

Edited Notes *Every Heart Restored: A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin* (The Every Man Series)

by

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[The Church as Let us Down from Fred] The porn-film industry rents out seven hundred million videos a year. To keep up with the insatiable demand for new product, porn filmmakers produce eleven thousand movies each year so that men can succumb to this evil filth in the privacy of their homes.

How did this happen in the culture? I pondered this after a close Christian friend phoned me after Super Bowl XXXVIII in early 2004. My friend was all worked up. "Fred, did you see Janet Jackson's halftime show?" he exclaimed.

Certainly he was joking, I laughed. "Of course not! We turned the channel during halftime because I know Janet Jackson has always been about sex. Plus I heard that MTV was producing the halftime show, so it doesn't surprise me what happened."

"Well, I watched it!" my friend blurted out. "What a shocking show! Justin Timberlake ripped off part of her top just before the lights went out, and her breast popped out in plain sight of everyone! You should have seen it. It was amazing!"

Though it was already quite late on Super bowl Sunday when I answered his call, it would be some time before I'd drop off to sleep after handing up the phone. Anger flooded over me, and the more I thought about this conversation, the angrier I got. Why didn't my friend turn the channel when he saw the dancers sexually gyrating or Janet Jackson grinding with Justin Timberlake early in the song? As Christians, we *all* should have done that, because that's what God's Word counsels us to do:

But among you there *must not be even a hint of sexual immorality*, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Eph 5:3

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things (Phil 4:8).

Do these scriptures mean anything to most Christian men? I wonder, just as I wonder how many Christian men did change the channel upon seeing early bumping and grinding on that Super Bow halftime stage. If these men were still watching by the time Janet's breast popped out, then these scriptures mean nothing to them.

And this begins to answer my original question: how in the world did our culture sink so quickly into the sexual stew? The answer: We've' jumped Scripture and lost our saltiness.

Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. Mt 5:13, MSG

[Foreplay of the Eyes and the Importance of Being in Small Group]: These images damage our oneness with Christ.

I have forty young men who have been developing in-depth accountability over the last year, [to avert their eyes from titillating images and to refrain from masturbation which is sin] and they are finally at a point where they are ready to take a bold and radical step together to eliminate the sexual and lustful patterns of sin in their lives.

Men need to be accepted as men. They can find freedom through the heart of another Christian man. This is the very reason accountability groups can be so vital in this battle. True intimacy of Christian friendship and acceptance actually heals the wounds so that the false intimacy of affairs, porn and masturbation is no longer needed as a pain-killing medication. Even more important, men need to be accepted and affirmed by God.

I can go and sin no more in the sexual arena. Unfortunately, those men who don't find that healing often experience deeper wounds, and these are self-inflicted. In the end, that's where I found healing of my wounds and a washing away of the anger simmering in *my* soul.

While referencing Revelation 3:20, Greg made a simple statement that just blew me away. "God just wants to put His arm around you and have a steak with you," he said. In that moment, God's revelation hit me like a comet.

God wants to put His arm around me and cut into a juicy steak with me? You're probably scratching your head and saying, What's the big deal with that? All I can tell you is that when that sentence was mixed with God's power into my spirit, years of pain, agony, and frustration over my dad's lack of acceptance of me as a man crumbled and melted away instantly. My heavenly Father saw me as His son, and He didn't care a whit about what I achieved or what I did or if I was successful. All He really wanted was a relationship with me, a change to just sit down with me, put an arm around me, and have a barbecue steak with me. Because of Jesus, I was already worthy to be called His son, a man to be reckoned with, with nothing to prove.

[How it Divorce Affects your Son] The deepest wound my dad ever inflicted on me was his divorce. As I've said, masturbation is a way young men can salve deep insecurity or psychological pain, and nothing delivers a load of pain quiet like divorce. Derrick said, "I've been a Christian all my life, and I had no problem with sexual sin until my parents divorced two years ago when I was seventeen. I was so upset. For some reason, I started up with some mild porn and masturbation. It felt good, but not it's gotten steadily worse. I don't know what to do."

I've heard many stories like Derrick's. These broken relationships cause great internal anguish and insecurity in the sons, leaving them to seek intimacy wherever they can find it.

Sexual sin flourishes in the wake of bad or broken family relationships. The splintering effects of divorce or parental death shatter our worlds. Teens, rather than feeling accepted and cherished by their parents, feel as though they've been cast aside. They spend their lives searching for love and meaning, when it should have been provided in the home by a loving mother and a loving father.

But, even if the father sticks around, the wounds inflicted can lead to deep bondage of sexual sin.

[Softwired Differences in Male Sexuality] There is plenty of evidence that porn and masturbation wreak significant havoc upon male sexual hardwiring in a number of miserable ways.

Decoupling Sex from Intimacy

For instance, God built my hardwiring on the basis that my sexuality is not really mine at all. My sexuality was not created for me or for my pleasure but for Brenda and for her pleasure. God never spoke of sexuality in the context of one in the Bible. He always spoke of it in the context of two.

In addition, my sexuality is a primary communication line for transmitting and receiving intimacy. When that line goes down, my emotional life shrivels, and the effects upon my marriage are disastrous.

Tragically, porn's first major blow does exactly this, decoupling sex entirely from the communication of intimacy. Over time, sexual *intensity* replaces *intimacy* as the man's primary focus. This is where significant damage to our hardwiring begins.

How in the world does this happen? Like a germ using a cell's own DNA to reproduce, porn and masturbation uses the man's own hardwiring to destroy itself. It all starts innocently enough, with the eyes feasting naturally on the sexual images, just as they were created to do. The orgasmic chemical responses hit the pleasure centers like a dream, again, just as they were created to do. Then the addictive component develops, which will keep him coming back for more porn. Once that happens, he's hooked, and looking at porn becomes part of his life.

It is here where porn initiates a cataclysmic feedback loop in our hardwiring. Pornography's effect on the brain is Pavlovian, and an orgasm is a huge reinforcer.

Now, if my hardwiring is normal, as God created it, my focus is not on me but on Brenda and her pleasure, and all my orgasms happen with her. Because of that, I associate my

orgasms with my wife: her kiss, her scent, her body. Because of that reinforcement, that is what will turn me on over time and will keep me fascinated with the wife of my youth.

If I open my boundaries to endless transgressions in the harems of cyberspace or magazines; however, my sexual proclivities and tastes go in other directions. That is not good for me...or for Brenda.

Worse, my hardwiring morphs and brings in an unnatural obsession with looking at other women rather than interacting with them. It brings an attitude that objectifies women and rates them by size, shape, and harmony of body parts. And the morphing? The visual side of my sexual hardwiring gets supersized, creating an obsession with visual stimulation (for instance, the bigger the breasts the better), while the "transmission of intimacy" side ("I so love your soul, honey") shrivels away.

Oftentimes, porn distorts a guy's perceptions. This warped hardwiring causes a sensual overload of intensity over intimacy, and the sheer heat of porn's intensity requires an escalation to more graphic depictions in order to reach the same high. Eventually, what once would have disgusted him now grants him the excitement he craves.

Matt said he was twelve years old when his brother got him started on porn, and now this addiction is killing him. "It started innocently with a *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue back in grade school, but now I'm looking for anything and everything sexual, including homosexual sex and even worse."

Whoa. Matt originally craved intimacy, but no genuine intimacy was passed. Faster and faster he gulped his sexual salt water, but his thirst went unquenched. All he got was the high and the thrill, and before long, that's all he know to seek. Intimacy's transmitters were fried long ago, and the porn-related thrills are all he knows. He honestly doesn't know that marital sexual *intimacy* offers so much more than *intensity*.

Once intensity take the place of marital intimacy, and marital intimacy is then decoupled from sex with your wife, the sexual high is the end in itself. As we said, the transmitters get fried, which means marriage bed is cooked. The souls and the sprits aren't meeting on the mattress.

Where once his natural hardware prompted him to normal intimate connections, now it just prods him for another intense hit, sometimes with you, sometimes with the computer or magazine. Sex may be intense, but it's always godless, soulless and cold.

In a second self-inflicted blow to the hardwiring, porn eventually destroys the taste for the real thing, as this e-mail from Randy relates:

I've hit bottom, and so has my poor, beaten-down wife who believes I'm not attracted to her anymore. Maybe she's right. My sex life with my wife has been virtually nonexistent since lust has been controlling my thought life.

The devil has stolen my sexual desire the most beautiful woman I know.

Even if our wives manage to stay true to us, we open them up to the Enemy's direct attack as we bring sinful, corrupt sexual paraphernalia into our homes. It is foolish to think that our sexual impurity has no impact on our marriages and family or in the spirit realm.

It's good to acknowledge God's Word regarding generation sin. We must also not forget His Word regarding generational blessing as well. The blessing of purity rather than sin can flow naturally to the next generation.

The bottom line--our sexual sin crushes women, and we need to take responsibility for that and stop it.

God graced men with a high call as husbands and fathers, and our Lord is counting on us to stand with Him. We have such power to impart and heal, and we have a strong position to impact lives for a generation.

Far too often we arrogantly lord over our wives while keeping a secret cyberharem on the side, spitting on Scripture and summarily dismissing an inspection of our lives on the grounds that we have imperial immunity.

As a group, we are not living up to our high calling as men. As a wife, you have every reason to feel rotten about your husbands' sexual sin.

The tendrils of sexual sin that choke our lives aren't just sexual and aren't just physical--they reach throughout our being--body, soul and spirit.

They're about wounds and emotional dependence and ignorance and warped wiring. They're about sin.

[Now What from Brenda, Fred had had an affair and became addicted to porn] The root of the problem is your husband's behavior, and for total victory, he needs to repent. He has to accept his sin and engage the battle. The reason that's true should be no secret to anyone. While it's true that your marriage has been a mirage in many ways, don't forget that your husband destroyed something that was very real--your trust in him. He demolished it, and there will be no victory until trust returns, because trust is the basis of all relationships. There can be no oneness and no intimacy without trust, sexual or otherwise.

Becoming trustworthy will require immense character change on his part, and that's no small task. On your end, trusting your husband again will require obedience and submission to God in spite of your scars.

I am referring to obedience and submission to God in spite of your scars and only after you husband has grown trustworthy. You can't do your part (trust him again) until he has done his part (become trustworthy).

The fact of the matter is Fred changed completely, so I trust him now. Some men won't change so trust will not be possible.

Oh, I can hop against hope that Fred'll keep his word, and I can certainly play mind games with myself like Charlie Brown does with Lucy and the football, but real trust can only come when I have full confidence in Fred's faithfulness. Only one thing can bring that confidence--his consistent, faithful actions. My love, forgiveness, and commitment may require nothing of Fred, but my trust requires plenty. Without right actions, he can't have my trust, and if he wants my trust it's all on him.

It is God's will that you should...learn to control [your] own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who does not know God (1 Thess 4:3-5).

Your love could be as strong as the ages, but his sin will still crush your trust and keep crushing it until he stops.

[When Rebuilding Marriage from Fred] I'd angrily snap, "If you loved me, you would stop that [mistrusting]! You know I've changed!"

But on the inside, I wasn't really angry. I was crushed to my toes. I knew that it wasn't *her* fault that she couldn't trust me yet. It was mine, all on my shoulders, and it had nothing to do with her love for me.

I'd simply become trustworthy, and in time, she trusted me. That was all there was to it.

[Letter from John, was porn addicted and recovered from Fred] "She knew. She knew because here is this man whom she loved with all her heart and whom she had made into this fantasy figure of strength, godliness, and fidelity, and yet something was terribly wrong.

I knew she was right but I reacted angrily because I didn't think it was really any of her business. It was, after all, "just pictures".

I spent years lying to her and telling her that her concerns were just a fantasy, and that everything was fine.

All the facades are now gone, and now she gets to choose whether to stay with the *real* me, not some cracked idol that I tried to convince her I was through lies and deception. Sure, her love feels different, but at least it's honest, and now I regret running from honest all these years. I like things better now.

When I look into my wife's eyes, I see her loving me in spite of my faults, and she knows exactly what they are now. She knows exactly who she is married to.

And she loves me still, despite my wrongdoing. Now that I'm honest with her, she's been honest about herself in ways never possible before, admitting things she would never have told me in a million years before. That's breathtaking.

Christ is in my marriage in a way that He never was before, and I believe she's forgiven me and that she's going to stay. I am in the light with her, and she gets to actually choose whether to be married to me. She couldn't choose before, because she didn't know who she was married to.

In my journey, I am learning to prefer the light over every other things.

John's eyes are open and he seems repentant, doesn't he? But is he trustworthy? Only time will tell, and his choices will reveal the truth. The same will be true in your marriage.

But while trust will have to wait for tomorrow, hope is here today. While this man's marriage is still in ruins, hope bubbles up from every word. The mirage has evaporated, which places his marriage in one of the most hopeful positions possible. Honesty and truth can now reign. Light can prevail, if only he'll choose wisely.

Have you ever wondered what your Christianity is really made of behind all the Bible studies and church attendance? Your moment of truth is upon you. The lethargy and blindness have been lifted from your marriage, and this is your chance to bring glory to God, your chance to live it all out in spite of the pain.

This is your opportunity to live like a real Christian, to truly sacrifice, to truly rebuild on the foundation of Christian principles, and to truly align your thinking with Christ regarding your marriage.

A man has far more potential for blessing his wife than most women ever dream. As an author, I'm out to lift men to walk in the image of God, to stand regally and proudly in His light, trustworthy and fully Christian.

[A Rebuilder's Reflection from Fred] God gave you [wives] a role to play...the role of helpmate. The principles involved in rebuilding a marriage broken by sexual sin are the same principles required to fix *any* broken marriage, regardless of the type of sin. After all, if you've been trampled by sin, you've been trampled, and it doesn't matter what kind of sin crushed your heart and marriage. A wife's response must always be the same, and she will follow the same principles of healing and restoration no matter how her husband crushed her--because the challenge is always the same...that somehow, the trust must be reestablished, Real accountability must be formulated, and romantic love must be revived.

Brenda had absolutely nothing to do with my sexual sin. That was my choice. I schlepped my sinful baggage right p the gangway and on board the good ship USS

Matrimony on my wedding day, and I carried those trunks freely about the decks with no help from her.

It was her healthy, holy thinking that challenged me to move closer to Christ and to eventually toss my baggage overboard. People are 100 percent responsible for their lives 100 percent of the time. Yet what spouses do or don't do has a direct influence on the situation. A wife can certainly make matters worse, but she can also make matters better if she plays her role well. Ask yourself: *How much do I look like Christ these days in my marriage?*

[From Brenda] Why must we look like Jesus? The snap answer is that we're Christians and we love Him.

In the gloom of sexual sin, you will need your compass in the worst way. The emotional fog is thick, and the hurt and loneliness can be so disorienting that you can walk in circles for months, even years.

Jesus is your mark in the distance, your reference point. Jesus is the magnetic pole of all things normal. The arrow in your compass must point directly at North.

Becoming normal is what Christianity is all about. Your husband needs to become normal like Jesus and stop hurting you. At the same time, this is your chance to normalize your relations and stop inflicting your husband with more wounds from your cold shoulder and biting tongue. The wounding on both sides has got to stop or you'll never be normal.

If you want to stand shoulder to shoulder with your husband one day in a restored marriage, a great first step is to see that you're standing shoulder to shoulder with Christ and taking on His normal, broader view of marriage as well as His normal view of your husband's sin. Without Christ at your side, you'll lack the foresight and the compassion to play your role well.

We posed questions to couples in our marriage classes. Our questions prompted answers that sounded like marital gripes:

"We're just so incompatible."

"She doesn't respect me."

"How can I respect her lousy attitude?"

"I'll start forgiving him when he starts forgiving me!"

"I'll start treating her better when she starts being happier again!"

There had been a collision between their lower ways of thinking and God's higher, broader thinking on marriage. Remember what God says about our ways and thoughts:

As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa 55:9).

God has a higher purpose for marriage, and those purposes may not necessarily be all about you.

We sometimes do not see the big picture regarding the way God designed marriage. We choose to marry based on similarities and compatibility, but when the honeymoon's over, we sometimes believe we've made a mistake, not thinking for one moment that God also brings us together for our differences and even our wounds, since living happily ever after is not the only thing He has in mind for us. We're blinded and trapped by our less-mature, lower-ways view.

We aren't grasping the big picture. Providing a lifetime soul mate is on God's list, but soon we'll seem like soul mates on a day-to-day basis depends on the softness of our hearts to His sanctification work, both inside and outside the bedroom. That's part of God's higher ways.

He wants happiness for you, but He also wants what is best of you and what is best for your husband. He knows that this sexual disaster in your marriage will force you to learn how to love the unlovely, the very bedrock trait of Christian character, and He knows that what's happened will shatter your husband's defenses so that the Lord can move in closer and begin healing his long-festering wounds.

God is caring. Isn't it caring and right for God to improve your character? We *are* His, after all. Besides, marriage never was all about you. What if God needs to change your husband by making him struggle through these problems with you? Is it not fair for God to ask you to serve Him this way after everything He's done for you? We aren't truly a marriage of three until we accept His higher ways of thinking on marriage. Consider this verse:

If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me. Mt 10:39, MSG

And if we don't accept His higher ways of thinking, guess what continues to happen? While you're thinking everything is wrong, everything may actually be going perfectly, from God's perspective, and you'll remain totally confused and frustrated even while your husband is healing.

1. God may have created your marriage in part for the messy work of helping Him heal your husband's wounds, of assisting your husband in his journey to Christian maturity.
2. God may have picked you to be the central figure in this work of restoration from the very beginning. How do you know that this marriage isn't among God's highest dreams for your life?

Too often we ignore God's higher-ways point of view and miss His vision for our marriages.

There is no question that you are your husband's wife. But when you look in that mirror of your heart, what do you see? Are you also your husband's sister? If you're to handle his wounds well on Christ's behalf, you'll have to act like a loving sister, too.

Christ's example is clear. Jesus was wounded plenty, just like you--it happens to all of us. But while it's okay to *be* wounded, it's not ok to *stay* wounded.

Christ refused to stay wounded, and He didn't dwell on how He was being mistreated (as we're so prone to do). Instead, Jesus chose to be His brother's brother and to help the wounded around Him, the very ones who had wounded Him and who would eventually nail Him to the Cross. If he focused at all upon His own wounds, it was to turn them around in order to bring glory to His Father's grace and to change the entire world. In the end, He could pray, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (Jn 17:4).

You, too, can bring God glory on earth by completing the work He gave you to do. And what is your work? To be your husband's sister in Christ, and not just his wife. You, too, can refuse to stay wounded, fixing your gaze upon the Cross, the Word, and the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit and turning your focus toward your hurting brother. It isn't easy at all and you certainly won't change the whole world like Jesus did, but you'll surely change the smaller world around you and the relationships that God has placed in your hands.

[From Fred] Brenda did exactly that in setting a standard of normal into my life. Before that time, I couldn't look God in the eye because of my sin. I couldn't pray, I had no peace, and I felt no strength before the Enemy. Today, I have wonderful intimacy with God. When I walk outside in the morning, I'm absolutely certain that I'm walking with the Lord, and the Enemy jumps to the alert. Obviously, Christ authored this work from the beginning, but Brenda's ministry to me has had a vast impact upon my life. She somehow caught God's higher vision of marriage.

Now that doesn't mean she was perfect. She purposely pushed the right buttons to drive my temper. In spite of that, at the end of the day Brenda shone magnificently for Christ in my life. She found the grace and mercy to see the big picture with the help of Christ's eyes. Our marriage was no longer all about her. For Brenda, our marriage had become a ministry.

As my Christian sister, she once declared her faithfulness with these indelible words: *You have never had a completely faithful and trustworthy person in your life. I'm going to be that person, no matter what. I won't hurt you, and I won't leave you for as long as I live.*

With that note of unconditional love ringing in my ears, she began a long, torturous journey, working with God to heal my wounds and rebuilt my mind. Forgetting her own wounds, she chose to focus instead upon God's call on her life as my sister in Christ, and

today she can honestly pray, "I have done all that You asked me to do. I have brought glory to You, Father."

Of course, this was never where Brenda thought the marriage gig would take her. She's a homebody, a busy and happy mother who would have preferred that our private troubles never became public. But she knew she has a part to lay in encouraging and lifting me, just like God does for us:

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people. Ps 113:7-8

[From Brenda] We encouraged you to ask yourself, *How much do I look like Christ these days in my marriage?* I would like you to take one more good look into your heart's mirror and ask yourself this question: *How am I doing in my role as helpmate?*

In this role as helper where most wives make their biggest mistakes in marriage. Let's return once more to Genesis and review why we were created as women:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it...the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."...For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (Ge 2:15, 18, 24)

Why was it not good for man to be alone? I can assure you it was not because Adam needed some help hanging vines or running a backhoe in the garden. And it was more than Adam's needed someone to talk to or have sex with.

So what does a helper do? Fred explains it this way: as a helper, a wife's role is to help lift up her husband--boost him, assist him, encourage him--to Christian greatness, whatever that may entail. This isn't an easy role to fill, even when your husband is *asking* for your help.

What are you supposed to do when your husbands are *not* asking? What happens then?

Each of us has two major roles in marriage. Fred lays the headship role and is the overall leader in the home. He's also been called by god to be the high priest of our home, the spiritual leader responsible for building a normal Christian home.

As his wife, I play the parallel submissive role to Fred's leadership at home, and the parallel helper role to prod, lift, and strengthen him to carry out his roles as head and high priest.

Note how God expects the husband and wife to play essentially the same spiritual role for the other spouse. As a high priest, Fred is to *lead* me into Christian greatness. As a helpmate, I'm to work alongside the Holy Spirit to *lift* Fred to Christian greatness.

[From Fred] Why do men ignore their role as high priest? Mostly out of laziness and natural rebelliousness. We'd rather kick back and flow with the lazy tides as long as we can do what we want.

But if we're ignoring that high priest's role out of rebelliousness, why are women ignoring their helpmate role? Books pound at our wives to submit, submit, submit, no matter how their husbands act and no matter how blind we have become.

And so their helper role, which might have helped strengthen us husbands to become great leaders in our homes, has been stripped away from our wives, while the better Christian male leadership we might have provided is compromised.

When your husband needs your help but can't see that he *needs* help, which role are you to play? Should you simply be quiet and pray for his insight to improve, submitting in silence for the sake of peace? Or does the Lord expect you to step out boldly to actively defend your home and to encourage your husband toward God?

For answers, we can look to the story of Abigail and David from 1 Samuel in the Old Testament. Abigail was an intelligent and beautiful woman, while her husband, Nabal, was surly and mean in his dealings throughout their region.

David and his men settled nearby and asked Nabal if he might be able to spare some food in exchange for the protection that David's army had been affording Nabal's household. Nabal--not the sharpest tool in the shed--harshly dismissed his request, and David was furious. David told four hundred of his men to strap on their swords, as he fully intended to make Nabal pay for his insolence. But suddenly, Nabal's helper--that's right, his wife, Abigail--intervened. After hearing from a servant that disaster was hanging over her house without telling Nabal, she loaded up the donkeys with food and cut David off at the pass.

She bowed low before him and said (my paraphrase), "My lord, pay no attention to my husband. He can be so foolish. Let my gift of food be given to your men, and please forgive our offense. When God makes you king over this nation, as he has promised, and you are enjoying broad success, I don't want you to have to look back and regret this day of bloodshed. I want you to remember us well."

David was overwhelmed by her boldness, and he graciously accepted her gift. Abigail could have been divorced for opposing her husband's wishes, but she stood bravely to protect Nabal and her house from his foolishness. She also could have been sliced to ribbons by David's men, but she trusted God that as she spoke the Lord's words into David's heart, he would respond and rise up to be the merciful, spiritual leader that was his calling. Her reward? Peace for her house.

As women, sometimes you'll be called upon to stand up to your husbands' foolishness to protect your house, and you'll have to trust the Holy Spirit that as you speak His words

into your husband's heart, your husband will listen and the fruit of the Spirit will blossom broadly in his life. Quiet submission is not the only path to peace and health in marriage.

We would have never had lasting peace in our home had Brenda not also played her hard-nosed, audible helper's role for God and for me. It isn't normal for a Christian man to be surly, mean, or foolishly blind like I was, and had Brenda not intervened strongly as my helper when she did, my leadership would have been devastated and I would have crushed our home. None of us would have had a chance to be all that Christ intends us to be.

When I became a follower of Christ, I gave up my right to look like anything but normal as a Christian. As spiritual leaders, men are to *lead* their families to Christian greatness, which is another way of saying normal Christian behavior. As helpers, women are to lift their husbands to Christian greatness by revealing the blind spots keeping them from normal, Christian behavior.

Brenda could have backed off under my withering outbursts. She had heard well-meaning girlfriends tell her to "be still and let Fred lead." It gives me nightmares to think where we'd be today if she had listened to them. I know *so* many men who have the same temperament flaws twenty years after their weddings because they wouldn't let their wives play that helper role.

She loved me enough to fight on until I could see it for myself. It was good that I listened to her.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way...You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and *speaking truthfully to his neighbor*, for we are all members of one body. (Eph 4:17-20, 22-25).

As my Christian sister, Brenda had a right and a duty to speak out truthfully (and even sharply) to me when I was still living in the futility of my thinking, darkened in my understanding and separated from full life in God because of my ignorance of normal Christianity.

And when it comes to your husband's sexual sin, you have every right to stand up and help him win. To be a helpmate means that you will never allow your husband to drift to his lowest level. Instead, you'll help him to be great.

Being iron sharpening iron is part of the Christian friendship and fellowship, as the previous scripture (Eh 4:25) suggests. Like it or not, sometimes you're required to encourage (and perhaps even force) your husband to consider a higher train of thought and behavior in your marriage, and when you do this, its okay. You are just doing your job.

If you only play "submitter" and never play your helper role, the laws of reaping and sowing will be suspended in your husband's life and he'll pay no price for his abnormal, immoral behavior.

Sometimes I need to be irritated, or I won't listen. Sometimes I need to be pushed away, or I won't see. I need my helper's voice!

When Brenda stands up for her right to speak into my life, she's actually standing up for *me*, though it rarely feels like it at the time. When she refuses to be still regarding my crushing behavior, it is an abdication of her call to submit to my authority? Heavens no! It is the proper discharge of her call to help me see and to lift me towards Christian greatness. It is a sign of her unconditional love for me.

[From Brenda] Fred had the responsibility to commit to kindness and sexual purity on his own.

[Dressings and Iron from Fred] In my struggle with sexual sin it took me just six weeks to get my eyes trained and under control, it took quite a bit longer to train my mind to capture my wandering thoughts. I think two or three years passed before I'd mastered all the emotional triggers that had tripped me up sexually in the past.

Total victory is possible for your husband. Patience is required. I know patience is not easy when your heart has taken deep wounds from a husband's betrayal.

Problems don't crop up in a day, and neither do they vanish over-night. Overcoming sexual sins is a process and a journey. Accountability, counseling, communication, support and continual prayer are mandatory. Surrendering and forgiving are daily requirements, and discouragement can abound.

[From Brenda] Christ's broader view of marriage prevented pain from dominating my heart and kept Fred's pain on my mind, enabling me to consider mercy and patience. His sin is revealing his deeper wounds and addictions below the surface.

I was to be his good Samaritan, compelled by my love to dress his wounds, and also his friend, taking on the "iron sharpens iron" role described in Proverbs 27:17.

That dual picture of applying the dressing and grinding the iron portrays our helper role pretty well.

You are not your husband's mother, and he's not your misbehaving child who just needs to get his little rear in gear. He's a man, and if he's anything like Fred, he's been wounded by years of emotional trauma, and those wounds aren't just going to slip away under your scolding. Yes, sparks can fly when iron sharpens iron, but the result sought should always be mutual and healing and constructive.

Verbally, I absolutely refused to be muzzled in our relationship, in spite of his frightening, intimidating tantrums. That would have stripped me of my helper role, and it would have perpetually doomed us as a family. Sorry. I couldn't do that to God, Fred or my kids.

Some would say I had not right to change my husband. Baloney! Of course I had that right and, because of my role as helpmate, I also had the *responsibility* before God to insist upon change. When Fred claims Christ be continues to harbor sin, he pollutes our stream. We are *one flesh*, and because our lives are so intertwined spiritually, I have as much right to expect him to change as I have the right and responsibility to inspect myself and change. In marriage, my spiritual health depends not only upon my choices but also upon his. I have every right to insist that he handle that responsibility well, in one form or another. We're one.

Granted, we must manage our expectation between short-term goals and long-term change. In the short term, for instance, you can expect *nothing* from your spouse. You might demand, "Get that temper under control," but he can't possibly reply, "Okay, sugarplum, I'll have that changed by Tuesday." Change is hard, and old habits die slowly on the battlefield.

In the long term, you can expect *everything* from your spouse, because we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. In the long term, there is no wiggle room. The mate with the temper can only say, "I married my wife, for better or worse, and she traded away all her rights and freedoms to marry me. I have a responsibility to her before god to walk a godly path and to be conformed to Christ. I will not rest until my temper is under control."

One of the reasons why I was diligently honest with Fred was because I wanted him to understand the full extent of the damage he was causing our relationship. If anything would keep him from dogging it, my honest would. I once told him that my respect for him was in a free fall in nearly every area of our relationship, and that I was having an especially hard time respecting him spiritually. The damage assessments were brutal for him to hear, and they were also brutal for me to pronounce.

I would never let these things go without doing everything I could do. I wanted a calm, healthy home, just like the one I grew up in. And Fred wouldn't know how to lead us there without my help.

You cannot afford to ignore the roles God asks you to play in marriage, whether you hate confrontation or not. You must do it for God, and you must do it for yourself. If you are asking your husband to fight this withering battle for sexual purity, shouldn't you be willing to carry the iron as his helpmate, no matter how hard it is for you?

[From Fred] How did my heart soften toward change? Brenda's approach with the dressing had a lot to do with it. She was only interested in my good.

If I'd reach out after a fight to touch her, she wouldn't pull away. If I'd stop downstairs in a fury, she'd calmly wait up until I came back upstairs.

That doesn't mean that her stinging rebukes never hurt, of course. In fact, they always did. Like any guy, I hated to be called out on my character flaws, and she was always dead-on right, much to my private consternation. I often struck back like a wounded rattler.

Her words were meant to switch on a light in my mind. She stung me but did not wound me further.

I asked her about her approach one time, and she said, "My reactions to you are always a choice, and when I can't love you for your sake because you are being so harsh, I can always find a way to love you for Jesus' sake because of what He's done for me."

She'd forgive me because of what Christ meant to both of us. She was not out to hurt me or have her own way. She was out to help me and to have things God's way, normal and true.

For instance, let's say we were headed home after a dinner party. Given my past and my discomfort in those situations, I would naturally assume that most of the guests had thought I'd been a dork all night. If I'd express something along those lines to Brenda, she'd simply turn toward me with raised eyebrows and ask, "Is that really how you think? Normal Christians don't think that way, sweetheart."

Startled, I'd reply, "Really? That's how I've always thought. Are you sure?"

"Of course," she'd giggle. "Normal Christians have a good self-image, and they don't assume the worst like that."

Balanced accountability is the loam in which the seeds of trust will sprout again. In the end, each couple's story will look different from every other, as temperaments will vary and response times will differ.

But one thing must always remain consistent: each Christian couple is called to be sanctified, to become normal in Christ. You are both wounded now, and you'll both have to work together to heal and to be accountable to living a normal life together.

What is normal living in the wake of sexual sin? Well, it's up to your husband. Has he fully repented? Is his repentance lagging or even nonexistent?

[Your Lagging Heart from Fred] If he repents, you may still feel cheated: I've been betrayed, I've never felt less loved, less valuable, or less safe;; I've never realized until now how little our marriage meant to him; How could he do what he did?, What will others think of me keeping him?

You need to fight the right battle after he repents. If your husband has fully repented, and your emotions are still lagging behind the changes in his life, you're no longer dealing with sexual sin. The battlefield has changed. You're now dealing with broken trust.

Trust requires two ingredients: your husband must become trustworthy, and you must trust again. Each of you is responsible for bringing one ingredient to the table.

Practically speaking, it no longer matters that it was your husband who demolished your trust in him. You're on to a new battlefield now, and all that matters is that both of you have roles in rebuilding that trust.

Compassion and mercy must replace anger. You must lay down your arms in humility before God.

It takes discipline and training in God's truth to break free from sexual sin.

You should know that marriage is not about you but about God and the picture He wants to paint with your life together. And since you know these things, you can lay down your arms and decide what your future will look like.

You can choose to love the unlovely and to do everything in your power to encourage your husband in his brave stand for righteousness. This looks a lot like what Jesus did for us.

Christianity is always about choices. Whose ideals do you love the most--yours or Christ's.

Brenda's choices have me the freedom and grace to live again in our relationship and to grow into all I was supposed to be, in spite of my sin. That's what helpmates do.

Seek God's face. Then, if you can find it in your heart to love the unlovely. Watch what God will do in your life. You will reap blessings. Oneness *will* arise for having gone through this all tougher.

There is really no trick to trusting again. Only one thing can bring confidence--his consistent, faithful actions. Without right actions, he can't have your trust, and if he wants your trust, it's all on him.

Husbands often hate this responsibility, but you needn't apologize for it. You can expect it and even fight for it, applying the iron for the sake of your relationship. How so? Well, your husband wounded you. Use your iron to insist that he apply the dressing to your wounds as you need them applied.

To get your emotions back up to speed, you'll need the following from your husband:

- complete openness and honesty
- his patience as you heal
- trustworthy acts

How much detail and honesty can you expect? As much as you need. Willingness to answer questions has got to be there.

How much patience can you expect from your husband? Again, as much as you need. This kind of damage demands gentle care, and he owes that much to you simply out of restitution, of nothing else. He put you there.

His patience is a sign of deep repentance. If that sign isn't there, it's a troubling red flag. When your husband demands immediate forgiveness and doesn't show patience, then that's an indication that he's not where he needs to be. A husband may even complain, "What kind of Christian woman are you that you won't get over it and forgive me?" That is outright spiritual abuse and comes from the same weak character that sent him into sexual sin in the first place.

If he truly repented, trustworthy acts will become second nature to him. As his helpmate, you have every right to play a role in defining what trustworthiness means to you, and you can expect him to come through for you.

For example, in his trustworthiness he will join an accountability group. He will read books that you have encouraged him to read, like *Every Man's Battle* and *Every Man's Marriage*. He will tell you about actions he is taking and will ask you for more ways that he can build your trust.

Taking things one day at a time is good advice because complete openness and honesty, patience as you heal, and trustworthy acts don't happen overnight, but they will happen quickly once your husband turns his whole heart to God. Once they do, your emotions will finally catch up to his new life, and you'll experience the loving freedom of your dreams.

[A Merle Hay Road Moment from Fred] You want your husband to stand as a pure Christian man. Until he does, you'll feel crushed and your family will be open to assault from the Enemy.

Nothing will change, though, until he makes a hard, firm decision to fight for purity. Once he truly makes up his mind that things are going to change in his life, you should see some sort of progress, some sort of mental shift, but such a decision can be a long time coming.

God showed me Job 31:3, which said that it is possible for a man to make a covenant with his eyes not to look lustfully at another woman. As I meditated on this passage, this revelation rocked my soul: *If Job could do it, so can I!*

Your husband's fragile ego can't stand the fears that bubble up from his core as he ponders, *Do real men submit to this kind of discipline with their eyes? What if sex becomes boring? What if purity hinders my ability to perform in the bedroom?*

Joey cried:

This sin is destroying my marriage. My adultery and self-defilement has separated me from my wife and separated me from God. I feel so lonely and lost, asking myself, *Why do I do the things I do? Why won't this monster leave me alone?*

I want to know God and walk with my Lord daily, and know that His blood washes whiter than snow; but I feel dirty, eternally stained. I do not want to hurt my wife anymore than I already have. Besides, I'm beginning to think I don't even belong in God's kingdom. What good am I to God? There are times when I pray, "Oh God, do you still love me when I bleed?"

You see, Joey wants to break free from sexual sin but he can't quite let go. Why doesn't Joey just make the decision? Why did it take me so long? Sometimes, we need a good, stout revelation of truth to pop us free.

[From Brenda] You need patience as you wait on your husband's repentance and deal and deal with your simmering pain. Move in closer.

If your husband has not fully repented, he is to be pitied--he is either blind with a veiled heart or he is trapped and can't quite see how to get out. Only God can lift that blindness, though the scales are still there now. God has authored something in your husband and simply needs time to finish it. He's counting on you to persevere as Christ endured the Cross:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the

throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow wary and lose heart. (Heb 12:2-3).

If you can endure the wait, there is marital joy set before you on the other side. God has such plans for your marriage!

Keep the truth before your husband by speaking the truth and living the truth before him. Endurance and prayer play an important part in any ministry. You are not just your husbands' helper, but God's.

Make no mistake, marriage is ministry. This is a time to get right with God as never before.

Dorie wrote:

After finding out about the sin, I realized that this was bigger than me. I needed God's help.

As you get closer to the One who created you, you'll pick up God's higher-ways view of your marriage, and that's vital. God doesn't see marriage as an end in itself but as a restorative process for both of you, and He puts us in relationships like these to allow us to work out our sin so that we can be of more use to Him.

[From Fred] God wants restoration because that's what's best and fair for your family.

Jesus came to Earth to heal the broken, to have mercy on the ones who couldn't stand on their own, the ones who would never deserve it. Christ always chose mercy when it came to sin, and He's asking you to move closer to Him so that you might choose mercy too. Your husband has probably been deeply wounded and warped by sin, like many husbands are.

Jake wrote:

I grew up to be a very self-reliant man with a very guarded heart and a selfish, self-protective spirit. I have never trusted God completely and have withheld some of my heart from Him. My lack of true relationship with my wife has been a reflection of my lack of true relationship with Christ.

At the first sign of trouble or rejection, I immediately withdraw to a place within myself.

Do you sense your ministry opportunities? Aligning ourselves with Jesus means being about our Father's business as Jesus was. And what is that business? Simple: healing the broken--especially those who don't deserve it.

[From Brenda] Your husband has veered off the track and crashed hard, so you're obviously in business. You're the last line of defense, and God's counting on you to defend His name and His boundaries before your husband. The Lord wants him walking again in His image.

Kim caught God's perspective and began to see her struggling marriage as a ministry. "I had to realize that my husband, Carl, made his own choices when it came to being sinful or not, and I didn't have full control of that," she said. "My job was to trust God, be the person God wanted me to be, and help my husband."

If you're asking your husband to move closer to God, shouldn't he be able to expect that you'll move closer to God as well? I think so.

Debbie found out:

There was something different and lasting now. I guess you could say he was ready to grow up, take the hard steps, and make the hard choices to open his life up to others in a healthy way and humble himself before God. Oddly enough, our sex life quickly became better than ever. For the first time in a long time, I felt like he really knew I was there in bed with him. Maybe there was more of a reason to invest in our pleasure since the other wells had run dry, but who really cares? All I knew is that I liked his efforts.

Once you've moved in close and have a kind, humble spirit before God, He can deliver the spiritual tools you'll need to discharge the duties of your ministry well.

God already has one naive, blind, broken child on the scene in the form of your husband, and He can't afford to have two. He's asking you to move closer to Him so He might make your sight completely whole. He needs one trustworthy child on hand to work with Him in this, and He wants to make you strong.

As your husband's helpmate, it's best for you and him if you inform him that you'll be actively seeking out God and asking the Lord for discernment in holding him accountable. He should be encouraged because you will have his back and follow through on whatever the Lord says you need to do to help him.

Molly wrote:

I had divorced myself emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually from Randy. I had been begging God to release me from this marriage, rather than completely giving my heart to restoration.

After her repentance:

Seeking godly counsel and praying like never before, I finally committed my heart 100 percent to restoration, preferring to go through the pain of marital healing rather than the pain of walking away.

God has asked me to choose mercy. I will follow God faithfully. I think we'll make it.

At some point, I suspect that God's next lesson for Molly will be to teacher her to trust Randy again, which won't happen overnight. But in the meantime, she will have to continue to discharge her duties well as helper.

[Moving Even Closer from Fred] We know that you love your husband, but love sometimes requires pushing him a little toward normal. If his repentance is lagging, you must speak the truth, even though the truth can be disruptive.

Your husband made promises to you the day you were married, and you have every right to speak up when he doesn't keep them. Sure, he may not recognize your rights and may try to wriggle out by sniffing, "You're not so perfect yourself! Who are you to judge me?"

You needn't be perfect to judge:

It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning in these ways. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you." (1 Co 5:12-13, NLT)

If your husband is a Christian, he had better be open to inspection, because you are called to speak the truth as his Christian sister.

[From Brenda] Sexual sin is devastating to his wife's emotions because of her make up.

If you're willing to rebuild your marriage after your husband has destroyed the most precious, intimate area of your being, then he owes you big time--and he likely has no idea what a precious gift you've offered. While the Christian life is about forgiveness and turning the other cheek, it is also about commitment and keeping promises. Calling oneself a Christian while winking at sexual immorality is reprehensible and degrading, and it also gives a false testimony of Christ to the world. Furthermore, there are inescapable laws of life, like reaping what you sow.

Women often ask, *I'm not even sure I know what normal looks like anymore!* Let me try to paint a picture of normal as best I can.

I feel incredible security knowing that I'm married to a man who keeps his eyes to himself. I live unthreatened by any woman around me. Fred loves me for me and is very satisfied with who I am and what I've become.

When my husband prays, I'm confident that nothing is hindering his connection with God. If I knew of dark, hidden areas, I'd have no faith that his prayers would even rise to the ceiling, but I've seen how a pure man's prayer packs a spiritual punch.

My confidence in Fred's spiritual protection is unbounded. I never wonder if there are open cracks in our spiritual defenses where the Enemy can slip into our lives. Christianity is not a game to Fred, and image means nothing. He'd rather *be* a Christian than seem like one.

Fred has every right to make the decisions for our family because it's God's plan, but even if it weren't, he's earned that right through his actions. He's proven in battle that his commitment to the Lord and his love for his family are the highest priorities in his life, and we simply rest in his strength.

This normal, godly pattern leaves everyone flourishing, and this wouldn't be possible if blatant sin were clogging things up. I know who Fred is, and in the secret places of life, I know where he will not go.

Every wife deserves a shot at normalcy. I sure didn't start at normal in my marriage, but with Christ's grace our marriage got there. It won't happen over a long weekend, but this is what you serve, this is what God has promised you, and in the long run, this is what God calls your husband to deliver.

Take another look at the normal picture of a marriage. Implicit trust permeates every corner. Fred's consistent faithful actions stir confidence within me that he conducts himself in a godly manner when it comes to sexual purity. If your husband's ever going to be trustworthy to you, he must first be trustworthy to God.

God knows the truth about your husband and now so do you. It isn't enough to seem Christian in marriage--you have to be Christian, to live his Word. Only then can God trust him and only then can you trust him again.

Defend God's boundaries in your marriage and expose your husband's well-crafted image to the light of truth. It is proper. Your job is to help him see and open his heart and ears to God.

Grind with the iron and point out clearly what God means by being trustworthy. Confront him. Be honest about your pain. Talk straight about how he is failing you and how you are losing respect for him. You're not here to hurt. You're here to help. You're not fighting for your way but to have things God's way.

Defend God's boundaries not your own. Intimacy is for you--and you alone. Be transparent, persistent and resolute. God won't let you live peacefully any other way. You cannot control him. You can just stand normally and in Christ.

You aren't there to attack. You are there to boost the man. It's not your ministry to bring him back to you sexually. It's your ministry to bring him back to God spiritually. It is ultimately between your husband and the King. Trust God.

[From Fred] Let's take a look at a few of God's boundaries.

Insist that your husband stop drawing his own lines for sin. He needs to accept God's definitions of sin, not those of the guys he plays pickup basketball with during lunchtime. Your husband must accept God's terms, or else He can't trust your husband.

Don't muzzle the Spirit's voice about your objections to titillating images around the home or garage. Those pictures *are* pornographic though he may try to argue they are not. The Spirit's voice is telling the truth. If your husband is stuck in sexual sin and rebellion, his eardrums have been cauterized to the whispers of the Holy Spirit, and his conscience has been seared. You must speak for God and call sin "sin" so your husband can hear and learn what it is.

Insist on the truth. He can start telling the truth today. Normal Christian men tell the truth, and if he expects God to trust him, his lying has got to go.

Mary Beth writes regarding her husband's affair:

He had been playing the loving, accountable-husband to a T, but he had been lying through his teeth the entire time.

Your husband must stop lying immediately. You need open communication regarding his sin, and he must truthfully answer any question you might pop his way.

Insist he stop posing as a strong Christian man. Remember, your husband has been hiding behind a good Christian image, but that must change. Since image is everything these days, "Showtime Christianity" is pandemic.

Brody said regarding going to marital counseling:

That pastor's never going to look at me the same way again.

Who cares if the pastor won't look at you the same way? Get real! Your wife already can't look at you the same way, and God's eyebrows are arched askew, too. Being Christian should have total priority over looking Christian any day of the week, and if God is to ever trust your husband, you must encourage your husband in that direction.

Insist that he quit posing at church. His image may mean something in the visible realm, but only substance counts in the spiritual realm. Your husband needs to face the truth that he isn't who he says he is. Those bushes that covered him like those bushes that covered Adam in the garden after his sin burn and this charade must end.

[From Brenda] While healing, women must hold themselves emotionally separate from any man other than their husbands, and women should be careful discussing their dreams and desires with men (unless they are in a professional counseling situation). Your focus must be on your marriage.

We urge you to be purposeful about surrounding yourself with godly sisters in Christ who are navigating the same waters. Being able to vent and pray *with a member of the same sex* can offer you wonders for your sanity. Pray for his repentance. Look for changes in him.

Holly wrote:

You know what? I did notice some things about Ryan. He seemed more confident, and he wasn't that 'boy' I'd come to despise--he was even being quite open with people that the separation was partly his fault.

[From Fred] The secret weapon is prayer. God has the power to restore, renew, and rebuild broken marriages.

There is great freedom in casting your cares and your worries at the Lord's feet. He'll give you supernatural peace, joy, and strength. Brenda and I urge you to continue to endure and persevere because great is His faithfulness, mercy and grace.

Wait for your husband's heart to fully return to the Lord.

[Lagging sexuality from Brenda] Your sexuality is your most guarded possession, your secret garden. You trusted that he would be worthy of your precious gift, but he cavalierly allowed another into his heart, polluting and littering your garden. You deserve so much more.

Still, as long as you're married you have an irrevocable call of God to be your husband's helpmate. As Christians we can never allow our ministries to be left up to the vagaries of our emotions.

It has been my experience that spouses should never wait until the situation is perfect or until their feelings are just right before moving ahead and doing the right things in relational issues, especially regarding sex. The right feelings will generally follow the right actions soon enough. You should maintain normal, sexual oneness.

On the battlefield of broken sexual trust, your husband must become trustworthy and you must eventually choose to trust again. Sex is a natural language of intimacy, and he needs interpersonal intimacy with you badly.

The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. (1 Co 7:4).

Your spouse's body is your prized possession, you *only* legitimate vessel of sexual satisfaction on the face of the earth. His sexuality was created for you and yours was created for him.

[From Fred] Some men twist this verse into a perverse entitlement that sounds something like this: *my wife is my very own call girl on retainer, and if she isn't up to snuff, I can head off to the harems to make up for it. God will understand!*

Nope, that's not how it goes. *The Message* translation of this scripture clarifies the spirit behind this passage:

The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality-the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. *Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights."* Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. (1 Co 7:3-4)

God's message is that your husband's sexuality must always and only be directed toward you, his wife. You are the co-owner of his body. It is for no one else. He has no right to use his body any way that he wants.

I had no right to use my body or my eyes on things Brenda would disapprove of.

Because your husband has taken his body into his own hands without asking you, your relationship may be kaput. Now you find that when you go to use it, his body no longer works the way it should for you. He's broken it, yet he coolly returns it to your bed every night without a word of admission.

While tools can be borrowed and returned unscathed, bodies can't. Affairs, porn and masturbation inevitably inflict wounds. Remember what happens? His eyes begin to dominate his sexuality. A boorish clamoring for his own sexual intensity replaces his normal desire for martial intimacy. His body, originally created for *your* sexual pleasure, now pleasures your less, and we needn't search far to understand why.

Men in sexual sin become more callous to female sexuality, and their normal, godly concern for their wives' pleasure falls off significantly. How likely is it that your husband can borrow his body and return it to you unbroken? Very unlikely. In short, men have broken their normal, God-given sexuality and bonding mechanism that was created to serve and satisfy you and you alone. Now, their sexuality demands more, better and different from you to satisfy themselves.

Soon, his body won't work right for you to enjoy. Considering what you now know about male sexuality, you can predict where you'll find the physical, emotional and spiritual damage.

If he better understood his own sexuality, he'd know that is lack of ability and lack of progressive lack of satisfaction isn't your fault.

Brenda told me, "It's great that as we both keep our eyes and minds pure in terms of television, movies and books, we've never once slowed down sexually. It's always fresh and new, even after all this time."

Have you ever experienced this normal picture throughout your marriage? If not, fix what is broken:

- Give up porn to break to domination of his eyes in his sexuality.
- Give up masturbation and choose intimacy over intensity.
- Get an accountability group to help him to explore godly intimacy further.

First, he must get his eyes back to normal. God says it's normal for a Christian guy to keep his way pure (see Psalm 119:9) and set no vile thing before his eyes (see psalm 101:3). It's normal for a Christian to avoid lusting after women in any setting (see Job 31:1).

My eyes don't dominate my sexuality anymore. When I sweep Brenda into my arms, it's not just her body I'm after. I want to connect with all of her, both inside and out. That is God's plan.

Husbands need to deal with underlying issues, as well. God to a counselor if needed. Seek accountability through a transparent relationship with a godly, mature man or find an accountability group where the honest expression of feelings and true intimacy can replace dependency upon false or inappropriate intimacy. Also, he needs to develop an ongoing relationship with God that involves all the spiritual disciplines, especially prayer and worship.

And what comes from this journey for your husband? Sex as God intended--real, appropriate intimacy--and a relationship with God that will blow him away.

What happens for you? The return to normal.

Take time to care for one another sexually. Compatibility is not necessary for oneness--sacrifice is--and that's something every man--and his wife--has to learn.

Do not refuse and deprive and defraud each other [of your due marital rights], except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves unhindered to prayer. But afterwards resume marital relations, lest Satan tempt you [to sin with yourself or another] through your lack of restraint of sexual desire (1 Co 7:3-5)

Guys need regular sexual fulfillment two or three times a week. Passionate longings and burning desire are not at all abnormal emotions in the marriage bed. In fact, it is quite normal for a wife to desire her husband passionately. Take a peek at some verses I've condensed from Song of Songs:

Husband: You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride;
you have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes...
How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!...

Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel.
Your hair is like royal tapestry;
the king is held captive by its tresses.
How beautiful you are and how pleasing,
O love, with your delights! (4:9-10; 7:5-6)

Wife: My lover [husband] is radiant and ruddy,
outstanding among ten thousand.
His head is purest gold;
his hair is wavy
and black as a raven....

His mouth is sweetness itself;
he is altogether lovely.
This is my lover, this my friend....

I belong to my lover,
and his desire is for me....
Let us go early to the vineyards...
there I will give you my love.
The mandrakes send out their fragrance,
and at our door is every delicacy,
both new and old,
that I have stored up for you, my lover. (5:10-11, 16; 7:10, 12-13)

Does your sex life look anything like this today? It may not, but this is still the point on the compass that you'll want to point your arrow to--normal--godly.

[From Fred] You must firmly guide him toward normal sexuality until his blindness lifts and he understands. You have God's permission to hold his feet to the fire. God commands married couples to provide regular sexual intimacy (1 Co 7:3-4).

Any husband ought to know that he is to treat his wife with tenderness as a fellow heir to the kingdom of grace (see 1 Pe 3:7). Our sexuality was given to us primarily for our partner's pleasure, not for our own (see 1 Co 7:3-4). That can only mean one thing: a husband is wrong to fight for this verse in 1 Corinthians to fight for *his* rights, and instead he should be using it to fight for *your* rights.

[From Brenda] Nothing feels more foundationally secure to a woman than to have a husband who is faithful, even in his eyes and thoughts. As he changes, you'll desire him again.

[From Fred] Neither of you has a right to keep old wounds or to desecrate God's picture of marriage.

[What if Change Never Comes from Fred] If your husband refuses to turn away from his sin, there are no easy answers. Sin corrupts, and your marriage and family will remain corrupted as long as he refuses to repent.

Flipping your Bible pen to Malachi, you read: "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel" (2:16).

Yep, there it is! And He couldn't have said it any clearer.

Then, you flip to the New Testament to read:

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"

So they are not longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate."

"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." (Mt 19:3-8).

Look at that! It's not irreconcilable differences that cause all our divorces after all! God didn't allow divorce because we *couldn't* love our spouses, but because of hardened hearts, we *wouldn't* love our spouses.

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adulterer with her in his heart (Mt 5:28).

This type of behavior is betrayal.

Your decision will impact many others, including those you love the most: your children and close family members.

Your husband has already let you down and stolen a part of your world. Sin corrupts everything nearby. As long as he is unrepentant, you will never have what God intended

for marriage in terms of oneness, grace, or peace. Even if you stay, you will always struggle with your emotions over the betrayal.

We have no simple maps or billowing platitudes to offer. Your decisions must be based on God's Word. Only then will you feel free to take any appropriate actions before your husband's unrepentant heart bankrupts your faith and shatters your soul (Mt 19:9).

There are no easy answers and certainly no guaranteed outcomes, but we pray that God will bless you as you choose. May your ear hear His truth, and may His love and grace carry you home.

[The possibilities from Fred] What's possible for you and your family in the wake of a man's sexual sin? In God's eyes, the possibilities are endless.

Of course, that truth may sound trite to you right now. I understand. It's always hard to see the possibilities when life's debris stretches endlessly over the surfaces of your life like so much rotting, foaming flotsam. I've been there.

While those icy, gnarly claws of sexual sin still gripped my throat, everything looked impossible to me. After all, my family path was set in stone. My grandfathers were both hooked on porn and loose women. We found porn in my father's desk when he died at the age of seventy-one, and he'd had countless mistresses through the years. God used my past heartless, empty relations to draw me into His own arms through salvation, but even though I cleaned out the porn and broke off the relationships in the year before I married, my eyes were still ravenous seekers, searching the horizon and locking onto any target with sensual heat.

One morning in prayer my exasperated Father in heaven spoke this chilling challenge into my heart: *Are you going to drive the stake into the ground right here and change the destiny of your family tree--or will you be leaving the job for some man better than you, somewhere down the line?*

I broke into tears. I couldn't stand the kind of man I was, and I knew that if I refused this challenge, the Lord would one day lay that same challenge at Jason's feet. Would my son become that man who was better than I? I didn't know the answer, but I wasn't about to leave such a brutal battle up to my precious son to fight alone. That sealed the deal for me. No matter how miserably I might fail in the battle, he was my boy, and he wouldn't have to battle this horrid thing by himself.

So I engaged that battle, and against all odds, I was soon standing victoriously over my enemy in this ruthless fight. It *wasn't* impossible. Best of all, the victory has remained. It has been more than nineteen years since I've slipped in my commitment to purity.

Today's situation in your home defines nothing about your marriage or your family's future destiny. Only today's decisions define it. That also means everything is possible, even following your husband's betrayal.

No matter how long the sexual sin has been going on--in our case, for generations--it only takes a few decisions, mixed with God's grace, to change everything once and for all.

Complete sexual purity is to be every mans' destiny, and teaching others will have a natural place in that destiny. I may be hard to see right now, but your husband has an extraordinary destiny waiting for him like this one:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to you great compassion
blot out my transgressions....

Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you. (Psalm 51:1, 12-13)

From the dawn of time, God has planned to set your husband free to teach others, if only he'll turn.

[From Brenda] Remember, while decision are made in a moment, destinies can't be written in a day. While Fred and Jasen crushed that generational sin beneath our feet by God's grace and power, remember that a couple of decades spanned our lives between Fred's commitment and Jasen's first pure kiss at the alter. Complete healing won't arrive by this evening. But you *can* decide to begin that healing process today.

[From Fred] Secular counselors will tell you that all your husband can do is manage his sin. Perhaps that's true if he isn't a child of God. But if he is, the Lord has given your husband everything he needs to crucify his sin completely:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil deeds (2 Pe 1:3-4).

Everything is possible. Your husband can rack up two decades worth of purity for himself, if he wants to, and you can live a new life of freedom with him. Your sons and daughters can follow with you. The entire destiny of your family tree can change.

Granted, your marriage can't heal and your family can't heal unless your husband engages the battle for keeps.

While you can't get there by next Tuesday, you can begin that journey today by taking the following steps in your life.

1. Get More Intimate with God Than You've Ever Been Before
2. Find or Start a Support Group
3. Decide to Protect Your Children from this Sin

Eric stepped up and answered God's call early:

I've given my testimony publically a few times now, and every time, I say it with more strength and with more pride in my God. Through Him, I defeated the sin of pornography and all that came with it by learning His truths. Two of my uncles are still hooked on porn, but this generational curse stops with me. When I get married and have a son, I'm going to be able to hold him in my arms and say, "Little buddy, I'm right with God, and because I'm right with Him, you will be too. You won't have to go through what I did, my son!"

I can't wait for that moment!

God's heart is longing for yours. Never forget that His eyes are ever upon you. As you deal with this difficult situation, turn to the Lord fully from here on out. Ask Him to wrap you up in His arms. He will.