

# He Would Never Do That...Would He?

## Helping Your Husband Survive Sexual Temptation

It's frightening. After hearing the stories of countless men, I have come to believe that given the right circumstances—most men would compromise sexually. Yes, tragically even men who love Jesus, and men who love their wives. I have witnessed good men crumpled in deep remorse as they relate their moral failure.

I have also met many wives who are terrified that their man may end up as one of “those men.” These ladies may not verbalize it, but deep down it lurks, that dread that their hubby could slip off the cliff of sexual temptation.

Frightfully, in recent years that ominous cliff has gotten much closer to your home. Former fighter-pilot-gone-pastor, Ted Roberts, puts it aptly in *Pure Desire* “In the last decade, the Internet has become a stealth bomber from hell with pornography as its payload.” Ted's survey of one denomination showed that 25% of its pastors were addicted to porn—not just struggling with—but addicted. That survey was done several years ago, and things have only gotten worse. With sexual material so accessible, even the strongest men can compromise with one stray click—It's just too easy.

For many men it may have started off with curiosity. That first encounter lights a little fire. That fire starts nagging for more fuel. A man is bombarded with options. Some of it disgusts him, some he rationalizes as “just harmless entertainment.” Steadily the fire grows and compromise after compromise becomes a conflagration. If a man is hurt, or lonely, or stressed he is a sitting duck with a modem.

It's an age-old ploy of the enemy to get a man away from his dream and call. In the Old Testament stories we are baffled by Israel's enticement with the idols of neighboring nations—the phenomenon was really quite simple—idolatry included sexual ritual. Sex worked then, and sex works now. It is especially effective if a man has doubts about his adequacy and validity as a human being. When he looks in the mirror he likely sees the same kinds of things a wife sees in herself: a failure, a coward, a big nose or a bony chest, a kid neglected by a father or criticized by a mother. So a man compromises to medicate this fear, and subsequently the enemy adds another statement to the list, the whisper is plain to hear “You are filth.”

The result of all this for a man is shame, and guilt, and more compromise. He then spirals further and further from his dreams, his call, and his true love.

## What Not To Do

Certainly any woman would feel betrayed, humiliated, and even furious when discovering her husband's vice. So when a man musters the courage to come clean his fear is twofold—openly facing his frailty, and wounding his wife. But as one wife's wrath began to boil she recognized the “incredible shame he felt and the trust of his outstretched soul to me.”

When a man lays his struggle on the table before his wife he feels like a huge burden has been lifted, yet simultaneously his wife feels like an enormous load has been dropped on her. It's a strange reversal in the words of Men's Ministry specialist, Scott Oja: In confession he thinks, “I'm becoming a man of integrity” she thinks, “I've been betrayed” he thinks, “I've never loved her more” she thinks “I've never felt loved less.”

In her hurt and fear a wife's first tendency is to control her husband's behavior. After all, her world is threatened: her marriage, her home, her children's welfare are all in danger. She may start nagging, checking bills, mail, calls, his computer history, and feeling restless when he's traveling, late, or out of bed. However, the more a wife tries to control, the more he is thrown into the addictive cycle. She has fallen for the old co-dependent trap and unaware become an accomplice. In the words of Melody Beattie, author of *Co-Dependent No More*, “Sometimes the things we do to protect ourselves turn on us and hurt us. They become self-destructive. Many co-dependents are barely surviving and most aren't getting their needs met. As counselor Scott Egleston says, ‘Codependency is a way of getting needs met that doesn't get needs met.’”

The co-dependent wife is a reactionary. She will overreact. She will under-react. But rarely will she *act*. This results in three counter-productive coping mechanisms. First, *ignore*—pretend it's not an issue—but down deep the poison circulates. Or second, *withdraw*—but the hurt drags you into despair. Or third, get *enmeshed*—but the struggle for control saps you dry. Clearly none of these coping mechanisms will help you or your husband.

## What You Can Do

### 1. Let Go

Changing people has always been the job of the Spirit. I have never met a husband who improved by the efforts of a meddling wife. In letting go a wife creates an environment for the Spirit to change her man and creates space for her to face her own

issues and find her own healing. Letting go is about trust—trust that God is at work. A woman who has let go, has asked herself, “Will I allow my husband’s behavior to determine who I am and how I feel about myself?” And she can answer, “My true identity is not based on how he treats me, but on how *He* treats me. My value is not determined by a man nailed to a computer, but by the *Man* nailed to a cross.

## 2. Find Grace

A wife must begin to see her husband with the eyes of Christ, this will mean she is filled with grace—a supernatural response that isn’t situation-dependent. Grace is about treating people in ways they don’t deserve. In the words of Johann Goethe, “When we treat a man as he is, we make him worse than he is. When we treat a man as if he is already what he potentially could be, we make him what he should be.” Though your man may be struggling sexually, he could be of the caliber of men like St. Augustine, who records his own struggle in one of the greatest of spiritual classics *Confessions*, or he could be the likes of King David who despite great sexual problems penned *Psalms* and was a-man-after-God’s-own-heart.

When a wife is filled with grace she can forgive. Even from her cross she can utter, “Father forgive him for he knows not what he’s doing” albeit her husband seems the very reason for her suffering. A wife filled with grace will know that her husband is not the enemy, but actually another victim of the real enemy who is trying to keep both from God’s ideal—true oneness. On the other hand, a wife with a poisoned spirit only furthers the real enemy’s plans. But grace waylays those plans. Lewis Smedes writes, “Grace is the beginning of healing because it gives the thing needed most, to be accepted without regard to whether we are acceptable.”

## 3. Pray

A wife must never forget that this is principally a spiritual battle, a battle requiring heavy artillery. Prayer busts the footholds of the enemy and reclaims lost territory. In prayer a wife will find healing for her hurts. She will be empowered to let go. She will also find grace. Prayer is foundational. It will clear the landscape of the lies of the enemy that say it is “hopeless.” According to spiritual psychologist Gerald May, no matter how oppressed we are by addiction, some small capacity for choice remains unvanquished—it is indestructible—we are always free on some level. Pray that this mentality and hope grows in your husband, that he will continue the fight, that he will not become discouraged, that each day he will make right choices and stand firm with a full armor.

Your man is going to have to cut through the gargantuan denial, replace tangle

rooted fear with trust, alleviate bone deep shame and hurt, put to death-lies that have permeated his identity since maybe childhood—nothing less than a no-bars-held miracle, and a miracle that may be years long in the process—a miracle that will require un-relenting prayer.

### **Which Road to Choose**

To say the road ahead is manageable is a deception—it is a harsh road—an impossible road alone (but you are not alone)—and it must not be forgotten that this road is well worth the journey.

There are women who choose another route, according to women’s minister Diane Roberts, “Some have been afraid to confront for fear of losing their marriages. They remain in the wilderness of denial and choose to live with their husbands’ duplicity. Others used their husbands’ infidelity to justify their own lusts. Others immediately divorced and remarried, only to find themselves facing a variation of the wilderness they were in before, because they never allowed time for personal healing and change. Dealing with a husband’s sexual addiction is one of the most difficult battles we ever fight in our lifetime.”

The destiny of our marriages and homes and churches has much to do with the wisdom of Christian women—women who can trust enough to let go, women whose lives are fragranced with grace, women who spend the needed time on their knees. These times call to such women. They are the ones who will prove, in the words of Thomas Merton that, “Prayer and love are really learned in the hour when prayer becomes impossible and your heart turns to stone.”