

From Heartache to Healing

Finding Power in Christ to Deal with
a Loved One's Sexual Addiction

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12 Step Materials for the LDS Community
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A Personal Introduction

Colleen's Story

When I joined the LDS church at age fourteen, the single doctrine that attracted me more than any other was that of eternal marriage. When I married five years later, I was determined to dedicate my life to this doctrine, to sacrifice anything to make sure my marriage lasted forever. Over the next twenty-three years, I poured my heart and soul into being the most active LDS woman I could imagine. I attended every meeting, held every position I was called to, gave birth to as many children as I could (twelve), and tried to understand why, no matter what I did, my husband was never satisfied with me—sexually or in any other way. Instead of feeling joyful and fulfilled, I spent my life in a nearly constant state of confusion and discouragement, wondering what was wrong with me.

Totally unbeknownst to me, my husband was practicing a sexual addiction that he had been indulging in since he was a teen. At no point in his life had he ever been concerned enough about his behaviors to tell anyone about them. All along he believed Satan, the father of lies, who convinced him that his choices weren't really "that bad," and that keeping them a secret would never fail him, that his secret indulgences could go on indefinitely even while he was performing publically as a faithful LDS man. Gradually, just as the scriptures warn, his conscience seared "**with a hot iron,**"¹ he rationalized and justified involving his own child in his lust.

Meanwhile, I was so distracted by trying to hide the continual spirit of blame and contention that permeated our private family life that I was oblivious to his hideous secret. I was blinded by the belief that since

I, as mother, was supposed to be the heart of my home, all of our problems in the home and family must be due to my failure. Surely, if I just did more, did better, was a better wife and mother, the Spirit of the Lord would be with us more.

Then one day, the truth about the depths of my husband's descent into evil came out, as my precious daughter disclosed to me his sexual behaviors toward her. While I have heard of wives who have been able and willing to face this level of heartache and go on with their marriage, I honestly could not feel the Lord asking that of me. Though it took several years to convince me that I had to leave my husband to the rescue of the only One who could save him, I did eventually accept that what I felt was, without a shadow of a doubt, an "honorable release" from the marriage. I felt the Lord's testimony that I had done all that I could do and my offering was acceptable to Him, that it was enough.

Like Lehi, I felt God's witness of truth to my heart that it was time to leave all that was secure and familiar behind.² I needed to take my children with me and trust that the Lord would lead us as we faced the equivalent of a journey into an unknown wilderness. Paradoxically, I was strengthened by the Lord's own spirit, as I did what I knew had to be done. I ended the marriage. I knew that no matter what lay ahead, nothing could be more harmful to my children than my husband's refusal to own his actions with a broken heart and contrite spirit. Thus I learned first-hand the devastating truth that there are times when divorce, with all its challenges, is the "lesser of two evils."

So it was that in June, 1991, I became a single parent with eight children between the ages of six and seventeen still to raise. I was alone, and yet, I did not feel as alone and vulnerable as I had in my marriage. I felt the Lord cleaving to me, keeping me safe in His Spirit, and with all the desperation of a drowning person, I clung to Him. Though my testimony of Him felt still and small at times, it never left me. Fortunately for me, I had already been studying and practicing the Twelve Steps during the previous ten years in order to maintain some degree of recovery from my own tendency to use food as an addiction. I knew what it meant to rely on the Lord to do for me what I had no idea how

to do for myself. He would not fail me. I had to trust that He would lead me one day and one step at a time. Still, it was obvious that I would need to do something to support myself and my children. Upheld by His Spirit, I resolutely turned my face toward the future and began to look at my options for work or schooling. I prayed that the Lord would light my way into whatever path He knew was best for me.

One of my options was to immediately find a job, but what kind of job? I was a teen in the 1960s, when Church leaders counseled young women not to put anything, even education, ahead of marriage. I married after only one year of college. I had been a stay-at-home mom for twenty-three years. What skills or qualifications could I put on an employment application? This reality pointed me toward the other option of returning to school to pursue a degree that would afford me far more earning potential. The thought of re-entering the world of books and tests and grades was overwhelming, but I felt the Spirit of the Lord leading me. It made no sense, but I felt a warm, glowing, peaceful excitement. Other options left me cold, feeling shut down and bothered.

For the next five years, supported by various forms of financial aid, I attended Brigham Young University and eventually graduated with a MA in English with an emphasis in journal and memoir writing. During those same years, I pursued and completed the course work for certification as an addictions counselor through the University of Utah and finished writing the book, *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*. After a brief post-graduation pause for further consultation with the Lord, I applied and was accepted into a doctoral program in Family and Human Development at Utah State University in Logan, Utah.

Again, I was faced with stepping off into the unknown as I prepared to relocate myself and my two youngest children—the only ones still living with me. As I drove away from the house my husband and I had moved into fourteen years earlier, a house that I had thought we would grow old in, a house that I thought would be the place our children and grandchildren would love to come home to, I could truly identify with the feelings of the early pioneers. I set my face toward a life that had turned into exactly the opposite of what I had expected.

I spent the next two years in Logan, sharing a house with my married daughter, attending school full-time and teaching undergraduate classes part-time. Once again, I thought I knew what the Lord wanted of me. I pictured that I would finish raising my youngest children, complete my PhD, and go on to teach and hopefully do more writing. However, in the summer of 1998, I learned that the Lord had an even greater education in mind for me when he moved me to Cache Valley. He was going to help me heal from the devastation of my first marriage to a sexually addicted partner, ironically enough, by inviting me to marry another sexually addicted man. He wanted me to learn what only a repentant man could teach me—a man's sexual addiction is not about his wife's inadequacy.

Though Phil had also struggled with his addiction since his teens, unlike my first husband, he had never justified it or pretended to himself it was okay. Instead, he had repeatedly sought out priesthood leaders to confess his problem and to reach out for help. Neither did he blame his wife for his behaviors. He was humble and honest about his weakness. He was willing to admit it was an addiction and to do all that he could to participate in his own recovery. In the first year we were married, I watched him slip several times, but he never tried to minimize or hide it. Every time he slipped, I would turn to the Lord, seeking His counsel and comfort, and every time, I would feel His love for Phil. I would feel His testimony that Phil's heart was in the right place—turned to Him—and that I could trust that Phil's desire to be clean was genuine and would eventually mature into complete and lasting recovery.

The Lord's promise was finally realized. Phil's slips became fewer and further between. As of this writing, he is rejoicing in over ten years of deliverance from his addiction. I have watched a miracle. My trust and faith in God's ability to change lives and restore a person to complete wholeness has been affirmed. I am filled with wonder and awe at His mercy and grace every time I observe Phil's healed soul. He is as innocent and without guile as a little child and yet so wise because of his experience. His testimony of the Savior's Atonement is unwavering and powerful, and blesses the lives of others.

Today, I enjoy the safety and oneness of a marriage between two partners who are both grounded firmly on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not faith in each other. The Savior is the heart of our home and in Him we have “**a perfect brightness of hope**” for ourselves and for our marriage. We pray continually to be able to convey this voice of hope to you, to strengthen you in your own journey from heartache to healing.

A Little of Phil’s Story

How grateful I am to be able to share with you the miracle that has happened in my life and to share the hope I have for you and your husband. I also must thank Colleen for her kind words.

About six months before my first wife, Kathy, suffered heart failure and passed away, she and I found Heart t’ Heart and quickly became close friends with Colleen. Like Colleen, Kathy had been involved in Twelve Step programs and so I knew something about the steps through her. Still, I had never tried to apply them to myself.

It wasn’t until I started to learn the LDS version of the steps that I began to realize that I was, in fact, an addict. This was a hard thing to face, but in doing so, something else began to happen that helped me to stand still and not deny the truth of it. I started to come to know my Savior for the first time. This sounds strange to write, because I was an active Latter-day Saint all my life. I thought I knew a lot about the Savior. I discovered, though, that knowing about Him wasn’t the same thing as knowing Him. For example, I couldn’t imagine that the Lord wasn’t as disgusted with me about my addiction as I was with myself. I blamed and shamed myself and thought He was inspiring me to do that. When I really came to know Him, I found that He felt exactly the opposite about me. I felt His Spirit testifying to me that He had never stopped loving me or having faith in me! I felt that He had been waiting, all along, for me to come to Him with the reality of how powerless I was to save myself. When I did, He received me with open arms.

One of the beliefs I held in the past that kept me from coming directly to the Lord was that I had to prove myself “worthy” before I

sought Him. Only then could I expect Him to help me. As I studied the true principles in the Twelve Steps, using *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* as a study guide to the Book of Mormon, I began to realize that by holding this belief, I was reversing the order of true repentance.

For the first time in my life, I actually heard Moroni's testimony: **"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness..."**⁴ and saw that the first thing I needed to do, even while I was still unworthy, was to come unto Christ. Why? Because only in Him would I find the power to deny myself of the ungodliness of my pornography addiction. It was only when I came to the Savior just as I was, in the middle of my messed up life, and admitted that I couldn't get rid of this addiction without His help, that things started to change.

Citing **Doctrine and Covenants 6:36** in which the Lord testifies, **"Look unto me in every thought,"** the text of *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* helped me see that I could actually turn to the Lord even in the moment of my worst temptations, not just in my righteous thoughts. As that testimony sunk into my heart, I came to the place where I could humbly turn to Him right in the moment, and say, "Lord, I can't handle this temptation, please take it away." And He would.

Even more miraculously, I found that He never became impatient with me, even when I had to cry out to Him in my heart many times in the same day, sometimes in the same hour. Every time I did, I found His power with me, sustaining me. Thus, in His power, not mine, I found myself able to remain abstinent, one day at a time. Those single days have now added up to many amazing years of deliverance from a sin that I thought would destroy my life. The thing I must always testify of and never forget, though, is that it is *His* strength that is working this miracle in my life, not my own. For over thirty years, I couldn't put together more than a few weeks of abstinence, and without Him, I can't do it now, either. But Christ can, and He does.

What is my part? What do I have to do? I have to be willing to put my relationship with Him first, above all other relationships. Although my recovery grows stronger with the passing years, I know I must remain

watchful. Even more importantly, I need to always remember where the power came from that enabled me to become abstinent in the first place. I must acknowledge that power as it continues to support me from day to day. I have to stay in close touch with Him every day, but that has only convinced me how much He loves me—and I know He loves each of you that much, too, and will help you to find your way through the confusion and pain you are now feeling.

That is the message I hope to support Colleen in sharing with you—that there is a way out of this hell, for both you and your husband. The Savior can change lives. He can lift us from these awful depths and give us a life of peace and happiness, free from the anguish that years of addiction have inevitably caused. In the years since Kathy’s passing and my marriage to Colleen, I have been blessed to share my experience of coming to know and apply the Savior’s atoning power in detail in my book, *Clean Hands, Pure Heart: Overcoming Addiction to Pornography Through the Redeeming Power of Jesus Christ*.

Now, it is my blessing and privilege to join Colleen in sharing the message of this book, *From Heartache to Healing*. I hope that it will be a blessing to you to hear some of the thoughts I can contribute as a recovering husband and father. Let me begin by assuring you that the Lord loves you and wants to help you find peace, right now, right where you are, whether your husband chooses to change or not.

Colleen has learned how to support a husband in his recovery while not interfering with his agency and accountability before the Lord. She has inspired and blessed me with her example since the first day she agreed to marry me. Still, in and through the ten years we’ve been together, she has left me alone to work out my recovery with the Lord. She has taught me that my wife can’t save me, any more than I can save myself. She has modeled for me what it looks like and feels like to go to the Savior for the hope and strength it takes to face life’s hard times without resorting to addictive behavior.

I thank the Lord continually for her willingness to believe in me and to believe in Christ even more. The tragic loss of Colleen’s first marriage to sexual addiction stands in stark contrast to the healing of our lives

and the joy we feel as we both come to Christ and experience the sealing bond of His Spirit. Because she has lived through both circumstances, I believe she has a unique ability to empathize with other sisters, no matter which direction their husbands may choose to take.

You and your husband are both experiencing one of the most challenging scourges of our times. But there are principles that will help. Most importantly, the Savior is there for you. He has blessed my life and Colleen's life, and we know He will bless yours as well. Thank you for letting us be part of your journey.

Our United Testimony

You need to know up front that we both believe that there can be no heart-deep, genuine healing for a Latter-day Saint woman (or man) if her efforts at recovery do not center on and arise out of the words of Christ perceived and believed in the private, personal, sacred places of her own heart. It is our testimony that no amount of talk therapy, guided imagery, or emotional release work, and no number of books read, priesthood leaders counseled with, or loved ones gathered round to support you, will bring you the heart-deep, soul-satisfying comfort and counsel that the Lord's own testimony will bring to you.

We hope to share enough of our experience, faith and hope in Christ in the pages of this book that you can feel His presence in your own heart and mind as you read. We pray that you will not only read and say, "I recognize this story. It is so much like mine," but that you will continue to read and begin to say, "I believe their testimony. I feel a hope in Christ awakening and strengthening in my heart."

We offer this testimony that we have lived in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

1. 1 Timothy 4:2
2. 1 Nephi 2:1-3.
3. 2 Nephi 31:20.
4. Moroni 10:32.

Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed
unto the end of the world,
Say ye to the daughter of Zion,
Behold, thy salvation cometh.

— Isaiah 62:11

Section 1

Discovering the Truth, Confronting the Lies

Chapter 1

Where to Start?

The usual place to start is with an introduction, so let's do that first.

Hi, Colleen and Phil here! If we could welcome you into our home and sit down with you one-on-one, we'd be delighted to do so, but since time and expense prohibit that, we are trusting the testimony of the Lord to our hearts that it will be just as good—maybe even better—to put our sharing in writing and send it out to each of you via this book.

Who are we? What are our credentials? How can we presume to offer you help with what you're facing? In one sentence: we are survivors of the heart-breaking experience of sexual addiction and its consequences on family members. Phil struggled with pornography addiction from the time he was a teen, but has been in recovery and clean from his sexual addiction since November 1999. My first husband refused to deal with his sexual addiction. I was forced to face and recover from a codependent relationship with him and end our marriage of twenty-three years in 1991. I have also had to learn how to allow the Lord to sustain me through many heart-rending moments in my children's lives as they, too, have fallen prey to various addictions.

To Wives and Other Loved Ones

We are well aware that there are husbands with sexually addicted wives, as well as parents and others with sexually addicted loved ones, who long to find literature addressing their situations. Nevertheless, we

have followed the persistent impression to direct our thoughts to the wives and fiancées of men who struggle with sexual addiction.

If you are a husband or loved one of a sexually addicted person, we pray that the Spirit of the Lord will guide you to adapt and apply the ideas in *From Heartache to Healing* to your individual needs. Virtually all recovery literature based on the Twelve Steps contains true principles from which every addict and every loved one of an addict can benefit.

Colleen: Sharing with Each of You as Individuals

Phil and I speak to each of you as friends and fellow survivors in this battle Satan is waging against the Saints. Neither of us pretends to represent the voice of secular education and professional counseling, helpful as that voice may be. We believe the contributions of science can give addicts and family members great techniques and much thoughtful advice based on the latest studies and theories. We have both been through PhD programs and trained in the scientific method. While all of that learning was good, it did not reach to the depths of the human soul where the testimony of living experience can reach.

We know by our own experience that there is a very special kind of help that can only be found when personal experience, shared feelings, and living testimony speak heart to heart. Thus, Phil and I will be drawing primarily upon our own experiences as a man and wife who have faced and survived the ravages of sexual addiction. Besides the “authority” of our own experience, we will be relying wholly upon the counsel of the prophets of the Lord, and through their testimonies, of the Lord Himself.

As you read, you will find that some sections are written in our united voice while other sections will be designated as either one or the other of us, just as this section is in my voice. We have done this because as we sit at our desks typing these thoughts, we are wishing we could be with each of you in person. Thus it is our desire that the voice in these pages will feel to you like we are sitting across from you in our living room rather than speaking to you from a podium or pulpit.

We invite you to use your imagination and visualize each of these chapters as if it were a separate conversation with us. Granted, we will be doing most of the initial “talking” in print as you read our words, but we encourage you to respond the same way—in print. We encourage you to get up right now and find pen and paper—journal or notebook—where you can jot down your thoughts as they come in response to our thoughts. We hope you will use this technique throughout *From Heartache to Healing* so that your reading experience can be as close to a dialogue between us as possible. We also welcome your direct responses and feedback at the following e-mail or post office address:

FHTH@windhavenpublishing.com

Windhaven Publishing, P.O. Box 31, Hyrum, UT 84319

We would love to hear from you and will do our best to answer each of you personally.

In Their Own Voices

Included in the following chapters you will also “hear” the sharing of other LDS women who are dealing with their husbands’ sexual addictions. These comments and testimonies were originally posted anonymously on an online spouses’ support forum. Out of gratitude for these sisters courageous sharing and with a desire to help their voices reach as many readers as possible, we have included excerpts woven throughout the book. For the sake of anonymity we have used pseudonyms and eliminated personal details.

We know that you will be blessed by their long-distance fellowship and hope that you may be encouraged to participate in such a support system yourself. (See Appendix for a list of online forums.) These forums can be a great help if you are concerned about keeping yourself strictly anonymous or if you do not have a local LDS support group to attend.

The Repetition of Certain Themes in This Book

As we address the different issues in each chapter, you will find several major themes or testimonies repeated over and over, such as:

- Your husband's addiction is not a reflection of anything about you.
- You are not responsible for his recovery, only for your own.
- You and your husband are not each other's worst enemies—no matter how much you may feel that way at this point. Satan is the enemy of you both.
- You and your husband can find hope and recovery from the wounds Satan has inflicted upon you as you follow the principles in the LDS version of the Twelve Steps.
- The twelve true principles found in the Twelve Steps will lead you along a pathway of honesty and humility that will bring you closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior than you may have ever imagined possible.
- You *can* survive this! You *can* heal from this! You *can* outlive this experience. There can *and will* be life after this. We offer our stories and our lives as living proof of that testimony. Someday, this season of terrible heartache and confusion will be behind you; it will be history.

Though it may feel totally insane to consider these ideas from where you are today—with your dreams shattered around you. However, we know you can emerge from this experience far more mature, more compassionate, more patient, and with greater capacity for love, and yes, even joy, than you have ever known. We speak to you from that place of recovery in our own lives. We readily admit that it feels almost

like a form of resurrection, of having been returned to life. We know the reality of the Savior's power in our lives.

We pray that you may feel our love for Him and for you throughout this book. We pray that reading this book will bless you with an increase in your sense of His love for you so that you can trust Him even in the otherwise overwhelming challenges you face. We pray that your ability to feel His peace will increase while you read this book. There is no one and nowhere else you can turn that can give you the peace that only the Savior Himself can administer. The peace He gives is a **“peace...which passeth all understanding.”**¹ We will be coming back to this theme many times throughout the following chapters. This is the only peace that can enter into the depths of your heart and create a haven for His Spirit, so that He can sustain you through the storm and walk with you across the crashing waves created by sexual addiction in these last days.

Starting Where YOU Are

If we could meet with you face-to-face, the next thing we'd want to know is where you are right now along the path of discovering your loved one's sexual addiction and dealing with it. We'd invite you to share some of your story with us. We'd probably ask a few questions like:

- How long have you known about your husband's addiction? Did you just learn about it or have you been struggling with knowledge of it for years?
- Have you had a chance to do much research on the subject of sexual addiction or are you still in shock at having to even use those words?
- Is this book your first effort to reach out for help?
- What other books have you read?
- Have you been trying to deal with this all alone or have you talked with anyone else yet? With your bishop, a parent, a family member, a best friend?

- Are you seeking or have you found a professional marriage and family therapist who understands addiction and respects your religious beliefs? Does he or she know about the growing number of resources available in the LDS community?
- Do you feel like you're on the verge of a separation? Maybe even a divorce?

By asking those questions, we would be doing a sort of triage assessment of the nature of your individual wounds and which order of response we could make that would be tailored directly to your personal needs. Since we can't do that, we'd like to suggest that you turn back to the Table of Contents at the front of this book and read through the chapter titles and subtitles prayerfully. Ask Heavenly Father to highlight for you those chapters and sections of chapters that He knows would address your most pressing needs. It may be to start at the very beginning with just what "addiction" is and what the prophets have said about it. If this is the case, then reading Chapter Two, "What It Means to Be Addicted," would be the place to start. If, however, your heart is breaking over questions like, "What did I do to deserve this?" or "What do I do now to control his acting out?" then you'll see in the Table of Contents that other chapters may be the place to turn first.

Whether you need to do some quick first-aid reading of specific chapters after this one, or you feel able to settle in and read straight through the chapters in order, we do recommend that you read all of Section One, "Discovering the Truth, Confronting the Lies," before moving on to Section Two, "Continuing in the Truth, Outliving the Lies," and all of Section Two before moving on to Section Three, "Embracing Your Common Need for Recovery." This will give you the best foundation to build upon as you move forward.

Our prayers and blessings go with you.

Chapter 2

What It Means To Be Addicted

We understand how tempting it is to want to believe your husband's behavior is just a very disgusting and ugly bad habit. We know you want to believe that if you could just convince him how disgusting and hurtful it is, he'd come to his senses, put it down, scrub his mind with a wire brush and be done with it.

You might be surprised to know that those are exactly the same thoughts he had about his involvement in pornography when he started. When he was first exposed to it and didn't turn away, you can be sure he assumed that he'd eventually just make up his mind, exercise a little willpower (okay, a *lot* of willpower), and be done with it. But when he finally tried, he found he couldn't stop, at least not permanently. In this chapter we hope to help increase your understanding of why your husband can't just stop, even though he may want to with the same desperation a drowning man feels to breathe.

Why? Because a bad habit is to an addiction what a mosquito bite is to a shark bite. What a skinned knee is to leprosy. What a tonsillectomy is to a heart transplant. What the common cold is to the black plague.

We believe the following is a good working definition of addiction and conveys the whole truth about its scope and power:

Addiction exists when the repeated use of a mood-altering substance or behavior results in a person

becoming so dependent on the substance or behavior that they can find no way to permanently stop, even when continuing the behavior is causing serious damage to their relationships, health, employment, and personal sense of serenity and spirituality.

The Enemy Has Infiltrated Our Ranks

In the LDS community, most of us have believed that if we would avoid the use of addictive *substances*, we could ignore the whole subject of addiction. We have been oblivious to the reality that Satan has infiltrated our lives and is mounting an all-out war by luring us into behaviors that can be every bit as devastating as a Word of Wisdom problem.

The fact is that any activity that offers a person even a temporary escape from stress or other challenging feelings can become an addiction. Whatever *it is*, we almost always start out thinking we'll indulge "just this once." Thus, abuse of prescription drugs, gambling, excessive spending, excessive use of television and other forms of electronic media such as computers, electronic games, and fantasy games, are some of the most prevalent addictive behaviors today. In the LDS culture just as in the world in general, unhealthy eating behaviors are rapidly becoming more than just bad habits for many who find that no number of diets, exercise programs, or weight-loss drugs can provide them with permanent relief. Just one more bite, one more brownie, one more meal—then we'll "go on the wagon."

As challenging as it may be for us as members of a church culture whose very identity is founded on "Deseret" (the honey bee and the continuous busyness of the beehive), we are having to recognize that it can become an addiction to be compulsively working, serving others, reading, exercising, cleaning our homes and many other good things found on the ideal "to do" list.

Why? Because all of these behaviors—even living as perfectly as possible, checking an ever increasing number of "should's" and "have-

to's" off a list—can be motivated by the need to distract ourselves from fear, anxiety, sorrow, regret, guilt, shame, and resentment, just to name a few of the negative feelings mortality presents us with.

These behaviors have the ability to mask and postpone negative feelings by triggering rushes of adrenaline, dopamine and other mood-altering chemicals. Thus, when we indulge in any of these activities excessively, we must prayerfully ask this question: *Am I doing this because it brings me joy and peace, or because I am feeling compelled to do it?*

If, in all honesty, we have to admit we are doing these things to avoid negative feelings, we need to face the fact we are practicing an addiction.

Still, even in the face of how widespread addictive behaviors can be, there is no other addiction among the Saints that is taking a greater toll in terms of devastated lives and disrupted families than addiction to pornography. As President Ezra Taft Benson declared:

The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality. This, the Prophet Joseph said, would be the source of more temptations, more buffetings, and more difficulties for the elders of Israel than any other (see *Journal of Discourses*, 8:55) (President Ezra Taft Benson, “Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 4).

Satan not only desires your husband's downfall. He desires the downfall of you, your children, and your children's children, as well. With this understanding, it can provide some comfort to know that the prophets of God have foreseen the battle in which we find ourselves immersed. It is further testimony that we do have a Father in Heaven who is aware of our burden. We can be sure He has prepared a way for us to rise triumphant from even a blow as devastating as addiction.

Let us say it again, as gently but as firmly as we can: *Your husband can't stop using pornography on his own, no matter how much he loves you, or how much love you extend to him, or how much pressure you put on him.*

The truth is, without realizing it, he has wandered down a progressive path into Satan's single most powerful trap—addiction. Nothing you do is going to save him. The only thing you can do to help him, or to help any person who is struggling with an addiction, is to set the example of coming to Christ for your own sake.

What Makes Pornography Addiction So Powerful?

Traditionally, those who work with drug and alcohol abuse define addiction as taking a foreign substance into the body frequently enough that the body adjusts to its presence and goes through severe symptoms of withdrawal when deprived of it. Admittedly, people who attempt to quit a behavioral addiction may not experience the kind of physical pain, cold sweats, and *delirium tremens* suffered by someone coming off hard drugs or alcohol. This can invite the deceptive impression that those with behavioral addictions don't really suffer from dependency and withdrawal. The reality is quite the opposite.

Those who have become addicted to the sexual arousal stimulated by viewing pornography relate very closely with the behaviors, emotions and thinking of people addicted to substances like drugs or alcohol. In fact, Elder Dallin H. Oaks quoted one brother who testified that “quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing” in comparison to trying to quit sexual addiction.¹

There's a very logical reason for this reality. Of all the behaviors that could become addictive, there are none that alter the body's internal chemistry more powerfully than sexual arousal. One bishop referred to this physical change as “arousal on demand” (see Elder Oak's talk cited above). Even though these chemicals are produced by the body instead of being introduced through a pill or needle, they are no less real. Thus, the use of pornography is definitely a “mood-altering” experience that can be almost immediately addictive.

Phil: Can a Person Really Lose Their Agency?

Nobody starts viewing pornography in the hope of becoming addicted. In our day and age, a young man's first exposure to pornography is very likely not a deliberate choice of his own. Nowadays, becoming exposed to pornographic images is not really a question of "if" but "when." A person can hardly turn on any commercial television channel or stand in line at a grocery store without being exposed.

Fortunately, many men are able to turn away from such inadvertent exposure. On the other hand, many other men and virtually all boys are enticed to take a second look. Then, when they realize that a little curious looking has become a compulsion—something they feel compelled to do again, even though they really meant to give it up—they are already deep into the adversary's snare. Many pornography addicts have truly tried to quit over and over again, even before anyone else found out what they were doing. They may have tried dozens of times, but found they could not stay away. Trying to hide their panic, even from themselves, they begin to despair. The irrational result? They often give up trying to quit all together.

I can testify how it feels to get lost in the darkness of repeated surrender to temptation. By giving in over and over, the reaction becomes so ingrained that eventually there is no thought, no decision, no attempt to resist the urge. There is just a following of the temptation, wherever the tempter chooses to lead, as if one were in a trance. It's as if there is no choice but to give in. The temptations seem overwhelming, and the will to resist seems to have disappeared somewhere along the way. That is why so many addicts come to a place of feeling hopeless about ever getting well. Like me, they have tried over and over to break free, only to find their own strength woefully insufficient. After repeatedly trying and failing, I came to the point where I thought recovery was impossible and began to respond like a total slave. I had become convinced that I was lost, doomed to unending bondage to the enemy of my soul.

Paradoxically, one reason Satan has been able to virtually sneak up and establish such a battle-front right in our midst is because of our

belief that we are free agents and will always be able to make a right choice if we want to badly enough. What we haven't realized is that while we are all born with our agency intact, we can have experiences after coming into mortality that compromise or cause us to forfeit our ability to choose for ourselves "almost to the vanishing point," according to President Marion G. Romney.

The free agency possessed by any one person is increased or diminished by the use to which he puts it. Every wrong decision one makes restricts the area in which he can thereafter exercise his agency. The further one goes in the making of wrong decisions in the exercise of free agency, the more difficult it is for him to recover the lost ground. One can, by persisting long enough, reach the point of no return. He then becomes an abject slave. By the exercise of his free agency, he has decreased the area in which he can act, almost to the vanishing point (Marion G. Romney, "The Perfect Law of Liberty" *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 43).

Other Apostles and Prophets, such as Elder Russell M. Nelson² and Elder Boyd K. Packer³ have also borne prophetic testimony to the fact that a person can literally lose the ability to exercise their own will by slipping ever so gradually into the severe bondage of addiction.

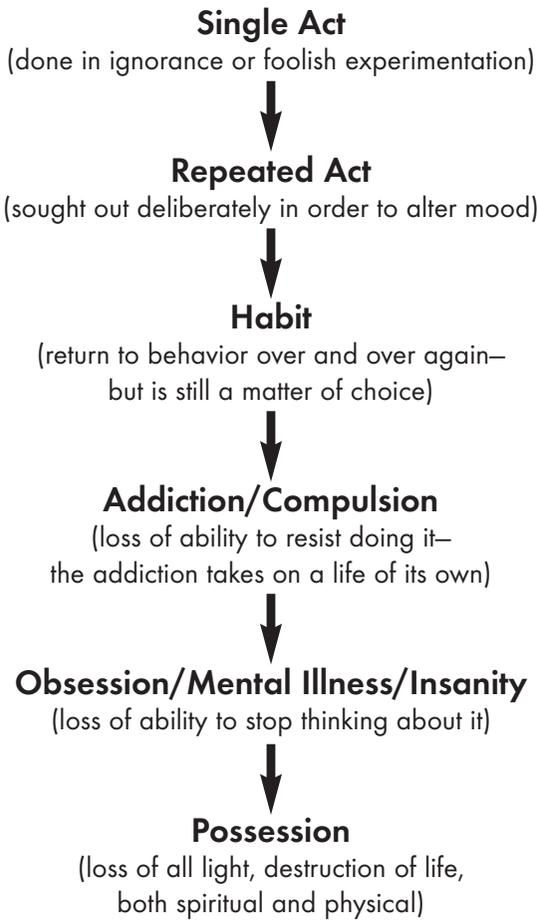
How Did It Become an Addiction?

Every addiction, not just pornography addiction, begins as one single act against one's conscience. At that moment, when the potential addict goes against the Light of Christ and ignores the truth, that person begins to forfeit their "response-ability," or in other words, their ability to resist the next act. Before they know it, they are repeating the act, and most likely they have begun to do it in secret.

This is how you can tell the difference between a habit and a *bad* habit—when it must be done in secret. Soon, the bad habit has become something the person begins to depend upon. They need it to help them

feel able to cope with life. An addiction has formed. Just as the Book of Mormon testifies, Satan’s enticements, which began as light as flaxen cords,⁴ end up being the very chains and fetters and shackles of hell.⁵ As the addiction tightens its grip, the person caught in it begins to care more for the addictive substance or behavior than for anything else in their life. Possession is not too strong a word for the end stage of this downward spiral.

The Loss of Agency to Addiction



We hope that seeing the progressive nature of addiction may help you understand that your husband most likely started out as the really decent guy you originally thought him to be, but he has contracted a serious mental/emotional/spiritual illness that cannot be minimized or ignored. The lying spirit of the adversary is at the root of addiction and must be countered with truth. Addiction will only grow worse in the fertile, dark soil of secrecy and denial.

Phil: Accepting the Diagnosis of Addiction

It may be very hard to accept the diagnosis of your husband's problem as an addiction. To use that word makes it sound so serious. But for me, it was a great blessing to identify exactly what I was dealing with. Calling the problem an addiction is no worse than calling diabetes, diabetes. Using the correct term for it is not going to make the reality worse. In fact it's going to set you free to deal with it frankly. It is so important to acknowledge the seriousness of addiction; it's hardly an exaggeration to say it is a matter of life and death. If you resist accepting the reality about his addiction, you won't be willing to go through the steps necessary to help your husband deal with it.

Think of it this way: If you turn your ankle and think it is only sprained, you likely won't go to the doctor. But when the pain continues to get worse, you may start to suspect that your ankle is actually broken and needs a doctor's care. Calling the injury a sprain and treating it as such allows more damage to occur while you continue to walk on an ankle that is truly broken. Once you accept the diagnosis of a break and seek treatment, healing can occur.

My own tendency to minimize my problem kept me from finding real help for years. It is my hope and prayer that in being honest and sharing my own experiences, I can encourage you, as well as your husband, to come out of denial and seek help immediately.

Colleen: Please Seek Help for Yourself

One of the most universal hallmarks of addiction is the desire to keep it a secret. The addict is always reluctant to let anyone know of the problem. Perhaps he has told you of the problem on his own, or maybe you have discovered his secret independently. In any case, you are hurting and need help. You need to talk to someone, even if you don't want to. Secrecy breeds more disease. One must let the light in to allow the healing begin.

My dear sister, I hope you won't mind my reiterating this thought just one more time: *You need to seek help for yourself.* You're hurting. You need to take care of your own mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health, no matter what your husband does. We'll talk more about that in a later chapter. For now, suffice it to say, one of you has to go for help.

To pretend you can take care of this problem secretly, on your own, just between the two of you, without sacrificing your privacy (pride) is another lie of the devil. He is attempting to keep you in isolation until the disease has destroyed your marriage and family.

Run, don't walk—no matter how bad it hurts—to your nearest priesthood leader, whether your husband agrees or knows. This is not an area where your husband's feelings can righteously interfere with your need for help. If he hasn't yet figured out just how potentially terminal his condition can become, then what you are learning may be the most important truth you can offer him. But first you have to get it, absorb it, believe it—and grab the lifeline of recovery for yourself.

Do You Have a Behavior You Struggle to Control?

As you begin to realize that addiction can come in many forms, you may be able to identify a behavior that you've tried to eliminate from your own life, but without lasting success. This honest realization may help you relate to your husband's dilemma. Please know that we do not suggest this exercise of self-examination in order to detract in any way from the seriousness of your husband's addiction, or to subject you to any more shame or guilt. We suggest it simply as a very profound way

that may help you to comprehend how addiction could have such a terrible hold on your husband's life.

Colleen: My Experience with My Own Addictive Behavior

I am absolutely sure that one reason I was able to understand and bear the reality of Phil's addiction was because I was able to empathize with him. I understood what it felt like to be addicted myself.

Since 1981 when I first attended a Twelve Step recovery group focused on unhealthy eating patterns, I had known that, for me, eating was a mood-altering experience—and certain foods were more mood-altering than others. Though I was constantly obsessing about my weight and the latest diet craze, I could not resist the urge to consume unhealthy types and amounts of food any better than an alcoholic could turn down alcohol. My weight increased until I was over 300 pounds! I think we would all have to agree that I was living up to our earlier definition of addiction as “causing serious damage to [my] relationships, health... and personal sense of serenity and spirituality.”

In my personal preface to *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*, I wrote:

In 1981 I tipped the scale at over 300 pounds. Believe me, I was the most miserable “active” Latter-day Saint I knew. Of course, I didn't know many people, Latter-day Saint or otherwise, because of the isolated, imprisoned lifestyle I lived. I walled myself in with cleaning, cooking, canning, sewing, even with children and husband and, of course, with eating. ... Eating was the one thing I consistently did for myself. Mother, the supreme nurturer and caretaker, finally got around to nurturing and taking care of herself at midnight by consuming food she had deliberately hoarded and hidden earlier.

It's pretty obvious that I had a problem—a serious problem. It's obvious to me today, but it wasn't then. Back then I didn't have time to recognize any problems

in my life. All I needed was another Twinkie and I could make it; I could be there for one more act of service or hour of self-sufficient sewing or canning.

The parallels between my behavior and those of an alcoholic (or a pornography addict) were terrifying and humbling. I ate in secret. I spent money that we desperately needed for family necessities on my private indulgences. The list could go on and on. I knew what it felt like to actually hate the ice cream or chocolate I was eating and still not be able to leave it alone. I knew what it meant to have every ounce of willpower I could muster fail me.

Gratefully, by the time I met and married Phil, I had been in recovery from my addiction for fifteen years and was maintaining a weight loss of over 150 pounds through the grace (power) and personal revelations of Christ (not by trying to manage or control my own behaviors). I also knew that even if Phil couldn't overcome his addiction, the Savior could, if Phil would let Him.

It helped so much for Phil and me to be able to talk as two fellow mortals, equally in need of deliverance from our "thorns in the flesh." It really leveled the playing field, as the saying goes. Satan couldn't lie to me and persuade me to think that somehow I was better than Phil or that he was worse than I was. I recognized that Phil had simply fallen into a different way of trying to mood-alter than I had, when he was sad or discouraged or overwhelmed or lonely.

I know as I write this that there may be a chance that you are someone who has never struggled with a tendency to unhealthy eating, in which case you may find it as hard to relate to my story as it is for you to comprehend your husband's sexual addiction. Still, if you will honestly try, I think you will be able to identify some behavior in your life that means so much to you that you get moody and upset if you are unable to engage in it. It may be watching television, reading, spending money, or it may even be cleaning and organizing. Maybe it's exercising or trying to be perfect in some way, or maybe in every way. Remember,

it could be an activity that is good when used in a healthy, moderate way, but when used to excess or in an inappropriate way, it is damaging and consuming your life.

Prayerfully consider this and ask Heavenly Father to help you discover if there are behaviors in your life that could fall under the label of addiction.

Once again, we only suggest this exercise because it is such a powerful way for a spouse to begin to comprehend in a small part that we actually share the same dilemma—we are *all* dealing with the tendencies of the “**natural man**,”⁶ in one way or another. Our common enemy is Satan (not each other), and our equally in-common need is to become converted to the Lord Jesus Christ—not just to His Church—and to be “**strengthened...in the inner man**”⁷ by His atoning power. Otherwise, we are all equally lost and fallen.

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Pornography,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 87.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Addiction or Freedom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 7.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “Ye Are the Temple of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 72.
4. 2 Nephi 26:22.
5. Doctrine & Covenants 123:8.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Ephesians 3:16.

Chapter

3

*At War Against a
Common Enemy*

When a home has been invaded by pornography or another sexual sin, the very foundations of a marriage can be shaken. Both partners look at the other as the source of their pain and suffering. She looks at him and says, “How could you bring such trash into our home, into our lives?” He sees her words as yet another source of shame, another reason to turn to his addiction. Love in the home is replaced by fighting and recrimination. Both people begin to wonder if their marriage will survive this dreadful division between them.

The battle seems futile at times. I know it is the adversary. Through this experience he has discovered my Achilles' heel and my husband's. What better way to destroy a family than to make us both wallow in the bitter battle of addiction, compulsion and obsession? I know where to turn for strength, but the futility of repeated patterns has left me tired and weak.

— Lois

Satan has established a beachhead in the family, a frontline within the home.

Colleen: Satan Wants to Destroy Both of You

One of the truths I have been most blessed by as I have allowed it to find place in my heart, is the truth that Phil and I are not each other's enemies. We are actually comrades in arms against the same enemy—Satan. Letting this truth soften my heart towards Phil was one of the most powerful contributions I made to become his ally in his recovery efforts. I can't emphasize how important it is that you begin to prayerfully consider allowing the Lord to open this witness to your heart about your husband.

In the spiritual realm, just as the Savior taught, there is a legion of evil spirits in league with Satan who desire not only your husband's destruction, but yours as well. Satan is doing all he can to turn you against each other—blaming and accusing and shaming each other. He is the one who would deluge your husband with lust and drown you in despair. He is the one who would destroy your potential as individual children of God. He is the one who would like to see you become so despondent that you develop addictions of your own as you try to cope with your fear and pain. He is the one who hopes the effects of your unhappiness will drive your children to resort to addictive behaviors.

When the addiction is revealed and recovery has a chance to begin, he often intensifies his efforts.

Maybe Satan feels we are slipping from his grasp because we are getting into recovery. He knows how to destroy our family. He can entice my husband to choose to follow him until he is an addict. He can encourage me to be so angry and resentful that I am filled with contention and have no desire to forgive. He can give me every opportunity to become thoroughly overwhelmed so that I can't mother my children—and if I can't do that, I can't protect them from his snares. — Cathy

Of all the people alive today, we as Latter-day Saints are *potentially* among the most fortunate, even when the battle with pornography has entered our homes. Why? Because of the eternal perspective on life provided to us by the doctrines of the Restoration. We say “potentially” because our doctrines do us no good if we don’t learn them or, if knowing them, we don’t apply them in the trenches of our real lives.

This is a spiritual war being fought in the spiritual depths of men’s and women’s souls. We must be willing to step back from the immediate heartache in order to see the big picture of what’s really going on and to recognize our common enemy.

Drawing on Gospel Truths to Reveal Our Real Enemy

According to the scriptures, Satan was once known as Lucifer and actually began a war in heaven. This was not a war of flesh and blood, but a war of heart and mind. It was a time in which each of us decided how we felt about agency. Did we agree with Lucifer’s offer to save us from the painful, messy consequences of agency? Obviously, since we’re here in mortality, we agreed with Heavenly Father’s plan, which required us to humble ourselves and participate in a fallen, imperfect world that we can only escape by allowing the Savior to rescue us.

When Satan’s offer was not accepted, he became enraged at God and at those of us who chose to follow our Father’s plan, to trust Jesus to redeem us. Satan is the one who still encourages these very same attitudes of bitterness and resentment in our hearts today. He leads us away from life on God’s terms—those terms being agency, imperfection and humility. This becomes especially true when we must deal with the reality of addiction in our own life or in the lives of our loved ones.

Colleen: Coming to Know the Unfailing Love of God

The adversary is literally drowning the human family in lies. We can hardly get through an hour of our day without something discouraging and disheartening bombarding our hearts and minds with negative thoughts. Thanks to our modern media and technology, the whole

world has become the equivalent of a tiny village where we can hear (almost instantly) about enough sad, traumatic things to last a lifetime! Then, to find out that the influence of the adversary has reached right into the heart of our marriages and our lives—it is enough to crush every hope we have. That is exactly what he is working for and planning on—to convince us that life isn't worth living.

When I was going through the darkest times in my first marriage, the adversary bombarded me with the lie that life wasn't worth living. The only thing that saved me was coming to the Savior, personally and directly, in the same way as did Alma the Younger.

I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death (Alma 36:17-18).

Of course, in Alma's case he was suffering for his own sins, but the truth is that sin, no matter who commits it, has the potential to drag us all down into the “**gall of bitterness**” and the “**everlasting chains of death,**” unless we can turn to the Savior and call on Him for salvation.

As I went through those terrible, dark years, there was only one way and means by which I could find rest to my soul, and that was by establishing my faith securely upon the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—not just on being a member of His true Church. Membership and activity alone were not enough to save me. I needed *Him*. I needed to come to the veil and converse with Him, sometimes every hour, in order to receive His Spirit and His guidance about what He would have me do each day.

It was also during this time that I was delivered from Satan's lie that God is a stern and punitive being who will not bless me if I am in any way unworthy or unfaithful in my own thoughts and actions. I was so grateful to learn, instead, that my Heavenly Father and my Savior are

both “big” enough and spiritually secure enough to handle my anger and bitterness, even if, in the midst of my pain, I direct it toward Them. I have learned by my own experience that literally *nothing* can separate me from the love of God.¹

Colleen: The Sacred Act of Holding Nothing Back from the Lord

Yes, you heard me correctly. It really is okay for you to admit to Heavenly Father that you’re mad at Him, or at the very least, that you’re really confused and frustrated toward Him and His “**great plan of happiness.**”² After all, He knew your husband had this problem and He didn’t warn you about it. It’s normal to question why God didn’t warn you and keep you from ending up in such a marriage.

I have learned that to harbor any negative thoughts or feelings of any kind while trying to pretend them away is to fall once again into the liar’s trap. You see, the adversary doesn’t want you to go to Heavenly Father with your whole heart and pour it all out—right down to the dregs, right down to the very last drop of sorrow, sadness, regret, resentment, bitterness, confusion, and anger. Satan knows that if you do, you will discover for yourself just how loving and compassionate Heavenly Father really is.

Unlike Satan, our Father will not attack you with accusations and doubts. I have every confidence that you will find, as I did, that He will continue to love you, even if you are full of anger and disgust at your husband, yourself, and even at Him, for what has happened.

Some years ago, as I was pondering what it means to fully surrender my will and my life to the Lord (as Step Three in the Twelve Step program invites us to do), I realized that I had to be willing to lay all the pain I had ever felt on the Savior’s willing and capable shoulders. On that occasion, I wrote the following words in my journal:

When I have finally come to the end of myself and I have lost the battle and given into my fear, anger, frustration, impatience and bitterness, I find nowhere to go but to the same God I’m so tempted to blame for not saving

me from “this hour.” How amazed I am at the *humility* of the Lord in the face of my feelings, as I hear these words come into my mind and know they are His:

“Let me have your pain, Colleen. Your anger and your bitterness as well.”

“Lay it on me. I can take it....In fact, I *have* taken it.”

“I’ll step in between you and the pain.”

“I’ll take a ‘bullet’ for you, *even if you need to fire it*. Blast away.”

“Get it all out. Get all the pain out.”

“Don’t hold anything back.”

The peace the Lord offers comes only when we’re finally willing to *let* the Lord be the one—the only one—to save us. The greatest truth that you and your husband will ever come to know is just how much you are loved by your Savior, even in your addictions and your confusion.

Our message, as you will hear over and over in this book, is that these feelings, as well as all of your other challenges, can be taken to the Lord. His mission was and continues to be to **“bind up the broken-hearted.”**² We hope to convey to you our sure witness that comes from personal experience: He stands ready and waiting for you to cast your burdens upon Him so that He can bear them for you.

This connection with Him is exactly what Helaman described to his sons. We offer this “likening” of Helaman’s testimony. It is our testimony, as well.

And now, [dear sister], remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty

storm shall beat upon you [in the form of all the devil’s lies], **it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo** (Helaman 5:12, emphasis added).

Satan is just as real as God. He wants to destroy my husband and by so doing hopes he can destroy our family unit. He is whispering things to me constantly, wanting me to feel discouraged, fearful and hopeless. I refuse to let him win! This is a burden that either I chose or the Lord chose for me to carry in this life. I don’t know how it will end. I hope it will end happy and positive, but if it does not end that way, I know that before I was ever a wife to an addict, I was a daughter of God and I will always be a daughter of God! As long as I am true and faithful, He will take care of me and my family. Everything will turn out in the end. — Lynnette

Escaping the Lies Satan Has Snared Us With

It’s interesting that Satan is called the “**father of all lies,**”³ not the father of adultery or even the father of murder. It is also interesting that Satan thrives on secrecy—whether it be about an episode with overeating or with pornography. Once we start doing our “thing” in secret—eating, spending, or whatever—we’ve crossed a line into his territory and cut ourselves off from the fellowship of truth.

One of the most prevalent lies Satan perpetrates on the human family has to do with his own self—what he looks like and what he has the power to do to us. Since the beginning of all mythology and superstition, he has encouraged us to think of him in a variety of terrifying forms, holding all kinds of magical powers to cause things to happen in the physical world. In one simple statement, the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed the truth about Satan’s influence:

All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. *The devil has no power over us only as we permit him* (Cook and Ehat, *Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 60, emphasis added).

In other words, all Satan can do to harm us is whisper negative, discouraging, lie-based thoughts into our minds and hope that we will believe him and act out our beliefs toward ourselves and toward each other. That's what he did in the garden when he lied to Eve, and it is what he did when he convinced Cain to kill his brother, Abel. He lied and convinced them to take action based on those lies. And so it has been from the beginning.

[Satan] is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning (Ether 8:25).

If Satan can't take control of us through our fear of his power to hurt us, then he goes to the opposite extreme and tells us there is no devil: **"I am no devil, for there is none."**⁴ This belief that there is no spiritual realm or spiritual influence, such as God or the devil, is the position of secular science and humanism, including social sciences, such as sociology and psychology. It is the prevailing "world view" (belief system) that we have been immersed in for the last 150 years. And we are reaping the whirlwind of the human family embracing and acting upon that lie.

And thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance [except through seeking and embracing the Atonement of Jesus Christ] (2 Nephi 28:22).

Satan's tactics have not changed. They can't. Even today, He can use no other tactic against us except to lie. Satan is still trying to drive the lie of blame and shame between every husband and wife like a wedge, just as he tried to do in the garden between Adam and Eve.

Colleen: Some of the Lies Satan Uses Against Women

Satan's desire is to make you miserable, to discourage and dishearten you, to bring you down in every way possible. So what are the lies he uses against you? Here is a partial list of lies I've either believed myself or heard other women express about themselves. See how many of them you recognize in your own thoughts:

- You're not pretty enough.
- You're fat.
- You're old.
- You're plain.
- You're flat.
- You're too much.
- You're not enough.
- You're the problem.
- You don't do enough.
- You don't do the right things for him in bed.
- You don't care enough.
- You don't keep yourself dolled up enough.
- You've gained weight.
- You're too skinny.
- You're the wrong size, shape, color.
- You're boring.
- You caused it, you know.
- You weren't enough to get him to stop using pornography when he married you.
- You could cure this if you'd just change.
- You can control this if you just scream at him enough.
- You can control this if you just stay up late enough and get up early enough.

- ❑ You can control this if you keep track of him closely enough.
- ❑ This wouldn't be happening if it weren't for you.
- ❑ He'd be a faithful husband if you just hadn't: let yourself go/gained weight/yelled at him/needed him so much.

The lies could go on and on and on and on and on. There's no end to them. As soon as you try to respond to one (by believing and obeying it), a hundred more spring up. You go on fighting, swinging, flailing, slashing, and trying to conquer the lies by fighting them. You snap at the kids. You can't open the drapes. You begin lying to everyone you meet—pretending you're fine—when inside your soul you are dying from the spiritual infection caused by these lies.

For me, it helps just to recognize where these feelings (of bitterness and discouragement) are coming from. If I can recognize that it's just the adversary working on me, it's easier to put those feelings in their place. I realize that these thoughts aren't some weak, bad part of me... This is warfare and the enemy is firing on me! If I get wounded by a bullet, I don't have to run around wondering how I could have been so silly as to get shot and blame myself for having a bullet in me. I realize that the enemy has attacked me, and I can take myself to the surgeon to be healed.

— Margene

Phil: Some of the Lies Satan Tells Men

Of course, women aren't the only ones Satan lies to. He lies to men just as much as to women. Some of the lies are the same—some are different. You may recognize some of these in your husband's excuses. Maybe you see them in some behavior of your own. At any rate, let's get more explicit about the lies he's telling the guys:

- ❑ Sex is your most important need.

- ❑ You are never going to get enough.
- ❑ No one is really going to take care of your needs.
- ❑ Even if your wife is a willing partner, you need more.
- ❑ You are being kind to her by taking care of your own needs.
- ❑ It's important that other women besides your wife find you attractive.
- ❑ You're not attractive to others.
- ❑ You're a loser.
- ❑ No girl would want you.
- ❑ Go ahead and stimulate your own sexual feelings. No one cares. No one knows. It won't matter.
- ❑ You deserve to know what it feels like.
- ❑ You deserve to know what is going on in the world.
- ❑ Go ahead and look. They're just pictures.
- ❑ You're not victimizing these women in the pictures. They enjoy expressing themselves.
- ❑ You're not hurting anyone.
- ❑ You're only hurting yourself, so it's ok.
- ❑ This is normal. All men do this.
- ❑ You're not normal if you don't look.

In *Clean Hands, Pure Heart*, I wrote about the double whammy Satan throws at men, first enticing them to sin, then shaming them for giving in.

Satan actually twists the enticing of our own conscience to defeat us. Unlike the Lord, he doesn't respect us and he doesn't have any integrity. He doesn't fight fair. He entices us to sin, saying, "Hey, this will be fun, this will be great—come and try this out! It's not that bad. It won't do any harm." Then when we give in, he turns on us and

sneers in our face, in a cruel, sadistic imitation of our conscience: “You sinner! You scum! You are the biggest slime ball in history. No one could possibly tolerate you (let alone love you) if they knew what you are *really* like.” On and on it goes. Is it any wonder the adversary is referred to as **“the accuser of our brethren” (Revelation 12:10)**? The really sad part is that after a while, we take up the cry ourselves, becoming our own accusers. Our enemy has convinced us to join his side *against ourselves*, exactly as he intended. He knows if he can confuse our perception of our conscience enough, if he can get us to *identify ourselves* as sinners, we are that much easier to coax into sin. We act as we believe, and if we believe ourselves to be bad, we are much more likely to act badly. We say to ourselves: “Why shouldn’t I do (whatever)? That’s just the sort of person I am. There’s no point in expecting anything better from me.” Thus our negative beliefs contribute to our own defeat. As the scriptures tell us, **“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7)**.

Too often, when we are in a marriage, we look to the other person for our strength and inspiration and are disappointed when we find that they are just as human as we are. This can lead us to look elsewhere to things that can become addictions for both the husband and the wife. It doesn’t matter to the adversary which direction he takes to bring us into bondage, as long as he gets us away from the truth.

Phil: Satan’s Lie That You Are Each Other’s Ultimate Source

As I’ve counseled with my brethren over the years, I’ve observed that some men—I believe under the influence of Satan—begin to twist the often rehearsed idea that women are spiritually superior to men into an excuse to indulge in their baser inclinations. This tendency to put women on a pedestal is further reinforced by the cultural stereotype that women are, by nature, more spiritually sensitive or spiritually inclined

than men. This generalization has been portrayed for years in the media, as movies and television series have shown the wife taking the children to church while the husband stays home. We often repeat statements like, “Behind every good man is a *really* good woman,” or “My wife is my better half,” thus implying that the wife is expected to carry the spiritual load. Even in the Church this attitude is encouraged, despite the fact that it is the husband who represents the Lord and His priesthood in the family.

I have to seriously wonder how this stereotype contributes to the way a married man addicted to pornography may shift the responsibility for his addiction to his wife, expecting her to keep him on the spiritual strait and narrow. On the other hand, I also have to wonder how much the stereotype contributes to the way a woman often believes that it is her mission to rescue her husband from himself and feels like it’s her failure if he doesn’t reform.

As always, the best antidote for a lie is the truth. The truth about a man and woman who share the sacred covenant of marriage is that neither of them qualifies to be the source of inspiration and power to the other. The truth is neither of you belongs on any pedestal. You are equally mortal, equally lost and equally fallen “fellows” in this life. Thus you are both *equally* in need of a spiritual rebirth into a close, personal relationship with the Savior.

The major healing that needs to happen in your life and in your husband’s life will only begin when you both stop looking to each other for salvation and look to Jesus Christ instead. Only in Him will either of you find the strength and wisdom (personal revelation) to protect you against the adversary, the father of all lies.

Colleen: We Are Not the “Power Behind the Throne”

I can hardly contain the desire to testify to you, dear sister, of how important it is for us wives to realize that our husbands have a Savior *and it isn’t us!*

Assuming that somehow I was in charge of saving my husband, I remained in my first marriage for years after I realized how far into sin my husband's addiction had taken him. I look back at my journal entries written during those years, and my heart breaks for the woman who wrote them. I was convinced I couldn't leave. Why? Because it was my fault he was this messed up. Why? Because I believed that what you might call "mother-power" or "woman-power" was the *ultimate* power in the family.

In other words, I believed that I set the mood in my home, and if the mood wasn't positive, somehow I had failed. This thinking locked me into living with a man who behaved like a peevish, mean-spirited, cruel child in the privacy of our home—toward myself and our children. All the while, I thought his moods were my fault, because I wasn't good enough to fulfill and inspire him. I truly believed the rhetoric I heard about how the woman is "the real power behind the throne," and that every worthy, well-functioning man in the Church owed to his wife his ability to perform his duties. The fact that my husband was never called to be in a bishopric, for example, was my failure.

How grateful I am to Phil for *not* putting me on a pedestal, and for *not* making me the one to whom he attributes his faithfulness, either in the fulfillment of his priesthood responsibilities or in the ongoing miracle of his abstinence from pornography addiction. It feels like the most compassionate and loving attitude I have ever felt from any man. It gives me the freedom to work out the only salvation I have the response-ability to work out—my own.

1. Romans 8:38-39.
2. Isaiah 61:1.
3. 2 Nephi 2:18.
4. 2 Nephi 28:22.

Chapter 4

I Didn't Ask for This!

Hi, Phil here. I'd like to open this discussion by sharing a memory of an incident that happened a few years ago while I was passing through the airport on my way to a short business trip.

With only two days to go until Thanksgiving, it wasn't surprising that I found the parking lot of the Salt Lake City International Airport filled to capacity, forcing me to park in the section furthest from the terminal. The shuttle was just as crowded, but the young couple in the seat across from me seemed oblivious. He wore his dark hair in a short, well-groomed haircut; her blond hair was pulled back in a neat pony tail. He was handsome; she was radiant. Over and over, her adoring, trusting gaze returned to his face. Her left hand bore a single ring with a diamond. Each of them had only a small carry-on bag with them.

Their story seemed apparent. They were headed home, either to his parents or hers. Perhaps this was the very first visit home they had made together. There would surely be excited and hopeful introductions—the beginning of a new life, a new family, with new relationships all around.

After passing through the security gates, I saw them again, sitting at a table in the food court. She was still looking at him as if there wasn't another person on the planet. The hope and adoration in her eyes could no more be hid than the rays of the sun on a clear summer morning. It was so obvious that she was willing, even eager, to entrust the rest of her life to him, along with her hopes for an eternal marriage. Into his hands

she was placing all her dreams—for herself, for the two of them, and for their children to come.

Painfully aware as I am of the growing plague of pornography addiction among men—even the nicest of young men—I couldn't help wondering how this young couple's future would unfold. I struggled with questions she most likely hadn't even considered. Would her dreams be safe with him? Would he be the strong, reliable husband and lover she envisioned? Or would their happiness be challenged and perhaps shattered by the future revelation of this hidden weakness? Perhaps it was already part of his life but a part as yet undisclosed. Or it might not develop until later, after a few months or years of marriage.

If this heartbreaking situation happened to her, how would she cope with it? How could she ever see it as anything except a horrible tragedy? And if she were to be confronted with such a challenging reality, would their marriage weather the blow? Would he have the humility to admit his frailty, and furthermore, his need for help beyond his own resources? And if he did, what would be her response? Would she be willing to suffer through a painful and uncertain period of repentance and recovery? On the other hand, what if he refused to acknowledge the seriousness of his behavior? What would she do then?

Colleen: Experiencing Your Own Version of 9/11

If you were anywhere near a television on September 11, 2001, like me, you saw the video replay over and over again of the World Trade Center twin towers in New York City collapsing into a heap of rubble—110 stories disintegrating in just over 10 seconds. I cannot think of any better comparison to what it feels like when an active LDS woman finds out that her husband is deliberately seeking and using pornography.

Learning that your husband has a sexual addiction can feel a lot like facing your own personal 9/11. Your trust and security has been destroyed and your life will never be the same again. In just a few moments, your hope and faith in him, in yourself, and in your marriage have crumbled to dust, just like the twin towers. You can't quit playing

the “tape” over and over in your mind: Your husband is sexually active, sexually involved—without you.

Maybe you had no idea. You assumed that his fidelity to your marriage was as unwavering as your own. Or maybe you already had some clue that sometime in the past he'd indulged just a little, “experimented” with some form of sexual transgression. If it was in his youth, you were sure that, just as he had sworn to you, the transgression was ancient history, a problem conquered and left behind long ago. You both wanted to believe that it was something he would never think of doing again now that he had you—the girl, the wife of his dreams.

But then the day came when either a long trail of little uneasy moments or a single major discovery revealed to you that the problem is not ancient history. It is here. It is now. The truth hits you like the airplanes hit the twin towers: He is caught in the secret soul-sickness of pornography and masturbation. You confront him. You sob. You rage. You become insane trying to police his life. Over and over again, he either pledges reform with tears and sorrow or responds with defensiveness and criticism of you. Each of you begins to find bitterness replacing the love you once felt.

Or maybe, by the time you find out about his addiction, it has already escalated, seared his conscience, and enslaved his heart and mind to the point that he has actually acted out with another person. He's had an affair or paid a prostitute—all while you were being faithful, believing, and trusting.

Suddenly, all your trust turns to humiliation and the mutilation of your heart. Your own sanity feels like it's hanging by a thread. You walk numbly through your days, dealing with the children, going about your routine like a zombie. Nothing seems real or tangible any longer. It feels like your life is over, like something in you has died, and rightfully so.

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob, the brother of Nephi and a great prophet in his own right, declares how severely a husband's sexual infidelity—even if only in thought and intent—can affect his wife.

Speaking to men who were just “beginning to labor in sin,” or in other words, just beginning to contemplate acting out, Jacob said:

Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, *many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds* (Jacob 2:35, emphasis added).

Two Ways That Many Wives React to Such Deep Wounds

We’ve heard from many sisters who write to express one or the other of a pretty polarized reaction to finding out their husband is infected with pornography addiction. Some react by drawing away in disgust and adamantly insisting, “This is totally *his* problem. I don’t want to hear about it. I don’t even want to know it exists. I just want him to stay away from me until he is 100% fixed. Then, we’ll see whether we have a marriage left or not.”

Meanwhile, other wives become obsessed with helping their husbands stay abstinent. This wife may think in terms of a team effort: “This is *our* problem, and *we* need to do something about it.” In reality, she has decided she needs to be his coach, manager, and the cheerleader of the team. Such wives remind their husbands of meetings and insist on reading recovery literature *to* them. Their belief is, “I’ve got to make sure he does whatever it takes. He’ll never make it without me.” If this is the way you feel and believe, we have some tough news for you. If your husband can’t make it without you, he definitely won’t make it with you, or even *for* you. His motivation has got to go deeper than keeping you pleased with him or keeping you off his back. Until you step out of the way and get on with your own spiritual growth, he won’t even get started at owning his own problem or his own recovery.

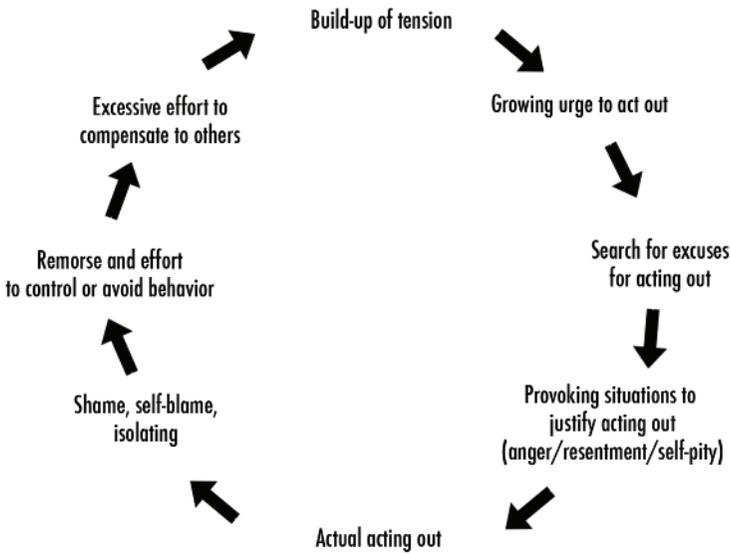
No matter what your feelings about being involved in your husband’s problem, we feel it is important to recognize and validate the

feelings you're dealing with. This challenge can't help but affect your own sense of stability and even your feelings of sanity, as you find yourself spinning into what is often called the "cycle of addiction."

Caught in the Cycle of Addiction

Living with an addict can be a disheartening, bewildering, and agonizing experience. Sometimes he may be grouchy, angry, and just plain impossible to live with. At other times he may be very sweet and attentive. You may find yourself asking, "Which of these men is really my husband? To whom am I really married?"

It may help to know that addiction typically follows a pretty predictable pattern that goes something like this:



When you see this cycle of addiction continually repeating itself, you may be tempted to ask, "Is my husband really trying to overcome this addiction, or is he just trying to get around me so he can keep acting out?" Or you're tempted to think, "He doesn't *really* want to quit. If he

did, things would change. I would at least be able to see some improvement.” This can be a seriously inaccurate assumption.

Colleen: Your Husband’s Remorse May Really Be Sincere

The concept of addiction may still be so new to you that you’re having a very, very hard time believing it is the equivalent of an infection—an illness that your husband has contracted, rather than something that is plaguing him. In reality, your husband may be desperately sincere when he goes through the remorseful phase of the cycle and may be trying to stop with all the willpower he can muster—which is obviously totally inadequate.

During the phase in which he is making excessive efforts to compensate, it is most likely that he is trying to genuinely make up for how much he hurts you when the insanity of his addiction sets in. The truth is, he isn’t creating this cycle of addiction; he’s just as caught in this Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde curse as you are. Somewhere deep inside, at a spiritual level, he is very likely feeling just as terrified of its power to destroy your life together as you are. Trying to understand this truth does not excuse him for what he’s doing nor does it make it okay for him to ignore it and pretend it’s not happening, but it does offer you some release from feeling that you’re causing it or that you can do something to stop it.

Men who are trying to come back to peace with God, to heal and live in a marriage as God intended, may have moments when they slip. But, if they do, they will get right back “on the wagon.” If you see your husband doing this, hang on to him. He’s a man worth walking through hellfire with. Why? Because he is working toward wellness. — Tabitha

Nevertheless, because of the heart-deep connection that marriage represents, you cannot help but be pulled into the vortex of this insane way of life and become obsessed yourself. Satan is trying to infect you with depression and despair. One of Satan’s most powerful ways of doing

this is getting you to believe one or both of the following ideas: 1) that you did something to deserve such a challenge, and/or 2) that you made a mistake when you married your husband.

What Did I Do to Deserve This?

A little reflection will reveal that this kind of self-incrimination is based on the false assumption that life's challenges are God's punishments. This is a lie. Satan wants you to believe Heavenly Father is deliberately meting out the heartache and pain you are feeling. It just simply is not true. The scriptures are full of examples of individuals being faced with unjust and unfair situations they did not bring on themselves or deserve.

Still, we understand that it is virtually impossible at first—and maybe for weeks and months to come—to keep the thought from going through your mind: “What did I do to deserve this? This reprehensible turn of events certainly wasn't what I signed up for. I was certain we'd have a home filled with security and love, not this sordid, evil presence in our lives that seems to be destroying us from the inside out. This isn't what my life was supposed to be like! It's so *unjust!*”

The question of what is fair or of having to face and endure your husband's addiction may be particularly powerful in your mind, especially if you've made considerable effort to live your life the best you know how—with daily personal and family prayer, scripture study, family home evenings, and church and temple attendance (or at least the goal of a temple marriage). After all, that was supposed to be *the* formula that would provide immunity against a life filled with such heartache as you now feel.

On the other hand, maybe your own choices haven't always been ideal. Maybe you have made some mistakes along the way—even serious mistakes. Perhaps mistreatment or abuse in your childhood or in past relationships has taught you to think so poorly of yourself that you have concluded that marriage to a sex addict is a just result and it is all that you deserve, the most you can hope for.

Whether you think you deserve what's happening or not, we want to adamantly bear our testimony to you: *your husband's addiction has absolutely nothing to do with your past or current behaviors or choices.*

This is not about what you do or don't deserve! This is about living in the last days and facing the challenges those days bring. The temptations and climate of today's world are filled with sexual images. That is a definite challenge to most men and also to many women. Those who succumb to these temptations are not bad people. They are mortal and have succumbed to the drives of the mortal body. Understanding this reality doesn't mean we simply accept such transgression as normal; but on the other hand, we need not overreact either.

Colleen: I Thought I Was Inspired to Marry Him

It is my testimony to you that finding yourself in the challenging situation of being married to a man addicted to pornography does not mean you weren't led by the hand of the Lord to marry him. The scriptures are full of examples of people who followed the Lord and still found themselves in the midst of great challenges. One of the greatest symbolic examples of this can be found in Lehi's dream:

And it came to pass that I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me. And it came to pass that he spake unto me, and bade me follow him. And it came to pass that as I followed him I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste (1 Nephi 8:5-7, emphasis added).

Here we find that Lehi followed an angel representing the Lord and, of all things, he found himself in a "dark and dreary waste." What? How could that be? And yet it is right there in black and white.

I can't tell you how many times between seminary, institute classes, and family scripture reading, I had read those verses and totally missed that amazing insight. Following the Lord doesn't guarantee a fairy tale outcome. Yet, I had bought into that fallacy completely and I had

married fully expecting that my activity in the Church would insure safety from “the dark and dreary” influences of the world.

It was only when I turned back to the Book of Mormon, desperately needing to hear and see the truths it contained that would get me closer to God than any other book or source of advice I could find, that I began to have eyes to see and a heart to understand such mysteries. Only then did I absorb the example of Lehi’s faithfulness to the Lord, despite the fact that He didn’t just whisk Lehi and his family away to the **“far better land of promise.”**¹

No, Lehi walked thousands of miles and put up with years and years of challenges. He definitely went through a “dark and dreary waste” experience before he arrived in the place the Lord first revealed to him as his “promised land.” It was then that I realized that the Lord reserves the right to require the same of me. I faced a huge call to step up to the plate when I saw that obedience to the Lord doesn’t bring the same type of instant results as putting a dollar in a vending machine.

I believe that, without exception, we will all face at least one trial in this life that is going to exceed our capacity to deal with it. In other words, we are all going to face our own version of a Gethsemane experience. We’re all going to have to come to a place where we find ourselves pleading with the Father, even as our Savior did, “Let this cup pass from me. Please don’t let this thing be happening. Please, God, don’t let it be true. I can’t face this. I can’t deal with it. Please take it away. *Please* turn the clock back. What did I do to end up like this?”

Seeking the Savior’s Ability to Separate the Sin from the Sinner

We often hear the scripture rehearsed that states, **“For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance,”**² to imply that if a person is committing any kind of sin, God cannot stand to look upon him or her, and the person must stop sinning before He will embrace them. This is such a sad interpretation of that verse, and with just a little thought, I believe, we can see its fallacy. In His earthly ministry, Jesus “looked upon” sinners continuously. He walked with

them, talked with them, touched them—lepers, cripples, harlots, wine bibbers, money-changers, to name just a few of the sinners He invited into His life. All of us are sinners; there are no perfect people for Jesus to look upon.

Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer (1 Nephi 10:6).

None of us can escape needing the Savior's merciful willingness to receive us just as we are—infected with one kind of sin or another. While there is no doubt that pornography is a great evil, we must remember that nowhere is there a greater need for us to distinguish between condemning the sin and annihilating the sinner.

In counseling the Saints about the war Satan would rage against us in these last days, the Prophet Joseph Smith advised us to exercise caution in attacking evil too hastily:

Stay yourselves; do not give way [to Satan's urging to attack those who have done wrong]; don't make any hasty moves, you may be saved. If a spirit of bitterness is in you, don't be in haste. You may say, that man is a sinner. Well, if he repents, he shall be forgiven. Be cautious, await (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:314-15, emphasis added).

It may help you feel the truth of the Prophet Joseph's counsel if you take a few minutes to remember the feelings you had toward your husband in the early days of your courtship and marriage. Why did you marry this man? Wasn't there a lot of good in him that made you want to give yourself to him in marriage? And now, because you have found a flaw, are you tempted to throw the whole deal overboard? That's like saying because there's a hole in the dike, the dike is useless—so condemn it. Or because there's a leak in the boat, take a hatchet to it.

Here is a verse that plainly demonstrates that it is possible for a man to administer in a righteous manner for the sake of others who depend on him, but to still be cut off from the Lord in his own spiritual life:

And he did do justice unto the people, but not unto himself because of his many whoredoms; wherefore he was cut off from the presence of the Lord (Ether 10:11).

The truth is, for the most part, our brethren—including our husbands—who have been sent into the world in these last days, are good men facing a challenging problem. Good men. Sons of God. Saved for the last days, when the battles would be the fiercest.

Colleen: Getting Past the Feelings of Devastation

Now, with all that said, let's get back to the other side of the paradoxical reality you live with. While this challenge of your husband's addiction is not your fault, it would be untrue, unfair, and unfeeling to suggest that it doesn't affect you.

My biggest problem is that I am afraid that as soon as something good starts to happen he will quit doing everything (praying, reading, seeing his counselor, etc.) and then the cycle will begin again. — Judy

It's only natural and understandable that you have spent hours obsessed with doubt and confusion over this issue. You have every right to these feelings. To get out of them, to move past them, however, you must eventually stop indulging them and ask yourself what you are going to do with them. To act upon them by attacking something, whether it's your husband or your "to do" list or the extra pounds you need to lose, is not the same as finding release and genuine peace.

I would like to propose that it is likely that even before you were born, you had an idea of what you were getting into when you entered mortality. You knew earth life would be hard and that even your closest loved ones would be capable of making choices that would hurt you. In other words, you knew you were headed for a “**dark and dreary waste**”³ when you chose the Father’s plan and followed the Savior into this mortal experience.

Pray about this—about whether you knew and trusted Heavenly Father and Jesus before you were born. Pray about whether you were shown that mortality in these last days might very likely include this kind of challenge and whether or not you were willing to face it.

I feel assured that you will receive the witness that you and your husband were both willing to accept this degree of challenge that is so prevalent in these last days. I also know, because I have lived it myself, that this witness will bring with it an increase of compassion for both yourself and your husband, as one. The Lord loves you both and desires to save you and your marriage if at all possible.

I have learned that I may be pushed to my very limits, to where I think I can't go another minute. Much learning, growth and strength come from those moments. I also know that when I truly am to my limit, the Lord provides a way for me to be lifted to where I am okay again. I know that I agreed to this life before I came here. ... I know that no matter what I do or what opportunities the Lord gives my husband, it is ultimately his responsibility to choose righteousness.

— Terri

1. Alma 37:45.

2. Doctrine & Covenants 1:31.

3. 1 Nephi 8:7.