

I was blessed to be raised in a Christian home in the beautiful Northwest, spending the first 16 years of my life in Spokane, Washington. I remember when I was 12 years old my parents went forward in church to rededicate their lives to the Lord. My older brother and I followed. Although I wasn't sure what really happened, I saw a significant change in my father. He began reading the Bible daily, praying, and making church attendance a priority. I became accustomed to being in church Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night. There was never a doubt in my mind that my parents loved me and accepted me. They would lavish praise, be supportive, and were an encouragement in my life. This love and acceptance was also exhibited with my extended family to the extent I was living in a safe little cocoon.

There was one area in my life, my "little secret", that I would not, or could not talk about, and it was relating to sexual desires that were a part of me from a very early age. I could not figure out why I thought as I did or act as I did. Nobody else in my family seemed to struggle with what I was going through. I began thinking I was just a little off, a couple of clicks off dead center. I was drawn to pornography. After starting with books and magazines in childhood, my desires progressed to a full blown addiction in

my teen years. I, of course, had no clue what an addiction was, but knew if I told anyone they would think I was some kind of pervert. Satan had me right where he wanted me. I lived a life filled with guilt and low self esteem. I was defeated. When we moved to Fresno, California, I thought it would be a fresh start and the past would stay in the past. It didn't. When I graduated from high school a friend of mine drowned while trying to swim to an island with a case of beer on his back. I knew if I had been with him I would have been doing the same thing and I too would have drowned. I was scared to death. I remember driving around that night and wondering if there really was a God and then presenting the "challenge." "God, if you are for real, have someone at the church." I drove by. It was about 9:30 on a Thursday evening. There were no church activities that night, but the senior pastor was there. We talked for two hours and I invited Christ into my life. Finally, I thought my struggle was over. I now had a new life, never to worry about the past again. The euphoria was short lived. Within a month, the demons returned to torment me; only now, I was a "Christian" so I knew I couldn't share my problem and get help.

I accepted a baseball scholarship to Biola College; a well respected Christian College in Southern California. As I surrounded myself with Christian men,

my “secret” sin continued to haunt me. It didn’t matter where I ran; I could not rid myself of the anger and bitterness that was building up within me. In my junior year I met and eventually married my wife who was to be the mother of my children. Finally, I thought my life would change and I would be like everyone else; I would live a “normal” life. It didn’t happen. Shortly after my marriage, my father died unexpectedly, I was devastated. The only true “rock” I knew was gone. I became very angry with God. I couldn’t understand why He took my father away at such a young age. The first of my 3 children came just before graduation. Again, I thought it would be a changing point. It wasn’t. I graduated and began my career in the cable television industry. This would surely be the time when my obsession with pornography would die. It didn’t; in fact it escalated to all forms of acting out. I became more and more obsessed. I began to seek out sexual gratification. I was spiraling downward and had no idea how to stop. I was literally out of control. By this time, I felt I was beyond help; that I would live the rest of my life under the control of this addiction. I learned quickly the “advantage” of being addicted to pornography rather than drugs or alcohol. My eyes didn’t dilate and I wouldn’t stagger when I walked. It is the perfect addiction to hide. I could speak to anyone and they would have no clue of my suffering. My mask was securely in place.

My marriage fell apart, my company sold and my mother died all within a very short period of time. My life was in shambles. I was tired of living. I wanted out. Rather than deal with the hurts in my life, I chose to get involved with a woman that struggled with the same thing. Now I had someone who understood. What I *didn't* understand was the baggage she brought into the relationship equaled my own. We were dysfunctional from the start. The marriage was short lived, we had moved to Texas, once again running, and now my family was no where around. I had no one to turn to.

I met a man at church, an authentic man, who knew something was wrong in my life and began to piece my addiction together. By speaking the truth to me in love, he persuaded me to visit a Christian recovery program called Celebrate Recovery. I put him off several weeks, but he was persistent. I finally attended and it forever changed my life. As I sat in a newcomer small group a very successful person stood up and identified himself as a Christian who struggled with pornography. I was floored. How could someone admit something like that to anyone? As we went around the room, I realized I would soon be asked to say who I was and why I was there. When I said "My name is Darrell, I am a Christian who struggles with

pornography”, I felt a huge weight lifting from my shoulders. It was out; I could never again say it wasn’t true. I got involved, went through the small group process and found the peace God has promised. Through this process I came to grips with how I was sexually abused by a trusted family friend early in my life. I now understood why I thought the way I did. I wasn’t crazy. When I dealt with the pain of the past I was able for the first time in my life to release myself from it. Well meaning people have told me to not look back, but I have come to see that if we don’t deal with the past, we will be a slave to it. I am now free from the pain of my past. I know why I did the things I did. I KNOW God has forgiven me, and I was finally able to forgive myself.

There was much hurt through this process, but God doesn’t waste a hurt. He accepted me through my life’s journey, but loved me too much to leave me there. Although He has forgiven me there are consequences that I will live with for the rest of my life. The most difficult being the loss of my family; my wife, and 3 lovely children. We are rebuilding, but I realize it will never be the same. God has given me a passion for those struggling with pornography. It is easy to say “what if”, but I can’t change the past. I look forward to serving God. I hold the promise of Romans 8:28 very close to

me. I believe everything will work together for good. God has changed the anger to compassion, the bitterness into a desire to pray for others. He has placed a passion in me never before felt; a passion to work in the lives of those struggling with pornography. A passion to come out of my shell and get involved with church, men's groups and accountability groups. To allow God to use me in any manner He chooses. I understand the importance of consistent Bible study and prayer. I have found significance in my life. Not because of anything I have done, but through the grace and forgiveness of God. I John 1:9 has been burned into my heart. "If I confess my sins He is faithful and just to forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness." That is His promise to us; we don't have to live in sin's bondage. Christ has already paid that price; we just need to accept it.

When the healing process takes place, we come out of our comfort zone. For me, it was almost as if I had lost a "friend." There was a void in my life. The void caused by my addiction. It is difficult to describe how it felt, almost like losing a limb. In Matthew 12:43-45 it says: "When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, seeking rest but finding none. Then it says, I will return to the person I came from. So it returns and finds its former home empty, swept, and clean. Then the spirit finds seven other

spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before.” I saw that as an example of relapse into my addiction. If I didn’t fill that void this addiction would return. I found an accountability group. I took leadership rolls in church and got involved with leadership in Celebrate Recovery. I filled the void with helping others. As I spoke, others approached me struggling with the same addiction. We now have groups that meet twice a week to discuss men’s integrity issues. I have been able to use my pain to help others. The years of turmoil in my life were not wasted.

One of the many benefits of recovery is the restoration of broken relationships. I know I will never have the same relationship with my wife and children as before, but the relationship we have now is authentic. God has given me the opportunity to make amends with family and friends. This is an ongoing process and I look forward to the healing that comes when I am obedient. I have developed a new base of friends with a foundation of honesty and trust. I don’t need to wear a mask to be accepted by others.

God has also blessed me with a woman with whom I can share my life. While in recovery, I prayed that God would prepare a woman for me and more importantly that He would prepare me for that woman. He has

graciously answered that prayer. Seeking God's will in this relationship was something totally new to me. I have found a true helpmate; she knows about my past and loves and accepts me for who I am. I have been blessed by her.

I understand there will be struggles in this life. Temptations will always be there. We will face hurts and disappointments, but we don't have to face them alone. I have grown in my personal relationship with Jesus Christ while learning to accept His forgiveness and His grace. As importantly, I have learned to forgive myself. I have accepted my identity in Jesus Christ. He has restored my life to sanity.

Viewing life through "unfiltered" eyes has allowed me to see things in a whole new perspective. Rather than focus on Darrell, my passion is for others. I have come to realize people accept the real me much more readily than the "fake" me. Life is not about Darrell, it is all about God and His love, grace and forgiveness. God has given me the courage to step out in faith, to reveal the hurts of my past, to help those who are struggling, and to work with churches and organizations where my past can bring honor and glory to God.



I have come to realize the magnitude of pornography, even in the church. When I understood that one in three Christian men have viewed pornography in the previous thirty days, it showed me just how pervasive this addiction is. This is the fastest growing addiction in the United States. That's the bad news. The good news is God stands ready to help. In John 10:10 Christ said He came to give life and to give it more abundantly. I didn't understand that verse until the healing began. To wake up in the morning with hope and thankfulness instead of guilt is huge. To see just one life being changed is more rewarding than anything I have ever done.

If this miracle can happen to me, it can happen with anyone struggling with any addiction. Whether it is alcohol, drugs, or porn, God is bigger. He had to break me, to remold me to remake me in His image. If He did it for me He can do it for you.