled with a porn addiction and stumbles still, you must know this. Most of the time it is not about or because of you that they have fallen. Many people take it too personally when they find out their spouse or partner has fallen. It's seen as a huge betrayal and before you know it, they make the problem all about them.

"How could you do this to me?" They will often say.

What we need to understand here is that the person who has fallen already feels wretched and miserable from the fall and the last thing they need is to have you add to that feeling. They are also dealing with an addiction that they have probably been living with and trying to battle since they were kids. The youngest average age of a child

exposed to porn last year was three. It may take a lifetime to beat it. That does not mean that we throw those afflicted on the scrap heap. They need your support in ways that you might expect if it were you in their shoes. It is not always about you!

Michelle's response to me was a Jesus response. In our ministry we encourage those who seek our support to understand that we are at war with evil. That there are only two sides from which to choose. We ask them which side they would like to be on and then encourage them to make that choice in their daily lives by asking WWJD? (What would Jesus do) Does Jesus turn His back on us and cry out, "How can you do this to me?" No, because that is not grace. Yet we as Christians strive to be righteous and more Christ-like. When we make it about us we invite Satan into the penalty area for a free kick and he always scores.

Michelle's response has made me stronger than I have ever been in my battle with porn. I have not so much had a lustful thought since we had that conversation. Why? Because I saw Jesus in my wife and I felt comforted. In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us in His own words; 'Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.'

This is how we put our faith to the test and how we apply the teachings of Jesus. You don't have to get rid of the Internet and put blocks on computers. That is not the answer. We must allow Christ to condition us for our journey into a sin filled world. His blood will Teflon coat us and make us impervious to the stain of repetitive sin. The answer to dealing with this issue is very clear. WWJD? Love them through it and not judge or punish them through it. You will strengthen their resolve, create a more loving and trusting environment and Christ will smile upon you and your marriage. The world will always be full of traps and temptation. God may not hold us responsible for our sin of choice, only our choice to sin. The truth will set you free and the comfort you live in as a result is mutually beneficial.

Take it from one who has been afflicted with this sin for more than forty years. There is no quick fix and very few can give up porn addiction cold turkey. Satan will always use your sin of choice as an entry point when you're down and out for the count. I am not trying to say that this experience for spouses is a cakewalk. It brings home all of our insecurities and can make us feel worthless. I am still coming to terms with what my addiction cost my family.

Your spouse needs you at the front with them and not sniping at them from behind. If the man in your life is the one struggling, then know this; He has always been wired to be a hero and anything that makes him feel less than that only makes the situation worse.

God bless.

*Graham Hood*